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# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

WHAT OVERARCHING SYSTEM? - WHAT TYPE OF SUSTAINABILITY?



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## WHAT OVERARCHING SYSTEM? – WHAT TYPE OF SUSTAINABILITY?

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of community development through the lens of Christian faith within the Canadian city/region context. The fundamental issues deal with the overarching systems that provide for community development in our nine largest Census Metropolitan Areas (referred hereafter as CMAs). What type of sustainability can be envisioned? This paper examines what we know about the subject and what we need to know about putting processes into place in a systematic manner and that will create a long term impact in our CMAs. The introduction begins with the Christian themes that inform the reflection. As it is germane to the method of networking and community development that is proposed in the third section of this paper, it is entitled, *Addressing the City*.<sup>1</sup> A brief literature review sets the table so that we can examine why this is a critical issue for Christian urban practitioners in Canada today. In the second section, *Penser la ville*,<sup>2</sup> we will situate the issue in Canada by looking at our neighbourhoods. In the third section, we define community development and community organisation. Finally, in the last section, *Transforming the City*, we contextualize our actions through the lens of faith.

This paper proposes a transformational method of community development. It begins with an attempt to discern where God by his Spirit is at work in the context.<sup>3</sup> It is rooted in three mediations or steps that are the means to an understanding and transformation of community. It begins with a socio-analytical reflection of the community. We address the context. It continues with a Biblical reflection on God's word with the poor and the marginalized. One thinks though the issues using community discernment and judgement.

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<sup>1</sup> I use a similar method in a chapter in a forthcoming book to be published by the École de théologie de Montréal entitled, « Indicateurs clés d'une ville transformée: L'Église en dialogue avec son contexte – observations sur Montréal ».

<sup>2</sup> Literally this means, "Thinking the City." This title is inspired by the fine piece edited by Pierre Ansay et René Schoonbrodt, *Penser la ville*. (Bruxelles: AAM éditions, 1989.)

<sup>3</sup> This approach to urban mission hermeneutics is intentional on my part. A lived experience in context is a preliminary step in all contextual theologies. This is certainly true in theologies of liberation. Leonardo Boff and Clodivis Boff call this the preliminary stage of all theologising, a living commitment with the poor and oppressed. Robert Schrieter summarizes the biblical foundation well, "...the development of local theologies depends as much on finding Christ already active in the culture as it does on bringing Christ to the culture. The great respect for culture has a Christological basis. It grows out of a belief that the risen Christ's salvific activity in bringing about the kingdom of God is already going on before our arrival. From a missionary perspective there would be no conversion if the grace of God had not preceded the missionary and opened the hearts of those who heard." (*Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), p. 29.

This leads to a serious action-reflection-action implementation plan to overcome the forces of oppression and marginalization of the populations within the community so as to improve the living conditions and to revitalize neighbourhoods. But as we will see this fusion of horizons is spiral in nature.

A fundamental question we will need to examine at every juncture of community development is how poverty in Canadian cities affects worldview and how worldviews can transform poverty. Essentially, poverty is about relationships. It is not just about economics. Poverty is a broad concept including economic, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual realities. It is often intergenerational. As we will see, it affects peoples' identity (social exclusion, absence of harmony in life and well-being) and their vocation (deprivation at every level of life including one's ability to participate in the welfare of the community). But as Jayakumar Christian points out, the causes of poverty can be traced to "*inadequacies in the worldview*".<sup>4</sup> These inadequacies are in actual fact a web of lies beyond the mere cognitive level of deception. As Christian points out, this intricate web leads people to believe that their poverty or social status is somehow divinely sanctioned or a factor of fate. People sense that they have no choices. A worldview is a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty.

## **Introduction: Addressing the city**

This paper is the result of dialogue with three cities on the subject of urban holistic sustainable community development. Although I did my initial training in the subject while pursuing my doctoral studies in Chicago, I learned first-hand about the subject in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien, Haïti. During a sabbatical in 1999, we launched five initiatives in the Cap, three are continuing today. While writing this paper I spent three days with church leaders in the community of Balan near Cap-Haïtien. We were participating in a consultation using an adapted form of the appreciative inquiry methodology to explore ecclesial engagement with the community around the issues of voodoo and public education. As I sat with these leaders, I was struck with how community development has become counter intuitive in our day and age. These pastors and priests engaged the process with clarity, commenting, "Why has no one ever done this with us before?" Their findings from three days of discussion were the first steps in helping them to contribute to an ongoing community development project in the zone.

But I live in a third "place"; one which is as contextually specific as the other two – the city of Montréal. *Place is space with historical meanings, different identities, varied societal preoccupations.*<sup>5</sup> For example, I live in the city where philosophical

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<sup>4</sup> Jayakumar Christian. *Powerless of the Poor: Towards an Alternative Kingdom of God Based on the Paradigm of Response*. PhD thesis. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena Calif., page 340.

<sup>5</sup> One of the few texts on urban geography that takes these two distinct categories seriously is by A. M. Orum and X. Chen, *The World of Cities: Places in Comparative and Historical Perspective*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For these authors "place" is the specific locations in space that in turn

postmodernism<sup>6</sup> was first coined and studied as a social and philosophical expression. Montréal is a different place than the one that most people are talking about when discussing this theme. The unending story we find ourselves in always needs to be woven into the fabric of place a little differently. To illustrate this, I will footnote Montréal particularities throughout the paper.<sup>7</sup>

When we work in our city-regions and reflect on community development, immediately we are struck by the necessity to address both macro and micro issues. In choosing to “address” the city, we need to remember some preliminary, foundational issues that are often overlooked by people living in metropolitan areas.

First, it is obvious that we need to place each individual city in its own context yet understand its place in the larger urban system. Because of globalisation, no one metropolitan area exists in isolation from others. When you ask me where I live, the answer depends with whom I am speaking. I can tell someone from Chomedey that I live on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, a Québécois that I live in Chomedey, but to someone outside of Québec, I am from Montréal. Each “address” tells something about me: my living environment, the languages I use on a day-to-day basis, my lifestyle, and perhaps my social status.

To approach this subject from a perspective of what is happening to cities across Canada and the world, and then within one’s own community, or to work in the reverse order is not all that important. What is important is to see the inter-relationships between the local, the national, and the global systems. It is also important to adjust these “addresses” for the audience in question.

Second, when the Church addresses the city, we must direct our attention to urban realities. We need to understand our own assumptions and framework. The Church, however, will always want to keep a focus on a biblical perspective on community.

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provides an anchor and meaning. (See pages 1, 15, 140 and 168) Our sense of place is rooted in individual identity, community, history and a sense of comfort (11-19). “Space”, on the other hand, is a medium independent of our existence in which objects, ideas and other human persons exist behaving according to the basic laws of nature and thought (see pages 15, 140 and 160-170). Recently two Canadian urbanologists, Bunting and Fillion, complimented this notion by stating that the “term” place speaks of the subjective and sentimental feelings associated with various aspects of one’s environment. Space speaks to the objective attributes related to proximity and access. Yi Fu Tuan coined the term ‘topophilia’ to denote the personal identity with and love of a place. Canadian Cities in transition 3e edition, pages 6 and 440.

<sup>6</sup> In 1979, Le CRÉPUQ (Conseil des recteurs et principales des universités du Québec) requested a report on “knowledge in the most highly developed societies.” Montréal was the context from which Jean-François Lyotard wrote the book, *La condition post-moderne*, Collection «Critique », Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

<sup>7</sup> This reflection on community development is the result of a yearlong feasibility study undertaken in two boroughs of Montréal with my colleagues at Christian Direction and with Canadian Programs of World Vision. The dialogue with these friends and colleagues has enriched my experience and this paper.

There are two issues that inform contextual community development and help us to understand what it will look like.

First, consider the theme of **social context**. Many people do neighbourhood studies and wrestle with (the sociology of) place. On a different track, other practitioners try to get their heads around the philosophies that make up the personality of our cities, sometimes referred to as a *horizon*. In this paper, I want to help the urban ministry practitioner put these two approaches together so that in examining the community or the neighbourhood as a place we are also learning to look very closely at the worldviews that are reflected in the urban context.

It is also obvious that urban practitioners need to be able to identify worldviews in order to reflect about the spirituality in their particular context. Worldviews are primarily lenses through which we look at what life is all about. Generally speaking, they are the series of presuppositions that groups of people hold, consciously and unconsciously, about the basic make-up of the community, relationship, practices and objects of daily life, whether they are of great signification or of little importance. They are like the foundations of a house – vital but invisible. The make-up of a worldview is based on the interaction of one's ultimate beliefs and the global environment within which one lives. They deal with the perennial issues of life like religion and spirituality and contain answers to even simple questions such as whether we eat from plates or how to launder our clothing.

Worldviews are communicated through the channel of culture. We should be careful to not confuse culture and worldviews, although they are in constant relationship with one another. Culture, is foremost a network of meanings by which a particular social group is able to recognize itself as such through a common history and a way of life. This network of meanings is rooted in ideas (including beliefs, values, attitudes, rules of behaviour), rituals and material objects including symbols that become a source for identity such as the language we speak, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the way we organise space. This network is not a formal and hierarchical structure. It is defined in modern society by constant change, mobility, reflection and ongoing new life experiences. This is opposed to traditional societies where culture was transmitted from one generation to another vertically within the community structures. Modernity still transmits some aspects of culture like language and basic knowledge, vertically through the bias of school system, but once this is done, the horizontal transmission of culture through friendship, peers and socio-professional status become more important.

Max Stackhouse helps our understanding of this first theme of social context by raising several foundational questions. “How do we know a context when we see one?” “How big is a context?” “How long does it last?” “Who is in it and is out of it, and how do we know?” In reality, the complexity of the city means we constantly ask these questions.

The second theme that informs our urban ministry is our **Christian traditions**, meaning our study of the Scriptures, Church history and Christian theology. Now the

hermeneutical process becomes a true exchange for practitioners between gospel and context. We come to the infallible message with an exegetical method to understand a biblical theology of place. We ask, “What does God say through Scripture regarding this particular context?” (This includes place, problem, value, or worldview). This initial dialogue sets us out on a long process where the more we understand the community; the more fresh readings of the Bible will arise. Scripture illuminates life. But life also illuminates Scripture! This dialogue must also include the practitioners’ worldview and that of the community in which they base their initiatives.

Hermeneutics conceived in this fashion represent a holistic enterprise in which the Holy Spirit guides the interpreters to a more complete reading and understanding of Scripture and a more complete understanding of the culture. There is an ongoing, mutual engagement of the essential components of the process. As they interact, they are mutually adjusted. In this way, we come to Scripture with the right questions and perspectives. This results in a more attentive ear to the implications of the exegetical process and an ensuing theology that is more biblical and pertinent to the culture. As we move from the cultural context through our own evolving worldview to the Bible and back to the context, we adopt increasingly relevant local reflection and initiatives. As we listen to Scripture and walk through our various situations in life, we are faced with a question. How can we hear and apply God's word in our cities and neighbourhoods? In reality, the complexity of the city means we constantly ask these questions. Holding text and context together is vital as we continue in an era of rapid urban growth, urbanization and globalization.

Doing the socio-analytical mediation can take many forms. As we are seeking the reasons for the spatial differences of human activity in urban areas we will need tools of analysis. The new urbanism suggests transect studies. Within the framework described thus far it is important to examine Census Canada data on five sets of numbers:

- household revenue (lines 1525-1547 of the 2001 Census data. Lines for 2006 are somewhat different. We use 2001 as the baseline as it was a complete census.);
- ethnicity including immigration patterns (lines 400-734) and language spoken at home (lines 225-380);
- rates of scolarity (lines 1356-1397);
- issues related to family structure: age structure (lines 6-43), birth rates, number of children per household (lines 82-89), celibacy (line 45) etc;
- current rates of religious affiliation (lines 1675-1709).

Throughout the analysis, the community undertaking the work is seeking to reflect upon the lived experience of people in their context. This is why community development is a true contextual model of theology and mission in a Christian framework. A holistic understanding of poverty with the emphasis on identity and vocation is indispensable to the research.

Over the past 50 years much ink has been spilt on the subject of community development. The name of Saul Alinsky is indispensable to understanding the practice. From the 1930s to the 1970s his work influenced a whole generation of practitioners. His formal training in sociology, his active participation in the labour movement in the 1930s and especially his work with the *Back of the Yards Neighbourhood Council* shaped the field of study. The assumptions that motivated him were that community development issues were interconnected rather than independent of each other. Community problems were city-wide if not national in scope and required the intervention of extra community agencies.<sup>8</sup> In his classic work written in 1971, *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky highlighted problems that confront local residents often arising from sources outside the community and necessitating organisations that will tackle them on a systemic level.<sup>9</sup> However, in the words of Donald and Dietrich Reitzes, “[his] greatest professional shortcoming was his inability to integrate effectively his sociological understanding of power, organisation and community with his flamboyant tactics.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1977, the classic piece, *The Neighborhood Organiser’s Handbook* was published. This was the manual for many of us who in the subsequent two decades wrestled with neighbourhood organising issues. Rachele and Donald Warren did an excellent job on detailing the issues *in* and *of* the community.

This book was helpful to me in detailing the geography of urban functions.<sup>11</sup> The description for cultural analysis that I use allows a practitioner to take seriously the fact that social activity is culturally and historically specific. Urban hermeneutics allows us to understand or decode the polarity between social structure and human agency, which is constantly at work in a metropolitan area. Social institutions—the basic building blocks of a city because of their far-reaching spatial and temporal existence – are used by human agents to create urban systems and metropolitan structures. Human actions are constrained by these structures but are also enabled by them. In attempting to understand a city, neither the subject (the human agent) nor the object (society and social institutions) has primacy.

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<sup>8</sup> See the appendix (page 30) for Alinsky’s definition and characteristics of people’s organisations.

<sup>9</sup> Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, (New York, Random House, 1971) page 801.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Reitzes and Dietrich Reitzes, Saul A. Alinsky: A Neglected Source but a Promising Resource. *The American Sociologist* 1982, Vol. (17) (February): 47-56.

<sup>11</sup> Refer as well to the short bibliography for other works on the subject. For a more detailed analysis on method in pursuing urban ministry reflection, read Glenn Smith, "Doing Theology in the Canadian Urban Context: Some Preliminary Reflections", in “Studies in Canadian Evangelical Renewal - Essays in Honour of Ian S. Rennie” (Toronto: FT Publications, 1996), p.81-103. Also see note 24 on p.225 of *Espoir pour la ville: Dieu dans la cité*. (QC: Éditions de la Clairière, 1994) and chapter 8 in *Towards the Transformation of our city/regions*. (LCWE, 2005)

By grasping this geography of urban functions, we are looking at issues (the social dynamics, problems, needs, aspirations, and world views) that are culturally and historically specific. Like the city itself, these issues reflect the prevailing values, ideology, and structure of the prevailing social formation. A useful analytical, social, and theological purpose is served by the empirical recognition that urban issues are manifest in geographical space and place. This implies that the resulting description will detail issues *in* the city as well as issues *of* the city. (For example, an issue *in* urban space would include the consequences of population density in a census district in Ville St-Laurent that has 11,536 people per square kilometre versus the Census Metropolitan Area of Montréal norm of 847. An issue *of* urban space includes attention to the socio-economic factors that go hand-in-hand with such population concentration.)

In the 1980s a new body of Christian literature surfaced led by Robert Linthicum. His article, “Networking: Hope for the Church in the City”<sup>12</sup> has been used around the globe in several languages to ignite reflection and action on the subject. His subsequent books developed his theory on the subject. His best piece, published by MARC in 1991, *Empowering the Poor* detailed his method in community organizing.<sup>13</sup> “Community organization is the process by which the people of an urban community organize themselves to deal with the forces that are exploiting their community and making them powerless victims...It is a process of mobilizing the people in a troubled neighbourhood to take action together to identify and defeat the social and spiritual forces destroying the neighbourhood.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1999, The Brookings Institute published the new landmark text on the subject, *Urban Problems and Community Development*.<sup>15</sup> Edited by Ronald Ferguson and William Dickens, this 600 page work replaces Warren and Warren for the theoretical underpinnings of the field but is far less practical. Thirteen different facets of the subject are explored in depth. “This book reviews much of what is known from research that bears on meeting the place-and poverty-related challenges those residents of low-to moderate- income neighbourhoods face. Chapters show that a great deal is known but also that much remains to learn.”<sup>16</sup> Community is understood as the residents of a geographical neighbourhood or multi-neighbourhood area no matter how they related to one another. (See our discussion below on the fundamental duality of neighbourhood.) Development produces assets that

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Linthicum, *Networking: Hope for the Church in the City* in *The Gospel and the Urban World*: 5e edition. Edited by Glenn Smith. Christian Direction. 2007.

<sup>13</sup> *Empowering the Poor*, Monrovia: MARC, 1991. Also see the appendix (page 36) with the diagram of his method.

<sup>14</sup> *Authentic Strategies for Urban Mission*, Robert Linthicum in *Disciplining the City* 2e edition. Edited by Roger Greenway. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) page 115 and 118.

<sup>15</sup> *Urban Problems and Community Development*. (Washington: The Brookings Institute. 1999)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 606.

improve the quality of life.<sup>17</sup> The great plus of the text to the field of study is the theoretical contributions in the first half of the book.<sup>18</sup>

Over the past two decades, Richard Morin of the UQÀM has written from the Canadian perspective. The series, *Canadian Cities in Transition* edited by Trudi Bunting and Pierre Filion offer good insights on the issue from the vantage point our CMAs. It is worth underscoring here how complex Canadian cities are. (We will explore their particularities in the next section.) This raise challenges for those trying to pursue community development. Communities are simultaneously complex social, economic, ecological, worldview and political systems. But they are real places, each one distinct in history, geography and built environment. As we have seen they are social spaces and places for living and social reproduction characterized by thick networks of social interaction, support and often alienation.<sup>19</sup> For the Church to do community development and theology that is truly biblical in the context of the Canadian city, it is not necessary for her to borrow it completely from a foreign situation or transpose it directly from the Reformation. A good missiology that engages a local group of believers in a specific community will have a different look to it where the Montréal Canadiens hockey team are king instead of the life and times of Emmanuel Kant, Jean Calvin or Rudolph Bultmann.

Finally, let me draw your attention to one piece produced in this decade. Arjun Appaduria in his piece, *The Production of Locality* joins Morin in explaining how three critical factors are shaping the discussion today. He writes, that these factors, “....affect the production of locality in the world of the present – the nation/state, diasporic flows and electronic and virtual communities – are themselves articulated in variable and puzzling sometimes contradictory ways that depend on the cultural, class, historical and ecological setting within which that come together.”<sup>20</sup>

This introduction has allowed us to examine critical aspects of community development in Canadian cities. We begin with the necessity of a socio-analytical reflection of the community that takes both the social context and the Christian traditions seriously. These sources of information for addressing the city and the literature on the subject will inform what follows. In the next section we will situate the issue for Canada by looking at our neighbourhoods. In the following section, we will define community development and community organisation. Finally we will contextualize the action-reflection-action model through the lens of faith.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Page 4.

<sup>18</sup> See in particular chapters 2 and 6.

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 27 of *Canadian Cities in Transition*, 3rd edition.

<sup>20</sup> Appadurai, Arjun. 1997. *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. The chapter is entitled *The Production of Locality*, pages 118-119.

## *Penser la ville*<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the vast and excellent literature on Canadian urban issues that exists today (Ley, 1996; Bunting and Filion, 2000, 2006; Lorinc, 2005), unfortunately very little has been written to document the experience of Christian ecclesial reflection and practice in our census metropolitan areas. Even less has been written on holistic sustainable community development. Over the past decade very few significant articles have appeared. David Ley, professor of urban geography at the University of British Columbia has written three fine, accessible pieces about faith in the Canadian city (Ley, 1992, 1993, 2000). There are two reasons to explain this. First and foremost, people doing urban ministry in Canada (and across the globe, for that matter) rarely take time to reflect in writing on their actions and learnings. We all are impoverished because of this. Second, American perspectives influence far too many notions about community development in Canada. The literature review illustrates that! Christians continue to identify community development (solely) with inner city poverty issues, neglecting the broader issues of Canadian urbanization and urbanism. For that reason alone, one must insist on describing metropolitan orientations by using Canadian data.

Richard Sennett defines a city as “a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet” (Sennett, 1974, 39)<sup>22</sup>. The United Nations Population Fund documents the

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<sup>21</sup> See footnote 2. Thinking about the city is a natural next step (for congregations) after appropriating place and space.

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, most of the early modern definitions of city came out of community development practice. Lewis Mumford, based on his experience in New York, wrote in 1937 the city is “a theatre for social action... [and everything else – art, politics, education, commerce] only serve to make the social drama...more richly significant, as a stage set, well-designed, intensifies and underlines the gestures of the actors and the actions of the play.” Based on his organising in Chicago, Louis Wirth in his 1938 article, “Urbanism as a Way of Life” wrote, “For sociological purposes a city may be defined as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially homogeneous individuals. On the basis of the postulates which this minimal definition suggests a theory of urbanism may be formulated in the light of existing knowledge concerning social groups.” In the 1960s, Herbert Gans, based on his work in Levittown in Philadelphia, challenged these assumptions by illustrating that both inner-city folk, urban villagers and suburbanites tend to maintain their pre-existing cultures and personalities.

I actually prefer to take a whole different approach to the question – a more functional approach. The German proverb, “*Stadtluft macht frei*,” or “*City air makes you free*” takes on new meaning as minds are set free to think and dream when people immigrate to the city. Max Weber popularised the expression when he described the consequences of economic opportunities in medieval occidental cities. “The time period varied, but always after a short time, the lord of a slave or bondsman lost the right to subordinate him to his power. The principle varied in varying degrees. Very often, in fact, cities were forced to promise not to admit un-free men and when there was a restriction of economic opportunities such barriers were

diversity of definitions for an urban category in its 1996 State of the World Population report. A British urbanologist, David Clark, has clarified many of these issues in his most recent book (Clark, 1996).<sup>23</sup> The OECD prefers to speak of a functional metropolitan area, reflecting organisation of social and economic relations.<sup>24</sup>

But beyond definitions and the demographic function of cities known as “urban growth,” one may ask, “*What is happening to Canadian urban society?*” What were the conditions, inherited from the past, which have been transformed in these last forty years that help us understand its present state? This is a fundamental question we need to explore, if we are to understand the cultural context in which we pursue community development. But our concern points in a further direction with a second question, “*How will the church reflect and pursue relevant community development in the years ahead?*”

To answer these two questions, an attentive practitioner can use an ethnographic analysis of the culture so as to understand how social structures and human behaviour interact and influence a city. A transformational method is an excellent tool for the Christian practitioner who desires to study the following: the knowledge and practices of people; the manner they use their freedom to dominate, to transform, to organize, to arrange, and to master space for their personal pursuit so as to live, to protect themselves, to survive, to produce, and to reproduce. To do this one must master dominant tendencies so as to grasp where we have come from and where we are going as a society and what the mission of God in this culture will look like. As we have already noted, urban practitioners need to be able to identify local worldviews in order to understand the spirituality in their particular context.

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also welcomed by cities. However, despite such exceptions, as a rule the principle of freedom prevailed. Thus the estate-based differences vanished in the city at least so far as they rested on a differentiation between freedom and bondage.” And then from her experience in New York City and then Toronto, Jane Jacobs picked up on the same idea, “...City air still makes free the runaways from company towns, from plantations, from factory-farms, from subsistence farms, from migrant picker routes, from mining villages, from one-class suburbs.” (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (Page 444 of Vintage Books edition, 1992). These ideas are further articulated in her last book, *Dark Days Ahead*. . (New York: Random House, 2004)

<sup>23</sup> He names a population of 50,000 people or less a *town* or a *village*. On the other hand, *cities* are human agglomerations that have up to 200,000 residents. A *metropolitan area* has more than two million people, but a *megalopolis* is an urban region over five million. These distinctions are helpful because a country like Norway considers any human settlement of 200 people as urban, while Bénin, for example, only uses “urban” for places of 10,000 or more people. Statistics Canada defines a census metropolitan area as a human settlement of 125,000 or more people. In 2001, Abbotsford, BC (population 147,370), Kingston, Ontario (144,838), and Thunder Bay, Ontario (125,986) were added to the list since the last complete census in 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Redefining Territories: The Functional Region. (Paris: OECD, 2002)

At first glance the analysis is striking. For years urbanologists spoke about the North American city, combining Canadian and American cities in their analysis. However, if one applies the urban method we propose, it becomes obvious that Canadian cities are distinct. In our URBAN FORM, Canadian cities are more compact in size and therefore considerably denser in population.<sup>25</sup> In TRANSPORTATION and TRAVEL, Canadian cities have four times fewer freeways, relying 2.5 times more per capita on public transportation. (Interestingly, Americans own and operate 50% more motor vehicles than Canadians.)<sup>26</sup> URBAN POPULATIONS represent more ethnic diversity, higher incomes, and more “traditional family” units. Canadian middle-income families show more propensity to stay in the central city. In monetary terms of URBAN GROWTH and DECLINE, Canadian cities are more stable, perhaps because URBAN SAFETY is much more in evidence.<sup>27</sup> Finally, URBAN GOVERNMENT is radically different between the two countries. However, in URBAN FISCAL POLICY, American cities depend on property taxes for only 27% of their total revenue in contrast to 52% for Canadian cities.<sup>28</sup> U.S. cities have more access to local sales taxes and income taxes and receive greater state and federal transfers than Canadian cities.

The central tenet of my argument therefore leads us to affirm that cities evolve within the worldview of the societies within which they are located. In spatial and architectural forms they are manifestations of deeply rooted cultural processes that encompass economic, social and religious/worldview elements as well.

What does all this mean for Canadian neighbourhoods and local communities? In large part it depends on how we define them. The literature review shows how vast this topic really is and why it makes community development complex.<sup>29</sup> Increasingly definitions take into consideration both the concept of geographical proximity as well as the social bonds between members of a designated population. Arjun Appaduria goes so far as to argue for “neighbourhood” as the existing social forms whether in a specific place or virtually that allow people to live in the here and now and have potential for social reproduction. However he does admit, “Nevertheless, it carries the burden of co-opting a colloquial term for technical use.”<sup>30</sup> Again we would be wise in Canada to listen to

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<sup>25</sup> Montréal is the third most densely populated city in North American, slightly behind New York and Boston.

<sup>26</sup> Montréal has the highest number of commuters and people walking or biking to work per capita in North America.

<sup>27</sup> Montréal’s homicide rate is 2 per 100,000 people compared to an average of 20 in major US cities.

<sup>28</sup> In Québec municipalities, 76% of total revenue is from property taxes, severely limiting (for example) Montréal’s ability to manoeuvre.

<sup>29</sup> On pages 35-37, one will find a fine description done by the 2004 Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force: Toronto.

<sup>30</sup> Arjun Appaduria, *The Production of Locality*, 98.

Alinsky who wrote in 1971, “To organize a community you must understand that in a highly mobile urbanized society the word, “community” means community of interest, not physical community.”<sup>31</sup> He was making the point that in cities, community often emerges from common concerns rather than shared geographical boundaries. However, Richard Morin is the most helpful. In his article, « *Quartiers et lien social: des pratiques individuelles à l'action collective* » he shows conclusively how the two functions are thoroughly inter-related. In actual fact he writes that when one functions within a purely territorial definition of neighbourhood the citizen becomes unimportant. Professionals love this model of neighbourhood as it takes a purely functional approach sometimes to the point of actually minimizing the concept of place. The neighbourhood merely becomes a monopoly board on which social action takes place. On the other hand, when interpersonal social bonds are at the centre of a definition of neighbourhood, the subjective features of life dominate and relativizing the psycho-spatial and socio-economic aspects of life.<sup>32</sup>

This becomes very critical as we transition into the third section of this paper. How a culture understands neighbourhood effects how it does community development. Let me illustrate this.

Fontan, Morin, Hamel and Shragge point out that the main difference between Toronto and Montréal is the degree of organisation and integration of these approaches into the local community.<sup>33</sup> Montreal’s organizations have received recognition from two levels of government and are seen as a means of promoting economic development and social integration. Toronto, in contrast, has been characterised by targeted initiatives that either work with specific populations (e.g. psychiatric survivors) or in a section of the city with a particular population. Each organisation stands by itself, and there is no over-riding policy or program from any level of government to support it.

The authors identify basic differences that explain to a large extent the way that community development has emerged in these two cities. Originally in Montreal the parish structures were important and this sense of locality was preserved through a wide variety of structures and local organising. These processes have been more sporadic in Toronto, and the locality has not been incorporated into local governmental structures and services as systematically as in Montreal. Second, governmental structures in Montreal that shape local activities are numerous. These include provincially controlled community health and social service centres (CLSCs), and decentralised bodies that fund a wide range of community organisations and activities. It is almost impossible for any

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<sup>31</sup> Rules for Radicals ,120.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Morin, *Quartiers et lien social: des pratiques individuelles à l'action collective*, 105

<sup>33</sup> These next two paragraphs have been informed by Fontan, J.-M., P. Hamel, R. Morin et E. Shragge “The Institutionalization of the Montreal ’s CDECs : From Grass Roots Organizations to the State Apparatus?”, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research/Revue canadienne de recherches urbaines*, vol. 12, no 1 : 58-76, 2003.

local activity not to come face to face with a local bureaucrat from a provincial or municipal government. These structures are less developed in Toronto. Third, with the election of the Harris Conservative government, the links between the community movement and the provincial government were severed. In contrast, successive Québec governments have actively recruited and given the community sector greater visibility through its economic revitalisation strategies. These relations and traditions explain the differing structures of community development which in Montreal are highly structured and integrated into governance, and which in Toronto are fragmented and individually must negotiate their funds and their roles. These differences will become even more obvious when we apply our criteria of the transformational analysis to a comparison with American and Canadian community development agencies.

Therefore, the description for cultural analysis that we propose allows a practitioner to take seriously the fact that social activity is culturally and historically specific. Urban hermeneutics allows us to understand or decode the polarity between social structure and human agency, which is constantly at work in a metropolitan area.

To pursue this contextual analysis, the community development practitioner will need to bring:

- a high sensitivity to the local specifics and to micro-details in the context;
- a concern for the larger worldview influences (understood as the macro issues);
- a synthesis beyond a simple homogenisation of the data;
- a true appreciation of the differences between cities, regions, and even neighbourhoods so that one can appreciate the specifics of the area in the light of the task.

This hermeneutical mediation engages the socio-analytical step in the question we raised at the beginning of this section. “*How will the church reflect and pursue relevant community development in the years ahead?*” But this also causes us to realize that all too often we are not taking the time to think biblically so as to act contextually. Without a holistic understanding of poverty and the preoccupation to address identity and vocation as the pillars of the Biblical vision of the human person and one’s community, development simply becomes programmatic. This leads to the next set of questions and the final mediation described in this paper.

## **What is community development in Canada? What is community organizing?**

Community development fundamentally aims to improve living conditions and revitalize neighbourhoods. Community organisation is the various networking strategies employed

to accomplish the specific mission of the agencies committed to the vision for the neighbourhood as it is conceived.<sup>34</sup> A sample of mission statements illustrates this:

“...to find ways to develop and link community-based identities and struggles in a way that challenges capital.”

“...on the assumption that poverty should not be viewed just as an individual affair but as a systematic disease that affects the whole community.”

“The individuals who build these communities believed they could not only give barrio residents control over their economic future, but that their communities would eventually equalize power relationships between the barrio and the outside world.”<sup>35</sup>

“We define [community development] as a comprehensive, multi-faced strategy for the revitalisation of marginalised or distressed communities. Through the development of resources and alliances, organisations and institutions that are democratically controlled by the community are put in place. At stake is the possibility of the democratisation of the local economy. [These] organisations mobilise local resources (people, finances, technical expertise, and real property) in partnerships with resources from beyond the community. This is undertaken for the purpose of empowering community members to create and manage new and expanded socio-economic tools (businesses, specialised institutions and organisations, skill, and practices), or new types of local governance.”<sup>36</sup>

In the United States, Ferguson and Dickens point out that issues around public housing are at the core of community development corporations in that country.<sup>37</sup> But as Richard Morin and Jill Hanley point out in their comparison of community development in four North American cities that the national context really matters in how community development is articulated.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Linthicum goes to great length to try to distinguish the two terms, giving priority to the second in urban work. See chapter three of *Empowering the Poor*. The argument seems forced in my opinion.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter five of *Urban Problems and Community Development*.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Marc Fontan Pierre Hamel, Richard Morin Eric Shragge *Community Economic Development and Metropolitan Governance: A Comparison of Montreal and Toronto*. Canadian Journal of Regional Science/Revue canadienne des sciences régionales, XXII:1,2 (Spring-Summer/printemps-été 1999), 201-217.

<sup>37</sup> *Urban Problems and Community Development*., page 202 and especially chapter 10.

<sup>38</sup> Morin, R. et J. Hanley, “Community Economic Development in a Context of Globalization and Metropolization: A Comparison of Four North American Cities”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 28, no 2: 369-83, 2004.

Building on all the literature reviewed in this paper to this point, I see community development as part of an organisation field<sup>39</sup> that has a preferential option for the local community.<sup>40</sup> Therefore it is a multi-faceted initiative that mobilises a vast number of partners, acting out of an increasing awareness of their deepest values and assumptions, to confront the forces that destroy their individual lives, families and communities<sup>41</sup> so as to build social capital to improve the quality of life and contribute to the holistic transformation of the community. As poverty in all its facets is challenged and persons are freed to develop their identity and vocation in life then social capital is released in fresh ways. The organisational field as a system encompasses the principal levels of involvement – grassroots participants who generally are volunteers, local agencies that deliver services, organisations and structures on the municipal or national level that directly support these agencies and then provincial and federal entities that intervene on a punctual basis depending on the province and the area of competency. However, community development can only take root as issues of power, capacity, and especially trust among the partners, are brought to bear on the major assets that improve the quality of life and contribute to the transformation of the community.

Social capital is a new concept in community development. Ferguson and Dickens gloss over the subject. Robert Putman contributed to the concept in his ground-breaking piece, *Bowling Alone*. Social capital refers to features of community organisation such as networks, norms, social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for the common good. He points out that life is easier with communities that are blessed with “substantial stock of social capital.”<sup>42</sup> By contributing to meaningful human contacts of all sorts that characterize true community – we are developing a strong and active civil society and the spiritual welfare of all.

We can conclude by saying that community development is journeying in community to express aspirations, discover assets, confront limitations and generate solutions for peace and well-being in homes and the neighbourhood.

## **Contextualizing the Subject: Transforming the City**

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<sup>39</sup> According to W. Richard Scott an organisational field includes critical exchange partners, sources of funding, regulatory groups, professional and trade associations and other sources of normative and cognitive influence.” But it is well recognized in organisational field theory institutional rules and structures are far from the whole story. This is where our understanding of world view takes root.

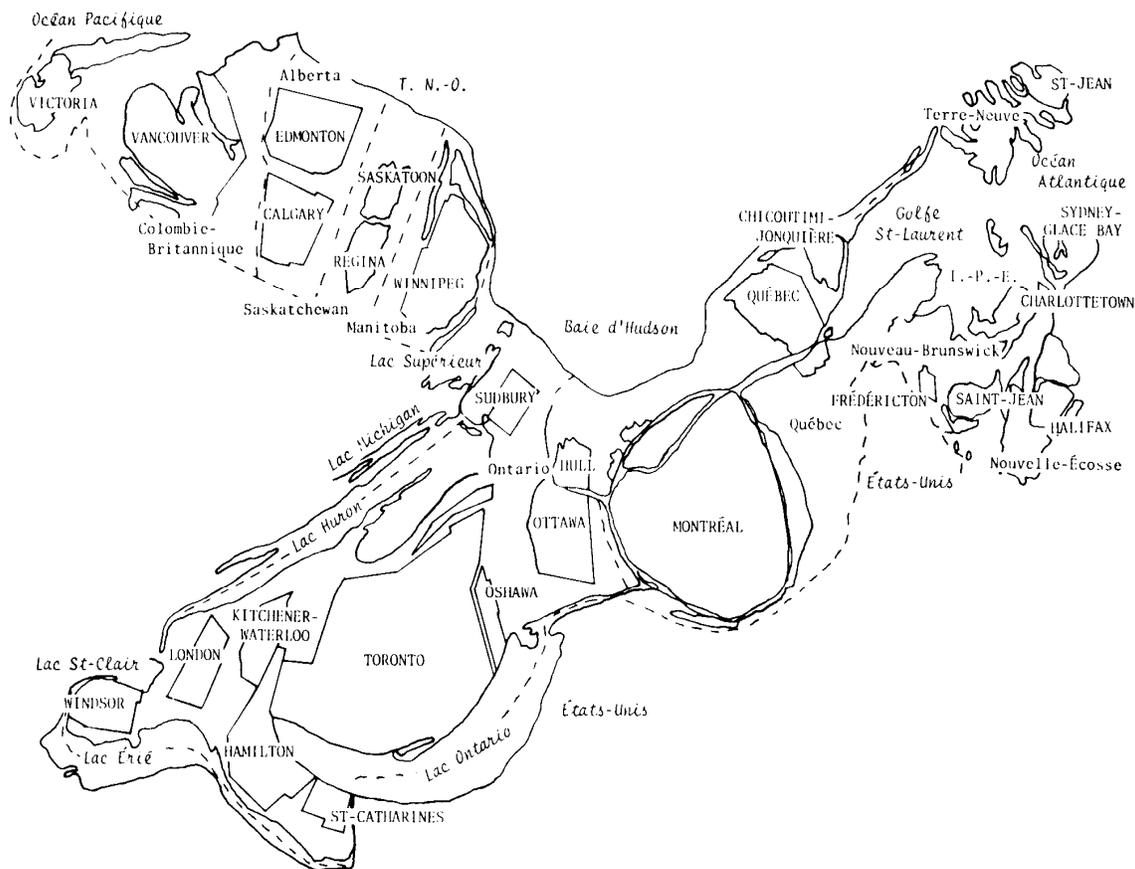
<sup>40</sup> I love the term that Pierre Clavel, Jessica Pitt and Jordan Yin use, “the community option for local services.”

<sup>41</sup> This means that Christian community development practitioners will need to take the category of principalities and powers seriously. Jayakumar Christian explores these notions with candour in his Ph.D thesis. See footnote four.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Putman, *Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital*, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 65-78 (January 1995)

In this discussion of community development in Canadian cities and specifically in the era of municipal fusions in Canada, there are three issues that must be considered. First, one needs to consider the principal dimensions of change that have affected this country over the decades. This includes the vast increase in the size of urban areas, including four major components: population, employment, capital investment, and infrastructure. Second, we need to understand the emerging polarized social landscape that is touching every area of urban life. Finally, we must take note of the increasing poverty in our CMAs.

It is remarkable how the urban landscape has evolved throughout the history of the country. At Canadian Confederation in 1867, less than one in five citizens lived in towns and cities of 1,000 or more population. By 1924, Canada was considered an urban nation by Statistics Canada, as better than 50% of the population lived in an area of 1,000 people or more. In 1965, the country was truly metropolitan as 50% of the population lived in cities of 10,000 people or more. Now, there are 140 urban centres, occupying less than 3% of the land. In the three largest urban centres—Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal—we find 35% of the population occupying 0.8% of the land. It is for this reason that I say, “*The urban system of Canada is Canada.*” This isodemographic map of Canada illustrates this reality.



Three processes are at work. First, urbanization happens because of the natural growth as the number of births exceeds the number of deaths. Second, the migration of large numbers of people from rural areas to the city increases the population. It is estimated that better than 40% of urban growth is from this process alone. Finally, mergers, or the incorporation of peripheral areas into one city metropolis, are causing cities to grow. This is certainly true of the Canadian urban landscape.

These realities force the Church to take metropolitan areas much more seriously. More theological emphasis on the city as a specific geographical place needs to be emphasized. Bible studies on the mission of God in the city are needed if the Church is to equip the whole people of God to love the places in which we live. Transformation must take root in Scripture and in community.

We are very accustomed in Christian circles to studying the history of theology or to reading theological texts. In other words, we want to see the results of other people's reflections. As Douglas Hall has pointed out, because clergy and professors have done so little to alter the situation, "laypersons tend to think of theology as a more or less fixed set of beliefs, contained in embryo in the Bible, codified in various historical creeds, confessions and faith statements, refined in forbidding volumes of doctrine and relayed to congregations in simplified form through sermon, catechetical instruction, and (for a few) college classes in religious knowledge."

The basic purpose of theological reflection has never really changed. It is the reflection of Christians upon the gospel in light of their own circumstances. Theology is God in dialogue with his people in all their thousands of different situations. Yet how does an action- reflection-action orientation to community development help us to reflect in a missiological manner in our situation?

To reflect about transformation and pursue development with one's neighbourhood is not just about finding new ways to apply the Bible to those situations in the most innovative ways we can. In a changing age we need a new set of glasses. The urban practitioner first needs to reflect upon the meaning of the Bible in its original context. Then the local congregation can contextualize that message in all the spheres of her life. In this manner, she can communicate the relevance of the Scriptures in situations very different from Bible times.

This means that the Church will need some very clear criteria as she goes about the process. Without wanting to be either exhaustive or too theoretical, let me briefly suggest five principles that will guide the action-reflection-action model.

First, this reflection is rooted in an inductive study of the Bible. It sees God's revelation as progressive. This exegetical study examines closely how the Bible illustrates the process of making God's word relevant to the recipients of the message. By understanding the principle of historical progression in the biblical record from creation through the tragic fall, into the redemption offered in Christ and the future consummation

of the celestial city, the church sees how the Bible does justice to the diversity of contexts. At the same time, it upholds the fundamental unity of God's revelation in time and place.

At the heart of our reflections as Christians lies an understanding of God's intentions for human history. These intentions read like a narrative, the unending story, so to speak, that Conn talked about. Numerous writers have attempted to summarize it.<sup>43</sup> My best effort would read like this:

*Reality as we know, see and experience it is the result of a Creator who made the world and fashioned creatures in His image to live in harmony, well-being and peace (Shalom). These creatures were given a series of mandates to pursue so that one day all of creation should be flooded with the Creator's life, in a way for which it was prepared from the very beginning of the human story. By tragic irony the creature rebelled against these intentions. The rebellion brought dissonance at every level of creation. But the Creator acted astoundingly and solved the problem in principle in an entirely appropriate manner - through Israel and ultimately through Jesus to rescue creatures/creation from the plight of the rebellion. The full scope of this rescue is not yet apparent but the story continues with the Creator acting by His Spirit within the world to bring it to that purpose originally foreseen. To this end, the Creator has created a new community of witnesses to this story. While waiting, this community is called to speak, to serve, to live in loving obedience to Jesus Christ and to be a sign of God's peaceful purposes for the world and to dialogue to subvert other ways of telling stories of the world. One does this in patient attendance to the grand finalé of the story.*

Second, this reflection and resulting strategies that respond to the needs of the local situation is a corporate enterprise. No one individual can do community reflection and action on one's own. It is communal in the sense that thinking about what the Scriptures mean on the subject in a specific cultural context is not only left up to professionals, or the highly trained.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In the past decade many Christian authors have attempted to summarize God's project in human history in a succinct paragraph. Tom Wright (*The New Testament and the People of God*, page 133) and Richard Hays (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, page 190) employed the most recent insights in narrative theology, while maintaining an historical focus on the faith, helping the Church understand God's Story in fresh ways in theology and ethics. Brian McLaren (*The Story we Find Ourselves In*) applies the method in an altogether different literary genre that he calls creative nonfiction. He employs it for the broader theme of the authentic mission encounter of the Church with our culture that has been explored by many authors since Leslie Newbigin first published *Foolishness to the Greeks*. (Erdmann's, 1987). One fascinating summary of the Christian story is found in the Montréal novelist, Yan Martel's novel, *Life of Pi* (chapter 17).

<sup>44</sup> See the suggested community Bible study themes on transformation beginning on page 38.

Third, doing Christian community development in context will mean that we will listen to the cries of the vulnerable and the call of the Scriptures on this subject. The theme of God's justice is found in over 400 texts in the Bible. Any reflection upon action will need to include this component, therefore, having a clear prophetic dimension in its development.

Fourth, as we have already pointed out, community development will be contextually practical and relevant to both the people implementing the action and the populations participating in the development. We are not just trying to systematize what the Bible teaches on the subject, we are trusting God to transform the situation through the corporate and collaborative efforts of God's people. Scripture speaks clearly that the development of "sound doctrine" is not just the cerebral acquisition of knowledge. It is the development of true Christ-like character.

Finally, this reflection and action will be "place specific". God's concern for people includes a deep love for the situation in which they live. God used particular places to speak to individuals such as Nineveh in the case of Jonah or Rome in the case of Onesimus. The same principle is at work for the people of God when the Lord used, for example, the city of Babylon to speak to the children of Israel who were in exile there in 587 BCE.

This forces us to ask questions about contextualization. It is a critical issue for the Church in a city to face in light of questions raised at the local, national or global level. The word is relatively new in theological circles.<sup>45</sup> It implies the interweaving of the Scriptural teaching about the city and the Church with a particular, present-day context. The very word focuses the attention on the role of the context in the theological enterprise. In a very real sense, then, all doctrinal reflection from the Scriptures is related in one way or another to the situation from which it is born, addressing the aspirations, the concerns, the priorities and the needs of the local group of Christians who are doing the reflection.

Contextualization begins with an attempt to discern where God, by his Spirit, is at work in the context. It continues with a desire to demonstrate the gospel in word and deed and to establish groups of people who desire to follow Jesus in ways that make sense to people within their (cultural) context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and transforms their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Jesus and remain within their context.

The task of contextualization is the essence of urban reflection and action. The challenge is to remain faithful to the historic text of Scriptures while being mindful of today's realities. An interpretative bridge is built between the Bible and the situation from which the biblical narrative sprang, to the concerns and the circumstances of the local group of Christians who are doing the reflection. The first step of the hermeneutic involves establishing what the Text meant at the time it was written: what it meant "then". The

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<sup>45</sup> See the writings of Harvie Conn (1984) and Bakke, Pownall, Smith (1995).

second step involves creating the bridge to explore how the text is understood in meaningful terms for the interpreters today: what it could mean “now”. The final step is to determine the meaning and application for those who will receive the message in their particular circumstances, as present day interpreters become ambassadors of the Good News.

But for what purpose does the urban ministry practitioner pursue contextualization? Why listen to both the present context and Christian tradition, including our study of the Scriptures, Church history and theology? Increasingly we hear the use of the word *transformation* as a term that encompasses all that the Church does as followers of Jesus in God’s mission in the city.<sup>46</sup> But what does this mean? What does it entail?

The 1990 Population Fund Report on cities laid out interesting strategies for more livable urban areas. The Population Crisis Committee carried out the most complete study ever done. Data was gathered from the world’s largest 100 metropolitan areas. Based on a 13-page questionnaire, the researchers wanted to determine the quality of life in these places. Ten parameters were chosen to determine the *livability* of these cities. Based on these criteria an urban living standard score was calculated. The parameters provide a glimpse of what *transformation* might include.<sup>47</sup>

Beatley and Manning offer this picture, “To foster a sense of place, communities must nurture built environment and settlement patterns that are uplifting, inspirational and memorable, and that engender a special feeling and attachment, a sustainable community where every effort is made to create and preserve places, rituals and events that foster greater attachment to the social fabric of the community.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Although the text is quite dense, I would highly recommend Graham Ward’s book, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Ward proposes a *poiesis* (which he carefully defines on pages 6-9) which does not over distinguish aesthetic production (in the sense of poetry) from political and ethical activities – often associated with *praxis*. His *poiesis* is transformative social behaviour and the practices of everyday life. His proposal comes to a fitting conclusion from pages 165-174 where he seeks to answer the question about Christian discursive practice or *poiesis* and the production and transformation of public accounts of what is true.

<sup>47</sup> (1.) Public safety based on local police estimates of homicides per 100,000 people; (2.) Food costs representing the percentage of household income spent on food. (3.) Living space being the number of housing units and the average persons per room. (4.) Housing standards being the percentage of homes with access to water and electricity. (5.) Communication is the number of reliable sources of telecommunications per 100 people. (6.) Education is based on the percentage of children, aged 14-17 in secondary schools. (7.) Public health criteria are based on infant deaths per 1,000 live births. (8.) Peace and quiet based on a subjective scale for ambient noise. (9.) Traffic flow being the average miles per hour during rush hour. (10.) Clean air based on a one-hour concentration in ozone levels.

<sup>48</sup> The United Nations Millennium Development Goals provide a marvelous starting point for a reflection on transformation as well for a local congregation. The reader is invited to consult the web page <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.shtml> that describes the goals. A valuable exercise would be for the church to contextualise these eight goals in their city-region in collaboration with other churches. A

Inspired by John de Gruchy reflections<sup>49</sup>, I would suggest that a transformed place is that kind of city that pursues fundamental changes, a stable future and the sustaining and enhancing of all of life rooted in a vision bigger than mere urban politics.

If we accept that the Scriptures call the people of God to take all dimensions of life seriously, then we can take the necessary steps to a more holistic notion of transformation. A framework that points to the best of a human future for our city-regions can then be rooted in the reign of God.

In Jewish writings and tradition is the principle of *shalom*. It represents harmony, complementarity, and establishment of relationships at the interpersonal, ethnic, and even global levels. Psalm 85:11 announces a surprising event: “*Justice and peace will embrace.*” However, a good number of our contemporaries see no problem with peace without justice. People looking for this type of peace muzzle the victims of injustice because they trouble the social order of the city. But the Bible shows that there cannot be peace without justice. We also have a tendency to describe peace as the absence of conflict. But *shalom* is so much more. In its fullness it evokes harmony, prosperity, and welfare.

The term goes to the very heart of God’s picture of what he has created and desires for Creation is *shalom*. The word occurs 236 times in the Old Testament<sup>50</sup>. It refers to a state of fulfilment resulting from God’s presence and covenantal relationship with His people. It encompasses concepts of completeness, harmony and well-being.

The Old Testament record indicates three other important aspects of *shalom*. First of all we see from the semantic field of the word that it implies an absence of strife but with the rich implications of a state of rest. Implicit in this first use of the term is the notion of unimpaired relationships with others and true enjoyment in all one does.<sup>51</sup>

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congregation could use the framework of a city proposed on page 12 and develop strategies based on the concept of the rule of God and the millennium goals to pursue the social and spiritual transformation of the whole city.

<sup>49</sup> John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity, Art and Transformation: Theological Aesthetics in the struggle for Social Justice*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> In 38 cases the word refers to an absence of conflict. Twenty-five times it is used as a greeting and in the other cases it describes the essence of fulfilment because of God’s presence. In the Greek Septuagint the translators opted for the word, *eiréné* in 192 of these references.

<sup>51</sup> As Nicholas Wolterstorff states, “But the peace which is shalom is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationship. Shalom at its highest is enjoyment in one’s relationships.” *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 69.

Second, the term is a synonym for all we would imply by the general state of well-being of a person, a community and nature. The ideas of completeness, wholeness, prosperity, harmony and fulfilment summarize this best. As G. von Rad stated, “The ground meaning of the word is well-being and indeed with a manifest emphasis on the material side.”<sup>52</sup> Leviticus 26: 1-12 illustrates this.

Finally, *shalom* includes an eschatological aspect. (Isaiah 9: 5-6.) The Messiah, the Prince of Peace (*sar shalom*), will bring fulfilment and righteousness to the earth.

James Metzler summarizes well this, “Eden’s *shalom* was perfect because everything was just the way God made it --- connecting the possibility of *shalom* directly to the creative powers of God. Out of primeval chaos, void and darkness the Creator had planned and formed an orderly and purposeful world. ...The Creator looked over the work with complete satisfaction: “Behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). “*Shalom* affirms that the truly good life is the natural state of creation and that all creation is truly good with place and purpose for every part...The *shalom* of all creation depended on the man and woman using their godlike powers of choice... The *shalom* of Eden... pointed to the need for community and companionship.”<sup>53</sup>

In the New Testament, the image persists but the term changes. The reign of God is the royal redemptive plan of the Creator, initially given as a task marked out for Israel, then re-inaugurated in the life and mission of Jesus. This reign is to destroy his enemies, to liberate humanity from the sin of Adam and ultimately establish his authority in all spheres of the cosmos: our individual lives, the Church, society, the spirit world and ecological order. Yet, we live in the presence of the future. The Church is “between the times,” as it were: between the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom. It is the only message worth incarnating for the whole city!

The action-reflection-action mediation of the transformational model will take on many facets. As Linthicum points out partnerships (what he calls coalitions) are indispensable to the process. In the Canadian context, the city as we have shown will influence the structure of those partnerships. Some will be rooted in geographical boundaries, others in the interpersonal social bonds that people create around issues and concerns. Projects will emerge through the partnerships so that people can solve problems on their own. Advocacy is inevitable in our cities by their very nature. These efforts will be to get various levels of the public and private sectors to assume their obligations (under the law) to improve the living conditions and revitalize neighbourhoods. For example, in my city, better than 50% of this year’s cohort will not complete high-school five years from now. It is obvious that advocating for just educational systems to promote school success is a priority. A cycle of reflection on actions will establish itself. If you get people to think about issues that concern them they will do more social analysis and seek a deeper

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<sup>52</sup> See von Rad’s entry in TWNT, vol. II, page 400.

<sup>53</sup> James E. Metzler, *From Saigon to Shalom*. (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1985) 60-61.

understanding together as to the root causes of their problems. Acting on the first two steps, developing better projects and pursuing advocacy thrusts people into deeper reflection and actions.

Poverty as we saw at the beginning is a broad concept touching economic, social, physical and spiritual realities. It affects peoples' identity (social exclusion, absence of harmony in life and well-being) and their vocation (deprivation at every level of life including one's ability to participate in the welfare of the community). But as we saw the causes of poverty can be traced to "inadequacies in the worldview." These inadequacies are in actual fact a web of lies beyond a mere cognitive level of deception. This intricate web leads people believe that their poverty or social status is somehow divinely sanctioned or a factor of fate and there is no way to change it. People sense that they have no choices. A worldview can be a powerful instrument in perpetuating chronic poverty.

Good community development will emerge as the three mediations take this very seriously and then pursue the improvement of life and the revitalization of the neighbourhood.

## POSTFACE

In extended conversations with practitioners from several Canadian cities and two boroughs of Montréal since this paper was initially drafted, I believe that it is important to articulate the essential components of sustainable metropolitan community development in our context. This post face was inspired in part through discussions with our colleagues at the Christian Community Development Association in Chicago and with John Perkins. His foundational piece, "The Three 'Rs' for Ministry in the City" is found in the Appendix.<sup>54</sup> In this concluding section, I would like to articulate two foundational components and three operational components of sustainable community development in Canadian cities. But it is important to begin with the big picture.

*As followers of Jesus, we are committed to working with the whole community towards an over-arching vision that looks to the well-being of the whole neighbourhood.*<sup>55</sup> Our philosophy is embodied in our presence in the community. There must not be dichotomies and we will pursue our partnership in the community regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Transformation means that the community is moving with increasing awareness and intentionality towards this vision of well-being. But, what would a transformed

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<sup>54</sup> See page 40.

<sup>55</sup> This is the kingdom aspect or shalom aspect of our understanding of place. As we have already articulated, these two concepts go to the heart of how we understand community development from our perspective and worldview.

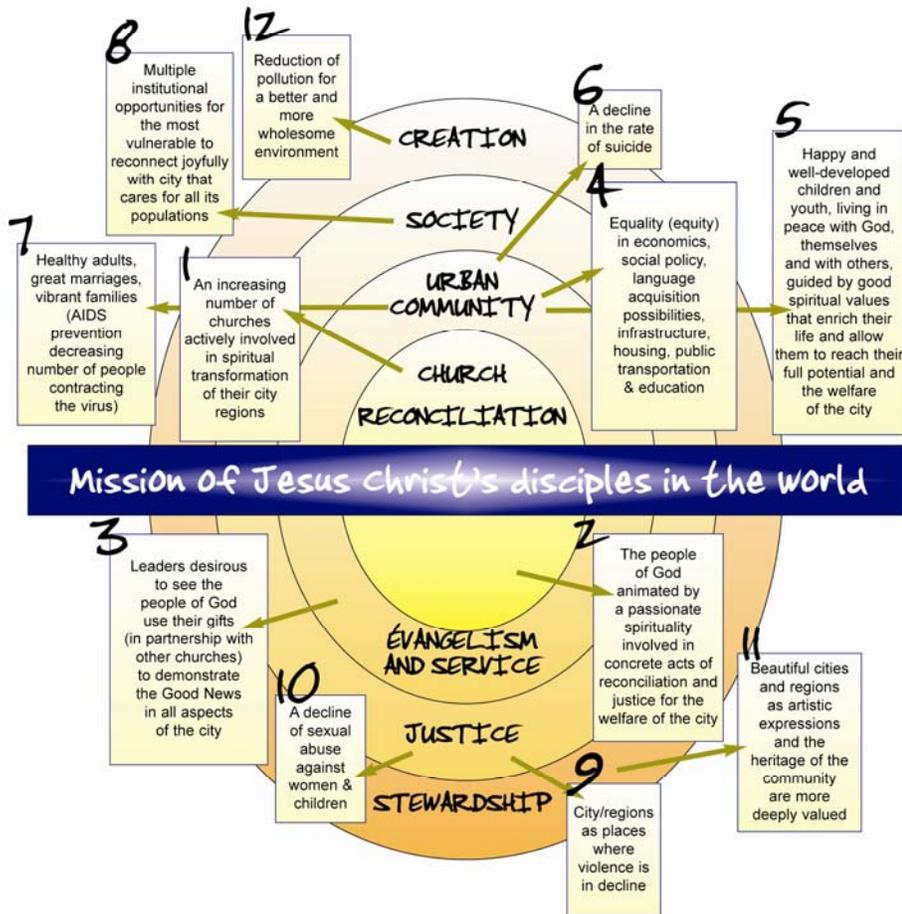
community look like? In light of urban realities an increasing number of congregations and communities have adopted the following schema and the 12 indicators as a vision of what our transformed city would look like. These indicators are rooted in four concentric circles that represent God's concern for all of life beginning with the congregation that embodies shalom and reconciliation. Subsequently these communities demonstrate the Good News in their neighbourhoods, society and in all of the created order. But so as to measure realistically the vision, we have articulated 12 indicators of the type of transformation we are pursuing. These address contextual concerns in our city. This has obviously been inspired by the eight Millennium Objectives. However the schema lacks the rigour of the 18 MDG targets and 32 MDG indicators. Accompanying these indicators are baselines rooted in research on the state of life in the city. Congregations work together to pursue the welfare of the city.

This vision seeks to help the Church participate in the transformation of the city, particularly in an era of broken relationships and the holistic understanding of poverty we have articulated.

# Key Indicators of a Transformed City

What would a city look like that has been transformed by Jesus Christ and his kingdom values?

Christian Direction has chosen these 12 indicators for the cities of Québec and La Francophonie that inspire our vision for a transformed city.



This vision is clearer when we articulate the quality of life that enables children to thrive and reach their potential as measured by health, safety and education. (Indicators four, five, six and seven) These three aspects can be defined in this way:

- Health - The process of growth towards optimal physical, social, mental and spiritual capacity that enables a child to confront challenges with resiliency and contribute to society to his or her full potential.

- Safety - The provision of basic needs and protection for children in order to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance development of capacities that enable present and future participation in society.
- Education - The knowledge and skill development that enables a child to achieve age- appropriate levels in life and employment preparation.

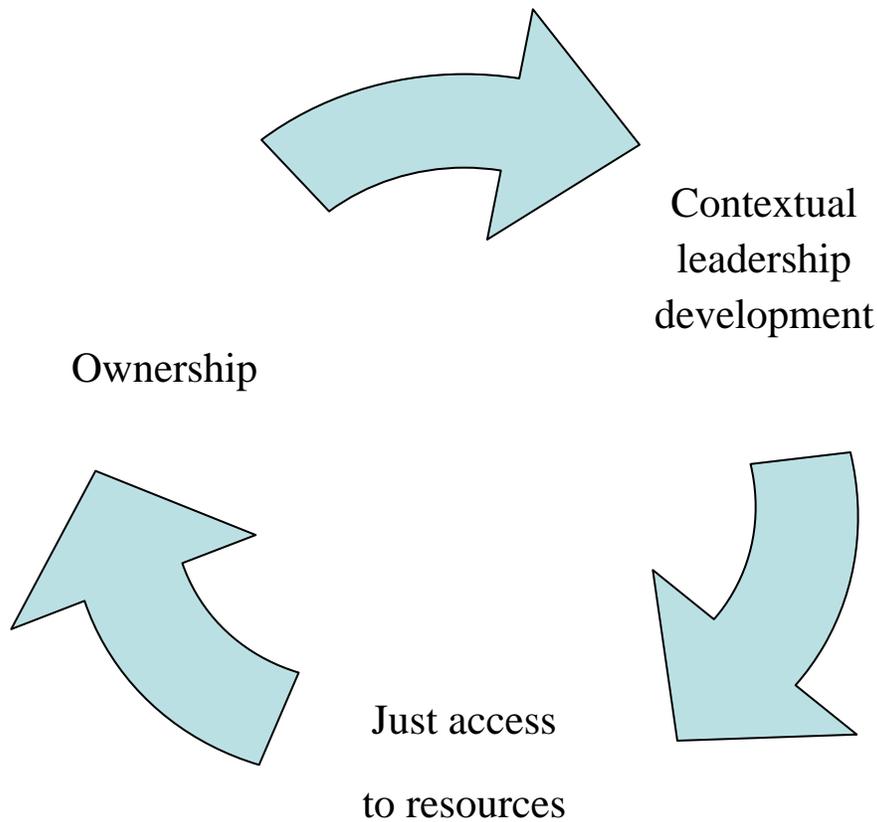
With each indicator, we articulate focus areas and specific targets and outcomes.

*Foundational Component # 1* - We practice an intentional presence with the community, listening with the community about her aspirations, limitations, assets and solutions.

As we have seen, city/region development is a preferential option for the local community so as to build social capital to improve the quality of life. Community development is rooted in the social-analytical mediation – one addresses the neighbourhood. This common vision is built on dialogue with the community. Hopes, dreams, aspirations, dilemmas, concerns, fears, struggles come to the surface in the exchange. These inform the articulation of a specific vision for the neighbourhood.

*Foundational Component # 2* – Reconciliation of all of life is a key component of community development.

As poverty is about broken relationships, then community development must take into serious consideration the full restoration of relationships at all levels. When this is taking place across cultural and ethnic lines, across economic lines, between indigenous groups and those who are new to the community, across sexual lines and among generations then we will begin to see community take true form. Yet as we have seen, poverty is rooted in world and life views. People come to believe that they do not have choices or the ability to address and deal with the brokenness in their social, emotional, physical, mental, economic and spiritual worlds. Reconciliation addresses these issues. A sense of neighbourhood is born. As we have seen, neighbourhood is central to a Canadian understanding of community in our city/regions. Relationship goes to the heart of how we understand locality but also how we wrestle with all the dimensions of poverty. As we practice these two foundational components, three other aspects of development take place together. We can diagram it as follows.



*Operational Component # 3-* The community develops an ownership of its transformation.

At the heart of community development is the active participation of the neighbourhood in taking ownership of its well-being. People are empowered to appraise their situation, to participate in the process of transformation by identifying issues, crafting solutions, making decisions, implementing projects and evaluating the results.

*Operational Component # 4 –* The pursuit of contextual leadership development.

All research points to the incredible influence of local leaders and organisers in community development.<sup>56</sup> This leadership emerges very early in the organisation of the community development process. This leadership will be formal (chairpersons of round-tables and task forces including elected officials) and informal (spokespersons and networkers).

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<sup>56</sup> See chapter 10 of Linthicum, *Empowering the Poor*, Monrovia: MARC, 1991.

*Operational Component # 5 - The redistribution of resources for true equity as an integral aspect of community development*

Sustainable urban community development is not mere charity. It is not primarily about relief for punctual distress as important as these notions might be. We are concerned for justice that stems from forgiveness. This leads to seeking means of re-distributing wealth and creating a stable sustainable economic base that allows the community to determine its own destiny.

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DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS  
WHICH ORGANIZE TRAINING CENTER SEEKS TO BUILD AND STRENGTHEN

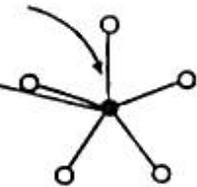
1. The organization is rooted in local tradition, leadership, and people.
2. The organization's practice is guided by the values of the democratic tradition.
3. The organization recognizes the importance of self-interest as a source of energy and motivation for its participants.
4. The program of the organization arises out of the local people themselves.
5. The organization has the support of the majority of the people of the constituency for which it claims or seeks to speak.
6. The organization involves a substantial degree of individual participation. It is characterized by a constant day to day flow of volunteer activities and the daily functioning of numerous local committees charged with specific short-term functions.
7. The organization emphasizes the functional relationship between problems and therefore its program is multi-issue, and it seeks to relate to others similarly situated in other communities.
8. The organization avoids circumscribed and segmental approaches to the solution of the problems of the community.
9. The organization recognizes that a democratic society is one which responds to popular pressures, and therefore realistically operates on the basis of pressure. For the same reason, it does not shy away from involvement in matters of controversy.
10. The organization concentrates on the utilization of indigenous individuals who, if not leaders at the beginning, can be developed into leaders.
11. The organization gives priority to the significance of two major sources of human motivation: deeply felt values and self-interest. The organization proceeds on the idea of channeling the many diverse forces of self-interest within the community into a common direction for the common good. It emphasizes the values of the democratic tradition and the particular culture of various groups of people as guideposts for settling disputes among the people. By values, we mean: liberty, equality, community, love, mutual respect, dignity, and so forth.
12. The organization recognizes and respects the autonomy and diversity of individuals and organizations.
13. The organization is or becomes self-financed through direct dues and membership participation in fundraising activities. This testifies to its representative character in that the local community supports its organization financially, insures to the membership the accountability of its paid staff, and guarantees the financial independence of the organization.

Note: Much of the above is adapted from a statement written by Saul Alinsky in July 1955.

# Community Organizing Strategy

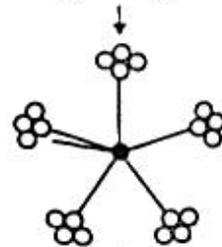
## 1. NETWORKING

The community organizer gets to know the people and discover their problems and abilities.



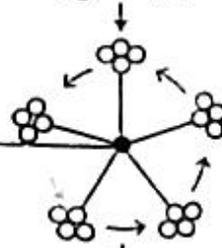
## 2. COALITION BUILDING

People with similar skills or problems are drawn together and encouraged to find their own solutions to their poverty.



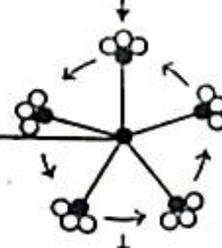
## 3. ACTING/REFLECTING/ACTING

Groups begin to plan ways of tackling tackling communal needs. A sense of community develops.



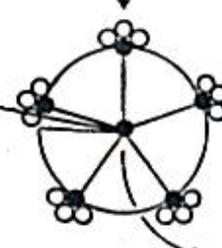
## 4. LEADERSHIP EMPOWERING

Leaders emerge. Groups begin to work together with others in a network.



## 5. THE REBIRTH OF COMMUNITY

Community is built. The slum begins to change. The people have a hope and a future. The poor are empowered. The community organizer can move on.



## What is a neighbourhood?

A neighbourhood may be defined as having several thousand residents covering an area that people can walk across. The scale of a neighbourhood typically focuses on a primary school catchment area (Power and Wilson, 2000; Novick, 1979).

Scale is important when considering what a neighbourhood is, but it is not the only consideration. From a review of the literature, we can find four over-lapping approaches to defining neighbourhood.

1. By its functions – Neighbourhood is seen as a site for the routines of everyday life (e.g. shopping); the provision of community support services and institutional resources (e.g. schools, libraries, parent drop-ins); informal surveillance ('the eyes of the street', such as block parents); and social control (e.g. over the neighbourhood children and youth to make sure they do not misbehave, but this could include the support of other people's children).
2. By fixed boundaries – Defining neighbourhood via fixed boundaries, such as postal codes or census tracts, is a proxy most often used for research purposes to draw a line around neighbourhoods. The City of Toronto defines 'neighbourhood' for administrative and funding purposes as consisting of several census tracts, between 7,000 and 10,000 people. One of the limitations of the fixed boundaries approach is that it may not capture 'natural neighbourhoods', nor people's perceived neighbourhoods.
3. The degree of homogeneity – Homogeneity can result by choice (people choosing to live with others who share important values, cultural backgrounds, language, etc.) or necessity (e.g. where affordable housing can be found). People with similar values and lifestyles often aggregate to the same geographical locales.
4. People's lived experiences – Neighbourhoods do not necessarily have objective features that are experienced or defined the same way by all residents. Neighbourhoods have social and symbolic, as well as physical boundaries. They can, therefore, be defined subjectively from within by the people who live there. For many people, neighbourhoods are a source of their identities and sense of pride. American research shows that more educated residents are likely to say that their neighbourhood is larger than other residents. Conversely, neighbourhoods are perceived as smaller if they have a higher proportion of low income residents and 'minority language' speakers. Residents who interact more with their neighbours also have a different view of their neighbourhood than those who are more isolated. (Interestingly, this study also found that "a surprising number of

routine activities take place close to home”, with the workplace being the furthest from home” (Sastry et al, 2002).

Initiatives funded under Britain’s local neighbourhood renewal strategies use various definitions of neighbourhood, depending on what makes sense to local conditions. Local perceptions of neighbourhoods “may be defined by natural dividing lines such as roads or rivers, changes in housing design or nature or the sense of community generated around centres such as schools” (NRU, 2001:13). “Bespoke neighbourhoods” is the term used to describe the definition of neighbourhood that emerges when people are asked to draw a line around what they consider to be their neighbourhood. This may or may not overlap with geographical boundaries.

It is obvious that there is no single definition of neighbourhood, that a neighbourhood is fluid and may be different at different times depending on the situation, the people asked, and the policy or research rationale.

### **A neighbourhood is like an onion**

*“Neighbourhoods often have sharp boundaries, either physical or atmospheric, but the layers of neighbourhood life are like an onion with a tight core and a loose outer skin”.* (Power and Wilson, 2000:1)

To capture the complexity and inter-relationships between different aspects of “neighbourhood”, some writers compare a neighbourhood to an *onion* as a way of understanding the roles neighbourhood plays in people’s lives. Power and Wilson (2000) and Lupton (2003) use the onion analogy to describe the levels at which ‘neighbourhood’ exists. When their different levels are combined, one ends up with four somewhat distinct layers of neighbourhood:

1. **The home area** for social interaction and making connections with others. This includes the home and immediate surroundings. This can also be the level for “demonstrating and reflecting one’s values” (Lupton, 2003).
2. **The locality** for schools, shops and parks. This level denotes status (Lupton) and reflects the *social composition* of the neighbourhood (Power and Wilson, 2000).
3. **The neighbourhood environment.** A neighbourhood’s reputation, its physical appearance and ‘feel’, the social norms that exist are all part of the neighbourhood environment which Power and Wilson define as giving “an intangible but powerful signal of who we are and how we should behave, and ... offer[ing] a sense of familiarity and security to the people who live there” (Power and Wilson, 2000:1).

4. **The wider urban district or region.** This is the level of neighbourhood that exists for job opportunities, “the wider landscape of social and economic opportunities” (Lupton, 2003:5).

Power and Wilson maintain that neighbourhoods give people a sense of familiarity and security which break down when all the three layers – home, services, environment – are significantly “disrupted” (Power and Wilson, 2001:2). What Lupton draws from the analogy is that different boundaries make sense to meet different needs. When people are asked what their neighbourhood is, they may refer to any or all of the aspects or levels above: their local school, the atmosphere of the city centre, the feel of the neighbourhood environment, or the job opportunities that exist close by.

## **Biblical References on Urban Transformation for Reflection and Liturgy<sup>58</sup>**

### ***Old Testament***

Genesis 1:1- 2:15	Creator, creation and human beings as co-creators
4:9-10	Where is your brother Abel?
10:	First cities in biblical record
19:	Sodom and Gommorah
Exodus 3:1-15	God intervenes on the side of the oppressed
22: 25-27	Do not keep the poor man's cloak
Leviticus 25:8-10	The Jubilee Year
25:35-28	Kindness to strangers
19:9-11	Sharing with the poor
19:13-15	Sharing with the poor
Deuteronomy 24:19-22	Leaving some of the harvest
Psalms 72:1-4	God's concern for justice
72:11-17	God's concern for justice
105:22-27	Celebration of the Exodus
Isaiah 1:11-17	I am sick of holocausts
3:13-15	The vineyard
11:1-9	They do not hurt or harm
58:1-12	Worship, poverty, and oppression
65:17-25	New heaven and new earth
Jeremiah 22:16	Is not that what it means to know me?
29:1-7	Seeking the shalom of the city
32:	Buying land in the city during difficult times
Amos 5:14-24	Woe to those who feel secure
6:1-6	Woe to those who feel secure

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<sup>58</sup> This text is inspired from Anne Hope and Sally Timmel's book Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers. Harare, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984.

8:4-7	Woe to those who feel secure
Micah 2:1-2	Beat their swords into ploughshares
4:1-4	Beat their swords into ploughshares
6:1-9	What does God require of those in the city?
Ruth 1-4	Love and faithfulness
<b><i>New Testament</i></b>	
Matthew 9:35 to 11:1	Pursuing God's mission in the world
13:1-52	Stories of the rule of God
25:31-45	I was hungry and you gave me to eat
Luke 3:2-11	John the Baptist
4:16-21	He sent me to bring the good news to the poor
6:20-25	The beatitudes
19:1-10	Zaccheus gives away his riches
10:25-37	The Good Samaritan
16:19-31	Dives and Lazarus
John 1:35-51	Jesus' view of sacred place
4:5-42	Woman at the well
8:3-11	Jesus stops the stoning of the woman
20:11-18	Jesus sends a woman to announce the resurrection
Acts 2:42-47	Sharing among the first Christians
4:32-35	Sharing among the first Christians
15 to 18	Paul's urban strategy in the second journey
Galatians 3:26-28	Neither Jew nor Greek
Philippians 1:27 - 2:18	Citizens emptied themselves like Jesus did
James 2:14-17, 26	Faith without works
1 John 3:14-18	If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need
Revelation 21:1-5	Behold I make all things new
13:1-17	The power of the beast
21 to 22:	The renewed city of God

### Three "R's" For Ministry in the City

From the address of John Perkins at Urbana 1976, as carried by Radix, March-April 1977, and summarized in Partnerscan, June 1977. Used with permission.

**Relocation:** "First, we must relocate the body of Christ among the poor. I'm not talking about a group of people renting a store-front through which to provide services to the community. I'm talking about some of us voluntarily and decisively relocating ourselves and our families for worship and for living within the poor community itself. Living involvement with people turns poor people from statistics into our friends. I am not willing to lay down my life for a statistic. But I am more willing to lay down my life for my friends. Again, Jesus is our model. . . A person ministering from within the neighbourhood or community will know and be able to start with the real needs, instead of forcing on people what he or she has assumed their needs are."

**Reconciliation:** "Second, we must reconcile ourselves across racial and cultural barriers. I hear people today talking about the black church and the white church. . . I do it too, it's reality. But it's not in Scripture. We should not settle for the reality with which our

culture presents us. You see, the whole idea of the love of God. . . When reconciliation is taking place across cultural lines, between blacks and whites, between rich and poor, between indigenous and those who are new in the community, we are beginning to make visible God's glory in the community."

**Redistribution:** "We must as Christians seek justice by coming up with means of redistributing our goods and wealth to those in need. How well a ministry can begin the process of creating a stable economic base in the community determines the motivation of that ministry. Is it simply "charity"? Or is it really trying to develop people and to allow them to begin to determine their own destinies? It also determines the long-range effectiveness of a body's commitment to a neighbourhood. For without an economic base there will never be a launching pad for ministry. . . The long-term goal must be to develop a sense of self-determination and responsibility within the neighbourhood itself."



Dr. Glenn Smith is married to Sandra (1976) and together they have three daughters, Jenna (né 1981), Julia (né 1984) and Christa (né 1986). Glenn did his graduate studies in Patristics at the Université d'Ottawa and his doctoral thesis in contextual theology at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. He received an honorary doctorate from the Union des universités privées d'Haïti for his contribution to urban theological practice in that country.

He has been the Executive Director of Christian Direction in Montreal since 1983 - a multi-faceted ministry committed to the spiritual transformation by Jesus Christ of all of life in the cities of the Francophone world. He is a professor of urban theology and missiology at the Institut de théologie pour la francophonie and at the Université chrétienne du Nord d'Haïti. He is a sessional lecturer at McGill University. He also is a professor at Bakke Graduate University. He and his family have been involved in pastoral ministry with an Anabaptist Francophone congregation in Montreal, Quebec for 20 years.

While directing the ministry of Christian Direction, Glenn Smith was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities from 1986 to 1990 and its President from 1990-1992. He was a member of the Protestant Committee of le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (Superior Council of Education) from 1986-1991 and its President during the two school years of 1992 and 1993. He was the President of the Protestant Partnership on Education from 1993 to 2004. From 1991-2005, he was a member of the Board of Directors of World Vision Canada. He is on the Board of IVCF: Canada. He chairs, Urbanus, an international partnership committed to providing reflective, practical and contextual education for urban practitioners in large French speaking cities. He is the senior associate for urban mission for the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation.

He is co-author of three books: *Espoir pour la ville; Dieu dans la cité, Éduquer les enfants: une vision protestante de l'éducation* and *L'histoire du protestantisme au Québec depuis 1960* and the editor of *The Gospel and Urbanization*, a 250 page reader that is into its 5<sup>th</sup> edition in French and English on urban ministry. He also wrote the book, *Following Jesus: God invites us to transformative discipleship*, which was published in English, French and Spanish. He edited, *Towards the transformation of our city/regions* in the LCWE Occasional papers series. His forth-coming book is entitled, *City Air Makes You Free: Transforming the city through a fresh, biblical hermeneutic*. He is the author of numerous articles on urban mission.