

Theories of Gentrification

Gentrification

- Term was coined by Ruth Glass (1964) looking at middle-class people colonizing working-class parts of Islington, London
- Core idea: Gentrification involves wealthier people taking over neighbourhoods where poorer people used to live
 - Rich displace the poor

Demographic

- The baby boomers were a large generation, who put pressure on the housing stock
- Led to major expansion of suburbs, but also major refurbishment/new construction in old inner city areas

Sociocultural

- The attitudes and values of the middle class shifted and became more pro-urban, making them more inclined to settle in the inner city

Political-economic

- Civil rights movement discouraged open racial prejudice and segregation.
 - Enabled Black Americans to move to suburbs, whites to inner city
- Marxists argue that decay of inner city was a deliberate policy

Community networks

- People seek community networks
- In the suburbs: difficult to build local community, achieved through transportation, technology, meeting places
- Inner city greater density allows greater nearness, denser and more visible community networks
- Suburbanites tire of auto-dependent disconnectedness

Social Movements

- Social movements are powerful in an urban area
- Gentrification has many of the characteristics of a social movement

Economic Factors: Production Side

- Capitalist economy is constantly restructuring urban space

Rent Gap Idea:

- Industrial capitalism once drove the wealthy to the suburbs, abandoning their former inner city homes
- Wealthy people panic to exit falling inner-city property market
- Capitalism restructures, old inner city industry declines, high-income white collar jobs intensify in urban cores
- Wealthy people panic to get back into rising inner city property market

Rent Gap in Toronto

- To get housed c 1960 you could
- Buy a Yorkville Ave fixer-upper for \$25,000
- Buy a new suburban home in North York for \$15,000
- Buy a cheap slum house in Corktown for \$5,000

Rent Gap in Toronto

- Rent Gap Theory:
 - The gentrifiers should buy the slum house in Corktown
- Reality
 - Gentrifiers buy in Yorkville
- Does not fit the rent gap idea

Economic Factors: Consumption Side

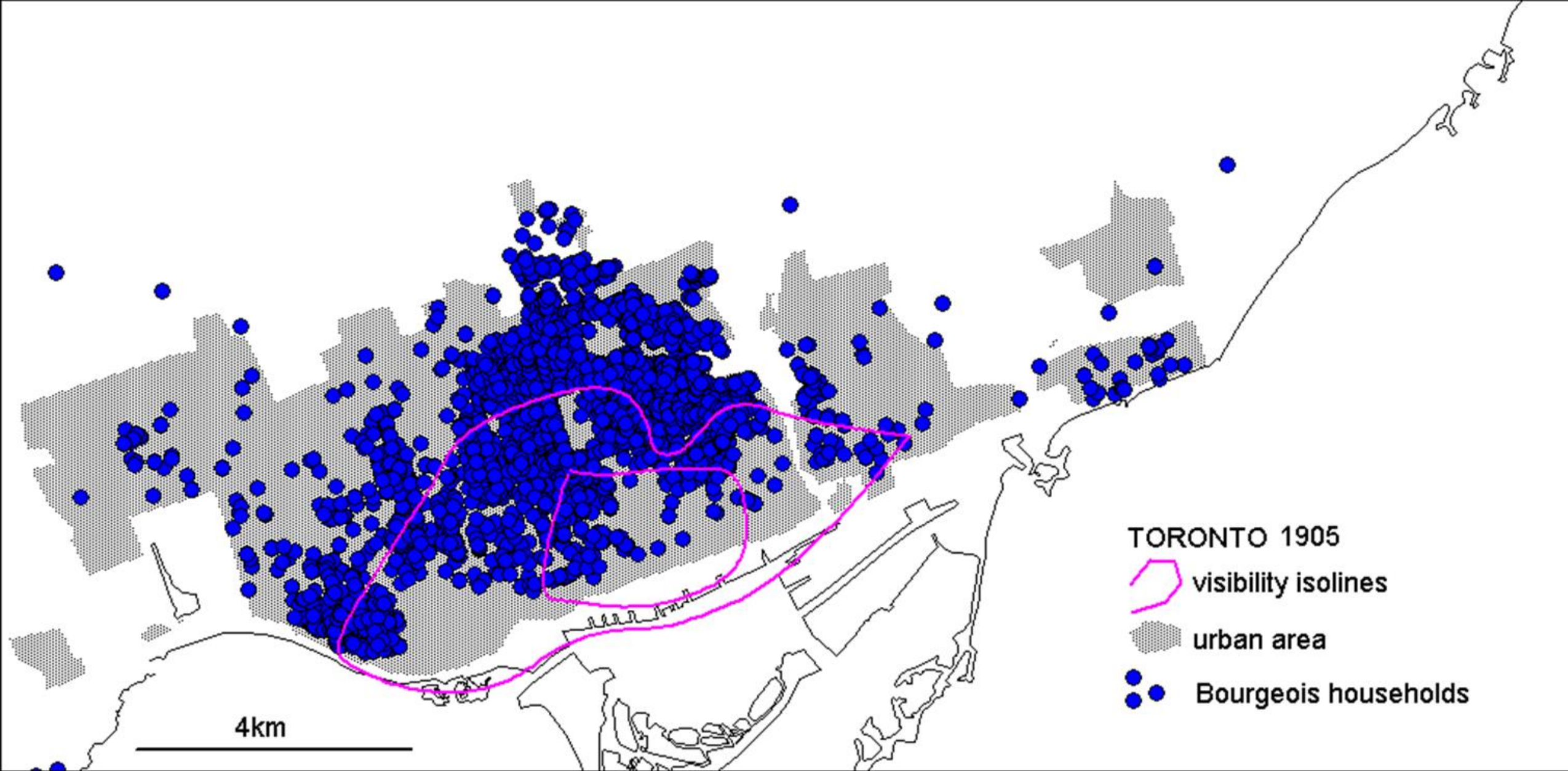
- Urban economy shifts from manufacturing to services
- The middle class (employed in services) expands in size and buying power
- They rehabilitate the inner city and the old industrial districts

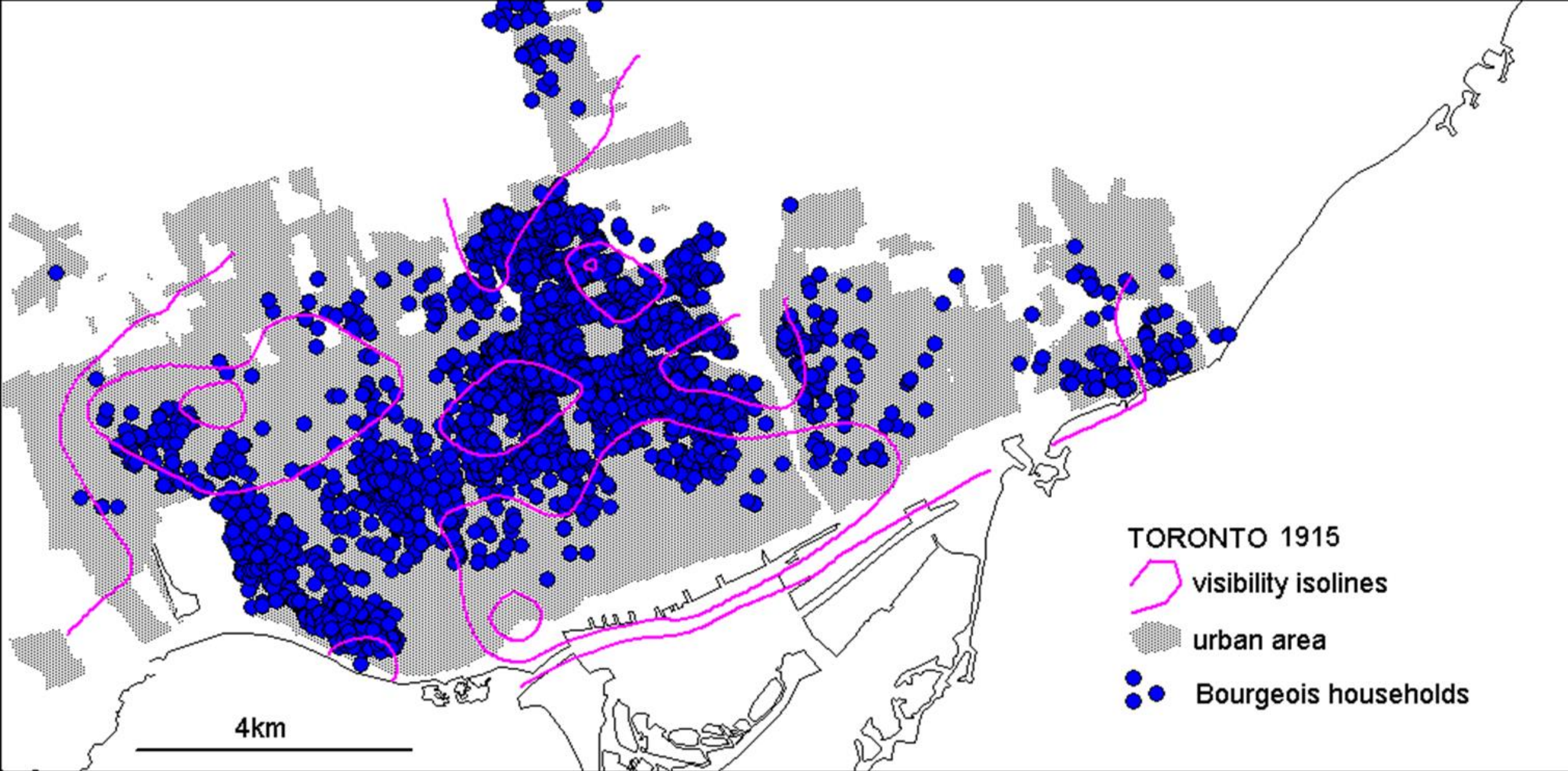
Globalization

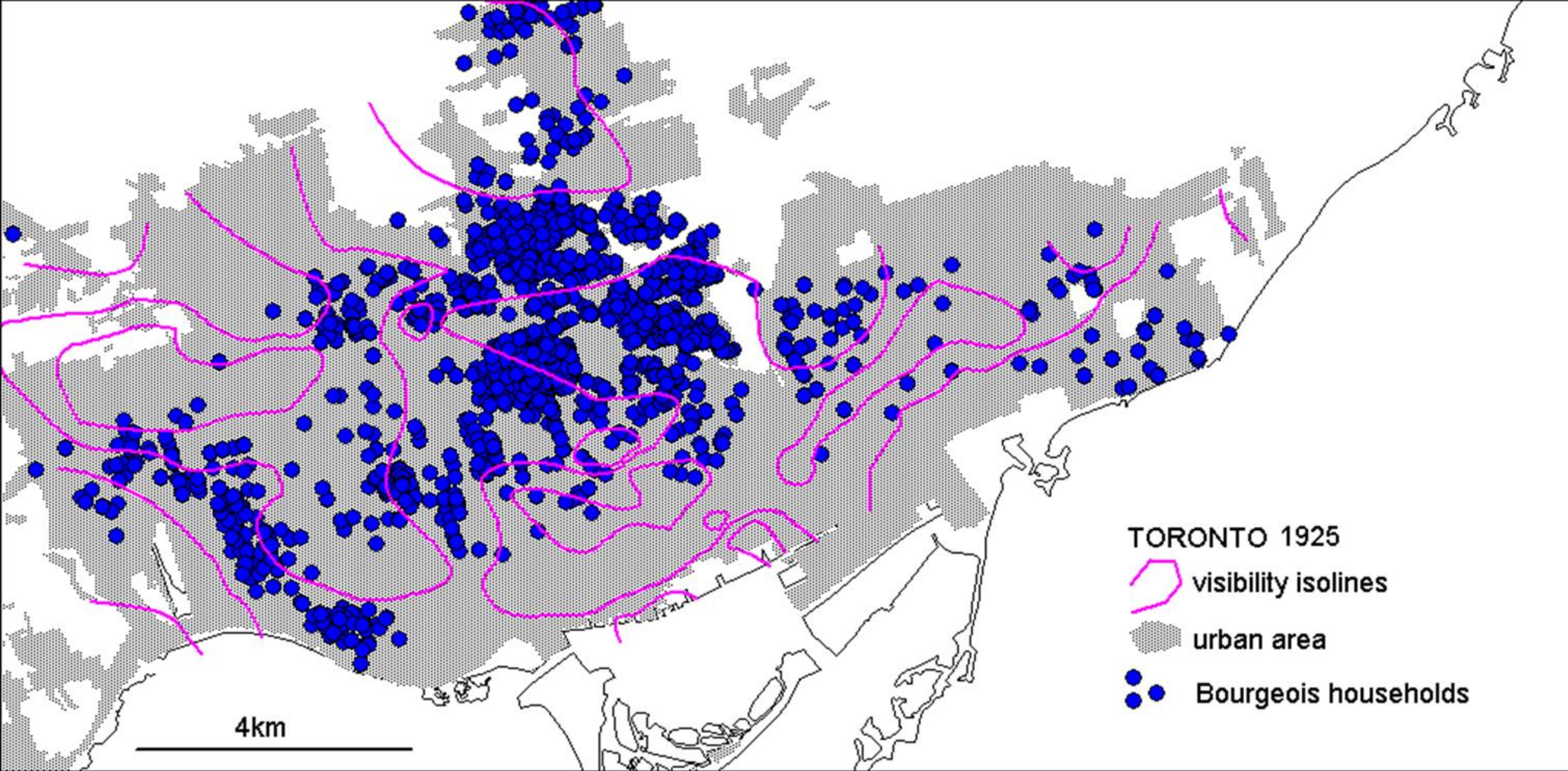
- The emergence of a global economy has led to new patterns of difference between cities.
- Some global cities become global control points. Finance and services sector with global reach
 - Housing market inflation and gentrification active

My Theory (currently)

- Based on my work on Toronto
- Based on historical primary sources
 - Most gentrification theory not created this way
- Starts with the wealthy heading to the suburbs







My Theory, pre 1950

- Wealthy abandoned the inner city for the suburbs in 1910s
 - But suburbs inhibited close social networking
 - Traffic issues, distance, make access to downtown difficult
- Retail strips serving suburban women (retail gentrification) emerge in vacated inner city
 - Bloor-Yorkville (1910s onwards)
 - College-Grenville (1910s onwards)
 - Gerrard West “Greenwich Village” 1930 onwards
- Retail strips showcase the creative economy, feminized social networking

My Theory, 1950s

- We had a powerful emerging creative economy by the 1950s
 - Young adults who need to work/network in dense environments downtown
- Access to downtown and inner areas crucial
 - Discourages suburban living, too far out, too disconnected
- Evening shopping broadens gender appeal of retail gentrification strips
- Demand accommodated by new-build high rises in North Toronto (a wealthy inner suburb) and the Yonge subway corridor
- Some infiltration of inner city by creatives
- New build private sector investment avoids the remaining pockets of severe air pollution

My Theory, 1960s onwards

- Creative economy continues to expand, change
- 1960s onwards: Creatives ready to refurbish old inner city housing
- 1970s: gentrification continues, but incoming creatives join with remaining working class to resist new-build high rises in inner city
 - Emergence of community activists, social movements
- Gentrification starts with the most desirable areas, then spreads
 - Avoids active industrial areas, areas of remaining severe air pollution
 - De-industrialization, air quality improvement opens entire inner city to gentrification by the 2000s

My Theory

- **Retail** gentrification arises from the 1910s departure of the wealthy to the suburbs, is shaped by the automobile
- **Residential** gentrification starts with new-build high-rises displacing rich people in North Toronto in the 1950s
- **Creative economy:** Gentrification is essentially the living arrangement for the creative economy
- Gentrification: involves new ways of using urban time as well as urban space