

## 2 The Study Area

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### § 2.1 Introduction to Toronto's Policy Context

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*This sub-chapter includes excerpts from the previously published report Ahmadi, D. & Tasan-Kok, T. (2014). Urban policies on diversity in Toronto, Canada. Delft: TU Delft.*

Dominant narratives and discourses of diversity in Toronto have for long been predominantly based on ethnic origin and immigration due to the migration history and tradition in Canada which is increasingly reliant on immigration for population and labour market growth (Wayland, 2006). In Canada, national and city level diversity policies are often very different, although discourses at the federal level have an important impact upon city and even community-level efforts in addressing diversity in Toronto. A number of important shifts have taken place at the federal level with regards to diversity policy in the recent years when the Stephen Harper-led Conservative Party won the 2006 federal elections. These shifts include increased decentralization of administrative and financial responsibilities, cut-backs to federal funding of social programs, introduction of conservative values in public social services (especially concerning health issues, women and newcomers), changes in the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP), and immigration policy, all of which have impacted on policies at the local level (Russo, 2008; Caron and La Forest, 2009).

Canada has a longstanding policy framework regarding immigration and diversity. Since the very founding of Canada through the appropriation of Aboriginal land resources, immigration policies have been central to the production of the Canadian nation (Thobani, 2000). Evidently, in-migration has fluctuated considerably over the past century and the most significant spikes have occurred in the 1910s, the post-war immigration boom of 1950s, and later by the close of the 20th century. Within the Canadian immigration policy, two pro-dominant principles of admission can be identified namely *economic contribution*; and *family reunification*, the latter of which only came to be clearly defined in the late 1960s. The removal of national origin as a criterion of admission, and the introduction of a system, which assigned points based upon notions such as education, age, language skills, and economic characteristics of applicants, also took place in those years. The point system (entrenched in the

Immigration Act of 1967-1977) classified immigration under two main categories, the independent and family classes. Subsequently selection criteria for the former category were based on levels of education and occupation and on kinship ties for the latter (Thobani, 2000). The upholding of the formerly mentioned principles by the immigration policy had an important impact upon the composition of the immigrant population as it entailed that applicants from all nations, particularly non-traditional immigration source countries could be admitted on the condition that they met the new criteria. It further allowed for the entry of refugees from non-European countries as the new strands of policy also incorporated humanitarian-based admissions (Boyd and Vickers, 2000).

In line with the change in the population composition of Canada and the increasing cultural diversity due to in-migration flows, in 1971 the federal government adopted a formal multiculturalism policy, declaring multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian society. The policy recognised the equal contribution and entitlement to rights, privileges and powers, of all Canadians (by birth or by choice) regardless of their gender, race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion, and further confirmed the rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada (Department of Justice, 1985). In 1988, Parliament passed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which provided a legal framework to guide federal responsibilities and duties with regards to multiculturalism. (Fleras & Kunz, 2001).

Prior to the 1990s, Canada adjusted in-flows based on the nation's absorptive capacity. Subsequently, immigration policy was designed with short-term goals in mind. In contrast, during the 1990s immigration policy was tailored to promote longer-term growth regardless of the perceived state of the economy at the time. (Grant and Sweetman, 2004). In the late 1990s, the Canadian government launched an extensive legislative review regarding immigration policies, which re-emphasized the objective of enriching through immigration the cultural and social fabric of Canada and further called for the reinforcement of the family class as the cornerstone of Canada's immigration program. (CIC, 1998) The recommendations within the document, particularly those in relation to the family class, sponsorship and spousal immigration fuelled many public debates and active criticism –especially by women's organisations and female advocacy groups. Furthermore, the structural changes and welfare cuts initiated by the progressive conservatives in mid-1990s continued when the new Harper government implemented reforms in 2008. These reforms were in line with privileging economic objectives over other immigration goals which heightened the immigration minister's discretionary authority to hand-pick economic immigrants by bypassing the department's own lengthy and complicated selection procedures.

In 2001, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, anti-terrorist measures and security-related policy apparatus were reinforced swiftly in Canada as well as many other states. In fall 2011, Bill C-11: The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was passed by Parliament which evinced a considerable concern with matters related to security (Adelman, 2002). It further elevated the standards for eligibility and provided the citizenship and immigration minister with more authority with regards to immigrant and non-citizen detention. Bill C-31 received considerable criticism regarding its redefinition of the status and right of entry of permanent residents; the lack of judicial review for permanent residents and refugee claimants; the 'raise' of barriers for access to the refugee determination process; and the increased reliance on administrative discretion (Russo, 2008: 299). Furthermore, the provided for immigration law to become the focus of Canada's anti-terrorism efforts, particularly due to the fact that it allows procedural short-cuts and a considerable degree of secrecy, one which would normally not be tolerated in criminal law.

Furthermore, the events of September 11th marked a shift towards the reinforcement and legislation of security through immigration laws. As Russo (2008) contends, the past two decades have witnessed the reshaping of the approach towards Canadian immigration from building citizenship to importing labour resources and economic capital, to protecting state security (a shift towards thinking about diversity and order). The Harper establishment continued to call for increased limits upon immigration. Moreover, some controversial measures were introduced to limit public health care for many refugee applicants; cut back on family reunification programs; limitations over settlement funding; cancellations of applications (Ibbitson, 2012); increasing the selectiveness in immigration process; the introduction of a new and more thorough citizenship test; the banning of veils, *burqas* and *niqabs* at citizenship ceremonies; and the introduction of additional language requirements for the citizenship applications, etc. Since 2006 deportation proceedings against illegal workers have accelerated, high profile deportation actions have increased, and the integration of security, intelligence and immigration agencies has re-emerged as a focal point in federal decision-making.

In March 2008, Immigration Bill C-50 was introduced which was heavily criticised on a number of grounds; namely favouring efficiency at the expense of fairness (as it proposed reducing immigration queue by rejecting more applications to prevent further backlog), granting too much discretionary power to the Immigration Minister and creating a closed and non-transparent immigration system (See Russo, 2008). While the federal government maintains a significant steering capacity and remains partially in control over aspects of the process (such as overall levels of admissions and security regulations), provinces have increasingly become significant, autonomous players (separation of powers). Moreover, supported by the economic crisis, the Harper government implemented budget cutbacks, which had a direct impact on policy priorities for communities or neighbourhoods at the city level (Toronto Star, 2013).

2006 Population:	<b>80,150</b>
% Change Since 2001	<b>-6.0%</b>
Area	<b>21.0 Km<sup>2</sup></b>
Population Density	<b>3,817 persons / Km<sup>2</sup></b>
Pop. of Children (0-4 yrs)	<b>7.2%</b>
Pop. of Children (5-14 yrs)	<b>15.3%</b>
Pop. of Youth (15-19)	<b>6.7%</b>
Pop. of Youth (20-24)	<b>7.1%</b>
Pop. of Seniors (65+ yrs)	<b>13.6%</b>
Pop <15 and >64	<b>36.0%</b>
Total Employment	<b>37,382</b>
Part-Time Employment	<b>5,714</b>
Unemployment rate (Ages 15 and over)	<b>9.1</b>
Visible Minority	<b>70.6%</b>
South Asia (India, Pakistan etc.)	<b>38.8%</b>
South America	<b>16.4%</b>
Western & Eastern Africa	<b>11.0%</b>
Western Central Asia & the Middle East	<b>10.6%</b>
Southeast Asia (ex. Philippines)	<b>4.9%</b>
Other	<b>18.4%</b>
Not Visible Minority	<b>29.4%</b>

**TABLE 2.1** Key Characteristics of Jane-Finch / Source: City of Toronto, 2008

In summary, prior to the 1960s, immigrant admissions were regulated on the basis of national origin and immigrants' rights to sponsor family members to enter Canada were hardly addressed by policy. Thus, economically motivated immigration was the sole primary immigration category defined within the highly selective policy framework. The 1970s and 1980s arguably witnessed a shift towards a more pluralist policy discourse as the introduction of a formal 'multiculturalism' policy, the Multiculturalism Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Employment Equity Act entrenched the concept of multiculturalism within the Canadian institutional body and contributed to the establishment of a more diverse Canadian identity. The tone of the new wave of policies and the approach to diversity as a public relations strategy (Boudreau, Keil, & Young, 2009), put forward by the conservatives, however, may continue to pose a threat to sustaining Canada's pluralist approach towards diversity in the long run.

## § 2.2 Jane-Finch: An Overview

The area commonly known as Jane-Finch today is home to approximately 80,000 residents. It is located in the north-west end of Toronto, in the North York district of Toronto. Jane-Finch is, in fact, not the official name of this area, rather a colloquial name by which it has come to be known. The area consists of four different neighbourhood units: Humber Summit, Humbermede, Black Creek and Glenfield-Jane Heights (Tasan-Kok and Ozugol, 2017).

Jane-Finch was originally inhabited by Aboriginal communities (1400 to 1550). Later in the 1800s, settlers began to arrive and build houses in the area. The development continued in the 1900s with the construction of churches, schools, farms, and later a railway in 1853 (Richardson, 2008). The population of the Jane-Finch area continued to grow, with the real boom happening after World War II. In the 1960s, the development of Jane-Finch proceeded with the addition of major paved roads and bus services. The neighbourhood as it is today, was developed predominantly on the basis of Modernist principles in the 1960s and 1970s in response to a significant growth in the area's population (2000 percent in a decade) (Ibid). Its high rise, high density apartment towers, abundant open spaces and wide streets wherein the pedestrian and vehicular routes which are completely separated all reflect the principles of modernism and Ideal City (Boudreau, Keil & Young, 2009). Besides high-rise apartments, the area accommodates semi-detached dwellings and townhouses. There is as well, an industrial site to the west of Jane Street. Jane-Finch also accommodates a number of commercial sites, most notably the Yorkgate Mall and Jane Finch Mall, located at the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue. Additional commercial activities can be found along Jane Street in the form of strip malls (Tasan-Kok and Ozugol, 2017).



Over the years, the availability of affordable housing in the area has attracted a high immigrant, working class and urban population with newcomers from the West Indies, Asia, Africa, South America and India (Narain, 2012; Richardson, 2008). However, social infrastructure and services have not developed sufficiently to cater to the area's exponential population growth. Today, Jane-Finch has one of the highest proportions of youth, sole-supported families, refugees and immigrants, people without a high-school diploma, low-income earners, and public housing tenants of any community in Toronto. Jane-Finch was negatively branded very early in its development as a "*suburban ghetto – a poorly planned, ugly, dangerous, and undesirable place in the city*" (Boudreau, Keil & Young, 2009: 127), a stigma which prevails to this very day. In addition to the stigma, Jane-Finch residents face issues of gang violence, poverty, racism, access to education and employment. (Khosla, 2003; United Way of Greater Toronto, 2004).

In 2005, Jane and Finch was selected as one of the city's 13 Priority Neighbourhoods. The selection was made on the basis of the challenges these neighbourhoods faced in terms of economic position, education, urban fabric, health and demographics. (United Way of Greater Toronto, 2004). In March 2014, the City of Toronto further identified 31 neighbourhoods as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas. Jane-Finch was again selected as one of the areas in need of special attention (Tasan-Kok and Ozugol, 2017).

Despite the evident lack of planned social infrastructure needed to sustain community life in the area, Jane-Finch is home to many community initiatives, civil society organisations, and grass-roots activities which continue to impact the socio-economic

conditions of residents (Ahmadi & Tasan-Kok, 2014). The area thus provides a fascinating case for exploring the challenges and opportunities of living with and catering to diversity when a neighbourhood originally designed for a homogeneous population accommodates a diverse population.

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