

Adjusting to Toronto's *new reality*

By Mohammad Qadeer and Sandeep Agrawal, with assistance from Waleed Babary and Cody Gretzinger

SUMMARY

The argument put forth in this article, with the help of the accompanying map, is that the Toronto Metropolitan Area (TMA) has evolved into distinct ethnic sectors of vibrant institutions, cultural practices, and economies. The ethnically defined spatial structure of the TMA is both enduring and increasingly embedded in suburban municipalities. This suburban view is in contrast with the urbanist vision emanating from the city centre. The article argues that the TMA is now a multicultural and multifocal metropolis. It has been relatively successful in accommodating and recognizing diversity. The new challenge is to integrate these diverse communities into a socially and culturally cohesive metropolitan society and space.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur de cet article soutient, carte à l'appui, que la région métropolitaine de Toronto (RMT) est maintenant constituée de secteurs ethniques distincts dotés d'institutions, de pratiques culturelles et d'économies dynamiques. Cette structure spatiale bien définie de la RMT est bien ancrée et de plus en plus intégrée dans les municipalités de banlieue. Cette perspective des banlieues contraste vivement avec la vision urbaine issue des centres-villes. Selon l'auteur, la RMT est devenue une métropole multiculturelle et plurielle. Elle a réussi dans une certaine mesure à reconnaître et à accommoder la diversité. Le prochain défi sera d'intégrer ces collectivités diversifiées dans un espace et un tissu social cohésif et métropolitain.

IMAGES OF THE TORONTO AREA

The popular image of the Toronto area is that of a city on the lake, centred around a vibrant downtown, resplendent with glass towers of residences, commerce, culture, and power. Yet this image is being complemented by another view emanating from suburbs. The larger Toronto area has a band of ethnic enclaves surrounding the centre city, where immigrant cultures are flourishing, transforming both community life and local economies. The geographical organization of this cultural diversity makes for a new image of the Toronto area.

The view from suburbs, the 'outside-in' perspective, of the metropolis has significance that goes beyond the celebratory cliché of 'diversity is our strength.' Yes, the ethnic geography of the metropolis speaks of the accommodations and recognition of cultural differences, but it also points out the need for building a cohesive society of shared civic culture. How diversity and integration can be balanced has been a neglected item on the agenda of multiculturalism, a concept which has long proclaimed the advantages of diversity.

Our map points out how the scaling up of ethnic enclaves as municipal communities has restructured the spatial organization of the Toronto area. The objective of this article is to bring home an awareness of the alternative forms of community life emerging in the suburban parts of the metropolis, in contrast to the current focus on the life styles of millennials and boomers as the defining image of the metropolis.

The restructured Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) includes the city of Toronto and 22 suburban municipalities and a First Nations community. **Map 1** shows the locations of ethnic enclaves and

neighbourhoods within the CMA, based on the 2016 census data. These suburban enclaves extend from Ajax in the east to Brampton in the west, forming an arc around the city. Within the city, eastern Scarborough, Etobicoke and East York have similar pockets of ethnic concentrations.

What the map shows is the basic characteristic of enclaves, namely the high concentration of a particular ethnic group in the population of a census tract (CT). A CT is a territorial unit containing about 4,000-5,000 people on the average laid out by Statistics Canada. In 2016, the CMA had 1153 CTs dividing up its area of 5905 km².

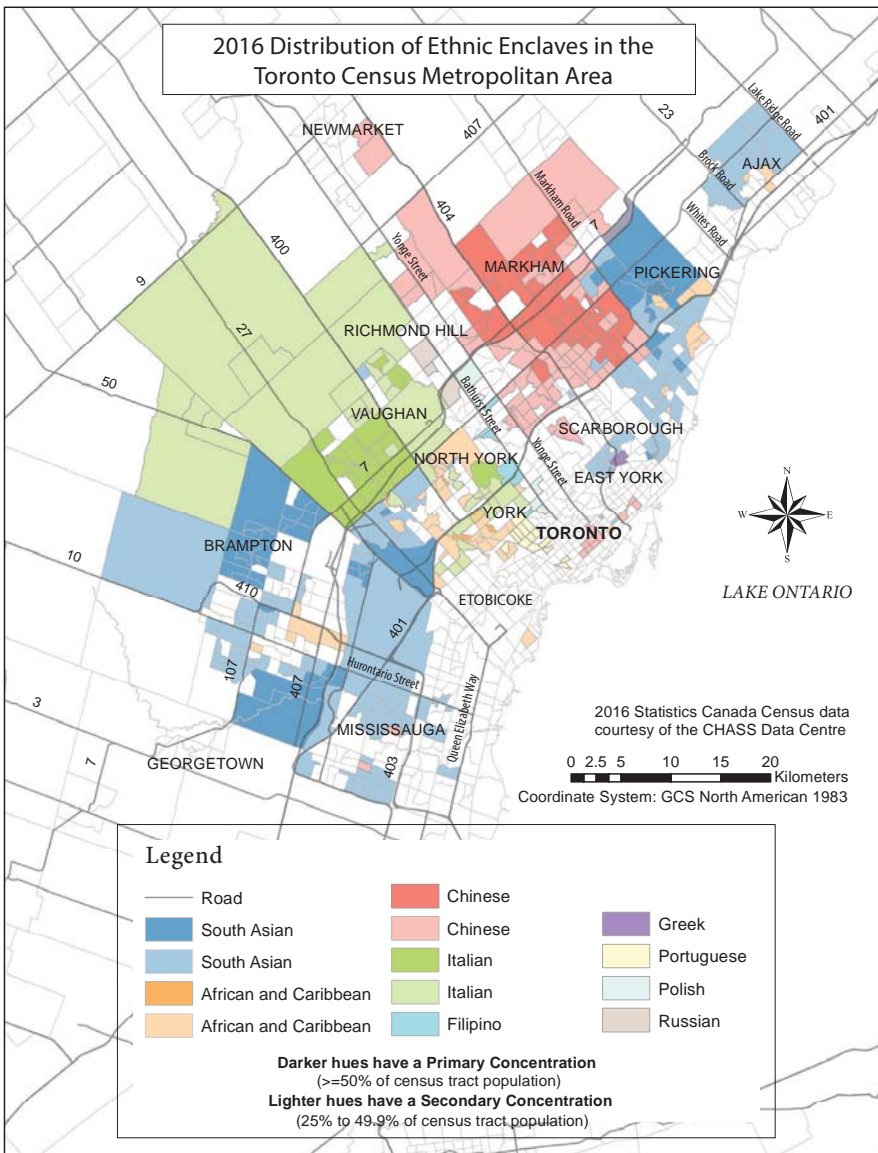
The map shows clusters of CTs where one or the other ethnic group constitutes either a majority (50% plus) shown in darker hues of a colour, or the largest group but not the majority (25-49%) population of CTs shown in the lighter shades of the same colour. The CTs of the majority ethnic populations are called the primary concentrations and those of 25-49% ethnic population have been labeled as the secondary concentrations. The map reveals that the major ethnic groups have carved territorial sectors outside the city centre. Following are the notable features.

ETHNIC SECTORS OF THE LARGER TORONTO AREA

1) South Asians are concentrated both in the east and the west, with eastern Scarborough on one end and Brampton, Rexdale to parts of Mississauga on the other. There are also scattered concentrations in East York (Thorncliffe Park) and southern Scarborough.

2) Chinese form a compact sector along an axis that runs from northern Scarborough (Agincourt) to Markham and parts of Richmond Hill, spilling out to New Market.

MAP 1



There are also small concentrations around the central and eastern Chinatowns in the city.

3) Italians are concentrated in a sector running from Vaughan-Woodbridge to western Richmond Hill and the northwestern corner of Brampton. They have the historic Little Italy in the heart of Toronto, which is at the southern end of the same axis.

4) Blacks (Africans including Somalis and Caribbean) have come to form spatial concentrations in the last 10 years. They have three distinct concentrations: i) some primary and secondary CTs in Etobicoke edging up to Vaughan, ii) a few proximate CTs of secondary concentration in Mississauga and Brampton, iii) a cluster of CTs in Ajax- Pickering spilling over to eastern

Scarborough. A noteworthy point is that all three have emerged since 2006.

5) The Portuguese village in Toronto city is a long-standing enclave, though secondary in concentration. A few scattered CTs of secondary concentrations of Filipinos, Polish and Russians have evolved in the past 10 years along an axis straddling Bathurst Street from North York to Richmond Hill, which was a mostly Jewish area a decade ago. These scattered concentrations are small and dispersed.

6) The large swaths of blank areas on the map are generally inhabited by people of a wide variety of European ancestries. They have other ethnic groups living by their side but none of them is a noticeable minority.

Many CTs have mixed populations where no single group stands out.

7) All in all, enclaves are not ethnically exclusive, despite being dominated by particular ethnic groups. There are others living among the dominant groups. It has long been established that enclaves are not ghettos or territories of segregation or lands of poverty. Conversely except a few CTs, there are no areas without some members of visible minorities.

Is this territorial concentration by ethnicity a continuing trend and process or just a snapshot of the current situation, representing a passing trend? To answer this question, we compared the present distribution of ethnic concentrations with our 2006 map of the CMA's enclaves.¹ It is striking how the territorial sectoralization of ethnic groups has not only remained stable but also continued to grow.

Between 2006 and 2016, the boundaries between Chinese and Italian enclaves have shifted a bit. Another change is the emergence of Blacks' concentrations in CTs that had no dominant ethnic group. All in all, the ethnic geography of 2006 holds.

One major difference revealed by the 2016 map is that Jewish enclaves have disappeared. Jewish people who were the most concentrated group in 2006 appear to have lost their territorial base. Between 2006 and 2016, their ethnically identified population fell from 141,070 to 59,195 in the CMA, an unbelievable drop of 58% in 10 years. It is argued that the phrasing of the question on ethnicity in the 2016 census questionnaire may have dissuaded many of them from being counted among the ethnics. Leaving aside this special case, the ethnic geography depicted in the 2016 map reveals the relatively enduring spatial structure of the CMA.

ETHNIC BASES OF MUNICIPALITIES

The concentrated ethnic population in an area turns into an enclave with the development of ethnic businesses, places of worship, clubs and banquet halls, music and sports clubs, literary circles, and political pressure groups, namely a full complement of community institutions. This transformation has happened in the major ethnic enclaves of the CMA, which are increasingly stamping their cultural identity on the municipalities within which they fall.

TABLE 1 – PERCENTAGE OF ETHNICS TO THE TOTAL POPULATION OF PLACES, 2006/2016

City/Town	Total Visible Minority Population		South Asians		Chinese		Blacks		Phillipinos	
	2006	2016	2006	2016	2006	2016	2006	2016	2006	2016
Ajax	35.6	56.7	10.8	20.9	2.1	2.9	13	16.7	3	4.8
Brampton	57	78.3	31.7	44.3	1.8	1.5	12.4	13.9	2.8	3.4
Markham	65.4	77.9	17.3	17.8	34.2	45.1	3.1	2.9	2.8	2.7
Mississauga	49	57.2	20.2	23.2	6.8	7.6	36.2	6.6	4.6	5.1
Pickering	30.5	42.9	9.1	15.2	2.1	2.7	10.1	10.1	3.1	3.8
Richmond Hill	45.7	60	7	7.7	21.4	29.4	2.1	2.1	1.7	2
Toronto	46.9	51.5	12	12.6	11.4	11.1	2.6	2.6	4.1	5.2
Vaughan	26.6	35.4	8.6	10.1	4.2	6.8	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.9

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2006 Census Tables. Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity.

This demonstrates a significant scaling up of ethnic enclaves, from social constructs to political-legal jurisdictions.

The municipalities of the Toronto CMA are increasingly being associated with one or the other dominant ethno-cultural group. **Table 1** shows continuing demographic consolidation of respective ethnicities at the municipal level.

The visible minorities had become the majority of population in Ajax, Toronto city, Markham, Brampton and Mississauga by 2016. Even the CMA as a whole had a majority of visible minorities (51.3%) in 2016, which included second and third generation Canadians. This change in population composition will continue as about 70,000 immigrants have been arriving in the CMA on the average every year.



Comparing the proportions of different ethnic groups in suburban municipalities over the period 2006-2016 shown in **Table 1**, it can be observed that the Chinese continued to increase their share of the municipal population in both Markham (from 32 to 45%) and Richmond Hill (from 21 to 29%), but had insignificant increases in other municipalities. These two municipalities have become essentially Chinese places.

South Asians' proportions increased significantly in Brampton, Ajax and Mississauga, but there was almost no increase in their proportion in the Chinese areas, though they have a sizable presence in Markham (17%).

Blacks increased their proportion in the city from 3 to 9% and also continued to expand their presence in Ajax over the period 2006-2016.

Based in on this data, it is evident that while the Toronto city core is developing another kind of cultural identity based on a post-modernist lifestyle of affluent baby boomers and millennials, its outer neighbourhoods are going the way of suburban municipalities.

A MULTICULTURAL METROPOLIS

As a municipality comes to be dominated by a particular ethnic group, its political institutions begin to reflect that group's cultural identity and social base. This process has made the CMA's municipalities culturally diverse and socially self-contained. Markham, Brampton, or Ajax are not only the localities with self-government, but also places with distinct ethnic economies, eateries, malls, clubs and bars, music concerts, banquet halls, and radio stations, in respective cultural and linguistic mediums. They are socially and

culturally autonomous. Toronto city centre is another land.

The Toronto CMA has become a federation of culturally differentiated municipalities, linked together by the regional infrastructure and civic services. This is the new image of the Toronto area: a multicultural and multifocal metropolis of majority-minority population. What challenges does the building of a shared civic culture and social cohesion present? This question has to be addressed by public policy at local as well as metropolitan levels, but first the new image of the area has to be absorbed in the public narrative. Planners must also absorb this narrative, taking this new reality into consideration, along with the need to integrate these diverse communities into a socially and culturally cohesive metropolitan society and space. ■

Mohammad Qadeer, FCIP is a professor emeritus, Geography and Planning, Queen's University.

Sandeep Agrawal, PhD, MCIP, RPP, ACIP is the director of Urban and Regional Planning Programs, University of Alberta.

Waleed Babary and **Cody Gretzinger** are respectively a graduate student in Spatial Analysis, Ryerson University and an undergraduate Urban Planning student at University of Alberta.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mohamad Qadeer and Sandeep Agrawal, "Evolution of Ethnic Enclaves in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, 2001-2006." *Journal International Migration and Integration*, 11, (2010).

