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Lorenzo De Vidovich

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Tilburg University
Tilburg Center for Regional Law and Governance (TiREG)
Reitse Poort 1 (1st Floor)
Prof. Cobbenhagenlaan 125
5037 DB Tilburg
The Netherlands

Website: www.tilburguniversity.edu/tireg
Email: tireg@tilburguniversity.edu
Phone: 0031 13 466 2128

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE GOVERNANCE OF “SUBURBIA”: LEARNING FROM THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

Lorenzo De Vidovich

PhD Candidate, Polytechnic University of Milan
DAStU – Department of Architecture and Urban Studies
l.devidovich@gmail.com; lorenzoraimondo.devidovich@polimi.it

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Abstract

In a world of planetary urbanization, processes of spatial development are under endless changes and threatened by the constant strengthening of neoliberal policy-making at all spatial scales. At the same time, the existence of worldwide urban growth shows us that the urban morphology is no longer readable through core/periphery dualisms which strengthened a centralist bias on urban theory. Today, both urban growth and change are better understood if we take into account tendencies towards urban expansion, de-centralization and suburbanization (Keil, 2017a), to explore the relations between agglomeration processes and their multi-scalar operational landscapes. By addressing the uneven spatial development of urban areas, the paper grounds its reflection in the governance processes of suburban areas, embracing two perspectives to bridge an analysis between Canada and Europe. On the one hand, it grounds the reflection on “suburban governance”, by looking at the so-called “suburbanisms”, i.e. the growing prevalence of distinctive ways of life in the suburban areas. On the other hand, the paper looks at the city-region perspective to address the governance of the multifaceted expansion of urban agglomerations in European and Canadian contexts. Furthermore, the paper provides an overview of suburbanization in Canada, as a territorial mass halfway between the American and the European models of suburbanization. A noteworthy literature has been produced to study the suburban ways of living in Canada, and in this respect, the contribution enhances the strengths of the “Atlas of Suburbanisms”, pointing out the interesting theoretical approach adopted by Canadian academia. Finally, the paper posits that urban changes not only imply transformations in built environment, but they also call for new governance agendas able to deal with societal, inter-institutional and infrastructural issues in a time of uneven suburbanization within city-regions.

1. Introduction

Urban agglomerations have new forms. Roger Keil (2017b) argues that we are currently living on a suburban planet and questions of both urban growths and changes are better understood if we take into account tendencies towards urban expansion, de-centralization and suburbanization. As a global phenomenon, urban sprawl has extensive environmental impacts (Ewing, 1997; Weilenmann, Seidl, & Schulz, 2017). Nevertheless, beyond the sprawl – at times considered sterile and irrelevant to study the current urban expansion (Tonkiss, 2013) – suburbanization entails a deeper understanding of governing practices, dealing with the non-territorial aspects of suburbs “as the products of assemblages of resources, discourses and power mobilized by various actors” (Phelps, 2017: 239). Cotemporary (sub)urbanization is so dynamic that it is in a way necessary to see it as a process of different concatenations that work together, changing the environment. However, land and morphological changes are determined by political and non-territorial reasons and relations, as the theory of “planetary urbanization” (Brenner, 2014; Brenner & Schmid, 2011, 2015) advocates. In a post-Fordist era, marked by globalization and neoliberalization, many conceptual resources indicate how urban-regions are planned and built, hence dealing more with the physical form as the remarkable aspects of suburban developments in different national settings. However, as stressed by Harris, “in order to understand the meanings of the suburbs, it is necessary to consider the backgrounds, purposes and experiences of their residents [...] the character of infrastructure to which they have access, ranging from school to transportation” (Harris, 2010: 38). Indeed, much less attention has been paid to the constellation of public and private processes, actors and institutions that determine the planning, design, politics and socio-economic patterns of suburban spaces and ways of life (Keil & Hamel, 2015). This paper grounds its reflection in the field of governance of “suburbia”, a culturally connotative noun (McManus & Ethington, 2007) adopted to describe the “constellation” of suburbs (i.e. the

built forms of settlements located at the metropolitan edges) also referring to their inhabitants' ways of living. The suburban scale makes clear that, even though nowadays the state continues to play an important role in regulating social and economic problems in urban areas, "the traditional and centralized approach to public action proved inadequate to meet emerging social demands" (Boudreau & Hamel, 2017: 34). In this respect, the contribution integrates the analytical frame of "suburban governance" with that of "city regions" to read between Canada and Europe the processes of planetary (sub)urbanization (see Phelps, 2017) toward a study of suburbs underlining the importance of their forms and functions, beyond the "place" and the physical suburban realm. The paper is framed in the debate that pushes for an overcoming of the binary conceptualizations that narrowly place "suburbs" as fixed spatial entities situated in relation to a historically urban centre (Bourne, 1996; Ekers, Hamel & Keil, 2012; Walks, 2013). In so doing, the essay uses its reflection on the latest Canadian suburban investigations as a theoretical way to "view from outside" European governance challenges.

The paper is organized as follows. First, it addresses the "call for suburban studies" (see also Keil, 2017b), introducing the shifting from urban to suburban age, then illustrating in a nutshell the post-suburban politics framework to observe Europe on the one hand, and the rationale of "suburban governance" on the other hand, through a brief presentation of the research "Global Suburbanisms". Second, the paper enriches the theoretical debate on urban expansion including the discussions regarding global city-regions, as a viewpoint to observe the constant growing of urban areas both in Canada and Europe, towards regional development. Third, it focuses on the Canadian context tackling the issue of how it can be helpful in studying pathways for suburban governance in Europe. In doing so, the paper provides a brief overview of Canadian suburbanization, then moving the attention on a good practice to investigate on suburbanization: the "Atlas of Suburbanisms", created by the School of Planning at University of Waterloo. Finally, concluding remarks raise questions about whether "suburban" is a one-size-fits-all term for territories at the edges of urban cores, included in wider city-regions.

2. A call for suburban investigations

2.1 Into the suburban planet

As early as 1955, Kingsley Davis observed that urbanization was widespread. Anticipating the "urban revolution" outlined by Henri Lefebvre (2003 [1970]), he had foreseen what has occurred in the following decades: "at the periphery, it may be well that metropolis and the countryside, as the one expand and the other shrinks, will merge together" (Davis, 1955, p. 437). More than half a century later, the urban revolution is still ongoing. From the 1970s the large cities exploded giving rise to growth of suburbs, residential conglomerations, industrial complexes and satellite cities, shaping the post-Fordist society as an "urban society", even due to a complete subordination of the agrarian to the urban (see Lefebvre, 2014 [1970]).

As a consequence, the reliability of binary dichotomies such as centre/periphery and rural/urban to observe the urban realm, are undermined. It has been widely acknowledged that urban areas have become polycentric (Hall & Pain, 2006). The concentric city identified during the 1920s by the Chicago School of sociology (Burgess, 2008; Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1984) no longer represents the urban dimension, albeit the urban itself remains at the centre of manifold debates. The UN Habitat forecast (2008), which assumes that by 2050, 70 percent or more of world population will live in cities, is often mentioned, but at the same time, some other recent reports, such as the "Atlas of Urban Expansion" (Angel et. al.m 2012), recognizes the existence of a broad urban periphery "fully developed into an outer exurban or peri-urban fringe where urban and rural land uses intermingle" (Harris & Lehrer, 2018, p. 7). This means that the so-called "urban age" (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007) is in reality "suburban" (Keil, 2017b). Investigations of the suburban have recently found a stronger continuity, contributing to a deeper understanding not only of the sprawl, but also of metropolitan infrastructures, land consumption and city-region governance.

Although North-America is considered the birthplace of suburbanization (Beauregard, 2006; Fishman, 1990; Harris, 2010; Jackson, 1985), it is nowadays a global phenomenon (Keil & Hamel, 2015) that found new theoretical inquiry. Jauhainen (2013) differentiates an interest in such themes as planned or unplanned suburbs, regulated and unregulated suburbanization, both noticing that the complex phenomenon needs novel approaches and hybrid concepts from a range of disciplines and perspectives, from the economic to the social.

In a nutshell, suburbs can be conceived as the key scopes of the 21st Century urban growth, and the field of "suburban studies" has more recently come to the fore, as the 21st Century is characterized by a massive and

worldwide proliferation of suburbs in various forms. Increasingly, suburbs are a theme of universal significance, implicated in the growth of globalized “world cities” and the rapid development of built environment at the urban outskirts, particularly in emerging economies (Vaughan et. al., 2009). Currently, suburban studies struggles with the definition of the “suburb” (Forsyth, 2012, 2014), conceptually perceived as an extension of urbanism (Walks, 2013). Suburbs are currently best defined as a category of settlements that is one of housing settlement types (from high-rise condominiums to family homes), commercial and industrial spaces, as well as infrastructures (such as transit networks or pipelines) and illegal settlements which are now part of the emerging fabric of an urbanized world (see McGee, 2013). Given this definition, reflections about the state of the art, ongoing debates and unsolved knots are worthy of a broader space of analysis, as there is little unity among scholars about what suburbs, suburbanization and the recent term “suburbanisms” might mean (Harris & Vorms, 2017). The latter – “suburbanism” – indicates the suburban ways of living (Fava, 1956; Walks, 2013; Keil, 2013; Keil & Hamel, 2015)¹, whereas suburbanization can be synthetically defined as “the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion” (Ekers, Hamel & Keil, 2012, p. 407), albeit it encompasses new processes typical of the current post-suburban phase.

2.2 European post-suburbia: features and functions

The form of suburbia is not universal but rather diverse and hybrid in time and space. Lang and Knox (2009) have argued that that urban regions have been stretched and reshaped to accommodate increasingly complex and extensive patterns of interdependence. This statement, albeit suggested through an observation of the American “megalopolis”, enables a rethinking of European suburbs either, which are historically different from the North-American bourgeois utopian settlements composed by single-family homes (Fishman, 1987). Within a heterogeneous constellation, European suburbs were observed as non-pleasant containers of vulnerability until the post-Fordism, when they began turning into emerging spaces for entrepreneurialism, investments, consumption and new institutional arrangements, as occurred in the U.S. (Cox & Jonas, 1993; Keil, 1994; Peck & Tickell, 1994; Phelps et. al., 2006; Cox, 2010). Before introducing suburban governance, geographical clarification and distinction are needed.

Although U.S. perspective continued to inform us about contemporary suburbanization at length (Sjöberg, 1960), the relevance of the numerous terms adopted to describe the North-American suburbs – such as “edge city” (Garreau, 2011), “edgeless city” (Lang, 2003; Lang & LeFurgy, 2003), “exopolis” (Soja, 1992) or the modern “technoburbs” (Fishman, 1987) – is questionable. The term “post-suburbia” (Teaford, 1997; Phelps et al., 2006; Phelps, Wood, & Valler, 2010) has been devised to capture and encapsulate this plethora of terminologies. Whilst post-suburbia appears as a global phenomenon (Phelps & Wu, 2011) two main disparities intervenes between the patterns of European and North-American suburbanization: a “dimensional disparity” (Mazierska & Rascaroli, 2003), on the one hand, which relies on differences in the geographic scale of suburbanization, and a “temporal disparity” (Phelps et al., 2006) in timing and speed at which suburban settlements have emerged across Europe, in different settings. European metropolitan areas have experienced some elements of the urbanization occurred in the US and Canadian cities, such as decentralization, growth of car-usage, retail parks and offices clusters, but in North-America these changes have been much more extreme and extensive (Mazierska & Rascaroli, 2003). As argued by Bontje and Burdack (2005), the recent European suburban developments can be conceived as a typical variation of the American “edge city”.

In Europe, suburbanizations have been refracted very differently through the variety of capitalisms, welfare, planning, house systems, land ownership, industry structures and suburban ideologies (Phelps & Tarazona Vento, 2015). Whilst European city-regions remain relatively more compact than North-American ones, in the growth of post-suburban areas, a nodal and fragmented pattern of relationships emerged in a disparate urban fabric, overcoming a radial and concentric depiction of urbanization (Keil & Ronneberger, 1994; Brenner, 1999; Soja, 2000). In this view, post-suburbia is usually defined in relation to the cores it surrounds on the one hand, but it also has lateral relationships with other suburban and post-suburban developments, on the other hand (Phelps et al., 2006). Post-suburbia is therefore a new form of settlement space in polynucleated and functionally differentiated metropolitan regions (Gottdiener & Kephart, 1995), which rejects the binaries of centre-periphery, detaching from the consolidated spatial hierarchies within a fragmented infrastructure provision captured in the notion of “splintering urbanism” (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Therefore, post-suburbanization represents the multifaceted contemporary European

¹ The notion of “suburbanism” is inspired by previous analysis that sees “urbanism” as a way of life (Magnusson, 2013), thus reproducing it on suburbs according to their massive contemporary growth.

suburbanization as the end product of a long-standing decentralization process of metropolitan population (Teaford, 2011, in Keil, 2017) which nowadays calls for new governance and agenda-settings towards a European post-suburban identity (Phelps, 2010; Phelps et al., 2006, 2010). In this sense, governance comes as a term to describe how the public, private and non-governmental organisations take their place in local political processes on the suburban scale, providing an additional clear difference between North-America and Europe. While in the former, private-public alliances, determined the suburban development of American capitalism (Walker, 1977; 1981), in Europe, public-private partnership remain fairly limited, except in the U.K., without having the local reliability of a growth machine (Molotch, 1976) regime (Harding, 1997; Le Galès, 2002), at least until the rise of *Zwischenstadt* (in-between cities) (Sieverts, 2003) separated from the core city. In other words, governance of suburban areas in Europe is newer than in North-America, albeit trans-European networks are anything but new.

2.3 Suburban governance in a nutshell

From 2010 to 2017 the research programme “Global Suburbanisms”² focused its attention on the political and governing aspects of the current suburbanization, with the goal to fill a void both in theoretical and empirical investigation on the geographical peripheries and outskirts, seen as urban areas that claim new kinds of centralities (Keil, 2017). Suburban governance can be primarily defined as a mechanism of regulation in order to cope with issues of territorial integration at a metropolitan, city region, or mega-city region scale (Hamel, 2013). However, the research programme “Global Suburbanisms” examined suburbanization by way of the themes of (1) governance, i.e. the efforts and governmental arrangements to guide and regulate suburban development, (2) land, which includes housing, shelter systems, real estate, greenbelts and megaprojects of suburban regeneration, and (3) infrastructure, dealing with transport networks, sewage, water and social services. Keil and colleagues from “Global Suburbanisms” have outlined a new framework to observe the spatial suburban development along with social marginalization and geographical subdivisions from “burb to burb” (i.e. in the global suburbia a gated community can be found beside a low-class condominium-dominant area), where issues of redistribution, inclusiveness and segregation are analysed according to their political frame. In particular, they distinguish between processes of suburbanization under three modes of governance: state-led governance, capital-led governance and authoritarian governance (Ekers et al., 2012; Hamel & Keil, 2016; Keil, 2017b; Keil & Hamel, 2015). The research programme provided a worldwide analysis that involves investigations based on mixed methods, carried out in five different regional clusters: Africa, North-America, Europe, India and China (with two other clusters in Santiago and Melbourne, to include a contribution related to Latin America and Australia).

The research has led to a plethora of new conceptual, empirical, thematic and regional insight (Keil, 2017a), finding out that physical forms of suburbanization and social processes of suburban expansion are accompanied by distinct “suburbanisms” – i.e. suburban ways of life – that defined the spread of the urban tissue at the edges of metropolitan areas together with the persistence of automobile-dependence, domesticity, increased density and socio-economic diversity (Keil, 2017a; Moos & Walter-Joseph, 2017; Walks, 2013). The collective research initiative set out the “role” of governance in a context of suburban expansion by supporting the dazzling and puzzling heterogeneity of suburban typologies and suburbanisms. Furthermore, it remarked how suburbanization, from a distance-making process (of class, race, ethnicities, etc.) has turned into a process of mixing and reshuffling the urban, while the city (as much as it is still a recognizable unit in a time of planetary suburbanization) became a rarefied monoculture in a safe and predictable environment that runs through processes of “creative destruction”, gentrification, and displacement of the traditional populations from city centres, relocating them in the “urbanized” peripheries (see Keil, 2017a, 2017b).

Currently, politics matters in suburban areas, raising questions of values and choices regarding justice (de Leonadis, 2002), echoing questions of “spatial justice” (Soja, 2009, 2010). The importance of a governance agenda for suburbia is indeed determined by a misalignment between political institutions and the rapid growth of both suburban expansion and decentralization development, continuously transforms the urban regions (Le Galès, 2003; Phelps & Wood, 2011). Therefore, suburbanization cannot be reduced to a mere consequence of urban sprawl, but rather, it requires – as a process – investigations on the political and governing aspects that drive the worldwide development of suburban constellation, as “it is the explicit political character of suburbanization that pushes for a consideration of

² Major Collaborative Research Investigation “Global Suburbanisms: governance, land and infrastructure in 21st century” is directed by Roger Keil, from York University (Toronto). The research produced a large body of works and publications over the last decade. More info: <http://suburbs.info.yorku.ca>

the governance of suburbanization and its profoundly unequal geographies, environments and social histories” (Ekers et al., 2012). Suburbanization nowadays is running through a time of post-suburbanization which includes decentralization and re-centralization, re-building and redevelopment processes at the urban edges, densification and diversification of suburbanization itself (Charmes & Keil, 2015).

The array of suburban governance modalities (state-led, capital-led and private-led) enables to observe and study the overflow of activities beyond the existing form of the city, producing what previously Henri Lefebvre, followed by Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, called implosion/explosion of the urban. In this sense, post-suburbanization is part of the “explosion”, entailing “a profound rescaling of the relationalities and modes of governance that have traditionally regulated the relationship between centre and periphery in the suburban model” (Keil, 2017b, p. 189). Suburban governance, as a paradigm, set out the existence of politics able to define governance arenas and political strategies in the constellation of manifold suburbs. However, governance of suburbia is not immune from the contemporary problems of governing a complex society, but rather it is affected by three different sources of political tensions that are even reproduced in post-suburban growth: provision of collective consumption, environmental and residential amenities, and governmental amalgamation and secession (Phelps et al., 2010; Peck, 2011).

3. City-region frames between Canada and Europe

3.1 The global side of city-regions

Previously, the importance of regions as socio-economic units as well as global development territories had been pointed out by Michael Storper (1997) in “The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy”. Storper argues that primarily through the impetus of urban agglomerations, cohesive regional economies emit, especially in city-regions, a generative force of economic development, technological innovation and cultural creativity. Indeed, in post-suburban Europe and Canada, many metropolitan areas are increasingly dynamic thanks to the dense agglomerations of economic activities. The most striking forms of agglomeration in evidence today are the city-regions that have come into being all over the world in the last few decades, with their complex internal structures, comprising multiple urban cores, extended suburban appendages, and widely-ranging hinterland areas (Scott, 2000; Hall, 2001; Scott & Storper, 2003). Yet, inequality among regions has turned sharply up, not only in Europe, but also in many countries, both developed and developing (Iammarino, Rodriguez-Pose, & Storper, 2018).

To carry out a rigorous comparison, the investigation between Canada and Europe should include a statistical investigation, for which information on geographic units of comparable size would be desirable. However, the territorial statistical unit used for European regions is NUTS-2, whereas in Canada regions are sub-units of Provinces (e.g., York Region is part of Ontario), thus raising a definitional incongruence. Furthermore, the city-region perspective deals more with processes than areas, as it is embedded in specific political, institutional and even cultural contexts which differ from one metropolitan area to another, hence framing the governance modes and arrangements. In North America, but particularly in the U.S., “regional governance” tends to refer to the “metropolitan” governance, that is the coordination of cities and their surroundings suburbs, whereas in Europe, regional governance refers to the patterns of regional social, political and cultural awareness (Pierre, 2005 in Boudreau, Hamel, Jouve, & Keil, 2007). It is widely acknowledged that cities and metropolises related in global networks bring about “new state spaces” (Brenner, 2004a, 2004b; Brenner, Jessop, Jones, & Macleod, 2008) and new regulation landscape, particularly in Europe, as well as in Canada.

The post-war period experienced two modes of what Neil Brenner (2004a) names “spatial Keynesianism”: the USA promoted intense inter-urban competition among local growth machines, subsidized suburban development and public investments on military industry, whereas European national states encouraged a spatial fix under Fordism by attempting to spread industrial urbanization as evenly as possible mostly throughout Western countries. Furthermore, national urban policies were introduced in Western Europe to address socio-economic problems of underdeveloped peripheries of large cities. As posited by Boudreau et. al. (2007), in this regard Canada is more like Europe, albeit its suburbanization presents some North-American features: meeting of sprawl and growth machines, intensity of capitalism and neoliberalism (particularly in Toronto), enclaves for bourgeoisie and those for immigrants, just to name a few. Moreover, Canada’s provincial authorities play a key role, thus municipalities do not have as much autonomy as in Europe, where cities can promote their own governance agendas (Le Galès, 2002). Indeed, although institutional cooperation is present, many European metropolitan regions are not institutionally integrated but rather pursue

distinct aims and strategies (Heeg, 2017). Yet, metropolitan regions are an increasingly important scale in current capitalism, as a result of global competition and uneven development (Belina & Lehrer, 2017). In this respect, Bob Jessop (2016) points out that EU is a real-time laboratory for trial-and-error experimentations in governance. At the moment, many European cities of metropolitan regions are undertaking processes of urban competition and property-led growth that reproduce the uneven spatial development, particularly in suburbs, where building development lacks coordination and uniformity (Heeg, 2017).

In both Europe and Canada, city-regions – seen as locomotives of national economies (Scott & Storper, 2003a) – cannot be decoupled from suburbs, as the latter fuel the locomotive. Suburbs are the spaces of the shifting from the global city expansion to the globalized urbanization (Brenner & Keil, 2011). As argued by Addie (2013, p. 209), the functional networks of contemporary global urbanization “increasingly transcend the jurisdictional and territorially defined boundaries of the metropolis. [...] The relations between city and suburbs no longer harness the development of city-regions”. Indeed, suburbs are going global, as demonstrated, for instance, by the growth of Markham³ in Toronto (Belina & Lehrer, 2017), the massive expansion of Espoo near Helsinki (Phelps et al., 2006; Phelps & Wood, 2011; Vaattovaara & Kortteinen, 2003) and the development of Getafe at the Southern edge of Madrid (Phelps, 2017; Phelps & Tarazona Vento, 2015). More specifically, the “global city region” is defined as a new metropolitan form characterized by sprawling polycentric networks of urban centres clustered around one or more “historic” urban cores.

Nevertheless, suburbs play a role in globalizing city regions, as they are sites of productive activities” relocation within the expansion of the so-called “global city-regions” (Brenner & Keil, 2006): venues of condensed centralized activities and successful interurban programmes in the challenge for the economic competitiveness. In this view, the global city-region, which includes suburbs, is a key emerging scalar fix resulting from the dialectic between global and regional integration, oscillating between self-interested actors, both political and territorial (Belina & Lehrer, 2017).

Furthermore, the macro-processes of globalization and neoliberalization push the urban regions to update their governing agendas recasting a collective regional agency through a process of “internalized globalization” (Keil & Addie, 2017), i.e. “the opening of central cities to their wider regions via extended infrastructure networks and the aggressive adoption of internationalization by urban regimes, with the goal of seeding more resilient forms of governance at a variety of scales” (*ivi*: 103). Intense rearrangements are under way in both Europe and Canada. In Italy, for instance, this process has been entailed in the implementation of a new institutional level, the “Metropolitan City” (*Città Metropolitana*) in a number of important urban contexts⁴, towards forms of regional urbanisation, albeit uncertainties about the competences, action, and boundaries of this new institution persist (Fedeli, 2016).

3.2 Post-suburban governance of city regions: responding to the real existing regionalism

Beyond the wide difference between the “sprawled” North-American cities and the “dense” European cities, the city-region perspective enables us to move beyond dualisms, recognizing the rise of a regional model of urbanization, as suggested by Soja (2015, p. 376):

“one of the tasks of new research on regional urbanization is to rethink this rigid dual model of the metropolis and recognize the paradigm shift that is taking place from a metropolitan to a regional model of urbanization. [...] This shift is (like all social processes) happening unevenly, more intensely evident in some areas. With some efforts, however, evidence of peripheral urbanization and outer-city growth can be found in almost every large city-region [...]. The relation between peripheral urbanization and sprawl is particularly complicated and needs to be clarified, especially given the negative connotations attached to such notions as

³ About the development of Markham, the project “Creating a Community” (<http://www.creatingacomunity.ca/>) is ongoing, led by private investments. For more details, see De Vidovich (2018). In addition, media began to talk about a “Downtown Markham”, as a new “suburban” core with “fully urban” facilities. More info: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/toronto/breaking-the-suburban-mould-with-downtown-markhamdevelopment/article36320297/>

⁴ *Città Metropolitana* has been introduced with the Law 56/2014. It basically transformed the former provinces into “Metropolitan cities”, in 14 Italian urban contexts: Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Genoa, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Bari, Reggio Calabria, Messina, Palermo, Catania, Cagliari. The law is the last step of a long process began with the Laws 142/1990, 436/1993 and 265/1999. In addition, the Constitutional Reform of Title V (2001) introduced the subsidiarity principle in the Italian constitution, giving more political autonomy to the regions.

“periurbanization” in Europe, where it is associated with unsustainable sprawl beyond hinterland boundaries”.

In this respect, governance issues arise as key aspects to cope with the regional urbanization. Allen and Cochrane (2007) states that “a more fluid set of regional political relationships and power-plays has emerged, calling into questions the usefulness of continuing to represent regions politically as territorially fixed in any essential sense”. Therefore, the governance of these urban regions – without forgetting suburbs as pieces of the regions themselves – now works through policy rearrangements that stretch across and beyond any given regional boundaries. Regarding boundaries – not only geographical but also analytical – Soja calls for a step forward, maintaining that:

“it is becoming unacceptable to speak of typically European or North American cities, especially when this refers to compact versus sprawling cities. To some degree, several cities on earth is experiencing some similar developmental forces shaped by globalization, the new economy and the revolution in information and communication technology” (Soja, 2015, p. 378)

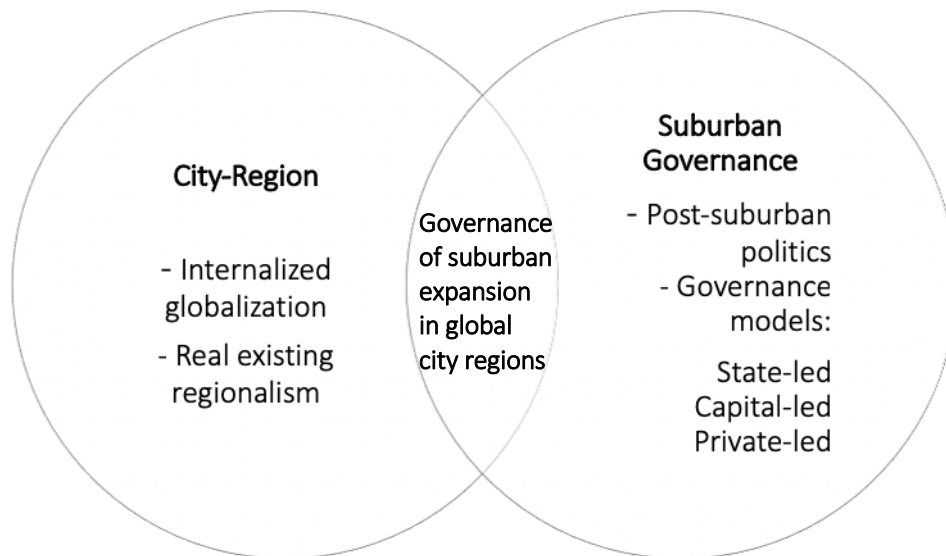
The debate on regional urbanization (or the regionalization of the urban) has been nurtured over the last decades. In this respect, Soja and Kanai (2007) observed the collection of – inter alia – new terms and concepts arisen from the extended regional urbanization, stretching beyond the outer limits of the metropolis. Such conceptual effort proceeded beside novel governance inquiries in the view of city regions’ expansion, by shifting the attention on the concrete actions, spaces and strategies, while focusing on the role of the state and territorial politics in regionalization. Rodríguez-Pose (2013a) addresses the question of whether institutions matter for regional development and, if so, how can institutions be included in regional development strategies embedded in the tradition of national development policies. The study is quite challenging, particularly in a time of hazardous interplay between globalization and neoliberalization. In this respect, Addie and Keil (2015) propose the inspiring concept “real existing regionalism”, that meets the tension between the discursive constructions and the normative interventions characterizing much current regionalist debate and the territorial politics and technologies reflecting and generating new state spatial strategic choices. Real existing regionalism “acknowledges the fact that regionalism is neither a mere normative ideational construct nor a set of predictable practices, but a contested product of discourses (talk), territorial relationships (territory) and technologies (both material and of power)” (Addie & Keil, 2015, p. 409).

A key feature of real existing regionalism is that it emerges from suburbanisms and city/suburban dynamics, as occurred in Southern Ontario, where it has been created by the transport and land-use planning legislation, thus integrating the post-suburban reality into the talks, territorial arrangements and applied technologies of the region (Addie & Keil, 2015, p. 414). In this respect, urban regions develop multiple centres where in-between landscapes call for new politics to be evolved. As a result, we have entered an era where urban and suburban politics are less separated, standing in-between the old lines of demarcation within cities and regions (Young & Keil, 2014). MacLeod (2011) observes how the uneven spatial development of city-regions requires a “nimble” urban politics able to incorporate and mobilize new connectivities, centralities and to democratize the governance between overlapped political relations. In other words more attached to the European reality, the attempt is to read the spatial regional development from a “place-based” approach, rather than a “place-neutral” (or spatially-blind) approach (see Barca, McCann, & Rodríguez-Pose, 2012), in order to respond to the uneven growth of city-regions, and its consequences on the socio-spatial relationalities. In this regard, post-suburban politics are called to arouse the growth of urban regions, also according to their aspiration to be global, thus reinforcing pathways of “internalized globalization”. As a consequence, suburban governance has to be conceived as a part of the governance of the urban society, providing a perspective able to read that expansion of city regions towards a globalized dimension, which is occurring both in Canada and Europe.

Before focusing on Canada, an additional distinction has to be taken into consideration. Although suburban governance and city-regions perspectives are adaptable to both contexts, the form and functions of suburbs differ. In North-America, unincorporated suburban development in the form of edge cities (Garreau, 2011) has emerged as an economic node included in city-regions expansions. In Europe, there are fewer examples in which the suburbs escape the territoriality of local and national government to play such a global economic role, “though most national governments appear to have been willing to license the expansion of the suburban economy in order to sustain city-region and national competitiveness” (Phelps, 2017, p. 238), supporting the claim by Rodríguez-Pose (2013) regarding the interdependence between national and regional developments.

In any case, the suburbs have become the new arenas for forming politics, modes of governance, ways of life and the forms and notions of community, manifested in different ways, at different scales (Hertel & Keil, in Keil, 2013). Real existing regionalism represent the mix of talks, territories and technologies that occur in suburbs, contributing to the formation of specific suburbanisms. To summarize the rationale of the theoretical configuration, the scheme below illustrates suburban governance and city-region as two interwoven “poles” in observing the uneven suburban growth, regardless their application in Europe and North-America, thus taking into account the differences between the two areas.

Figure 1. Building the interplay between suburban governance and city-regions.



4. Tales from Canada: analytical resources for Europe

Contributions from Canadian analyses and approaches lie behind a long-standing investigation on the changes of urban environments in their forms and functions, also addressing issues of governmentality. Such aspects may be useful to observe European (sub)urban transformations, regardless the geographical and historical differences between Europe and North-America. Over the last twenty-five years, governance has become central to political, policy and academic debates. In the planning field, governance is seen as more pluralistic way of governing, through the engagement of different stakeholders in a consensus-building process oriented to the common affairs of the city (Jessop, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2005). As the dominance of the urban cores has been replaced by a fragmentation of the periphery driven by suburban development, today governance cannot be reduced to the city-scale, but rather, particularly in Europe, it is called to deal with the polycentric dimension of city-regions (Hall & Pain, 2006). North-American inquiries about the “urbanization of suburbs” are anything but new (see Masotti & Hadden, 1973; Beauregard, 2006; Beuka, 2004; Clapson & Hutchison, 2010; Hayden, 2003). More recently, Canadian academics proposed new explorations to tackle not only suburbanization as a process, but also suburbanisms as a key driver of suburban growth in the metropolitan or densely populated areas of Canada, such as the Greater Golden Horseshoe⁵.

European cities and nations “have long acted as arenas or nodal points of “inter-referencing”, policy mobility and exchange” (Phelps, 2017, p. 9), playing a role in the scaling of “multilevel governance” (Warleigh, 2006; Kazepov, 2010; Piattoni, 2010). In a time where the solidity of urban politics across Europe is highly uneven (Harding, 1997), governance looks encapsulated in a tension between competition and co-operation (see Phelps et al., 2006). Analytical suggestions for Europe come from Canadian investigations within “Global Suburbanisms”, as suburbanization of Canada got some similarities to Europe. Furthermore, governance issues between Europe and Canada can be read through the frame of “city-regions”, to observe the current suburbanization in the light of socio-economic and institutional processes (see Keil, Hamel, Boudreau, & Kipfer, 2017) that lie behind the expansion of suburban “in-

⁵ The Greater Golden Horseshoe is a secondary region of Southern Ontario, territorial scope of the Growth Plan 2017 (<http://placestogrow.ca/images/pdfs/ggh2017/en/growth%20plan%20%282017%29.pdf>), and it is the most densely populated and industrialized area of Canada, accounting for the over 21% of Canadian population.

between cities” (Sieverts, 2003). The in-betweenness” standpoint deals with new morphological, spatial and scalar manners (Charmes & Keil, 2015; Sieverts, 2003; Young, Keil, & Wood, 2011), embedded in the greater city-region spaces that are claimed to be the heart of the new globalized trans-national economies (Soja, 2015). Thus, new governance agendas concerning the multilevel setting and the suburban multinucleated expansion of metropolises (Gottdiener & Kephart, 1995), is needed.

4.1 Suburban Canada: an overview

Is Canada a “suburban nation”? Most likely, according to several research findings (McCann & Smith, 1991; McCann, 1999; Gordon & Janzen, 2013; Moos & Mendez, 2013; Moos et al., 2015; Moos & Walter-Joseph, 2017), the answer is yes, as in Canada 66% of population lives in some forms of suburbs (Gordon & Janzen, 2013). In their analyses, Balakrishnan & Jarvis (1976, 1979, 1991) questioned the representativeness of Burgess’ concentric zones theory for the spatial and socio-spatial differentiation of urban Canada, in the light of the mass urban development from the post-WWII period. More recently, suburbanisms in Canada have been depicted through an “Atlas” (Moos & Mendez, 2015; Moos & Walter-Joseph, 2017), to discover that suburbia is a strong component of Canadian urban life and form (Keil, Hamel, Chou, & Williams, 2015). Just as in UK, United States or Australia, the suburban ideal historically lured residents to a detached house, along the metropolitan fringe (Teaford, 2011). However, Canadian urbanization is not only influenced by Anglo-Saxon tradition, but rather, it is also aligned with the European one:

“At the outset, spatial organization and urban forms were influenced by the centrality model that defined the classical European city. However, this model was transformed during the nineteenth century by North American liberal culture of individuality and ownership. The priority given to consumer preferences [...] has played an important role in shaping suburbia. In this sense, the Canadian case is very much in line with other classical Anglo-Saxon suburbs. It reflects the governmentality of white settler societies in a perceived environment of abundance, spatial limitlessness and opportunities to break class and ethnic restraints and express individuality” (Keil et al., 2015, pp. 80–81).

In other words, Canada is situated halfway between the market-oriented urban development of United States and the (formerly) traditional state-led developments of European cities (Keil, Hamel, Boudreau, Kipfer, & Allahwala, 2017). As assumed by (Boudreau et al., 2007), the contemporary state-space interplay found by Brenner (2004b) for Europe, has found some reproduction in Canada. On both sides of the Atlantic, metropolization has created (a) high value-added socio-economic capacities, advanced infrastructures, industrial and investment growth, thus increasing labour flows in the major metropolitan areas, and (b) territorial disparities between urban regions and peripheral towns. In Canada, as argued by Boudreau et. al. (2007; 2017), the globalized and dynamic city-region growth characterized urbanization process, together with adjustments to the interurban competition. Furthermore, suburbanization processes – and specifically, the working-class suburbanization (Fiedler & Addie, 2008) – have been the major components of metropolitan growth, particularly from the post-war onward, as also illustrated by Figure 2, which shows the variation of Canadian population in 15 top metropolitan areas for the years 1951 and 2016.

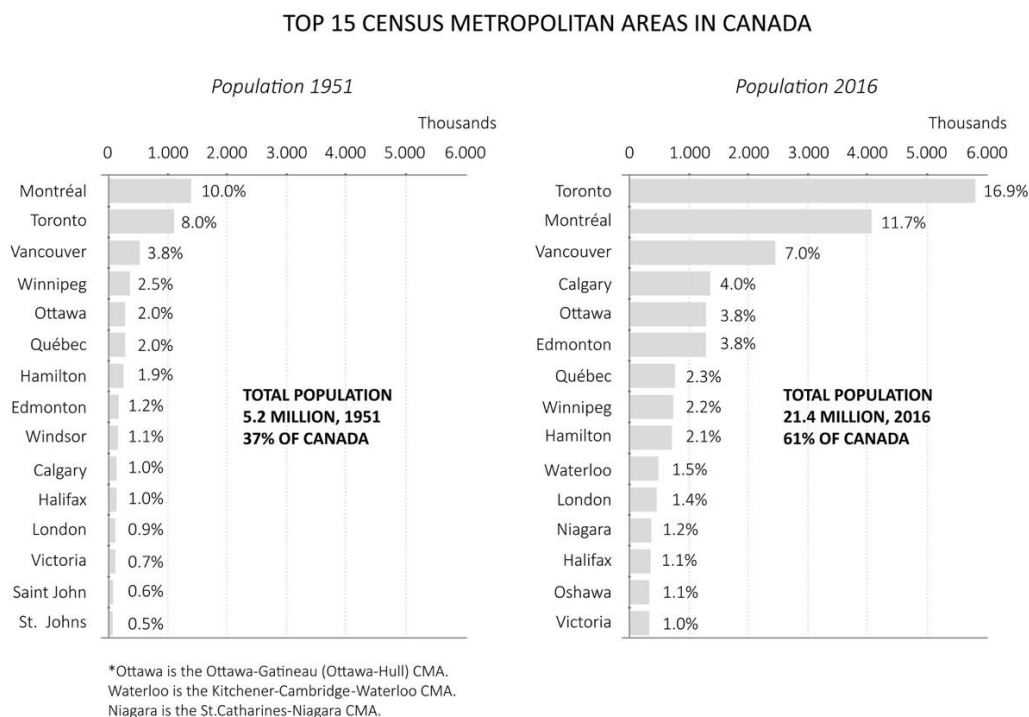
Long before, as early as 1825, Canada was one of the most urbanized countries in the world (Hiller, 2010 in Keil et al., 2015), largely because colonizers tended to gravitate to few sustainable settlements. One key aspect to be considered here is the taking of indigenous land. Relying on the studies by Lorenzo Veracini (2012) about settler colonialism, Keil (2018) recognises that urbanization and suburbanization are directly inscribed into the colonization of the Canadian land mass, its waters and of its population. As acknowledged by Stefan Kipfer (2016, in Keil, 2018) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonialism relegated indigenous people to non-urban settlements and symbolically excluded them from the “urban” civilization⁶. In this respect, Rob Shields (2012) argues that the colonization of the land in Canada, especially where it is tied to resource exploitation and land taking⁷, is “primary” suburbanization, where no city yet exists and suburbanisms are reframed through spatial recategorization and patterns of “feral suburbs”.

⁶ Today, Winnipeg is the urban area with the highest indigenous presence (92.810 inhabitants among First Nations, Inuit and Métis, Census Data, 2016). More info on this CBC article: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/aboriginal-population-statistics-canada-1.4371222>

⁷ An example of “suburbanized” town through land exploitation is Fort McMurray, in Alberta (see also Major, in (Keil, 2013).

Figure 2. Variation of population in top 15 Census Metropolitan Areas in Canada.

Source: Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership, based on Census Data by Statistics Canada (Census 1951 and 2016) (2018). Graphic recasting by the author.



According to Census data (see Figure 2), today most of Canadian population is concentrated in the six major metropolitan areas (Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Edmonton). Suburbs fuel such metropolitan expansion through the interaction of the three governance modes depicted by “Global Suburbanisms” (Ekers et al., 2012; Keil & Hamel, 2015): state, market and authoritarian (public-private) governance (see Keil et al., 2015). On the federal level, government played a visible role in structuring Canadian suburban landscape, by supporting – for instance – the financing of homeownership through the creation of Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Although the role of the State has historically been weaker than in European countries, public housing has also shaped Canadian suburban development, particularly in the most growing metropolitan areas. As a result, North American and Anglo-Saxon suburban ideal coexists with European working-class suburbanization. Today, suburbs are “the country’s most defining form of settlement” (Keil, 2018, p. 59), driven by three main changes, summarized by Keil et. al. (2015), using Toronto as an example:

1. Suburbanization has become more diverse in every respect. For example, ethnic diversity shaped suburbs and urban peripheries in Toronto and GTA (Sewell, 2009; Hulchanski, 2010; Cucca, 2013), paving the way also for the concentration of immigrant populations in some newer “boomburbs” (Lang & LeFurgy, 2007) and “exoburbs” (Soja, 1992).
2. The neoliberalization (Peck, 2011, 2015) and “splintering” (Graham & Marvin, 2001) of suburban development have led to a reorientation of metropolitan politics, institutional arrangements as well as geographic boundaries. Not by chance, major (neoliberal-led) suburban growth occurs in newly in-between cities bordering on Toronto, such as Vaughan and Markham (De Vidovich, 2018), as well as in Southern Ontario, where the Growth Plan 2017 is conceptually redefining the boundaries of the Greater Golden Horseshoe according to its high density.
3. The political balance between regionalization and redistribution “has been upset as aggressive suburban regimes have come to power regionally or even federally in Canada, using their political base to fundamentally shift the meaning of metropolitan politics” (Keil et al., 2015, p. 83). As a result, suburban local administration have gained more autonomy and influence on a metropolitan scale and, at the same time, turning into venues of conflicts of interests, graft and corruptions, as occurred in Mississauga and Vaughan,

as well as in Desio, in Brianza, a high-productivity province at the northern suburbia of Milan (Chiodelli, 2018).

Diversity, neoliberalization and suburban hegemony are the three main drivers of recent Canadian trends. As noticed by Moos & Mendez (2015), homeownership, the pattern of single-family dwellings and the automobile-dependence still influence suburban forms, thus continuing to be largely the remit of higher income earners. As a consequence, “while suburbs may be becoming more diverse in social composition, suburban ways of living remain much more homogeneous in terms of their deep connection with higher social status” (Moos & Mendez, 2015, p. 1877). In this “Canadian way”, a high rate of suburbanization rescales the responsibilities across the system of multilevel governance. Canadian municipalities and regional institutions are today called to deal with the challenges of multicultural and diverse suburbs, poverty, exclusion, and environmental sustainability, that push for a new urban politics (McLeod, 2011), as in Europe.

4.2 Analytical practices from Canada: depicting suburbanisms

Within “Global Suburbanisms” research framework, scholars from School of Planning at Waterloo University created an “Atlas of Suburbanisms”⁸, to understand suburbanisms and North-American cities in general, with a deeper reflection on Canada. The investigation attempted to offer a novel quantitative analysis of a concept – suburbanisms – previously treated primarily as a qualitative notion (see Fava, 1956, Walks, 2013). By adopting this tool, suburbanisms in Europe and Canada can be compared.

States and politics within the framework of the EU experienced a reorganisation driven by three main forces (Le Galès, 1998): (1) the weakening of member states in the economic sphere and the consequent gap between globalization process and the political space of nation-States; (2) the fragmentation and then the declining of the national institutions (such as the Church, political parties, trade unions, etc.); (3) the progressive establishment of a European political space and politics. Indeed, over the last three decades several European programmes took place in many policy-areas (urban regeneration, education, climate change, R&D), as well as in the field of cohesion policies (McCann, 2015). In a nutshell, planning is a key of European policy-making, and European agendas strengthened their policy integration framework thanks to “multilevel governance” (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Kazepov, 2005; Warleigh, 2006; Piattoni, 2010).

Nevertheless, the issue of how to govern the expansion of city-regions has been less explored, at least according to the features of suburban governance. Much less attention has been paid to the improvement in studying socio-spatial phenomena of suburban growth in their forms and functions, thus missing an identification and subsequent investigation of the so-called suburbanisms of the European cities, with the exception of the latest researches carried out within “Global Suburbanisms” (see Phelps, 2017; Harris & Lehrer, 2018) and the previous inquires on the post-suburban Europe (Phelps et al., 2006; Phelps & Wu, 2011). In this respect, Atlas of Suburbanisms tackled a challenging issue: depicting the ways of living that might constitute forms of “suburbanisms”, in order to study the diversity of “(sub)urban Canada” in its population and patterns, as suburbs became more heterogenous in terms of socio-economic status (Moos & Mendez, 2015).

All results of the Atlas project have been collected in “Still Detached and Subdivided? Suburban ways of living in 21st Century North America”, by Markus Moos and Robert Walter-Joseph (2017). Are North-American suburbs still the venues of bourgeois utopias (see Fishman, 1987) made by single-family dwellings in a sprawled built environment? To respond, the researchers carried out a quantitative analysis, relying on Canadian census tracks of the twenty-six CMAs (Canadian Metropolitan Areas), then conducting a cross-national analysis according to the contextual differences of each Canadian metropolitan area. The information provided in the Atlas – the authors maintain – is inherently incomplete, as it relies heavily on data-based and quantitative methods. Yet at the same time, the Atlas reveals the socio-economic and built form characteristics for metropolitan areas as a whole, in relation to traditional measures of suburbanisms, such as distance from the central city. It allows to see characteristics and dimension of Canadian urban areas, placed in the context of the regional metropolitanization wide trends. As stated by Keil et. al. (2015), suburban expansion and suburban governance in Canada, occur in an environment where there is little correspondence between municipal boundaries and the geographic living spaces of urban residents. In this respect, Markus Moos points out a key aspect of the Atlas’ construction:

⁸ To consult the maps, tables and analysis of the Atlas: <https://uwaterloo.ca/atlas-of-suburbanisms/>

“our aim was to measure how many people live in suburbs, how many jobs, how they are built, but in particular, how suburbs fuel the city. The idea was to question urban as a dominant category but being careful to write a meta-narrative of suburbs. Suburbs-city are fluid but at the same time they coexist, and an Atlas makes sense to better observe the features of suburban population and the role of suburb in metropolitan context. Suburban ways of living were the fundamental aspect of our research” (Markus Moos, interview, February 14th, 2018, University of Waterloo).

The contents of the Atlas pursued, in a way, the investigation on the dimensions identified by Ann Forsyth in her literature review on suburbs (2012): location, built form, transportation infrastructure, activity, social and cultural, and political features. In so doing, Moos et. al. (2015; 2015; 2017) operationalized suburban ways of living through three characteristics: “social status”, “domesticity” and “built-form/tenure/commute mode”. Considering Greater Toronto Area as an example, the mapping outcomes, available online, are here briefly described. The selection of GTA is due to its high congruence with the city-region frame, but more maps of Canadian urban areas can be found in the Atlas⁹. The aim of this brief description is to spark a European awareness about the need to study the socio-spatial forms and relationships that are taking place in the heterogeneous city-regions, taking inspirations from a statistical exercise built on a national environment that stands between Europe and North America or rather, as argued by Markus Moos, between UK and US, as it is the expression of an Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Social Status

This dimension is one for which above-average area values for all the three variables that compose it (high income, university degree and managerial occupations) are peculiarly rare in locations that are peripheral to the downtowns or historical urban cores. In Toronto (as well as Montreal, Edmonton and Halifax) however, areas in which the three variables tend to jointly score above the metropolitan average are visible within and immediately around the city centre, revealing a metropolitan dimension particularly reflective of the geographic plurality of suburban ways of living. Lower-than-average values for all three variables together tend to be spatially associated with suburban locations in a heavily pronounced way. A higher incidence of managerial occupations alone is also associated with suburban areas, with few exceptions¹⁰, of which GTA is not part (see Figure 3).

Built form, tenure and commute mode

This dimension consists of three different features (Moos & Mendez, 2015; Moos & Walter-Joseph, 2017): (i) residence in a single detached house; (ii) homeownership as type of housing tenure; (iii) private automobile use as mode of commute. Looking at the built-form and commute mode dimension, the combination of the three variables has a clear suburban dimension. Outside of central cities or historical city centres (if identifiable in North America), the rareness of areas where none of the three variables have values above the metropolitan average, is an evidence of the large extent of suburbanization as a process, and suburbanisms as ways of living, at least in GTA (see Figure 4). This threefold combination has been widely described in North American literature on suburbanisms (Jackson, 1985; Hayden, 2003; Beauregard, 2006).

Domesticity

Consistent with the typical residential built form of Canadian urban cores, the domesticity dimension exhibits a sparse incidence of high scores for the variable “number of rooms” in practically all the metropolitan areas. This reflects the smaller housing-unit sizes in and immediately around the urban centres. Here, we can observe either a combination of high scores for couples with children and unpaid house work, or of high relative levels of couples with children but low levels of unpaid housework. As stated by Moos and Walter-Joseph (2017, p. 27), “the dramatic growth of patriarchal suburbanization in North-America reflected and reinforced the distinctive trajectory of Fordist-Keynesian capitalism, etching into the rhythms of daily life the entrenched separation of private home and public workplace” (see also Jackson, 1985), as demonstrated by the pattern of GTA (see Figure 5).

⁹ Subdivision per cities: <https://uwaterloo.ca/atlas-of-suburbanisms/maps-and-data/cities>

Comparison among cities: <https://uwaterloo.ca/atlas-of-suburbanisms/maps-and-data/comparing-cities>

Mapping the dimension of suburbanisms in 22 Canadian urban areas: <https://uwaterloo.ca/atlas-of-suburbanisms/maps-and-data/comparing-cities>

¹⁰ The whole description is written by Pablo Mendez (Carleton University), from the Atlas of suburbanisms’ website.

Figure 3. Mapping of suburbanisms in Greater Toronto Area. Dimension: Social status.
 Source: Atlas of Suburbanisms (University of Waterloo)

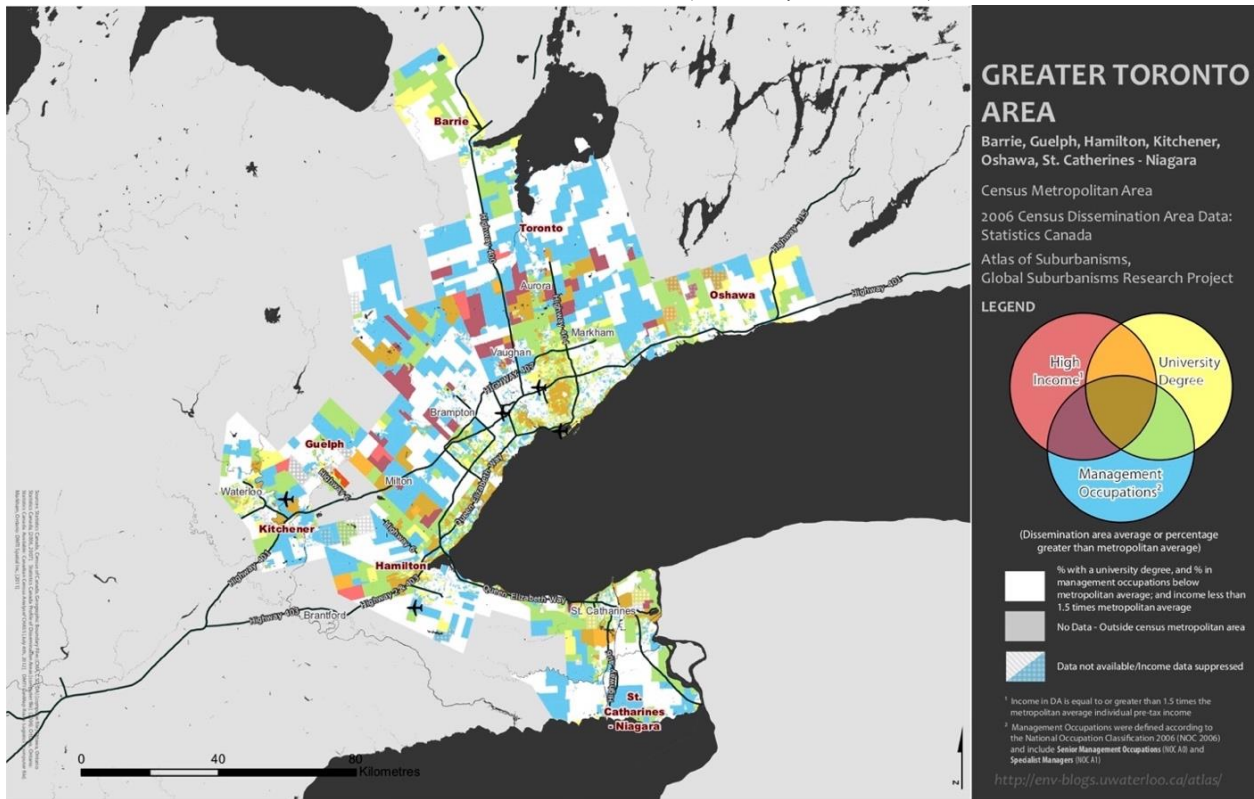


Figure 4. Mapping of suburbanisms in Greater Toronto Area. Dimension: Built form, tenure and commute mode.
 Source: Atlas of Suburbanisms (University of Waterloo)

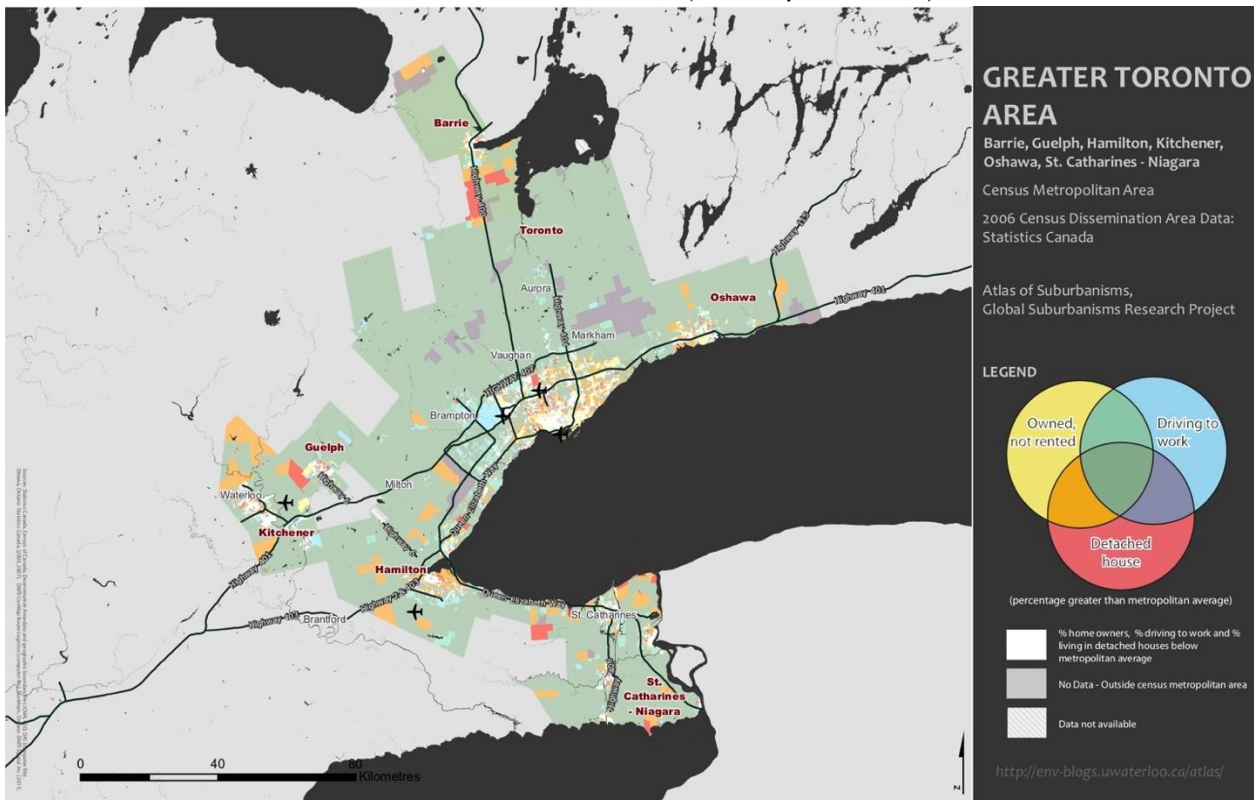
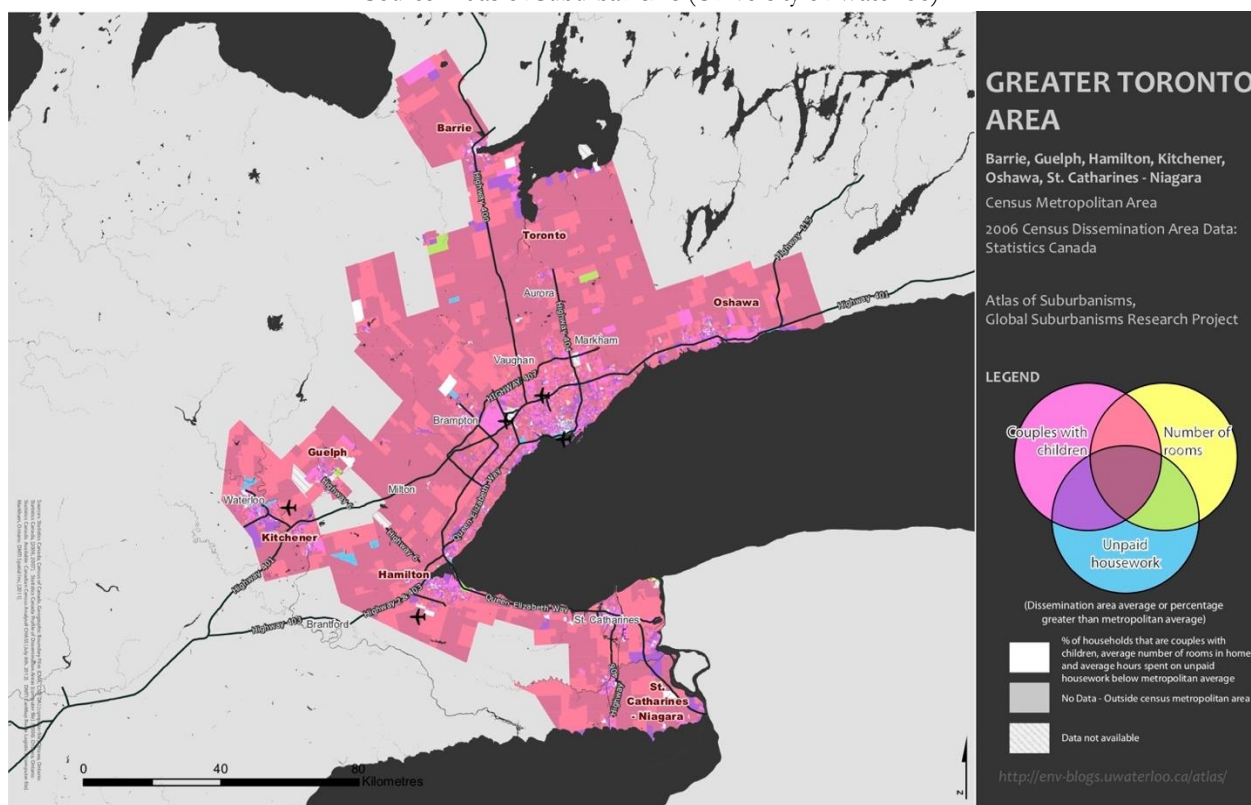


Figure 5. Mapping of suburbanisms in Greater Toronto Area. Dimension: Domesticity.

Source: Atlas of Suburbanisms (University of Waterloo)



In a seminar held at Polytechnic University of Milan on May 9th 2018, Markus Moos and I discussed the contents of the Atlas as an instrument to observe suburban constellations (Keil, 2013) beyond a “centralized” vision. However, an unsolved knot related to the governance issues has emerged. How the Atlas itself can be a tool for the actors of governance in city-regions and within each suburban administration? In other words, a higher utilization of mapping built from collective efforts should be fostered for deeper investigations of what national census provides on a general level. In Italy, a new “Post-Metropolis Atlas”¹¹ has been created as the outcome of a national research programme aimed at identifying the new forms of urban Italy within the blurring of centre and periphery, inspired by Soja. The depiction of socio-spatial forms (and inequalities) in the expansion of city region needs further investigations. EU, starting from Eurostat dataset, should attempt to reproduce a depiction of European suburbanisms in the view of the “real existing regionalism”. In this respect, Europe can learn from Canada on how to develop tools that can be helpful for governance issues, particularly according to the new state spaces that strongly modified the political configurations in Western Europe (Brenner, 2004b). Cohesion policies and multilevel integrations are likely to be weak, if not accompanied by a deeper investigation of the socio-spatial relations that take place in the increasingly inhabited European polycentric metropolis (Hall & Pain, 2006).

5. Concluding remarks

Suburban changes in their forms and functions not only imply transformations in built environment, but they also call for new governance agendas able to deal with societal, inter-institutional and infrastructural issues at a time of unevenness which marks the shifting from the “urban” to the “suburban” age. The so-called suburban governance requires the understanding of suburbanization and suburbanisms as two sides of the same coin, depictable through an Atlas. Furthermore, the city-region frame shows how the “internalized globalization” on the one hand, and the combination of talks, territories and technologies on the other hand, are shaping the growth of urban areas, including their suburbs, towards a regional development, or rather, to use the term by Soja (2000), a regional urbanization.

This paper aimed to bridge a theoretical inquiry regarding the call for studying and investigating suburban expansion, providing ideas and analytical instruments for a way of governance capable of focusing attention on socio-economic and socio-spatial relations in their heterogeneity. In Europe, the governance framework too is encapsulated

¹¹ To consult the Italian “Atlas of Post-metropolitan territories”: <http://www.postmetropoli.it/atlane/>

in what has been framed as post-suburban politics (Phelps et al., 2006; Phelps & Wood, 2011, Phelps, 2017). Furthermore, as argued by Phelps (2012, p. 692), “interest in suburbs and edge cities tends to be for what they can tell about new trends across city-regions rather than what they may tell about the diversity of, and changes in, urban politics”. In this view, the paper conceived the issues of suburban governance and the process of suburbanization in an interwoven relationship with the debate on (global) city-regions, where “real existing regionalism” (Addie & Keil, 2015) occur in various forms, as well as the “suburbanisms” depicted by Moos et. al. (2013, 2015; 2017) in the Canadian (and North-American) contexts. Canada is a national context influenced by both North-American and European traditions (Keil, Hamel, Boudreau, & Kipfer, 2017), where the private-led suburban patterns of the first is combined with the city-region governing framework of the latter. Thus, a theoretical bridge between Canada and Europe can be put in place. The further step would envisage a wider debate in the European context, without relegating it to academia. In this view, the contribution on regional development pointed out by Storper (1997), Scott & Storper (2003) and more recently Rodriguez-Pose (2013), is nudging the debate in a good direction, positing the issue of regional inequalities among Europe (for an overview of regional inequalities see Iammarino, Rodriguez-Pose, & Storper, 2018; Rosés & Wolf, 2018).

This paper invites European scholars to deal with the socio-spatial inequalities that stand between suburbanisms and real existing regionalisms, as two carriers that determine the growth of the historically compact and dense European cities, today turned into polycentric areas surrounded by “in-between” towns (Sieverts, 2003). In this regard, a conclusive key question shall be raised: is “suburb” a term that fits European contexts at the edges of metropolitan and urban areas? This paper takes for granted the adaptation of such a term in a context different from its birthplace, i.e. North America. In contrast, European literature did not frame the urban “peripheries” within a “suburban vision”. However, process of suburbanization encompasses institutional, governmental and infrastructural issues and, as Roger Keil argues (Keil, 2017b), the 21st “urban” Century is globally suburban: most of the earth’s future 10 billion inhabitants will not live in conventional cities, but in suburban constellations of one kind or another. In this respect, the research “Global Suburbanisms” addresses the global dimension of this process that, if integrated with the rationale of global city-regions, alerts us to novel governance challenges.

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