

## Some Scenes of Urban Life

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The primary aim of this chapter is to articulate the nature and importance of the idea indicated in its title. First I will offer a meditation on the phrase "some scenes of urban life," reflecting on each word of the phrase separately and then together as a unity. John Dewey, Georg Simmel, Kenneth Burke, Charles Baudelaire, among others, will serve as reference points for this exercise. Second comes an illustration of how scenes can be empirically studied as both outgrowths and drivers of key aspects of urban life. To do so I will draw from original Canadian national databases of local amenities. Built from census of business and online business directories, these databases cover all Canadian postal areas and include millions of listings of hundreds of amenity categories (such as family restaurants, churches, art galleries, and the like). Similar databases have been built in the US, France, Spain, and Korea. The conclusion argues for the fruitfulness of synthesizing scenes-oriented research with the neighborhood effects tradition of urban analysis, exemplified most powerfully in recent years by Robert Sampson's *Great American City*.

### **"Some Scenes of Urban Life": Meditation on a Phrase**

This section is a meditation on the phrase, "Some Scenes of Urban Life." It is meant to illuminate aspects of the overall conceptual orientation that has informed an ongoing stream of research into "scenes," much of which is summarized in the forthcoming *Scenes* (University of Chicago Press, see also Silver and Clark 2014). The section titles indicates how I will proceed: first I will discuss each word in the phrase separately, and then reflect on them together as a unity, first as pairs ("urban life," "some scenes," and then as linked pairs joined by the word "of."

### **"Life," "Urban," "Scenes," "Some," "of"**

*Life.* There is no agreed upon definition of life, and it would be foolish to attempt to establish one here. Padgett and Powell's (2012) *Emergence and Organization of Markets* distills for social scientists the recent work of biologists on the topic. For explicating the present usage of the term, the late work of Georg Simmel may prove helpful.

While vitalism was one of Simmel's life-long concerns, it assumed a central place in his thought toward the end of his career and life (Simmel, 2010; Silver, Lee, and Moore 2007). Vitality, he thought, consists in a simultaneous "more" and "more-than." Living things are dynamic, growing, expanding – "more." A teeming ecosystem accumulates "more" life than a desert. Dying things are static, atrophying, shrinking – "less." Living things are also constantly transcending themselves, transforming and reaching beyond their present limits – "more than." Dying things are stuck in themselves, isolated, enclosed -- "less than." John Dewey develops a similar notion of vitality in his *Art as Experience*, and captures the intuition well: "To the being fully alive,

the future is not ominous but a promise...In life that is truly alive, everything overlaps and merges...Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world" (Dewey 2005, 17-18).

*Urban.* The nature of urbanity is just as elusive as the nature of life. Researchers across disciplines are continually working to crack the urban genome. Yet Simmel's meditation on the experience of urbanity remains a touchstone here too.

The outstanding feature of Simmel's way of thinking about urbanity is his laser focus on urban experience, what it is like to be urbane, wherever and whenever it occurs. The primary fact of urban life is the density of human contacts it routinely involves. In a village, one encounters the same people over and over; relations are personal and intimate; the pace is slow. Urbanity brings one into close contact with thousands of people each day, too many to know intimately or even recognize as distinct individuals; relations are more impersonal and distant; countless others whiz by as faces in a churning crowd.

*Scenes.* While less intellectual attention has been paid to the notion of scene than to those of urbanity and vitality, simplicity and consensus are difficult to find in this case as well. A recent special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* includes many perspectives on the topic. For present purposes, the sociological dramatism of Kenneth Burke and the pragmatism of John Dewey may provide useful points of reference.

The scene was one of Burke's action-theoretical "pentad," along with act, agency, agent, and purpose. As Gusfield notes, scene explanations have a natural fit in sociological accounts of human behavior (Gusfield 1989, p. 15). The scene highlights the circumstances that bear on an apparently isolated act. A man drinking a beer in a bar is not simply drinking a beer. He is drinking a beer engulfed in gloomy light, surrounded by tired and dejected people slumped over half-empty glasses, in a deserted strip of town, with silent streets and solitary cars on their way to somewhere else. Or he is dancing, with loud music blaring, moving gregariously about in the energetic crowd, while outside lines are gathering, cafes are full of couples looking at themselves being looked at, and groups stroll slowly across the block to catch a glimpse of the action. "Space becomes something more than a void in which to roam about dotted here and there with dangerous things and things that satisfy the appetite. It becomes a comprehensive and enclosed scene within which are ordered the multiplicity of doings and undergoings in which man engages" (Dewey 2005: 23).

The scene sets the mood that defines the character of the individual act. This close connection between situation and action is a particularly important feature of Burke's way of thinking about scenes (see also Silver 2011 for pragmatist and phenomenological roots of similar ideas). A scene is not simply a bare, blank situation. It is the situation congealed into what Dewey calls "an experience." "There is that meal in a Paris restaurant of which one says 'that *was* an experience.' It stands out as an enduring memorial of what food may be...In an experience flow is from something to something" (Dewey 2005: 38). The scene describes circumstance that somehow bear on action, that carry some weighty portent, that mean or say something, that call out for some response. Burke illustrates with Chekhov's famous saying: "If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off."

*Some*. “Some” here suggests plurality and multiplicity. *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*; *The Division of Labor in Society*; *The German Ideology* – the sociological classics tended to seek unity, and this is evidenced in their grammatical choices. *Some* spirits, *some* divisions, *some* ideologies – the grammar here works against a single, final answer that covers all cases. “Some” is an indication that the word it modifies admits of multiple meanings, which may combine and overlap in numerous ways. Interpretation and analysis often involves explicating many possible senses or aspects of a concept, and working through their implications.

### “of”

“Of” has many meanings, some of which are relevant to our phrase. In “I dream of you,” you are the object of my dream; my dream is about you. In “the book of hers,” the book belongs to her; it is her book. Cases where “of” can mean both at once are particularly interesting. In “the thought of Georg Simmel,” the thought may belong to Georg Simmel; it comes from him. At the same time, the thought may be about Georg Simmel; it refers to him. The “of” in “Some Scenes of Urban Life” in many instances has this dual quality.

### “Urban Life” “Some Scenes”

*Urban Life*. Urban life is life as it proceeds under the aspect of urbanity. It is the concentrations of activities that emerge in the midst of dense human commerce and contacts. The vitality of urbanity lies in its being both “more” and “more than” itself, both spatially and temporally.

Spatially, urban life is vital to the extent that it clusters activities (“more”) and reaches beyond itself to be itself (“more than”). There is “more” happening here than there, this place accumulates amenities, events, engagements, venues – here is where life happens. There is also “more than” what is happening here happening here. A vital urban life is cosmopolitan, linked to other happenings elsewhere. Even a tight-knit neighborhood in a vibrant urban setting is more than itself. A host of amenities and people and events are close at hand, a quick subway ride or walk away, constant possibilities over the horizon, even if they are not now, or even rarely, accessed. As horizons become walls, urban life becomes less vital.

Urban life also has a temporal character. It is “more” when it is growing. This year there are more shops opening, people arriving and visiting, events occurring, than last year. There is also a “more than” to urban vitality. Vibrant urbanity is always redefining itself; there is constant churn. One can repeatedly visit and find something new has emerged, something old has been lost, or transformed. This “transcendent” character of urban life is not external to it; it is part of it. An urbanite expects it, knows that the vitality of the present lies in its being on the way to becoming something else. The momentousness of urban life also means that it is momentary. Hence the constant refrains of both upwelling energy and melancholic nostalgia in the poetry of urban life.

*Paris changes! but naught in my melancholy  
Has stirred! New palaces, scaffolding, blocks of stone,*

*Old quarters, all become for me an allegory,  
And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.*

*Some Scenes.* There is no one EveryScene for Every Thing; any given scene is multiplex. Scenes are plural, with multiple overlapping dimensions that may combine in different way, in different situations.

Consider one scene with multiple dimensions. A small record store has a special area for music made by local artists. Posters on the wall show people dressed in leather, with tattered jeans, t-shirts bearing anarchist symbols, spiky hair, tattoos, and body piercings. A sign on the door proclaims: “no major labels allowed.” The scene here is multi-dimensional. It says something about how to appear, to see and be seen – in this case in a transgressive way. It also says something about the sources of authenticity, or a genuine identity – in this case in locality and non-corporateness. It says something about the legitimate grounds for action – in this case, in personal self-expression.

Scenes evoke multiple qualitative characteristics. Scenes say something about how to live, appealing to qualities such as legitimacy, theatricality, authenticity. And not only in general unspecified terms; scenes evoke determinate content: self-expression, transgression, locality, and the like.

Different scenes may evoke different qualities that call out different modes of existence, or combine the “same” qualities in different ways to produce different overall atmospheres. A small café is full of older Italian immigrants, sipping cappuccino. They all wear suits and ties. Posters show idyllic images of the Italian coast. Traditional folk songs are playing. Here too the scene lays out a path toward authenticity, also rooted in the local. But that is joined with a different mode of self-display, more formal than transgressive. Likewise the scene evokes tradition more than self-expression as a legitimate ground for action. Corporateness does not seem highly relevant to this scene, one way or the other.

Thus from out of multiple dimensions, “some scenes” emerge.

### **“Some Scenes of Urban Life”**

The “of” suggests two ways of connecting “some scenes” and “urban life.” Some scenes belong to urban life, in this way they are “of” urban life. Some scenes are directed toward urban life, and in this way are also “of” urban life. The same scene can be “of” urban life in both senses at once.

Scenes that “belong to” urban life are those that tend to arise out of the process of urban living. They are the distinctive scenes associated with urban life. They belong to the dense contacts, the concentration and growth of activity, and the spatio-temporal self-transcendence characteristic of urban life. When people live in an urban way, they evoke characteristic scenes, images, qualities, atmospheres, dimensions of experience, which are less strongly evoked, if at all, where urban life is less developed. These are the scenes that belong to urban life.

Scenes that are “directed toward” urban life foreground the scenic qualities of urban settings. A painter setting up a canvas along a boulevard dramatizes couples out for a weekend stroll. In so doing, he treats their walk as an object of aesthetic appreciation, to be admired, rejected, contemplated, offended by, or savored – much like

driving the scenic route transforms the landscape from an obstacle to be passed through into a view to be taken in. Painters, poets, film directors are experts in drawing scenes of urban life. Yet just as anybody can take the scenic route, at least during certain special breaks from the press of utilitarian concerns, so too can anybody appreciate urban life as an aesthetic phenomenon. The artist has simply developed this potential to a high degree and created objects designed to activate it in others. “The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd...”(Dewey 2005: 3).

Both senses of “of” are often at work simultaneously. Urban life throws up its characteristic modes of practice, and these can turn themselves into aesthetic objects. They can (as if) demand to be treated as possible subjects of paintings or poems or films. There is the drama of the pivotal board meeting high atop a skyscraping tower, when participants become (if only vaguely) aware that they are producing the stuff of legend and lore. There is the exhibitionism of the Venice beach boardwalk weight lifter, who could bench press alone, but instead puts himself on display amidst the steady stream of passers by. In these and many other ways, the very process of urban living can involve transforming oneself from a utilitarian agent to a source of aesthetic possibilities.

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“Some Scenes of Urban Life”: the spatio-temporal concentration, growth, and self-transcendence of activities amidst dense human contacts produce multiplex images with charged significance while providing material for aesthetic reflection.

### **A Research Program**

The rich meaning of a seemingly simple phrase points toward an ongoing research agenda into some scenes of urban life. It has several inter-connected components. Investigating *some scenes* of urban life means articulating a host of possible meanings that could be evoked in various settings, in different modes and combinations. Investigating some scenes of *urban life* means locating scenes in urban and non-urban contexts, and examining which scenes tend to be associated with urban living. It also means being sensitive to the fact that any scene is “more than” what is happening within the boundaries (however defined) of any given time or place, but is also defined by its past and future and its near and far.

Investigating some scenes *of* urban life also means considering how some scenes may figure as both independent and dependent variables in urban life. Some scenes may be characteristic outcomes of urban living. Here scenes are dependent variables. Scenes may also drive urban life, when for instance the scenic qualities of a place provide grounds for moving or leaving, opening a business or working nearby, mobilizing political activism, and much more. Here the presence of a certain scene should lead to specific outcomes: growth in certain segments of the population for whom the scene is enticing, the emergence of new businesses congenial to the scene, the consolidation of political movements to protect the scene or promote values consistent with the ways of living it evokes. Scenes here are independent variables.

That is the program. Here are some ways it has been realized, so far.

*A multi-dimensional heuristic.* Scenes evoke multiple qualities, such as glamour or personal self-expression or tradition, and they orient one toward various modes of life, such as legitimacy, authenticity, or theatricality. To approach such qualities and orientations with a degree of coherence and rigor, a heuristic is necessary. We cannot “just look” and expect the many scenes of life to array themselves before us, of their own accord.

The whole universe of concrete objects, as we know them, swims, not only for a transcendentalist writer, but for all of us, in a wider and higher universe of abstracted ideas, that lend it its significance. As time, space, and the ether soak through all things, so (we feel) do abstract and essential goodness, beauty, strength, significance, justice, soak through all things good, strong, significant, and just. Such ideas, and others equally abstract, form the background for all our facts, the fountain-head of all the possibilities we conceive of. (James 1985: 46)

We are always “seeing with” some set of categories, often informed by the legacy of past seeings, encoding in the history of social and cultural thought.

### **Table 1 about here**

Our looking is always informed by some heuristic, often implicit. We can look more clearly if we try to make the implicit explicit. One way to do this is to compile and codify some of the major qualities that have emerged from past and current sensitive reflection on the scenes of urban life. Even if it exhibits a certain coherence, such a heuristic need not be complete or final to be analytically valuable. It provides direction for analysis, and for conceptual refinement.

### **Table 2 about here**

Tables 1 and 2 lay out a heuristic that has informed much research into scenes. Students of the social and cultural sciences will immediately recognize that these terms encompass themes central to the classics: Weber, Rousseau, Hegel, Kant, Simmel, Habermas, Herder, Baudelaire, Goffman, and more reverberate throughout. In this way the heuristic crystallizes and codifies the wisdom of generations.

*Scenes* elaborates each of these dimensions in detail. For present purposes, the intuitive sense of the sort encompassed in describing the record store or café above is enough. The analysis to come does not use these dimensions separately, but examines their empirical-typical combinations in Canada.

*Locating scenes.* To discern typical empirical combinations of life’s scenic dimensions, one must be able to locate those dimensions, at least approximately. There are many ways to do so, such as interviews, ethnographic observation, content analysis of relevant texts, or surveys. In addition to these techniques, much ongoing research has employed large-scale datasets derived from local business directories, which include items such as art galleries, churches, restaurants, department stores, and much more. The advantage of such data is that they permit wide-ranging comparison of local differences.

We can pinpoint typical patterns while situating any given location in reference to many others.

Thus far two main sources have informed much research in this extensive and comparative mode: national censuses of business, and online business directories (e.g. “yellow pages”). The former typically employ standard industrial categories (in North America they are called the “North American Industrial Classification System”). The term “industrial” can be misleading in that the categorization includes religious organizations, political organizations, many types of arts organizations, and other non-profit organizations. The latter, more consumer-oriented, often includes more fine-grained categorizations about qualitative types of businesses, such as multiple restaurant categories, church denominations, as well as specifics such as yoga studios, tattoo parlors, hunting and fishing lodges, among others. The former benefits from completeness and a public classification procedure; the latter benefits from specificity, breadth, and a consumer-orientation. Joining both can be especially fruitful.

*From observations to text.* Such data provide the observations into which the scenes of urban life can be read. “Reading into” means treating these data as not simply observations but also as texts-to-be-read. “When we speak of reading a text, instead of observing, this reflects an implicit understanding that it is not the words as physical entities that is important but their meanings. Similarly...the social fact is no longer an obdurate, concrete reality; instead it has become explicitly symbolic” (Brown 1977: 50). Entering into this symbolic level of analysis implies an interpretative effort, with the goal of making statements about what the mass of information contained in the many items *means*.

The heuristic outlined in Tables 1 and 2 provides a way to read systematically. For each business category, one judges whether it affirms, denies, or is neutral with respect to each of the many dimensions of scenes. A Catholic church may affirm the legitimacy of tradition while rejecting transgressive theatricality; a modernist art gallery may affirm the legitimacy of personal self-expression while rejecting corporate authenticity; a farmer’s market may affirm the authenticity of the local while rejecting formal theatricality. One then assigns values to each business category accordingly: high values for strong affirmation, low values for strong rejection, middle values for neutrality.

*Performance scores.* These weights can provide the basis for comparative measures of the relative importance that any given quality holds for an area’s overall scene. It is simply a matter of averaging. For each local area, first sum the values for each dimension for all listings. If an area has five Catholic churches, and Catholic churches are assigned a five (out of five) for traditional legitimacy, that adds up to 25 units of tradition here. Do the same for transgression, glamour, and all the rest. Then divide by the total number of listings in the area, for all business categories. The result is the average degree to which the typical listing for the area “performs” on that dimensions. Call that the “performance score.” If those five Catholic churches were the only things listed in a given area, its performance score for traditional legitimacy would be five. That scene would be strongly defined by the legitimacy of tradition.

The below analysis is based on just this sort of procedure, applied to over 1800 business categories across all Canadian Forward Sortation Areas (FSA’s, which are similar to the US zip code).<sup>1</sup> Similar techniques have been applied in the US, France,

Spain, and elsewhere. Other ways of constructing measures are of course possible as well.

To be sure, business categories provide somewhat limited information for discerning the qualities embedded in local scenes. Yet as we see below, even this admittedly meager bit of text can prove highly illuminating, as it aggregates millions of data points into indexes of holistic scenes. At the same time, as the era of big data continue to unfold, new sources (such as yelp.com) may provide a richer view, especially those that include texts with reviews and evaluative statements about what a place has to offer.

No doubt this sort of systematic reading necessitates many fine-grained evaluations. This is in the nature of any interpretative effort. While there is room for debate in any given judgment, the compilation of so many small judgments produces a consistent overall impression that is barely altered when various individual decisions are changed. With over 28,000 coding decisions (1800 items x 16 dimensions), any single decision has a minimal impact on the overall scores. This is evident in that when we alter several coding decisions and recompute the scores, we consistently find minimal differences.

It should also be noted that this empirical approach is more suited to the spatial elements of life's "more" and "more-than," at least so far. It shows us if there is "more" self-expression here rather than there; and whether the meaning of this-scene-here shifts depending on its proximity to those-scenes-there. But it is clear enough how to extend the matter temporally. One can examine growth and change in scene through compiling longitudinal datasets. And just as new sources such as yelp.com provide richer qualitative detail, they also record review dates, permitting analysis of scene growth and transformation. Integrating space and time is an active area of ongoing research, necessary because integral to the very notion of "some scenes of urban life."

### **Some Scenes of Canadian Life**

Caveats in mind, we can use the performance scores to build up a portrait of the typical scenes of Canadian life. Of course, the typical is not always the most interesting, and one can accordingly also search for unusual scenes. There are several ways to do this. One is to specify a priori the multi-dimensional profile of a scene of theoretical interest, and then measure actual scenes against that ideal-typical benchmark (see Silver, Clark, and Navarro 2010 for an instance of this approach). Another is to begin from some especially interesting place, and then assess other places relative to the scenic profile for that place – one could in this way assess the relative "Greenwich Village-ness" of all other neighborhoods. Or one could actively seek out areas that exhibit unusual or uncommon combinations of dimensions.

To discern the unusual we need a sense of the typical. A factor analysis of the performance scores reveals their most common combinations. Table 3 summarizes results from such an analysis, showing the dimensions that load most strongly for each of the four most common Canadian scenes. Table 3 also indicates some of the specific items most strongly correlated with each factor. The names of the factors – Gemeinschaft, Romanticism, Renoir's Loge, L'état – are meant to suggest that these configurations resonate with deep cultural currents.



Figures 1 and 2 map factor scores generated from these results, at two scales, Ontario and Toronto, providing a richer multi-scalar view than either would alone. Figure 3 joins the four typical scenes with core variables derived from census data – population, density, rent, education, visible minorities, walking to work – and shows the degree to which these variables predict the strength of each typical scene. Together these analyses indicate what Canada’s most typical scenes are and the degree to which they are features of its urban life.

### Four Scenes

*Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.* Ferdinand Tönnies first articulated the classic distinction between “community” and “society.” In Tönnies’ original version, “community” or “Gemeinschaft” is the rural world of folk culture, intimate friendship, extended family, common understanding, warmth, intimacy, and fellowship. “Society” or “Gesellschaft” is the world of the distant, unfeeling bureaucracy, the ruthlessly efficient corporation, and the impersonal and heartless laboratory.

The first factor listed in Table 3 suggests the enduring power of the scene Tönnies captured. It contrasts the traditional, local, neighborly, and natural – “community” – with the utilitarian, rationalist, and corporate – “society.” Items such as religious organizations, museums, historical societies, campgrounds, and local credit unions are associated with the former; management consulting, accounting, human resources, engineering, R&D, data processing, exporters, and fast food with the latter.

Tönnies and his 19<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries associated “community” with the rural village and “society” with the metropolis. Even if this view held in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and that should by no means be taken for granted – Figures 1 and 2 indicate that it has become considerably more complex today. Figure 1 shows that “community” does appear to be strong in Ontario’s more rural regions. This is what the large dark swathes dominating the landscape indicate in the “Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft” map of Ontario. Then as we move into Toronto, more light shades appear; “society” begins to comprise the scene in more areas, a situation that extends beyond the city limits into the Greater Toronto Area, much of which has a strong “societal” character, in particular the industrial and employment areas around Pearson International Airport (not shown). In the city proper, the most “societal” areas are in the financial district in the urban core, and in the areas of the older suburbs (amalgamated with the old city in the late 2000s).

Yet the city also has some of the Province’s most “Gemeinschaftliche” areas. These are clustered in the old city’s historic neighborhoods to the East and West of the downtown core. Here there are single-family homes, leafy tree-lined streets, nearby public schools and churches, community centres, active neighborhood associations, and grassy parks. Figure 3 indicates that “communitarian” scenes are stronger in larger metro areas but less dense neighborhoods with relatively low average rent and few university graduates.

Tönnies can be forgiven for missing this sort of nuance, of course – he lived at a time before sprawl, suburbs, and globalization had left their full mark on the social landscape. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, scenes of *communitas* are not restricted to the rural village. Scenes of “society” moreover do not define the city as a whole but are particularly strong in the financial core and in the industrial and employment zones. “No

less than the financial district in the core of the city, [the industrial and employment districts are] where Toronto makes contact with the global economy, though in a material rather than a virtual way” (Relph 2014:92).<sup>2</sup> Here is a first indication of the “transcendent character of urban life” – these “societal” scenes reach out beyond themselves as the connective nodes of the modern global economy; to be in that scene is to also be beyond it at the very same time. While the old “community vs society” contrast persists, it does so not as a monolithic clash between two homogenous geographic areas, but by way of a patchwork of overlapping scenes that come in and out of focus at various scales.<sup>3</sup>

*Romanticism.* “The world must be romanticized,” wrote the poet Novalis, “the commonplace [given] a higher meaning, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite.” Friedrich Schiller drew a link between this romantic spirit, art, and nature: “Art is the right hand of Nature. The latter has only given us being, the former has made us men.” Inner expression rather than outer conformity, the organic rather than the artificial, the particular rather than the abstract, the spontaneous and unique rather than the planned and conventional – these are some of the themes that have defined the romantic pole of modernism since it emerged especially in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (though the roots extend further back). They have provided a persistent counter to the more “bourgeois” or “establishment” variant of modernism, with its “black business suits, “the necessary garb of our suffering age...the dress-coat and the frock-coat not only possess their political beauty, which is an expression of universal equality, but also their poetic beauty, which is an expression of the public soul” (Baudelaire 1965: 118).

Romanticism continues to inform Canada’s scenes, especially in places with higher values on the second factor listed in Table 3. These scenes join the self-expressive, transgressive, naturalist, and charismatic over and against the rational, utilitarian, and formal. They have relatively high concentrations of fishing and hunting, retreats, campgrounds, bars, butchers, snowmobiling, pastry shops, film studios, interior decorating, boutiques, cafes, saunas, performing arts companies, and massage therapists; they have relatively few portfolio managers, lawyers, investment advisors, securities brokerages, and the like.

Romantic scenes are infused with a spirit of relaxation of the rational mind, escape from utilitarian pressures, and communion with nature. While they overlap with the “communitarian” scenes to some degree (their correlation is .3), Romantic scenes place a stronger emphasis on the arts and recreation than do the former. They tend to be in larger metros, have lower than average rents, and relatively few university graduates, compared to the more “establishment” scenes (though this is changing in certain contexts, as we will see). At the national level, Romantic scenes are not strongly associated with density, walking to work, visible minorities, or FSA total population.

The maps again reveal a somewhat more complex picture behind these national averages. As in the case of communitarian scenes, much of the (physically) larger outlying areas of Ontario are dark, with their campgrounds, festivals, cottages, and community theatre. Likewise, the Greater Toronto Area’s industrial areas are less Romantic, along with its financial and business center, while the Old City of Toronto’s historic neighborhoods have a stronger Romantic charm. The difference appears to be a matter of degree and scope. These historic neighborhoods are “high” in communitarian

scenes, but are “very highly” Romantic – they receive some of the highest scores on that scene in the Province. Moreover, the high values for Romantic scenes stretch further to the East and West ends of the city than they do for the communitarian ones; Romanticism is more firmly and widely lodged in the Canadian metropolis.

This interplay between city and nature has been a hallmark of the Romantic tradition. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Baudelaire dreamed of a world where all was “*luxe, calme et volupté*” from his Paris garret, and today camping supply shops and bait stores in dense urban neighborhoods make a similar promise. At the same time, Baudelaire himself helped to inaugurate a tradition that sought the romantic in the city itself, to turn its streets into sources of wonder and respite. The Old City’s charming cafes, soft-hued restaurants, and winding trails along jagged ravines continue this tradition.

It would be a mistake to conclude, however, that a Romantic or Communitarian scene in the central city is the same as their rural counterparts. They may indeed have similar scores on the same measure of their symbolic contents. But they are not islands; this again is an element of their vitality, their transcendence. A Romantic scene in Toronto’s West End is “more than” what lies within its boundaries; its “outside” is part of its “inside.”

A simple indication of this difference is the average density of the areas in the immediate surrounds. For instance, the areas around the Lake of the Woods near rural Kenora, Ontario have Romanticism scores roughly similar to those for Toronto’s hip West Queen West neighborhood (the two highest in the Province, in fact). In the FSA’s adjacent to West Queen West, the average population density is nearly 8000 people per square kilometer. For Lake of the Woods, it is under 3. That adjacency to density “just over the horizon,” as it were, alters the significance of a Romantic scene in measurable ways is a point to which we will return, below.

*Renoir’s Loge.* Renoir’s painting *La Loge* (Theatre Box) depicts an elegant couple on display at the theatre. The painting is emblematic of the emerging scenes that fascinated the early impressionists. Under their eyes, the spectacle and theatricality of modern bourgeois life came into its own as the middle classes came to take their place amidst the glamor and pomp and drama of Parisian fashionable society.

The third factor listed in Table 3 shows the depth to which scenes like those of Renoir’s *Loge* have coalesced in the contemporary metropolis. As in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, the contemporary Canadian scenes of Renoir’s *Loge* join themes of glamour and formality while downplaying transgression – the evening gowns and high fashion that turn a night into a *perfect occasion*, where outcasts and imperfections and rough edges are buffed away into a gleaming image of graceful and effortless beauty. This scene is strongest in areas with strong concentrations of women’s clothing stores, boutiques, shoe stores, jewellery stores, PR firms, interior designers, theatre companies, advertising agencies, and film studios. Renoir’s *Loge* has relatively few unglamorous and informal items, such as trucking, sewer construction, machine shops, or oil field services.

Renoir’s *Loge* is highly concentrated in Canada’s urban centres, with 24 of the country’s top 30 FSA’s located in Toronto or Montreal. Toronto’s highest scoring FSA, M5R, contains Yorkville, its epicentre of upscale shopping and fashionable sociability, while the second highest Toronto score goes to the downtown theatre district. Montreal’s strongest Renoir’s *Loge* FSAs are H2T and H2W. These contain, respectively, the Mile

End and Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhoods, which are some of the major focal points of the Montreal art worlds.

Figure 3 shows the national generality of these patterns. Of the four scenes, Renoir's Loge shows the strongest connection with core indicators of urbanity such as population density and walking to work. Renoir's Loge is strongest where there is "more life" than anywhere else in Canada. It is also the most strongly associated with university graduates. This fact, coupled with its negative association with visible minorities, calls to mind a remark of art historian TJ Clark about Renoir's painting, *Les Grands Boulevards* in reference to Degas' *Place de la Concorde*: "What does the viscount care for history, even recent history, with a good cigar wedged firmly between his teeth and an umbrella under one arm at a forty-five-degree angle? As little as his children do; no more than the passing, abstract stroller. Their inattention is provided for by the empty spaces and the stream of sights – in that sense, Renoir's boulevard pastoral, or Monet's bird's-eye view, is a product indeed of Haussmann's labours" (Clark 1984: 75).<sup>4</sup>

#### **Figure 4 about here**

The maps in Figures 1 and 2 lend more nuance to these patterns. Again we see the strong city centre concentration of the Renoir's Loge scene. Most of the (geographic extent of the) Province is shaded light, while much of the entire urban core of Toronto is jet black.

This pattern further illustrates the importance of multi-dimensionality. As we saw, with respect to scenes of Community and Romanticism, the Old City's residential neighbourhoods contrast with the financial district and suburban industrial areas while sharing much in common with scenes of the countryside (at least thematically, in terms of cultural content). But the scenes of these areas are defined by "more than" Community and Romanticism, and with respect to Renoir's Loge, their similarities and differences to other areas are different. The intense concentration of arts, culture, and entertainment across so many Toronto neighbourhoods – running along a corridor that follows the subway lines, another indication of urbanity – places them all on one side of a divide over and against both the suburbs and the countryside. Thus Toronto's cool West End neighbourhoods are congeries of multiple overlapping scenes, in their communitarian and romantic respects they point beyond themselves to charms of nature and belonging; in their glamorous theatricality they reach out to the peaks of urbane fashion and dramatic sociability.

Nevertheless, Toronto is not uniformly glamorous. There are pockets within the City that have Renoir's Loge scores that are about as low as those typical of the countryside. These are concentrated in the Northeast and Northwest, the areas furthest removed from public transportation and the glittering facades of the city's core. The modern city is divided in multifarious ways; we have class and race divides, but also glamour divides.

*L'état.* Seymour Martin Lipset's *Continental Divide* (2013) is a trenchant comparison of Canada and the United States. One of Lipset's major insights is to trace the countries' divergent attitudes toward the state back to their founding moments and their relationship to their respective frontiers. In the US, the key symbol was the cowboy. A loner who operated independently, his justice was rooted in his individual strength and

charisma. The state and its attendant institutions only followed later, accompanied by a sort of melancholy awareness that the rough and tumble frontier was being inexorably tamed. John Wayne's characters often embodied these complex emotional tonalities, elaborated brilliantly in Robert Pippin's philosophical exegesis of the Western (Pippin 2010).

In Canada, by contrast, not the cowboy but the Mountie became the symbol of frontier life. And the Mountie was a government agent. He tamed the wilds before the settlers arrived. Peace, order, and good government already permeated the environment. Here the state was experienced not so much as an alien imposition on a free individual but as the pre-condition for a functioning society.

The fourth most common combination of dimensions encapsulates similar themes. It joins dimensions of state and equality. Strong correlates of this scene of "L'état" include hospitals (state-provisioned in Canada), social service agencies, civic and social organizations, schools, and social housing. These are some of the major venues through which the Canadian state makes its presence known in daily life, in particular as a provider of welfare benefits and a bulwark of social equality.

This outward reach of the state noted by Lipset continues to inform the Canadian scenscape. L'état is strongest in Canada's territories and Atlantic provinces, precisely those areas furthest from the country's major metropolises, and where standards of living are most evidently dependent on direct intervention by the state through transfers and support agencies. The maps in Figures 1 and 2 give some indication that this pattern exists in Ontario as well, with most of Toronto shaded light, and the darkest areas lying furthest from the city.<sup>5</sup> Figure 3 adds that L'état is strongest in FSA's located in smaller metros with low density and low rent. On average, they have relatively high university graduate and walking to work rates, though these correlations are strongest in the Prairies and Atlantics, perhaps indicating farmers and oil engineers rather than new urbanist walkability.

Of course, the fact that a city like Toronto has relatively weak scenes of L'état does not mean the state is absent here. Numerous social service agencies dot the streets, punctuated by iconic buildings such as City Hall and Queen's Park, not to mention the thousands of individuals employed by the Provincial and Municipal governments. Even so, the volume of activity in a modern metropolis apparently tends to crowd out the state from its scenes, at least relative to those areas (such as the Atlantics) in which the agencies of the state comprise a larger piece of the scenic pie.

### **Scenes as independent variables**

Some scenes tend to emerge from out of the ferment of urban life. The glamorous formality of Renoir's Loge shows a particularly strong association with density and walkability, though urbanity is also in its own way conducive to various forms of community and romanticism.<sup>6</sup> Yet scenes are not only outgrowths, they are also potential independent drivers of urban life.

A simple illustration of this potential is in population changes. A person surveys the scene, and finds some aspects congenial, some off-putting. Affordability and many other factors of course play a role, but this sort of aesthetic appraisal matters too. Is this a scene I could imagine myself fitting into, is it "for me" and am I "for it"? To the extent

that increasing numbers of people (or of specific types of people) answer “yes,” then the result is population growth in scenes of that type (by people of that type).

### **Figure 5 about here**

Figure 5 suggests this sort of process may in fact be occurring in Canada, at least for one group widely held to be crucial to an area’s fortunes: university graduates. Figure 5 shows the impact of various factors on increase in the university graduate share of the population, from 2001 to 2011. University graduates increased most in the country’s most urbanized areas, a finding consistent with much recent urban research. Growth was strong in FSA’s located in larger metro areas, with high rates of walking to work, high population density, high visible minority shares of the population, and low current university graduate rates.

Yet even accounting for these seemingly basic variables, scenes play a role as well. Independent of population, rent, race, and density, university graduates grew most in Renoir’s Loge and Romantic scenes, least in L’état. The strength of these associations moreover rivals that of density. Scenes are independent variables of urban life; when they change, the fates and fortunes of cities change. Neglecting the scene leave out key factors in the urban process, which can be modelled alongside the tried and true variables of urban social science.

A final analysis returns to the issue of the transcendent character of urban life, in particular in its spatial variant. As we saw, Toronto is home to scenes with Romanticism scores similar to those in areas far from the city. While such scenes may be in some senses similar within their FSA boundaries (at least in terms of their cultural content), they are also clearly surrounded by very different environments; their horizons and their beyonds are strikingly different, which in turn means that their “withins” are different as well. Being in is being beyond. This is transcendence.

### **Figure 6 about here**

We can capture this difference in more general terms by comparing the average density of the FSA’s surrounding each FSA. Inserting this new “adjacency variable” into our analytical model permits an estimation of this adjacency effect on university graduate growth. We can also estimate how adjacent density shifts the impact of other variables.

Figure 6 shows that the effect of Romantic scenes on university graduate growth is highly dependent on the density of its surrounds.<sup>7</sup> The three lines separate high (90<sup>th</sup> percentile), middle (median), and low (10<sup>th</sup> percentile) Romanticism scores, while the x-axis shows the surrounding population density. On the left side of the figure, where surrounding population density is low, the solid line and the dotted line are close; there is little predicted difference in university graduates for low vs. high Romanticism. Move to the right and the lines spread out. The dotted line slopes upward, the solid line downward. Surrounded by high population density (around two standard deviations above the national average), highly Romantic scenes predict around four percentage points more university graduate growth than the least Romantic. The situation outside a scene helps to define the character of what goes on within it. Transcendence, as Simmel put it, is immanent to life.

## Conclusion: re-integrating the Chicago School

It is inevitable that individuals who seek the same forms of excitement, whether that excitement be furnished by horse race or by grand opera, should find themselves from time to time in the same places. The result of this is that in the organization which city life spontaneously assumes the population tends to segregate itself, not merely in accordance with its interests, but in accordance with its tastes or its temperaments. The resulting distribution of the population is likely to be quite different from that brought about by occupational interests or economic conditions. Park 1984: 43.

Robert Park wrote these lines in 1925. The present chapter suggests they remain as true now as they did then, perhaps even more so.<sup>8</sup> “Social facts are located facts” (Abbott 1999) well describes the basic Chicago School orientation, which continuously aims to contextualize abstract processes in concrete times and places. Park’s quotation indicates that this original Chicago School vision included aesthetics and taste as key outcomes and impulses in the organization of city life. Park spoke of “moral regions” not scenes, but the conceptual continuity is palpable.

Despite some notable exceptions (e.g. Hunter 1974, Suttles 1984), the main traditions that grew up in the wake of the Chicago School have neglected this cultural aspect of urban life. Major themes instead have been crime, deviance, and social control – all of which were also of great interest to Park and his collaborators, to be sure. Even so, this neglect may be reversing.

Robert Sampson’s *Great American City* is a landmark work, bringing together decades of research and reviewing a centuries-long research tradition into neighbourhood effects and ecological processes, in which the Chicago School and its legacy looms large. One key result of that work is a renewed concern with culture as a potential driver and product of neighbourhood effects. In particular, Sampson stresses that neighbourhoods have enduring reputations. “Beacon Hill, The Tenderloin, Hollywood, Bed-Stuy, Kensington, and the Left Bank...convey a distinctive meaning and sense of place. Neighbourhoods have reputations that may well be sturdier than individuals” (Sampson 2012: 59). Such meanings figure importantly in the fate and fortune of a place, as they inform decisions about moving or staying, investing, policy, and more.

For Sampson, this analytical salience of culture is a breakthrough. And it is. But it is also a return to the more holistic vision Park anticipated almost a century ago. The present chapter gives some indications of how to push the insight further.

We can go beyond listing key neighbourhoods known for possessing certain cultural traits. Analytical progress requires systematic analysis of what these differences consist in, so that we can distinguish one place from another in terms of their cultural symbolism. This in turn can organize the search for empirical indicators of local cultural differences that can inform contextual analyses, along with standard demographic variables. Such an approach lets us examine cultural dimensions separately (glamour, tradition, neighbourliness, etc), trace out their typical (and atypical) combinations (as in the factor analyses), and pursue theories of their sources and consequences. The present chapter has illustrated some of the potential in this way of thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, it is based on the average of yellow pages and NAICS-based performance scores.

<sup>2</sup> Relph evocatively describes the industrial and employment areas, writing of their “spacious, minimalist, mysterious quality,” their similarity to “modern electrical appliances – they have flat surfaces, clean lines, and are opaque” (Relph 2014: 91), and of the “dozens of low buildings...variously occupied by accountants, lawyers, and companies manufacturing or repairing high-tech products; several fitness and health clubs; a couple of small office towers; a facility for recycling electronics, restaurants, fast-food places.” Relph’s list, derived by extensive walking and personal observation, is strikingly resonant with the items in Table 3 associated with *Gesellschaft*. Sensitive on-the-ground observations corroborate what the maps and scene measures also reveal. This should increase our confidence in the validity of the methods used to generate the latter, and in the inferences we can make on their basis.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 3 summarizes results of a multi-level regression model, as indicated in its note. An advantage of such models is that they allow one to estimate the proportion of variance explained at each level of analysis, in this case at the local (FSA) or metro (CMA) level. For the four scenes in Figure 3, the vast bulk of their variance is explained at the local level, 85 to 90 percent. Interestingly, *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* has the highest proportion of its variance explained by the metro level, around 15 percent. This suggests that the urban-rural divide does explain this scene to a relatively large degree – so Tönnies et al. were not coming from nowhere – even if for the most part community-society cuts across metro boundaries and is more strongly associated with local area characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> The negative association with visible minorities needs to be interpreted with some care. The simple bivariate association of Renoir’s *Loge* and visible minority share of the population is positive; it becomes negative when density is added to the model. Put differently, compared to all of Canada, Renoir’s *Loge* scenes have relatively high visible minority populations. However, relative to similarly dense areas, their visible minority populations are low. This is an indication of the recent immigrant settlement patterns in Canada, with newcomers moving into the inner suburbs of major metro areas.

<sup>5</sup> The highest values for *L’état* are somewhat more extreme than for the other three scenes, which means that fewer cases fall into the “very high” category.

<sup>6</sup> In this context it may be worth noting that the model in Figure 3 fits Renoir’s *Loge* substantially better than it does the other three scenes; the AIC for Renoir’s *Loge* is 600-900 lower than for the others.

<sup>7</sup> It may also be worth noting that when we add adjacent density to the model from Figure 5, both CMA population and FSA density become statistically insignificant. This indicates that the impact of overall metro size and even within-area density on university graduate growth is mostly explained by the clustering of dense areas nearby one another. The main effect of Romanticism also becomes insignificant. The “within” seems to be in these instances trumped by “the around.”

<sup>8</sup> The similarity is no coincidence. Simmel and the American pragmatists were the major intellectual inspirations for the Chicago School.

**Table 1: Analytical Components of Scenes I: Theatricality, Authenticity, Legitimacy**

<b>Theatricality</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>	<b>Legitimacy</b>
Mutual self-display	Discovering the real thing	Acting on moral bases
Seeing and being seen	Touching ground	Listening to duty
Appropriate vs. Inappropriate	Genuine vs. Phony	Right vs. Wrong
Appearance	Identity	Intentions to act
Performing	Rooting	Evaluating

**Table 2: Analytical Dimensions of Scenes II: dimensions of theatricality, authenticity, and legitimacy**

**Theatricality**

Exhibitionistic	Reserved
Glamorous	Ordinary
Neighborly	Distant
Transgressive	Conformist
Formal	Informal

**Legitimacy**

Traditional	Novel
Charismatic	Routine
Utilitarian	Unproductive
Egalitarian	Particularist
Self-Expressive	Scripted

**Authenticity**

Local	Global
State	Anti-State
Ethnic	Non-Ethnic
Corporate	Independent
Natural	Artificial
Rational	Irrational

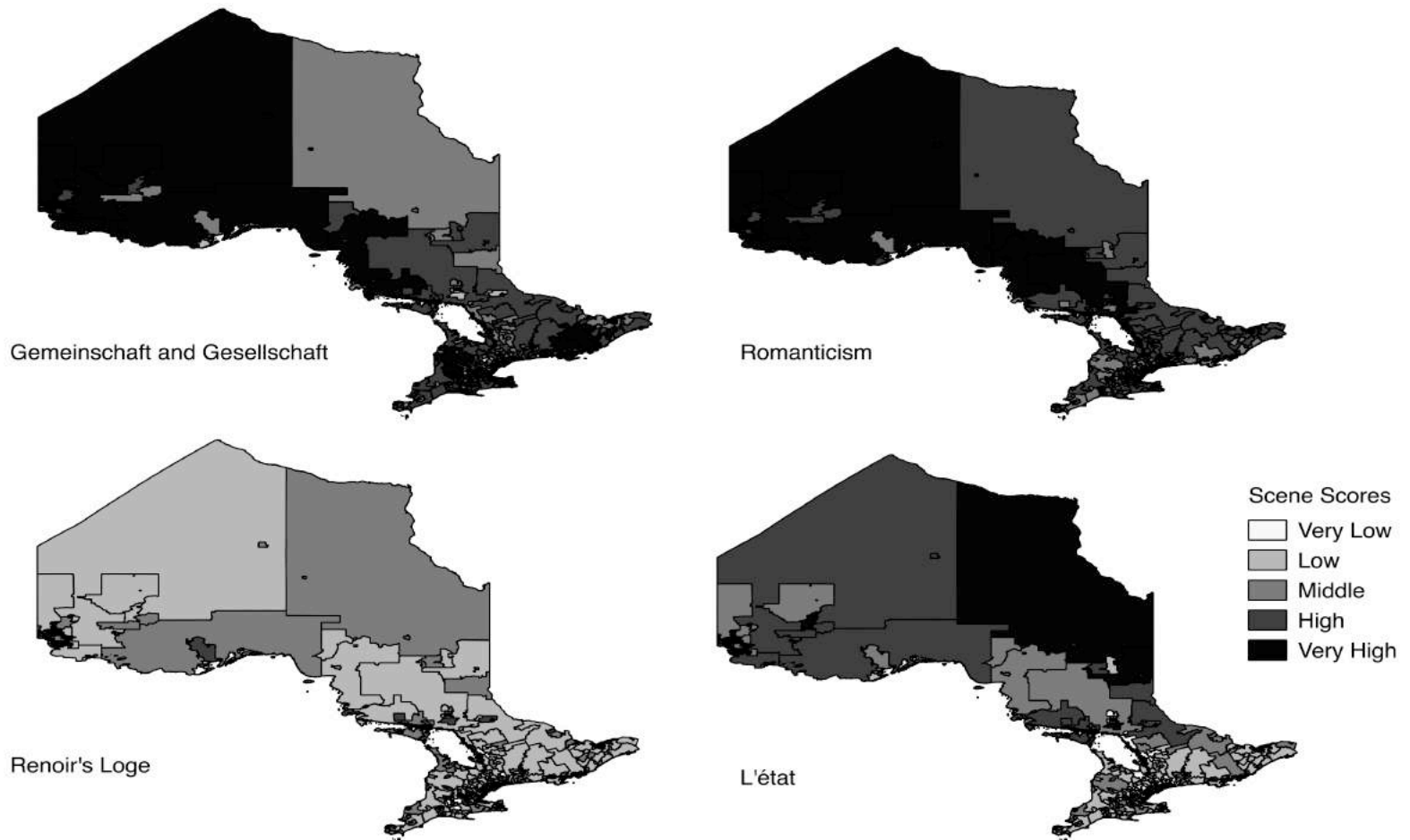
**Table 3. Canada's typical scenes**

	Positive	Negative	Positively correlated	Negatively correlated
<b>Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft</b>	Tradition, Local, Neighborly, Natural	Utilitarian, Rationalist, Corporate	Religious Organizations, Museums, Historical and Heritage Sites, Campgrounds, Farms, Bed and Breakfast, General Stores, Tourist Accommodations, Nature Parks, Inns, Funeral Homes, Hardware Stores, Fire Stations, Recreation Centres, Local Credit Unions, Hunting and Fishing Camps, Cottages	Management Consulting, Real Estate Brokers, Accountants, Professional Scientific and Technical Services, Investment Advice, Human Resources Consulting, R&D in Physical Sciences and Engineering, Software Publishers, Portfolio Managers, Employment Placement Services, Engineering Services, Courier Services, Data Processing Services, Computer Software, Exporters, Limited Service Eating Places, Cleaners
<b>Romanticism</b>	Self-expressive, Transgressive, Naturalist, Charismatic	Rationalist, Utilitarian, Formal	Bars, Butchers, Pastry Shops, Motion Picture Producers & Studios, Massage Therapists, Fishing & Hunting, Theatre Companies, Retreats, Campgrounds, Interior Decorating, Snowmobiles, Boutiques, Brasserie, Cafes Terraces, Riding Centres, ATVs, Performing Arts Companies, Resorts, Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers, Outdoor Recreation Centers, Baths and Saunas – relaxation, Maple Sugar Camps, fishing bait shops,	Investment Advice, Portfolio Managers, Offices of Lawyers, Real Estate Brokers, Management Consultants, Securities Brokerages, Financing, Human Resources, Consulting Services, Insurance Brokers, Professional Scientific and Technical Services
<b>Renoir's Loge</b>	Glamorous, Formal	Transgressive	Public Relations, Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers, Motion Picture and Video Production, Architects, Interior Designers, Management Consultants, Advertising Agencies, Theatre Companies, Graphic Design, Agents for Artists, Athletes, and Entertainers, Musical Groups, Real Estate Management, Coffee Houses, Book Stores, Restaurants, Women's Clothing Stores, Boutiques, Sound Recording Studios, Shoe Stores, Jewelry Stores	Siding Contractors, Campgrounds, Trucking, Sewer Construction, Campgrounds, Plumbing, Drywall Contractors, Farms, Truck Dealers, Roofing, ATVs, Oil Field Services, Livestock, Kennels, Stables, Machine Shops, Logging
<b>L'état</b>	Egalitarian, State	Corporate	Hospitals, Economic Development Agencies, Social and Human Services, Civic and Social Organizations, Individual and Family Services, Social Housing Projects, Museums, Physicians and Surgeons, Aboriginal Public Administration, Youth Organizations & Centres, Community Health Centres, Colleges & Universities, Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, Mental Health Services	Residential Building Construction, Landscaping Services, Electrical Contractors, Siding Contractors, Roofing Contractors, Industrial Design Services, Tile and Terrazzo Contractors, Exporters, Importers, Wood Flooring Work, Freight Forwarding

Note: this table summarizes the four most typical combinations of scene dimensions in Canada. It is based on a factor analysis of the scenes dimensions, and lists the specific dimensions with the strongest positive and negative loadings for each factor, along with items strongly positively and negatively correlated with each factor.

Figure 1: Four Scenes of Ontario

## Four Scenes of Ontario



Note: this figure shows Ontario FSA maps of the four scenes described in Table 3, based on their factor scores. These scores are grouped according to Jenks natural breaks.

Figure 2: Four Scenes of Toronto

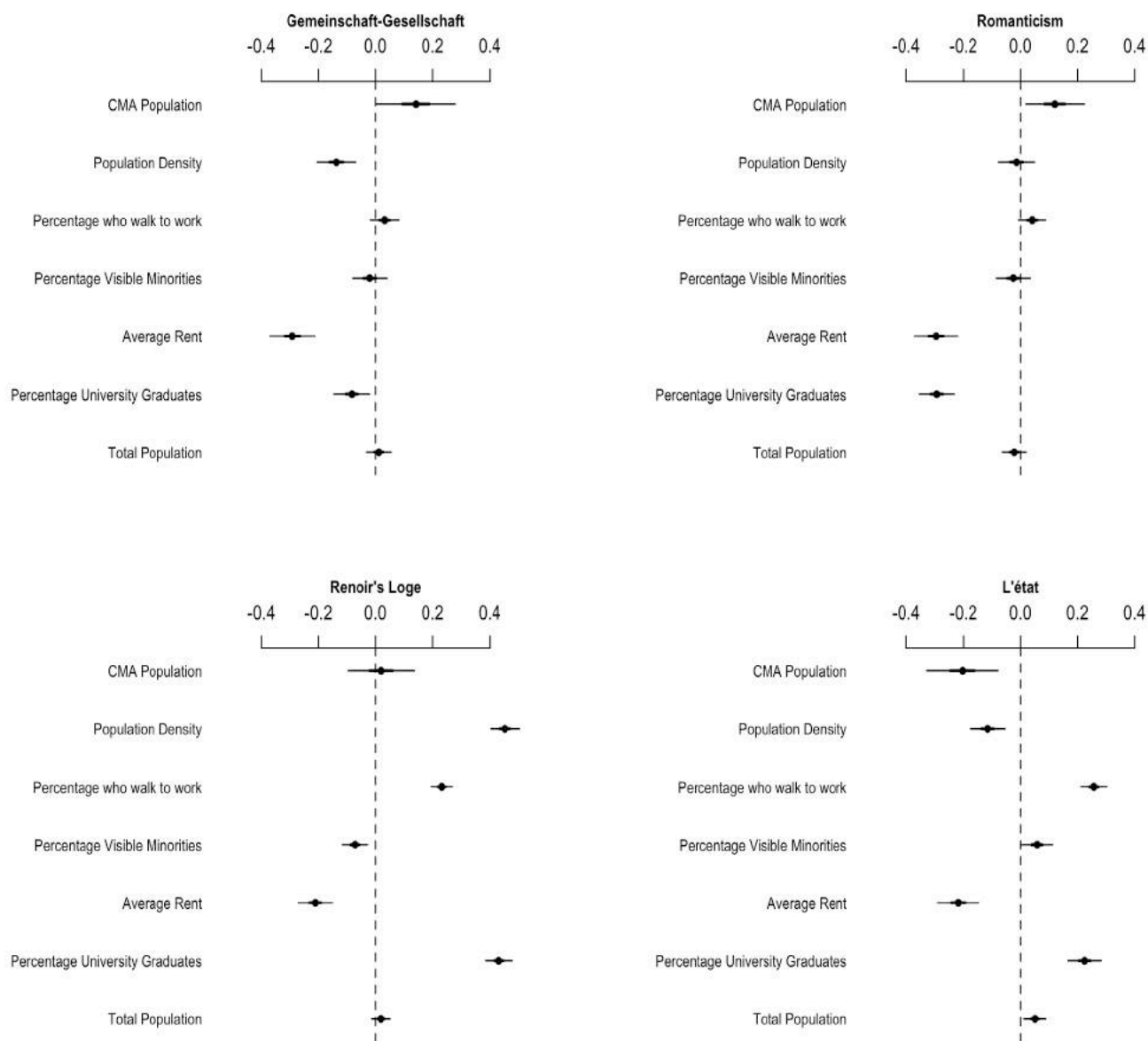
## Four Scenes of Toronto



Note: this figure shows Toronto FSA maps of the four scenes described in Table 3, based on their factor scores. These scores are grouped according to Jenks natural breaks relative to Ontario as a whole.

Figure 3: Scenes as dependent variables

### Predictors of some scenes

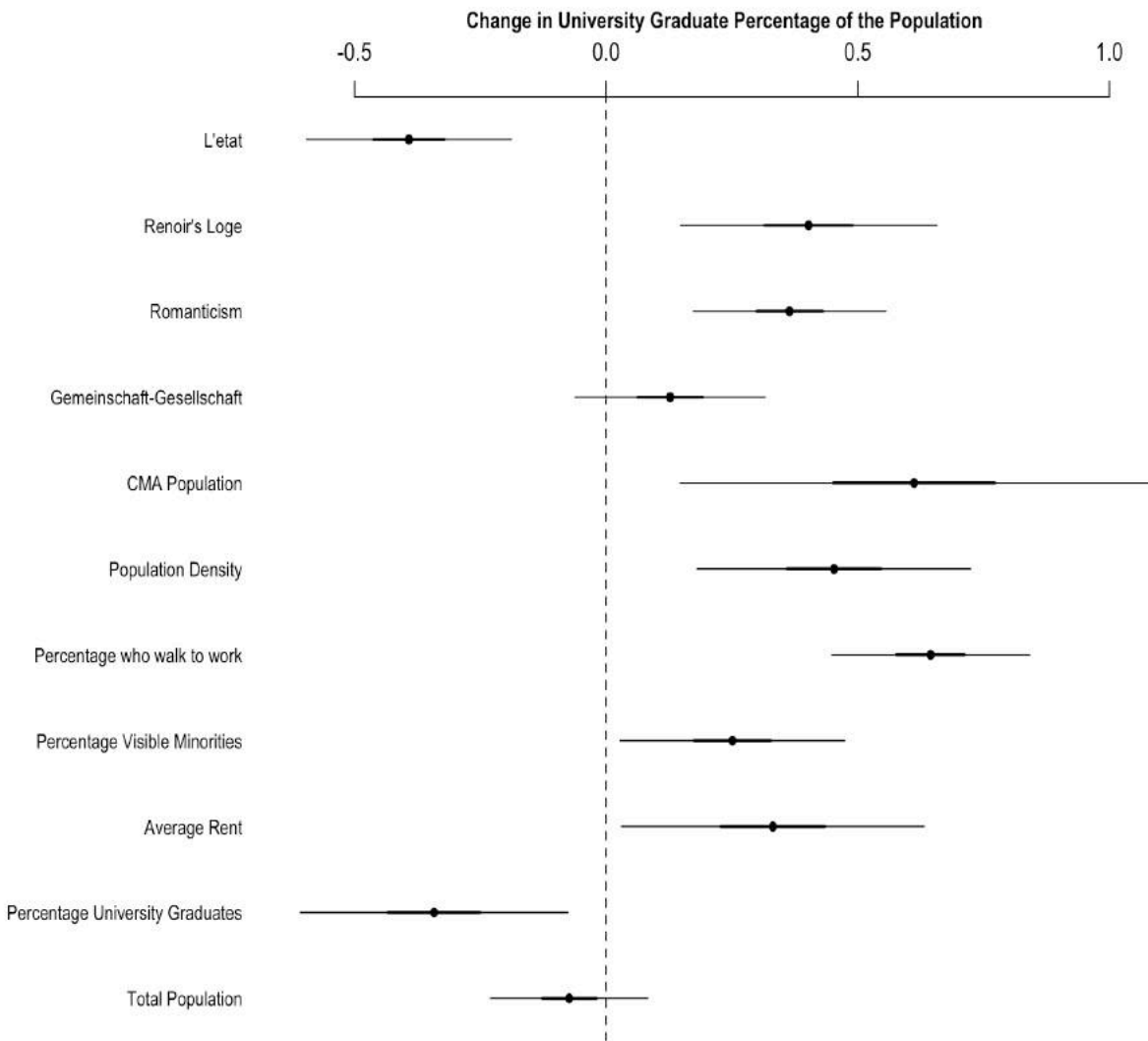


Note: this figure shows results of four separate multi-level regression models, where FSAs are the level 1 variables and CMA's are the level 2 variables. The scenes listed in Table 3 are the dependent variables. Unless otherwise noted, all variables in the model are at the FSA level. Points correspond to fixed effect estimates, and lines show the 95% confidence interval. If the line crosses 0, it is not statistically significant at that level. N=1506.





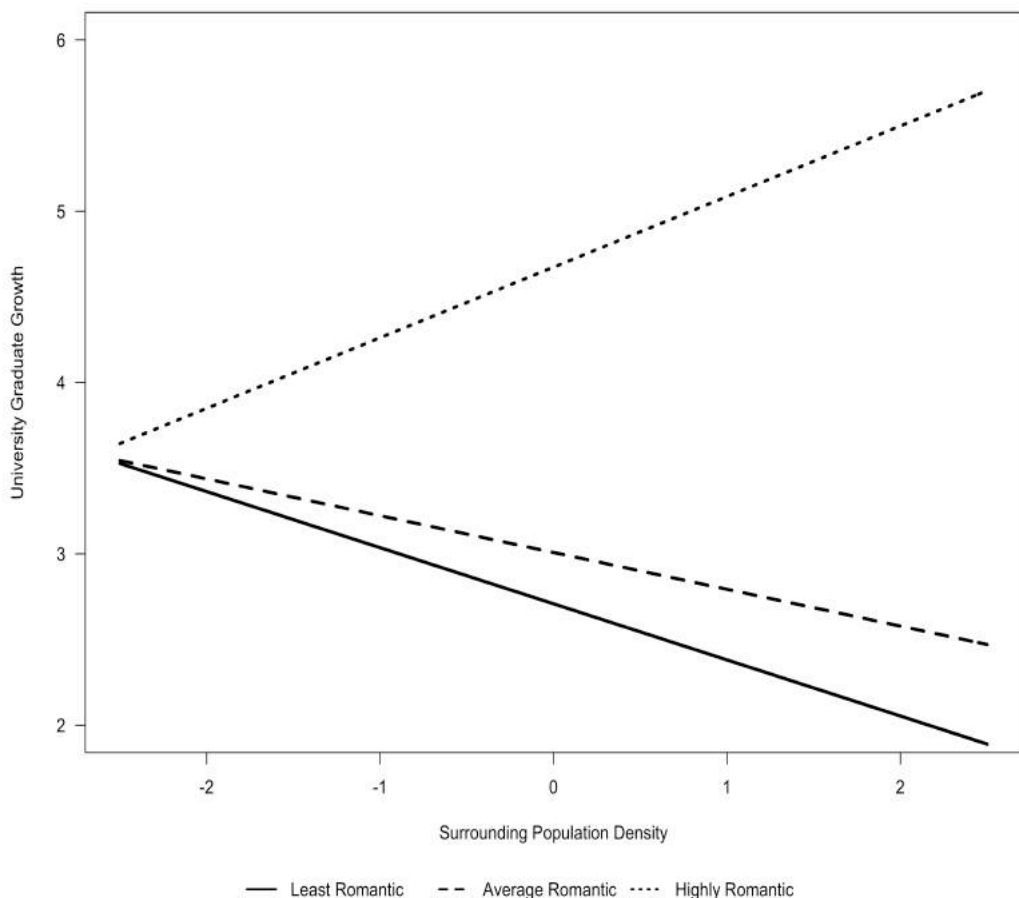
**Figure 5: scenes as independent drivers of urban change**



Note: this figure shows results of a multi-level regression model, where FSAs are the level 1 variables and CMA's are the level 2 variables. The dependent variable is the difference in the proportion of the population with a university degree between 2011 and 2011. Unless otherwise noted, all variables in the model are at the FSA level. Points correspond to fixed effect estimates, and lines show the 95% confidence interval. If the line crosses 0, it is not statistically significant at that level. N=1506.

**Figure 6. the scene transcends its boundaries**

**University graduates rise more in Romantic scenes surrounded by dense areas**



Note: this figure visualizes the interaction between Romantic scenes and the average density of their adjacent FSA's. It is based on the regression model from Figure 5, with the addition of adjacent density, and the product of adjacent density and Romantic scenes. Units on the x-axis are standard deviations from the national mean; units on the y-axis are predicted values for percentage point differences in university graduate proportion of the population. "High" "average" and "low" values for Romanticism are, respectively, 90th percentile, median, and 10th percentile.