Sunrise Propane Explosion
Reading

- Keil & Young 2009
10 Aug 2008

- A series of fires and explosions destroy the Sunrise Propane storage facility in Downsview ON
  - A 6-alarm incident
- Kills an employee, and later a firefighter
- Thousands evacuated, multiple homes wrecked and damaged
In the 1980s

- Fuels safety handled by Ontario Government
- Zoning and land-use planning handled by North York
- Officials in place at both levels who knew the territory
Origins of the disaster

- The Ontario government (Mike Harris) deregulated fuels safety to an industry-run body TSSA in the 1990s
  - Sunrise allowed to violate safety procedures
Origins of the disaster

• The Mike Harris government forced amalgamation on Toronto in 1997
  – Throwing zoning and planning systems into disorder
  – Disrupts local planning and land use knowledge
  – Made it difficult for Toronto to regulate industrial hazards through zoning
Origins of the disaster

• A combination of
  – Provincial de-regulation and removal of protective services
  – Derangement of municipal land use control systems
  – Corporations willing to cut corners to make an easier profit
Origins of the disaster

- **Downsview** located in Toronto’s post 1950 suburban fringe
  - An “In between city” area now in economic change (decline?)
  - Scalar politics
  - The importance of place and territory
The “In Between City”

• A term coined by German urbanists, now influential in the City Institute at York
• Essentially an older suburb which is becoming dysfunctional
Toronto in the Digital Age

- Toronto’s inner city is intensely photographed, filmed, tweeted and blogged about
- The “digerati” tend to be young, upper income downtowners
  - Lovingly feature inner city Toronto
Sunrise Explosion

• For a major Toronto news event breaking in 2008 it was remarkably poorly photographed, filmed

• [Tdot Flickr photo pool](#)  
  – 174000 items posted online  
  – Nothing on Sunrise Propane

• Because it happened in the unfashionable suburbs of the “In Between City”?

• Adds another dimension to the role of place, territory in the incident
Origins of the Disaster

• Were systemic:
  – Provincial deregulation of fuels safety
  – Companies who behave badly for easy money
  – Forced municipal amalgamation
  – Suburbs abandoned by the digerati

• So the risks to the In-Between-City will be systemic too
  – Other places face comparable vulnerability