Chapter 2

Canadian Cities in Continental Context: Global and Continental Perspectives on Canadian Urban Development
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Contemporary cities are the product of the interaction of large-scale processes with local urban forms, mediated through a variety of institutions. Canadian cities can be differentiated from those in Europe, Latin America, East Asia, and the like in terms of prevailing urban forms, political geographies, and socio-economic characteristics. However, from a global perspective Canadian cities are commonly seen as being more similar to US cities, giving rise to the concept of 'the North American City'. And, from an international perspective, this concept has real utility and some coherence for both teaching and research. Indeed, given the global prominence of American social science and theorizing about the city, it is not surprising that 'the North American city' has considerable intellectual purchase and appeal. Yet, there is great value in geographers' claim that place matters, that local and regional contexts do make a difference—a difference not merely evident on urban landscapes but also important in the everyday lives of Canadians.

In this chapter we challenge the singular concept of 'the North American city' by highlighting Canada–US differences and the variation among the cities within each country. We reflect on differences and similarities between Canadian and US cities and how they have persisted or changed over approximately the last 30 years. At the outset we should be clear that during this period cities on both sides of the border have become more variable and complex at both the intra-urban and inter-urban scale, making it increasingly difficult to make broad generalizations about differences between 'the' US city and 'the' Canadian city (hence the plural 'cities' in our title). We draw out several Canadian–US differences with respect to the nature of the urban form, including housing and transportation, and the urban processes that shape cities in both countries. We also draw attention to global processes that directly produce change in cities, but note that as lives and landscapes are increasingly globalized, it is important to remember that these changes are not necessarily experienced in a similar way in different places. Of course, some urban areas are relatively untouched by certain global processes (international immigration, for example). But our point is that cities are open systems in an era marked by increasing economic and cultural globalization, rapid digital and wireless changes in telecommunications, massive increases in international travel for business, administration, and tourism, and new dynamics in international migration and settlement. A wide range of such large-scale processes markedly affects cities in Canada. Other chapters in this volume provide more detail on specific features of Canada's urban regions with respect to the interplay between these processes and local structures.

Urban Canada in Context

In common with other Global North countries, including the US, a high proportion of Canadians live in urban places. Of greater importance is that the vast majority of Canadians live in metropolitan areas, defined by Statistics Canada as census metropolitan areas—CMAs (see Appendix B for a full listing). Just under two-thirds of Canadians (and four-fifths of Americans) reside in these major
locations. In terms of metropolitanization, the last century witnessed vast transformations. In 1900, just over 1 million Canadians lived in the principal metropolitan regions, but by its close, more than 19 million did so (2001 figure). The scale of these metropolitan areas has also increased such that by the end of the twentieth century there were four 'million plus' metropolitan areas in Canada (and 47 in the US, a roughly equivalent number keeping in mind that the US population is larger than Canada's by a factor of approximately 10). However, there are two particularly notable cross-national differences in the two contemporary metropolitan systems. First, the Canadian urban system (that is, including urban places smaller than CMAs) grew more slowly than the US urban system in the 1990s (14 per cent versus 19 per cent in the US), whereas in the 1980s Canada's growth (13 per cent) was slightly ahead of the US (12 per cent). Second, geographic concentration is more marked in the smaller Canadian urban system, with one-third of the national population living in the three largest CMAs, whereas only about 17 per cent of Americans live in the three largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs)—New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago (although, of course, in absolute terms this amounts to more people). Thus, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver continue to dominate the Canadian urban system, and now that the national capital region (Ottawa–Hull–Gatineau) has joined the 'million plus' club, the principal cultural, economic, and political Canadian players are well represented at the top of its urban hierarchy. Globally (see Chapter 4), Canada's largest cities are increasingly important anchors in the global cities network.

As the absolute size of the metropolitan population grew over the twentieth century there has been an important geographical redistribution throughout North America. First, a strong relationship exists between metropolitan growth and economic performance of the regional hinterland, and increasingly (at least for certain favoured metropolitan areas) growth is linked to performance in the international economic system. Thus, we find in both the Canadian and US urban systems considerable variation in terms of population and house-
hold change depending on their location within their respective national space economies. In general terms, metropolitan areas in western Canada and those in southern Ontario have prospered and grown, while CMAs in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and parts of the Prairie provinces have done less well. Characterizing the US situation is more challenging because there is much greater variation within that system. However, particularly dramatic growth is evident in the metropolitan areas in the Pacific states and in Arizona, Texas, Florida, Nevada, and Utah, while the places of slower growth, stagnation, or decline are concentrated in the old industrial heartland states.

Major redistribution has also occurred within the metropolitan regions themselves. As a consequence of continued suburban growth and decentralization of economic activity, some argue that demonstrably different urban forms have been created, such as urban sprawl and edge cities. Today, half of all Americans live in suburbs, and within MSAs those residing in the outer city now outnumber those in the central city by roughly two to one. In Canada, metropolitan suburbanites account for 38 per cent of the national population and the ratio of outer to central-city population is 1.5 to 1. Thus, while suburbanization is common in both countries, suburban populations remain more dominant in the US than Canada. This is more than a geographical curiosity. For example, (predominantly white) American suburbanites are a major political force whose allegiance is eagerly sought in national and state elections. While Canadian suburbanites are of less demographic significance, their voting patterns, especially in Toronto and Montreal, are pivotal in provincial and national elections (Walks, 2004b).

**Canadian and US Cities: Differences and Similarities in Urban Form**

Conventionally, Canadian cities are characterized as having more vital central cities and as being more compact and less dispersed than their US counterparts. In this section we compare the urban form of
Canadian and US cities along several dimensions identified in previous research as significant in cross-national comparisons.

Population and Household Change

The dynamics of population and household shifts within metropolitan areas are useful indicators of structural changes in urban form. To capture population shifts in the two urban systems we developed a five-type classification based on population change in metropolitan areas and their central cities. We define ‘central/original city’ as the incorporated political unit around which outlying units have grown; it is usually the largest and oldest municipality. The results of our classification are presented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, which provide a visual and immediate way of making cross-national comparisons.

For the 1981–91 decade (see Figure 2.1), there are no Canadian cases where both the central city and the overall metropolitan region lost population (Type 1), and hence there were no places that faced the difficulties associated with urban decline. There are not even many CMAs (less than a fifth, examples being Windsor and Saint John) that fall into Type 2, what we call the ‘classic type’ of urban population change: central-city decline despite overall metropolitan growth (indicating high suburban population growth). The majority of the CMAs (76 per cent) are in the two classes that capture either a stagnating central city with metropolitan growth (Type 3), or a solidly growing central city alongside metropolitan growth (Type 4)—examples from Type 3 are Montreal, Hamilton, and Halifax, and from Type 4, London, Calgary, and Vancouver. So, although during the 1980s only two CMAs (Kitchener–Waterloo and Saskatoon) exhibit what we term ‘booming’ central-city and metropolitan growth (Type 5), only a few of Canada’s CMAs suffered central-city population decline (Types 1 and 2). In stark contrast, the US system had 39 cases (out of 230—almost one-fifth) where the metropolitan area and its central city lost population (Type 1) and another 54 cases (23 per cent of all MSAs) experienced the ‘classic’ urban population change (Type 2). Examples of Type 1 MSAs are Buffalo, Detroit, New Orleans, Flint, and Akron, and Type 2 examples include Philadelphia, Denver, Memphis, Syracuse, and Mobile. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the US evidence is its diversity, echoing the 1970s results of Goldberg and Mercer (1986). So while there are 93 MSAs with central-city population decline (Types 1 and 2), Figure 2.1 also indicates that there are 37 MSAs classified as ‘booming’ (Type 5), with high central-city growth combined with overall metropolitan growth.

Central cities lose population because of absolute loss due to out-migration, or because households in the central city, where smaller households are typical, are becoming even smaller. While politicians and journalists lament population loss, a more profound loss for a local jurisdiction is that of households. The loss of households’ effective demand for goods and services, including housing, has a cumulatively negative effect on a city’s quality of life. The US experience is more threatening in this regard, as some 60 central cities experienced a loss in households (over 20 per cent of the nation’s cities with populations larger than 50,000) in the 1980–90 period. Such a loss is common in Type 1 and 2 cities: 28 of the 39 grouped into Type 1 and 25 of the 54 in Type 2 also suffered this potentially devastating reduction. The occurrence of household loss was most pronounced in the inner parts of the larger metropolitan areas and poses a longer-term problem if this decline cannot be reversed. Furthermore, the most affected central cities are spatially clustered in America’s manufacturing core, which includes Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In Canada, by contrast, only four CMAs are in Type 2 (there are no Type 1 CMAs), and none of them experienced household loss. The Canadian–US difference points to the continued overall vitality of Canadian central cities compared to US cities. In addition, households in the central cities of both countries are generally more varied than suburban households in terms of household and family structure and marital status. But an important difference between Canada and the US (and one that explains some of the patterns described here) is that households in
Figure 2.1  Metropolitan Population Change: Distribution of Metropolitan Areas by Type of Change, Canada and the US, 1980/1–1990/1

Legend
Type 1: central city decline allied to metropolitan decline
Type 2: central city decline and metropolitan growth
Type 3: central city stagnation (equal to or less than 1% over five years) and metropolitan growth
Type 4: solid central city growth (in the 1.1 to 3.9% range) and metropolitan growth
Type 5: booming central city growth (4% and over) and metropolitan growth
Canadian central cities are much more likely to house families with children. 2

We applied the same classification procedure to population change data for the 1990s, using the 1991–6 and 1996–2001 inter-censal periods for Canada (Figure 2.2). 3 Unlike the 1980s statistics, these data do indicate some convergence between Canadian and US metropolitan regions. The most notable contrast in the 1990s is in Type 2, the ‘classic’ pattern. This likely reflects some improvement in economic performance in many parts of Canada in the latter part of the past decade that enabled greater central-city growth to occur, creating more Type 3 than Type 2 patterns of population change. For the past decade, the greatest similarity again occurs in Types 3 and 4. In Canada, most metropolitan areas fall into these two categories (60 per cent in 1991–6 and 70 per cent in 1996–2001); in the US, 72 per cent of all metropolitan areas fall into these two types. There is also some convergence at the two extremes—booming (Type 5) and declining (Type 1) central cities/metropolitan areas. There are no Canadian areas in the most rapidly growing group (Type 5), but there are also only a few US cases in this ‘booming’ category, the most notable being Las Vegas. The higher proportion of cases in the Canadian system now in Type 1 indicates a significant number of metropolitan areas in distress. This demonstrates that economic growth is not even. Cities such as Regina and Greater Sudbury are within regions facing severe economic decline; almost all of these Type 1 places are located in Atlantic Canada (excluding Halifax), parts of Quebec, and northern Ontario. This shift (especially compared with the patterns of the 1980s, shown in Figure 2.1) may suggest a need for concern (see also Chapter 3). However, it may also reflect the depth of recession in Canada in the early 1990s compared with the strength of the US economy in the Clinton years.

Within the US, the regional pattern of metropolitan and central-city decline has persisted. Type 1 places include Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Dayton, and Syracuse and Type 2 examples include Cleveland, Detroit, Hartford, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. The

recovery of a number of America’s principal metropolitan regions in the 1990s is demonstrated by Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, and Salt Lake City, all of which saw a reversal of previous central-city decline in the 1980s analysis and are now classified in Type 3. Sustained central-city growth contributes to substantial metropolitan growth (Type 4) in, for example, Austin, Charlotte, Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, and San Diego, as well as many smaller urban areas.

Urban Transportation

In a global context, North American cities are enormously dependent on autos and trucks for the movement of goods and people. While this allows great individual mobility and flexibility for road users, massive environmental and infrastructure costs must be borne collectively (see Part 6 of this book). Nevertheless, the commitment to the car is particularly strong. While Canadians have long been greater users of public transportation than Americans, negotiating the low-density outer city makes the automobile particularly attractive and mass transit particularly costly (and hence in need of substantial subsidy) in both countries.

The size, density, and form of an urban area likely dictate the forms of urban transportation that can be effectively provided, but, once provided, transportation systems have an important effect on private, speculative development that characterizes capitalist cities like those in North America (for more detail on urban transportation in Canada, see Chapter 6). Previous research shows that Canadian commuters were significantly less likely to use automobiles in their daily commute (about two-thirds compared to 85 per cent for Americans). Although the gap has narrowed, that cross-border difference still exists; in 2000–1, 77 per cent of Canadians drove autos or carpooled compared to almost 90 per cent for US metropolitan commuters (see Table 2.1). The rates of auto use in both countries are lower for some groups of women and certain racialized groups, who rely more heavily on public transit. Canadians are also far less reliant on expressway
Figure 2.2  Metropolitan Population Change: Distribution of Metropolitan Areas by Type of Change, Canada: 1991–6, 1996–2001 and the US, 1990–2000

Legend
Type 1: central city decline allied to metropolitan decline
Type 2: central city decline and metropolitan growth
Type 3: central city stagnation (equal to or less than 1% over five years) and metropolitan growth
Type 4: solid central city growth (in the 1.1 to 3.9% range) and metropolitan growth
Type 5: booming central city growth (4% and over) and metropolitan growth
systems as there is less expressway capacity in metropolitan Canada than in metropolitan America (for more details, see Goldberg and Mercer, 1986). The difference can be traced back to the two countries’ different transportation policies of 1940s and 1950s. In the US there was enormous federal funding for the interstate system and other highways, whereas in Canada the federal contribution was comparatively small. And the US developed the ‘Highway Trust Fund’ based on gas and fuel taxes to finance highways; in Canada those funds went into general revenue budgets.

There is a striking difference in public transit. Table 2.1 shows that the proportion of transit users among commuters in metropolitan America is a low 6.1 per cent. However, some places exceed this considerably (such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington) by factors ranging roughly from 8 to 2. Given the costs of mass transit provision in lower-density suburban settings, it follows that transit use would be higher in central cities. It is, but for US central cities alone, the proportion reached only 12 per cent. Transit use in metropolitan Canada is almost 2.5 times greater than in the US, and Canadians are more than twice as likely to walk to work, both suggestive of a denser urban environment.

Clearly, notable cross-national differences persist in urban public transportation. There were, however, some worrying signs for Canadian transit. Perl and Pucher (1995) compared ridership trends from 1950 to 1990 and found that following massive post–World War II declines in both countries, ridership on Canadian transit systems recovered strongly in the 1970s and 1980s, but US ridership had only modest gains (yet another indication of the greater importance of transit in Canadian cities). However, they also reported that ridership had steadily declined and at a faster rate in Canada than in the US (1990–4). Increased employment opportunities in dispersed locations, growing numbers of women combining paid employment with family responsibilities (child-care centres are often in different locations from workplaces, both of which often are located away from retail nodes), fewer transit–dependent youth, auto price competition, and fiscal austerity in the public sector are all factors challenging the effectiveness of Canadian transit systems. However, the steady decline noted by Perl and Pucher bottomed out in 1996; then ridership increased almost every year to 2003 at an annual rate of 1.9 per cent. In the US, transit ridership declined until 1995, then rose each year to 2001, dropping again in 2002 and 2003. The overall annual rate of increase (1995–2003) is 2.4 per cent (APTA, 2005). APTA attributes improved US ridership to the strong economy, better service, and higher levels of public and private investment in public transportation following from 1991 federal legislation and subsequent funding bills.

### Table 2.1 Modal Choice and the Journey to Work: Metropolitan Areas in Canada and the US

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<td>All other</td>
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Note: Mass transit refers to bus, streetcar, subway, elevated railroad, and railroad; carpool includes those who are passengers in cars, trucks, or vans driven by others. These are the modes used by workers in the week prior to the survey or census.


### Housing

The housing stock of a city is one of its most durable features. Of course, until recently many suburbs have been the domain of the single-family detached dwelling unit (mostly in an owner-occupied tenure). Indeed, a common and accurate enough perception of North American cities is that their stock is dominated by owner-occupied,
single-detached housing units, although in a number of large cities in both countries other forms of housing, such as row housing or apartment structures, predominate—a partial listing includes Montreal, Quebec City, St John’s, and Toronto; and Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and New York. In both countries, the level of home ownership remains broadly similar, typically in the 60–5 per cent range of all units (levels of home ownership in both countries vary across social groups such as ‘race/ethnicity, age, and gender). However, Canadians do not have the tax advantages provided to Americans to promote home ownership, widely seen as an essential underpinning of capitalist democracy and another example of US individualism and commitment to private property.

Although single-detached units are the majority of all units in both sets of metropolitan areas, a clear cross-national difference exists. For 2000–1, they account for 62 per cent of all housing in metropolitan America and 55 per cent in Canadian areas. The typically higher average percentages for the US are also found for central cities—52 per cent in the US and 46 per cent in Canada. The generally lower proportion of single-family units in Canadian metropolitan housing stocks, together with urban transportation differences, suggest a more compact and less dispersed form in Canadian cities—a goal sought by their historically more effective local planning and regulatory systems compared to land-use controls in the US. Also, in the US, the strong demand for housing in the outer suburbs, compared to soft demand in central cities, has driven up land values in recent decades. Land costs, changing household structures in the suburbs, and environmental regulations reducing land supply have all contributed to a greater production of multiple forms of housing. These factors are likely also at work in the outer parts of Canadian metropolitan areas but their aggregate impact seems reduced, probably because Canadian inner cities remain a mainstay of higher-density multiple-family dwelling, especially high-rise condominiums. In the US, vacant housing, abandonment, and eventually clearance have reduced the aging single-family housing stock in many central cities.

In the US, gated communities, some of which have created local governments, are clear expressions of the American ideology of individualism and represent a withdrawal from the larger metropolitan community (including an abdication of any responsibility for its social condition) (McKenzie, 1996; Low, 2003). Gated communities also reflect the extraordinary concern of Americans over violent crime, especially in the central city. Of course, relatively few folk live in gated communities compared to the millions of ordinary suburbanites who live in non-gated communities; nevertheless, many suburbanites will feel they too have achieved an acceptable level of security in their homes, schools, and parks by moving to outer-city locations and investing in personal security systems. While there has been increased concern about crime in Canadian metropolitan regions, even in their suburban parts, defended or gated communities are far less common, though this does not mean there are not exclusive suburbs and personal estates (Grant, 2005).

The suburbs of US and Canadian cities are infinitely more diverse than ever before and are shedding the image of being residential ‘bedroom’ communities, with visual uniformity associated with the mass production of so-called ‘little boxes’ and social uniformity based on their generally middle-class appeal and affordability (see Chapter 12). Historically, suburbs have been associated with women engaged in (unpaid) domestic labour and the reproduction of the family unit in the home. Strong-Boag and her collaborators argue that in Australia and especially in the US, suburban life stands close to the core of the national vision but that in Canada and Britain, suburbs do not embody the nation in the same way (Strong-Boag et al., 1999). The small town of America’s republican heritage has been recreated in the sprawling realms of the suburbs. Indeed, while US and Canadian suburban forms may be similar, their meanings can differ. For example, both countries now have suburbs developed around neo-traditional planning. However in the US, their popularity coalesces around safety issues and nostalgia for nineteenth-century small-town living. In Canada neo-traditional communities are more likely to be
prized for their affordability and environmental advantages (Grant, 2003).

Planning and Local Government Fragmentation

Evidence on population and household change, urban transportation, and housing structure has often been used to argue that Canadian cities are more compact. But newer evidence is mixed; decentralization may now be more common in dynamic metropolitan areas, such as Toronto, Vancouver, Kitchener, Oshawa, and Ottawa–Gatineau, but less common elsewhere in Canada where pressures for growth, development, and space are less (for examples, see Bunting et al., 2002). In addition, an important factor contributing to the compactness and livability of Canadian cities is government regulation. Almost 20 years ago, Barry Cullingworth, the scholar of comparative planning policy, observed that ‘Canadian urban and regional planning has a more wide-ranging and acceptable role than is the case in the United States’ (1987: 462). Research comparing Canadian and American metropolitan systems reveals that in Canada planning is more developed and possesses more fiscal power and authority than in the US. But processes of decentralization are undermining historically stronger Canadian metropolitan systems because so much growth (and associated tax bases) is outside metropolitan jurisdictions (e.g., Rothblatt, 1998).

Despite the expectation of increased provincial/state involvement to shape more effective institutions to address metropolitan development, some believe that cross-national convergence is occurring and will accelerate.

One striking difference between Canadian and US cities that remains, however, is local government fragmentation. In the US, where local governments have a greater degree of local autonomy, weaker planning systems are exacerbated by highly fragmented local government systems. While metropolitan fragmentation does occur in Canada, it is not at the US level. Metropolitan fragmentation means that among the different governments of the metropolis, central cities are often the losers in the struggle for investment, taxable property, affluent residents, and higher government fiscal transfers. Such a portrayal seems less appropriate for Canadian cities, but it is clear that in Canada’s few largest metropolitan areas this scenario is becoming increasingly fitting (Razin and Rosenthal, 2000).

Some 20 years ago, one measure of metropolitan fragmentation was approximately 2.5 times higher in metropolitan US than in Canada (Goldberg and Mercer, 1986: 214). Little has changed since. In fact, the number of local governments per US metropolitan area increased, contributing to even greater fragmentation (Rothblatt, 1998; Razin and Rosenthal, 2000). In contrast, there is a Canadian predilection for unilateral local government reform through provincial action and legislation, completely disregarding local autonomy in a way that is almost unthinkable in the US. In the last several years significant reductions have occurred in the numbers of Canadian municipal governments, the intent being to achieve greater efficiencies and reduce expenditures. For example, in the Halifax urban region, the Nova Scotia government created a new metropolitan-wide municipal government, dissolving the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, as well as smaller suburbs, and amalgamating this urbanized core with a huge rural territory. Other examples include Ottawa, Hamilton, Kingston, and most recently Montreal and Quebec City. The creation of the ‘Toronto mega-city’ in 1998 is particularly significant given this region’s pre-eminence and size (see Chapter 17). Prior commentary suggests that US and Canadian cities are most alike in the outer city (Goldberg and Mercer, 1986; Harris, 1996), though even here Goldberg and Mercer found important differences. Two other features of the contemporary outer city are ‘edge cities’ with regional and super-regional malls. Edge cities, popularized by Joel Garreau’s 1991 book of the same name, are characterized by several million square feet of office and retailing floor space (usually in malls), adjacent residential developments at higher than typical density, and an almost total reliance on automobiles (Garreau, 1991). These
massive complexes have been produced across the US by private-sector initiatives. Such new forms are rarer in Canadian cities but suburban downtowns, or town centres, have been actively promoted in Toronto and Vancouver (see Chapter 10; see also Filion, 2001, for discussion of Toronto's suburban mixed-use centres). The major cross-national difference is that public planning ideology generated high-density suburban centres in the Canadian context, although their actual development remained in private hands. In Canada these planned centres were intended to reduce pressures on core central business districts (CBDs) and related inner districts, and at the same time to contribute towards the 'intensification' of suburbs.

**Canadian and US Cities: Differences and Similarities in Urban Processes**

A whole host of large-scale or global processes influence Canadian and US cities; those of particular importance to Canadian cities include economic restructuring and the changing trends in immigration. These processes also affect US cities, but how they are worked out both locally and cross-nationally suggests some distinctiveness that challenges 'the North American city' concept, and highlights the significance of comparative research to uncover and understand similarities and differences between Canadian and US cities. In this section, we address a series of large-scale processes—economic restructuring; immigration, 'race', and ethnicity; and inequality and poverty—to investigate how the Canadian or US context makes a difference.

**Economic Restructuring and Urban Economic Geographies**

Given the economic transformation of the last three decades or so, the manufacturing basis for previous waves of metropolitan growth has been severely eroded and replaced by a knowledge-based economy (see Chapter 14). The magnitude of this transformation is marked by the increasing use of terms like 'the informational city' and 'the post-industrial city'. This rapid economic change is evident in the spatial organization of Canadian and US cities because both economies are increasingly globalization and integrated under free trade agreements, suggesting that there may be reduced cross-national differentiation. However, the mediating role of the government (federal, provincial/state, and municipal) is important. In Canada, the historically greater role of the public sector in economic development and the stronger commitment to social support systems continue to make a meaningful difference, even with increasingly neo-liberal policies of deregulation and reduced public expenditures.

Given recent rhetoric, one might expect the landscapes of American and Canadian cities to be littered with signs of industrial decay. Many are, but industrial growth and even boom must not be overlooked. Manufacturing industries, though reshaped, have not vanished and remain important in numerous metropolitan areas in both countries. Nonetheless, industrially based metropolitan areas generally have done poorly in terms of growth in recent decades; examples include Detroit, Youngstown–Warren, Flint, Erie, and in Canada, Chicoutimi–Jonquière and Montreal. Conversely, metropolitan areas with diverse economies and growing populations have prospered, with new kinds of industries emerging; for example, Calgary and Vancouver, and Los Angeles, Phoenix, Raleigh–Durham, San Jose, and Atlanta. However, one striking difference is that Canada's core region has retained manufacturing employment more than the US manufacturing belt. As of 2001, three-quarters of manufacturing jobs were still located in Ontario and Quebec, chiefly in the Windsor–Quebec corridor where the Toronto and Montreal CMAs alone contain 32 per cent of national manufacturing employment. The Toronto CMA is the dominant manufacturing region, a position now occupied by the Los Angeles agglomeration in the US, far from the traditional manufacturing heartland of the Northeast.
there are other important national differences. While Canadian manufacturing employment declined both absolutely and proportionately in the 1985–95 decade and plant closures increased steadily from 1986 onward (MacLachlan, 1996), since the mid-1990s manufacturing employment has actually grown in absolute terms (a growth of 6.6 per cent from 1996 to 2001) and the proportional decline within overall employment evident since the mid-1980s levelled off by 2001. In contrast, the US economy has not seen a similar reversal—manufacturing employment declined by 7.2 per cent between 1995 and 2001.

A pattern of manufacturing decline in the central city and inner suburbs alongside expansion in outer city and beyond is evident on both sides of the border. In medium-sized American metropolitan areas where manufacturing employment has steadily declined, the recent geographic pattern is suburban closure and job loss—central-city locations were abandoned decades ago when alternative suburban sites opened up (for example, Akron and Syracuse). Moreover, the loss of manufacturing employment in US central cities combines with racialized residential patterns to create spatial mismatch whereby inner-city minority (especially male) workers are spatially disconnected from growing job opportunities in the outer city. With industrial decline comes rising poverty (half of the cities with poverty rates over 20 per cent are located in the ‘manufacturing belt’ and the burden continues to fall disproportionately on African Americans). Although the ‘race’ dimension is much less salient, similar industrial decline in the city of Montreal has exacerbated poverty in this particular Canadian city.

The economic landscapes of American and Canadian cities have also changed with the explosive growth of service-related employment. The downtown high-rise and suburban office parks have replaced the factory as emblematic of the age. Moreover, the rise of the service sector has been in tandem with the increase in Canadian and American women’s paid employment since the 1970s. As a result, the widely observed sense of decline in US CBDs has been arrested in certain instances, such as Philadelphia, Cleveland, and St Louis. In the cities that house key command-and-control functions in the continental and global economy, massive reinvestment has occurred in the CBD producing new office towers (and dramatic skylines) that not only house information-rich activities, but create architectural reputations and lucrative commissions. Core-area workers seeking inner-city residences (especially two-income couples) have stimulated demand for housing that has been met by condominium redevelopment and gentrification. But (as detailed in Chapter 10) even when there have been absolute increases in central area office floor space, the rapid growth of office space in outer-city locations often means that the core is less important proportionately in the overall metropolis.

In both countries, the transformation of the largest cities means that they are becoming somewhat more similar as participants in a global, knowledge-based economy, while less well situated or connected places further down the hierarchy are passed by. In a new study, Courchene (2005: 13) identifies several global city-regions in Canada, describing them as ‘the principal repositories of human capital and, therefore, [knowledge-based economy] competitiveness’. Research comparing Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary, for example, with Hamilton, Kitchener, and Sudbury would be instructive and might reveal similar outcomes to comparing Boston, Atlanta, and Denver with Buffalo, Milwaukee, and Omaha.

Immigration, ‘Race’, and Ethnicity

Both countries have similar histories of immigration and, indigenous peoples aside, are nations of immigrants—a social, historical, and geographic fact of profound importance. Bearing in mind the factor of 10 regarding population size, Canada has admitted immigrants at three times the rate of the US since 1960: 7.4 million entering Canada (2.3 million between 1991–2001 alone) and 24.3 million entering the US. Both countries have experienced significant shifts in the source countries of their recent immigrants, and the proportion of ‘traditional immigrant stock’ of European origin has declined. This is particularly important in Canada
where this shift has reduced the significance of the cultural links to Britain. However, while immigration from non-European sources has increased, there are key cross-national differences demographically, culturally, and politically. Broadly, the Americas, especially Mexico, and other Central American countries, as well as various Caribbean countries, are the most important source for the US, followed by countries in Asia and Africa. In Canada, the countries in East, Southeast, and South Asia alone accounted for 50 per cent of all immigrants in the 1996–2001 period, with the countries in the Caribbean and Africa also contributing notable flows (around 12 per cent combined). Even within the broad category ‘Asian’, there are differences reflecting Canada’s membership in the Commonwealth and the US geopolitical involvement in Pacific Asia. Thus, peoples from India and Hong Kong are proportionately greater in Canada, whereas people from Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam are more significant in the US (for Canada, see Schellenberg, 2004, and Abu-Laban and Garber, 2005; for the US, see Singer, 2004). The impact, culturally and in ethnicized/racialized terms, on the cities where the immigrants migrated has been major, in terms of not only social relations but also labour and housing markets, as well as service provision, with education being particularly emotionally charged (see Ley, 2004, for a discussion of transnationalism and everyday life).

Canadian and US cities both share the ‘gateway’ model of immigrant settlement. Over the course of the twentieth century, new immigrants settled disproportionately in just a few urban regions. In Canada, the leading destinations are Toronto and Vancouver, which attracted a remarkable 61 per cent of all immigrants who arrived in the 1990s. Montreal, attracted proportionately fewer (12 per cent), a product of the joint effects of perceived language barriers and more limited economic growth prospects (Mercer, 1995). The ‘traditional’ gateways also continue to dominate in the US, although the concentration is in a larger set of cities than in Canada. The vast metropolitan complexes centred on Los Angeles and New York remain the principal US destinations, followed at some distance by Chicago, Houston, and Miami; these remain the five pre-eminent places for immigrant settlement: However, an array of cities have become or are emerging as new ‘gateways’, including Atlanta, Dallas, and Las Vegas, which had few foreign-born residents until the last decade or two (Singer, 2004).

Outward population shifts in US cities are not new and have long been associated with racial relations (e.g., ‘white flight’). Although racialized minorities have increased significantly in numerous Canadian cities, there is absolutely no counterpart to the way that ‘race’ marks the US city. As of 2001, only seven CMAs have proportional shares of visible minorities greater than the national proportion of 13.4 per cent (Table 2.2). Only in the Toronto and Vancouver CMAs does the proportion of visible minorities exceed one-third. For the central cities of Vancouver and Toronto the visible minority proportion is 49 per cent and 43 per cent respectively,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMA</th>
<th>% Visible Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa–Hull</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘Visible minority’ does not include Aboriginal Canadians. 
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 census.
indicating that visible minorities are somewhat more concentrated in the city, but also that there is not much difference from the overall CMA population. In fact, of the other 10 municipalities with more than one-third visible minorities, all but two are suburbs of Vancouver and Toronto. These suburbs are examples of ‘ethnoburbs’, a settlement pattern noted by Wei Li among the Chinese in Los Angeles (Li, 1998).

The seven leading CMAs (all above the national average) account for the vast majority (85 per cent) of all the visible minorities in Canada. Again, there are marked concentrations in the largest cities; 72 per cent of all visible minorities reside in the Toronto (43 per cent), Vancouver (18 per cent), and Montreal (11 per cent) CMAs alone. Not surprisingly, then, racialized issues are most prominent on the public agenda in the local governments and neighbourhoods of these CMAs. At the same time, this also means that many Canadians living in smaller cities do not experience ‘lived-in diversity’ first-hand, or the social and cultural issues around immigration and racialization—especially controversial and divisive issues—except through the media. This places considerable moral responsibility on media owners and workers, and there is continued debate about representations of racialized groups and immigrants in the media (Abu-Laban and Garber, 2005; Henry and Tator, 2002).

In the US, ‘race’, often reduced to a black–white dualism, has been enormously important in most cities. This is made more complex by the incredible growth of Asian and Latino populations in the last two decades, especially significant in the rapidly growing metropolitan areas of the Southwest and Florida, as well as in New York City, Washington, DC, and Chicago. However, distinctive geographical patterns associated with the arrival of new groups overlay those resulting from the concentration of blacks in America’s central cities. In 2000, 20 US central cities had majority black (mostly African-American) populations (Gary, at 85 per cent, Detroit, 82 per cent, and Birmingham, 74 per cent, had the largest proportions), and fully one-fifth of all central cities had proportions above one-third, including Atlanta, St Louis, Cleveland, Chicago, and Philadelphia (in Canada only two central cities, Toronto and Vancouver, have visible minority populations greater than one-third). Increasingly, African Americans participate in suburbanization, but there is still segregation and they experience mortgage discrimination (Wyly and Hammel, 2004). There is nothing comparable in scale in Canada. The central city of Vancouver attracts many Asian immigrants and second-generation Asian Canadians, but only in a few small areas, such as Chinatown, does the concentration begin to approach US levels of racial segregation. And Toronto is the only Canadian city with a substantial Afro–Caribbean population and their segregation from whites is not only low by American standards, it is lower than for other racialized groups (Myles and Hou, 2004). This suggests that while weaker than in the past in the US, the persistence of African-American segregation will continue to be an important cross-national difference. Similarly, while there is greater diversity than ever before in Canadian cities, nothing compares to the rapidly expanding Latino population in the US; Latinos are now a majority in 12 US central cities and represent 20 per cent or more in 36 others. Although their residential segregation from whites is not as pronounced as it is for African Americans, it is significant and points to the avoidance behaviour of whites, housing market discrimination, and a large poverty gap (see Pulido, 2000, for a Los Angeles example).

Inequality and Poverty

Socio-spatial polarization has been well-documented, especially in relation to extensive economic restructuring and its geographic outcomes. The debate over the extent of increasing inequality in industrial countries is complex. Economic inequality has increased in both countries in recent decades, although poverty rates in the US are higher. Over the most recent decade, attempts to balance public budgets have placed increased fiscal pressure on the welfare systems in each country, eroding or
eliminating long-established support programs. One might thus expect more convergence in inequality. But the work of social economists Gottschalk and Smeeding (1997) indicates that whereas income inequality in the US rose significantly from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, there was actually a modest decrease in Canada from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and no change through to the mid-1990s (their study is based on a summary of numerous national studies of 24 countries).

Using 1970s data, Goldberg and Mercer (1986: Table 7–12) created a ratio showing income disparity between the central city and the whole metropolitan area for both metropolitan systems; a ratio value of 100 means that central–city income equals that of the entire urban area (no disparity). The overall ratio value for the US was lower than in Canada, indicating greater internal disparity for US metropolitan areas. One-quarter of all the US cases showed acute disparity (they had ratios of 79 or lower), whereas no Canadian cases had such low ratios.

We repeated this analysis for 2000–1 and the cross national difference persists. Higher overall ratio values for median family income distinguished Canadian central cities (mean = 97; median = 99) from US cases (mean = 87; median = 90). Again, there is a clear distributional difference. Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of the Canadian central cities have ratio values in the 90–9 range, with only 7 per cent below 80 and none under 70. In contrast, over 30 per cent of US central cities have values under 80, with 15 per cent under 70. As expected, proportionally more Canadian (8) than US (57) central cities had ratios exceeding 100. Economic segregation in Canadian cities is on the rise. A recent study found high levels of residential segregation based on income in prairie cities (Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina), and among the three largest cities Montreal was the most economically segregated (Ross et al., 2004). Bourne (1993a) argues that the intra-geography of income goes beyond the rather arbitrary central city–suburban distinction in urban studies. Canadian central cities reveal continued, even deepening impoverishment, pronounced accumulation of wealth and expansion of elite districts, and a remarkable persistence in both the location and composition of well-established high- and middle-income districts. This characterization does not fit the inner parts of most US urban areas (although undoubtedly some individual cities are a better fit—Seattle, Houston, Dallas, and Minneapolis–St Paul). An important factor in producing this complexity is the widespread construction of luxury as well as more modestly priced condominiums in Canada’s central cities. Such construction means demolishing cheaper, often rental, housing and displacing its residents. And with a declining or static social housing sector without capacity to house such folk, homelessness and living in shelters is increasing, intensifying the view that Canadian cities are becoming more like US ones.

The simplistic city-versus-suburbs dichotomy distorts underlying urban realities that do not respect local government boundaries and homogenizes the suburbs at great analytical cost. Yet it is hard to see it disappearing from public discourse. It frames debates over fiscal health and equity issues concerning taxation and the financing of services. In the US context in particular, ‘city’ is too often an emotional signifier of a heavily racialized ‘other’ that white suburbanites avoid by distancing themselves in outer residential communities. Despite increasing urban ‘revival’, a steady diet of nightly local TV news paints a depressing picture of the city as a racially marked ‘place left behind’, replete with arson, violent crime, complaints over inadequate public services, and mounting fiscal problems (see Beauregard, 2003, on ‘voices of decline’).

**Conclusion**

Students of North American cities have to grapple with increasing variability and complexity within the metropolitan areas, which are principally the result of enormous economic transformations and social changes that are global in nature and impinge directly on open metropolitan systems. Some of the most fundamental changes are the shift away from manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy as
the principal economic foundation for urban growth, and dramatic shifts in immigration source leading to complex social changes in both inner cities and suburban districts. Given the large scale of these transformations, the changes they produce are felt more or less equally in the metropolitan areas of Canada and the United States. This could result in greater similarities or convergence between the two sets of cities, a direction supported by some of the empirical evidence reviewed here.

Persistent cross-national differences have arisen over time as one society made different choices from the other. The United States experienced colonialism and then gained nationhood via revolutionary independence, whereas Canada experienced a gradual and still contested nationhood after a much longer colonial dependence. Canada became a resource-based economy tied to the prosperity of external markets, initially in Britain and then the US itself, while the United States grew into a significant industrial power and eventually a global power. Both countries expanded their territories—sometimes in conflict with each other—and both experienced massive inward population movements, but with different social consequences in subsequent social histories and geographies (French and English, as against black and white). These strategic choices—and the distinctive urban places those choices produced—occurred in the context of common and widely experienced processes. Canadians continue to desire to differentiate themselves from their huge neighbour despite increased and closer economic integration. But inherited urban forms, the social mores that shape interpersonal and inter-group relations, and the political culture and institutional structures all demonstrate effective resistance to continental homogenization. Thus, significant cross-national urban differences persist.

So while some assert that Canadians and Americans are becoming more alike under the imperatives of globalization and continental trade integration, an important contrary view is expressed by others, including Michael Adams (2003: 140). Based chiefly on cross-national surveys for 1992, 1996, and 2000, Adams provides strong evidence to support his claim ‘that the social values of the two countries are once again becoming more distinct, not melding as conventional wisdom would have it.’

We propose that the distinctiveness of Canadian cities continues—Canadian cities are more public in their nature and US ones are more private. But rather than these being sharply drawn polarities, there are both range and overlap along a public–private continuum anchored by ideal types (Figure 2.3). In proposing this continuum, we attempt to capture a series of characteristics that differentiate the American and Canadian contexts, including (1) the strong national commitment in the US to individualism and individual freedoms; (2) the protection of private property rights under the US Constitution; (3) the US reliance on private mechanisms and individual user fees in the provision of infrastructures, as well as certain public goods and services; (4) the emphasis on home ownership, especially of the single detached residence as the ideal type; and (5) the power of local autonomy in government, reflected in the still increasing profusion of special-purpose districts and small municipalities as extensions and expressions of relatively homogeneous social groupings. In a privatized society, problems are solved in a highly individualized manner. The conditions of daily life in many US central cities and certain metropolitan areas have led to withdrawal of certain groups to suburban and ex-urban places. This listing is partial but does convey the essence of the privatized city.

The public city is more attuned to Canadian values, ideologies, and practices. It expresses a strong commitment to a greater emphasis on collectivities over individuals (though perhaps this has weakened with the emphasis on individual rights and freedoms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms); to the maintenance of social order and effective public practices over individual pursuits; to
a greater trust and belief in the competence of governments and their bureaucracies (though this has clearly diminished in recent decades as the effectiveness of the public sector has been widely and relentlessly attacked by ideologues in Canada and elsewhere); and to the idea of active intervention in the chiefly private process of city making by city and suburban planners, some working for innovative forms of metropolitan government. Public cities are also places with a higher quality of urban development consistent with high servicing standards set by local authorities; they have extensive networks of high-quality public transportation systems, publicly funded schools, community centres, and quality parks and open spaces.

This key distinction owes much to the nature of state intervention rather than to the degree of intervention. Governments in the US have been extremely active in supporting private consumption and facilitating private (corporate) gain (although the latter is not uncommon in Canada). This is well illustrated by the vast expenditures on urban freeways that encourage private auto and truck use. By contrast, governments in Canada have adopted a more balanced approach to urban transportation, although this, too, may now be tilting away from the public transit sector in an effort to reduce public expenditures. The willingness of provincial governments to reorganize municipal governments to achieve regionally integrated forms means a more uniform distribution of municipal services and planning. With US state governments being more sensitive to 'home rule' arguments voiced by those opposed to metropolitan ('big, inefficient, remote') government and being unwilling in most cases to take the lead, sharp variations persist in service standards and property tax levels within metropolitan regions.

Over 25 years ago, the question was put: 'Is there a distinctive Canadian city?' (Kerr, 1977). While we avoid the singularity of the Canadian city, as it does not allow sufficiently for the inherent variability in Canadian cities, we answer confidently 'Yes, but ...', for there is an important qualifier. While distinctive within their continental context, the North American character of Canadian cities needs also to be acknowledged as they are inevitably and always open to continental and global interaction and influences.

Notes

1. We revisit certain findings of Goldberg and Mercer (1986) regarding North American comparisons. A fuller analysis than we can provide here is desirable (but see Zolnik, 2004).

2. A large literature develops the idea of family- and women-friendly cities. The argument is that multi-purpose, mixed-use, compact neighbourhoods mean greater proximity to services (and perhaps less reliance on cars), while higher densities provide sufficient concentrations of users to support a greater diversity and choice of services within a smaller geographic area (see Miranne and Young, 2000, for Canadian and US examples).

3. We calculated the types based on central-city boundaries that existed before the amalgamations of the late 1990s; for example, for Toronto we used the boundary for the city that existed before 1998.

4. Throughout this chapter we use 'race' in a fashion that is consistent with the position that the division of people into separate, distinct 'races' is a social construction, not a biological truism. Racialized and ethnicized identities are highly contested and socially significant (for example, inclusion within named categories has important effects in counting for national censuses), and consequently becomes important electorally and fiscally. Furthermore, the social construction of 'race' (and also ethnicity) means the naming of particular groups changes over time and space (for example, 'black' and 'African American' in American discourse, and 'Aboriginal', 'First Nations', 'Native', and 'Indian' in Canadian discourse). On the 1996 and 2001 long form Statistics Canada census survey on ethnic origins, a question asks: 'Is this person: White; Chinese; South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan, etc.); Black; Filipino; Latin American; Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.); Arab; West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan); Japanese; Korean; or other (specify)'; Debate continues over the appropriateness of descriptive categories (e.g., West Asian) to capture ethnicized identities and the political implications of collecting information about certain groups (e.g., 'Arabs').