

# Planning Canadian Cities to be Smart and Inclusive

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April 26 2018

SFU, Vancouver



# Can Canadian Cities be Smart and Inclusive?

- ‘Smart’ Visions of Today – Sidewalk Toronto
- Putting these visions in historical context
- Planning as a political and place-based process
- Making ‘inclusive’ an integral part of city techno-design
- What policy experiments can be part of ‘smart’ city design *from the beginning?*



# Links to past practices

- “It is more important than ever to retain spaces for in-depth debate of emergent phenomena that have disruptive and transformative potential...this requires attention to...diverse economies with clear links to past practices.”



The screenshot shows the article page for "Sharing economies: moving beyond binaries in a digital age" by Anna R. Davies, Betsy Donald, Mia Gray, and Janelle Knox-Hayes. The page includes the journal title, volume and issue information, publication date, and an abstract. The abstract discusses the need for in-depth debate on emergent phenomena in a hyper-mediated world.

**Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society**

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**Sharing economies: moving beyond binaries in a digital age**  
Anna R. Davies, Betsy Donald, Mia Gray, Janelle Knox-Hayes

Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, Volume 10, Issue 2, 1 July 2017, Pages 209–230, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsx005>  
Published: 14 June 2017

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**Abstract**  
In periods of turbulence, the tendency to simplify messages and polarise debates is nothing new. In our hyper-mediated world of online technologies, where it seems that even national policy can be forged in the 140 characters of Twitter, it is more important than ever to retain spaces for in-depth debate of emergent phenomena that have disruptive and transformative potential. In this article, we follow this logic and argue that to fully understand the diverse range of practices and potential consequences of activities uncomfortably corralled under the ambiguous term 'the sharing economy' requires not a simplification of arguments, but an opening out of horizons to explore

**Article Contents**  
Abstract  
Introduction  
Etymology of sharing and sharing economy[ies]  
Geographies of sharing  
Work in the sharing economy  
Governing sharing economies  
Impacts and sharing economies

- *Sharing economies: moving beyond binaries in a digital age*, by A. Davies, B. Donald, M. Gray and J. Knox-Hayes, Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 2017

# 'Smart' City Context

- Cities as key sites of contradiction
- Digitization is disrupting all aspects of the urban planners' toolbox – housing, education, transportation, food systems, waste management, public space, etc.

# 'Smart City' Visions of Today



# Google Spin off - Sidewalk Labs, Toronto





Tuesday at Corus Quay that included Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google's parent company Alphabet.

toroff said his two-year-old company looked across North America, western Canada for the best place to try new ideas including self-driving buses and mass transit homes to solve major problems of urban living such as high housing costs, income inequality, climate change and even cold weather keeping people indoors.

thestar.com

News · City Hall

### Google firm wins competition to build high-tech Quayside neighbourhood in Toronto

Once officially confirmed, Sidewalk Labs, sister company of Google, will construct the new neighbourhood on the east downtown waterfront.

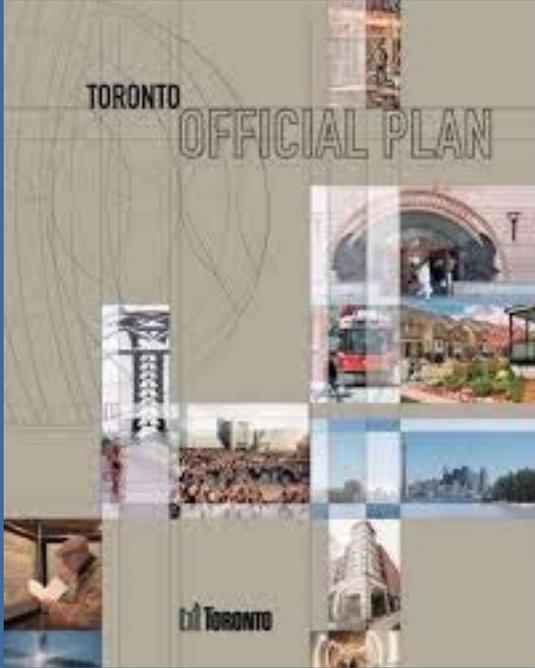
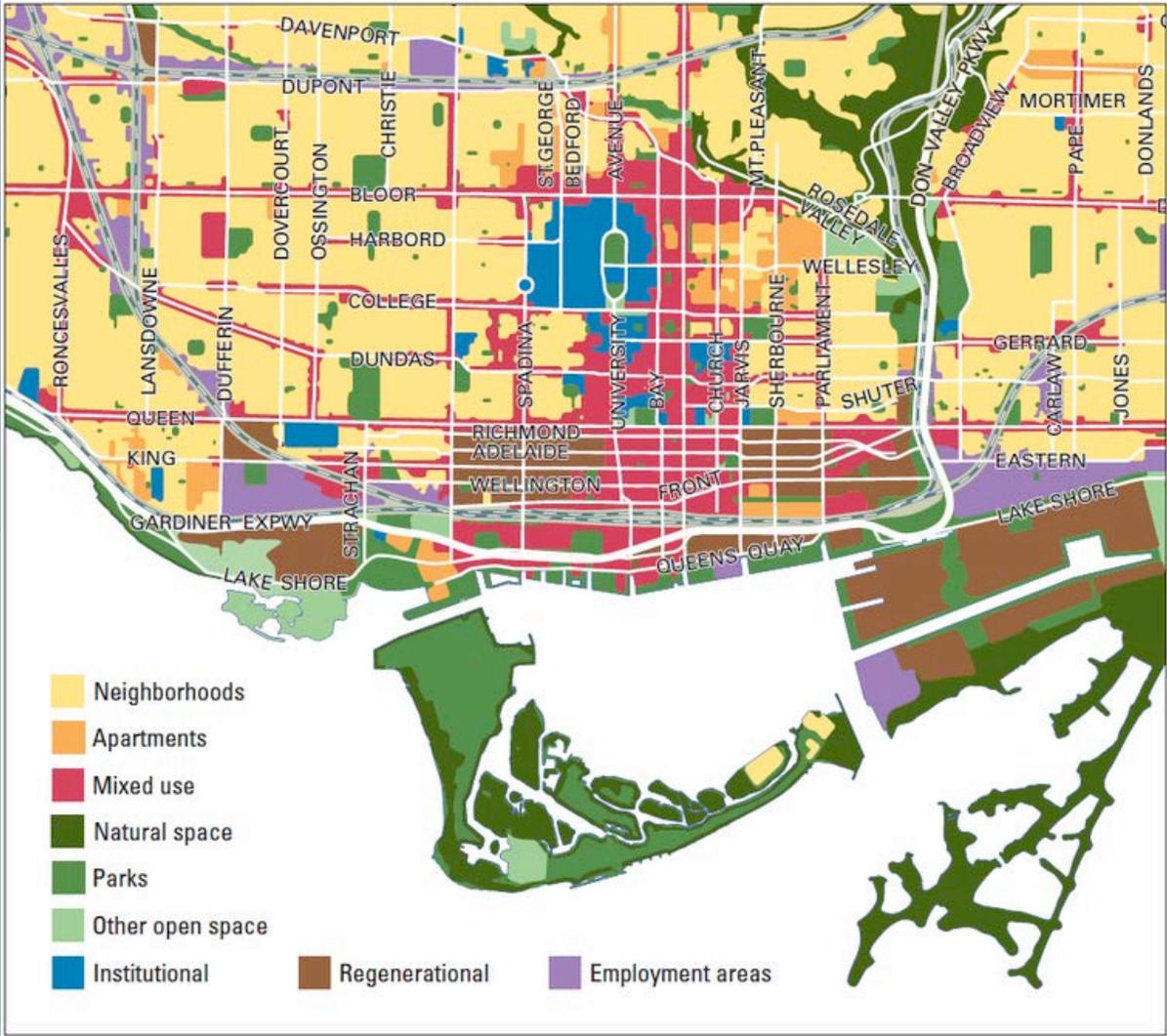


Located just southeast of Downtown Toronto, the Eastern Waterfront contains more than 325 hectares (800 acres) of land subject to future revitalization, including Quayside and the Port Lands.

Sidewalk Toronto is a joint effort by Waterfront Toronto and Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs to create a new kind of mixed-use, complete community on Toronto's Eastern Waterfront, beginning with the creation of Quayside. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY SIDEWALK TORONTO)

October 17, 2017

# Official Plans



# Sidewalk Toronto

- “Google Founders Wanted To Shape a city. Toronto is their Chance”, *New York Times*, October 18, 2017
- “Wouldn’t it be nice if you could take technical things that we know and apply them to cities?” Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Alphabet (now Google’s parent company)
- 12 acres of waterfront (with hope to scale up to 800 acres) – one of best opportunities in North America to rethink at scale how housing, streets and infrastructure are built
- City of the future



# Sidewalk Toronto



nytimes.com

11 Overview... 10 Overview... Week 11 Lec Google's Fou... +



A rendering of the Sidewalk Labs vision for a new waterfront development in Toronto. Sidewalk Labs

**By Emily Badger**  
Oct. 18, 2017

Google's founders have long fantasized about what would happen if the company could shape the real world as much as it has life on the internet.

"Years ago, we were sitting there thinking, Wouldn't it be nice if you could take technical things that we know and apply them to cities?" Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Alphabet (now Google's parent company), said Tuesday. "And our founders got really excited about this. We started talking about all of the things that we would do if we could."

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# Sidewalk Labs is reimagining cities to improve quality of life.

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CANADA

City of the Future? Humans, Not Technology, Are the Challenge in Toronto

Google's Sidewalk Labs signs deal for 'smart city' makeover of Toronto's waterfront

URBAN DESIGN

## Google's Sidewalk Labs signs deal for 'smart city' makeover of Toronto's waterfront

The partnership between a U.S. urban-innovation lab and a government agency could bring a bold experiment in city-building and high-tech to Toronto, Alex Boziovic explains

More below • [An illustrated primer on how Sidewalk Toronto would work](#)

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# Media Coverage of Sidewalk City

- *Pros*

- Environmentally friendly
- Carbon neutral
- Sensors that separate waste from recycling
- Modular buildings
- Flexible land-use
- Self-driving transit shuttles
- Shared-ride taxibots
- Adaptive traffic lights
- Delivery robots
- Heated bike paths and sidewalks
- Affordable Housing

- *Cons*

- Concerns about data use, privacy and surveillance
- Concerns about lack of genuine public participation
- What does a technology giant know about place making?
- Technology giants known more for contributing to urban problems rather than solving them
- Cities are organic and unpredictable
- Gap between technology and city government types
- Who is Sidewalk really for?



# City planning context

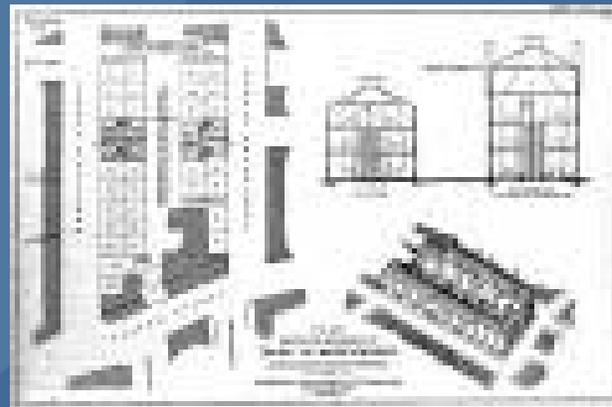
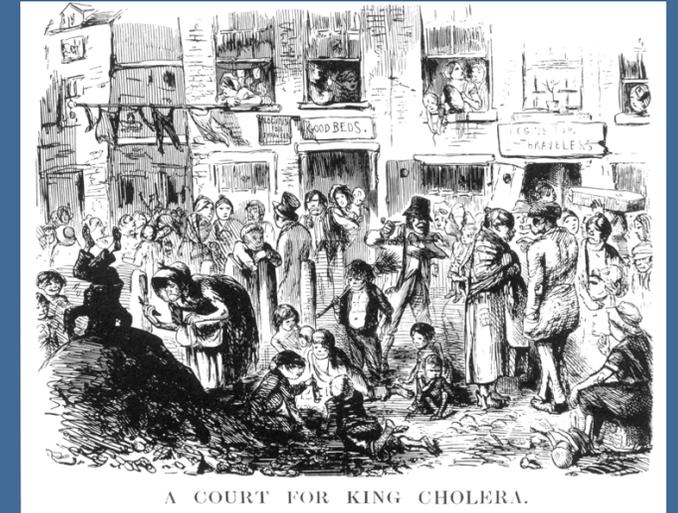
- Important to remember that urban planning as a practice came out of the challenges of the industrial revolution



© Getty Images

# Planning and Social provision

- Planning has always played an important part in sustaining economic development in cities by providing housing, education, and basic services.
- Local authorities have to support collective consumption.
- There are always political struggles around who does what, who gets what and why. Urban planning **is a political process**.
- Urban planning is inherently **political**.



# A Brief Intellectual History

Time Period	Planning Idea/Key author	'Classic' Example	Bad Applications
1900s	The Garden City/Ebenezer Howard	Letchworth, UK	Bland suburbs/auto-dependent all over US and Canada
1920s	The Modernist City/Le Corbusier	Plan Voisin, Paris	Pruitt Igoe and many other post-war social housing projects in US and CND cities (old Regent Park, Toronto; Rideau Heights, Kingston)
1990s	New Urbanism/ Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk	Seaside, Florida; Intensification in Downtowns	Rapid condo-ization of downtowns; gated communities using new urbanist architecture but lacking in social diversity

History of 'Utopic' urban visions

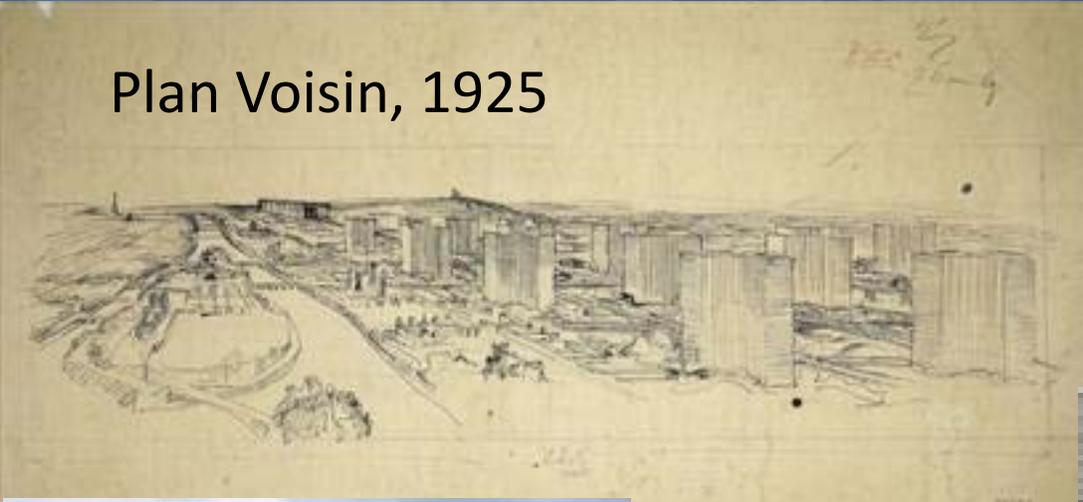


# Bad Applications



# The Modernist City

Plan Voisin, 1925



Le Corbusier



# 'Physical' Failure, Community 'Success'

Pruitt – Igoe, Failed Public Housing Project



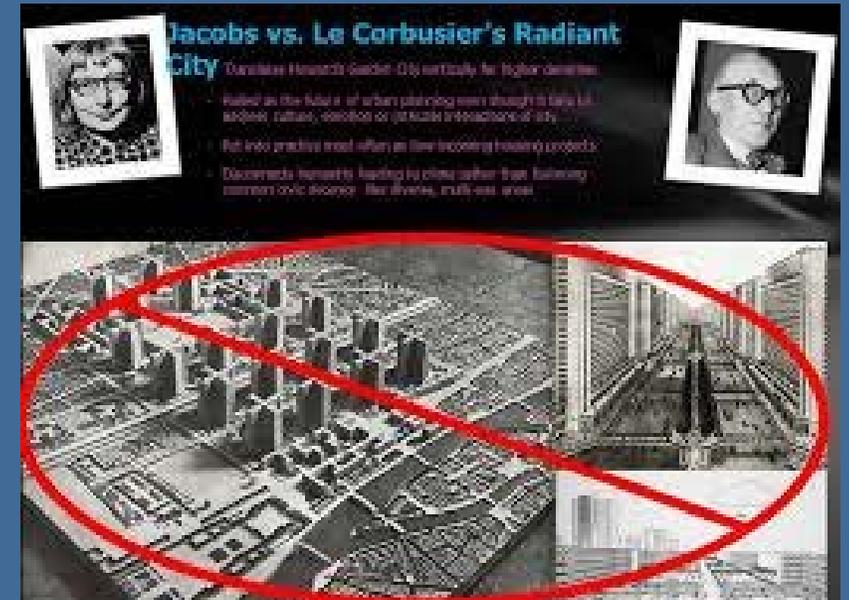
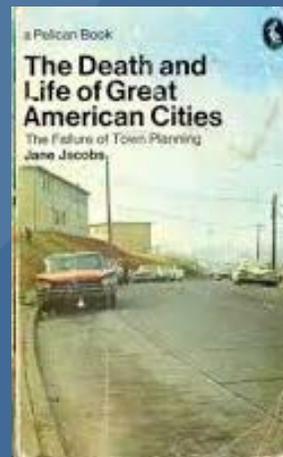
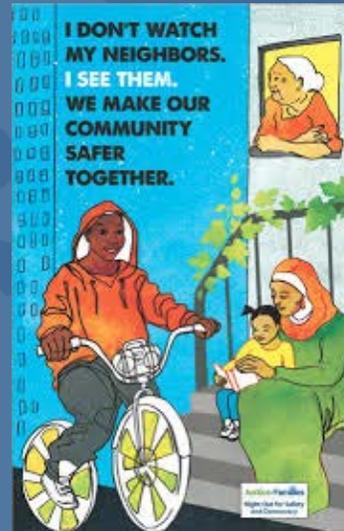
Cabrini Green (Chicago, old Regent Park (Toronto))

- contested narrative, strong sense of community in place despite physical failure

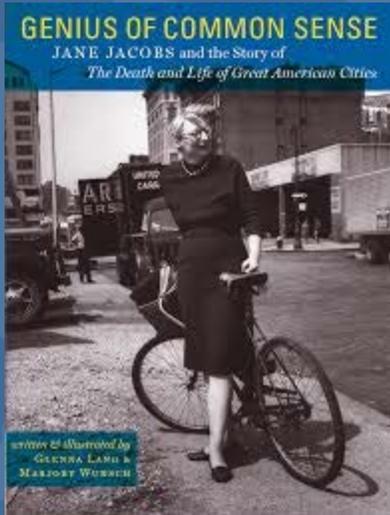
# Dissenters of Modernist Planning

*“You can’t make people watch streets they do not want to watch. Safety on the streets by surveillance and mutual policing of one another sounds grim, but in real life it is not grim. The safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are using and most enjoying the streets voluntarily and are least conscious, normally, that they are policing.”*

- Jane Jacobs, 1961



# Diversity and Human Scale Cities



The point of cities is multiplicity of choice.

Jane Jacobs



# New Urbanism

- New Urbanism/ Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk
- Bringing back the human scale to planning
- Walkability, transit-supportive land use, compact urban form, interesting and varied architecture, public space
- Often lack social diversity



# Social diversity and inclusivity

- The \$1 B Regent Park Redevelopment Project, Toronto
- Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre, Vancouver
- Housing Coops, Co-housing, other more inclusive mixed-used, mixed income communities
- Success requires deep community and citizen engagement planning (Brail, 2018)



# Planning for inclusive and smart city spaces

- Making 'inclusive' an integral part of city techno-design
- But the question becomes: what specific policy experiments can be part of 'smart' city design *from the beginning set within a diversity framework?*
  - Co-operative housing
  - Housing First
  - Basic income experiments?



# Conclusions

- Sidewalk Toronto has the potential to set the bar for a truly smart and inclusive space
- Canadian cities like Toronto have a history of institutional innovation and deep citizen-engaged planning
- Municipal democratic institutions are strong and have withstood significant political and economic challenges
- The question is how transferable are these ideas?



# Thank you CDO Network!



B. Donald Geography and Planning