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TORONTO'S REGENT PARK: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIXING POLICIES IN CANADIAN URBAN DIVERSITY

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Alla mia mamma e al mio papà, che hanno sempre creduto in me.

Al mio fratellino e alla sua disarmante dolcezza.

Ai miei nonni, fonti inesauribili di savio amore e conforto.

A tutti coloro che hanno il coraggio di guardare oltre e che non temono di abbracciare la diversità.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past several decades, migration and therefore ethnic diversity have become an increasingly central component of modern society, having concerned virtually every country worldwide. Conversely, a parallel and just as unmistakable trend that a seemingly ever-growing number of nations have been witnessing during recent years is the evident rise of right-wing governments. While conservative agendas may greatly vary, it is often no secret that issues of migration and diversity are seldom among their central priorities, with some not refraining from explicitly stating fierce opposition with regard to said topic.

Since cities often serve as reception sites for migrants, they are frequently among the areas most inherently shaped by ethnic and social diversity, making urban scenarios a central setting where authorities and policy makers must inevitably come to terms with issues of poverty, isolation, segregation, and stigmatization. At the urban level, governments may adopt a plethora of different strategies to address ghettoized communities, but the most prominent of them are possibly mixing policies, whose primary intent is to attain a degree of social mix, which in turn is expected to produce a series of beneficial effects not only on the minorities concerned, but also on the city as a whole.

However, in spite of the lofty advantages attributed to ethnic, cultural and financial mix, a substantial body of literature supported by numerous studies paints a much less flattering picture that is in stark contrast with the arguments put forth by those in favor of said policies. Thus, given the sheer complexity of the matter and the lively debates over its efficacy and outcomes, the current unequivocal and gradual shift of governments away from heterogeneity acceptance sparked my interest and led me to wonder whether social mix can genuinely prove effective in approaching urban diversity.

Hence, in order to provide an answer to that question and, consequently, hopefully contribute to the already rich literature on the topic, this dissertation seeks to delineate the merits and limitations of mixing policies within a context of urban diversity by examining the case study of Toronto's Regent Park, where a physical and social revitalization plan is currently underway. More in detail, this paper will first provide a theoretical framework for mixing policies in Chapter 1, which attempts to account for the

phenomenon's origins and evolution over time before examining not only the intentions behind it, but also the critiques most widely levelled against it.

Then, Chapter 2 will devote its attention to exploring Canada's approach to its viscerally characteristic urban diversity, particularly examining the history of the country's trademark multicultural policy and the Canadian citizens' perception of it. The chapter subsequently presents an outline of the country's relatively recent attempts to employ social mix especially through housing policies, ultimately analyzing how said programs unfolded by drawing upon mainly descriptive data concerning their application in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver.

Finally, this journey across time and space will culminate with the more practical approach adopted by Chapter 3, which constitutes the most extensive and paramount section of the current paper, devoted to the aforementioned case study of Toronto's Regent Park. First, it will trace the intricate history of the neighborhood and then perform a quantitative demographic analysis of its residents, as both of which will prove indispensable for a full comprehension of the matter. Then, a meticulous dissection of Toronto Community Housing's (TCHC) physical and social plans envisaged for Regent Park's revitalization will be carried out. Finally, by consulting a copious body of mainly qualitative data, Chapter 3 will provide a conclusive thorough assessment of the effects that the project has produced on the residents.

CHAPTER 1
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL MIX AND MIXING POLICIES

1. Introduction to social mix and mixing policies

Before thoroughly diving into the Canadian approach to cultural diversity and analyzing the current paper's case study of Toronto's Regent Park, it is fundamental to provide a definition of the concepts of "social mix" and "mixing policy". Doing so is no easy task due to the complexity and fluidity of the topic stemming from its broad application across various social contexts and its evolving nature in urban planning discourse. Despite this, Arthurson (2012) manages to capture all its central elements, explaining that "social mix" is nowadays employed to describe the "lack of variance in housing tenure or socioeconomic status" (p. 2). She then proceeds to further expand on the term, adding that it can refer to a plethora of circumstances, namely:

> "the balance between social housing renters, homeowners and private renters, and low-income residents within a particular spatially defined area […] [as well as] the mix of youth and aged residents in different high-rise social housing towers, blocks of flats or groups of units, […] [and even] the variation in the ethnic mix of residents" (Arthurson, 2012, p. 1).

As the author (2012) states, this income, age or even ethnic mix is what mixing policies strive to achieve since, through them, policymakers and urban planners seek to diminish the concentration of disadvantaged neighborhood residents. Their intent is to produce heterogeneity in order to tackle segregation and reduce the degree of homogeneity, which is believed to be the source of a wide variety of issues related to the so-called "neighborhood effects".

Moreover, as will be discussed in further detail in this chapter, Paola Briata (2019) points out that mixing is considered to produce a great deal of beneficial effects including, for instance, the stimulation of social mobility and the encouragement of bonding between different culturally diverse people. Despite this, these practices have been widely criticized over the years as being ineffective or even detrimental, especially to the most impoverished and vulnerable: i.e., the very individuals they are meant to help the most.

2. The history of social mix

A second need just as essential is to generate a comprehensive picture of the history of social mix and mixing policies, paying particular attention to their evolution over time. To that end, Arthurson (2012, pp. 11-54) proves particularly useful once again, given that she offers a meticulous overview of the development of the concept, sectioning it into three main time frames, namely "19th century Britain", "20th century post-war debates" and contemporary "21st century debates". Therefore, drawing heavily on Arthurson's detailed account, the following section aims to outline the main historical developments of social mix and the related policies.

2.1 The origins

Mid-19th century Britain is considered to represent the dawn of the centrality of mixing policies, a period when the fundamental utopian objective behind them was to bring together the various social classes that industrial capitalism had previously separated. As a result of the innovative machinery introduced after the First Industrial Revolution, a great many workers in the countryside were deemed virtually useless and lost their jobs, which therefore caused the working class to migrate to industrial towns to take advantage of the new-found opportunities and enter other occupations. These cities, which were highly unprepared to receive such a large population influx, soon experienced a dramatic drop in sanitary conditions, which pushed the upper and middle classes to leave, leading to high concentrations of workers in slums.

One means through which reformers planned to address the aforementioned issues was to relocate factories to the rural outskirts of cities in order to create "model industrial villages" meant to promote mixing of different social classes while reducing overcrowding and pollution. Hence, during this period, many utopian communities started being founded: a rather well-known example is George Cadbury's Bournville Village, which was built in 1895 and aimed to create a "blend of income and class" as well as:

> "provide high quality housing developments […] in socially mixed communities, using best management practices to promote ways to improve the quality of life for those living in such communities" (Arthurson, 2012, p. 16).

In order to do so, the working-class and middle-class residents' housing units were positioned next to each other under the assumption that the latter would act as "role models", allowing the former to enhance their quality of life. However, at the root of Bournville Village was also the prejudiced perception of middle classes, who viewed the segregated working classes as threatening and dangerous, which is what encouraged reformers to disperse workers.

An alternative to model villages was the garden city movement, which was first introduced in 1902 by Ebenezer Howard in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. This initiative aimed to combine the uncontaminated greenery of the countryside with the opportunities of industrial cities in an attempt to, once again, alleviate the harsh living conditions of the working classes. However, as opposed to communities such as Bournville Village, said garden cities like Letchworth employed only a partial mix at the residential level, leading to the segregation of the poor classes in neighborhoods and blocks.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Letchworth Garden City

Towards the end of the 19th century, Octavia Hill conceived a third option in that, while on the one hand she agreed with the notion that the working class could benefit from exposure to the middle-class model, on the other hand she identified a close relationship between precarious sanitary conditions and low quality of housing. Therefore, Hill resolved to take under her wing a disadvantaged slum property and endeavored to improve its housing conditions, later renting it to poor tenants. Still, Hill did not believe it crucial to implement a close residential mix in order to achieve the emulation effect she

sought; instead, she had a few middle-class volunteers pay a visit to the working classes from time to time.

A fourth alternative was proposed by Samuel and Henrietta Barnett in 1884, when they installed Toynbee Hall, a university settlement aimed at bringing together the different classes through the combination of university and adult education and by moving the instructed classes so that they would reside among the disadvantaged. Once more, the central concept inspiring this modus operandi was that the poor could be "fixed" by being exposed to the middle-class model.

2.2 20th century post-war debates

The early 20th century saw a steep decline in the interest for social mix as a consequence of the First World War which, together with the Great Depression, absorbed the vast majority of national resources worldwide. Despite this, there were still a few supporters including Lewis Mumford, who applied to the American context the idea that homogeneity and segregation were detrimental to the poor and suggested they needed to draw inspiration from various social environments, believing that mixing would lead to a greater capital to invest in infrastructure and facilities. This idea was perfectly exemplified by the community Mumford himself resided in, namely Sunnyside Gardens, a socioeconomically mixed neighborhood considered to be the first emulation of Howard's garden city model in America.

As for Britain, social mix regained its centrality in urban policies mainly as a way to "support romanticized ideals about bonding of the different classes" (p. 26), since the First World War had encouraged a cross-cultural and social collaboration necessary to attain a common objective. In addition, the resurgence of mixing policies was also determined by two other factors, namely post-war rebuilding programs and the establishment of the welfare state, which included among its fundamental purposes that of redistributing wealth and services to the poor. However, the Victorian concept deeming middle-class role models necessary to stimulate a positive change in the disadvantaged classes still persisted, leading to a paralyzing indecision as to the degree of social mix and the means through which it was supposed to be attained.

Later, towards the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the relevancy of social mix and the premises at its core started to be questioned by a body of American

and British academics. One such scholar, sociologist Herbert Gans, put forth his intuition that it was necessary to address the issue of segregation eradicating the social and economic disparities at its roots. Gans argued that letting heterogeneity sprout spontaneously was crucial, since forcing it could give rise to hostility within neighborhoods: therefore, he believed that mixing should be implemented on a neighborhood scale, but not on a block one. He also highlighted the useful, if not fundamental role of homogeneity in terms of aims and ideals in permitting cross-social contact in neighborhoods, stating that:

> "although propinquity initiates many social relationships and maintains less intensive ones, […] it is not sufficient by itself to create intensive relationships. Friendship requires homogeneity" (Arthurson, 2012, p. 33).

This view was further supported by other opposers of mixing policies who warned that social mix was harmful for the working classes, claiming that it caused them to feel discriminated against and looked down on by the middle class. According to such critics, social mix would enfeeble the collective political relevance of working-class communities and eventually enable the State to obtain the "compliant labor force necessary for the smooth workings of capitalism" (p. 34).

2.3 21st century debates

The late 1990s and the early 21st century were characterized by a renewed prominence of mixing policies as a consequence of the insurgence of various issues concerning social housing administration and the augmented concentration of disadvantaged residents which, in turn, exacerbated a number of pre-existing major setbacks. Firstly, in spite of the massive expansion of public housing demand due to the economic recessions and the increase of unemployment, the 1980s inaugurated a tendency to reduce public housing funding, hindering the expansion of housing stock. Moreover, the only stock left available to the poor consisted of older and more unpleasant housing in urgent need of maintenance, whose costs were soaring. This determined an alteration of the features of public housing residents, who grew more and more incapable of paying rent and included individuals affected by psychological or physical disorders, leading to distinctly noticeable concentrations of public housing.

Such degree of segregation, coupled with the rising crime rate, started attracting the attention of the public, who developed discriminatory prejudices against social housing tenants. This also tarnished the image of public housing estates, which gained the reputation of undesirable residential areas further exacerbated by their overemphasized media depictions. One of the most evident signs of said stigma-related issues was the implementation of the term "social housing" as a substitute for "public housing": while the latter had a neutral, if not positive connotation implying the possibility for disadvantaged residents to attain more decent living standards, the former conjures up a series of unpleasant ideas related to unemployment and prejudice.

As a response to the aforementioned difficulties, housing authorities commenced relying on neighborhood regeneration projects including, for instance, the physical enhancement of the quality of estates. This procedure entails demolishing and/or replacing obsolete units with new high-quality private housing meant to attract middle-class residents, thus producing a more balanced social mix thought to be capable of alleviating disadvantage, though this often results in the forced perpetual relocation of some social housing tenants.

Once again, what lies at the heart of said policies is the assumption that employed, more educated classes can provide a role model for the disadvantaged and that it is the excessive concentration of such individuals in the first place that causes social and criminal issues and fuels unemployment and violence. This notion that concentration determines or worsens pre-existing trouble was first introduced as "area effects" by American academics Wilson and Murray in the 1990s and contributed to the resurfacing of mixing policies as the solution to any issues experienced by housing authorities, this time with the objective of tackling the new-found antagonist, that is, social exclusion. Murray, in particular, argued that poor communities were afflicted with a "culture of poverty" exacerbated by broader phenomena such as the welfare state itself which, according to him, encourages dependency rather than promote a work ethic. What arose as a consequence was a series of lively debates focused on grasping the extent to which the precarious conditions of disadvantaged individuals were determined by their own behaviors and on how accountable other large-scale phenomena should be considered.

Arthurson (2012, p. 54) ends her insightful overview of the history of social mix by highlighting that a significant risk is that, in the near future, mixing policies will reawaken

Victorian notions identifying the poor as dangerous individuals. Should such a hypothesis become reality, policies might focus on the dispersal of segregated residents, thus neglecting other broader factors at the root of inequality.

3. Objectives and positive outcomes of social mix

By investigating the history of social mix, part 2 of Chapter 1 has also indirectly highlighted the central ideas lying at the heart of mixing policies. The current section, namely part 3, seeks to provide a more comprehensive analysis of said notions and to grasp their objectives, paying attention to several actual instances in which their implementation is considered to have been not only successful, but also beneficial.

First, although it might seem unnecessary and obvious, understanding what brings us to gravitate towards each other in the first place is fundamental for a full comprehension of the complexity of social and cultural mixing. As reiterated by Wood and Landry (2008), humans are social beings by nature and thus require interaction in order to survive. In addition, welcoming diversity and therefore endeavoring to understand the "Other" has proved essential for the development of most, if not all, cultures throughout history, which is what fueled their evolution. To support their argument, the authors (2008) provide several examples of cosmopolitan cities that saw interculturalism as a resource: Rome, for instance, in addition to being "the world's first cosmopolitan metropolis", showed no sign of segregation, allowed anyone to gain the Roman citizenry after being provided with the required education, and even let individuals from any background mix at will. Moreover, as further evidence supporting their belief that "a culture cannot develop without diversity" (p. 6), Wood and Landry (2008) emphasize that intercultural exchange has played a major role in determining the success of many powers such as Venice, whose prosperity was built on the intercultural connections fostered by trade.

As has already been discussed in part 2 and highlighted by Arthurson (2012), a key factor underlying mixing policies is the belief that, as Brail and Kumar state (2017), poverty concentration causes social and economic isolation due to the lack of contact with mainstream society, making notably employment "nearly impossible to obtain" (Bucerius et al., 2017). Spatial proximity is regarded as a solution in that it is believed to lead to social interaction which, in turn, is expected to provide "role models" for the minorities to imitate, therefore enabling more satisfactory living conditions including services and

infrastructure of a higher quality as well as reduced levels of crime and violence (Bucerius et al., 2017). In other words, Silver (2013) explains that mixed-income housing is thought to reduce poverty by allowing the vulnerable to escape "neighborhood effects" and access social mobility through a process of "passive observation of respectable behavior". Brail and Kumar (2017) add that socially mixed neighborhoods and their advantages are seen as ideal opportunities for other place-related ancillary beneficial occasions such as revitalizations, renewal projects and new commercial investments which, according to Arthurson (2012), allegedly have the potential to enhance the reputation of the entire neighborhood even further.

In addition to this, Wood and Landry (2008) propose a plethora of reasons why diversity, social mix and the idea of "intercultural city" can be highly beneficial opportunities and urban assets. In particular, they underline a crucial point of view still at the heart of many positive expectations on mixing policies, that is, the "contact theory": conceived by psychologist Gordon Allport in 1954 as a means to justify desegregation in the US, it took the view that progressive interaction between majority and minority groups leads the former to lose any prejudice they might harbor against the latter. This concept can be applied in a variety of fields including education, where mixed schooling techniques like twinning (i.e., the implementation of joint activities and students exchanges between schools of diverse ethnic profiles) can encourage the blossoming of intercultural relationships and even friendships. This idea, for example, was put into practice starting from 2000 in Oldham through the Oldham School Linking Project, which was found to have increased pupils' awareness of diversity, contributing to the demolition of stigma-related barriers. Similar results were obtained in Bradford, which launched its own Schools Linking Project in 2001, allowing their students to establish a considerable number of cross-cultural relationships. Arthurson (2012) further expands upon this point, claiming that some studies also found such intercultural bonds between students to be beneficial for parents, whose interactions can be encouraged through their children attending the same school.

Moreover, according to Wood and Landry (2008), hybridity is also a "driver of innovation", which "is, and must be, a more collective process" in that different points of view provide a more fertile environment, allowing for greater creativity and thus more unique and effective ideas. This, in turn, can prove especially useful for business growth,

which is exemplified by many extremely successful companies: for instance, a 2007 study by Wadhwa et al. revealed that 52.4% of Silicon Valley startups was founded by one or more migrants, and the development of the electronics colossus Phillips in the 1990s took place thanks to its Italian head of product design Stefan Marzano, who willingly created a team consisting of 33 different nationalities. This relationship between creativity and social mix was especially endorsed by Richard Florida in his 2002 work *The Rise of the Creative Class*, where he states that, in order for modern cities to compete, they need to harness the talent of the "creative class", who gravitate toward tolerance and diversity.

4. Critiques and negative consequences of social mix

While mixing policies have undoubtedly had multiple supporters as well as theories to depend on, part 2 of the current paper showed that their acceptance has by no means been constant or unanimous throughout their history. Despite the numerous benefits generally attributed to social mix, a great many authors agree that the large and growing body of literature on the topic finds scant evidence of mixing policies offering actual socially beneficial outcomes. In fact, the various studies and reviews conducted rather suggest that their implementation might lead to detrimental effects, particularly for those they claim to be aiding, namely the most stigmatized and vulnerable.

One of the essential arguments fueling the many attacks directed towards social mix concerns its very core, that is the assumption that spatial propinquity leads to social interaction: according to a large number of scholars including Brail and Kumar (2017), Silver (2013), Bucerius et al. (2017), and Arthurson (2012), there is little to no evidence that interactions across income or racial groups actually occur in mixed neighborhoods in the first place. In addition, Bucerius et al. (2017) explain that even in the exceptional cases in which such interactions do take place, there are no significant signs indicating that they lead to the idealistic benefits that social mix is intended to achieve: instead, they argue that "physical proximity to middle-class neighbors is not, in and of itself, a sufficient condition for cross-class interaction and networking" (p. 488), adding that studies conducted on New York mixing projects show that low-income residents who were moved into middle-class neighborhoods preferred to maintain existing social ties rather than forge new ones. Silver (2013) further expands on this, claiming that no

beneficial emulation effect can occur between middle and low-income residents because that is only possible when "the income gap among residents is not too large" (p. 77).

Moreover, according to a number of authors, not only are mixing policies ineffective at producing the positive interactive and "role model" effects they seek for the more vulnerable, but they can even cause them harm and worsen their already dire situation. August (2014) highlights that mixed housing does not alleviate the aura of prejudice surrounding the poor, but it rather shifts it "from the neighborhood to the microlevel of individual buildings and tenants" (p. 1330), while Silver (2013) states that it even exacerbates it, as the middle class tends to stigmatize and avoid low-income residents, which in turn leads the latter to isolate themselves even more as a result. To make matters worse, the author (2013) warns that forced mixing can even produce conflict and discord, a vision also shared by Brail and Kumar (2017), who reiterate that diverse socio-economic backgrounds are often a recipe for antagonism and distrust rather than inspiration and harmony. Rowe and Dunn (2024) illustrate this concept even more explicitly by reporting a study concerning the HOPE VI projects in Chicago, which concluded by describing a:

> "patronizing and unwelcoming social environment where [low-income residents] feel judged as a group, resented for their presence, and have unequal access to power brokers and decision makers [in a] dominant us-versus-them dynamic" (Rowe and Dunn, 2014, p. 3).

Another serious accusation frequently brought against mixing policies is their dishonesty in outlining their true intentions in that:

> "recent applications of social mix ally more with neoliberal strategies of urban governance, and the principles espoused by neoliberal ideology, than they do with the progressive and quality oriented principles behind historic promotion of the idea" (August, 2008, p. 83).

This point of view is shared by a great many scholars including Bucerius et al. (2017), who claim that policy makers only pretend to be seeking positive outcomes for the vulnerable and to be fostering tolerance and diversity, and that such excuses serve only to mask their "paternalistic", "classist" and "racist" desire to prioritize "the self interest of the state and corporations above the social welfare needs of the urban poor" (p. 488), as well as to promote anti-migration policies.

In fact, according to August (2008, 2014), mixing policies are much more beneficial for the middle class, since they aim to alleviate segregation and public housing concentration just to enhance the image and property value of attractive residential areas. This in turn enables regenerations and redevelopments so as to suit the preferences of

higher-income homeowners, which leads to the infamous process of gentrification, sometimes referred to as "state-led", "by stealth" (Silver, 2013), or even as a new form of colonialism. More in detail, Walks and Maaranen (2008) explain that gentrification is a "cycle" involving a series of stages, the first of which sees the neighborhood enter a state of decay and thus attract low-income residents (often artists), which in turn bolsters the potential value of the buildings as well as the area's identity. In the second stage, other groups with more locational choice like students and homosexual people move into the neighborhood and consequently lead to a further increase in property value and to the "trendyfication" of the area, which becomes more attractive for a higher-income market. This determines a social shift in the third stage, as more middle- and upper-class residents settle or invest in the neighborhood, causing property values to soar and therefore forcing the displacement of low-income tenants. Lastly, the final stage entails what is known as "re-gentrification" (sometimes also referred to as "super-gentrification"), i.e. the arrival of even more affluent professionals like financers and business administrators who further invest in the re-renovation of the local properties, rendering them completely inaccessible to all but the wealthiest.

What is considered to be especially detrimental is the aforementioned displacement process that said redevelopment plans require lower-income residents to undergo, which forces them to relocate to entirely new environments. To make matters worse, Arthurson (2017) warns that this condition is often permanent, as those who are displaced seldom have enough financial means to afford the rents of the refurbished housing units, not to mention the local services, whose prices often surge as a consequence of the renovation. However, even in the isolated cases in which relocated tenants would be financially able to return to their original neighborhood, only the less "problematic" ones are "cherry picked" with the aim of improving, through a process of social engineering, the reputation of the residential area. This, according to August (2008), promotes social exclusion and deprives those whose presence is unwanted of their right to space and property. In addition to that, since social bonds are often already present among segregated residents, especially long-term ones (Arthurson, 2017), as Bucerius et al. (2017) add, relocations sever any support networks and sense of community already existing in the original neighborhoods.

In order to thoroughly examine the dangers and negative consequences caused by mixing policies, the literature on the matter, including authors such as August (2008, 2014), Silver (2013), Brail and Kumar (2017), and Rowe and Dunn (2024), more than often mentions the case of the aforementioned American HOPE VI initiative. This federal project started in the early 1990s and sought to work with private developers to redevelop public housing with the aim of achieving mixed communities in terms of income and ethnicity. However, despite the lofty expectations, the vast majority of studies conducted on the initiative agree that its consequences have generally been negligible, if not dire.

Notably, one of the most notorious examples of HOPE VI's failure is Cabrini Greens, a neglected, crime- and violence-ridden neighborhood in the heart of Chicago that consisted of social housing units inhabited by a community of mostly poor, low-income and stigmatized Afro-American residents. Starting from 1995, the neighborhood witnessed the demolition of multiple housing units and the displacement of a great number of its members, many of whom were eventually not able to return due to either the unaffordability of rents, or the imposed social engineering-related restrictions that allowed only the most "ideal" residents to be part of the new mixed community. This, according to many studies and investigations, not only deprived Cabrini Green's residents of their beloved community and triggered a process of gentrification, but it also failed to solve the issue of segregation and neighborhood effects in the first place, given that no meaningful interaction or role-model emulation occurred between original and middle-class members.

Figure 2: Demolition of a high-rise in Cabrini Green, Chicago

Given the inconclusive, if not harmful nature of mixing policies, some authors hold the opinion that culturally homogeneous spaces are not as problematic as they are portrayed to begin with, and that they should not be eliminated. In particular, Cattacin (2006), in his work eloquently entitled *Why not "ghettos"? The governance of migration in the splintering city*, refers to aggregated neighborhoods as valuable opportunities that serve as a first safe haven for migrants, accompanying them in their integration process and preserving their individual and cultural identities. The author thus cautions that:

> "the blending of society, for example through anti-segregation policies in cities, risks destroying the self-regulating resources of our society produced in more homogeneous spaces, [further explaining that] accepting to live in a pluricultural society – rather than a multicultural one – in which differences are the norm, implies finding a way of working with these differences for what they really are, namely, resources" (Cattacin, 2006, p. 6).

To conclude, Cattacin argues that contemporary cities are inherently shaped by difference and that they must strike a balance between openness and closure: therefore,

urban planning should adopt participatory policies allowing minorities to sustain themselves, while still avoiding promoting segregation.

CHAPTER 2
CANADA'S URBAN DIVERSITY AND MIXING POLICIES

Before exploring the case study of Toronto's Regent Park, it is necessary that the current paper direct its attention to Canada so as to provide a comprehensive overview of its approach to diversity. Therefore, Chapter 2 will examine closely the multicultural nature of Canada, particularly touching upon its three main components, i.e. bilingualism, migration and aboriginal peoples. Subsequently, this chapter will proceed to inspect Canada's housing policies and attempts at social mix and then conclude by reviewing their correlated effects on the communities involved, drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative data to assess their merits and downsides.

1. The multicultural nature of Canada

Among the features most widely recognized as visceral to Canada is undoubtedly its multicultural identity, so much so that the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism defined its people as a "mosaic", a "multicultural society", as early as 1965 (Department of Justice Canada, 2022): as highlighted by Dewing (2013), the country now hosts more than 200 ethnic origins including, from the most common the least common, "Canadian, English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, First Nations, Ukrainian, East Indian, Dutch, and Polish", with immigrants making up 20.6% of its population. Furthermore, Canadian diversity also extends to its linguistic component, as a fifth of Canada's population speaks a language different from English, French, and Aboriginal idioms (e.g. Ojibway and Inuktitut), especially Punjabi, Chinese, Spanish, and Italian, for instance (Dewing, 2013). However, prior to examining the Canadian multicultural policy, a brief explanation of the notion of multiculturalism is imperative: hence, the following section.

1.1 The concept of multiculturalism

In order to provide a thorough definition of multiculturalism, it is firstly essential to clarify that it is not a synonym of the term "multiethnicity", despite it being often employed as such. Briata (2019) explains that, while the latter refers exclusively to the presence of multiple ethnic groups, the former implies many other shapes of diversity,

such as nationality, religion, gender, age, education, sexuality, and socio-economic status. The author (2019) further points out that multiculturalism does not limit itself to a basic tolerance of non-dominant cultures in a given country, but rather actively seeks to promote and support them by means of public policies. This is also reiterated by Berry (2013), who describes multiculturalism as a combination of "cultural maintenance (the cultural diversity element) and equitable participation (the intercultural element)" (p. 666).

A similar idea is expressed by Guo and Wong (2015), according to whom plural societies have two opposite models to handle diversity, namely the melting pot model and the multicultural one. The former, present in countries like France or the USA, believes that one group should be dominant (or "mainstream") and that the rest of society should remain non-dominant, i.e. "minorities". On the contrary, the multicultural model perceives a broader national context known as "larger society" fostering the necessities and interests of the other ethnocultural groups so that all can live in harmony together. Moreover, multiculturalism sees diversity as a resource, and thus does not expect minorities to assimilate, meaning "intercultural relations and change are not viewed as unidirectional, but as mutual and reciprocal" (p. 38).

Guo and Wong (2015) also add that, although such an intricate approach needs to be in a perpetual state of evolution through agreements and compromises, it ultimately bears fruit in that all cultures in a multicultural society are expected to possess equal rights. According to them, multiculturalism allows for much better adaptation than any other method because of integration, which enables minorities to develop a "double engagement" with both their fostering and their heritage culture, permitting them to obtain support and resources from both. This, in turn, allegedly has positive psychological and sociocultural effects, bolstering not only life satisfaction and self-esteem, but also academic and professional success.

Despite the high expectations and the positive findings of multiple studies, as Guo and Wong (2015) recount, multiculturalism has met with a great many critiques throughout the past decades both as ideology and as policy, which the authors interpret as a probable consequence of the escalation of "home-grown" terrorism during the 2000s and 2010s. Among the most significant tragedies are, for instance, the attacks of 9/11 and to Charlie Hebdo in 2015, which struck right in the heart of the Western world, further fueling the

idea that multiculturalism was a "failed project". This eventually prompted scholars to coin the term "post-multiculturalism" to indicate the necessity to devise different strategies to tackle immigrant and ethnic integration.

1.2 Canada's multicultural policy

To fully grasp the Canadian approach to diversity, it is first essential to comprehend the multifaceted nature of its multiculturalism. In that regard, Dewing (2013) proposes three different interpretations of said concept, namely as a sociological fact (descriptive), as ideology (prescriptive) and as policy (political). Sociologically speaking, multiculturalism describes the existence of multiple ethnic groups in Canada, whereas, at the ideological level, it rather refers to an ensemble of ideals aimed at celebrating the country's diverse identity. Finally, the political meaning of the term conceives multiculturalism as the set of policies attempting to formally manage diversity at the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels.

In order to furnish an account of the evolution of Canada's multicultural policy over the decades, this section will draw upon the very insightful works of mainly Dewing (2013), Berry (2013), and Guo and Wong (2015). Dewing commences his recount by highlighting that Canada has been inextricably intertwined with diversity ever since its colonization in the early 16th century, when the British and the French started establishing their first settlements in the country. As a result, Canada immediately became a multicultural society comprising three founding peoples, namely the British, the French, and the preexisting Aboriginal individuals, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit, who all coexisted and even formed strong economic, religious and military bonds (Government of Canada, 2015). Dewing (2013) specifies that, during the Confederation times, Canada was mainly British (60%) and French (30%) until immigrants hailing from the rest of Europe were permitted to enter in the 20th century. Then, Canada lifted its country-of-origin barriers in the 1960s, allowing non-European migrants to gain access to the country as well (Reitz, 2012), which explains Canada's rich diversity, as the statistics previously illustrated show.

According to multiple scholars, Canada's federal multiculturalism policy has experienced three different evolution phases, i.e. the incipient stage (before 1971), the formative stage (1971-1981) and institutionalization (1982 to nowadays). As explained

by Dewing (2013), the incipient stage consisted of a progressive acceptance of multiculturalism as a visceral component of the Canadian society. At that time, the Canadian government did not value diversity, rather viewing it as a liability to the country's unity and therefore attempting to dilute it by means of assimilation: it was not until after World War II that the authorities felt the need to reconsider their approach to diversity as a consequence of those years' substantial immigrant influx to Canada.

The first step toward a more equitable handling of diversity was in 1963, when Prime Minister Leister B. Pearson founded the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (aka the B and B Commission) to respond to the French Québécois' political discontent with assimilation policies of Anglo-conformity, which even manifested itself through a series of bombings planned by the Front de Libération du Québec. The B and B Commission therefore introduced the 1969 Official Languages Act, but since many non-British and non-French felt excluded by the notion of "biculturalism", the Commission published the *Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups* later that same year, thus acknowledging the importance of minor ethnic groups to Canada's cultural identity.

However, as noted by Guo and Wong (2015), multiculturalism started to be intended as public and state policy only in the formative stage, starting from the 1970s: in particular, Berry (2013) specifies that the Multiculturalism Policy was launched in 1971 by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, making Canada the first nation in the world to do so. Thus, fueled by the will to discard assimilation in favor of the integration of minor ethnic groups and to confer them complete citizenship rights and equitable institutional participation, the Multiculturalism Policy declared that:

> "a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework […] [is] the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of all Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others, and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. […] The Government will support and encourage the various cultural and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and values with other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for all" (Berry, 2013, p. 664).

Therefore, as summarized by Guo and Wong (2015), the primary aims of the policy were: "1) to assist cultural groups to retain and foster their identity; 2) to assist cultural groups to overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society; 3) to promote exchanges amongst cultural groups; and 4) to assist immigrants to learn an official

language" (p. 3). These propositions were facilitated by the establishment of even a Minister and Ministry of Multiculturalism, as well as of a Multicultural Directorate dependent on the Department of Secretary of State.

As anticipated earlier, what followed starting from 1982 was the institutionalization period, which is still ongoing at the time of writing the current paper. Dewing (2013) describes the 1980s as a quite delicate time due to the sentiment of racism that was starting to lurk among certain groups, which the author interprets as a plausible consequence of the ethnicity shift that immigration was causing especially in large cities. The government thus commenced a series of initiatives aimed at assisting Canadian institutions to adapt and employed anti-discrimination programs, with the notable approval of 1982's Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, inscribing Canada's multiculturalism in the Constitution.

Furthermore, as recounted by Guo and Wong (2015), the multicultural policy became official legislation in 1988 thanks to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which sought an equilibrium between cultural uniqueness and equality by fostering diversity and striving to assure to every Canadian an equitable participation in both the political and the social domains. Canada then proceeded to enact several other programs, among which Dewing (2013) highlights the establishment of the Department of Canadian Heritage and of a Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, as well as the designation of June 27th as the Canadian Multiculturalism Day in 2002. Finally, in 2010, the Multiculturalism Program was complemented with multiple new objectives, which prioritized, among others, the development of a more integrated and cohesive society capable of satisfying the necessities of Canada's diverse population.

To conclude, Berry (2013) notes that while diversity and equity remained pivotal to Canada's policy, its focus has shifted several times throughout its development during the past decades, moving from "ethnicity multiculturalism (with a focus on cultural diversity), to equity multiculturalism (focus on equitable participation), to civic multiculturalism (focus on society building and inclusiveness) and finally to integrative multiculturalism (focus on identification with Canada, and with full incorporation into the larger Canadian society)" (p. 665).

1.3 Perceptions of Canada's multiculturalism

As stated by Berry (2013), a great many pieces of research on the Canadian multicultural policies agree on considering Canada a rather successful role model in handling diversity, with the country boasting several high rankings in international surveys concerning especially immigrant reception. Furthermore, numerous studies show not only that "acceptance of diversity is the norm in the new Canada" (Parkin and Mendelsohn, 2003, p. 3), but also that "most Canadians celebrate diversity as part of their national identity" (p. 10). This view is shared by Berry (2013), who explains that Canadians are growing increasingly supportive of intercultural relations over time, adding that 74% express agreement with the federal multicultural policy, with 96% even believing that "young Canadians are fortunate to grow up surrounded by friends from different races and religions" (p. 669).

Figure 3: Monument to Multiculturalism, Toronto. This monument, which serves as a tribute to multiculturalism, symbolizes how deeply diversity is engrained in Canadian identity and public consciousness.

Despite this, on the other hand, Canada's Multiculturalism Policy has drawn fierce criticism and skepticism much alike that which is often directed towards mixing policies, which has already been discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of the current paper. In particular, Guo and Wong (2013) summarize the critiques most widely levelled at the policy in the following five statements:

> "1. Multiculturalism is divisive: it undermines Canadian society (identity and coherence) by promoting cultural diversity at the expense of unity; 2. Multiculturalism is marginalizing: it ghettoizes minorities, their aspirations, and commodifies culture by invoking cultural solutions to structural problems; 3. Multiculturalism is essentializing: it fossilizes differences and envisions Canada as a collection of autonomous ethnic groups that are self-contained, determining, and controlling; 4. Multiculturalism is a hoax: it does not address the root cause of inequality as it is a symbol without substance that promises much but delivers little except to delude, conceal, evade, or distort; 5. Multiculturalism is hegemonic: it does not empower minorities but rather contains them as it is an instrument of control that achieves consensus by manipulating people's consent without their awareness" (Guo and Wong, 2013, p. 6).

What is perhaps even more intriguing is that, according to several surveys, Canadians acknowledge that the country is still a long way from surmounting the ever-present issues of racism, prejudice and discrimination: Parkin and Mendelsohn (2003) particularly explain that 74% of Canadians complain that "there is still a lot of racism left in Canada" (p. 6), with 53% denouncing unfair treatment of Aboriginal and Black people by the police in cities such as Toronto.

Among the most plagued by discrimination are immigrants, especially their children, i.e., the second generation: according to Reitz (2012), non-white groups are especially concerned, particularly African- and Asian-Canadian communities, who still report struggling with unemployment, poverty, gun violence and social isolation. To make matters worse, the Ethnic Diversity Survey demonstrates that said visible minorities are not as integrated into Canadian society as white migrants, as only 30% fewer would identify as Canadian or vote in federal elections. These statistics strike as particularly unexpected, primarily because the Canadian immigrant selection system, which chooses immigrants according to a series of points that can be awarded for virtues such as education or work experience, has been largely praised as remarkably successful.

Likewise, as argued by Friederes (2008), others believe that, contrary to what may seem at first glance, Aboriginal Canadians are also the victims of the repercussions of multiculturalism. As a matter of fact, Aboriginal people began facing numerous tribulations as soon as the 17th century due to Canada's colonization, which inaugurated a "history of genocide, collective trauma, […] dispossession of land, disenfranchisement, poverty and ill health, just to name a few attributes" (Friederes, 2008, p. 323), thus condemning even today's descendants to experience "historical trauma".

Nowadays, primarily due to 1971's Multiculturalism Policy, it is worth noting that Canada has undoubtedly come a long way since the forced assimilation and boundary enforcement days, to the point that the Canadian government now recognizes the value of Aboriginal people and has put into practice several initiatives to protect them.

Moreover, what Friederes (2008) describes as a "Revival of Aboriginal identity" has been taking place for the past three decades, as non-Aboriginal Canadians grow increasingly more accepting of Aboriginal culture. Despite this, some take the view that Aboriginality is nothing more than a façade, an "artifact" concealing a much different reality in that Aboriginal people, who are still among the poorest in the country, are allegedly just experiencing a new form of assimilation.

2. The Canadian social mix experience

After Section 1's in-depth analysis of Canada's intrinsic multicultural nature and of its modus operandi in handling it, the following Section 2 will attempt to generate as detailed a picture as possible of the country's mixing policies. It is worth noting, however, that despite its explicitly diverse identity, Canada does not possess as many decades' worth of experience with said policies as other countries: in fact, as August (2008) notes, Toronto's Regent Park is Canada's largest and most prominent project of this kind, preceded chronologically only by Don Mount Court, also in Toronto, which was approved in 2004. Still, Canada has tried its hand at achieving the positive effects expected of social mix through smaller-scale housing policies. Thus, Section 2 will examine these trends by reviewing Canadian housing policies and drawing upon specific examples to provide an account of their perceived outcomes.

2.1 The evolution of Canada's housing and mixing policies

In order to fully comprehend Canada's relatively recent attempts at social mix, it is vital to review the history of the country's housing conditions. To that end, this paper draws extensively on the detailed account provided by Greaves (2011), who begins by highlighting that the 1940s were a time of strong demand for Canadian housing, especially by the more disadvantaged. This is accounted for by those years' significant demographic growth, which in turn is attributed to several factors such as the baby boom, an extended life expectancy, and a considerable immigrant flow, leading the population to double by 1981. However, what played an even more prominent role in the increase of housing demand was the population distribution, which underwent a process of urbanization due to the new job opportunities stemming from post-war industrialization.

To make matters worse, this soaring necessity for housing was exacerbated by a "perpetual deficit in Canadian housing" (p. 14) primarily because of the soaring construction costs and a lack of serviced land. Moreover, Greaves (2011) emphasizes that the Canadian government neglected especially public housing almost entirely, as the country's very first dedicated organization was founded no sooner than 1953 by Toronto's municipal government. All the aforementioned factors therefore led to overpopulation in cities, which had no choice but to accommodate the disadvantaged in their suburbs.

By contrast, the second half of the 20th century saw a U-turn in that housing costs decreased while income rates increased, resulting in new housing and renovations. Although the Canadian federal government had already been involved in the sector previously, the first instance of its intervention in favor of low-income housing was 1944's National Housing Act (NHA), which made historically low mortgage rates with the intention of fostering "slum clearance and urban renewal" (Greaves, 2011, p. 18). This enabled more Canadians to be their own homeowners, with the majority of the housing stock being increasingly privately owned as a consequence.

Furthermore, Canada at the time suffered from a debilitating "indecision" as to "which level of government was responsible for public housing" (p. 16), so all the efforts directed at public housing stock production were put in by voluntary community organizations, including the Citizens Housing and Planning Association and the Association of Women Electors. In addition, the limited number of administrators who actually lived up to what is necessary to correctly manage public housing also proved detrimental, since:

> "those who are charged with the responsibility of administering dwellings provide for certain persons or families who qualify by virtue of low income, grossly inadequate current housing accommodation, some physical or emotional disability, large families, or a combination of these several attributes, must be persons who have a clear understanding of both the objective of the housing programs and of the culture of the families and individuals most likely to inhabit them" (Greaves, 2011, p. 17).

What followed was a gradual increase in the use of housing as a means to shape social policy, with a particular interest in rebuilding the outdated facilities that were destroyed during World War II. As added by August (2008), this aim was pursued by Canada between the 1950s and 1960s with the Urban Renewal Program, which sought to fund modernist public housing complexes for rent-subsidized tenants until its termination in 1969. This tendency was accentuated especially since the NHA was amended in 1949 by

Minister of Resources and Development Robert H. Winters, who made it so that public housing was to be handled by local governments.

From then onwards, the Federal Government's plan to assign this task to local authorities was increasingly clearer, as demonstrated by Finance Minister Paul Martin, who established that the duty to manage subsidized housing belonged exclusively to provincial governments (Greaves, 2011). Moreover, in 1979, the Federal Government started encouraging income mix in social housing as stated in Section 56.1 of the NHA, believing that social mix would favor financial viability and social stability. However, income-mixed social housing was deemed too costly in 1983, so, after the NHA was amended in 1986 to restrict assistance to tenants in "core housing need", the project was ultimately cancelled in 1992 (August, 2008).

Then, with 2000's Social Housing Reform Act (SHRA), public housing responsibilities subsequently fell to Municipal non-profit Housing providers (MNPs) so as to "shift the nature of social housing from a 'top down' model to a locally based, autonomous, 'more entrepreneurial' project" (Greaves, 2011, p. 76). However, despite being financially responsible for public housing management, and therefore playing a central role in the wellbeing of the more disadvantaged, such organizations did not hold significant enough power to act when it was needed most since, according to the Business Corporations Act, it was the government who exercised control over any changes made to subsidized housing projects.

As a result of the government's negligence, housing providers aligned with neoliberal tendencies in that they grew increasingly "more entrepreneurial", thus allying "more closely with the private building market, and […] working with local service managers rather than a central authority" (Greaves, 2011, p. 76). This, according to the author (2011), produces even more pernicious effects than if the government opposed public housing outright, as no meaningful attempt at improving it is ever made.

Finally, as anticipated earlier, it was not until the early 21st century, when "concerns about high concentrations of poverty, social isolation, neighborhood safety, and the physical deterioration of public housing stock" had been raised (Bucerius et al., 2017, p. 487) that Canada started drawing inspiration from other countries' experiences in large-scale social mix projects. In particular, August (2008) explains that what influenced the Canadian approach the most was the HOPE VI program, which the U.S. approved in 1992

and whose effects in Cabrini Green have been briefly referred to in Chapter 1 of the current paper. This project aimed to resolve public housing issues through a series of redevelopments by means of demolishing complexes and rebuilding them as socially mixed communities, namely what is known as the American "deconcentration by demolition" model.

It was by drawing upon said projects that, in 2002, Canada commenced planning the redevelopment of its aforementioned first two neighborhoods, i.e. Don Mount Court and Regent Park, the latter of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 as this paper's case study. For the time being, however, suffice it to say that Canada's future social housing interventions will likely be taking into account Regent Park's redevelopment, which is in the hands of the public housing provider Toronto Community Housing (TCHC).

2.2 Local applications and outcomes of mixing policies in Canada

To conclude Chapter 2's analysis of the Canadian approach to diversity, the following part will shift its attention to the inspection of some of Canada's local attempts at fostering social mix through housing policy, with the aim of assessing their outcomes. Since Walks and Maaranen (2008) identify Canada's three largest cities, i.e. Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver, as some of the most prominent examples of social mix in the country, this paper will mainly direct its attention to selected cases concerning these urban areas.

Walks and Maaranen (2008) focus particularly on the effects of gentrification, which has been encouraged in Canada for several decades as a means to achieve "tenure dilution" by introducing market-rate housing in low-income neighborhoods in the hope of bringing social diversity and social "balance". This process, which often entails the demolition of working-class housing so that it can be replaced with higher-end buildings, is divided by the authors (2008) into three main "waves", namely the first (late 1960s-late 1970s), the second (1980s), and the third (1990s).

In Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, as expected of gentrification, the neighborhoods involved experienced an increase in high-income households. However, this phenomenon was especially notable in fully gentrified areas and those neighborhoods which started gentrifying the earliest, where greater concentrations of high-income households than anywhere else in the three cities were found. Conversely, neighborhoods where

gentrification had not been completed were somewhat diverse, but the observed patterns suggest that any existing degree of social mix in such areas is only transitory. Still, Walks and Maaranen (2008) highlight that the statistics are not entirely homogeneous across the three cities since, while Montréal and Vancouver saw their inequality rise as gentrification persevered, Toronto was the only one where neighborhoods in the first wave appeared to be more unequal compared to those in the second and third waves.

On the other hand, what was experienced by all the neighborhoods examined by the authors (2008) was a process of income polarization, meaning that the number of both low-income and high-income households increased while that of middle-income households plummeted, especially in fully gentrified areas and in those which gentrified first. This is because "gentrification contributes to polarization by spatially concentrating wealthy households and forcing low-income households into poorer neighborhoods elsewhere" (Walks and Maaranen, 2008, p. 313), which of course raises the important subject of displacement.

Even more concerning a finding, however, is that gentrification is causing inner-city neighborhoods to lose their role of immigrant reception areas, since the quantity of immigrants in these neighborhoods declines as the gentrifying process continues. To make matters worse, gentrification is also held responsible for an overall drop in the relative level of visible minorities, especially in fully gentrified areas, leading to a progressive "whitening of the neighborhood" (p. 317). What the authors (2008) therefore suggest, is that it would be best to find the means to employ gentrification and then prevent it from degenerating any further, since:

> "if allowed to run its course, gentrification is likely to reduce neighborhood levels of social mix and ethnic diversity, and with it the ability of a neighborhood to integrate future waves of immigrants […]. However, if gentrification can be slowed or halted altogether, there would appear to exist the potential for maintaining inclusive, ethnically diverse, and more socially mixed communities in the inner city" (Walks and Maaranen, 2008, p. 320).

Concerns about mixing policies and gentrification are also expressed by Rose (2004), who conducted a neighborhood-scale study on a zone in Montréal comprising Plateau Mont-Royal, known for its intensive gentrification; the Saint-Laurent boulevard, i.e. "the city's traditional multi-ethnic 'corridor'" (p. 291); the gentrified working-class districts of Petite-Patrie and Rosemont; the Centre-Sud district, which includes the city's Gay

Village and several “special needs” housing units; and Lachine Canal, a former industrial area now redeveloped for residential use.

These inner-city neighborhoods assembled before 1946 underwent a transformation in the 1990s, when non-luxury apartment blocks were added as infill as part of a project aimed at boosting the attractiveness of inner-city districts to investors and the middle-class market and at achieving tenure mix so as to reduce income gaps. Moreover, after the approval of the Opération Solidarité 500 logements program in 2001, the City of Montréal included amongst its priorities that of encouraging social mix in its housing policy with the intention to assure social and affordable housing.

Figure 4: Boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montréal

What emerged from Rose’s (2004) interviews was that many middle-class residents experienced several episodes of conflict and resentment on a daily basis due to them being perceived as the “gentrifiers”, with one respondent ironically stating: “I often think that our heads will be the first to roll when the revolution comes” (p. 293). Furthermore, one of the complaints most widely shared among those interviewed was the fact that, despite living in close proximity to lower-income residents, there was still a social abyss preventing any form of significant interaction to occur, although some confessed to appreciate a “distant but peaceful coexistence”.

As for the respondents' attitudes towards social diversity, the author (2004) found four main types of opinions: "ignorance or indifference", "'NIMBY'-type reactions", "tolerant, but with caveats", and "egalitarian perspectives". To the first group, i.e. the smallest, belong those who were completely unaware and who manifested indifference to social housing being present in their neighborhoods. A different view was held by the "nimbies", who felt disturbed by marginalized groups and lamented feeling unsafe, associating public housing with uncleanness and with "social problems in the community". The third category, on the other hand, held a more tolerant view of diversity but still resisted the idea of additional social housing units being introduced in their neighborhoods, with some being contrary to immigrants receiving such opportunities.

Lastly, the fourth group of respondents, who expressed an egalitarian view and valued social diversity, even revealed a deep understanding of the complex dynamics they were involved in as gentrifiers, expressing a sense of guilt for paradoxically "personally being beneficiaries of the economic and social dynamics of gentrification" (Rose, 2004, p. 298) and for indirectly causing displacement. They also believed that Montréal should prioritize social housing and that developers should be taxed on part of their profits in order to spend that money on social housing for those who are subject to displacement since, as one respondent put it, "The attraction of a city in general is that it's where things happen. And everyone has the right to be there and to express themselves" (p. 300). Despite this, when asked to indicate what determined their choice to reside in the condominiums they lived in, very few considered the neighborhood's diversity as a key factor.

After covering the neighborhood-scale effects of social mix through housing policy in Montréal, attention will now turn to the social dynamics occurring on a more domiciliary level by inspecting the intriguing phenomenon of secondary suites in Vancouver. As Mendez (2017) explains, secondary suites, also known as accessory apartments, are "self-contained dwelling units created through the subdivision of a principal dwelling (typically detached or semi-detached house)" (p. 1275) which gained the most popularity in cities where house prices have soared. As one such city, Vancouver houses Canada's most costly ownership market, which prompted its government to foster secondary suites since the early 2000s as a means to guarantee more affordable housing while attempting to

produce the benefits associated with social mix, hoping that disadvantaged renters would benefit from being in contact with wealthier homeowners.

Figure 5: A secondary suite in Vancouver

It is also worth noting that second units are advantageous not only for homeowners, who can rent them to boost their income so that they can pay their mortgages more easily, but also to real estate speculators, who view them as an exceptional occasion for investment due to their outstanding revenue stream. Therefore, given the financial nature of the criteria making secondary suites attractive to homeowners, Mendez (2017) conducted a study on the matter to investigate how numerous diversity factors such as ethnicity and financial disparities can affect domicile-scale interactions.

In evaluating his findings, the author (2017) observed three main types of interactions, namely "conflictive", "tolerant" and "respectful" encounters. In the first case, the inevitable contact between homeowners and renters generated conflict stemming from the perception that "one group [was] viewed as 'invading' the space of another group and thus being 'out of place'" (p. 1281). These instances of "social collision" were sometimes determined by a sentiment of racism, which is proved by one respondent who recounted the following unpleasant experience with her landlord: "'This place has always been clean, and there were never fleas till you guys moved in here. You brought the fleas.' [Laughs] And then she put a Canadian flag and an Irish flag [on the wall between our doors] and she wrote, 'Keep out'" (Mendez, 2017, p. 1281).

As for the second category of "tolerant encounters", these often resulted from homeowners considering secondary suites as no more than a contractual agreement and thus deliberately avoiding interactions when possible, as explained by a renter: "Very separated. She was very clear about that, she actually said to me, 'I don't want a new best friend.' That was fine by me." (p. 1282). Such inhibitions are also the result of the feeling of awkwardness stemming from the perceived power asymmetry between landlords and renters, which sometimes prevents especially the former from taking a step forward even when they would be eager to.

Finally, the third type refers to those interactions that go beyond mere tolerance, resulting from the willingness to perceive renters as actual "human beings" instead of as a "source of mortgage-helper revenue" (p. 1283). Despite such encounters being extremely rare, they still provided some endearing accounts of friendship blossoming over time, with some respondents reporting that "She asks how I'm doing, she's met my parents, and more of a familiar interaction almost has developed" or that "I've still got their phone numbers and they've got mine and […] I've been invited back to barbecues" (p. 1284).

In conclusion, what emerges from an in-depth analysis of the Canadian experience with social mix through housing policy is that, despite yielding some positive results, the efforts that cities like Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver put into encouraging diversity and alleviating segregation and inequality still resulted in major challenges involving displacement and minimal, if not conflictual, interactions across social groups. Thus, these findings underscore the immense complexity entailed by mixing policies and highlight the need for further meticulous research, so that policy makers may be better equipped to address the aforementioned issues as effectively as possible. In this regard, the next chapter will attempt to shed more light on the matter by examining the case study of Toronto's Regent Park.

CHAPTER 3
THE REGENT PARK CASE STUDY

After Chapter 1 furnished a theoretical framework on social mix encompassing its history as well as its objectives and downsides, Chapter 2 focused on providing a detailed account of Canada's approach to diversity by reviewing the development of its multicultural identity and by assessing its attempts at mixing through housing policies. Chapter 3 will now endeavor to apply the knowledge gathered so far by shifting its attention to a more practical matter, i.e. the case study of Toronto's Regent Park. In particular, it will begin by outlining the neighborhood's history and socio-cultural identity, before subsequently examining the physical and social redevelopment process currently underway. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative data will be consulted to generate a comprehensive picture of the perceived effects of the implemented policies on the residents involved.

1. Regent Park's rich identity: amidst history and demographics

As previously mentioned, in order to permit a thorough comprehension of Regent Park's enacted policies, providing an account of its intriguing history prior to its current redevelopment is of utmost importance, as is investigating the neighborhood's current socio-cultural, ethnographic and economic composition. Therefore, the following section will address both aspects to paint a comprehensive portrait of Regent Park's multifaceted identity, which will serve as the foundation for this chapter's subsequent analyses.

1.1 The history of Regent Park

The area now known as Regent Park is a 69-acre (approximately 280,000 m^2) neighborhood situated in East Downtown Toronto, Ontario. Located right in the heart of the Canadian metropolis, it is bordered by Gerrard Street to the North, Don River to the East, Queen Street to the South, and Parliament Street to the West, with Dundas Street East splitting the area into two distinct zones, namely Regent Park North and Regent Park South.

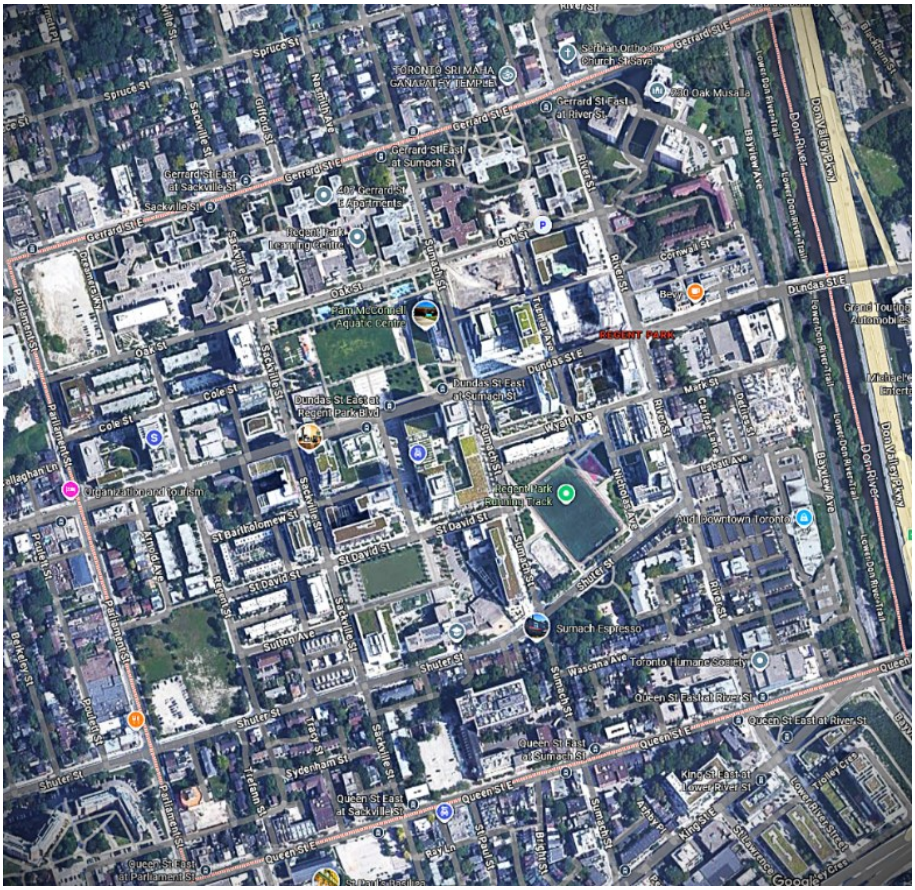

Figure 6: Satellite view of Regent Park, whose perimeter is marked in red

As both Greaves (2011) and Brail and Kumar (2017) explain, Regent Park was designed as a government subsidized housing site in the late 1940s and 1950s by city planner Eugene Faludi, architects J.E. Hoare and Peter Dickenson, and social activist Albert Rose, and still remains Canada's oldest and largest public housing project to this day. That said, the roots of Regent Park's intricate history extend far deeper, beyond the 20th century: in fact, Loney (2012) recounts that the neighborhood, built in the 1840s on ancestral indigenous land, was once known as Cabbagetown, a name which now corresponds to the current Regent Park's North area (Saeed, 2013).

Cabbagetown, mostly inhabited by poor working-class Irish Catholic and Protestant immigrants, was notoriously regarded as a precariously segregated and degraded neighborhood whose conditions were exacerbated after World War I, which notably caused a further impoverishment of the area. Not long after, the neighborhood's ever deteriorating state, coupled with the significant post-war immigration flow that Canada was experiencing (Toronto Ward Museum, 2020), attracted the interest of Toronto urban planners, who began conceiving a renovation process for the area in 1946 and commenced

physical construction of Regent Park in 1948 (Greaves, 2011). The initiative was financed by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, established by the federal government in 1946. Additionally, support came not only from the Canadian government, partly due to the increasing housing demand that the country was witnessing at the time, but also from former Mayor of Toronto Robert H. Saunders, who believed that "the true greatness of a city is measured not by its artistic and commercial attainments alone, but also by the homes of its citizens and the conditions under which the least affluent of them live" (Greaves, 2011, p. 19).

Therefore, as noted by the author (2011), the objective of Regent Park's construction was to grant appropriate housing to those in need, while at the same time cleansing Toronto of what was one of its most stigmatized slums, thus enhancing the overall perception of the city as an ancillary benefit as well. However, despite the complete demolition of Cabbagetown's slums being imperative to attain said objectives, the initiative was publicly quite well-received overall, as was further confirmed with subsequent voting. What followed thereafter in 1947 was the establishment of the Housing Authority of Toronto to preside over the project, as well as the decision to render it independent from civic administration, which was in line with Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's view, who believed that "it would be almost 'immoral' for an elected government to be 'the landlords' of its citizens, due to the power that the government would then hold over the inhabitants, and their living situation" (Greaves, 2011, p. 22). However, despite such intentions, the meagre amount of funding available eventually led to the partial involvement of the government, which wielded a significant power due to the Chairmen of the Housing Authority being selected from elected representatives who, being overly busy with their civic duties, were seldom able to attend meetings on the initiative. This unstable state of affairs lingered until 1956, when the post of Chairman was held by a chosen citizen for the first time.

In addition, Greaves (2011) highlights that another central step considered in the design of Regent Park was the selection of "worthy candidates" to dwell in the soon-to-be-built neighborhood, which was based on the concept of "adequate home" at that time, as only those who resided in inadequate housing or in the area that was to be demolished were eligible. Consequently, applicants were asked to submit descriptions of their living conditions, which a Sub-Committee on Management and Tenant Selection consulted to

detect the neediest families and those with children, who were then assessed and ultimately assigned priority. Only after these two categories were fully accommodated was any remaining housing reserved for tenants inhabiting the area set to be demolished.

However, as explained by Greaves (2011), the Housing Authority was also aiming to render Regent Park successful as a "social space" as well, so the housing units were arranged to encourage especially the elderly and smaller families to socialize. To that end, all three of Regent Park's areas, namely the eastern, central and western sections, consisted of mainly apartment buildings, contained multiple blocks of row houses, which were expected to ensure privacy while still increasing the likelihood of social interaction, and employed no fences enclosing each property's yard. Moreover, drawing inspiration from Howard's utopian garden city movement, which has incidentally been discussed in Chapter 1 of the current paper, Regent Park was planned to contain a large number of open green spaces later embellished with trees and flowers and complemented with several baseball diamonds and playgrounds.

As the Toronto Ward Museum (2020) recounts, since physical construction had started in 1948, the first area to be completed was Regent Park North in 1949, which therefore served as Canada's first public housing project aimed at offering support to poor working-class residents by assisting them in their eventual transition into a better life outside of the neighborhood. Regent Park South followed in the 1950s, with the building phase ceasing shortly after in 1957, when the project was considered concluded. The early 1950s were also a time of intense migration, which resulted in many immigrants from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine settling into the neighborhood, thus enforcing its role as "a landing place for immigrants and newcomers" (Toronto Ward Museum, 2020). The 1960s and 1970s then marked a new wave of migrants hailing from Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and Central and South America, not to mention the considerable number of Indigenous households residing on Sackville Street at the time, according to some storytellers.

However, while "Regent Park was initially successful in that it provided quality, new housing to many low-income residents […] [and] developed many strengths, including cultural diversity and a strong sense of community" (City of Toronto, 2024, p. 3), a number of significant issues and challenges started manifesting themselves not long after. According to Greaves (2011), many identify Regent Park's design as the primary cause

of such problems, with some notably holding “poor design” accountable for the project’s “failure” (p. 44). More in detail, since the neighborhood was designed as an exclusively residential space, no commercial spaces were included, which proved to be detrimental in that storekeepers contribute to ensuring the area’s safety and provide “ideal sites for non-committal interactions between neighbors […] to build a sense of community” (Greaves, 2011, p. 38). In that regard, while Bucerius et al. (2017) highlight that the neighborhood did not experience any trouble concerning its inhabitants’ sense of community, reporting a “tightly knit and vibrant community of original residents” (p. 489), the same cannot be said of safety, which was in fact among the most urgent problems afflicting Regent Park. Once again, design was to be considered responsible, as Greaves (2011) notes that the neighborhood was enclosed by strong fencing on its corners, with its streets being completely disconnected from those in the areas nearby, thus preventing police cars from intervening in the area.

To make matters worse, as recounted by Loney (2012), the physical separation of Regent Park was exacerbated by the utter absence of not only commercial but also recreational facilities, meaning that potential external visitors were by no means encouraged to access the area. In addition, crime and violence, especially drug-related, soon started to plague the neighborhood and intensified throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, which in turn resulted in a series of conflicts between residents and police officers so bitter that one of them became known as August 1995’s “Riot in Regent Park”. This, coupled with the ever-growing poverty among its residents as well as its ethnically and socially diverse composition, led Regent Park to develop a highly negative reputation as a stigmatized, segregated, crime-ridden area to be avoided at all costs, an image which was further tarnished by the derogatory depictions of the mass media (Toronto Ward Museum, 2020). As a result, Loney (2012) highlights that Regent Park’s residents endured a great many hardships ranging from relentless economic problems to intense racism and stereotyping, which the City of Toronto (2007) identifies as “local barriers, or ‘neighborhood effects’ [that have] undermined access to employment, success in education, and opportunity for advancement”.

In conclusion, what was at first conceived in the 1940s as a project that would rid the original Cabbagetown of its slums and accommodate the poor in adequate housing in order to enable their transition to a better life, eventually resulted in an isolated,

segregated neighborhood ravaged by poverty, violence and stigmatization. Such issues grew so blatant that, according to Saeed (2013), city officials commenced discussing possible ways of improving Regent Park as soon as the 1970s. Later, after motions to revitalize the neighborhood in the 1990s and several meetings with the Metro Toronto Housing Authority and the Provincial Ministry of Housing, the Toronto City Council eventually approved the revitalization of Regent Park in 2003, which will be reviewed and assessed in full detail later in this chapter.

1.2 Regent Park's socio-cultural profile

Before evaluating Regent Park's second endeavor to attain a successful revitalization, it is fundamental to grasp the neighborhood's demographic composition so as to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible of its residents' ethnographic, socio-cultural and financial identity. As will be further discussed, fostering social mix is among the primary objectives that the current redevelopment plan strives to accomplish. Therefore, a thorough understanding of such contextual factors is undoubtedly a necessary prerequisite not only for analytical purposes, but also to enable policymakers to act appropriately and effectively. To furnish the requisite statistics, mainly quantitative data from three different sources will be taken into account, namely a 2011-2012 survey conducted by the Toronto Centre for Community Learning (Mueen, 2012) and two reports by the City of Toronto containing statistics related to 2016 and 2021, published in 2018 and 2023 respectively.

First, what is perhaps most notable and consistent throughout the years is the neighborhood's rich cultural diversity, which comes as no surprise considering Regent Park's century-long role as a migrant reception area. In particular, according to Mueen (2012), the number of racialized minorities far exceeds that of white residents, with immigrant-origin individuals accounting for the majority of Regent Park's demographics. This is confirmed by the City of Toronto (2018), which notes that "visible minorities", i.e. "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (p. 18), account for almost 71% of Regent Park's total residents, a percentage far beyond that of Toronto's average, which sits at an already impressive 51%. In addition, less than half of the neighborhood's residents were born in Canada, meaning that first generation migrants make up more than 50% of Regent Park's population, with

second and third generation individuals accounting for respectively 23% and 20% of the demographic total (City of Toronto, 2023). As for their origins, the vast majority of Regent Park's migrants hail from Asia and Oceania (63%) followed by a distant Africa (17%), with the most common countries of birth being Bangladesh, China, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam (City of Toronto, 2023). It is also worth noting that, given that the neighborhood allegedly stands on what was once native land, Regent Park counts a few individuals who identify as aboriginal among its residents (2%).

As highlighted by Mueen (2012), such varied ethnic diversity means that the neighborhood is home to a plethora of different languages as well: in fact, although more than 65% speak English or French (i.e. the country's two official languages) at home, 52% of Regent Park's residents have non-official languages as their mother tongue, with the most common being Bengali, Mandarin and Tamil (City of Toronto, 2018). In terms of age, Regent Park appears to be quite young overall, with a median of 35 years old (City of Toronto, 2023). As Mueen (2012) explains, this is reflected in the neighborhood's household types, as 73% contain at least two people, 37% of which having at least one child (City of Toronto, 2018).

As far as occupation is concerned, Mueen (2012) notes that "Regent Park consists of a very educated group of people" (p. 11), reporting that almost 29% hold a master's degree, while only 3% have not advanced past 9th grade. Despite this, the neighborhood suffers from a relatively high unemployment rate, which hits 17% compared to Toronto's average of 14% (City of Toronto, 2023). To make matters worse, Regent Park is particularly afflicted by poverty as shown by an overall poverty rate of 44%, corresponding to double the amount of Toronto as a whole (City of Toronto, 2018). This is partially accounted for by a considerably low income across household types, which in some cases barely equates to half that of other Torontonians. Particularly, according to Mueen (2012), slightly less than 41% report a yearly income below $15,000, with a significant amount being spent on housing rent.

In conclusion, Regent Park, a neighborhood with a rich history of immigration, social housing and past revitalizations, is viscerally characterized by a wide spectrum of ethno-cultural diversity. However, it has consistently been plagued by several hardships including discrimination, stigma, unemployment and poverty. Such findings are instrumental in order to fully grasp the current revitalization plan, which will be examined

in the next section, as it is primarily aimed at attempting to tackle many of the aforementioned issues.

2. The revitalization of Regent Park

As has already been mentioned earlier, after the original Regent Park project had gradually been degenerating throughout the second half of the 20th century, with its dire housing and living conditions growing increasingly more apparent, it was the residents themselves who, having identified the major issues afflicting their own neighborhood, voiced their concerns in the late 1990s, reaching for help by attending meetings with government representatives and housing authorities. Incidentally, this, according to Brail and Kumar (2017), foreshadowed what would be one of the most prominent pillars of the current revitalization plan, namely the involvement of the neighborhood's community, as it was recognized that "efforts to engage, inform and involve residents in the redevelopment process were crucial" (p. 3780). Eventually, the City of Toronto approved the revitalization of Regent Park in 2003, and responsibility for the project was assigned to Toronto Community Housing (TCHC), which had presided over the city's subsidized housing since the previous year.

Greaves (2011) recounts that it was at this point that TCHC, which planned to sell land in order to invest the money earned into new subsidized housing, began officially seeking interested developers, eventually selecting The Daniel's Corporation in 2007 and Tridel Builders Inc. in 2020 (TCHC, 2025). Since TCHC's revitalization plan consisted of a total of five phases so as to "minimize disruption to the residents' lives as much as possible" (Greaves, 2011, p. 86), the former was chosen to supervise the first three, whereas the latter was assigned to the final two. Thus, as August (2014) notes, perfectly in line with the Canadian housing tendencies discussed in Chapter 2, Regent Park's redevelopment was envisaged from the start to be achieved through a market-driven public-private partnership, which Bucerius et al. (2017) further define as a "system that integrates state and corporate interests" (p. 487). The plan, which officially commenced in 2005, is scheduled to last a maximum total of 36 years, with phases 1-3 having ended in 2024 and phases 4-5 being planned to last between 10-15 years (TCHC, 2025), meaning that Regent Park's revitalization will be completed no sooner than 2034.

In its official website dedicated to the initiative, TCHC presents its main objectives by stating that, through a process of demolition and reconstruction:

> "the completed project will feature a mix of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units, affordable housing rentals, and market condominiums. Intentionally designed to create a vibrant neighbourhood, these quality homes will be integrated within walking distance of retail and commercial spaces, community facilities, active parks and open spaces" (TCHC, 2025).

As noted by Greaves (2011), what emerges from these words is the intention to resolve many of the issues previously highlighted by addressing what was often considered as their main source, namely Regent Park's design. In particular, TCHC envisioned tackling segregation and isolation by adding not only streets connecting condominiums to public housing, but also the commercial and cultural spaces that the neighborhood was in urgent need of. The aim was thereby to "open up" Regent Park, thus attracting both external visitors and new higher-income residents by selling them condominiums, therefore "providing Regent Park residents with tools to improve both the neighborhood and the opportunities for the people who live there" (TCHC, 2007, p. 1). However, TCHC intended to utilize design not only as a means to build a mixed-income neighborhood, but also to achieve social mix as a whole, envisaging to produce all the benefits commonly associated with it: according to the Housing Company (2007), the degree of success of mixed-income communities is significantly boosted when physical design features encourage social inclusion and social mix, which is why measures such as efforts to "minimize any visible distinction between rental housing and privately owned housing" were among the highest priorities.

More in detail, what TCHC (2025) and its partner The Daniel's Corporation planned for phases 1-3 was to erect high-rise condominiums; open new amenities such as the Regent Park Aquatic Centre, the Big Park and the Regent Park Athletic Grounds; and add commercial spaces such as Freshco. Greaves (2011) particularly highlights the strategic placement of said retail establishments, as many of them were built at the corner of crucial streets like Dundas St. and Parliament St., thus enabling "easy access" to not only residents, but also visitors from the areas nearby. In addition, the first three phases of the revitalization plan included the establishment of new neighborhood services like Dundas East Dental and the Toronto Birth Centre, and finally the construction of social service agencies such as the Toronto Centre of Community Learning and Development previously mentioned, and the Support Enhance Access Service Centre (TCHC, 2025).

Eventually, after phase 3 was completed, by 2024 Regent Park had gained "1,818 RGI units and 464 net affordable units […], including 110 barrier-free units and 53 fully modified accessible suites" (TCHC, 2025).

Figure 7: High-rise condominiums under construction in 2009, Regent Park

As far as the last two phases are concerned, namely phases 4-5, even though planning is still currently underway as of 2025, TCHC and Tridel Builders Inc. had their rezoning application approved by Toronto City Council in 2023, therefore opening the door to the development of further RGI, market and "critically needed" affordable units, additional commercial, community, cultural and open spaces, as well as to amenities such as the Toronto Public Library (TCHC and Tridel, 2022). Demolition began later that same year, which prompted TCHC and Tridel to acknowledge the necessity for some residents to undergo a process of "relocation". In that regard, TCHC endeavored to safeguard displaced residents, declaring the following:

> "Toronto Community Housing has made a clear commitment to residents of Revitalization communities: any resident who is relocated as part of a Revitalization has the right to return to a new unit being built as part of that Revitalization, subject to eligibility rules in the Relocation Agreement it signs with Toronto Community Housing" (TCHC, 2025).

As for said "eligibility rules", some are explicitly stated by TCHC and Tridel (2022), which explain that, for relocated tenants to exercise their "Right to Return", they need to be in "Good Standing", which entails owing no debts to TCHC and being free of any legal

actions taken by TCHC. Still, the Housing Corporation has been employing a "five-step relocation process" plan "based on the organization's values of Respect, Accountability, Community Collaboration, Integrity, and Accessibility for persons with disabilities" (TCHC and Tridel, 2022). Particularly, TCHC offers support to tenants by organizing meetings with them, educating them about their rights, assiduously notifying them and granting physical assistance such as paying for their relocation or providing packing materials.

Moreover, an additional notable aspect particularly evident in phases 4-5, as mentioned earlier, is the active role played by the community in the ever-evolving plan, which is continuously updated through surveys and meetings with the residents. One prominent example is Tridel's Community Development Economic Program, with which the company committed $26.8 million to "benefit the tenants and residents of Regent Park" (TCHC, 2025). How said money will be invested is up to the community to decide, as Tridel has been collaborating with the Community Benefits Oversight Working Group since 2023 to collect relevant data from more than 1,000 surveys, meetings, community events and community reports. Recently, drawing upon two years' worth of feedback collected from the residents, Tridel and TCHC have developed three different Community Benefits Packages focusing on wages for jobs for local residents, employment supports, and grants for community initiatives for local groups (TCHC, 2025). Currently, at the time of writing the present paper, the community is partaking in several ballots that will determine which one among the three Packages will become a legally binding agreement between Tridel and TCHC known as Community Benefits Agreement (TCHC, 2025).

In addition, as part of their Community Economic Development, Tridel has been assisting the neighborhood's TCHC tenants in their pursuit of employment via its resource hub Tridel Community Worx. With this initiative, Tridel makes use of its connections with its partners to introduce needy Regent Park residents to training, education and job opportunities. Furthermore, Tridel has officially been supporting small businesses in the neighborhood as well, proposing opportunities to work together to any who reach out to it (TCHC and Tridel, 2022). However, Tridel's Community Benefits and employment support are not the only measures implemented in order to accompany Regent Park's community through its long and complex revitalization process. In fact, TCHC has devoted considerable attention to fostering the neighborhood's social fabric

alongside its physical transformation. Hence, the following section will provide a comprehensive analysis of TCHC's Social Development Plan.

2.1 Toronto Community Housing's Social Development Plan

As highlighted by Greaves (2011), TCHC does show understanding that mixed-income designs, especially ones attempting to achieve social mix in all its meanings like Regent Park, are in need of "social interventions" in order to be successful. Most notably, TCHC recognizes the value of social bonds between the widely diverse members of the neighborhood's community, remarking that:

> "without interventions, there are often divisions between groups of residents in new mixed-income communities based on income, ethnicity, age, ability and length of stay in the community" (TCHC, 2007, p. 2), therefore adding that "informal activities, such as community events and casual gatherings that attract residents from all socio-economic backgrounds, are among the most effective tools in knitting a diverse community together and building bridges to neighboring communities" (p. 6).

Thus, it was with that end in mind that, explaining that Regent Park's revitalization plan would involve a "two-track approach" consisting of a Physical Development Plan and a Social Development Plan (SDP) (TCHC, 2019), TCHC launched the latter in 2007, presenting it as "a guide to building a successful, cohesive and inclusive community in Regent Park throughout the process of redevelopment and in the years that follow" (TCHC, 2007, p. 2). Issued from several consultations with the community, the SDP aimed to serve as a model to support other future revitalization plans in Toronto by proposing a total of 75 recommendations to assist Regent Park in developing a "socially inclusive community".

Among the most relevant recommendations are numbers 2-4, which focus on community activities fostering social cohesion by promoting events capable of attracting the interest of as many residents as possible, thus transcending barriers of tenure, income and ethnicity. The same purpose is served by recommendations 5 and 6, which encourage creating additional community gardens whenever possible. This initiative is not new to the neighborhood, however, as the previously existing Peace Garden, a memorial flower garden dedicated to those killed in Regent Park, proved considerably successful in bringing together a wide variety of residents. Additionally, to build connections between cultural groups, with recommendations 9 and 10, TCHC proposes the establishment of grassroot groups, i.e. small, ethno-specific organizations providing support to members

within while still encouraging forging bonds with other cultural communities as well. In addition, to further engage marginalized communities, recommendation 28 proposes establishing multilingual service infrastructures. Similarly, recommendation 11 promotes faith groups, acknowledging that Regent Park's rich diversity is also characterized by a large spectrum of different beliefs.

Furthermore, listed among the SDP's most urgent matters is also community safety, i.e. one of Regent Park's central and most persisting issues at the root of its stigma. In that regard, recommendation 16 encourages to maintain public spaces, keep the streets well lit, and devise strategies to prevent crime such as the Toronto Drug Use Strategy. Additionally, another major problem addressed by TCHC is the community's protracted struggle with poverty: with recommendations 44-51, the SDP urges that services be accessible to all income groups, either by providing low-income residents with programs at no charge, or by attempting to persuade higher-income individuals to partake in fund-raising initiatives.

Finally, acknowledging the lengthy nature of Regent Park's revitalization, TCHC also highlights the need for both a constant assessment of the SDP's efficacy, and for a progressive revision of it according to the periodical findings. Therefore, recommendations 67-75 announce the establishment of the Social Development Plan's Stakeholders' Table, a consultative body tasked with holding semi-annual review meetings so as to monitor the SDP. Thus, it was by considering more than 10 years' worth of feedback that TCHC produced the Regent Park Refreshed Social Development Plan (RSDP) in 2019, which:

> "continues to build on [the original SDP's] vision of social inclusion and social cohesion, especially now that the neighourhood is being transformed from an entirely social housing community to a mixed-income community […] [to ensure] the benefits of the revitalization and the success of a mixed-income community" (TCHC, 2019, n.p.).

To that end, the RSDP developed four "focus areas", namely "Safety, Employment and Economic Development, Community-Building, [and] Communication". The first focuses on rendering Regent Park a safe space for all, which TCHC had been striving to achieve since 2017, when the Regent Park Community Safety Action Plan was announced. Some noteworthy interventions in that regard include installing more cameras, fostering residents' safety programs and conducting regular safety audits. As for the second area, the aim is to bolster the rates of sustainable employment in order to

facilitate the residents' participation in the community. Although much had already been done by the time the RSDP was launched, such as the establishment of the Centre for Learning and Development, among the document's key propositions are ensuring space for small entrepreneurial businesses, holding more local hiring events like job fairs, and devising a local hiring policy in government agencies.

The third area, namely Community-Building, aims to penetrate social and physical barriers dependent on racial and religious prejudice to deepen bonds between residents so that Regent Park can become as inclusive a neighborhood as possible. Remarking that dedicated associations and creative events like the Regent Park Neighborhood Association and the Winter Skating Party are already in function, the RSDP recommends meticulous maintenance of TCHC buildings, organizing events against islamophobia and homophobia, and ensuring spaces are more accessible for casual interaction between residents. Finally, the fourth area, i.e. Communication, seeks to render information more easily retrievable for the community by exercising particular care in considering the neighborhood's extremely diverse linguistic composition. Currently contributing toward achieving that goal are various communication tools such as the TCH newsletter and Radio Regent, but the RSDP still formulates some recommendations, including the installation of TV monitors in TCHC building lobbies, providing translation services, and creating information display areas in strategically relevant locations like Wendy's.

In sum, the revitalization of Regent Park, consisting of both physical and social development initiatives, represents a long-term effort to reshape the neighborhood's urban design and forge its community ties. The following section will now assess the perceived effects of these policies on Regent Park's residents.

3. The effects of Regent Park's revitalization

In addition to being the conclusive section, this is arguably the most vital one as well, since, as has previously been anticipated, it will conclude the current paper's case study of Regent Park by adopting a more practical perspective. In particular, it will endeavor to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the neighborhood's revitalization on the very individuals in whose interest it was conceived, namely the residents. Before proceeding with said evaluation, however, it is imperative to reiterate that the plan is, at the time of writing, still very much ongoing and therefore might be subject to change. Furthermore,

while a great many studies have been conducted on the perceived results of phases 1-3 and of the original SDP, material on the remaining two phases and on the more recent RSDP is scarce, as it is perhaps still too early to draw significant conclusions on them. Therefore, through the consultation of both quantitative and especially qualitative data involving the like of surveys and interviews, this section will mainly direct its attention to the more certain and measurable effects of Regent Park's revitalization process as of 2025.

In order to be as thorough as possible, this evaluation requires to be conducted on the two levels that Regent Park's revitalization itself explicitly encompasses, namely the physical and the social levels. As far as the former is concerned, a large number of studies, like the aforementioned 2011-2012 survey carried out by the Toronto Centre for Community Learning (Mueen, 2012), suggest that both public housing and market residents have considered themselves satisfied with the neighborhood's built environment ever since the earliest phases of its transformation. Bucerius et al. (2017) particularly highlight how the newly constructed facilities and commercial areas such as the bank, day care and coffee shop have been widely appreciated by the community. As added by Greaves (2011), such contentment with the area's novel design is undoubtedly also bolstered by the much-needed inclusion of the previously absent streets, which appear successful in permitting easier circulation of pedestrians and cars.

However, a perhaps even more crucial finding is that housing design has been quite positively received across the board as well, with notably original residents finding their new housing stock to be of much higher quality compared to their previous dwellings (Bucerius et al., 2017). According to Greaves (2011), residents especially appreciated the materials employed in the construction of their new buildings, which is exemplified by condominium owner Steven, who particularly mentioned stainless steel, granite countertops, and the beautiful view provided by his glass façade. Still, it is worth considering that other inhabitants reported encountering minor setbacks concerning their dwellings: tenant Frank, for instance, lamented the absence of storage and the malfunction of the temperature system, while tenant Aisha raised the issue of the amount of glass present, which compromised her privacy and caused her unit to accumulate excessive heat. Moreover, Aisha also mentioned noticing several maintenance problems that went

unaddressed by TCHC, including a cracked ceiling, broken door handles, and a damaged pipe that eventually flooded her unit.

On the other hand, while Regent Park's physical transformation is almost unanimously judged as largely effective in addressing some of the neighborhood's major issues, the effects experienced by the community on the social level "paint a complex and not entirely positive view of the project's impact" (Rowe and Dunn, 2024). In particular, among the matters most extensively discussed and investigated is whether the neighborhood's newfound income mix has actually led to a significant reduction or dilution of poverty, i.e. one of TCHC's main objectives. In that regard, quantitative analyses on Regent Park's demographics yield promising results, since figures for 2021 show a notable decline in the community's overall poverty rate and an increase in the residents' income compared to 2016, when the same study had been previously conducted (City of Toronto, 2023). However, while still immensely useful, percentages and numbers alone risk oversimplifying the intricate and multifaceted phenomenon that is being discussed, thus possibly leading the present assessment astray. Bucerius et al. (2017) are particularly cautious in evaluating the community's financial situation, arguing that the neighborhood has witnessed the rise of a newfound concentrated poverty, in that:

> "revitalization has not actually deconcentrated poverty; it has simply re-concentrated it into smaller pockets of Regent Park—that is, even in the revitalized sections, poverty has been concentrated by building and blocks" (Bucerius et al., 2017, p. 499).

To make matters worse, despite the many initiatives proposed by the SDP back in 2007, Regent Park residents seem to still be afflicted either with the crux of unemployment or with low income. This, as noted by Mueen (2012), further exacerbates the already harsh conditions of poorer individuals, who are therefore incapable of escaping serious hardships including inaccessibility to nutritious foods and, more importantly, to the very programs that are supposed to provide job assistance, as they require a fee that many cannot afford. It consequently comes as no surprise that, when asked about the neighborhood's most pressing problems and most urgent needs, the residents mentioned the necessity for additional and more inclusive job development programs, especially for youths, who reportedly tend to engage in violent behavior.

However, occupation-related initiatives are not the only instances of Regent Park's inhabitants lamenting feeling excluded. In fact, a great many scholars highlight that, in

spite of community involvement allegedly being one of TCHC's most explicit key principles behind its plans, a large number of residents report a sense of "disempowerment" mainly stemming from severely lacking communication. Greaves (2011), for instance, emphasizes that Regent Park's original tenants, who were accorded priority of access to the new units constructed, were expected to choose one with no chance of seeing it in person beforehand, instead being permitted to consult exclusively floor plans. Consequently, being unable to grasp how said plans "would translate into the actually built space" (p. 102), many of them eventually regretted their decision. Additionally, Brail and Kumar (2017) warn that several residents reported even feeling ignored and betrayed by TCHC and accusing it of not keeping its promises, with one community leader recounting that:

> "we had a meeting about the park, 2006, or 07 […]. They said residents, please come out and put your input about what would you like to see in the park […]. A couple of years later, they come back […]. And I asked them, where's the ideas from residents in Regent Park? [They said], what are you talking about, we don't have nothing from residents of Regent Park. […] They lied! They lied to us" (Brail and Kumar, 2017, p. 3783).

Moreover, according to Brail and Kumar (2017), partially responsible for said communicative issues is also the "rapid turnover of residents" as a consequence of the relocation process that many community members are required to undergo, which hampers knowledge and expertise sharing between old and new residents. This, however, raises the additional and perhaps even weightier matter of displacement, as residents have been forced to be temporarily relocated for their dwellings to be demolished and reconstructed, some even more than just once. As explained by Greaves (2011), such phenomenon can produce dramatic effects on the social ties between the original residents, who already felt a strong sense of community and sometimes would have opposed to their relocation if they could. For example, some tenants described their experiences as:

> "very hard […] I felt very sad moving on that time, that moment was very hard. […] It kind of like somebody comes to your house and takes you out, you know? Like not like you voluntarily want it and also the unit that we had […] was perfect. It looks perfectly fine. […] Before, it was okay… everybody knows everybody. It was really a strong community. But now, people are moving. Places are empty. You're walking around, you see strange faces" (Greaves, 2011, p. 106).

To complicate matters further, Bucerius et al. (2017) note that not only does displacement sometimes become a permanent condition, thus denoting a process of

"displacement and dispossession", but it also jeopardizes the neighborhood's safety due to the increased crime and violence perpetrated by those residents who, "frustrated and upset about their community being 'taken over'", attempt to scare new residents off.

August (2014) takes this perspective even further, emphasizing that, prior to the current revitalization, the original residents described Regent Park as having a "supportive community where people help each other" and in which they could appreciate a "sense of mutual understanding based on the shared experience of poverty, and political strength based on shared struggles". The author (2014) also adds that the original community members were satisfied with the area's services, location, stores and accessibility as well, thus painting a much more positive picture of the original neighborhood compared to the one previously offered by the current paper. Hence, August (2014) accuses TCHC and its partners of distorting the public perception of Regent Park so as to promote a "pro-revitalization discourse", therefore questioning the neighborhood's very need for a revitalization in the first place.

Lastly, a final though cardinal matter is to assess whether, and if so to what extent, TCHC has succeeded in achieving their objective of building a "cohesive and inclusive" community in Regent Park. In that regard, while Mueen's (2012) findings show that, when asked to indicate the best qualities of their community, Regent Park's residents mentioned a strong sense of belonging, support, and unity despite their many differences, the vast majority of the remaining literature rather points to a much less flattering state of affairs. Greaves (2011) emphasizes that, after all:

> "despite all the efforts […], it is very difficult to deterministically shape social life through design. The residents of Regent Park are situated objects, with their own practices, motivations, relations and so on. […] Residents do not always navigate or live in a space in the ways intended by the design" (Greaves, 2011, p. 101).

According to the author (2011), these significant discrepancies between design and use manifest themselves especially through the unintended failure of spaces planned to encourage casual and formal interactions between residents, such as the two lounges with fireplaces installed in tenants' buildings, which go virtually unused. Moreover, while community gardens have been very well-received by most residents, the same cannot be said of the new social events and commercial establishments like the coffee shops, grocery stores and Aquatic Center which, given their relatively high costs and entrance fees, mainly appeal to middle-class residents (Bucerius et al., 2017).

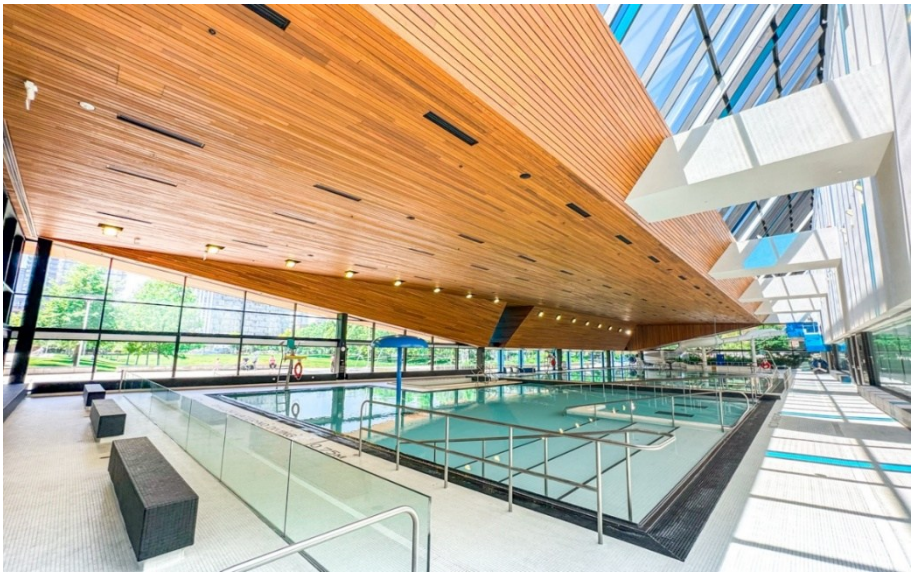

Figure 8: Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre, Regent Park

However, what many studies identify as the fundamental issue undermining social interactions are several insurmountable socio-cultural barriers standing between the residents and stemming from substantial linguistic, cultural and particularly socio-economic status differences. Bucerius et al. (2017) are especially concerned about cross-class relationships, as "limited to no interaction" occurs between original and new residents, who have adopted "an 'us/them,' 'invader/invaded,' 'colonizer/colonized' mentality" (p. 500), as exemplified by one resident who explicitly stated: "they're colonizing my neighborhood, I have to defend it. I want nothing to do with the colonizers" (p. 495).

The literature on Regent Park's revitalization offers a great many instances of such hostile relations: August (2014), for instance, highlights that many low-income residents feel "marked" and judged by the wealthier newcomers, perceiving their stigmatization to have worsened due to TCHC putting "the contrast" near them, exacerbating the distinctions between the two groups and "making you feel like you are not as good" (p. 1330). In particular, a recurring complaint voiced by tenants is that there are substantial differences between condominiums and public housing: their complaints, however, are not limited to mere aesthetic matters, e.g. black bricks for social housing and red bricks for condominiums (August, 2014), but they also extend to a perceived quality disparity (Bucerius et al., 2017). Although according to TCHC it is actually public housing dwellings that were designed of a higher quality in order to be shielded from deterioration

due to the rapid resident turnover, a significant number of tenants still believe that their units are easily distinguishable from wealthier ones, to the point that one resident held the opinion that "they are segregating everybody once again, the rich and the poor… in a sneaky silent way" (August, 2014, p. 1330). What is more, an additional way Regent Park stumbles on its own design and contributes to discouraging interactions is that, even though both Greaves (2011) and Rowe and Dunn (2024) note that pet owners and families with children seem to find it easier to socialize with all sorts of residents, Bucerius et al. (2017) clarify that, since the revitalized neighborhood's new condominiums contain mainly one- or two-bedroom units, the majority of the new residents attracted to the neighborhood are old couples, or childless young ones envisaging to leave Regent Park as soon as their family expands.

Greaves (2011) puts forward a similar perspective, claiming that "existing social networks or social groups, whether defined by class, ethnicity, age, and so on, remain intact to some degree" (p. 114), herself finding that both condominium owners and tenants perceive their lives as "separate" from the other group. What strikes as particularly noteworthy, however, is that social interactions are not hampered only by the aforementioned barriers themselves, e.g. the fact of speaking two different languages, but also by the residents, especially middle-class ones, acknowledging the very existence of said barriers. In other words, even when they would be willing to forge ties with other community members, the newcomers feel uncomfortable because they fear they are "seen as invaders that have come to take their land from [the original residents]" (Bucerius et al., 2017, p. 496). As for whether inhabitants would be even willing to engage in cross-class bonding in the first place, the findings on the matter appear to be quite mixed: while a minority exhibited willingness or even excitement at that prospect in the hope of bringing "positive change", many others did not.

More in detail, the latter group encompasses several sub-categories, the first of which being middle-class gentrifiers who never considered social mix or sought to be part of a community at all, instead having chosen to settle in Regent Park for the area's availability and vicinity to other amenities outside or to resell their units for a higher price in the future, sometimes even being completely unaware of the neighborhood's revitalization process. A second category contains those individuals who instead prove disillusioned and skeptical of the benefits of social mix or relished the prospect entirely, with tenants

primarily believing that “we’re not gonna benefit them, so why are they gonna talk to us?” (Bucerius et al., 2017, p. 494), and new residents mainly showing disillusionment with themselves supposedly serving as “role models” for the more disadvantaged, holding opinions like “I don’t think seeing someone go to work is going to somehow give you a job [laughs] or, you know, make you more inclined to do something like go to university” (p. 495).

In sum, the qualitative data consulted further proved the sheer complexity of Regent Park’s revitalization, suggesting that the physical changes made to the neighborhood have been widely welcomed by the residents, whereas “the assumed social benefits of cross-class interaction […] via social mix have not materialized”. While it is worth reiterating that some of the major issues highlighted thus far have been acknowledged by TCHC and their partner, who utilized their feedback to produce the rectified RSPD, whose efficacy has yet to be determined given the ongoing nature of the revitalization, it would seem that many of the complications presented are rather visceral and therefore perhaps insurmountable characteristics innate to the social comportment of human beings. Even though it might be argued that the alleged benefits of social mix require a long time to fully blossom and thus be visible, many of the original residents of Regent Park feel bereft of their community and more isolated and stigmatized than ever before. Bucerius et al. (2017) put forward the following suggestion for TCHC to adopt throughout the remainder of the significant time it has left to guide the revitalization: “don’t experiment on the poor, they have no choice. Experiment on the rich, who can always afford to move out” (p. 502).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation embarked on an eventful journey with the intent of investigating whether social mix can be considered an effective method of approaching urban diversity. However, the findings gathered through the Regent Park case study provide evidence that the answer to this question might not be as clear-cut as one might expect or desire. The current paper has demonstrated that, on the one hand, physical redevelopment of the neighborhood has yielded overwhelmingly positive results that have been heartily welcomed by the community, given the noticeable improvements in design, housing conditions, streets and facilities.

Conversely, on the other hand, the social dimension has proven far more contentious, with most of the alleged benefits expected by TCHC having failed to materialize outright. In fact, what has emerged from a close inspection of feedback from the residents of Regent Park is a series of major issues and unintended consequences related to persistent inequalities, disempowerment, displacement, broken community ties and insurmountable social and status barriers.

Still, not only does this ambivalence closely mirror the broader academic debates and literature on the matter, where enthusiasm for mixing policies is tempered by opposing studies condemning their ineffective and even harmful nature, but the very absence of a definitive answer is, in and of itself, highly significant. While it might not be unreasonable to share some of the more severe theories ventilated throughout this dissertation, such as the idea that segregated spaces should not be treated as problematic, or that mixing policies are no more than concealed attempts at speculation, categorically excluding the option would perhaps be even more so.

What the current paper has demonstrated is the irreducible complexity of social mix, which suggests that such policies should not be regarded as inherently universally effective tools, but rather as context-dependent experiments whose dynamics have yet to be fully comprehended. Moreover, it is fundamental to acknowledge that this study still presents a few major, yet unavoidable, limitations: as has already been explained, only recently has Regent Park's revitalization entered its two final phases and employed a renewed RSDP, meaning data on the latest developments remain, at the time of writing, largely insufficient to justify any meaningful inference.

Therefore, this dissertation has underscored the urgent need for further studies to examine the intricacies of social mix practices and has given rise to other conundrums for future research to investigate. In particular, additional data on the outcomes of phases 4 and 5 and on the novel social initiatives undertaken by TCHC are required to draw any firm conclusions on the specific case study of Regent Park.

In spite of the limitations and questions left unanswered, my hope is that the findings of the current paper can contribute to shedding more light on the convoluted, yet intriguing phenomenon of social mix. As for whether TCHC will make use of the feedback it has gathered up until now and of the rich body of literature on the matter to direct its decisions during the decade it has left to preside over Regent Park's revitalization, only time will tell.

SINTESI

Il presente elaborato nasce da una riflessione personale sull'attuale stato della diversità nel contesto urbano moderno. In particolare, nonostante la migrazione e l'eterogeneità siano ormai divenute parte integrante e imprescindibile della società contemporanea, negli ultimi decenni si è registrata un'evidente ascesa di governi conservatori in tutto il mondo, i quali spesso apertamente ignorano o si oppongono alla diversità.

Quest'ultima si manifesta di frequente proprio nelle città, che assistono di conseguenza a ingenti fenomeni di stigma, ghettizzazione e isolamento. Tra le varie strategie a disposizione delle autorità per affrontare tali problematiche figurano le politiche di mescolanza (*mixing policies*), che vedono nell'eterogeneità un'affidabile soluzione. Considerando le prospettive recentemente adottate nei confronti della diversità e le numerose critiche rivolte alle politiche della mescolanza, l'obiettivo del presente elaborato è analizzarne limiti e punti di forza al fine di valutarne l'efficacia in quanto strumenti volti alla gestione della diversità in ambito urbano.

A tal proposito, questa tesi, ripartita in tre sezioni, intende complementare il quadro teorico proposto nel Capitolo 1 con l'analisi empirica, affrontata nel Capitolo 3, del caso di studio di Regent Park, quartiere di Toronto che, attualmente, è oggetto di un processo di "rivitalizzazione" sul piano fisico e sociale. Il Capitolo 2, invece, si occupa di esaminare il caratteristico multiculturalismo canadese e le esperienze del paese nel campo delle politiche della mescolanza. Infine, i dati consultati durante la stesura dell'elaborato comprendono fonti sia qualitative sia quantitative, che spaziano da letteratura accademica e documenti ufficiali ad analisi demografiche e interviste.

Per cominciare, il Capitolo 1, di natura ampiamente teorica, si apre con una proposta di definizione dei termini "politiche della mescolanza" e "mescolanza sociale", spiegando come le prime indichino l'insieme di pratiche mirate a produrre la seconda, ossia l'eterogeneità socioeconomica in termini tanto di reddito quanto etnologici o addirittura di età, concentrata equilibratamente all'interno di un'area abitativa. L'intenzione alla base di tali politiche è quella di alleviare situazioni di svantaggio sociale attraverso la riduzione dell'omogeneità, considerata responsabile dei cosiddetti *neighborhood effects*.

Prima di addentrarsi nelle teorie che condannano le politiche della mescolanza, il capitolo si concentra sull'evoluzione temporale di queste ultime, ripercorrendone la storia sin dalle origini e analizzandone le teorie a supporto. La culla di tali iniziative viene individuata nell'Inghilterra del XIX secolo, quando la Prima Rivoluzione Industriale, attirando la classe operaia dalla campagna all'interno delle città, provocò un drastico deterioramento delle condizioni sanitarie di queste ultime, sfociando nella concentrazione dei meno abbienti all'interno dei bassifondi.

Fu proprio nella speranza di trovare rimedio alla suddetta situazione di degrado che le autorità crearono i primi "villaggi industriali modello", in cui la mescolanza sociale avrebbe favorito l'emulazione da parte dei ceti più poveri della borghesia, che avrebbe funto da "modello di riferimento". Come alternativa a tale pratica, furono concepite ulteriori iniziative tra cui la città giardino, seppur sempre basate sullo stesso concetto di emulazione tra classi.

Nel XX secolo si assistette tuttavia a un calo di interesse per le politiche della mescolanza come conseguenza della precarietà economica generata dalla Grande Guerra. Nonostante Gordon Allport, con la sua teoria del contatto, sostenesse che l'interazione tra minoranze e maggioranze potesse permettere l'appianamento di qualsiasi pregiudizio, tali pratiche e gli assiomi su cui esse si basavano cominciarono ad attirare le critiche di accademici americani e inglesi, che ritenevano la propinquità spaziale insufficiente per apportare cambiamenti significativi sul piano sociale.

Durante il XXI secolo, all'opposto, le politiche della mescolanza riacquisirono una notevole rilevanza in quanto la crescente concentrazione di alloggi popolari spinse le autorità ad avviare progetti di rigenerazione di interi quartieri con l'obiettivo di aumentarne la qualità e attirare dunque la classe media. L'insorgere di nuove controversie legate a disuguaglianze e dislocazioni, tuttavia, inasprì ulteriormente i dibattiti, che si protraggono con vivacità ancora al giorno d'oggi.

In particolare, i critici non solo ritengono tali politiche largamente inefficaci nel raggiungere i propri scopi, ma ne denunciano anche gli effetti potenzialmente nocivi proprio per gli individui più svantaggiati, che vedrebbero un peggioramento nella loro condizione di isolamento e stigmatizzazione e l'insorgere di ulteriori conflitti sociali con i residenti più abbienti. Inoltre, tra le accuse più ricorrenti vi è quella di celare, dietro retoriche inclusive, intenti speculativi: le vere intenzioni sarebbero infatti legate

all'utilizzo di processi gentrificativi a scopo puramente lucrativo, penalizzando invece i più poveri che, esclusi per mezzo di strategie di ingegneria sociale, sono costretti ad abbandonare i loro alloggi e, di conseguenza, la loro comunità.

Il Capitolo 2, successivamente, restringe l'attenzione sul Canada, anzitutto mettendone in luce l'impressionante varietà etnica e linguistica, per poi concentrarsi sul concetto di "multiculturalismo", ufficiale approccio canadese definito non solo come convivenza di diversità etniche, religiose, socioeconomiche e di orientamento sessuale, ma anche come loro integrazione mediante apposite politiche sociali.

Lo stretto rapporto che il paese sostiene con la diversità affonda le radici nel XVI secolo, quando la sua colonizzazione diede vita a una prima società multiculturale composta da britannici, francesi e popolazioni aborigene già presenti sul territorio. Tale mosaico etnico si ampliò ulteriormente in seguito con le ondate migratorie del XX secolo, il che spinse il Primo Ministro Pierre Trudeau a promulgare, nel 1971, la Multicultural Policy, avente l'obiettivo di fornire assistenza ai vari gruppi culturali in modo da promuoverne l'integrazione e permettere al contempo di preservarne l'identità.

Nei decenni seguenti, il multiculturalismo venne dapprima inserito nella Costituzione canadese, divenendo successivamente legge ufficiale e ricevendo infine il sostegno di numerose altre iniziative come la designazione del Canadian Multiculturalism Day, celebrato ogni 27 giugno. Oggi, nonostante il diffuso senso di diffidenza prodotto dagli episodi terroristici avvenuti nei primi decenni del XXI secolo e alcune voci denuncianti episodi di disuguaglianza all'interno del paese, l'approccio multiculturale del Canada continua a ricevere ampia approvazione da parte dei suoi cittadini, al punto che molti lo considerano oramai un imprescindibile tratto identitario della loro cultura.

Il capitolo si sofferma in seguito sull'evoluzione delle condizioni abitative del Canada, nozione fondamentale per comprenderne le esperienze in campo di mescolanza sociale successivamente trattate. Tra gli anni Quaranta e gli anni Ottanta del 'Novecento, la domanda di abitazioni del paese crebbe vertiginosamente per via di un considerevole aumento demografico, dovuto principalmente ai poc'anzi menzionati flussi migratori. Il processo di urbanizzazione che ne risultò sfociò poi in un'ingente sovrappopolazione delle città, che confinò i meno abbienti nelle periferie.

Seguì il National Housing Act (NHA) nel 1944, che diede il via alla privatizzazione del patrimonio immobiliare e a un periodo di rivitalizzazioni urbane e bonifiche delle

zone più disagiate, inaugurando un graduale interesse nell'utilizzo delle politiche abitative come strumento per plasmare il tessuto sociale. Tuttavia, a partire da un emendamento dell'NHA del 1949, il governo federale avrebbe affidato sempre di più la gestione di tali pratiche ad autorità locali e fornitori di alloggi, spingendo questi ultimi ad adottare approcci neoliberisti e incoraggiando nel frattempo l'adozione di pratiche di mescolanza sociale.

Date le ingenti e crescenti preoccupazioni per le elevate concentrazioni di povertà in alcuni quartieri e per la deteriorazione edilizia di questi ultimi, fu all'inizio del XXI secolo che il Canada, prendendo ispirazione soprattutto dal programma HOPE VI adottato negli Stati Uniti, avviò le sue prime vere iniziative di riqualificazione urbana. Da un'analisi approfondita degli effetti di tali pratiche a Toronto, Montréal e Vancouver, ossia le tre principali metropoli del paese, emergono tuttavia problematiche derivanti dalla gentrificazione, che ha causato fenomeni di dislocazione, inasprito le disuguaglianze e spogliato i quartieri riqualificati della loro funzione ricettiva nei confronti dei migranti.

Inoltre, tra le criticità più rilevanti figura il persistente e insormontabile abisso sociale che, nonostante la prossimità fisica, ha ostacolato, se non impedito, l'occorrenza di significative interazioni tra gruppi etnici ed economici distinti, generando aspri conflitti sociali tanto a livello di quartiere quanto su scala domiciliare. Sono pochi, invece, i residenti che hanno ricercato, o addirittura solo apprezzato, occasioni di contatto con individui diversi da loro.

Il terzo e ultimo capitolo adotta una prospettiva più empirica e pratica in quanto si dedica, come precedentemente accennato, al caso di studio di Regent Park, situato presso il cuore di Toronto. Dapprima, ne ripercorre l'intricata storia, evidenziando come il quartiere, inizialmente rispondente al nome di Cabbagetown, fosse stato realizzato negli anni Quaranta dell'Ottocento su un ancestrale territorio aborigeno. Abitato prevalentemente da migranti irlandesi cattolici e protestanti appartenenti alla classe operaia, presto divenne un'area afflitta da povertà, stigmatizzazione e degrado.

Nell'intenzione di alleviare tali disagi e di fornire alloggi adeguati a quanti lo necessitassero, le autorità della città, con il supporto fornito dallo Stato canadese, avviarono nel 1948 un processo di demolizione e ricostruzione del quartiere, che prese allora il nome Regent Park, con cui è tuttora conosciuto. La prima rivitalizzazione dell'area considerava inoltre tra le sue più ingenti priorità un successo anche sul piano

sociale, e fu proprio a questo scopo che il quartiere venne progettato con l'intento di facilitare la socializzazione dei suoi residenti. Una volta terminata la ricostruzione nel 1957, tuttavia, in seguito alle ondate migratorie del XX secolo, si manifestarono alcune complicazioni, dovute in particolare all'inefficace design fisico del quartiere: l'assenza di strade comunicanti con l'esterno e di aree commerciali segregò i residenti all'interno del perimetro di Regent Park, la cui crescente povertà e criminalità esacerbò il forte stigma ad esso associato.

Tale fallimento spinse alcuni residenti a far sentire la propria voce e, grazie a una serie di incontri con le autorità della città, il Toronto City Council si convinse ad approvare ufficialmente l'attuale, nonché secondo, piano di rivitalizzazione di Regent Park, del quale Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) venne nominato sovrintendente. Essendo il progetto suddiviso in cinque fasi, TCHC assegnò gli sviluppatori urbani The Daniel's Corporation e Tridel Builders Inc. rispettivamente alle prime tre e alle ultime due, la cui conclusione non è prevista prima del 2034. Con l'obiettivo di desegregare Regent Park grazie agli effetti positivi attesi dalla mescolanza sociale, il piano si propone di migliorare il design del quartiere, costruire nuovi servizi e attirare residenti più abbienti all'interno vendendo loro condomini di nuova costruzione, rinnovando al contempo anche gli alloggi popolari in modo da rendere ogni apparente differenza tra le due tipologie di edifici impercettibile.

Considerando inoltre che la rivitalizzazione opera non solo sulla dimensione fisica ma anche su quella sociale, TCHC ideò nel 2007 un documento intitolato Social Development Plan (SDP), che propose una serie di iniziative che contribuissero alla tessitura di una comunità unita, tra cui strategie di prevenzione del crimine e di inclusione della diversità religiosa, linguistica ed etnologica. Forte di più di un decennio di riscontri dai cittadini, TCHC propose nel 2019 una versione aggiornata del piano denominata Refreshed Social Development Plan (RSDP), incentrato su sicurezza, sviluppo economico, comunità e comunicazione.

Il capitolo si conclude con una valutazione critica degli effetti che la rivitalizzazione ha prodotto, sino al momento di stesura dell'elaborato, sui residenti di Regent Park. Mentre la trasformazione fisica del quartiere, grazie all'introduzione di strade, spazi commerciali, servizi e alloggi di migliore qualità, nonostante alcune perplessità, è stata quasi unanimemente ben accolta dagli abitanti, le aspettative sul piano sociale

sembrerebbero rimanere ampiamente insoddisfatte. Anzitutto, la povertà che attanagliava il quartiere non è stata debellata, bensì riconcentrata negli alloggi popolari, e i servizi pensati per i meno abbienti restano dagli stessi inaccessibili.

Inoltre, molti cittadini raccontano di sentirsi impotenti e inascoltati, denunciando la mancanza di coinvolgimento e di trasparenza da parte di TCHC. Ancor più ingenti sono le conseguenze derivate dalle dislocazioni imposte ai residenti originali: talvolta permanenti, queste hanno privato i soggetti interessati dei loro legami comunitari preesistenti, inserendoli successivamente in un contesto a loro sconosciuto. Altresì, permangono le barriere socioculturali che rendono impossibile l'interazione tra gruppi diversi, al punto da portare invece a ostilità e ad antagonistiche mentalità che contrappongono "colonizzatori" e "colonizzati" e che portano le minoranze a sentirsi ancor più stigmatizzate e inadeguate.

In aggiunta, solo una ridotta porzione di residenti manifesta fiducia nei benefici attesi dalla mescolanza sociale o volontà di parteciparvi: la rimanente maggioranza dei nuovi residenti, al contrario, confessa di non ritenersi effettivamente in grado di essere d'esempio per gli abitanti svantaggiati o di aver scelto Regent Park a fini puramente speculativi o di comodità, mentre gli abitanti originali, anch'essi scettici, si dicono disillusi dinanzi alla prospettiva di un cambiamento positivo.

In conclusione, i risultati, la cui natura ampiamente contrastante li rende particolarmente coerenti con la letteratura accademica concernente le politiche della mescolanza, evidenziano che, se da un lato queste ultime hanno mostrato un notevole potenziale dal punto di vista fisico, dall'altro si sono rivelate inefficaci, e talvolta persino nocive, sul piano sociale nei confronti di coloro che dovrebbero beneficiarne maggiormente.

Tale ambivalenza conferma l'immensa complessità del fenomeno della mescolanza sociale e indica che, al quesito iniziale, non vi può essere una risposta univoca. Ciò che si può affermare con cautela, se non altro, è che tali politiche non vanno intese come soluzioni universali, bensì come sperimentazioni fortemente dipendenti dal singolo contesto e le cui dinamiche rimangono tuttora solo parzialmente comprese. Nondimeno, tale assenza di una soluzione definitiva è di per sé alquanto significativa ed evidenzia l'urgenza di ulteriori approfondimenti in merito agli effetti delle politiche della mescolanza.

Considerati inoltre i limiti, per quanto ineluttabili, che questo elaborato presenta, tra cui in primis l'assenza di dati concernenti le ultime due fasi della rivitalizzazione di Regent Park e il nuovo RSDP, ancora troppo recenti per consentire valutazioni attendibili, emerge la necessità di ricerche future che monitorino i prossimi sviluppi del progetto, nella speranza che TCHC presti attenzione alle criticità emerse fino a ora. Nonostante ciò, in definitiva, si auspica che i risultati del presente elaborato possano contribuire a fare luce sull'affascinante, benché intricato, fenomeno delle politiche della mescolanza.

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Pictures

Figure 1: Aerial view of Letchworth Garden City (*Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation*, *Internet Archive*). Available at: https://rb.gy/h6fyw5 (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 2: Demolition of a high-rise in Cabrini Green, Chicago (Apartment Therapy, *Wikimedia Commons*, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cabrini_green.jpg (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 3: Monument to Multiculturalism, Toronto (Shawn Merritt, *Wikimedia Commons*, licensed under CC By-SA 2.0). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monument_to_Multiculturalism_by_Francesco_Perilli_(2762486479).jpg. (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 4: Boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montréal (Jeangagnon, *Wikimedia Commons*, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boulevard_Saint-Laurent_21.JPG (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 5: A secondary suite in Vancouver (Chris Saracino, *Renting Well*). Available at: https://rentingwell.com/tag/vancouver-secondary-suite-landlords/ (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 6: Satellite view of Regent Park, whose perimeter is marked in red (*Google Maps*, © Google).

Figure 7: High-rise condominiums under construction in 2009, Regent Park (Can Pac Swire, *Wikimedia Commons*, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dream_Homes_For_Many_(3567653629).jpg (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

Figure 8: Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre, Regent Park (*City of Toronto*). Available at: https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/parks-recreation/places-spaces/parks-and-recreation-facilities/location/?id=2012 (last accessed: September 19th, 2025).

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