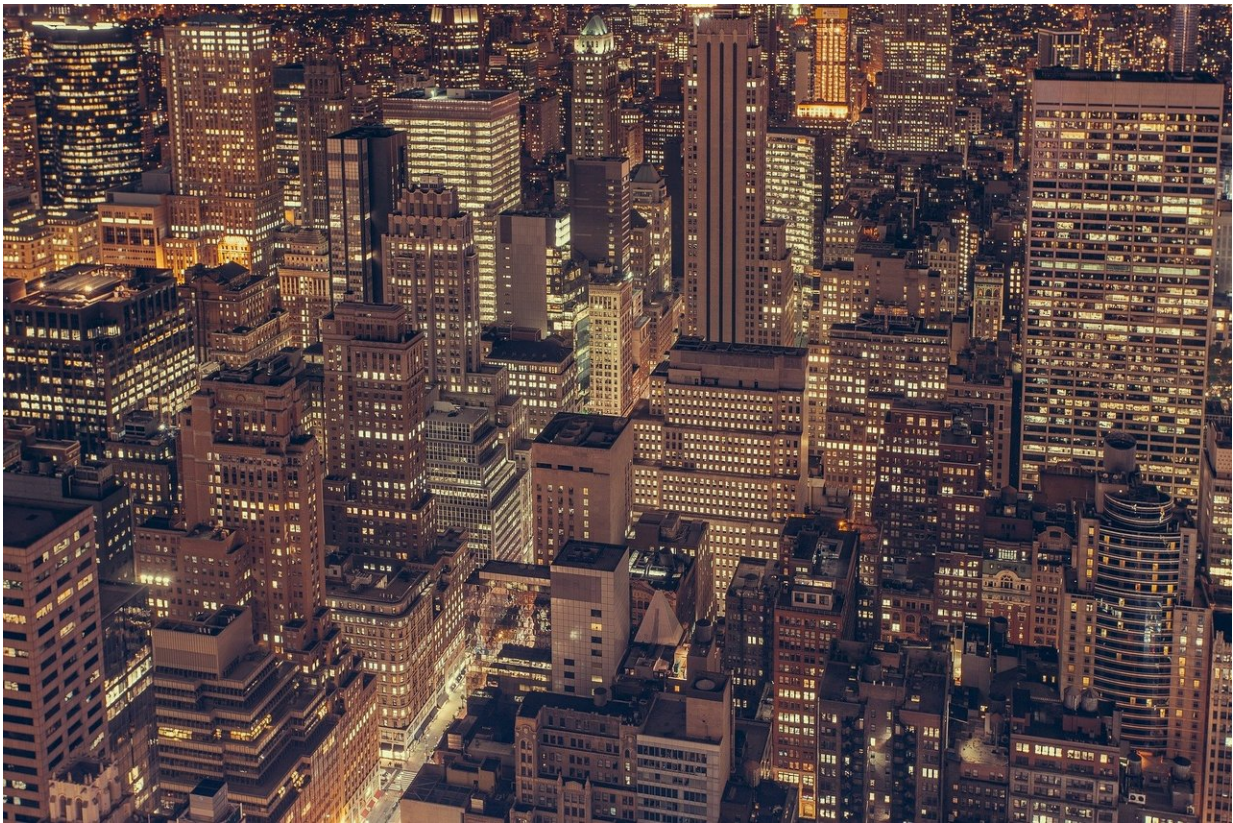


Urban planning policy contributes to political polarization

November 12 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Urban planning decisions from decades past are likely a contributing factor to the rise of right-wing populism, a study from the University of Waterloo has found.

The study looked at [urban planning](#) and voting data from post-World War Two to 2010 outside Toronto, Canada. It found that development patterns that led to the reliance on the automobiles may also be fueling political attitudes that favour comfort and convenience and resist sustainable development.

"As planners kept building suburbs they created scores of new electoral ridings and suburban voters who predictably voted for politicians and policies catering to their lifestyles," said Pierre Filion. "This translated into increasing automobile dependence, less land devoted to public space, and the continued cycle of building more suburbs.

"A careful look at the results of the recent mid-term elections in the United States shows the clear ideological division between urban and suburban areas."

In reviewing the data, the researchers found that the increasing use of the automobile heavily influenced land-use decisions and life-style choices. The combination of [automobile](#) dependency and continued urban sprawl normalized economic and cultural norms associated with unsustainable suburban living.

It has also led to many suburbanites resisting calls for change that would impact them personally.

"It's understandable that people whose recreation and livelihood depends on cars, would be less willing to accept transformative changes that could disproportionately impact their comfort and convenience," says Filion. "This contributes to a sense of having their values attacked, and could explain some of the waves of right-wing populism in North America.

"It's something we saw in 2016 as well as the most recent election in

Ontario, Canada."

The study, Enduring Features of the North American Suburb: Built Form, Automobile Orientation, Suburban Culture and Political Mobilization, appears in *Urban Planning Open Access Journal*.

More information: Pierre Filion, Enduring Features of the North American Suburb: Built Form, Automobile Orientation, Suburban Culture and Political Mobilization, *Urban Planning* (2018). [DOI: 10.17645/up.v3i4.1684](https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i4.1684)

Provided by University of Waterloo

Citation: Urban planning policy contributes to political polarization (2018, November 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-11-urban-policy-contributes-political-polarization.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.