

Ethnic enclaves and everyday mobility in Toronto, Canada

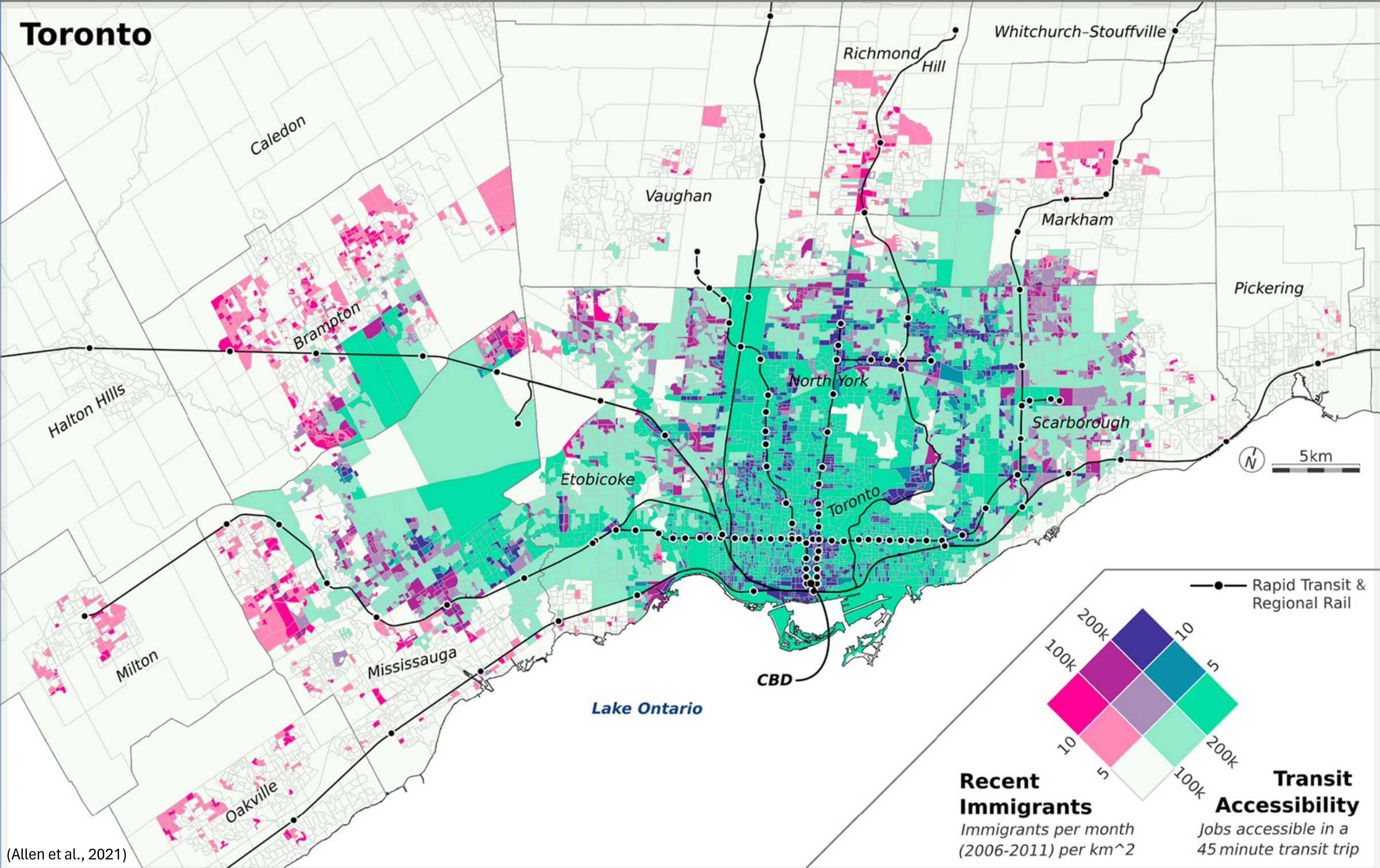
Ethnic Enclaves

The term refers to regions where an immigrant population sharing an ethnic background live together. Unlike residential segregation of African Americans in the US, ethnic enclave emerge **voluntarily**, as living close to co-ethnics is seen as beneficial by them concerning a variety of challenges for recent immigrants, such as such as **finding a job and accessing social services** (Nguyen, 2004). Furthermore, living in an ethnic enclaves can facilitate **participation in social activities** as well as finding **diasporic amenities**, like ethnic food stores and restaurants (Amar and Teelucksingh, 2015; Shin, 2017; Zhuang and Chen, 2017).

Immigrants’ travel behavior

General trends show that immigrants tend to **drive less, use more carpooling, public transit, and bike sharing**. Studies, mainly conducted in the US and Canada, show that **socioeconomic factors are key determinants to the choice of travel mode**. The higher a person’s income, the more likely it is that this person relies on cars, whereas low-income population have less options and mainly rely on public transit. Furthermore, immigrants tend to undergo a process of „travel assimilation“ towards adapting non-immigrants’ mobility practices over time (Amar and Teelucksingh, 2015; Delbosc and Shari, 2023). Living in an ethnic enclave, however, **increases the probability of using carpooling** as a travel mode that is independent of access to public transit (Shin, 2017; Smart, 2015).

Toronto



(Allen et al., 2021)

As the map shows, some regions in Toronto’s middle-suburbs hold a high density of recent immigrants, but only moderate levels of transit accessibility (Etobicoke, Scarborough, central Mississauga). At the same time, these are the neighborhoods where a substantial number of lower-income immigrants live, whereas the socio-economic status rises among immigrants living more towards the peripheries (Brampton, western Mississauga, northern Richmond Hills, Milton, Oakville) (Allen et al., 2021).

Everyday mobility in Toronto



Source: own Photo (2023)

Immigrants form over 50% of Toronto’s population. Contrary to historical patterns, they nowadays mostly live in the suburbs, as the city center increasingly lacks affordable rental housing. About 37% of the immigrant population use public transit, compared to ca. 21% of Canadian-born population (Amar and Teelucksingh, 2015). Thus, **immigrants keep Toronto’s public transit system afloat** (Lo, Shalaby and Alshalalfah, 2011). However, there is a **spatial mismatch** between housing and employment location of the city’s low-income population. Fast transit lines primarily serve regions with wealthier non-immigrant residents (Allen et al., 2021). **Transit planners** tend to **prioritize** areas of high potential to attract new riders in **more prestigious neighborhoods** of the city (Amar and Teelucksingh, 2015; Lo, Shalaby and Alshalalfah, 2011).

Social exclusion?

Immigrants in Toronto’s suburbs face a **relatively sparse local transit network** that requires longer walking distances as well as less frequent services and lower speed (Lo, Shalaby and Alshalalfah, 2011). In addition to this being an issue especially for people with disabilities, elderly or pregnant people, and children, accessing public transit comes with **high fares** (Amar and Teelucksingh, 2015). At the same time, when asked about their living location preferences, interviewees in a case study on Toronto argued that they **prefer neighborhoods with better access to diasporic amenities towards a location closer to a rapid transit line**. However, the generally heightened reliance on transit service in regions with a relatively poor level of transit service may reduce the potential to access certain activities and thus **increases the risk of social exclusion** (Allen et al., 2021).



Source: own Photo (2023)

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