On the Margins of Gentrification: The production and governance of suburban ‘decline’ in Toronto’s inner suburbs

by

Vanessa Marie Parlette

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography
University of Toronto

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Abstract

In many North American cities, the last two decades have witnessed not only the large-scale return of investment priorities to central cities, but also a rise in the suburbanization of poverty. This dissertation examines the problem of ‘suburban decline’ by investigating how it is produced, its effects on sub/urban populations, and the responses that it generates. I interrogate the processes through which relations of political-economic and cultural dominance are obscured, enacted, and reproduced through the production of sub/urban investment and decline. In doing so, I identify the ongoing colonial practices, classism, and systemic racism that are embedded into the neoliberal state and through it, the production and management of marginalized spaces and populations. I trace the mechanisms and techniques through which this power is mobilized to control populations and contain dissent. Finally, I demonstrate, through moments of social struggle, that growing unrest and changing demographics related to ‘suburban decline’ represent crises to the dominant structures of power.

In this three-paper dissertation I document processes of political-economic and racialized marginalization in Scarborough, an inner suburb of Toronto. My analysis centres around three key moments of major contestation that are also central to social and political change in this area
of the city: a failed mobilization to save community space that had taken root in a local retail
mall; the implementation of a motel shelter system; the roll-out of the priority neighbourhood
strategy for social investment and community governance. Highlighting struggles over suburban
space and belonging, I trace the growth and decline of Toronto’s postwar suburbs, through the
lens of Southeast Scarborough. I probe the tensions arising from suburban decline by excavating
responses from the state at multiple levels, popular media, social agencies, faith groups, and
residents. More broadly these struggles inform key dynamics that are central to contemporary
transformations in sub/urban socio-spatial relationships: the production of racialized space; the
targeting of poor communities; and devolution of governance responsibilities through third-
sector organizations.
Acknowledgments

This journey through Toronto’s inner suburbs by route of the downtown core has taken me along a series of busy arterials, cul-de-sacs, and difficult crossings; all this alongside vibrant communities, beautiful spaces, and gathering points. I first need to thank those who drove and inspired this work, and indeed made it possible. Scarborough residents and community organizers, who through their tireless efforts to re-narrate the stories that are told and the actions taken in their communities, are creating new spaces for envisioning a more just future. I am forever grateful to all of those who shared their time, knowledge, and practice with me over the years. Their passionate work continues to motivate my own.

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. iv 

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................... vi 

List of Appendices ................................................................................................................................. ix 

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................................... x 

1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 1 

1.1 Paper Descriptions ............................................................................................................................... 6 
  1.1.1 **Paper 1**: What’s Academia Got to Do with It? Seeking community-driven social change through participatory action research ........................................................................................................ 6 
  1.1.2 **Paper 2**: On the Margins of Gentrification: The Production of Racialized Space in Suburban Scarborough’s Kingston Road Motels. ........................................................................................................... 7 
  1.1.3 **Paper 3**: What’s the Priority? Toronto’s Targeted Social Investment and the Institutionalization of Community Organizing ............................................................................................................... 8 

1.2 Research Context .................................................................................................................................. 10 
  1.2.1 What is a suburb? ............................................................................................................................. 12 
  1.2.2 (Cautious) Approach ....................................................................................................................... 14 
  1.2.3 Places of Middle Class Myth ........................................................................................................ 16 
  1.2.4 Digging at the Mythical Roots ......................................................................................................... 17 
  1.2.5 Revisiting and Rethinking ............................................................................................................... 19 
  1.2.6 Suburban Progression ................................................................................................................... 20 

1.3 Methodology ....................................................................................................................................... 24 
  1.3.1 Participant Observation .................................................................................................................... 26 
  1.3.2 Archival Analysis ............................................................................................................................ 28 
  1.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews .......................................................................................................... 31 

2 Paper 1: What’s Academia Got to Do with It? Seeking community-driven social change through participatory action research ........................................................................................................... 36 

  2.1 What does it mean to do community-driven research? ...................................................................... 36
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>PAR: Activating theory or theorizing action?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Motivating Action</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Activating Change</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Asking the Hard Questions: Reflecting on the Academic-Activist role in PAR</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paper 2: On the Margins of Gentrification: The Production of Racialized Space in Suburban Scarborough’s Kingston Road Motels</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Revitalizing Decline, Producing Racialized Space</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Building the Bourgeois suburb</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Suburbs in Transition</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>City Reformulations</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Motel Stories</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>In and Out of place in Kingston/Galloway Orton Park</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Challenging the Borders of Colonial Space</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Arising Tensions</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Community Responses</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Review on the Use of the Motels</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Paper 3: What’s the Priority? Toronto’s Targeted Social Investment and the Institutionalization of Community Organizing</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Part A. Targeting a Strategy: The Genesis of the ‘Priority Neighbourhoods’</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Rolling Out a Framework</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Targeted Social Policy and the ‘Neighbourhoods’ Debate: Two Models</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Neighbourhoods in a Divided City: Policy Responses to Downtown Gentrification and Suburban Decline in Toronto</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4</td>
<td>Social Capital and Capacity Draining</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Part B. Institutionalizing Community: Action for Neighbourhood Change</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Structuring Community Development: Action for Neighbourhood Branding?</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Community Inc.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Community by Exclusion</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix 1: Reverse Chronological list of articles for media analysis in paper two</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix 2: Interview Participants</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References

Appendix 1: Reverse Chronological list of articles for media analysis in paper two

Appendix 2: Interview Participants
List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Reverse Chronological list of articles for media analysis in paper two

Appendix 2: Interview Participants
List of Figures

Figure 1: Residents Rising map of Southeast Scarborough community resources 33
Figure 2: Street map of Southeast Scarborough 34
Figure 3: Aerial view of Southeast Scarborough 35
Figure 4: Scarborough 1954, Lawrence Avenue and Markham Road 90
Figure 5: Scarborough 1962, Lawrence Avenue and Markham Road 91
Figure 6: Toronto Priority Neighbourhood Map 126
1 Introduction

This dissertation examines the problem of ‘suburban decline’ by investigating how it is produced, its effects on sub/urban populations, and the responses that it generates at the levels of: community, governance, media, and local politics. I interrogate the processes through which relations of political-economic and cultural dominance are obscured, enacted, and reproduced through the production of sub/urban investment and decline. In doing so, I identify the ongoing colonial practices, classism, and systemic racism that are embedded into the neoliberal state and through it, the production and management of marginalized spaces and populations. I trace the mechanisms and techniques through which this power is mobilized to control populations and contain dissent. Finally, I demonstrate, through moments of social struggle, that growing unrest and changing demographics related to ‘suburban decline’ represent crises to the dominant structures of power.

In many North American cities, the last two decades have witnessed not only the large-scale return of investment priorities to central cities, but also a rise in the suburbanization of poverty. As gentrification becomes a “global urban strategy” (Smith 2002) to attract investment capital, tourism and wealthy residents; inner city housing and living costs skyrocket as older suburban developments depreciate. A popular discourse expressed by gentrifiers and city boosters eschews the postwar suburbs in Canada and the United States as expired, unsustainable forms with a triumphant air, suggesting that their decline legitimizes reduced attention and infrastructural investment. At the same time these older suburbs see increasing numbers of recent immigrants, precarious workers and lower income peoples struggle for basic services and public resources. Toronto is one such city where concentrated, racialized poverty in the inner
suburbs has intensified in stark polarization to the gentrification and ‘whitening’ of the central city (Hulchanski 2007; Walks 2001). The emergence of this trend was first reported by the Social Planning Council of Toronto in 1978 and 1979 but it has only recently become a hot policy and news issue. After decades of perceived neglect and disinvestment, Toronto’s ‘declining’ inner suburban neighbourhoods are now drawing considerable attention. In 2005, the City of Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) introduced the Priority Neighbourhoods (PN) strategy. This strategy was developed in response to the growing concentration of high-poverty neighbourhoods with low levels of social services and perceived risk of crime (see paper 3; Siciliano 2010). That all thirteen of these neighbourhoods designated for targeted investment are located in the inner suburbs speaks to two interrelated questions around which this dissertation pivots: How is suburban decline produced? What do responses to suburban decline illuminate about current regimes of governance, and the potential for social change?

In this three-paper dissertation, I document processes of political-economic and racialized marginalization in Scarborough, an inner suburb of Toronto. My particular focus is on the Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO)¹ neighbourhood in the southeast of the borough. KGO is part of the city defined Morningside area, which is one of six communities in Toronto with a poverty rate greater than fifty percent of the population –of which five are located in the postwar

¹ Please note that ‘Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park’ is a classification of the neighbourhood designated by the city and is not an identification agreed upon by residents. However, because there is no ‘one’ neighbourhood name that is unanimously referred to by local residents and because I am interested in policy and governance directed to this area of the city I will use this name as reflected in policy documents. For more on the problematization of ‘KGO’ please see paper 1.
suburbs\(^2\) (UW 2004: 28). This region is located in city ward 43 with a population of 23,042 in the 2006 census and contains the highest concentration of public housing in Ontario. The neighbourhood is home to the largest indigenous population within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)\(^3\) and a majority population of more than 61% originating from countries of the Global South. Located in the far-east end of the city, KGO is spatially isolated due to inadequate transit service with poor links to other areas. Additionally, there are few local resources available to support the public space and service needs of a growing number of people living in crowded high-rise apartments or shelter housing. My analysis centres around three key moments of major contestation that are also central to social and political change in this area of the city: a failed mobilization to save the community space that had taken root in a local retail mall; the implementation of a motel shelter system; the roll-out of the priority neighbourhood strategy for social investment and community governance.

I view each of these moments of struggle as seminal to understanding the multi-scaled and multi-faceted forces that are remaking the socio-political-economic landscape of Toronto’s inner suburbs. As hallmarks of the fordist era of mass consumption and the welfare state, the postwar suburbs offer prescient insight into the implications of neoliberalization on sub/urban spaces through post-fordism (Harvey 1990). The process of sub/urban decline demonstrates the modes through which local and global forces cohere in shaping and responding to global relations of production, shifts in (inter)national governance, and corresponding struggles over

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\(^2\) The postwar, inner suburbs of Toronto are often referred to as the ‘former’ suburbs in popular discourse. This is because the former suburban municipalities of East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough and York were forcefully amalgamated with the City of Toronto in 1998.

\(^3\) The Greater Toronto Area, or GTA, is Canada’s largest metropolitan area and is comprised of Toronto and the surrounding regions of: Durham, Halton, Peel and York.
place, citizenship, and immigration. Because Canada is a nation built on stolen indigenous land, colonization practices are fundamental to European settlement, urbanization, and development of state institutions. Consequently, I posit, that because the violent underpinnings of urban and national formation and maintenance have never been owned and resolved by the white settler populations, every sub/urban struggle is also simultaneously a (post)colonial struggle. This region of Scarborough in particular is home to a significant population of First Nations’ residents and is a site of ongoing dispute over unsettled land claims (Bonis 1968; Mississaugas of New Credit n.d.; Myrvold 1996). We also see a morphing of colonization practices in response to new immigration patterns and residents from former colonies in the Global South. Hence, analysis of the social politics in this locale help to illuminate broader relations of settler dominance and ongoing colonial practices that come to be structured into mundane legal and policy frameworks (Baldwin et al. 2011; Blomley 2003; Razack 2002; Wallis et al 2009). More specifically, each of these moments expose spatial strategies that involve a major role of state involvement in the production, and responses to, suburban decline at the hind end of gentrification. Highlighting struggles over suburban space and belonging, I trace the growth and decline of Toronto’s postwar suburbs, through the lens of Southeast Scarborough. Entering the research process through three key moments, discussed below, I probe the tensions arising from suburban decline by excavating responses from the state at multiple levels, popular media, social agencies, faith groups, and residents. More broadly these struggles inform key dynamics that are central to contemporary transformations in sub/urban socio-spatial relationships: the production of racialized space; the targeting of poor communities; and devolution of governance responsibilities through third-sector organizations.

My research was grounded by the following set of questions:
What is the relationship between suburban decline and gentrification?

How is suburban decline produced?

What responses have emerged in relation to suburban decline?

a/ from the state

b/from the social service sector?

c/from the media?

d/from community residents?

How does the Priority Neighbourhood framework respond to suburban decline?

What is the problem that the framework is set up to address?

How is this framework reworking relations of community organizing and governance? Which forms of social capital are facilitated through the ANC structure? Which are curtailed?

What events/issues have been key sites of struggle over social justice in Southeast Scarborough, historically and in the contemporary moment?

Who are the key actors involved in social struggle and community development? What activities do they engage in? What forms of partnerships and coalition-building have taken place?

What does it mean to conduct community-driven research in the context of rapid social change? How can ongoing practices of social change be analyzed?
In the remainder of this introduction I provide an overview of the three papers that form the body of this dissertation. I then situate my work in relation to current literature that seeks to complicate how sub/urban spaces are made, changed, and reproduced through social and political struggles. After which I provide an overview of my data collection methods.

1.1 Paper Descriptions

1.1.1 Paper 1: What’s Academia Got to Do with It? Seeking community-driven social change through participatory action research

In this paper I conduct a reflexive assessment of five years of participatory action research (PAR) with residents and social agency partners in southeast Scarborough to question: What does it mean to conduct community-driven research in the context of rapid social change? How can ongoing practices of social change be analyzed? How does the suburban context impact the action-research process? I propose a distinction between PAR that is community-driven in motivations, purpose, design, and action compared to research that may be community-based and collaborative but still primarily initiated by the academic researcher. I argue that there are endemic tensions that complicate academic attempts to conduct community-driven PAR, namely that University work modes and community organizing are inherently at odds. The struggle to collaborate in community-driven action-research as an academic is further fraught with challenges thrown up by power relations within the community of practice, the political-economic context, as well as the networks through which we enter and by whom and how the ‘community’ is defined.

By documenting a long-term multi-project PAR process where I strove to engage in community-driven work by minimizing my academic role, I explore the strengths and limitations of my positioning. I entered into the action-research process in the wake of a failed local
mobilization to protest the demolition of community space that had taken root in a local retail mall (Parlette and Cowen 2011). Although the protests to save this space were unsuccessful, the politics surrounding the mall’s closure motivated collaborative action between myself and other scholar-activists, local residents, and social agencies united by the goal to challenge contributing forces to both symbolic and material suburban ‘decline’. I reflect on five years of practice with this group, identifying motivations, actions, and transitions to highlight key challenges and learnings for the practice of community-driven PAR as an academic researcher entering into a community undergoing rapid change in governance and social landscape.

1.1.2 Paper 2: On the Margins of Gentrification: The Production of Racialized Space in Suburban Scarborough’s Kingston Road Motels.

In this paper I investigate the processes through which spaces of privilege and spaces of degeneracy are (re)produced (Razack 2002) to question the modes and practices through which suburban decline is produced in relation to downtown gentrification. I turn first to a discussion of postwar suburban growth and inner city decline to highlight how similar processes are at work, but less widely recognized, in the reverse trend we are now seeing in suburban ‘decline’. This paper fills a gap in gentrification research which has focused primarily on central cities and locations of gentrification with relative silence on relations with its peripheries. I explore the effects of a renewed valorization of the city core by the white middle classes, in tandem with a growing hostility toward an assumed suburban homogeneity and subsequent devaluing of suburban landscapes. It is this power to define and occupy the spaces that are and are not ‘desirable’ that undergirds the (re)production of colonial space and white privilege on which the settler nation of Canada was founded. I employ a case study of the Kingston Road motels to
illuminating the intersections between ongoing colonization, racialization, and political economy in reproducing spatial dominance and marginalization.

Through a media discourse and policy analysis, supplemented with in-depth interviews, I uncover key events surrounding the 1986 transformation of fourteen motels along KGO’s major arterial, Kingston Road, into shelter housing for refugees and homeless families. The implementation of the motel shelter system was both a catalyst and an effect of suburban decline, which was profoundly reshaping what kind of place Scarborough was, as well as conceptions of who belonged in the suburbs. As federal and provincial funding for social housing dissipated in the mid-nineties, the ‘temporary’ use of the motels as emergency housing solidified into effectually permanent shelters (Green 1999). Throughout the decade, on any given night, more than 1000 people could be counted residing in the motels. The surge of people requiring shelter housing drew attention to the growing problem of suburban homelessness as well as changing patterns of immigration in Scarborough. The motel-shelters provoked a wide-range of responses from the white, mainstream community, ranging from benevolence to racist violence directed at residents of the motels. In this paper I seek to counter pose regressive NIMBY and inflammatory responses with an excavation of more progressive coalition-building around the need for affordable housing solutions, anti-racism, and social infrastructure. By foregrounding the tensions between ongoing colonial practices, racialization, and political-economy I recast the story of the Kingston Road motels to illuminate the modalities through which decline is produced in and through these systems of oppression to maintain spatial and social privilege.

1.1.3   **Paper 3: What’s the Priority? Toronto’s Targeted Social Investment and the Institutionalization of Community Organizing**

This paper explores official responses to suburban decline. Specifically, this paper questions: what happens after suburban decline? How does a community shift from ‘in decline’
to ‘priority’? Through an investigation of Toronto’s ‘Priority Neighbourhood’ Strategy for targeting social investment in thirteen underserviced neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poverty, and perceived risk of crime – I argue that this policy framework imposes new processes of “community governance” (Ilcan and Basok 2004) for managing poverty. I argue that the roll-back of the welfare state and internalization of neoliberal values enables the ascendance of targeted forms of service provision, as well as increased governance responsibilities for third-sector organizations. I first conduct an analysis of the research documents from which the Priority Neighbourhood (PN) Strategy was generated. Underlying the PN policy documents is a distinct reliance on a problematic interpretation of neighbourhood effects literature, which is mobilized to insinuate that the causes of poverty stem from the impoverished themselves rather than systemic inequalities. Consequently, the rationale for neighbourhood investment that emerges from this premise does not target poverty; it uses the lens of social capital and capacity building to target the poor.

I evaluate the impacts of this strategy on the ground through a case study of the United Way of Greater Toronto’s roll out of their Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) centre in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park priority neighbourhood. The ANCs are a major component of the UWGT’s strategy for the PNs, where they have sited a centre in all thirteen neighbourhoods in order to promote community engagement. My case study investigates the implementation and the impacts of the ANC roll-out in KGO. Interviews and focus groups with residents and workers in KGO reveal that the ANC project, and PN strategy more broadly, not only fails to confront poverty but actively institutionalizes and depoliticizes ‘community’ organizing. Through the ANCs, activism is funneled into ‘manageable’ forms of ‘resident engagement’ with third sector organizations that support rather than challenge existing structural arrangements.
1.2 Research Context

Why bother talking about the inner suburbs? Aren’t these older suburbs urbanizing?
What makes declining suburbs distinct from any other impoverished neighbourhood?

There are a few reasons why the literature states that suburbs are important to study. One commonly cited reason is that the continued spread of new suburbs and resultant growth in the number of suburban residents, demands attention to the sustainability and liveability of suburban spaces (Hubble 2006; Kelly 2009), as well as the implications for sub/urban politics (Walks 2006; 2007). Popular media writers query whether suburbs are becoming the new slums (Leinberger 2008; Nolan 2011). New York Times blogger Timothy Egan has even coined the term ‘slumburbia’, while CNN reporter Lara Farrar ponders if “America’s suburban dream [has] collapsed into a nightmare?” (2008). While perhaps alarmist, these are pertinent questions that are at the forefront of seismic shifts in contemporary sub/urban politics and social relations.

While each of my dissertation papers draw upon distinct sets of literature, my work more broadly contributes to recent debates that aim to reconceptualize suburban diversity and the complexity of suburban politics. The cultural baggage that the suburbs carry is significant to the ways in which suburbs are talked about, researched, governed, and acted within and upon. The suburban politics that predominate in the literature, defined by movements for tax reform, conservatism, and the protection of property values (Davis 1990), are often cast as opponents of assumedly more ‘progressive’ downtown politics (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996). Very rarely, if ever, do we read or hear about suburban sited movements toward the ‘right to the city’, a concept that is usually employed in demands for a radical re-appropriation, collective creation, inhabitation and enjoyment of social space (Lefebvre 1991).
A 1999 *New York Magazine* feature article entitled “Manhattan: The Suburb”, located within an issue headlining “The Status Quo Seekers” speaks directly to these deeply entrenched cultural assumptions in the North American imaginary. Later in the article we learn of the rampant NIMBY (Not in my backyard) politics of the city’s professional, well-heeled and housed classes who have apparently taken up the cause to protect property values and quality of domestic life, by declaring “war on high-rises, French restaurants, toy stores, and other social undesirables of the new millennium” (Abramsky 1999). This ‘suburbanization of the city’ is beginning to emerge as a common label attached to the wholly negative process by which the inner city presumably becomes more suburban, whereas the reverse, ‘urbanization of the suburbs’ is hailed as reparation for the failures of suburbia. But what exactly are the characteristics of suburbia that are referenced here? The suburbanization of the inner city is certainly not substantially decreasing density or relocating the city core to the urban fringe.

Rather, the article referenced above suggests that the emerging hysteria over the suburbanization of downtown (Hammett and Hammett 2007), is linked to ingrained suppositions about what and who is suburban and a refusal to acknowledge that NIMBYism and politics of exclusion may be just as much, *urban*. The conflation of NIMBY values with the suburban is particularly interesting for its reproduction of the suburban as ‘anti-city’ and similarly for its delimiting of the types of political activity that can take place there with complete disregard for the diversity that has existed within suburbs over time and at any given time. In the context of recent transformations in suburban demographics, these reductionist renderings are projected onto residents of declining suburbs who face chronic marginalization yet are fronted with anti-suburban scorn. These essentialist suburban narratives effectively curtail more nuanced conversations that enliven the potential for transformative politics and contribute to misdiagnosis and harmful responses to sub/urban decline. Starting from this premise, my work challenges the
over-simplified history of activism and social struggles within postwar suburban developments in order to advance a response to suburban decline that mobilizes a justice oriented politics of social change.

1.2.1 What is a suburb?

“suburban areas will undermine our historic cities and deface the natural landscape, creating a large mass of undifferentiated, low-grade urban tissue, which, in order to perform even the minimal functions of the city, will impose a maximum amount of private loco-motion” (Mumford 1968: 81-82).

“With ‘suburbanization’ a process is set in motion which decentres the city. Isolated from the city, the proletariat will end its sense of the oeuvre. Isolated from places of production, available from a sector of habitation for scattered firms, the proletariat will allow its creative capacity to diminish in its conscience. Urban consciousness will vanish” (Lefebvre 1996:77).

“No man who owns his house and lot can be a Communist; [because] he has too much to do” – (William Levitt 1948 in Kelly 1993).

Typical North American conceptions of suburbia in both the popular imaginary and academic scholarship depict suburban spaces as ‘non-places’ marked by class and racial exclusion. Suburbs cultivate images of sprawling landscapes of private homogenous homes inhabited by middle- to upper-class conservative, white nuclear families (Fishman 1987; Jackson 1985). Aside from the privatized, secure, and racialized shopping centres (Cohen 2000), little gathering space and a consequent scarcity of public politics is thought to exist. Indeed many scholars have theorized that ‘white flight’ to the suburbs after WW2 was not only a move away from the racial, ethnic, and economic minorities in the city, but also a domestic retreat from civic
responsibility, community belonging, and municipal taxation (Beauregard 2006; Danielson 1976; Davis 1990; Sennett 1970). This oversimplified portrait of suburbia and by extension, suburban dwellers, is drawn from a limited socio-economic demographic range that has prompted characterizations of suburbs as ‘bourgeois utopias’ (Fishman 1987). The political ramifications of this essentialization involves the failure to recognize that diversity in race and class were in fact instrumental in shaping the development of suburban spaces and continue to play central roles in ongoing tensions and struggles (Kruse and Sugrue 2006; Wiese 2004). Secondly, these reductionist histories tend to segregate the city from the suburb—as much as official policies and land uses have been seen to do so—they thereby (re)producing a problematic dichotomy between city and suburb that tends toward a reification of both that masks the complex and overlapping intricacies between the two.

These characterizations are not mere portrayals but have profound impact on the production of knowledge as well as the production of space, “representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology” (Lefebvre 1991: 42). In light of historical and contemporary antagonisms between city and suburb (Anderson et al. 2006; Caulfield 1994; Hawkins and Percy 1991; Mumford 1968; Sennett 1970) and dramatic recent decline seen in postwar suburbs across North America (Lucy and Phillips 2000; Short et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2001; Walks 2001), it is especially crucial that our analyses are informed by both the historical development and transformation of the relationships between and within urban and suburban spaces.

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4 Oliver (2001) counters this presumption through his research into suburban political participation, finding a higher level of involvement in small United States suburbs than in central cities.
1.2.2 (Cautious) Approach

Taking a broad “metropolitan approach” (Kruse and Sugrue 2006:7) to (sub)urban research (and activism) I probe the complexities between and within suburbs and cities, asserting that these histories are necessarily interdependent and must be studied as such. I focus on the postwar suburbs for two significant reasons. The postwar period of suburban development – bolstered by state incentives and corporate investment through the 1940s-70s –is widely heralded as the ‘suburban era’. This is when suburbanization became pervasive and stereotyped in North America; it was also intimately bound with rebuilding the ‘nation’ and redefining national politics after the war. Secondly, it was during this period that the now well known ‘hollowing out’ of the inner city took place, leaving a lasting impact on urban space and in popular conceptualizations of the “parasitic” form of suburban development (Beauregard 2006; Harris 2004). Although some strongly asserted caveats are required in recognition of prior and latter forms of suburban development that both contribute to the diversity of suburbia and subsequently complicate ‘the sub/urban’ as a foci of research.

Firstly, the definition of what precisely a suburb is has not been stable over time nor has it been agreed upon by suburban oriented scholars at any given time. Common criteria often noted have been: location near the edge of the city but within commuting distance; low densities; high levels of owner occupancy; politically distinct; predominantly middle class; and residentially oriented (Harris 2004; Jackson 1985). However, these typifications are not only contested but also fluid. Many have noted an “urbanization of the suburbs” (Lupi and Musterd 2006: 803), or the ‘growing up’ of suburbs into edge cities of their own (Garreau 1992), ‘ceasing’ to be mere bedroom communities or into ‘technoburbs’ (Fishman 1987). Lupi and Musterd’s suggestion to view the relationship more as a “continuum between urban and suburban” (2006: 803) is productive in its potential to break down barriers and recognize the
interdependencies and manufactured cleavages that pit city versus suburb. I propose that it is also critical to remain conscious of the residual effects and connotations entangled within and inflicted upon areas that historically originated as suburbs whether or not they still or ever did, evidence the traditional categories listed above.

Secondly, the dominance of the ‘mass’ impact and stereotyping of the postwar suburbs has functioned to subjugate the histories and importance of other types of suburban development. Suburban development in North America dates back at least as far as the 1800s. Dolores Hayden (2004) has composed a typology of distinct historical forms that suburbs have taken in the United States, starting with “Borderlands” in approximately the 1820s, moving into “picturesque enclaves” of elites attempting to escape the capitalist city around the 1850s. According to her chronology, the 1870s were witness to “streetcar buildouts” that made suburbs more accessible to other classes. The 1900s brought “mail order and self built suburbs”, where “sweat-equity” and home labour became a popular means by which homeownership was achieved by those willing (or preferring) to live in underserviced regions because it was cheaper. Unsurprisingly, the designation “sitcom suburbs” (1940s) was given to the postwar suburbs. However, she continues to distinguish post-postwar suburban types, including “edge nodes” onward from the 1960s (similar to Garreau’s ‘edge cities’) and “rural fringes” from the 1980s to account for continued expansion of exurban sprawl (Hayden 2004). In Canada, Richard Harris and Robert Lewis have written widely on working class, industrial suburbs in existence both before and after the war (2004), Becky Nicolaides has delivered similar documentation for the United States (2002). Similarly, self-built or ‘unplanned’ suburbs on the urban fringes were popular in both Canada and the United States, where poor and working class whites as well as blacks created spaces for themselves. This form of suburban settlement was often not seen as part of a middle
class dream, but rather a means to attain land for self-provisioning and cheaper living costs, even if it meant long walks to transit routes (Harris 2004; Wiese 2004).

Some scholars have suggested that the North American suburban ideal can be linked back to the elite pastoralism of early 19th century English suburbs that romanticized country homes as domestic havens from the industrial city (Fishman 1987). Others have located the roots of suburbia in London’s medieval suburbs, which were spaces of filth and depravity that resonate with the ‘sub’ categorization as less than or beneath the ‘urban’ (Jackson 1985; Nicolaides and Wiese 2006). European suburbs reflect this model, perhaps most strikingly recognizable in the Parisian banalieues, which have from origin been home to a largely working class and migrant (as well as largely racialized post-colonial) population unable to afford the rent and property values in the central city (Villette and Hardell 2007). Cognizance of these forms are useful for moving beyond the environmental determinism that is so often prevalent in discussion of suburban landscapes, in order to recognize the way these spaces vary over time and place in function, population, and political habitus (Bourdieu 1990).

1.2.3 Places of Middle Class Myth

Most accounts of suburban political insularity succumb to environmental determinism, which has increasingly come to denounce the privatized repercussions of sprawl while privileging the dense diversity and politically active city core. Yet at the same time, this condemnation of suburban banality is often accompanied by sweeping generalizations of the suburbs’ class and racial composition. Perhaps the most mythologized imaginary of the postwar suburbs is that they represent the standardized domestic environment of middle class, white nuclear families. In fact, this assumption is not merely presented as a characteristic tendency but indeed essential to the definition of what a suburb is in many academic histories. According to
Fishman (1987), whose much celebrated and in-depth account of the regulatory structuration (Mosco 1996) of the suburbs, “Bourgeois Utopias” were not merely a form of urban development. Suburban living implied the cultivation of a “cult of domesticity” or a new familial evangelism turned inward, worshiping property values and domestic comforts at the expense of communality and the workings of the city. Such arguments are echoed widely in the literature. Richard Sennett classifies the suburbs as “adolescent” purified spaces. The suburban culture of isolation induced by the over-valuation of the nuclear family, is the manifestation of middle class attempts to shield themselves from the risks of disorder and discomfort that would arise from spontaneous interaction in the urban, “to ensure the family’s security and sanctity through exclusionary measures on race, religion, class, or other ‘intrusions’ on a ‘nice community of homes” (Sennett 1970: 71). These images are carried forward in more contemporary accounts of ‘white flight’ from the city and the consumerist and exclusionary ethos that separated the public (male) sphere from a private (feminized) one (Caulfield 1994; Cohen 2000; Davis 1990; Sewell 1991).

1.2.4 Digging at the Mythical Roots

In discussing such denouncements of the suburban form and its inhabitants, I do not intend to dismiss or degrade the valuable insights into theory and practice that the above scholars have authored. Merely, I find it important to trace the ways these dominant historical practices have morphed into stereotypes that have infused popular and scholarly imaginaries. That these representations have been so persuasive and predominant, even among critical scholars, demands closer scrutiny. Clearly these accounts did not emerge unsubstantiated and do reflect many dominant practices from the 1940s-70s. State and economic incentives for middle-class home-ownership during the 1950s and 1960s, coupled with racial covenants and redlining that prohibited entry to non-whites, along with shifting consumer preferences, did indeed give rise to
many highly racialized, gendered, and often apolitical or even regressively political spaces (Checkoway 1980; Davis 1990; Harris 2004; Walker 1981). It would be naïve to assume that the demand for suburban homes was simply created; the middle class (North) ‘American Dream’ is a powerful metaphor that many nation born citizens and new immigrants aspire toward (Ley 2000; Ray and Johnson 1997), but it is one that has been heavily marketed and subsidized.

Suburban expansion across North America (as well as Australia (Anderson et al. 2001; Troy 2000), was indeed part of a deliberate attempt on the part of governments and corporations to promote economic and national security after the panic of the war and preceding depression. The promotion of middle class home-ownership was politically viewed as a bastion against communism as well as union organizing under the assumption that well housed (as well as dispersed) workers would be less likely to mobilize. Sprawl was both an effort to protect against nuclear threats as well as a profitable way to encourage mass production and jobs in housing and home supplies while expanding capital through property investment (Kelly 1993; May 1999; Troy 2000; Walker 1981).

The role of federal government played into a broader constellation of political, economic, social and technological factors in construction of highly racialized, exclusive and classed suburban spaces. The myth of “non-intervention” created by the government to erase its role in creating the suburban mortgage and credit market was coupled with the simultaneous promotion of the “free market” in housing and denial of the State’s role in structuring it. This functioned to naturalize the market as the “solution to economic problems” and provided a cloak for white homeowners to reject black neighbors out of concern for property values while appearing non-racist (Freund 2006; Harris and Forrester 2003; Lassiter 2007).
1.2.5 Revisiting and Rethinking

Although the above illustrations do not particularly challenge dominant representations of postwar suburbs as exclusive, sprawling, and segregated by race and class, they do provide a context to reconsider the multiple ways in which these constraining relations and forms failed, were challenged, contested, and changed. A growing body of work emphasizes the distinction between the suburban ideal and its realities (Morton 2002). Beyond the semblance of homogeneity the postwar suburbs are and have been far more socio-economically and ethnically diverse than commonly portrayed (Kruse and Sugrue 2006). As much as the postwar suburbs have been depicted as static and homogenous terrains of conservative politics, they have also been battlegrounds over and for major social movements such as for civil and women’s rights (Morton 2002; Murray 2003; Troy 2000; Wiese 2004).

Despite designation of suburbs as private, apolitical spaces (Kunstler 1993), spatial practices always exceed “representations of space” (Lefebvre 1991)–the conceived space of planners and designers or one might add also, to some extent academics. This is not to say that form is irrelevant, in fact I would argue that suburban spaces present distinct conditions for activism in relation to the central city. While dispersed suburban form may present unique challenges, there also exist opportunities that are not foreclosed by any pure delineation between suburb and city or by physical form. In fact some scholars indicate a need to question the distinctions between the perceived and actual functions of both private and public spaces (Kirby 2008). This, I argue is particularly central to an analysis of suburban politics where the lack of official public spaces has resulted in appropriation of private spaces for social and political gathering (Parlette and Cowen 2011). As neoliberal cornerstones of privatization and corporatized forms of management have come to dominate municipal approaches to urban governance, it becomes increasingly difficult to rely on any ‘true’ or ideal public functions to be
supported in State owned ‘public’ spaces (Kohn 2004). I am not arguing against a need and desire for municipal provision of public spaces. Rather, I seek to open the question of how the production of collective, political spaces may take a variety of forms (Blomley 2003), which may in turn lead to demands and pressure on State actors for resources and powers of decision-making. Expanding upon this observation, my literature review probes the types of social struggle that have taken place in a diverse range of suburban contexts that fit within the dominant imaginary of postwar western suburbanization.

1.2.6 Suburban Progression

While exclusionary and conservative forces were and may continue to be present and influential in suburban politics, the dominance of such movements in academic accounts tends to obscure the much richer contested terrain of political conflict that has arisen in various ‘suburbias’ throughout the postwar period. Peter Siskind (2006) seeks to complicate the narrative of the suburbs as a terrain for the festering of a new conservatism. Focusing on slow- and anti-growth suburban activists he maintains that, “their politics cannot be confined in the simple categories of backlash, anti-statism, or conservatism of suburban politics” (2006: 163). Although still focused primarily on the activities of white homeowners, Siskind grapples with the complex dynamics in the interrelationships between the “limits of legislative policy-making” (2006:176) as well as to activism. In each, a fragmented vision and power structure contributed to failures to limit growth and to build affordable suburban housing. Lassiter (2004) on the other hand, details a more hopeful outcome of the tensions between progressive and regressive political organizing. Lassiter traces the contested implementation of the Supreme Court ordered school desegregation policy across city and county in metropolitan Charlotte during the 1970s. Ultimately, the reactionary anti-bussing movement representing the hegemony of white bourgeoisie interests who sought to exclude their communities from integration was disarmed.
The counter-force of interracial coalition building between working-class whites and African Americans won out in a fight against racial and political segregation that they saw to be ghettoizing their neighborhoods (Lassiter 2004).

Such essays are testaments to the diversity and potential for change in suburban environments, a theme encapsulated by the work of Harris (2003; 2004), Murray (2003), and Troy (2000). Their case studies of suburbs in Canada, New York and Australia, evince that suburbanites are not necessarily owners (Murray 2003). In fact, in Australia, suburbs have long been home to working class populations where the communist party was the strongest advocate for home buying incentives postwar and housing tenure did not result in a reduction of labour disputation (Troy 2000). Richard Harris has corroborated this point through his documentation of pre- and early postwar working class and industrial suburbs in Canada (2003; 2004). Moreover, in regions ranging from Queens, New York; various Australian suburbs; Cleveland Heights; and Oak Park outside of Chicago, neighbourhood activism arose in response to local and broader societal inequalities, such as the Vietnam war, tenancy strife, and racism. What Wiese deems a precursor and integral part of the civil rights movement (2004), pressure came from both within and without the suburbs to challenge restrictive covenants and discriminatory practices. The collaborative mobilization of ‘middle-class’ suburban whites along with blacks aspiring to suburban residences was instrumental in changing policies and practices (particularly through real estate and businesses) to open particular suburban neighborhoods to wider diversity (Mattingly 2001; Morton 2002; Murray 2003; Troy 2000; Wiese 2004).

Private places such as family living rooms were often the only sites available for blacks to strategically organize and create spaces for themselves in suburban neighbourhoods (Wiese 2004), or as Kirby (2008) notes to gain access to public spaces. Similarly, postwar suburban
women, often assumed to have been relegated to domestic duties in private homes, have utilized the closed doors of PTA meetings, the private entrances to grocery stores and the kitchen table to mobilize for stronger communities, better schools, and social services (Murray 2003; Strongboag 2001). Some may argue that these activities still fall in line with liberal middle class norms that have sought inclusion and improved quality of life within the existing structural framework of middle class suburbanization. However, they have also in the process, altered the spaces within and upon which these actions have taken place.

Earlier forms of suburban progressive activism may be seen as a challenge to the very institutional and social arrangements that brought them into being, as well as agitation for improved community life. This subversion of white middle class normativity gave way to a distinct set of politics and social space. This element of racial and ethnic experience is taken up by Jones-Correa in his discussion of “new suburbs” in the United States, which are now home to increasing numbers of new immigrants from non-European countries (2006). His approach is enlightening for its questioning of the suburbs as political spaces with distinct political opportunities. He queries what effects the growing diversity of suburban ethno-demographics has on new social actors as well as on the spaces that they inhabit. While immigration and racial diversification will undoubtedly be central to any conceptualization of ‘new’ suburban politics, it is unfortunate that this piece does not engage more deeply with the changing nature of postwar suburbs themselves or shifts in class composition of suburbia that in many cases correspond to growing numbers of recently immigrated residents. Another example of an attempt to theorize more contemporary suburban activism comes from a piece by Gilbert (2004), who compares downtown Toronto anti-poverty activists with exurban anti-development activists. The article acknowledges the growth of poverty and strained services in Toronto’s inner suburbs but wholly
removes them from analysis and thereby reproduces the dichotomous opposition between progressive downtown and status quo suburb (exurb).

My research draws on scholarship that dissects the contemporary situation of western sub/urban changes based on changing racial, class, and ethnic composition as well as investment priorities. In doing so, I hope to delineate the imbrications between capitalism, racialization, and colonization in producing relations of spatial and social marginalization. Renewed focus on shifting suburban populations and local politics is critical in light of increasing ‘suburbanization of poverty’ in many postwar suburbs and a neoliberal approach to urban governance (as well as academic critique) that prioritizes the rehabilitation of downtowns (Gibson 2004; Harvey 1994). We are also witnessing a spread of more prosperous exurban suburbs that continue to reinforce stereotypical notions of middle class suburbia (whether or not these are accurate or reflective of reality are beyond the scope of this dissertation). A metropolitan framework illuminates the neglected diversity and suggests the potential for a more radical and justice oriented suburban politics than is commonly expected, particularly wherein we are seeing a dramatic transformation in the class and racial character of older suburban forms. However, the ever-present opposition to progressive politics is indeed as salient as wider national and international pressures in shaping the political climate and nature of social life (Morton 2002; Murray 2003; Troy 2000; Wiese 2004). This is an inevitably complicated terrain; however a more nuanced approach to suburban complexity is needed. This entails recognizing the changing nature of suburbs as well as changing the way we think about them, to aid us in avoiding an inversion of ‘inner city decline’ by indicating the necessarily interlinked social and political tensions between, across and within the sub/urban.
1.3 Methodology

“My use of capitalization for both “post” and “colonial” indicates the fact that the post can only be imagined for many subaltern groups because colonialism is a living reality for indigenous populations and that the internal colonization of minorities in the United States is alive and well. On the other hand I retain the use of the term “postcolonial” because of its radical potential and emancipatory possibilities as a theoretical and political position” – Mailini Johar Schueller on her concept of Post-Colonial citizenship

In order to establish a socio-political-economic profile of the region, my data includes analysis of: official planning documents, mainstream and alternative media reports, census data, and literature produced by community agencies as well as city council. Secondly, participatory action research (PAR) with activist and community groups working towards alternative and democratized planning, in collaboration with local residents, informed action and theory-building through participant observation. Participatory and archival methods were substantiated by extensive ethnographic interviews with local actors and staff at third-sector agencies and the City. My emphasis through PAR on critique, analysis, and intervention upon the shifting terrain of political, social, and economic antagonisms is reflected in Lefebvre’s method of transduction. His methodology is taken directly from Marx and emphasizes “regression-progression” (2003) as a descriptive analysis of the past (regression) to begin with an historical-materialist framework of social reality from which to begin envisioning progression of the ‘future impossible’, a revolution of space and social relations (Lefebvre 1991, 1996, 2003).

In my efforts to combine Marxist and postcolonial praxis in the context of neoliberal capitalism, I am influenced by the work of Nicholas Thoburn (2003), who has articulated the utility of Marxism to function as a theory of difference and change. Thoburn emphasizes a
parallel between Deleuze’s ‘minor politics’ and that of a contemporary proletariat, not as one based on essential identity but as a creative becoming and deterritorialization of major or dominant relations. That “the creativity of minor politics is a condition of those who lack these resources, or who experience them as oppressive and inadequate” (Thoburn 2003:8), exudes the potential to mobilize cross-class movements with anti-colonial struggles that are linked through recognition of oppression in the “cramped spaces” of neoliberal capitalism. As incomplete and uneven as neoliberal globalization may be, its pervasiveness demands that we grapple with the colliding forces of capitalism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism in remaking global centres and peripheries. Cities in the global north are in fact sites where the borders between north and south are blurred, protected, and resisted through new relations of governance, flows of people, and capitalism’s spread into all facets of life.

I position my research as a postcolonial-marxist methodological intervention, an inherently political project aimed at destabilizing dominant relations of power and exploitation (Raghuram and Clare 2006; Spivak 1990). With a focus on the agency of those who face socio-political-economic marginalization (whether woman, unwaged, underemployed, negatively racialized) to work within and upon structural configurations, a postcolonial politics is complemented by Marxist critique; autonomist Marxists emphasize the power of political actors to enact social and structural change at global and local levels (Hardt and Negri 2000). The proletarian in this case becomes, not a fixed identity to be represented, but an overcoming and creative becoming of a new people and politics rooted in immanent struggle and critique (Thoburn 2003). Like Malini Johar Schueller (2009), I do not presume that a postcolonial (or post-capitalist) world is immediately realizable. Rather my work draws on the hope and struggle contained within a postcolonial-marxist methodology to push the bounds of the possible in enacting a new politics.
1.3.1 Participant Observation

My participatory observation stems from five years of involvement in the Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park community as a member of the ‘Amazing Place’ organizing group, collaborator on numerous events and projects, and as an attendee at a variety of community meetings.

1.3.1.1 Amazing Place

*The Amazing Place is a collaboration of diverse groups in East Scarborough that use a community development approach through art, story-telling, local history, heritage and participatory planning to help people in their community build connections, learn about the past, define the present and create a vision for the future.*

This coalition of multiple groups and residents in KGO were united by a shared goal to facilitate processes of resident-led decision-making and empowerment to enact change and make claims on their community. As a founding member in this series of initiatives I gained insight into the complex history and contemporary experiences of the neighbourhood that continually drove and altered my research process. My activities in support of organizing events, meetings, and projects helped me to build relationships with many local residents, activists, and staff at community agencies. These activities have taken on a variety of modes and forms, such as: story-telling, community mapping, and walking tours, as well as meetings and forums. This multi-format approach helped to make the overall project more accessible and effective at resonating with local experience; it also uncovered layered textures of KGO that are not formally documented and would be impossible to reach through interviews alone. As a non-resident member of Amazing Place I did not assume a leadership position in defining the direction of the
group’s activities but was politically and emotionally invested in supporting the project’s mission as collectively arrived at with local residents (see paper one).

1.3.1.2 Residents Rising (RR)

Residents Rising is a group of community volunteers that started in 2005 with one paid facilitator to pursue member driven initiatives to address and support the needs of the community. Their work aims at building pride, inclusion, and greater equity by nurturing “a welcoming, respectful, and multi-cultural neighbourhood where everyone is encouraged to participate and contribute” (RRCA, n.d.). RR has organized a number of projects, such as a local community map imaging access to social services (see figure 1), groceries and transit routes; guerrilla gardening; and a protest campaign for bus service. Many of the two hundred members of RR are also involved in other community or activist groups, such as Women’s Action Centre and a Tamil newcomers group. As my research progressed I was able to attend and contribute support to meetings and workshops undertaken by these other groups. Regular gatherings of RR take place once a month. I attended ten of these meetings over the course of 2008 and 2009. In 2010 and 2011, I attended RR meetings less frequently but continued to collaborate with residents on projects and initiatives.

1.3.1.3 East Scarborough Storefront (ESS)

The ESS is a network of more than 40 partner organizations that provide services and social programming in the KGO community. The ESS site also provides: space for community groups of all kinds to meet or gather, free computer and telephone access, and functions as a communication hub for residents in KGO. On top of this everyday support, the ESS has been a conduit for collective mobilization in the area. Part of this mandate is supported through regular community “Speaks” which bring together the full diversity of the community to meet, discuss,
and strategize in large and small groups, challenges within the community and how to mobilize action for change. The topics of these forums build off ideas from previous Speaks and through resident direction, to ensure that they continue to reflect the priorities of the community. Over the course of my research I attended Speaks on a wide range of issues including: safety, food security, health, accessibility, public space, transit, bridging divides in the community, and community partnerships. Attendance at these forums and related events was integral to my research, particularly in questioning the role of the third sector in local activism.

1.3.1.4 Guildwood Valley Community Association (GVCA)

The GVCA was founded in 1958 to ensure that Guildwood “remains a great place to live” (http://www.guildwood.on.ca). This group is composed of residents from the more affluent Guildwood community adjacent to and sharing city ward 43 with KGO. However, unlike the high-density towers and social housing in KGO, Guildwood village residences extend toward Lake Ontario and more closely resemble an idyllic image of stately garden homes. Many of the members of this organization are Canadian born, middle class homeowners that have lived in the neighbourhood for an average of 20-40 years. Recent efforts of this group have been directed at protesting the introduction of a wind farm on the shores of Lake Ontario, attempting to develop a Business Improvement Association, and at preserving the village character of the Guildwood area. While I was not an active member of this group I familiarized myself with the history of GVCA activism to learn of more contemporary activities through passive observation at events. I attended Annual General Meetings of this group on March 24, 2009 and March 23, 2010.

1.3.2 Archival Analysis

My archival analysis consisted primarily of three interrelated forms of documentation, each of which were used to support and inform the direction of my other methods, for example,
by indicating potential interviewees or groups to contact. I realize that archives are an incomplete and partial source of knowledge that is determined by those with the power to record and preserve information. However, because I am interested in how groups organize, why, and how representations influence the (re)production of space, these documents nonetheless informed my sense of the changing relations of power and struggles in KGO. I did not take any of this information at face value and attempted to ensure credibility and rigour through triangulation with interviews, observation, and critical analysis of multiple primary and secondary sources.

1.3.2.1 Newspapers

I used newspaper articles as primary documents to piece together the representation of KGO overtime and changes occurring in the community, with specific attention to local mobilization in response to perceived challenges or threats (this encompassed both NIMBY and more progressive responses). My search began with the year directly proceeding the introduction of the Kingston Road motel shelters, thereby covering 1985 to 2010. This was not a systematic content analysis but a more targeted in-depth analysis of news discourse. I used key word searches to locate articles that speak specifically to the needs, causes, and impacts of the motels and later (2005) around the proposed and eventual demolition of Morningside Mall. My newspaper coverage was drawn predominantly from: The Scarborough Mirror, The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, Toronto’s weekly newspapers, NOW Magazine and Eye Weekly⁵, as well as magazine features in publications like Maclean’s and Toronto Life.

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⁵ Eye Weekly has since been redesigned and renamed as the Grid Magazine.
1.3.2.2 Local Archives

I constructed a history of the present context of the KGO neighbourhood and pertinent social struggles through an excavation of documentation taken by community groups, agencies, libraries, and the city of Toronto. This enabled me to understand changes in the political habitus occurring in Toronto/Scarborough and KGO specifically as well as the forms and focus of local struggles that have arisen as a result. I began with the postwar period, covering from 1955 to the present and drew upon newsletters, maps, photographs, pamphlets, articles, and reports from the following sources:

1. Scarborough Historical Society Archives.

2. Agency newsletters and reports: Guildwood Valley Community Association; Residents Rising; United Way; Wellesley Institute.

3. Local history vertical files held at the Albert Campbell library.

1.3.2.3 City Planning Documents

My analysis of planning documents was targeted to the specific ‘moments’ identified above. I conducted analysis of the Toronto Official Plan (2002) and its related Scarborough (2001) and downtown (2000) Supplemental reports, as well as the Kingston Road avenue study (2003) as starting points. Additionally, paper one draws on planning documents related to the implementation and review of the Kingston Road shelters (City of Toronto 1999). Paper three traces the policy formation of the Priority Neighbourhood strategy through six commissioned reports and a final call to action by the Strong Neighbourhoods Taskforce (2005).
1.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask direct questions and encourage personal narratives about perceived challenges, struggles, and both positive and negative changes in KGO as experienced by three key sets of local actors: city staff/officials; residents, and staff at social agencies. I conducted twenty-eight interviews specific to this study, each lasting for approximately one hour. Paper three draws on eighteen additional interviews performed as part of a related collaborative project. During this study we also designed and facilitated a series of multi-lingual focus group interviews through which we learned from sixty-five residents (Cowen and Parlette 2011).

1.3.3.1 Residents

These interviews allow me to follow up on participatory observation and archival findings to more directly encourage reflection on lived experience in KGO, particularly in relation to the key moments under study. My contacts were selected through directed purposive and snowball sampling. I first contacted people that I came to know through community networks and local events as activists or staff members. I identified additional contacts through my archival analysis and through referral from key resident and staff member contacts in KGO and Guildwood. This helped me to connect with those who may not self-identify as potential interviewees or as activists. In consideration of the time and life responsibilities of resident interviewees I was cautious to avoid over-sampling beyond information saturation. Interviewees were made aware of their right to end the interview at any time and guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
1.3.3.2 Community Agency and City staff

My interviews with local staff members aided me to assess the leadership role that third sector partners play in both serving and mobilizing the KGO community. I was able to question the processes and challenges involved in local decision-making and policy development as well as the relationships across agencies, city sectors, and with other levels of government.
Figure 1: Residents Rising map of Southeast Scarborough community resources
Figure 2: Street map of Southeast Scarborough

- Gabriel Dumont Non-profit Homes
- East Scarborough Storefront
- Family Residence
- Orton Park
- Ghesiq House Native Child and Family Services
- Morningside Mall site (now Morningside Crossing)
Figure 3: Aerial view of Scarborough
2 Paper 1: What’s Academia Got to Do with It? Seeking community-driven social change through participatory action research

“Reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution and action without reflection is pure activism, or action for action’s sake” ~Paulo Freire (1972: 41)

“Suburbanites are no less morally engaged or politically principled as individuals than other citizens, but suburban, everyday public settings tend to lack a strong sense of shared cultural authority… It was more clear now that I was studying a setting, one that produces suburban activism –not the individual suburban activist” ~Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002:135)

2.1 What does it mean to do community-driven research?

This seemingly innocuous question unleashes a series of challenges to the academic researcher. Along with the potential for social change, practice of community-driven research is overlain with conflicting politics, tensions, and ethics. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is often adopted as the methodological approach through which academics strive to collaborate with community partners. Participants are thought to enter into partnership based on shared goals to advance social change through research and action; social consciousness and collective empowerment are fundamental elements in PAR practice (Brydon-Miller 2001; Freire 1972; Kindon et al. 2007). However, I argue that the wide diversity among participants, in particular the differences between University and community understandings of what social justice means and what is possible to achieve in the operational context also yields diverging motivations and expectations for how to get there (Blomley 1994). I draw a distinction between PAR that is community-driven, where collaboration is sought and motivated in form and content by community members, and research that is merely community-based –produced in consortium
with community members but initiated by academic researchers. I argue that community-driven PAR is inherently complicated by tensions between academic work modes and the unpredictability of community organizing. This results in a predominance of community-based PAR, as a process that is more amenable to academic demands than intensive community-driven processes. Additional challenges to community-driven research arise from power relations within the community of practice as well as how that community is defined and by whom. In this article, I investigate my own attempt to conduct community-driven research by drawing on five years of participatory action research with community groups, organizations, and residents in the inner suburban region of Southeast Scarborough in Toronto, Canada.

My entry to this community began with a failed struggle to prevent the loss of community space through policy supported demolition of a local shopping mall (Parlette and Cowen 2011). I tell the story of how this loss segued into a grassroots attempt to challenge the relations of inequality between city and inner suburbs in response to processes of gentrification and suburban decline. As Toronto becomes increasingly divided by race and class with the city’s most marginalized populations crowding into the periphery (Hulchanski 2007; Walks 2001; see paper 2), we also see a fierce brand of anti-suburbanism thoroughly infused in public discourse wherein the suburbs are depicted as ‘evil villains’ (Kupferman 2010). Even downtown activists denounce the inner suburbs as passé homogenous zones and deny their belonging as part of the city (Cowen 2006). This social positioning of the suburbs obscures, parallels, and advances the material devaluation that we’re seeing in many inner suburban neighbourhoods, which are hit with a double-edged stigma of being both suburban and declining. Southeast Scarborough’s suburban form poses its own set of challenges, which the mall struggle illuminates. The dispersed physical layout of suburban landscapes and the lack of the iconic public gathering spaces typical of the urban realm, such as parks and public squares, contributes to what
Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002) describe as “activism in a privatized milieu” (135). This “privatism” creates a distinctive context for organizing that necessitates different tactics from the squats and protest marches that are highly visible in urban public spaces yet easily ignored in the suburban context. In the suburban milieu, public gathering more often occurs in private spaces (Kirby 2008; Wiese 2004), as seen through the appropriation of Morningside Mall and the need to use social agency sites for organizing meetings. The combined implications of anti-suburbanism and this privatized milieu interact with the action-research process, influencing organizing practices as well as results.

In this paper, I focus on the imbrications between motivations, reflective action, spatial and political context through reflection on shared struggles, successes, and failures over the course of a long-term PAR process. In particular, I initiate an evaluative process of my positioning as a scholar-activist grappling with the unique challenges thrown up by an attempted community-driven process with a community in flux. This community-driven praxis is complicated by my academic identity as it intersects with broader shifts in local governance and internal community relationships. I will begin by considering how PAR principles have been conceptualized and applied for the purposes of community-based research. I will then situate my experience of praxis by exploring both the process and outcomes of a five year community-driven process in one Scarborough neighbourhood. I highlight some core lessons by posing two key questions: How do academic-activists build and maintain effective relationships with communities that support residents as experts? How do we deal with evolving internal and external politics as they shape PAR practice?
2.2 PAR: Activating theory or theorizing action?

The integral dualism between action and reflection is widely ascribed to by those who practice Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR does not offer a definitive tool-kit of specific methods, rather it is defined by an epistemological approach that seeks to challenge and change existing inequalities through an ongoing and iterative process of reflection, research, and action (Adorno 1976; McTaggart 1991; Reason and Bradbury 2001). While PAR may draw upon a wide-range of methods that typically involve in-depth qualitative analysis, such as: ethnographic interviews, participant observation, story-telling, media-production, or performance among many others, it may also draw upon quantitative methods to support findings. PAR poses a direct challenge to positivist conceptions of knowledge, which are predicated on an objective reality that can be discovered by a rational, expert, researcher. PAR on the other hand is explicitly constructivist: reality is constituted, reinforced, challenged and changed in and through social relations. This approach to knowledge creation calls into question not just what we can come to know, but also how and where we come to know; everyday life becomes a privileged site of knowledge and expertise (Farrow et al. 1995; Kindon et al. 2004; Maguire 1987; Reason and Bradbury 2001). That knowledge production is driven by quotidian or community-based experience, which drives social change, is central to the aims of PAR.

Through PAR we are called to recognize our positionality and subjectivities, and how these predispositions shape our engagement with action-research practices. As someone who identifies as a PAR practitioner I recognize that all research is partial and situated (Alyesson and Skoldberg 2000; Harraway 1988; Merrifield 1995). I draw on standpoint theory to recognize that the subjugated knowledges of the oppressed offer a more fulsome vantage into an analytics of power than those of the dominant culture. Hence, I follow Harding’s assertion that when
working with oppressed groups and individuals it is appropriate to enter the research process through the experiences and knowledges of the oppressed (2004). Correspondingly, I make no claims to write a purely objective or value neutral study. On the contrary, I believe that values should be embraced and made explicit at the outset in order to make bias transparent. I take on an activist position, in which research is understood as a form of political action that seeks to challenge and change unequal social relations (Brown and Strega 2005).

In its explicit activism, PAR diverges from even more traditional forms of qualitative research where a study is designed, conducted, evaluated and documented by a formally trained researcher even as she sympathizes with the challenges faced by the populations that she works with. PAR is unique in that it brings academics and community members into collaborative ‘participation’ through a cyclical process of reflexive research and action. Ideally, ‘research’ and related processes should be co-designed, developed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with community members, also known as community researchers, and academic researchers. Along with a desire for social transformation and political change, the PAR process is also intended to break down the hierarchal relationship between the researcher and researched that exists in more traditional academic settings. Community expertise and skills are valued just as highly as those of academics, while the distinction between the two researcher ‘types’ is intended to blur and dissolve as PAR unfolds (Babbie and Mouton 2001; Berg 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Kindon et al. 2007).

This does not mean that power differentials do not still exist within PAR. There are numerous examples of participatory techniques being used to temper dissent, co-opt movements and generally serve the interests of dominant groups (Cleaver 2001; Francis 2001). Even well-meaning PAR activists are at risk of unwittingly upholding systems of privilege and power.
There are innumerable ways by which this can happen, for instance: an assumed homogeneity of community that fails to account for internal politics and divisions, racism and other forms of discrimination and exclusion; overwhelmingly high demands for participation that risk draining capacities or exploiting the time of participants; an illusory or hollow PAR process that fails to share power equally among members (Cooke and Kothari 2001). As PAR activists it is our responsibility to identify and directly confront both internal and external systems of power in order to mitigate their harm and bolster positive relations (Brook and McGee 2002; Gustaven 2001).

Yet, this ambitious goal is much tidier in theory than in practice. PAR offers much positive potential, but also poses a series of challenges, not the least of which is that social change is always complicated. However, I would also argue that there are tensions inherent to any coupling between academia and communities (Blomley 1994; Cancian 1993). These tensions, I believe, cannot simply be erased through a conscious practice of ‘blurring’ the distinction between researcher ‘types’. These tensions are foundational to the structure of the academic-community relationship and therefore require renegotiation through all of the dynamic phases that PAR takes us.

In this negotiation, reflexivity is necessary but not sufficient. Gillian Rose complicates the notion of self-reflexivity by reminding us that there is no such thing as a singular self waiting to be discovered. Like knowledge, the self is cultivated through the research process and shifts between contexts (Rose 1999). For instance, I might say that I need to maintain awareness of the politics and impact of my own subject position as a Caucasian, Canadian-born scholar at an elite, downtown, institution but influenced by a working class background and a history of involvement with social justice movements. Yet, despite that I was born a mere four kilometres
from the ‘hub’ of the community in which I work as a PAR activist, and that I have spent my life wavering between working class and poverty, I cannot be ‘of’ the community. As a white, University researcher, that identity takes precedence (whether I like it or not) in a community comprised largely of people of colour and aboriginal peoples, with high levels of poverty and inadequate housing. While I certainly have not experienced the ongoing discrimination that those who have been negatively racialized face on a daily basis, I am prevented from equalizing on class terms precisely because of the privilege accrued through my access to professional ‘middle class’ education (even though that has yet to yield the corresponding middle class income). This does not prevent my solidaristic support of the struggle against class oppression and stigmatization, but I am firmly perceived as a middle class participant with privileged networks.

Aside from the power of perception, and perceptions of power that it entails, there are other more concrete reasons why Community-University relationships are inherently challenging. Community work and academic work place different demands on us, operate within distinct social contexts, and measure success or progress through quite different forms of evaluation. Universities demand outputs: sole-authored publications, grants, and adherence to norms and specialized language that is frankly inaccessible to the vast majority of people (Cahill and Torre 2007; Cancian 1993; Castree and Sparke 2000). As a doctoral student I am expected to design and orchestrate an original body of research, demonstrated through a final dissertation that reflects an appropriate level of theoretical engagement and dialogue with existing literature.
Community work, on the other hand, is much more focused on process⁶, which is seen to be just as important as output. Community work is based on collaboration and action with roots in everyday life (Brydon-Miller 2001).

Although PAR approaches have been gaining esteem in the social sciences and geography more particularly, this acceptance does not alleviate the time demands and pressures to produce traditional academic outputs, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, that do not resonate with the everyday life of community residents and activists. At the same time, the hundreds or thousands of hours required to build effective and trusting community relationships do not fit into the laborious demands of the ‘publish or perish’ imperative that academics have been forced to internalize (Blomley 1994; Cahill and Torre 2007; Cancian 1993; Castree and Sparke 2000).

Community and academic work are not necessarily incompatible, yet, community-driven research and participatory action research are not automatically synonymous. There may be occasions where the goal of community-based research or of PAR is not, in fact, community-driven. This may require a re-conceptualization of what kind of partnership is needed and desired: does a community simply want statistics on demographic change; a content analysis of media coverage? Such projects do not necessarily require close collaboration and partnership; they are still predicated on the academic as expert, yet useful to the community. What I am most interested in is the question: what is meant when we say that a project is community-driven? There are numerous case studies of community-based PAR, many of which aim to be

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⁶ Though Alinsky (1971) may argue that process is merely the means to the desired result or product of activism, community organizing in this context is not always viewed as ‘activism’ by participating residents; the process of deliberating and muddling through facilitates a collaborative mode of envisioning desired results and key actions.
community-driven, but few that actually originate from a community-defined purpose. That is not to say that such partnerships aren’t useful, productive, and meaningful for both sides but that much community-based research and often PAR starts and ends as a research project (Chatterton et al. 2007). This common form of community-based PAR may be inclusive and social-justice oriented, with community expertise driving knowledge production. However, research in whatever forms taken (rather than action), tends to be the primary motivator for collaboration.

In the next section I trace my experiences with a multi-project process of community organizing where action came first and emergent community needs, desires, and struggles remained at the forefront of all action, reflection, and knowledge creation-sharing. My purpose is not to prescribe a normative framework (Alinsky 1971), but to reflect on and improve practices for supporting community-driven action and knowledge. The prioritization of action and community as opposed to research and outputs (as traditionally conceived) begs the question of how we reconcile our academic identities and responsibilities with community-driven work. I offer an overview of key moments in my engagement with a community that has come to be known as Kingston Galloway/Orton Park, shorthanded as KGO. When I began working in this particular area of Scarborough in 2006, it was not yet KGO. There was a strong sense of community but no agreed upon nomenclature for the neighbourhood or boundaries for identification, though people often referred to their nearest intersection or Southeast Scarborough to signal belonging to the region. The KGO classification started to emerge and catch on in late 2008 but it did not develop from local residents. ‘KGO’ was designated by the City of Toronto.

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7 Due to the iterative process of participatory action and community organizing, there is no static set of needs and desires at which we ‘arrived’ as a group. Rather we sought to develop processes to identify and respond to diverse and dynamic needs as they emerged, persisted, and changed.
and social service agencies to delineate a service catchment area that was targeted as a priority
eighbourhood for investment (Cowen and Parlette 2011; see also paper 3).

This exercise in naming speaks to the power relations at work when policy and service
agency workers are able to simultaneously define and constitute what a community is and is not,
spatially and socially. It reminds us that the ‘communities’ that we work in, with, and through
are not naturally bound and unified but indeed are always constructed for one purpose or another
(Rose 1996). As inclusive as it may feel to build and participate in communities, we must
recognize that this process of creating an inside, simultaneously produces an outside that
generates exclusion. Recognition of the networks and practices through which community is
cultivated remain central to PAR, as I demonstrate throughout this paper. Over the course of the
PAR process, the definition of the community I was working in shifted, from one that emerged
informally through communities of affiliation, to one that was rigidly structured according to
social service parameters. This throws up a series of complications for PAR in this
‘community’. If attempting to conduct community-driven action-research, how does the
definition of that community, and those with the authority to define, challenge the PAR process?

2.3 Motivating Action

The KGO\textsuperscript{8} neighbourhood is located in the far southeastern edges of Toronto. It is one of
six communities in Toronto with a poverty rate greater than fifty percent of the population, of
which five are located in the postwar suburbs (UWGT 2004). This is an ethnically diverse region
due largely to high rates of new immigrant settlement and the largest indigenous population in

\textsuperscript{8} I continue to employ the KGO designation throughout this paper primarily because, despite its imposed origins, this label is now how the community is known and referred in policy documents, the social agency sector, and among residents.
the GTA. KGO also has the highest concentration of public housing in Ontario (UWGT 2004; see also chapter 2). This community has faced the full brunt of stigmatization and socio-spatial isolation, as a community located in the far east of the municipality and accessible by car (which few residents can afford) or patchy public transit. Outsiders’ depictions of the neighbourhood tend to focus on rising levels of unemployment, youth gangs, poverty and violent crime. Those with a more sympathetic view indicate the lack of, and need for, more stable social infrastructure and spaces to support youth, community and employment opportunities as well as rehabilitative programs (Aly 2006; Cotanta et al. 2008, Rusk and Cheney 1999). Meanwhile many residents proclaim that they enjoy the neighbourhood and think it is undeserving of the bad reputation.

I was personally drawn to the KGO community because of a shopping mall. Indeed many people were brought together because of Morningside Mall. Not because it offered a prime shopping experience, but largely because it didn’t (at least not recently). Built in 1979 at the triangle between Kingston Road, Lawrence and Morningside Avenue, in its first two decades the mall did serve as the commercial hub for the surrounding community.

Well, it was sort of the town centre. It was a vibrant mall with a department store, a grocery store, a post office, drug store, food court, banks; it was a healthy mall. It was a place where not only people in this community shopped but people in outlying communities shopped. So it was a good blend of all walks of life who shopped there. And in the wintertime of course it was a great place to go because it was a safe, warm place you could go to walk. (Interview 1, Scarborough resident and community organizer)

The mall quickly became a centre for social gathering in this community built around the private spaces of roads and single-family dwellings so prevalent in postwar suburban development.
Physically, the mall was sited on a major arterial linking the city of Toronto to the town of Kingston. It stood three stories to measure at 26,000 square metres (McKay 2007). Until the late 1990s the mall thrived as both the retail and community hub of KGO, drawing residents to gather both formally for community programs and services, as well as socially, to connect with neighbours (Dickson 2007; Parlette and Cowen 2011; West-hill n.d.)

The Morningside Mall and Southeast Scarborough experienced parallel decline during a period of rapid change in the inner suburbs. Starting in the late 1970s but intensifying through the 80s, 90s and into the present, gentrification became the new dominant urban strategy to attract investment and affluence to downtown cores across North America (Hackworth 2001; Short et al 2007; Smith 2002). As a result, downtown Toronto benefitted from renewed resources and investment along with an accompanying surge in property values (Caulfield 1994; Kipfer and Keil 2002). Meanwhile properties in the inner suburbs were devalued and large blocks of public housing were concentrated in communities like KGO. As a result, many of the city’s lower income residents and new immigrants looking for affordable housing found themselves in these older suburban neighbourhoods but without the typical social supports and public spaces common to downtown (Cowen 2005; Parlette and Cowen 2011; Walks 2001).

Morningside Mall fulfilled a desire for accessible communal space and agglomerated services. The economic functions of the mall dwindled and anchor stores steadily moved out from 2000-2004. During this time the community functions of the space continued to flourish, through spontaneous gatherings (such as a Seniors’ card club and tai chi practice in the food court) as well as social agencies: Early Years Centre, Employment Services, YWCA, library.

The mall was also home to the East Scarborough Storefront (ESS), a coalition of over 40 community groups visited by more than 5000 residents each month. Groups using ESS space
provide a wide range of programs and services, including everything from internet access and employment training, to settlement and legal services, to collective cooking groups, and even a meditation group for Tamil seniors. The ESS is also a hub of political activity. Since inception in 2001, it has been the catalyst for a number of collective mobilizations for resources, such as: public transportation, affordable housing, and poverty reduction in the area. More formally, the ESS also hosts regular “Community Speaks” rooted in a civic engagement mandate. The ‘Speaks’ are forums which bring together the full diversity of Scarborough to question, discuss, and strategize in large and small groups, on issues related to the health, safety, and well-being of the community (ESS 2004; 2005).

However, 2005 marked a major turning point. The Morningside Mall owners, Palmer Holdings and Sunlife Financial, announced that the building was slated for demolition in order to be redeveloped into big box stores catering to middle class people from other neighbourhoods (McKay 2007; Gray 2005). The communities surrounding the mall were outraged over the proposed removal of one of the few public spaces available in this neighbourhood with no recreation centre and a landscape hostile to pedestrians. Yet, the plan for the mall’s destruction was in complete alignment with the Toronto Official Plan’s proposal for “reurbanizing” Kingston Road (City of Toronto 2003). The demise of the defunct mall also epitomized the neglect and economic decline in that area of Scarborough and a devaluing of the existing use of space. Most of the residents surrounding the mall live in high-rise public housing towers, as well as family shelters (see paper 2) and do not drive. Essentially, the big box stores returned an emerging pedestrian environment into one catering towards suburban auto-mobility (Gray 2005).

In June of 2005 hundreds of residents took to the streets to protest the mall closure, after a letter writing campaign was ignored. The ESS became the face of the mall demolition and the
protest march rang with chants of “save our storefront” (ESS 2005). This rally spoke to the broader loss of public space felt by local residents: “I think, um, that was sort of a lightening rod for the community, I think, when the mall was closed, because there isn’t a lot here and it sort of had that sense of ‘but that’s all we have. That’s all we have and you’re taking it away?’” (Interview 4, Scarborough resident and social agency staff). The march was successful at raising awareness of the community’s desire for enclosed space, however their demands were casually deflected by local city councillor Ron Moeser, who admitted the resident’s preference “to see Morningside replaced by an indoor mall” before adding, “there’s a certain acceptance now, that isn’t going to happen” (Adler 2007). True to plan, the demolition of Morningside Mall went ahead unhindered, the final blow struck in November 2007.

The surrounding community absorbed the greatest impact, and devastation was widespread:

It was more of a gathering point, it was more about community space than anything else. And when they tore the mall down, it was really, really felt. Because suddenly, I mean, No Frills isn’t a place to congregate, it is a place to shop. A mall is a place, like you can sit on a bench and chat with people and you can find out things about your community because there’s usually an information board. We’re missing that stuff. (Interview 4, Scarborough resident and social agency staff)

I still feel that there was a way that they could still have kept that indoor component because now it’s a strip mall, those big box stores…when I was there I didn’t feel like it was pedestrian friendly, cars were coming in and out all the time, honking. You have to really walk a lot to cross from one side or another and it’s not very user
friendly kind of street…you have to really watch yourself. (Interview 20, social agency staff)

Yet in the wake of their collective loss of social space, community residents were eager to rebuild: what comes after Morningside Mall?

2.4 Activating Change

“We are a group of urban planners, architects and activists who work with diverse communities of Toronto struggling against economic, cultural, and ecological injustice to open spaces for people to imagine, transform, and enjoy the city”

—Planning Action mission statement

In 2006, staff organizers at the East Scarborough Storefront were contacted by Planning Action, an alternative planning group that I had joined in the same year. This activist group was founded in 2001 to challenge the corporate approach to urban planning that has become dominant in Toronto. In contrast to a competitive, entrepreneurial approach to planning, Planning Action’s alternative vision sought to promote grassroots leadership. We aimed to decentralize control over decision-making to enable local residents and workers to shape their own communities (Cowen 2004; Parlette 2007). Although Planning Action drew a broad base of approximately two hundred activists, planners, academics, and artists that communicated via list- serv, members that participated in community collaboration varied from project to project. The group that collaborated with Scarborough partners was comprised of six core members, all but one with academic affiliations, committed to challenging and respatializing relations of inequality between the central city and the inner suburbs. From the beginning our relationship was based on reflective action, but our role came in a support capacity. Because all six of us
contributing through Planning Action were white, perceived as middle class, and lived in old Toronto, it was not our place to direct decisions about what should happen and how, but to work with the community to actualize their vision and goals.

With the mall conflict still active, prior to demolition, Planning Action co-organized a forum with support from Scarborough partners, to discuss the broader politics surrounding the closure. From this event, relationships were forged between No-One is Illegal, protecting the rights of undocumented peoples, and Worker’s Action Centre, a union for unorganized labour. Issues confronted by local youth were reflected on through presentations from East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, East Scarborough Storefront and the Youth Challenge Fund. Finally, panellists from Neighbourhood Action Group and Alternative Planning Group helped to frame the challenges faced by Scarborough residents in relation to broader systems of inequality and marginalization (Brown and Strega 2005). Following the presentations, we broke into small groups to learn from one another and develop strategies for moving forward. The forum then became a first step forward in developing participatory processes for directing neighbourhood change (Parlette 2007). Also motivating action at that time was the recent arrest of the Galloway Boys, a gang associated with the neighbourhood and with a media history of violence that contributed to fear and judgement toward KGO, “And the stigma, probably five years ago [2005] was the height of that, with the Galloway Boys” (Interview 18, ESS staff).

In the face of limited local infrastructure to support public space functions, high levels of family and neighbourhood poverty, and stigmatization of the neighbourhood, residents were galvanized to take action toward redefining the stories told about and the future of their neighbourhood, “People think it is all bad but it’s a good place to live. This is my community and nobody going to change that” (Interview 10, Scarborough resident). The Amazing Place was
born out of the challenges facing the Kingston-Galloway neighbourhood but also the strengths of its residents to cultivate a new ‘space’ for engagement, one that is aimed at redefining and transforming both the image and everyday life of the community. Hence the politics surrounding the mall’s closure spawned a collaborative partnership between activist-academics from Planning Action, local residents, and the ESS, united by the goal of challenging spatialized inequality between the inner suburbs and downtown (Kesby 2007; Pain 2004).

The final vision, collectively written to clarify the Amazing Place mandate over the course of several years work reads as follows:

*The Amazing Place is a collaboration of diverse groups in East Scarborough that use a community development approach through art, story-telling, local history, heritage and participatory planning to help people in their community build connections, learn about the past, define the present and create a vision for the future.*

These processes took time to germinate and develop. Our group started in a very ad-hoc way with non-hierarchal, consensus decision-making defining our loose framework, though it was still unclear what we even were. The lack of formalization in community organizing during this period enabled an openness and flexibility in our approach. This allowed our group to feel things out as we went along and adjust to events and concerns arising in the community in shaping the project.

Before the mall was torn-down, in January 2007 the ESS secured and relocated to a new location in a former police station at 4040 Lawrence Avenue East, approximately a ten minute walk from the former site. They continued to provide a democratically operated space for residents to access programs and for participatory planning of the Amazing Place ‘state of being’
(as dubbed by Scarborough partners) to take place. Through collaboration with the ESS, the commitment to radical democratic practices in pursuit of social, economic and environmental justice practiced by Planning Action, came into alignment with other groups fighting for justice for undocumented workers, anti-poverty measures, aboriginal heritage groups, and youth programmers (PA 2006).

Residents Rising (RR), a key player in the community, is a grassroots group of volunteers. RR started in 2006 with one paid facilitator to pursue member driven initiatives to address and support the needs of the community, aimed at building pride, inclusion and greater equity. Their outreach endeavours to include marginalized populations that face barriers to community organizing such as: linguistic, cultural, mental or physical health issues, as well as to shelter residents, have brought in more diverse voices in the overall process of building community image and local networks; increasing access to food, housing, transportation, commerce, health care and employment; advocating for better services; and increasing opportunities to rise from poverty (RRCA, n.d.; 2008).

Armed with the distinct approaches and capacities of participating members, the Amazing Place presented a unique configuration of participatory processes to support community-led social change in Southeast Scarborough. Yet, the actual process of facilitating ongoing practices that support and are supported by grassroots ownership and direction of the goals and structure is significantly more complicated and necessarily unbounded.

The democratization goal of opening the process and making it relevant to all members of the community is itself confounded (but also enriched) by the sheer diversity, as well as the spatial layout, of the KGO community. Because KGO is home to a large population of recent immigrants and indigenous populations, residents bring richness in experiences and perspectives
that deepen the production and exchange of knowledge (Farrow et al. 1995). However, because the diverse countries of origin also entailed a plurality of mother-tongues, we had to consciously develop modes of communicating across languages. Additionally, many residents face racism, discrimination, mental and physical health issues, as well as insecure housing and limited incomes. These daily realities presented challenges, in that creating an ‘accessible’ space for participation meant much more than sending an invitation to an ‘open’ meeting. Conscious recognition of relations of oppression and marginalization drove attempts to support safe and comfortable spaces of participation. The challenges in creating supportive social spaces were compounded by the physical inaccessibility of the suburban landscape. Where possible we strove to provide transit tokens to participants but this did not compensate for inadequate bus service or mobility issues. Regular meetings were held at the ESS, a place that is routinely frequented by many in the surrounding community; though this facilitation of access for some may have others for whom this space is difficult to access or that do not feel comfortable there, such as many First Nations residents.

Even while physically present, not every individual or group was interested or able to participate or engage with the process in the same way. We recognized that for some, regular planning meetings may be onerous or impossible to fit in with other commitments; in some cases expectations for ‘participation’ place inappropriate demands on individuals and communities that struggle to fulfill basic needs. The Amazing Place relied on multi-modal and multi-faceted formats such as: forums, story-telling, social events, art and community mapping workshops where residents indicate places and things in the neighbourhood that they like, dislike, avoid, are afraid of, or things they miss, wish were there, or could be improved (Amazing Place 2008). These events evoked collective learning through modes beyond the aural and written word by drawing on visual and performative knowledges to speak across language barriers. They also
provided opportunities for residents to drive, shape, or contribute to the project with opportunity, but not a requirement, for sustained commitment and responsibility.

In the early phases of collaboration as Amazing Place, the definition of ‘community’ was unfixed in order to be welcoming and inclusionary. There were no boundaries set to mark who was in or out of any designated zone. Instead our emerging ‘community’ was loosely comprised of inhabitants, workers, and those with a sense of attachment to East Scarborough. In many ways, it was a self-elected identification and a sense of place that approximates a “community of fate” in the way that Balibar (2004) describes, in that participants entered into these struggles and celebrations together. Through our collective ‘planning’ sessions, residents were able to reflect on the roots and impacts of challenges facing their neighbourhood while deliberating on what course of action should be taken (Amazing Place 2008; Kindon et al. 2007).

Coming out of a series of engagements from 2006 to early 2007, residents expressed a desire for a local history project. This led to events focused on uncovering important people, places, things, and moments in the community and lives of its inhabitants. At this point, all research and reflection toward this uncovering was informed by community members, otherwise known as experts in KGO, with academics from Planning Action merely facilitating use of resources or following leads to media or historical archives. We offered our time to support organizing details and employed our privileged networks to secure funding for the initiative, including donations from the University of Toronto Geography and Planning Graduate Students’ Association as well as from a radical geography journal’s community fund. The grant application cycles that we face in our academic work also proved useful when it came time to submit a proposal for a “Community Festivals and Special Event Grant” from the City of Toronto. Due to our familiarity with navigating the ornate language and requirements of funding
proposals we were able to relieve community partners of the time burden for drafting what turned out to be a successful application.

All of our coalition’s activities fed into a broader goal to mobilize opportunities for residents to reclaim and redefine the past and present of the community, while becoming key agents in the construction of the future. The first and perhaps anchoring large-scale event/spaces of engagement produced as *The Amazing Place* was a ‘community hunt for local history’ (www.theamazingplace.org). In June 2007, 120 participants from wide-ranging social, ethno-racial, linguistic and age groups that comprise the wider East Scarborough community gathered in teams of six and set out on a non-competitive ‘scavenger’ hunt to learn about and perform the history of their community. Eighteen sites were chosen and researched based on the prior mapping workshops, community speaks, and meetings with residents who identified significant, untold or marginalized histories in their neighbourhoods. The chosen sites emphasized the social histories behind seemingly mundane locations that were meaningful for struggles over and for community space and greater social and environmental justice. For instance, among many other sites, we visited a mosque that had taken over the space of a former Chinese restaurant; a First Nations’ community house; a Kingston Road motel that serves as transitional shelter housing; the first Caribbean restaurant in Toronto; the end of the streetcar line that once connected Scarborough to old Toronto.

The sites were organized into a choice of a walking route or a public transit route. Green t-shirt clad participants were supplied with transit passes, digital cameras and journals to document the day. Each site was animated by a volunteer who supplied information, photos, activities and refreshments to encourage interactive education and entertainment. Along with the digital still cameras, two video cameras were sent out with teams of youth interested in
producing film footage of the event, which has since been edited into a DVD and distributed amongst community groups, schools, libraries and gallery showings. The event culminated in a celebratory dinner where all participants were rewarded with prizes and able to share the experiences of the day through their own and other groups’ stories and pictures (AP 2007).

The community hunt was about highlighting local social histories but was also about laying claims on meaningful spaces in the neighbourhood by traversing them and sharing stories and experiences. During the event the teams reflected on the experience among themselves, with volunteers, and with curious observers while bringing positive attention to the neighbourhood sites as well as their own active engagement with them. The DVD has received significant viewership across the city, helping to educate residents in other Toronto neighbourhoods (and elsewhere), and has even been called on by other communities who seek to use it as a model for projects in their area. This wide-spread laudatory reception of the event lead to an adapted shortened walk becoming the feature launch site for Toronto’s Jane’s Walks in May 2008, a series of walking tours intended to build on Jane Jacobs’ “grassroots approach to city-building, the walks help put people in touch with their environment and with each other, bridging social and geographic gaps and creating a space for cities to discover themselves”⁹. The Jane’s Walk 2008 emphasis on the inner suburbs was intended to showcase the vibrancy and diverse activity happening in the former suburbs, while bringing downtown residents out to experience the streets of the KGO communities. This headline walk also featured a visit from then Mayor David Miller who walked along with local youth that had volunteered as tour guides and used the

⁹ http://www.janeswalk.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=64
opportunity to explain to him the plight of taking the infrequent and crowded Lawrence 54A, the
only bus that continues east of Orton Park along Lawrence Avenue.

However, we did not want the Amazing Place to be a victim of its own success. There
was an ongoing concern that ‘bottom-up’ community development might unintentionally bolster
more nefarious revitalization projects, leading to gentrification (Micallef 2008, see comments).
The relative inaccessibility of Southeast Scarborough’s built form is likely to provide a safeguard
against Kingston-Galloway becoming the next hip postal code for trendy private development.
However, we still ran the risk that the politics of grassroots ownership and control could be
assimilated into the much more conservative and often tokenistic forms of City-led community
development (Parlette 2007). Similarly, large-scale spectacular events such as the community
hunt, while certainly providing a unique way of mobilizing large numbers of people residing in
all areas of the city, are not possible to sustain in the long term. Although participants of the tour
were thrilled with the results and anxious to see another event of this sort, perhaps with different
sites and a biking route, there was also an indication of a need for a more permanent and tangible
local resource.

Following the community hunt, ongoing meetings, gatherings, mapping and active
collaboration with other groups working for change in the community continued building toward
a politics of transformation. Further projects entailed teaming up with a local youth arts coalition
and training them to conduct interviews using digital recorders. We spent the summer of 2008
staging a story tent at the community festival market where the young researchers interviewed
fellow residents. In the process they shared and collected stories about inhabiting the community
while confronting the stigma and reflecting on what it means at a more personal level, or what
the community means to its inhabitants. This endeavour was linked to a wider desire to extend the Amazing Place into something both perpetual and more concrete.

Processes of participation were geared toward planning the future of, and making political demands for the neighbourhood but also in marking the collected stories in the landscape. This goal was framed around creating permanent installations at key sites of struggle for social space in the community. These could take on a variety of forms depending on how the resident-designers determined the best way to illustrate or capture what they wanted to express. Benches from the old Morningside Mall were acquired through Scarborough agency partners in order to be used as the canvas for these installations, as a means to encourage inhabitation and transversal between the sites (Amazing Place 2008). Initially four pilot locations were collectively selected through a series of deliberations and reflection on the walking tour. The importance of Scarborough’s indigenous populations would be marked by a bench installation at Ghesig House. Ghesig is run by Native Child and Family Services to provide holistic programs and supports for First Nation communities based on Medicine Wheel teachings. The centrality of Ghesig House was intended as a celebration of the role of indigenous peoples in (re)building strength, autonomy, and community in the face of ongoing colonial violence. Other sites to be activated by the benches included: the former Morningside Mall; the Kingston Road Motels, which provide shelter housing to homeless families (see paper 2); and an intersection that had been reclaimed by Residents Rising members through guerrilla gardening of daffodils. Collectively, these four sites enliven social histories of struggle and reclamation of space (Merrifield 1995; Pain 2004). While originating in the context of the walking tour, the intention and implications extend much further into the cultivation of neighbourhood pride and collective education in the first instance. But more importantly, in the processes driving Amazing Place
initiatives was a way for local people to insert their labour and love into community sites, aimed at creating an expanse of collectively defined social space in a community that had so little of it.

2.5 Transitions

At the same time that the Amazing Place appeared to be blossoming into a broad based collective, it was also subject to a series of significant changes in political context. Along with the struggles indicated earlier, there is another reason why 2005 was a watershed year. It was in 2005 that the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) introduced the Priority Neighbourhood strategy (PN). This strategy targets investment in social infrastructure and capacity building into thirteen neighbourhoods designated as priority due to high levels of need, sparse services, and perceived risk of crime—all of these neighbourhoods are located in the inner suburbs (SNTF 2005; see paper 3). By 2008, the Priority Neighbourhood strategy had caught up to the Amazing Place. Part of the UWGT’s strategy for the Priority Neighbourhoods was to launch an Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) site in each of the thirteen communities with the intention to facilitate resident engagement. KGO was the last of the thirteen communities to get an ANC site in late 2008. Indeed this was the year that this community in Southeast Scarborough became KGO. This branding of the neighbourhood was not without consequence. KGO defined more than the mere name of the community, it delineated community parameters both physically and socially (see paper 3). The PN designation of KGO outlined the community within a strict catchment area drawn on a map and instituted through service provision. According to PN policy, anyone residing outside of these borders was not part of the KGO community; this included myself as a member of Amazing Place and Planning Action who had a sense of affiliation with KGO but not the address to go with it.
KGO’s status as a priority neighbourhood took prominence within the realm of social programs and services. As a result, our own relationships with social agency partners began to shift. The ANC came along with financial resources and institutional structure that were not available from the Amazing Place; through the ANC, community organizing came to be structured through a new formalization of “resident engagement”. Scarborough agency partners were splintered between meetings to set up the new ANC relationship. At the same time, Planning Action itself was largely dormant and had been reduced to just two of us from the original six, due to time constraints and other commitments.

Although the Amazing Place did continue to fulfill project goals directed by community residents, we lost the regular participation from some of our key Scarborough partners. Through this period, Amazing Place meetings were shifted out of the ESS and into a new location that was difficult to reach by foot or transit and rarely used by residents. Major projects, like the bench installations lost momentum. The balance of energy among remaining Amazing Place members came mostly from myself and another non-resident academic-activist. At this point, the nature of our relationships with community members began to change and started to take on more of a research direction, as participatory planning needs were redirected through new governance structures. The relationships that had solidified over the years were still strong, yet the fluidity of our earlier Amazing Place process of organizing had been concretized by the PN framework that positioned us clearly on the outside of KGO. The nature of our relationships with social agency partners, who were navigating a new system of funding and relations through the PNs (Cowen and Parlette 2011), began to diverge from those with community residents, who still treated us as part of their ‘community of fate’. Despite personal closeness through years of solidarity action with residents, institutional boundaries that cast us as outsiders also effectively closed the gateway to accessing residents for collective action (see paper 3). As a result,
community workers and residents began to request our involvement in community-based research. We went from attempting to subdue or even erase our academic affiliations to bridging University-Community networks more deliberately.

The largest project that emerged from this shift in politics and relationships was a research process and report that I co-authored with Deborah Cowen (the other one of us two that remained in Scarborough from the original Planning Action group). Community partners requested that we conduct an analysis and evaluation of the PN strategy with a focus on social infrastructure. The statement and proposal for research were driven entirely by social agency partners in KGO, though authored by us. We worked with resident-researchers to conduct and translate focus groups and relied on our tacit knowledge of the community to inform analysis and in-depth interviews. The resulting evaluation was published in report form as well as a shorter version presented at a local forum to further enhance resonance and uptake with community members and social agency workers. While this project was in itself not an example of PAR in motion, it was born out of a PAR process and thus offered the privileges of both insider and outsider status. For example, our years of on-the-ground activism and camaraderie in the neighbourhood deepened our analysis and our relationships with community members (even if the networks through which we enter into and engage with any community itself poses limitations, see Cowen and Parlette 2011). Similarly, although PAR would ideally entail collaboration in the final evaluation and writing process, our status as ‘outsiders’ permitted us greater freedom and flexibility in probing sensitive and contentious issues without endangering individual community members, initiatives or relationships\(^{10}\).

\(^{10}\) This was not an automatic process but required ongoing dialogue, sharing of drafts, and feedback with community partners prior to releasing any report information publicly.
Despite this turn toward a more traditional form of community research, action still remained at the forefront of collaboration. For instance, I have worked on many community education projects with resident-activists, such as weekend workshops and group activities. Though these activities tend to be much more individualized and based on personal relationships. One community leader whom I have collaborated with extensively over the course of five years aspired to develop non-credit University courses in the community in partnership with the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC). I used University connections to secure meetings that we attended together so that she could outline her program plan. Now there is a partnership established between the UTSC and ESS specifically to increase connections between the school and the community while developing two-way learning and educational opportunities.

2.6 Asking the Hard Questions: Reflecting on the Academic-Activist role in PAR

In broad brush strokes I have outlined just one process where PAR has been employed to support community-driven social change. However, I have deliberately sidelined detail of the daily practices, negotiations and struggles that are endemic to the thousands of hours that accompany a project of this intensity and duration. The reason for this omission is that this paper is produced as part of my dissertation and intended as a tool for commenting on and informing academic practice with communities, as opposed to community work or PAR in general. In short, these are reflections on academic practice in and through PAR, hence I feel it is not productive to denote the minutiae of tensions inherent to community organizing. Rather I attempt to draw out some learnings to improve the ‘Action’ component of PAR by focusing on the two key questions that I posed earlier. My list is not at all exhaustive, merely a starting point for further action-research. I highlight a few of the innumerable answers that could be drawn by
these queries, which are derived from successes, limitations, and failings in the project outlined above.

How do we build and maintain effective relationships with communities that support residents as experts?

The first thing that ‘community’ based researchers must recognize is that communities are not naturally occurring and discreet entities but are always constructed (Cohen 1985; Hoggett 1997; Rose 1996; Suttles 1972). Most people identify with many, often overlapping communities even within particularized spaces. The PAR process itself creates a community around the action project, research, or whatever form the interactions take. This community, like any other, produces both inclusions and exclusions. The networks through which we enter and build a community enable and constrain the actions of ourselves, other participants and non-participants. If effaced, the privileges and connections that structure access and networks in the first place may further reinforce unequal relations of power. Part of our responsibility to acknowledge and take responsibility for our own privilege and positionality also necessitates confrontation of existing structures of dominance, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion within and across communities (Alyesson and Skoldberg 2000; Brock and McGee 2002; Merrifield 1995).

That I entered into action-research in Southeast Scarborough through partnership with social agencies, rather than directly with residents, enabled access to a particular subset of ‘community’ residents that were already active within the network of service and program providers. We sought to expand those networks through the Amazing Place, as a coalition of: academics, social agency staff, and residents, to create processes of openness and inclusivity. However, when in 2008, the boundaries of the community became increasingly concretized
around a more restrictive delineation of ‘KGO’, our PAR community also came to be determined and constrained by this social sector definition, rather than the residents whom we sought to work with and for.

Nevertheless, through the Amazing Place we strove to actively dismantle barriers for new groups and individuals to find a safe and accessible space and mode by which to connect with the broader project. This meant creating a space of openness and anti-oppression, providing supports such as: food at gatherings; timing that resonated with patterns of daily life; modalities of leadership beyond the meeting format or written documentation; outreach to populations that have faced chronic marginalization and may not self-elect to take part in a community initiative. At times this demanded the deployment of alternative spaces, as was largely the case with the First Nations’ community in KGO. Though aboriginal involvement was highly desired and welcomed by the Amazing Place group, due to histories of violence, mistrust, and ongoing colonialism, many First Nations community members do not feel comfortable in mainstream organizing spaces. While this may indicate the failure to create a singular, fully ‘inclusive’ space, it was clear to us that sometimes it is warranted to preserve multiple safe spaces. Though members from First Nations communities did not often attend the regular Amazing Place planning meetings they often attended and contributed their knowledges to larger events.

Recognition of the ongoing cleavages between mainstream and First Nations communities within KGO became central to our research process. We sought to mobilize our findings toward recommending interventions at community and policy levels in order to actively confront daily interactional racism and longstanding relations of colonialism.

Secondly, my conceptualization of community-driven advocates that the community’s vision for change, rather than a specific research agenda, drives the collaboration all the way
from motivations, to goals, structure, and action. Much of the PAR work emerging in the
literature starts as a research project initiated by an academic researcher. This, and other, forms
of community-based research can still be beneficial, action-oriented, and empowering but it is
essential to clarify who owns and benefits from the project (i.e. what is the balance between
academic gain and community-based change?) (Cancian 1993; Chatterton et al. 2007). This
question of ownership is especially complicated by the modes through which community is
constituted and by whom it is defined. In seeking to facilitate community-driven knowledge,
action, and ownership, we (the academics involved with Amazing Place) avoided taking such
direction. Yet as academic outsiders, we were initially dependent on social agency staff to
connect with residents and to provide organizing space, this limitation was never entirely
overcome even five years into the process. Our primary agency partner was one over which
many local residents feel a sense of ownership, and where staff were committed to democratic
resident-led practice. However, because the ESS provided both our organizing space and contact
mechanisms, our ‘community’ was largely constituted in and through the ESS. Early in our
coalition building as Amazing Place, this partnership with the ESS was a source of strength that
allowed us to access, learn from, and work with a wide range of local residents. Later, when
community organizing in KGO became more institutionalized and the boundaries of the
community more rigid, the ESS retracted from the Amazing Place. As a result, the coalition
slowly lost regular community-level participants and was maintained primarily by academics
whose position as ‘outsiders’ became encoded into structures of governance.

At the same time, academic PAR actors, or others who do not inhabit the community of
action, must be upfront about the time they have available to contribute and what we can give to
the relationship: are you building a time-bound project? Or seeking to develop a deeper, long-
term process? We need to be accountable to both stated and implied commitments to the
community. Regardless of how or where the process starts it is essential that our PAR processes value the skills of residents and community partners as well as academics in a way that maximizes what each can offer. Throughout the Amazing Place processes, residents were experts in KGO and therefore had greater power within the community, yet we realized that broader relations of power and University networks privileged us as academics. Sometimes this inequality could be used to our coalition’s advantage, such as through grant applications or connecting with ‘influential’ people and networks.

How do we deal with evolving internal and external politics as they shape PAR practice?

PAR is premised on social change, which is never an easy process and can lead to both positive and negative impacts. Unlike with traditional research projects, PAR does not enable ‘researchers’ to control timelines, inputs or outputs due to changing politics, participants and external forces. Constant reflexivity directed into a cycle of action and reflection toward improved process in and beyond the participating group is key to minimizing the risk of harmful effects, such as: exploitation of residents’ time and labour or creation of a disempowering process owned and controlled by academic or ‘professional’ participants. For academics, this requires the prioritization of community interests, not academic goals. This may be especially important in cases where a project is no longer needed or is outgrown by a community, which demands either a renegotiation of the academic’s role or exit from the community (even if personally or professionally hurtful).

The socio-political context within which we operate also weighs considerably upon partnerships and coalition building. The community that I entered into in 2006 was under-resourced and under-studied. The decline of Toronto’s inner suburbs was a trend that had started in the late 1970s and accelerated throughout the subsequent decades, paralleling policy-
supported gentrification of downtown neighbourhoods. By 2005 the impacts of policy neglect, deindustrialization, hostility toward suburbia, and retrenchment in social spending had converged in the production of marginalized zones of high poverty and under-resourced suburban neighbourhoods (Hulchanski 2007; Parlette and Cowen 2011; see paper 2). The suburban character of the landscape added further assault to the growing diversity of residents with low incomes, often from the global south, who struggled to navigate the pedestrian-hostile environment, widely spread services, and lack of public space. In response to these struggles, epitomized by the closure of the one source of community gathering space represented by the Morningside Mall, our coalition formed to mobilize action and knowledge to address the impacts and systemic roots of spatialized inequality. Residents were eager to organize and due to the relative lack of political and academic interest in the area, we had considerable freedom to develop local processes for change.

However, in 2005 the PN strategy was in the works. Its full-scale implementation in 2008 resulted in much different policy and social sector approaches to managing suburban decline and promoting ‘community’ change. The PN strategy introduced new lines of governance that effectually redefined what our community was, and who was part of it. Consequently, the quest to do community-driven work demanded renegotiation to avoid simply serving the interests of City Hall and social agencies. We sought to renew commitment to residents themselves, and working on their behalf, yet this tightrope was difficult to walk in practice due to the relationships we had formed with service providers and the tensions they too felt within the PN framework.

The mandated roles and responsibilities of institutional partners similarly plays out in PAR processes. For one, participants in any coalition are bound to range considerably in their
personal politics and prejudices, which itself can produce conflict. Collectively establishing a process for identifying and confronting racism, discrimination and other forms of harmful speech can help to pre-empt and respond to instances of occurrence. Academic reflexivity must also account for our relative freedom of public speech compared to workers in the third sector. Government imposed limitations on advocacy work performed by social agencies, as well as their reliance on increasingly limited and piecemeal funding, simultaneously limits how ‘radical’ or explicitly political third sector agencies can be. This context opposes that of academia where we are trained to be ruthlessly critical of the very same structures upon which our partners may depend for their lifelines. The result is that we may feel that we have to temper our politics in order to muck through the messy world of politics in-situ. Although, this may feel like a compromise, it in fact deepens the strength of our engagements and our analyses; it holds us accountable to our process and outcomes when we weigh potential impacts on sensitive community relationships in the approach we take to sharing findings.

2.7 Conclusion

I have used this paper as a tool to reflect on and evaluate my practices as an academic-activist researcher throughout a five year attempted community-driven PAR process. Neither this writing, nor PAR, have been easy processes. Throughout I have struggled to balance the duality between my academic and activist selves, despite that the principles of PAR offer that this methodology facilitates a harmonious unity of the two. I have argued that in actuality there are competing and often conflictual demands between academic work and community organizing. This is not a case of academia and theory versus community and action, rather the issue is categorically different motivations, forms, and evaluations of those things. There is no short-cut to the time-intensive nature of community-driven work and relationship building. This
kind of deep process takes years and is not particularly conducive to rapid production of academic publications, our primary form of evaluation in University settings. Although the sustained critique and reflexivity that we practice as academics is valuable for activist practice, academic publications are not an accessible forum through which to have those discussions with broader communities. While many community-based researchers have long fought to have community work incorporated meaningfully into tenure review and other forms of academic evaluation, the corporatization of Universities intensifies and academics face greater pressure to ‘produce’. Consequently, PAR projects conceived within this context run the risk of academic ownership, or at the least, a process driven more by research needs and priorities than those that are identified and defined by the community of practice.

I believe that a community-driven PAR must start with and maintain prioritization of community defined purposes for action and collaboration. This in turn may yield valuable knowledge production with practical utility beyond the academy, where residents and researchers outside of the University system determine what they want and need from an academic-community partnership. Documenting the story of Morningside Mall was my attempt to illuminate the initial motivations for our PAR practice in KGO, which was grounded in urgent and tangible struggles engaged by the community. From this, our ongoing cycles of research and action were rooted in community desires, goals, and modes of knowing. As the socio-political context in which we operated shifted, there was no longer a felt need for the Amazing Place in its original permutation. At this time our academic roles became more practically useful and we were called upon to perform research and foster University-Community connections. Over the course of a five year process, the struggles of the Amazing Place ‘movement’ paralleled those of the methodology. I have indicated through my evaluative, yet imperfect and by no means complete, learnings that there is much that we can do as academic-activists to foreground
community priorities and contribute productively to social change without ‘colonizing it’
(Blomley 1994). This does not eliminate the struggles we face in advancing the accommodation of community-driven work within an academic context but it does enrich our collaborative learning, action, and contributions to movements for social change.
3 Paper 2: On the Margins of Gentrification: The Production of Racialized Space in Suburban Scarborough’s Kingston Road Motels

“How did boring, white-bread Scarberia become Scarlem—a mess of street gangs, firebombings and stabbings? Portrait of Toronto’s unluckiest suburb” (Gilmour 2007).

3.1 Introduction

This startling question headlined a feature article in Toronto Life, an urban middle-class lifestyle magazine, entitled “The Scarborough Curse”. The article asserts that the once homogenous, white, Scarborough is now plagued by race riots, gangs and turf wars; this supposed surge in crime and violence is explained with reference to the growing population of ‘visible minorities’. Wrapped up in the ‘Scarlem’ moniker is a connotation of racialized poverty that has become a daily reality in Scarborough (Hulchanski 2007; Parlette and Cowen 2010). Much like the implicit contrast between New York’s Harlem and mid-town Manhattan, the distinction between downtown Toronto and Scarborough is unwritten, yet crucial to the growing gap between downtown wealth and peripheral poverty. The cursed suburb is depicted as a place of drabness and disorder, a proverbial scarred ‘other’ to the cozy comforts of downtown.

Beneath all of its inflammatory rhetoric this article portends a deeper question that has been plaguing Toronto for decades: how exactly did Toronto’s inner suburbs succumb to the state of ‘decline’ that has recently become a hot topic across the city? Another question that we need to ask of the very same process rarely surfaces in public discourse: how did diverse downtown Toronto become a sanitized zone for gentrification by the city’s white and professional classes?
How is racialized suburban poverty related to the increased whiteness and affluence in the downtown core?

In this paper I interrogate this last question. In what follows I investigate the processes through which spaces of privilege and spaces of degeneracy are produced through the co-production of gentrification and suburban decline. I explore the intersections of colonialism, racialization, and political-economy in structuring and maintaining ‘Canada’ as a white-settler nation of the Global North. I argue that these systems of oppression are embedded and naturalized through concretization in sub/urban space, which ensures their reproduction. I provide a case study of the implementation of a motel shelter system in the Scarborough suburb to demonstrate the modes through which privilege and degeneracy –centre and periphery—are re-spatialized through the production of racialized space to maintain dominant relations of power.

Toronto is just one of many large North American cities experiencing an escalation and racialization of poverty in its ‘inner’ or ‘postwar’ suburbs (Allard and Roth 2010; Lupi and Musterd 2006; Luci and Phillips 2000; Short et Al. 2007; Smith et.al. 2001). In Toronto, this relationship manifests in the growing polarization of race and income between the downtown core and the suburbs. In the last thirty years we have seen the incomes of wealthy neighbourhoods near subway lines in the core increase by 71%, while those in many neighbourhoods in the postwar suburbs have dropped by 34%. The racial division is even more stark, where the population in the gentrifying, wealthy neighbourhoods is 84% white; in the

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11 Although racialization applies to all races, I conceptualize it as a process of othering that is typically defined in opposition to white privilege. The assumption of white dominance permits the white race to forget their ‘raced’ existence as white becomes the body against which ‘others’ are defined as raced.
declining neighbourhoods (Hulchanski 2007), 64% of residents are classified as ‘visible minorities’ – a term that itself signals the naturalization of ‘white’ as the norm against which others are marked as ‘visibly’ different.

This racialized inequality is not merely a bi-product of Capitalism’s uneven development. From violent colonial settlement on indigenous territories to imperialism and global capitalism, race has been employed as a ‘natural’ marker to differentiate social status and perceived attributes. The construction of race has long served as a powerful ideological tool employed by white-European cultures to assert, impose, and maintain dominance over ‘subordinate’ populations (Baldwin et al. 2011; Dhamoon 2009; Dua and Robertson 2009; Green 1995; NARCC 2007; Wallis et al. 2009). Processes of racial differentiation and racism function in concert and sometimes tension with global and local systems of production and class exploitation to produce marginalized spaces where “place becomes race” in service of the dominant settler society (Razack 2002). Canada’s positioning as a country of the Global North, and Toronto as a ‘global city’, is dependent on a colonial and imperial past and present that is “coterminous with the formation of capitalism” (Kipfer and Goonewardena 2007). The subjugation, assertion of dominance, management, and control of the indigenous other within and colonial other without that was essential to European settlement and capitalist expansion is recast in the contemporary neoliberal colonial state. Tools of bureaucracy, administration and culture have largely subsumed the more explicitly violent means employed to contain the colonial others of the past. This past speaks directly to the present when we see Western-led institutions of global capitalism, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank dictate social policy and land use for countries of the Global South; when immigrants from formally de-colonized nations are treated as parasites when they enter the Global cities whose wealth and privilege derives from the labour and resource exploitation of their countries of origin; when a National
crisis is declared on aboriginal reserve lands due to unsanitary water supply, lack of housing, food and schools to which Canada’s government responds by appointing an accountant; when those deemed as ‘other’ are externalized within the nation to peripheral, devalued spaces (Baldwin et al.2011; Dhamoon 2009; Dua and Robertson 2009; Green 1995; NARCC 2007; Wallis et al. 2009). I explore these relations of spatial production (Lefebvre 1991) through a case study in Scarborough, Ontario, a borough within the inner suburbs of Toronto. My particular focus is on the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) neighbourhood in southeast Scarborough as one of six communities in Toronto with a poverty rate greater than fifty percent of the population (of which five are located in the inner suburbs) (UW 2004). Through my analysis, I probe the processes through which white privilege is reproduced and respatialized in conjunction with the reorganization of the city’s social and economic geography.

My analysis traces a series of events starting with the 1986 transformation of 14 motels along the neighbourhood’s major arterial, Kingston Road, into shelter housing for refugees, homeless families, and aboriginal peoples resettling in the city. This emergency measure was intended to be temporary but occurred during a period of federal and provincial budget slashing for social housing throughout the 1990s (Green 1999). During this first decade the motels housed more than 1000 individuals at any given time and drew attention to the rising levels of homelessness and immigration in Scarborough, while intensifying strain on services and schools in the surrounding area. Despite the controversial community responses to the motel shelter system that became prevalent in 1997, their use is still in practice more than a decade later.

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12 Please note that ‘Kingston-Galloway’ is a classification of the neighbourhood designated by the city and is not an identification agreed upon by residents. However, because there is no ‘one’ neighbourhood name that is unanimously referred to by local residents and because I am interested in policy and governance directed to this area of the city I will use this name as reflected in policy documents.
(though the number of rooms were cut in half in 2004). My interest is in the political struggles spurred by the crisis surrounding the motels, including NIMBY sentiments from adjacent middle class communities and racial violence directed toward residents of the motels (Brown 1999). These forms of both subtle and explicit racism may be counter-posed with evidence of more progressive coalition-building around the need for affordable housing solutions that secured better access to social services in the community. Yet despite some important advances, public policy and media discourse coupled with both inflammatory and charitable responses to the motel populations operated in tandem to reinforce white, middle class spatial and cultural dominance. I argue that this local case study highlights the processes through which white privilege is consolidated more broadly through failure to confront the ongoing violence of colonialism and racism embedded in the structures and institutions of the colonial state.

More specifically, I view the struggles surrounding the Kingston Road motels as a key event in the production of suburban decline, one that magnifies the long duree of socio-political-economic change in the landscape of Toronto’s inner suburbs. The City’s use of the motels as shelter housing can be seen as a spatial strategy that is suggestive of the major role of state involvement in the production of suburban decline through the simultaneous promotion of gentrification. The over-valuation of particular spaces and degradation of others can be explained only partially by tracing investment priorities and political-economic inequalities. A more fulsome analysis uncovers the ways in which racialization processes drive and emerge from these other structural configurations to maintain racial and spatial distinction and hierarchy. The Kingston Road motels tell a story that illuminates theses tensions between urban and suburban, race and colonialism, to de-mythologize the mechanisms by which white spatial dominance is re-produced.
Revisiting the story of suburban development offers much insight toward understanding suburban ‘decline’. More precisely, I suggest that the two moments and processes are sutured together through colonial politics. I begin probing this dynamic by first turning to current work on gentrification. Why is it that we are seeing an escalation of suburban poverty at the same moment that downtown regions are attracting new investment and revitalization? Why, when it is widely conceived that postwar suburbanization directly contributed to inner city deterioration, do we find such a dearth of work that helps us to understand suburban decline within the context of gentrification (for exception see Walks 2001; Walks and Maaranen 2008)?

Postwar suburbs were once seen as idyllic havens for white, middle class nuclear families, and city cores the reservoirs for new immigrant and poor populations. Today we are seeing an inversion of this dynamic which is most manifest in the high concentrations of racialized poverty in suburbs across North America –a trend emerging in direct correlation to the expanding wealth in the central cities (Allard and Roth 2010; Jarkowsky 2003; Short et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2001). While postwar suburban expansion is often held responsible for the ‘hollowing out’ of inner cities, the impacts of gentrification on the contemporary ‘hollowing’ of inner suburbs is seldom called into question. In the following section I attempt to tease out what existing work on gentrification can and cannot tell us about suburban decline. To fill in the gaps, I turn to the postwar period of suburbanization, followed by a discussion of the reform era in downtown Toronto which represents a pivotal moment in the re-territorializing of privilege from the 1970s onward. Set within this context of anti-suburban downtown revitalization, I turn to a case study of community and media responses to the Kingston Road motels in order to draw out and make visible the (re)production of dominant discourses and practices. My case study draws on material from 28 in-depth interviews conducted during 2010 with East Scarborough residents,
city staff, and social service workers. The archival component of my research includes policy documents and media articles from mainstream publications from 1960-2010.

3.2 Revitalizing Decline, Producing Racialized Space

A well-established scholarly account of the postwar North American city explains how “white flight” and the movement of capital from city to suburb led to a “hollowing out” of city centres after World War Two. Lured by the dream of a “bourgeois utopia” (Davis 1990: 170; Fishman 1987), homebuyers abandoned the inner city in pursuit of private single family homes, on well spaced lots free from the problems, and ‘problem people’, of urban life. Urban centres came to be seen as sites of vice, crime, danger and decay, a view that was substantiated through new shifts in living patterns and investment strategies. As the more affluent ‘consumers’ fled the inner cities, industry and businesses also moved outwards to capitalize on available land, as well as on the expanding suburban market. Devaluation of the inner city was exacerbated by the subsequent loss of manufacturing and low-skilled jobs for the remaining city residents, many of whom were recent immigrants or members of ethnically marginalized groups who were “redlined”\(^{13}\) out of the new suburban dream. The result, as commonly depicted in scholarly literature, was a process of segregation along racial and class lines, leading to social polarization and an intensified cycle of poverty and poverty related crime in the inner city (Beauregard 2006; Hannigan 2005; Orum and Chen 2003; Parker 2004; Walker & Lewis 2005).

A less commonly told story is what may be seen as a reverse trend that we are witnessing decades later in globally connected cities. This other process can be seen in the relationship between downtown revitalization and the disinvestment and subsequent decline in the post-war

\(^{13}\) This is a process practiced by financial institutions that refused to lend in certain neighbourhoods or to particular races.
suburbs. Since the 1970s, urban governments have embarked on a series of inner city revitalization projects aiming to attract affluent consumers and capital investment back into the downtown core. Where the urban core was earlier depicted as ‘blight’ and with many areas slated for demolition from the 1930s to 1970s, the new trend in urban management is toward downtown conservation and neighbourhood protection. Strategies such as waterfront redevelopment, downtown beautification, tax concessions to corporate investors, and solicitation of prestigious events, have been documented as major causal factors of gentrification in multiple cities with global aims such as: Toronto (Caulfield 1994; Bunce & Young 2004), Vancouver (Lowes 2002), London (Hamnett 2003), New York (Comella 2003), Seattle (Gibson 2004) and others (Atkinson & Bridge 2005; Shaw 2005). A central goal of ‘revitalization’ is to entice wealthy suburbanites back into the urban centres, often through investment in aesthetic landscapes of consumption in previously low income or ‘underdeveloped’ regions. The promotion of art, culture, and historical architecture typically function as magnets for an upwardly mobile ‘creative class’ of consumers who are drawn to the hip and trendy atmosphere. Ironically the lower income artists and bohemians often seen as the vanguards of gentrification are soon priced out of quickly upscaling communities (Caulfield 1994; Gibson 2004; Lowes 2002; Parker 2004; Zukin 1991).

As gentrification has become a global urban strategy celebrated by city boosters as the route to revitalization of city life (Burayidi 2001; Hackworth and Smith 2001; Smith 2005), many scholars have been quick to question the undesirable effects of gentrification (Gibson 2004; Hannigan 1998; Orum and Xianmeng 2003; Parker 2004; Short 2005; Smith 2005; Zukin 1991). While there has been much criticism surrounding the displacement of lower income city dwellers as a result of gentrification, there is a surprising paucity of literature that questions to where exactly the displaced people (as well as displaced ‘problems’) have relocated. At the same
time, isolation, urban sprawl, car dependency, homogeneity, and lack of public gathering space, have reduced the appeal of suburbia. In addition, the baby boomer demographic bulge that supported suburbanization through the 1960s and 1970s began to return to the city in the 1990s. The once seemingly utopic space, is now denounced as hazardous, and blamed for an array of social ills (Davis 1990; Fogelson 2005; Kuntsler 1993; Parker 2004; Putnam 2000). It is now clear that inner suburbs are no longer the homogenous middle and upper class utopias of the 1960s, if they ever matched these dominant imaginaries. Many older suburbs across North America are experiencing decline, or a ‘hollowing out’, exacerbated through deindustrialization, disinvestment, outmoded infrastructure and impoverished public resources (CSPC 1980; Fillion et. al 2000; Teaford 1997; UW 2005; Walks 2001).

The ‘hollowing’ impacts of disinvestment experienced by both the inner city in the postwar period and the suburbs more recently is not all that they have in common. The production of space is reliant upon and complicated by processes of racialization and racism as well as denial or erasure of these processes; this further perpetuates ripple effects of violence and unequal power relations that can be traced back to European colonization and imperialism. Joyce Green describes the process through which race was constructed as a tool for legitimizing and naturalizing white settler dominance during the colonial period and onward. Entangled with colonial practices, racial differentiation has infused the formation of all the structures, institutions, and ongoing practices that comprise and support the colonial state of Canada.

That is, racism becomes part of the structural base of the state, permeating the cultural life of the dominant society both by its exclusive narrative of dominant experience and mythology, and by its stereotypical rendering of the “Other” as peripheral and unidimensional.
Colonial land theft was legitimized by the construction of paradigms explaining Aboriginal social, political and cultural development as deficient (now, “different”) therefore making “them” incapable of holding sovereignty or land or of resisting the civilizing, modernizing impulse of colonial domination (Green 1995: 88).

Following Sherene Razack (2002), I seek to foreground interlocking systems of oppression, namely colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, also described by Burrowes et al. as a braid of oppression, where the social practices and processes of each mutually co-constitute the other (2007). For example, historically we can trace an obvious co-constitution of these strands in the settlement of North America and in the formation of the United States and Canada as Nations. European men vested with the political power and physical might to travel to the ‘new land’ sought to expand the British colony by dispossessing and eradicating indigenous populations (Blomley 2004; Green 1995; Peters 2001). Expansion of mercantilism and later capitalism relied on tactics of trickery, rape and dispossession, as well as historical erasure of these practices, to undergird the imagining of a nation. Persistent practices of colonialism confined aboriginal people to reserves on undesirable land administered by the crown, creating a forced dependency to the settler state. Meanwhile assimilation policies based on cultural arrogance of the need to ‘civilize’ indigenous peoples, included removing aboriginal children from their families to place them in Residential Schools where many suffered physical, psychological, cultural and sexual abuse at the hands of Christian missionaries (Alfred 2009; Green 1995; Lawrence 2002; Peters 2001).

Continued exertion and denial of colonial violence against indigenous populations both in and beyond Canada underpins the myth of the multicultural nation (Bannerji 2000; Wallis and Fleras 2009). Canada’s colonialism is also fundamentally linked to imperialism; the production
of the Global North has been created through exploitation, theft, and colonization of the Global South (Said 1979). The assumed European cultural superiority inherent to imperialism and global capitalism has constituted what Balibar describes as a global community based on whiteness, which grants the white race the privilege of mobility and de-racialization as they are able to ‘forget’ their origins (1991; Leistyna 2005). Subjugation of indigenous populations, along with preferred and restrictive immigration policies has contributed to this historical normalization of whiteness in Canada. Exclusion of immigrants from non-European nations helped establish Canada as a ‘great white nation’ (Peake and Ray 2001). Adoption of the Points System in the late-1960s removed explicit racism by basing entry criteria on skills, education and capital rather than country of origin. Similarly, formal de-colonization of many nations of the Global South facilitated new international flows between former colonies and imperial centres. This change in immigration policy was essential for fulfilling labour market needs and also because blatant racial discrimination was becoming unacceptable. Yet, upon arrival, Euro-Anglo education standards prevent recognition of credentials and skills, confining new immigrants from the global south to un- and underemployment (Arat-Koc 2009). The myth of multiculturalism subtly demarcates a boundary between white Canadians and all of those ‘other cultures’ now allowed into the Nation (Bannerji 2000).

The national mythology of Canada as a land of peaceful, enterprising settlers confines indigenous populations to the past (Jacobs 1996), while positioning the Euro-white settlers as the ‘native’ population. ‘Canada’ is defined as a Nation of European English and French while displacing its conflictual emergence and maintenance through ongoing colonial violence against First Nations people as well as dependence on labour, skills, and resources from the Global South. Multicultural discourse obscures political conflicts of race, class, and patriarchy by conflating the struggles of non-white populations into issues of culture and representation rather
than those of exploitation, colonialism, and imperialism. Kipfer and Goonewardena (2007) argue that this multicultural capitalism reifies cultural and ‘ethnic’ identities while denying “the historical reality of liberal-cosmopolitan imperialism (where tolerance of cultural diversity goes hand in hand with a denial of political-economic self-determination)”. Through ‘multiculturalism’, the colonial state depoliticizes the struggles of new immigrants from former colonies, making it easier to manage and ‘contain’ their presence in Canada (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2008; Bannerji 2000; Dhamoon 2009). In the process, indigenous struggles and colonial politics are further obscured, which serves to bolster the hegemony of the white, apparently non-racist, Canadian state. The relationship between indigenous populations and those of immigrants from the global south is complicated, fraught, and under-theorized in the literature. Consequent to colonial politics, the two (incredibly diverse) categories are often conflated yet in practice there is little solidarity action among them. While it is beyond the capacity of any one paper to resolve the tensions surrounding new migrations to settler states, my aim here is to contribute toward mapping the subtle reproduction of colonial practices while seeking to denaturalize white privilege.

The dominant visions of the settler populations shape and are born out of the spatial arrangement of the nation. Urbanization and suburbanization are processes that are indicative of how these inequitable relations of power are inscribed into material and symbolic space to reproduce white settler political-economic, cultural and spatial dominance. Indeed struggles over land have been ongoing in Scarborough since at least the early European settlement that would give the area its current name. Suburban development occurred on land that was never ceded by indigenous inhabitants. The Toronto Purchase of 1787, signed between three Mississauga Chiefs and a representative of the crown staked out land extending north from Old Fort Toronto; “it did not include the township of Scarborough” (Bonis 1968: 35). Even when a
comprehensive search was conducted in 1896, “no document explicitly describing a purchase of the Scarborough area could be found, either in the Dominion archives or the Department of Indian Affairs” (Bonis 1968: 35). Thus, without legitimate claim to the land, British settlement went ahead with assumed entitlement based on a desire to expedite union of territories lying east and west. The Williams Treaties of 1923 were intended to resolve the settlement of much of southern Ontario, including Scarborough, through crown negotiations with seven Ojibwa communities. However, the Mississauga of New Credit First Nation never signed the treaty and as a result “were not bound by its conditions; the 1991 planning study for the Rouge Valley Park noted that the ‘phase 1 area forms part of an existing land claim’ (Myrvold 1997: 27). The Mississaugas of New Credit were successful in challenging deceptive methods employed by the Crown to strike the Toronto Agreement in general; an agreement was reached in 2010 that settled claim over the territory between Etobicoke Creek in the west to Ashbridges Bay in the east (Adler 2010). As it stands, Scarborough territory remains outside of any existing agreement. The unsettled land upon which Scarborough sits underpins the formation of colonial space. How do these struggles over land, territory, and belonging infuse the production of contemporary sub/urban space?

3.3 Building the Bourgeois suburb

“The suburbs are middle class simply because the middle class lives there; the middle class lives there because the suburbs could be made middle class” (Walker 1981: 397)

Richard Walker’s statement above alludes to the processes by which the production of space materializes through the mutual constitution of symbolic imaginaries, inherited modes of production, and uses of space. There are few stories more powerful in the popular imaginary than that of the white, middle class nuclear family freeing themselves from the depravity of the
city to take residence on quiet family lots far removed from the city centre. Indeed this association between suburban landscapes and the white Bourgeois family has gained so much traction that Robert Fishman, a widely renowned scholar on suburban development, has understood this stereotype to be central to the definition of suburbia itself (1987). Although a growing body of work indicates that suburbs have in fact seen an incredible diversity in race and class both pre- and post-war (Kruse and Sugrue 2006; Wiese 2004), this classification is not without merit. It is useful to consider how this myth came to be and subsequently how it has been mobilized. In this section, I focus on Toronto but more specifically the Scarborough suburb after world war two. Although it has been documented that suburban forms of many types existed earlier (Harris 2004; Hayden 2009; Wiese 2004), I focus on the postwar suburbs. This is because it was during the period of their development, roughly between the 1940s and 1960s, that suburbanization became generalized and stereotyped in North America (due in large effect to the substantial State backing to mass corporate development and credit financing). Similarly, it was during this period that the now well known decline of the inner city took place, leaving a lasting impact on urban space and in popular conceptualizations of the “parasitic” form of suburban development (Beauregard 2006; Hannigan 2005; Harris 2004).

The postwar period was characterized in Western nations by Keynesian policies that supported the needs of the Fordist regime of mass production and consumption, required to stave off the crisis of accumulation left in the wake of the wartime boom and residual anxiety over the 1930s depression. This regime was marked by a “corporatist compromise” (Harvey 1990: 133) between capital, state, and labour. Corporations conceded to a degree of union power in exchange for enhanced worker productivity; workers in turn conceded to increased commodification of daily life and the alienating standardization of industrial work practices. In exchange for tax revenue, governments provided subsidies and policies in support of
industrialization on the one hand and on the other, committed to the provision of social services based on criteria of equality and universal need. During this period, political progressives had been able to utilize the institutional channels provided by the state to demand access to resources and the expansion of rights—such that the civil rights and women’s movements demanded the extension of political freedoms to previously excluded groups and individuals. Similarly the extension of ‘social rights’, led to widespread support for the ‘welfare state’ in western democracies. Government taxation and public spending on social services such as health, education, and unemployment insurance were naturalized as citizen rights to material necessities in order to participate in society (Faulks 2000; Harvey 1990; Goodwin and Pointer 2005).

However, the welfare state model was by no means perfect, stable or as universal as its core tenets suggest, but in fact was always plagued by contradictory practices (Cowen 2005). Many have argued that the assumption of modernist universalism ignores the race and class conflict involved in securing particular rights across socio-ethnic groups, gender, and geographies. For instance, Canada’s First Nation populations—whose lives and definition of ‘Indian’ status have been administered by the federal government through the Indian Act since 1876—were banned from engaging in cultural ceremonies, such as powwows and potlatches until 1951. An emerging aboriginal rights movement in the postwar period put pressure on the colonial state, eventually securing the right to vote without giving up (state-defined) Indian Status in 1960 (Alfred 2009; Comeau and Satin 1995; Tester et al. 1999). However, in 1951 the majority of First Nation peoples in Canada remained segregated on reserves, with only 6.7% of the population.

\[14\] However, these successes may have been limited by unquestioned privilege within movements that effectually excluded or marginalized people of colour from postwar organizing, in the women’s and labour movements for example (Brand 2009; Dua 2009; Leah 2009).

\[15\] Still, until 1985, indigenous women were forced to give up their status if they married a non-Indian man.
residing in cities (Newborn and Peters 2003). Indigenous populations remained ‘in place’, contained within the colonial imagination of nature and the past (Jacobs 1996). The colonial-welfare state was thus enabled to expropriate undeveloped land and city space to secure property and status for the ideal –white, middle class –citizen.

Meanwhile, those who were positioned as ‘outside’ of the national ideal suffered the impacts of the welfare state’s contradictory practices. This is particularly evident at the level of urban governance and policy-making. Although Keynesian governments were largely responsible for the building of large-scale public housing projects in the inner cities, the simultaneous promotion and support for mass suburbanization perpetuated a widely proclaimed ‘decline of the inner city’. This ‘decline’ gave rise to slum clearance ‘renewal’ policies that disproportionately impacted people of colour and the working classes (Checkoway 1980; Harris 2004; Walker 1981). Although couched in a rhetoric of providing decent housing for all (Murray 2003) the active federal and municipal support toward the encouragement of mass suburbanization largely benefitted middle class homeowners and corporate developers, while often deliberately excluding undesirable ‘others’ via redlining and exclusionary zoning. The promotion of suburban living and expansion of credit made available to veterans represented a spatial and social strategy that was intended to neutralize radical politics in support of a very particular racialized and gendered form of nation-building. In tandem with blatantly racist immigration policies that restricted access to immigrants from non-western European countries up until the late 1960s, the expansion of suburban housing ensured the spatial dominance of the ‘ideal’ white citizen –the male breadwinner of the nuclear family (Bloom 1991; Davis 1990; Harvey 1990; Hannigan 2005; Orum & Xianmeng 2005; Smith 2005; Walker and Leis 2005; Zukin 1991).
Prior to World War Two the areas that now comprise Toronto’s inner suburbs were primarily a collection of rural villages and First Nations’ communities. However, suburban development grew exponentially from 1941-1961, as the result of government incentives and cultural influences that promoted the suburbs as landscapes for the cultivation of social, as well as racial, distinction (Bourdieu 1977). During this period the population in the old city of Toronto remained relatively stagnant with a slow growth from 667,457 in 1941 to only 672,407 in 1961 (though declining from 1951 to 1961), while the surrounding suburban municipalities that would later become part of the Toronto ‘Megacity’ rose from 242,534 to 946,380. Of this growth, “82 percent of it, 577,036, occurred in the three outer municipalities of Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough” (Clark 1968:99). Scarborough itself expanded from 24,303 in 1941 to 217,286 in 1961 (Clark 1968), transforming the borough into “Canada’s fastest growing community” (Bonis 1968: 206). Businesses were soon to follow their affluent customers, along with manufacturing firms and recreational venues such as malls, drive-ins and sport facilities (Cohen 2000; Davis 1990; Hannigan 1998; Zukin 1991). Suburban residents and their car-centred lifestyles were able to support and work in such locations that were inaccessible to less affluent inner city dwellers who relied on public transit (a system which itself had been devalued through the pumping of government funds into road construction) (Hannigan 1998; Kunstler 1993).

Explicit racial exclusions were less common in Canada than in the United States, however these racial covenants explicitly banned people of colour from suburban neighbourhoods (Davis 1990; Harris 2004). Systemic exclusion, such as poor employment opportunities for recent immigrants, functioned subtly to keep visibly marginalized groups out of the suburbs. In the Toronto region, many suburbanites interviewed in 1951 reported leaving their city residences to get away from increasingly “international” neighbourhoods, which were
becoming “occupied by immigrants” (Clark 1968: 53). Indeed, the Scarborough suburb had a population that was 83 percent of British origin in 1951, compared to only 68.9 percent in the former City of Toronto (Clark 1968: 99). In 1957 the Guildwood Village community was developed along the Scarborough Bluffs south of Kingston Road, for the purpose of combining “quality homes with beautiful surroundings” (GVCA, n.d.). Bringing together postwar militarism and middle class suburbanization, the gates from the Stanley Barracks that once served Toronto’s Fort York were re-erected to mark the grand entrance to the Guildwood’s “Avenue of Homes”, which were well-spaced along shaded curvilinear streets. This idyllic neighbourhood was settled and is still primarily inhabited by citizens of British descent, who established The Guildwood Village Community Association (GVCA) in 1958. The GVCA continues to exert considerable influence over the politics and landscape of Southeast Scarborough and has been described by many observers as “very white and very affluent” (Interview 14, former youth program worker). While intended to build a sense of community, the GVCA is exclusive to those that own “real property” (GVCA) in Guildwood. Unsurprisingly, current members of the GVCA express the collective group interest in the protection of property values, “As a ratepayers group, is what we’re called, what we are doing is not just doing these community activities but really what our purpose ultimately is protecting the taxpayers and we’re protecting our property values, and these sorts of things” (Interview 16, GVCA president in 2010).

In 1958, Guildwood may have been typical to the booming inner suburbs, whose growth is often viewed in opposition to the demolition of downtown neighbourhoods in the inner city; a re-spatializing of privilege and degeneracy as downtown neighbourhoods that housed Toronto’s poor and racialized populations were described as ‘blighted’ and at risk of demolition. During the postwar decades, whole swaths of historic Toronto neighbourhoods were torn-down
This scorn toward inner cities in the wake of suburban expansion is a trend widely recognized in Canada, the US, and the UK (Atkinson & Bridge 2005; Cowen 2005; Gibson 2004; Hamnett 2003; Ley 2000; Shaw 2005; Walks 2001). Firstly, the loss of jobs resulting from the relocation of manufacturers and major businesses fuelled a cycle of poverty wherein lost incomes of residents further depressed the areas in which they lived. This simultaneous de-valuation and racialization of urban space appears successive yet operates in mutual constitution. A process occurred which Parker describes as “de-gentrification (or filtering) where an increasingly dilapidated housing stock is occupied by social classes and ethnic groups who, by their very presence, are likely to depress the prices of any remaining freehold properties yet further” (2004: 95). Starved of the tax base afforded through businesses and high-income residents, municipal governments slashed inner city budgets for the civil service and public subsidies. Subsequently, social services were clawed back at a critical historical point of intense need.

Figure 4: Scarborough 1954, Lawrence Avenue and Markham Road (Bonis 1968: 212)
3.4 Suburbs in Transition

Toward the late 1960s major changes began to take root that fuelled substantial transformations in urban governance and everyday life. By the end of the decade high-density, modernist style apartment buildings had become the dominant form of housing starts in Canada, making up more than 60% of new builds in Metro Toronto, including the inner suburbs (Rose 1974). An enormous proportion of inner suburban builds were social housing. Public housing units were built with such veracity at this time that by the early seventies, the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park Community (KGO) stretching along the north-side of Kingston Road towards Lawrence and Morningside Avenues achieved the distinction of having the largest concentration of public housing in Ontario. At this point in the community’s history, the future looked uncertain but there was evidence of projected transitions taking place that would reshape

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16 In 1964 federal housing policy expanded to include direct financing for public housing construction in joint funding with the province (Hulchanski 2006). This increased expansion of and support for public housing (albeit which still only accounted for 2% of Canada’s housing stock by its peak in the mid-1970s before the program was replaced) was often built on the back of ‘slum clearance’ to eradicate ‘blight’ and ‘contain’ poor populations.
the image and daily life of Southeast Scarborough. One particularly prescient account came from a middle class Guildwood resident who reflected on an encounter with a police officer in 1977:

‘You know that strip, Kingston Road and that Morningside area is going to become another Jane and Finch in another ten years, you wait and see’ and I, I had no idea, I lived in Highland Creek in this lovely suburban neighbourhood and I said why? ‘Well they just built all this housing and the kids are young right now, they’re all little children. But in ten years when they all become youth, you’re going to see a lot more activity happen’. And he was absolutely right, but I didn’t believe it at the time. (Interview 1, Guildwood Resident)

This exchange between a white officer and a white homeowner indicates much more than a mere ‘prediction’ of neighbourhood change. It points to deeply ingrained cultural assumptions about ‘the poor’ and stereotypes about their behavioural attributes that infuse everyday social relations, public policy, and police practices. This discourse conflates poverty and social housing with an inevitable rise in crime and pathology—a problem assumed to be endemic to populations with low-incomes. More insidiously, this private conversation that took place in the village-like affluence of Guildwood, marks the ‘Us’ and the ‘Them’ of the emerging spatial order of KGO. In this case, the officer ushered a clear warning to this resident, of the pending degeneracy that was ‘growing up’ adjacent to the Guildwood space of privilege; a degeneracy from which the ‘Us’ (white, middle class settlers) would require protection.

This moralistic prognosis, although not new, was widely internalized by the dominant culture and influenced institutional strategies to contain, manage and combat the ‘culture of poverty’ (Lewis 1959; Moynihan 1968). One former youth-worker described how he was hired
in the early 70s by the United Church of Canada to connect with youth in KGO during the evenings to “give them other options” in order to prevent break-ins:

the youth of Scarborough didn’t have very many programs that they could go to and, the other concern was of course, I’m just gonna put it this way, when they were really bored, and the poverty among them. I mean it really wasn’t understood at that point that Scarborough had the biggest component of public housing per capita in Toronto, people always thought of Regent. They thought of others but they never thought that Scarborough per capita had the biggest amount and all along Kingston Road and Morningside in particular….See that wasn’t very well understood in the 70s. (Interview 14, former youth program worker)

In that period, however, the population of Scarborough and KGO specifically was still largely white, yet in transition:

And this was back in the day when Toronto, the distinction of the demographics back then was, the east-end was white. This was before, this is actually during that time when the West Indian population exploded in Scarborough, so it was coming but again, this was 71, so it was still early days….at that point for me it was still mostly white youth…Back then the profiling was class. (Interview 14, former youth program worker)

At the same time, Sherene Razack has elucidated the convoluted ways through which ‘whites’ can also be racialized through failure to inhabit the normative values and lifestyles of the dominant culture (2002). This observation, of course, does not dismiss or de-emphasize the indelible discrimination and barriers faced by people of colour. However, pejoratives such as
‘white trash’ and the ‘underclass’ (Wray 2006) that degrade and dehumanize their objects also unite class struggle and racialization processes in producing, enforcing, and destabilizing socio-spatial hierarchies (Pulido 2006).

Nevertheless, 1967 brought a landmark rewriting of immigration policy that saw the relaxation of restrictions and the inception of the points system, which targeted highly educated and entrepreneurial migrants that could fulfill labour market needs (Satzewich 1992). Subsequently, the face of Canadian nationhood began to shift dramatically throughout the 1970s and onward, with Canada acquiring many new residents from the Global South. These changes are widely cited as evidence of Canada’s multiculturalism and pride in being a ‘country of immigrants’, a pronouncement that functions to obviate focus on indigenous struggles for sovereignty. Meanwhile, a superficial celebration of ethnic food and ‘diversity’ obfuscates the reality of persistent racism and marginalization inflicted on immigrants of colour (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005; Hackworth and Rekers 2005). The specific manifestations of racism are different across groups and particularly between indigenous peoples and new immigrants. However, the legacy of structural racism born out of white-settler effacement of colonial practices and international imperialism is continually reproduced through national institutions (education, healthcare, government, media, policing) that reflect and facilitate white dominance (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2008; Bannerji 2000; Nelson and Nelson 2004; Wallis and Fleras 2009).

The systemic racism that underlies the points system of immigration clearly serves the interests of the dominant Euro-Canadian population. Though the ‘colour-blind’ system is designed to attract skilled labour, once migrants arrive in Canada they find their credentials and experience are invalid. Immigrants are then streamed into jobs most Canadian-born workers
refuse to do because they are typically precarious, unsafe, unregulated and/or underpaid. Yet this dismal reality does not prevent opposition from Canadian-born workers who reject immigration for fear that newcomers will ‘steal jobs’; this exclusion from within is most sorely felt by non-European immigrants (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2008; Arat-Koc 2009; Arendt 1973). Labour market exclusion and discrimination exacerbates a wage differential that has been growing along with Canada’s level of diversity. In 2005 Statistics Canada reported that new immigrant men make only 63 cents on the dollar compared to Canadian born men, down from 85 cents in 1980. The figures for immigrant women are even more troubling at 56 cents on the dollar in 2005, also down from 85 cents more than two decades ago.

These discrepancies do not solely impact immigrants but are also faced by Canadian-born racialized workers who are overrepresented in low-wage, low-status jobs (despite high levels of education), contributing to a wage gap persistently between 20-30% below that of the white Canadian born worker (Galabuzi 2001; Block and Galabuzi 2011). These figures portray one of innumerable examples of systemic, as well as attitudinal racism, which imposes barriers and violence upon Canada’s ‘diverse’ populations. Exclusion and discrimination in labour, as well as housing markets, helps to explain why people of colour are twice as likely to live below the poverty line than whites (Galabuzi 2001: 16; Block and Galabuzi 2011). Subsequently, people of colour (regardless of country of origin) are often forced to live in low-income and often substandard, overcrowded, and deteriorating housing that typically exists in under-resourced and marginalized neighbourhoods. In Toronto these practices and effects of inequality are increasingly manifest in persistent racialization and segregation of poverty that was formerly located in the inner city but has since shifted outward to the inner suburbs. The colonial mind-set embedded into state institutions and informing everyday practices effectually determines who is placed where, and what kind of spaces are desirable.
3.5 City Reformulations

Throughout the 1970s, social housing and low-rent private high-rises opened the gateway to a more diverse class composition of Scarborough in general, but particularly in KGO. New immigrant populations began to settle in larger numbers, as did many psychiatric survivors as deinstitutionalization put a growing number of former patients out on the streets and in need of the subsidized housing that was heavily concentrated north of Kingston Road. However, as the socio-demographics of the neighbourhood dramatically transformed, based on substantial influence from federal and municipal policies, there was no corresponding set of measures to address the needs of the changing populations. In a community built literally around the private family in private auto-oriented space, there were few programs and services available locally to support the diversity of new residents. By 1979, a report entitled “Metro Suburbs in Transition” sounded the alarm of a pending crisis: Toronto’s inner suburbs were seeing dramatic growth in concentrated poverty coupled with severe underfunding and lack of infrastructure (Social Planning Council Toronto 1979).

This process of devaluation did not spring inevitably from any inherent qualities of the new demographics. Broader global economic shifts and changing attitudes toward sub/urban space collided with inherited white privilege and historical imaginaries. Serious critiques of suburbia began to mount in academic and left-wing discourses, which attacked the homogeneity, sprawl and mass consumption that typified the postwar suburban developments (Jacobs 1961; Mumford 1968; Sennett 1970). Economic crisis due to the 1973-5 oil shock caused many to question the sustainability of suburban growth. The local response in downtown Toronto, to both the ‘suburban’ and the global political-economic context was expressed in a politics of urban revitalization that respatialized inequality in the city while bolstering anti-suburbanism.
Certainly, cheaper housing and the availability of greenfield sites on the outskirts that could accommodate large construction projects, such as public housing, contributed to the increasing diversity of the inner suburbs. However, affordable or subsidized housing does not necessarily produce decline, stigma, and racialization of space; the production of suburban decline is closely entangled with the reproduction and respatialization of wealth, whiteness, and privilege in the city core (Hulchanski 2007). Resettling and reclaiming the urban landscape also became a new form of lifestyle distinction for would-be downtown residents (Bourdieu 1977; Caulfield 1994; Slater 2005).

The razing of downtown neighbourhoods under slum clearance and ‘renewal’ policies stipulated by the 1944 and 1954 National Housing Acts (Rose 1980), spurned a movement of downtown reformers who opposed modernist city planning and suburbanization as processes that were seen to be destroying the city. Much of the success of the Toronto ‘reform movement’ has been credited to revered urban commentator and planning critic, Jane Jacobs, who moved from New York to Toronto in 1969 and whose neighbourhood approach to planning has influenced the city ever since. Jacobs and her crew of supporters were instrumental in halting the construction of the proposed Spadina expressway that would have cut through the Annex neighbourhood. They were motivated, in part, by an assumption that major expressways had been responsible for the hollowing out of North American cities. City-wide, reformers crusaded against high-rises, highway construction, demolitions, and the ravages of car culture, leading to a movement for downtown neighbourhood preservation (Caulfield 1994; Kaplan 1982).

This reorientation of city politics was solidified in 1972 when a pro-neighbourhood Mayor, David Crombie, was elected and urban reform became the dominant vision of city council (Caulfield 1994; Kaplan 1982). Coupled with changes to the National Housing Act in
1964 and 1973, the term ‘urban renewal’ was redefined from demolition to mean rehabilitation and revitalization of downtown buildings and neighbourhoods. This designation not only saved some of Toronto’s neighbourhoods that were slated for tear-down, such as Donvale east of downtown (which is now deemed ‘fully gentrified’ and renamed as Cabbagetown), but it also marked a distinct and dramatic shift in the way planners, residents, politicians, and businesses conceived of the city (Caulfield 1994; Walks and Maaranen 2008). During this period, gentrification took prominence as the dominant strategy for city revival.

Much of the critique surrounding downtown demolitions, car culture, and the subsidization of suburban home ownership came from a left liberalism; most of the members of this movement were white, middle class professionals with a nascent interest in protecting property values. Couched in the reform movement to save the city was an explicit attack on the suburban way of life. Suburbia and its suffocating homogeneity and consumerist values represented the threat against which downtowners rallied. This motive was well-recognized by Scarborough residents, as encapsulated by Toronto Star reporter Barbara Moon in 1983, “Thus: when Annex residents were fighting the developers a year or so back, one of them told a friend of mine their collective steam came mainly from fear that the extra housing would be an invitation to ‘people from places like Scarborough, with their tiny suburban values’” (CL 1).

As federal funding for suburban expansion dried up and middle class residents began to resettle in the city, gentrification of devalued land in the core became a way to ‘invest’ in housing while distinguishing one’s self and family from the cultural pathology of the suburbs. Although the suburban threat that loomed in the downtowners minds was closer to the stereotypical, homogenous, and exclusive Bourgeois utopia than the reality of inner suburbs with out-moded infrastructure for their increasingly diverse populations; this oppositional positioning
valorized the core by directly attacking the suburbs and those who ‘choose’ to live there. Indeed, Caulfield has gone so far as to celebrate this white middle-class re-appropriation of city-spaces as a “critical social practice” (1994). Caulfield’s assertion suggests that these gentrifiers possess entitlement to lay claims on the social and physical space of the city. In the process, this oblivious enactment of privilege has obscured and contributed to the intensification of inequality between degraded suburban neighbourhoods and the vanguards of gentrification.

The obsolescence of suburban form and the cultivation of self and lifestyle through gentrification collided with political-economic factors and racial differentiation to forge a deep symbolic dissonance between downtown and the suburbs. Scarborough in particular has long been cast as the ‘other’ to Toronto. Newspaper columnist, Barbara Moon articulates how this played out in popular narratives as early as the 1980s:

In the contemporary city, a Torontonian would rather be dead than redneck.

But to be savored, a Torontonian's superior urbanity requires a contrast, a wrong-headed, boring, inferior and faintly ridiculous collectivity, preferably in reasonable proximity, that can stand for all he disavows. This is Scarborough's special, crucial function.

...So be it. In a modern capitalist society, somebody has to read the Harlequins, wear the singlets, buy the aluminum flamingos, use the Hamburger Helper. Somebody has to dress in polyester and enter supermarket contests. Somebody has to settle for whatever housing is affordable. Somebody has to be the proletariat. And if Toronto needs so badly to believe it's us, why not? (Moon 1983: C1)

This growing sub/urban distinction was firmly entrenched by the 1980s, when the trend to municipally managed gentrification took prominence, as part of a global urban strategy to attract
business investment and high-income earners (Slater 2004; Slater 2005). By this time, Toronto had solidified its status as Canada’s centre of high finance wherein the downtown attracted highly educated professional FIRE\(^{17}\) workers while the de-industrializing suburbs absorbed the underemployed working classes who were forced to seek low status jobs at the far less lucrative end of the service sector. In 1980, the Toronto core elected pro-development Mayor, Art Eggleton, who served until 1991 while pushing an Olympic bid and contributing city-funds to the construction of a downtown convention centre, office buildings and a major stadium, the Toronto Skydome. At the same time, provincial passage of legislation to permit zoning for condominium ownership in the mid-1970s exacerbated a growing crises of housing in-affordability. The condo boom virtually eliminated new construction of rental buildings, since they were less profitable and now had to compete for zoned sites (Hulchanski 2006: 227). Hulchanski defines these trends as “homeless-making processes” that became part of “Canada’s housing and social-welfare systems” (Hulchanski 2006: 226). It was during this decade that homelessness became widespread and visible in Toronto and other major Western cities. Political-economic shifts toward neo-liberal retrenchment in social spending further bolstered gentrification and property investment as solutions to economic crises and tactics for attaining world city status. How do the policies and politics supporting downtown gentrification with aggressive force since the 1970s, operate in tandem with the alarming escalation of suburban and racialized poverty? The Kingston Road motels signal a moment that demonstrates the modes through which racialization and political-economic processes interact in (re)producing marginalized spaces and populations.

\(^{17}\) FIRE: finance, investment, real-estate, entrepreneurs
3.6 Motel Stories

By the late 1980s, the alignment of anti-suburban politics and broader political-economic shifts laid the foundation for the motel shelter system along Kingston Road. Shifting Toronto’s housing crisis outwards became both a symptom and a catalyst to the production of degeneracy in Southeast Scarborough. In the context of economic recession and the swelling housing and subsequent homelessness crisis that was threatening the strategy of gentrification in downtown Toronto, the use of suburban motels as shelters functioned to contain and shift the crisis away from the core. While this strategy may appear as an innocent or natural spatial practice of relocating the city’s poor to the periphery where space is cheap and available, it also represents a re-spatialization of inequality in the city, one that enacts and perpetuates processes of racialization and decline.

The Kingston Road motels were instituted as part of Metropolitan Toronto’s shelter system in 1986 as an effort to meet the growing needs of Toronto’s homeless populations. By the mid-90s there were fourteen motels in operation as shelters. On any given night during this period, the motels housed up to 1300 people (Green 1999), and comprised up to half of Toronto’s total emergency family housing capacity (City of Toronto 1999). Although the city’s contracting of motels along Kingston Road was intended to be a temporary response to the dramatic rise in demand for family shelter during the 1980s, the cessation of federal housing funding and cut-backs to social services intensified the need for the program’s expansion. Meanwhile, continued policy and media disparagement of the motel sites contributed to the devaluation of the neighbourhood. By 1997, many were proclaiming that the motels had effectively become “permanent shelters” (Philp 1997: A3). It was not until 1998 and 1999, thirteen years after the program’s inception that the city undertook an extensive review of the use
of the motels, prompted by complaints from the nearby middle class white communities.

Surmising a year-long investigation, the committee concluded that the concentration of shelter housing along the motel strip “was not sustainable” (City of Toronto 1999: 4).

Beyond the official documentation, the Kingston Road motels have a storied history. The motels represent a process through which the depreciation of the KGO community is both encapsulated and propagated. The degraded land value upon which the motels are sited is used as an alibi in official policies and spatial practices to justify the concentration of ‘less desirable’ land-uses. Here, economic value is able to mask cultural disparagement to naturalize the material and symbolic segregation of poverty, while stigmatizing inhabitants of the space. Devalorization of inner suburban properties further discouraged investment and infrastructural upkeep, leading to a self-fulfilling spiral of both physical and symbolic decay (Hannigan 2005; Orum & Xianmeng 2005; Parker 2004).

The motels have become sites of lore in the mainstream media where they are often depicted as the degenerate other, the foil to the dominant value system of Canada or Toronto. The motels, and by extension, Kingston Road are depicted as the harbours of pathological behaviours and anti-urbanism. Over the period from 1980-2010\(^{18}\), 68 articles in Canada’s National newspapers directly referenced the motels. Out of these 68, 20 used the motels as a vehicle to discuss shelter strain and homelessness in Toronto; 14 pertained to murder committed at or in relation to the motels; eight chronicle the ‘face’ of poverty in Toronto; six document hate crime against motel residents; four articles discuss Toronto planning processes to “reurbanize”

\(^{18}\) This period was chosen in order to encompass the six years leading up to the implementation of the motel shelter system, inclusive through to the completion of this research. Articles were located through the Canadian Newstand database with a search for ‘Kingston Road motels’ in each of Canada’s major daily newspapers.
Scarborough’s “impoverished public realm” (Kuitenbrouwer 2002: TO1); four refer to other crimes committed at the motels; three indicate amenities in the Scarborough area; three directly reflect on (and two contribute to) Scarborough’s negative image; three articles pertain primarily to prostitution in the motels; one discusses real-estate; one speculates on local elections and one weighs the value of replacing welfare with workfare.

Articles speculating on urban planning and real-estate are particularly illuminating due to the way that they implicitly position downtown Toronto as the ideal against which Kingston Road fails. Indeed all of the inner suburbs in Toronto are painted with a similar anti-urban brush, while the city’s former Chief Planner, Paul Bedford, is positioned as a sort of urban missionary tasked with transforming these regions. In a 2002 discussion of proposals for the area under the Toronto Official Plan, Kingston Road is thus described:

as one of the toughest ‘redevelopment’ challenges in the city. They want to turn it from a ‘blight into a pedestrian-friendly destination’… This is inspiring stuff.

Bedford is taking a crusade to the former suburbs of North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke: The gospel of the end of car culture (Kuitenbrouwer 2002: NP TO1).

Despite that the plans to ‘reurbanize’ Kingston Road called for the demolition of a vital community space for local residents (Parlette and Cowen 2011), only business owners were consulted to provide community voices on new developments:

‘Get rid of the hookers. Kingston Road’s famous for a $20 blow job.’

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19 The inner suburban boroughs (Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough) are often referred to as the former suburbs of Toronto as they were amalgamated with central Toronto in 1998.
It’s not famous for much else. Nothing here but dismal strip malls with peeling paint, littered with trash; motels that are homes for refugees, put up on the Queen’s nickel; traffic that never stops” (Kuitenbrouwer 2002: TO1).

The theme of Kingston Road as an uninhabitable divider runs steadily throughout popular discourse but is most blatant in a real-estate feature for a home in the Guildwood community:

If you're thinking of buying an acre or two of woodland and a spacious home in Scarborough's most prestigious area, your enthusiasm has to survive the drive along Kingston Road. With its rundown motels populated by homeless families, body-shop and gas-station forecourts and squalid strip plazas, the gateway to the Scarborough Bluffs neighbourhood "is no box of chocolates," acknowledges real estate agent Kimberley Leggat…’I have to blindfold them to get them here’ she jokes, ‘but when they get here they're hooked. It's a thoroughly country setting within Toronto’ (Gadd 2007).

In KGO, the motels serve as a barrier, dividing the community in two between the affluence of Guildwood and the poverty located north of Kingston Road in the large swaths of public housing and low-rent high-rises:

Anything sort of south of Kingston Road is quite well-off individuals, established neighbourhoods, families that have lived in the same home for thirty years, their children have grown up often return to that community. And then sort of north of Kingston Road is a collage of apartment buildings, high-rise apartment buildings. They might have a mixture of subsidized units within them or they’d all be rent-g geared-to-income units. (Interview 5, social service staff, Family Residence)
It’s the same in Morningside and Kingston. You have a really well-to-do area who have had all sorts of objections to the locations of the motels and wanted those people taken out of there and then you’ve got the poor who live in public housing.

(Interview 13, City of Toronto staff)

As transitional housing, the motels function as a liminal space for the residents who “would end up in a motel but not really have a home” (Interview 26, Guildwood resident). Residents are caught in-between and “out of place”; belonging neither to the space or imaginary of Guildwood nor to the public housing complexes (Cresswell 1996). Motel residents are cast into a period of waiting (for housing, refugee status, work permits), yet derided for their perpetual transiency and failure to put down roots.

Simply inhabiting this space is conceived by the dominant culture as an act of transgression (Razack 2002), where causes of motel residency, such as: domestic abuse, global disaster, job loss or illness, serve as alibis that legitimize exclusion. At the same time, the motels became the stand-in for neighbourhood poverty, which melds onto the community north of Kingston Road. In this sense the motels become a boundary between white and racialized space in KGO. The residents north of Kingston Road are primarily first generation immigrants from the Global South, many live ‘tripled up’ in deteriorating apartment buildings designed for young singles in the 1960s. Also residing along the same stretch but divided by a bridge (and social barriers between mainstream and aboriginal communities), is a significant community of First Nations and Metis that have resettled in Scarborough. Along with residents in the motels, these populations share transportation barriers to access work or services that are not available in local proximity, a hostile physical landscape for pedestrians (since they cannot afford the mobility offered by private transportation), and the stigmatization that they encounter by virtue of where
they live. One social worker in the neighbourhood notes how this reality aggravates the process of assisting residents to improve their situation, “Sometimes we caution families not to reveal where they’re staying because of stigma… Discrimination exists, don’t kid yourself” (Interview 5, social service staff).

This stigmatization does not merely drive media coverage but it also affects job opportunities, apartment applications, policy decisions and everyday practices, while compounding symbolic and material exclusion. In the process, ‘culture of poverty’ assumptions are reinforced, such as those expressed in an article drawing on poverty research conducted by UWGT in 2001, “You’re poor and you live in a neighbourhood where everybody around you is poor,’ she says. ‘It’s logical that that would make it worse…You lack positive role models, there is despair all around you” (Anne Golden, past president of UWGT quoted in Carey 2001: B01). These sympathetic statements, when based upon judgment of poor communities as less capable or inferior, can feed into more damaging perpetuation of stereotypes as expressed by a school principal in the same article: “My fear is, if there’s not more money pumped into Toronto’s inner suburbs…there’s going to be deterioration to the point where the middle class leaves,’ he says. ‘And as soon as the middle class goes, we’re going to have ghettos’ (quoted in Carey 2001: B01). Sentiments such as these connote that poverty is a behavioural deficiency and contagion that must be combated by middle class norms and containment (see paper 3). The term ghettos immediately signals racialized neighbourhoods based on its technical definition as areas that are highly concentrated with people of one race or ethnic background. While a ghetto in this sense of the term may be poor, this is not necessarily the case; by this definition predominantly white neighbourhoods, such as Toronto’s Rosedale (regardless of wealth), could be classified as ghettos (Walks and Bourne 2006). However, common parlance typically refers to a ghetto as any very poor area and is usually associated with crime, depravity, and social exclusion. These
characterizations are part of an othering process that conflates race and ‘under’class. This ‘ghetto’ characterization suggests two challenges to the dominant settler population, the first is to erect and maintain boundaries that distinguish between ‘our space’ and ‘their space’, while simultaneously ‘uplifting’ the behaviour of the underclass through ‘superior’ cultural proclivities (Dua and Robertson 2009; hooks 1992).

3.7 In and Out of place in Kingston/Galloway Orton Park

The introduction of the motels as family shelters has been described as “quite a shock” (Interview 26, Guildwood resident) to many of the residents living in the adjacent Guildwood community. The shelter system “came fast and furious” (Interview 6, former member of the Scarborough Homelessness Committee), without any consultation or notification from the City of Toronto. It was not until the people residing in the motels became visible that residents in the surrounding area took notice:

By the late 80s, early 90s we started to see an influx of refugees and I can remember driving along Kingston Road and seeing all these faces of sort of fearful families not knowing what to do…this is almost like a third world nation now.

…it really did impact the community, because what was once a tourist strip –it wasn’t a healthy tourist strip, because otherwise they wouldn’t have been able to get the motels – but to see so many people of need, so visibly, I think that’s what really changed the landscape. (Interview 1, Guildwood resident and community organizer)

Although this statement was intended as an expression of sympathy and concern, it nevertheless maintains a social boundary through the reference to the ‘third world’ inhabited by motel residents that stands in contrast to the first world with which the speaker is familiar. This
exchange also draws attention to the already detectable process of decline represented by the ‘unhealthy’ motel strip, but also the impacts of Toronto’s covert gentrification policy to shift the city’s housing crisis out of the core, “perhaps it was because they felt that it was far enough from the downtown area that it wouldn’t be a problem” (Interview 1, Guildwood resident and community organizer).

Yet despite the availability and affordability of the motels, there was little else in the community to support the new diversity of needs of people who are faced with precarious housing. “I don’t think they put thought into what would be there to support them, they thought of ‘where can we house these people?’… To me they just plunked them out in the wilderness, so it wasn’t fair” (Interview 1, Guildwood resident and community organizer). In the wake of massive construction of high-density private and public housing, the community was already severely under-resourced; this was a problem that the motels magnified. The deteriorating suburban infrastructure, with high-traffic multi-lane roads, few gathering spaces, and huge distances between buildings made the landscape particularly dangerous and onerous to cross. Combined with expensive and unreliable public transit options to access employment or services outside of the community, the urban ‘poor’ was effectively confined to the Kingston Road corridor.

### 3.8 Challenging the Borders of Colonial Space

At the same time, and along the same Kingston Road stretch, another struggle over urban space was taking place that posed a direct challenge to the boundaries of white colonial space. In 1986, as many aboriginal people were resettling from reserves to urban areas, a group of Metis and First Nations’ sought to build native non-profit housing on the strip. The plan was initially rejected by the federal government but eventually secured funding support from the Canadian
Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Originally, the housing complex was designed as high-rise structures to maximize units to land. However, because high-rise developments required community consultation, the permit was refused by the city after the settler community staunchly opposed construction. A First Nations resident of the neighbourhood summed up the middle class white sentiment at the time as, “god forbid more public housing come in, and that it be native…[there’s] an assumption that all native groups are crooks” (Interview 28). Plans were redesigned to fit the requirements for a “private enterprise permit”, which ultimately resulted in construction of the Gabriel Dumont non-profit housing complex in its current form as rows of townhouses. While successful in securing a small parcel of housing for aboriginal populations, this struggle marked an ironic refusal to concede space to original inhabitants of land and ensured ongoing dependence on the colonial state, “the feds set us up to fail” (Interview 27, Scarborough First Nations resident).

Though daily operations of Gabriel Dumont are managed by the aboriginal community, the housing is owned and administered by the government. Initially beholden to the federal state, after amalgamation in 1998, responsibility was downloaded to the municipal government. This occurred despite the fact that Scarborough’s indigenous community took a stand against amalgamation and refused to sign the operating agreement with the city. Though still formally federally administered, housing management is forced to answer to the city, lest they become a “project in difficulty” and are taken over by the municipality. Unlike mainstream public housing, First Nations’ non-profit housing is not entitled to run a surplus budget and have consequently self described their work as “twenty years behind mainstream” (Interview28, Scarborough First Nations resident).
Similarly, the low-rise structure “left a lot out” (Interview 28, Scarborough First Nations resident) and limited the number of housing units that could be made available. Staff feel constrained by the accountancy required by the city and are forced to evict community members struggling to make rent, even though most tend to return again the following month. As a result, Gabriel Dumont and the motels see tenants cycle back and forth between the two properties as they wait for, or are evicted from housing and require transitional shelter. Staff described this as a “spiral effect since the downloading…we haven’t failed yet. Are we going to win the war? No.” (Interview 28, Scarborough First Nations resident).

3.9 Arising Tensions

The burgeoning population in the motels throughout the 1990s connected local politics and policies in Toronto with a broader set of political-economic forces, linking Scarborough with an international politics of migration, the motels have the “largest impact during world events, migration” (Interview 5, social service staff). While the motels have certainly accommodated a large portion of Toronto’s reception of refugees, the over-capacity of the city’s shelter system was interconnected with broader neoliberal trends in governance and the global economy. Neoliberal globalization has necessitated flexible labour to adapt to the needs of mobile capital as well as reduced social spending that might ‘impede the free-hand of the market’. In Canada neo-liberal austerity measures crushed the foundations of the welfare state where financing for public housing and social services was slashed throughout the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time cash transfers from the federal to provincial government were reduced from an average range of 3.6-4.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product in the early 1980s, to 2.3-2.8 percent by 1996 (Hulchanski 2006: 231). Similarly, federal downloading of social housing to the provinces
ultimately resulted in the provincial downloading of housing and other public services onto municipalities under the Mike Harris ‘common-sense’ revolution in the 1990s (Siegel 2004).

The most notable tension surrounding the Kingston Road motels occurred in the late-1990s; over the span of 1997 approximately 1500 refugees from the Czech Republic arrived in Toronto and were shuttled to the motels. Media reports claim that a television documentary had aired in Czech that depicted Canada as a “land of opportunity that welcomed refugees” (Brown 1999: B3). Upon arrival, the Roma people were terrorized by hate-crimes perpetrated against them by young neo-Nazis who, on August 26, 1997, surrounded the Lido motel with swastikas and signs brandished with, “Honk if you hate gypsies” (Shephard 1999: 1). While a few young men were charged for inciting hatred toward a recognizable group and were referred to as skinheads, these charges were later acquitted (Saunders 2000). The coverage of these events also perpetuated and legitimized racial scapegoating of the Roma population even while condemning more blatantly violent acts. When referring to the Roma people, all of the major Canadian dailies continued to employ the derogatory slur, ‘gypsies’, even after acknowledging its offensive connotation. More problematic, was that articles mobilized the connotative baggage attached to this term to evoke stereotypes that cast suspicion upon the Roma’s refugee claims:

From out of the blue, from a peaceful and civilized European culture, planeloads of people who many associate with horse-drawn caravans and crystal balls started landing at Toronto’s Pearson International Airport last summer claiming refugee status as a result of oppression…

Most arrived after seeing a short documentary titled Gypsies Go To Heaven on Czech television that promoted Canada as a refugee haven of generous welfare cheques and inexpensive housing…
For a while, it was like clockwork: From every Czech Airlines flight touching down at Pearson, a dozen or more Roma would emerge and, in broken English, seek refugee status. Immigration officials would scribble down –on pieces of paper that could be handed to taxi drivers –the addresses of homeless shelters along Toronto’s Kingston Road motel strip. Within weeks, the shelters reached capacity (the first time that had happened) and city officials began shuttling vanloads of people to motels in nearby towns (Philp 1998: D1, emphasis mine).

This form of documenting the hate-crimes was commonplace in the mainstream press and contributed to public backlash against Romany peoples. Roma refugees were depicted as tourists coming to Toronto to take advantage of the welfare state, rather than recognizing and assessing the level of violence and persecution that they have felt as the only minority population in the Czech Republic. Such articles shift the blame for Toronto’s shelter strain onto those that are most vulnerable to the effects of global marginalization and the local housing crisis. Hence, in the aftermath of these hate-crimes and subsequent coverage, a so-called “silent-majority” of Canadians criticized the Canadian government for allowing Romany families into the country. The Canadian state responded by “slamming the door” (Philp 1998: D1) on those arriving from the Czech Republic by enforcing Visa requirements.

The hate crimes committed against the Roma fed into a mass of articles that contributed to a watered-down localized racism by promoting hysteria around refugees and immigrants. Around the time of the Roma coverage the motels began to receive a lot of attention in the press and the community around the housing crisis and over-capacity of the shelter system. Articles with titles like: “New tide of refugee claimants swamping Toronto shelters” (Philp 2001: A8), “The hope and heartbreak of motel people: Refugee claimants jam Toronto's Kingston Road
strip” (Lindgren and Miller 1998: A8, emphasis mine) and “Soaring numbers tax Toronto's family shelters” (Sarick 1999: A14) written about the shelter strain enflamed xenophobic fears about immigrants and refugees free-loading off the Canadian taxpayers. These articles, which proclaim that the numbers of arrivals were ‘swarming’ shelters suggests that newcomers are ‘problems’ that Toronto has to manage, rather than people who are entitled to live in Canada and can contribute to society and the city. Subsequently, the over-emphasis on refugees deflects attention away from other populations taking refuge in the motels, notably, First Nations residents and single mothers, often as a result of domestic abuse or loss of their sole-income. By attaching a parasitic association to “motel people”, as many articles referred, through misrepresentation of refugee claimants; motel inhabitants were effectively lumped together as a racialized underclass. More broadly, this fear-mongering suggests that the problem with the over-crowding of families into tiny motel rooms, sometimes for periods up to a year (Interview 4, social program worker), is that the people are there. Resident impacts, including: lack of privacy; inability to cook or grocery shop for nutritious meals; do homework; family tension and psychological stress of extended precarious housing; labour-market discrimination and poverty are not construed as the main issues requiring attention and intervention.

3.10 Community Responses

Media coverage tapped into and distorted actual anxieties experienced by community members living in proximity to the motels:

It’s a process that has plunged the suburban Kingston Road neighbourhood of West Hill into near-crisis, as schools, health clinics and churches struggle to meet the unrelenting needs of the unrelenting stream of motel people (Lindgren and Miller 1998: A6, emphasis mine).
Undoubtedly, the large population of homeless families did present real challenges to the community, as well as to those living in the motels. The new demands placed on services, schools and programs required adaptation and response to crises. Meanwhile, the changing demographics represented by the motels also demanded a rethinking to what kind of place Scarborough was. More broadly, crises surrounding the motels challenged assumptions about who belonged in the suburbs and in Canada, as externalized internal and external ‘others’ impinged on colonial social and physical space. The crisis that surfaced as the primary issue was that of housing, yet the more fundamental and enduring crises of colonization and racialized marginalization that underlie Canadian mythology and spatial practices drove the shift in sub/urban (dis)investments, yet was never questioned or confronted.

The middle class community had mixed responses to the motels, which ranged from hostility to charitable sympathy. The commonality between the range of responses was that access and inclusion to the community, and the city or country, was largely determined by the benevolence or maliciousness of white privilege. Some members of the community have stated that “The silent majority probably didn’t want much to do with the motel residents, but then there were those with social consciences who did” (Interview 1, Guildwood resident). This resident was referring to a coalition of Anglo-Saxon faith groups, called the Caring Alliance that coalesced in 1997 in response to the lack of resources available to the families living in the motels. This group of members from twenty-eight different congregations in Scarborough, with support from public health and staff at the Family Residence site that manages the motel shelter system, undertook to provide outreach and visitation to people living in the motels. Caring Alliance members would visit with motel residents, take them to appointments and introduce them to services; they also started an advocacy committee to demand more adequate support for families in need (Interviews 7 and 19, Caring Alliance members).
The work of Caring Alliance was motivated by religious notions of morality to ‘take care of the poor’. Although benevolent, these actions were predicated on a dependency model that relied upon a social distance between the everyday world of the Alliance members and those upon whom they bestowed charity:

well the general membership of the Caring Alliance is people probably who live south of Kingston Road. So they are well-established in their church, their community, a little bit more likely to vote, than anybody else. I think when they do, when there is conflict it tends to be if they share the same institution, like a school for instance, or a community centre. In my example it would be the school. (Interview 6, former member of Scarborough Homelessness Committee)

This community worker continued to explain the challenges faced in the local schools that at the peak of motel usage may have seen up to a third of the student population coming from the motels. Children living in the motels often faced significant academic disruption, having to switch schools multiple times over the course of a year. This also meant that the turnover in the receiving schools was great, which made it difficult to assign the correct number of teachers per grade and to plan curriculum. As well, many of the children and youth that lived in the motels required additional supports that existing school staff were ill-equipped to provide (such as language training, tutoring, counselling).

Yet despite the barriers that these limitations posed for the education of students that were under-housed, the problems in the schools were framed as an issue to the surrounding community:
The parent would feel that the turnover in the class created learning challenges for their child. So they tended to be quite vocal, there was resentment and occasionally hostility and they felt that the children from the shelter should not be…Parents thought it was disruptive and drawing away from the resources that would go toward their children. (Interview 6, former member of Scarborough Homelessness Committee)

Though, not without irony, this white middle class vocal opposition did in fact contribute to some minor reforms that assisted the learning needs of students from transitional housing. Schools that received high numbers of children from the motels were able to obtain inner city funding, which allowed for a support worker and a special reception class, as well as English language training supports. Of course, the policy reforms and additional funding did not eradicate the problems (neither the tensions, nor the learning challenges) but they did help to ease transitions.

Similar contradictory relations also played out in the broader community. Along with Caring Alliance, the Scarborough Homelessness Committee formed in the late 1990s during the peak of the ‘shelter strain’ period. This group was primarily composed of social service workers who had united based on the shared recognition that Scarborough itself was underserviced and that any “new service should benefit the greater good” (Interview 6, former member of Scarborough Homelessness Committee) as opposed to individual agencies. This group was instrumental in bringing housing and homelessness issues to various levels of government through deputations and letter writing. Both the Caring Alliance and the Homelessness Committee took a stand in advocating for an expedited refugee review process and protested proposed restrictions on immigration in 1998 (Lindgren 1998: A11; Interviews 1, 5, 6, 7 and 19).
These coalitions were pivotal in bringing additional services and programs to the KGO community, which led to the foundation of the East Scarborough Storefront in 2000. As a hub organization of more than thirty agencies, the Storefront provides space for programming and local gathering that has brought much needed supports to a severely under-resourced community (Parlette and Cowen 2011).

The impacts of the Scarborough Homelessness Committee and Caring Alliance presented some progressive, albeit limited, wins. Their advocacy put homelessness and immigration issues on the municipal agenda, although they had difficulty scaling up to affect change at higher levels of government:

Those taskforce reports really helped people to realize that it wasn’t a downtown issue, that it was in the suburbs. Even when Mayor Lastman was running, I mean ‘I don’t have any homeless people in North York’\textsuperscript{20} so those sort of media goofs, you know, actually led to more awareness and then what you saw was a shift to, funding wasn’t just allocated to downtown. (Interview 5)

You can do so much locally but you’re beholden to the systems that exist and that’s the problem, is that we can only do so much at a local level and then we hit that ceiling and we can’t push beyond that. Or we can, but whether or not it’s effective. (Interview 6)

\textsuperscript{20}In Mel Lastman’s 1997 campaign to be the first-ever mayor of the amalgamated City of Toronto, he proclaimed that “there are no homeless people in North York”. The following day, newspapers were filled with reports of a homeless woman who froze to death in a North York gas station the day before he uttered the statement. Widespread critique and subsequent embarrassment led to Lastman striking a Homeless Advisory Committee after taking office in 1998 (CSPC 2004).
While these new social services brought remedial supports to the community, particularly for new immigrant populations, systems of racial hierarchy remained firmly entrenched. This was even after indigenous people in Scarborough formed a barricade across Kingston Road in solidarity with the Kahnawake Mohawk people of Oka Quebec during the summer of 1990\textsuperscript{21}. Despite the elevated national profile of indigenous land rights and struggles for sovereignty that the Oka crisis inspired, these issues were not addressed as municipal priorities, even as Scarborough’s own land claims remained unsettled.

3.11 Review on the Use of the Motels

Increased middle class community mobilization prompted the city’s review of the use of the motels. The investigation started in 1998 and culminated with a final report and recommendations in 1999 after a year of consultation with local residents, schools, and service providers. The outcome of the review was a series of recommendations: to build more permanent shelter sites on a fair-share basis across the city; to phase out the use of the Kingston Road motels over a five year period; and to implement compliance standards in the motels to ensure acceptable conditions for residents in the meantime (City of Toronto 1999). If the motel review was driven by concern over the quality of life for motel residents, one would expect that standards would have been initiated at the outset of the program in 1986. The very fact that it took fourteen years after the roll-out of the motel system for the city to adopt minimal standards to ensure an ‘adequate’ level of health, safety and sanitation for residents in the motels; is a clear indication that the review was not conducted with their needs in mind. Throughout the report, it is the voice of middle class white residents that are conspicuously driving the review and the

\footnote{The Oka crisis thrust indigenous land rights onto the National stage through a violent stand-off between the military and Mohawk people who barricaded access to their reserve in protest of development and demand for land rights (Papilllon 2008).}
adoption of policy. Despite acknowledging an anticipated ten percent growth in demand for shelter housing *per year* and that Toronto has been forced to contract motels outside of the city, the final report prioritizes the needs of the affluent:

From an operational and service delivery perspective it would make the most sense to phase-out the use of out of town motels prior to phasing out motels along Kingston Road. Given the long-standing concerns of local Councilors and residents in the Wards of Scarborough Bluffs and Scarborough Highland Creek, we do not believe this is an option at this time. The use of motels along Kingston Road will remain a priority for phase-out (City of Toronto 1999: 6).

Throughout the report, the white middle class community is unequivocal in their opposition to the motels, regardless of their occupants:

Some community members…made it clear that the motels themselves represent a visible sign of a community under stress. These individuals believe the motels, whether or not they are used as homeless shelter, are a negative impact on the community (City of Toronto 1999: 4).

Hence the motel review, much like the school policy reforms, was not conducted for the primary benefit of motel residents. Long-term impacts included the building of another permanent shelter in another area of Scarborough and reduction of the number of motel shelters overtime. As of 2012, the number of motels in operation as shelters range from three to five depending on level of demand. Although, some of the changes made may accrue some benefit to those most in need and directly affected, there was no sweeping systematic change as a result of the review. The limited focus on immediate NIMBYism and strain in the KGO community
precluded a more critical analysis of the underlying contributors to the housing inaffordability crisis.

3.12 Conclusion

Over the course of the past four decades we have witnessed dramatic changes in the composition of inner suburban and downtown neighbourhoods. Where inner suburbs, such as Scarborough, were once icons of white middle class domesticity, city cores were seen as deteriorating physically and morally. The co-dependence of suburb and city during the postwar period is well-established yet it is rare that scholars question the role of downtown gentrification in the production of suburban decline. This paper has explicitly probed the simultaneous production of racialized suburban poverty and the re-spatialization of wealth, whiteness, and privilege in the downtown core. I have argued that these two cycles of investment and decline are related, though not solely in terms of shifting political-economic priorities and decision-making. I have drawn on the relationship between urbanization and suburbanization to tease out the underlying relations of power that both emerge from and enable the perpetuation of racialization processes in (re)structuring inequalities in the colonial state.

The Kingston Road motels reveal an important set of stories that highlight the inherent spatiality of these abstract processes in suburban Toronto. Since inception as shelters in 1986, the Kingston Road motels have been subject to media disparagement and community hostility that has linked up with broader discourses around immigration and poverty. Over-capacity in the motels drew attention to peripheral poverty and homelessness as the shelters were thrust into housing debates in the late 1990s. The strain and lack of resources in KGO as a result of changing populations with new needs and challenges in adapting to an inhospitable environment generated wide-ranging reactions among residents in adjacent communities. Outright rejection
of motel residents was manifest in violent opposition in front of the shelters as well as in more subtle demands for immigration restrictions or removal of the motels. More sympathetic community mobilization resulted in coalitions advocating for increased social services and affordable housing. While advocates experienced some success and contributed to putting homelessness on the municipal agenda, the ‘win’ came in the form of new shelter sites and services rather than structural solutions to combat poverty or increase construction and accessibility of affordable rental housing. The response to suburban homelessness had a limited focus on impacts of extreme poverty without questioning broader forces of socio-economic change, nor the inverse end of polarization in the city represented by the gentrification of the downtown core.

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that progressive gains were limited because surface level changes continued to be driven by the overriding property interests of dominant settler populations, as structures that support ongoing colonialism remain unchallenged. Much like the white, middle class settlement of the inner suburbs after world war two, the current landscape of downtown gentrification elucidates the power accrued to those that already inhabit social spaces of privilege to remake physical space to their benefit. The process of creating these highly coveted spaces is dependent on the (re)production of racial and class hierarchies that maintain distinction between us and them, desirable and undesirable. Failure to confront the historical and ongoing roots of privilege means that a sole focus on ‘lack’ of privilege will continue to be misunderstood and naturalized leaving the myth of Canada as a non-racist ‘land of opportunity’ fully intact. Though this piece is not representative of all inner suburban neighbourhoods it is indicative of underlying processes of racialization and class discrimination that must be foregrounded if we are to destabilize and deterritorialize white privilege to in order to work toward more equitable production of space.
4 Paper 3: What’s the Priority? Toronto’s Targeted Social Investment and the Institutionalization of Community Organizing

4.1 Introduction

In 2004, the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) released a watershed report. *Poverty by Postal Code* (PBPC) announced the deepening concentration of racialized poverty, particularly in the inner suburbs, that had been underway for three decades. Since publication, the report has surfaced in the offices of city planners, academics, and social program staff, where it has been referred to as ‘gospel’ in service agency circles (Interview 21, social program worker). PBPC has assumed enormous influence in shaping city policy and research; most notably, it has been credited for motivating the Priority Neighbourhood (PN) Strategy in the City of Toronto (Interview B3, City of Toronto Staff; Interview B11, UWGT Staff). Collaboration between the City of Toronto and the UWGT, led to the genesis of this ‘place-based’, or ‘targeted’ approach to service provision to manage concentrated poverty in 2005. Targeted investment is organized through the identification of thirteen neighbourhoods with high-levels of poverty, a perceived risk of crime and a lack of social services. The PN strategy signals a dramatic reorientation in policy and governance toward not only high-poverty neighbourhoods, but also to the inner suburbs where each of the thirteen ‘at-risk’ neighbourhoods are located. I argue that the PN’s targeting of community organizing in poor, suburban communities represents a strategy of ‘containing’ the risks of impoverishment, rather than eliminating poverty itself. My analysis revolves around two seminal questions: How did inner suburban neighbourhoods shift from spaces of neglect and derision to ‘priority’? What are the impacts and implications of the PN approach to targeted funding for social infrastructure and community organizing?
While PBPC is perhaps the most widely read research to illuminate growing inequality in the inner suburbs, it was not the first to do so. In 1978 and 1979, a two-part report entitled *Metro Suburbs in Transition*, pointed to the emergence of the exact same trends that had continued to escalate by the time of PBPC’s publication. That no effective action was taken in 1978 is curious but arguably due to prioritization of downtown revitalization (Parlette 2007; Parlette and Cowen 2011; see paper 2). However, PBPC was released into a contrasting sub/urban context that prompted urgent action. The massive restructuring of Toronto parallels that of many other North American cities, which are seeing an inversion of the imagined divide between white, wealthy suburbs and socio-economically and ethnically diverse inner cities (Davis 1997; Lucy and Phillips 2000; Short et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2001).

While downtown gentrification may displace urban poverty from the core to the ‘inner’ periphery, it is not necessarily effective at ‘containing’ the ‘problems’ of poverty. Indeed growing unrest among impoverished, racialized youth in the suburbs of Paris has sparked fear across the Western world that the ‘riots’ of 2005 might be replicated closer to home (Body-Gendrot 2006; Siciliano 2010; Silverstein and Tetreault 2006). This threat loomed in Toronto’s rapidly polarizing landscape and took prominence during a perceived crisis of gun violence in 2005, dubbed “year of the gun”. For the first time it seemed that the problems stemming from poverty in the inner suburbs might be ‘seeping’ into the downtown core and threatening the normative values of the city’s largely white gentrifying classes (cf Siciliano 2010). The combined influences of concentrated poverty as outlined by PBPC and the fear of widespread dissent set the context in which the Priority Neighbourhood Strategy was announced in 2005. More broadly, we have seen a worldwide surge in targeted policy approaches to social service delivery, but particularly in Anglo-Western countries as part of an ongoing neoliberalization of governance at all scales from the global, to the urban and the self.
In this paper I examine the genesis and roll-out of this new approach to the governance of impoverished neighbourhoods and by extension ‘the poor’ themselves. Although arising in response to high levels of concentrated poverty, analysis of the PN strategy reveals that it fails to either target or alleviate the causes and effects of poverty. Rather, its emphasis on ‘community engagement’ targets the behaviour and values of ‘poor’ people. I argue that, by positing the solution to poverty within the realm of social capital, the strategy risks downloading responsibility and blame for poverty onto those that experience it. At the same time, intervention techniques operate through ‘communities’ to empower third-sector agencies to define the modus operandi of social change. Responsibilization through community organizing depoliticizes poverty, and ‘political’ organizing, which comes to be designed and enacted by social service agencies as ‘resident engagement’. This institutionalization and transformation of activism into volunteerism functions as social cost containment for the inherent failures of neoliberalism while further enabling broader forces of inequality to persist in deepening poverty and marginalization (Brodie 1996; Mayer 2003; Rose 1996).

I explore these arguments through a case study of the United Way’s Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) project as not merely a new source of funding but a key framework of governance. The ANC strategy is just one part of UWGT’s community development approach for the PNs and operates in all thirteen designated neighbourhoods. Although I will briefly overview broader components and founding principles of the strategy, I have chosen the ANC for extensive analysis because it is explicitly focused on building ‘neighbourhood capacity’ through ‘community engagement’. The name alone is highly suggestive that the ANC sites are where action is taken to confront poverty and create change. Although, the PN strategy was developed in partnership between the UWGT and the City of Toronto, the City is primarily focused on the coordination and delivery of services and programs.
City staff have openly disavowed their own role in community organizing because it “can’t come from government, United Way can do things we can’t” (Interview B3, City of Toronto staff).

Yet, the downsizing of the welfare state empowers third sector agencies to operate as an arm of government in the delivery of social services and programs (Ilcan and Basok 2004). This introduces a new form of governance that is not subject to the same lines of accountability demanded of the state while downloading responsibility to social agencies as well as the populations that they serve. By focusing on the ANC roll-out, this paper interrogates the “regimes of practices” (Dean 1999) that drive and emerge from these new trajectories of governmentality. This chapter demonstrates how this new form of ‘community governance’ was concretized and identifies key impacts that it has on targeted populations and community organizing.

I will begin with an overview of how the priority neighbourhood strategy came to be institutionalized through partnerships between the City of Toronto, UWGT, and agency partners. I will then turn my attention to the United Way’s Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) initiative. My analysis will focus on ANC operations in one of the thirteen priority neighbourhoods, Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO)\textsuperscript{22}. My evidence is drawn from five years of participatory action research and 28 semi-structured interviews specific to this study. I also draw on collaborative evaluation of the PN strategy (Cowen and Parlette 2011) that includes an analysis of planning and policy documents as well as interviews and focus groups with residents of KGO.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{22} For background information on the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood characteristics please see paper 1. As mentioned therein, the naming of ‘KGO’ was imparted via the PN designation process and is not a label that was initially identified, nor currently agreed upon by residents. However, because there is no widely accepted alternative and because I am evaluating policy documents and practices that utilize that title I will use it as shorthand throughout this paper.}
4.2 Part A. Targeting a Strategy: The Genesis of the ‘Priority Neighbourhoods’

Place-based policy initiatives have been gaining popularity worldwide, bolstered by research from the neighbourhood effects tradition and a context of neoliberalization of governance and everyday life. The rationalities of neoliberalism are characterized by a decisive turn away from welfare state ambitions of universality and an embrace of competitive individualism and entrepreneurial conduct. Welfare itself becomes a dirty word, no longer associated with collective well-being but now employed as a derogatory aphorism for social assistance; recipients are suspected of ‘milking the system’ and coerced into workfare programs.
to ‘earn’ their entitlements (Brodie 1996). Where the benefits of citizenship are no longer viewed as rights or universal entitlements, individuals must demonstrate their eligibility to compete for equal opportunities. The naturalization of neoliberal ideology has not only denounced Keynesian welfare policies as wasteful impediments to growth, but has infused the daily enactments of social and political life. An analytics of governance as “conduct of conduct” (Dean 1991; Isin 2000) focuses on the techniques, modalities and mentalities through which we govern and are governed. The enactment of neoliberalism as ‘governmentality’ requires that neoliberal ideology be hegemonized, internalized and executed through individualized subjects (Brown 2006; Larner 2000). That neoliberal governmentality “marks a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power in certain societies” (Dean 1999: 19) suggests that the perpetuation of neoliberalization, although often through deliberate practices, is not the work of any single identifiable actor but is part of a collective enframing of a population within the historical constitution of the current regime. Neoliberalization, however powerfully orchestrated at times, is not simply delivered as a top-down process but involves everyday subject formation and enactment of the population.

Targeted approaches to social policy and service delivery are advanced through this new paradigm of population management through individual conduct. In the wake of cost-cutting and austerity measures implemented under neoliberal regimes, ‘targeting’ appears to deliver scarce resources to those most in-need. This enframing of the recipient population rests on an assumption of a deserving and undeserving class of recipients. Targeted social provision, then, is also a classification system that defines “problem people in problem places” who are in need of rehabilitation to adopt normative values (Brodie 1996; Cowen 2005; Mayer 2003). Research mobilized to support place-based targeting often advocates that resources be devoted to communities ‘at-risk’. On the surface, place-based measures appear to better target scarce
resources to needy individuals and elicit sympathy for the poor who are seen as unable to make-do without state assistance. Through the allure of obtaining investment for under-resourced communities, attention is deflected from the broader issues that structure and perpetuate poverty and marginalization in the first place. Although poverty is most manifest at the local scale, it is not solely or even primarily a local or individual problem: deindustrialization, labour market exclusion and collapse, reduced welfare state entitlements, ongoing colonialism and systemic racism are just some of the many factors that contribute to unemployment and structural poverty. Indeed, targeting the symptoms of poverty and social exclusion does more than just ‘fail to target the causes of poverty’; it reinforces the very processes that structure inequalities and oppression.

The state’s roll out strategies, to develop solutions to the contradictions and market failure inherent to neoliberalization, have brought on new institutional arrangements for ‘public’ programming. Certain civil society organizations are granted greater responsibility for social service delivery, but within an institutional framework by which their powers are severely curtailed toward serving the neoliberal purpose of connecting the social to the economic (Mayer 2003). The language of ‘social capital’ has been appropriated (away from Bourdieu’s concern with the structures through which power and privilege are reproduced), by initiatives intended to activate the potentials of the marginalized to more appropriately engage with the marketized system. The social cost is a redirected emphasis away from socio-economic inequalities toward social cohesion, “the talk is of ‘social exclusion’, instead of ‘social equality’” (Mayer 2003: 114). This individualized approach treats the symptoms, rather than the causes of exclusion and marginalization. The result is a blame and responsibility approach to social participation, wherein dysfunctional subjects must learn to ‘govern’ themselves more appropriately in order to live/compete in society (Cruikshank 1999; Mayer 2003; Miller 1993).
Increasingly, the social service sector is targeted with the task of imparting the norms and values befitting of a ‘responsible citizen’ (Cruikshank 1999; Rose 1996). Ilcan and Basok (2004) argue that the roll-back of the welfare state has been followed by a roll-out of what they term “community governance” whereby private actors, individuals and social agencies are called upon to take up the roll of social delivery that has been abandoned by the state. Some have celebrated this shift, arguing that it empowers local groups to deliver more responsive services and programs (Clarke and Gail 2005), while others critique that decentralization of responsibility for social welfare is rarely accompanied by the devolution of power over redistribution mechanisms (Mayer 2003; Perrons and Skyers 2003; Trudeau 2008). Instead, Ilcan and Basok (2004) argue, the service sector is called on to perform two critical functions of the new advanced liberal state: service delivery and responsibilization of citizens. Through this technique of governmentality, two key manoeuvres are unveiled (Dean 1991). One is the ascendance of the social service sector as agents of governance and the second is the production and naturalization of the ‘community’ as the scale of operation. The apparent natural unity of community grants an illusion of a pre- or non-political group of people bound by something they have in common (Ilcan and Basok 2004; Isin 2002; Rose 1996). In this case the common denominator is conceived to be poverty. If poverty is the problem, than logic would suggest that the solution should be its eradication, but when communities themselves are the ‘targets’, poverty is depoliticized as we see a movement from treating causes to treating effects. The Toronto PN case is demonstrative of how this strategy affects its targets on the ground.

23 See also Brenner and Theodore (2002) and Peck and Tickell (2002) for discussion of the uneven process of neoliberalization as well as roll-back and roll-out strategies.
4.2.1 Rolling Out a Framework

In 2005, thirteen Priority Neighbourhoods were selected for targeted investment in neighbourhood capacity building and social infrastructure. Along with the Poverty by Postal Code report (2004), impetus for the PN framework arose from the Toronto City Summit Alliance Report in 2003, and a conference in 2004. At this meeting, Don Drummond, Chief Economist for Toronto Dominion Bank, argued that concentrated poverty posed “a significant threat to the region’s economic competitiveness” (Drummond cited in SNTF 2005: 9\textsuperscript{24}), and urged government to respond. In response, the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (SNTF) was initiated through collaboration between the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto. With $185,000 in support from both federal and provincial governments and including participants from community, labour, and business organizations, the SNTF undertook to develop a methodology to indicate needs and service gaps in Toronto neighbourhoods. Effectively, nine original neighbourhoods were identified in the final report, SNTF: Call to Action (2005) based on socio-demographic data combined with an analysis of existing services that indicated areas of high needs and underinvestment. An additional four neighbourhoods were included based on the impacts of the Community Safety Plan and a perceived risk of violence after a summer of heightened gun-related deaths.

The PN strategy has entailed a dramatic and fundamental shift in municipal service provision; from one based on universality and led by the City, to a diffused model of state-third sector partnerships in service delivery combined with social capacity building. Alignment at all three levels of government has culminated in a tripartite agreement to target investment toward

\textsuperscript{24} The SNTF (2005) final call to action cites Drummond speaking at the conference in 2004 as motivation to striking the Strong Neighbourhoods Taskforce.
‘revitalization’ of neighbourhoods (Matthews 2008; SNTF 2005). Service Canada has drawn on the strategy to guide frontline investment, while the provincial government is fronting capital costs for building community health centres. The Ontario government has transferred $15 million to the United Way toward developing the Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) to provide leadership and job opportunities for young people in the PNs. The United Way has been responsible for administering the program, contributing an additional $15 million, and raising the final third through private fundraising to reach $45 million. The City of Toronto has introduced a Neighbourhood Action Strategy in each of the priority neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Action Teams (NATS) were set up to coordinate service delivery across city departments, while Neighbourhood Action Partnerships (NAPS) include city workers, social service staff and community members (see Cowen and Parlette 2011 for discussion). The city has also invested $13 million toward social infrastructure in each of the thirteen neighbourhoods and has leveraged an additional $88 million through partnerships (Matthews 2008).

Working lock-step with the city, the United Way has developed its own Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (BSNS), which has a number of components. From an investment perspective, the UWGT has committed 75% of all new annual funds to the priority neighbourhoods. Similarly, based on UWGT’s goal to incorporate two new member agencies per year, this process will also target Toronto’s inner suburbs. Following the UWGT’s Community Impact Strategy that was developed in 2003, two new units were instituted that have marked a transformation in the structure of the organization, the Community Capacity Building Unit and the Public Policy Unit. The BSNS is a unique initiative that runs alongside the base of the membership model, which provides core funding to member agencies. The BSNS includes investment in community service hubs, community development grants and resident
engagement. The Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC)\textsuperscript{25} initiative is a core piece of the strategy and is geared toward building resident capacity and encouraging engagement\textsuperscript{26}. In each of the thirteen neighbourhoods, the ANC sites are led by a select member agency, which is responsible for hiring and managing ANC staff. The expressed aim of the ANC is “to establish resident-led neighbourhood associations that will produce a vision, and develop plans to bring about positive change in their communities” (UWGT, n.d.). This aim is supported with an initial intensive period of funding at a rate of $250,000 for the first two years that permits the hiring of 2.5 staff members and offers a block of funds for “Quick-start” grants to support resident-led projects. After the first two years, the ANC projects are sustained at a reduced annual rate of $100,000.

4.2.2 Targeted Social Policy and the ‘Neighbourhoods’ Debate: Two Models

The PN designation has induced new infusions of capital and fostered new community development practices. Correspondingly, this redirection in social policy emerged from a broad based plan of research and justification to answer the question: why invest in neighbourhoods? The research shaping the framework seems to generate two main rationales for targeted investment. On the one hand, the inner suburbs have experienced a history of disinvestment in social and physical infrastructure. The impacts of this relative neglect were already visible in 1978 when the \textit{Metro Suburbs in Transition} report identified growing levels of poverty and

\textsuperscript{25} The Toronto ANCs under the priority neighbourhoods framework are distinct from a pilot Action for Neighbourhood Change project initiated federally and in partnership with the United Way to establish engagement sites in five Canadian cities (Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto in Scarborough Village, and Halifax) from 2005-2007.

\textsuperscript{26} KGO was the last of the 13 priority neighbourhoods to have an ANC office sited there in 2008, http://www.uwgt.org/whatWeDo/neighbourhoodsMap.php
sparse public services. Amalgamation in 1998 further aggravated this trend, when many programs and offices that had been located in the former boroughs, such as the *Community Social Planning Council*, were forced to move in order to concentrate resources downtown, leading to reduced local presence and an impaired ability to react to localized community needs (Zizys et al. 2004). These challenges are intensified by the dispersed lay-out of suburban landscapes that were designed for a culture of auto-mobility and single family housing. The increase of high density towers, social housing, transit dependency, immigration, and manufacturing job loss through deindustrialization, require new infrastructural and programming resources to support the needs of growing and changing populations.

The second rationale for targeted investment depends on a particular interpretation of neighbourhood effects research, which suggests that living in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty has a negative impact on child and social development (Galster et al. 1999; Wilson 1987). While there are some traditions of neighbourhood effects literature that conduct nuanced analysis of the causes and effects of concentrated poverty (Sampson et al. 2002), others use the co-presence of poverty and social ills to assume a natural causality between the two (Bauder 2002; Galster et al. 1999; Wilson 1987). This line of research tends to pathologize poverty and the behaviours of people and families that live in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poverty. Consequently, this stereotyping reproduces cultural discrimination, marginality, and stigmatization that may in turn produce a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bauder 2002). Much of this strain of research has focused on American cities, where segregation and concentration of poverty have historically been much more dramatic. Moreover, research findings that support a neighbourhood effects argument tend to rely on regression analysis, which is prone to bias, misinterpretation and an inability to identify the direction of causality. These studies rely on data from families of similar socio-economic status and background living in different neighbourhood
types but are unable to control mitigating factors such as personal contacts and underlying conditions, nor are they able to analyze the same individual under variant conditions (Oreopoulos 2008). Studies that do make a serious attempt to account for these methodological limitations and analyze sites of social contact have found that peer group influences, school contacts, workplace interactions, and household factors\textsuperscript{27} evidence much higher correlation than neighbourhood per se to future socio-economic status, educational attainment, political views, employment or social assistance usage (Ellen and Turner 1997; Oreopolis 2008; Solon, Page and Duncan 2000; Page and Solon 2001; Walks 2006).

It has been well documented that poverty is associated with inadequate nutrition, high-levels of stress and chronic health problems (Mikkonen and Raphael 2010). However, there is little consensus in the Canadian context to support the assumption that high-poverty neighbourhoods produce a multiplier effect of social ills. It has also been widely acknowledged that neighbourhoods with predominantly low-income residents tend to be underserviced, relative to middle- and upper-class concentrations, due to their limited consumer power and tax contributions. This does not mean that low-income earners require wealthier neighbours to demonstrate mainstream values (Curley 2010). It \textit{does} demand coordinated local planning and resources to ensure supportive programs and services. This is particularly important in areas of dramatic social change such as seen in the priority neighbourhoods, where it is vital to begin to redress a history of neglect and underinvestment. In this way, neighbourhood effects can be mobilized to recognize the broader forces of inequity and exclusion at work in contributing to the geographical concentration of poverty, such as housing and labour markets and poor transit

\textsuperscript{27} While some may argue that these factors are also forms of neighbourhood effects they are not necessarily locationally determined e.g. children may attend school outside of their neighbourhoods and supportive versus harmful home environments can be sited in any neighbourhood (or income bracket).
options that provide arduous access to employment (Gabriel and Rosenthal 1996). However, ‘neighbourhood revitalization’ aimed at behavioural interventions generates a form of social regulation through the management of ‘abject subjects’ (Gibson 2004; Helms et al. 2007; Ilcan and Basok 2004; Mayer 2003). Despite the normative intention of levitating the poor through responsibilization, these techniques more often create harmful effects on individual and collective community members.

4.2.3 Neighbourhoods in a Divided City: Policy Responses to Downtown Gentrification and Suburban Decline in Toronto

While there are elements of both rationales: service equalization and social management, present in the founding documents for the PN framework, it is particularly critical to distinguish between them as they have major consequences for the development of policy and implementation on the ground. A series of six research reports were commissioned by the SNTF to document roles, challenges, strategies and measurement methods toward building community infrastructure. In report number one, Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice, Christa Freiler presents a review of the literature on place-based investment and documents findings from initiatives undertaken in other cities (2004). The take up of place-based, or area strategies as they are called in the UK, has been growing internationally and typically relies on research that suggests that living in a high poverty neighbourhood inhibits social and professional development (Galster et al. 1999). While Freiler is careful to stipulate that the SNTF approach is distinct from “American notions of the ‘culture of poverty’ which

suggests deficiencies residing in the individual, rather than the environment” (2004: 3), the report goes on to suggest ‘fears’ related to supposed behavioural deficiencies:

High concentrations of poverty neighbourhoods are also presumed to lead to social and economic polarization, divisions among people along racial and other lines, and a threat to community and national social cohesion. It is feared that concentrated poverty will lead to *increased crime, racial tensions, ‘anti-social behaviour’*, and health problems among individuals living in these neighbourhoods. The effects on children’s development and future life prospects are particularly worrying (Freiler 2004: 3-4, emphasis mine).

Notwithstanding this predisposition, the report goes on to articulate the mixed results and contentious findings of neighbourhood effects research, where there is little consensus among academics on whether individual, household or school relations may be more influential and also whether the proximity of affluent neighbours is disadvantageous or beneficial for lower income residents (Freiler 2004: 18-19). In other words, because the ‘effects’ of neighbourhood are inconclusive in the literature, it is unclear what kind of impacts will result from place-based strategies. This does not mean that it is *not important* to invest in neighbourhoods. However, there are limitations to a place-based strategy that does not connect with broader political-economic structures.

For instance, Freiler provides case studies from the United Kingdom and the United States to outline prescriptions for good practice. The United Kingdom’s New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a federally led project of neighbourhood renewal that has been credited with some success. The project was initiated in 1998 as a ten year action plan to ‘renew’ 39 ‘deprived’ communities of approximately 9,800 residents and has seen more than £50 million in government investment for each area (Beatty et al. 2010). After earlier challenges with “area-based initiatives” throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the NDC approach has taken note of downfalls such as: the failure to address “underlying structural causes of poverty” (Freiler 2004:
too little connection with other areas, competition between communities and “too much reliance on short-term regeneration initiatives” (Freiler 2004: 22). This renewed strategy is focused on redressing the structural roots of concentrated poverty by cultivating partnerships at all levels of government and among community partners. The intention is to strengthen local economies and improve employment options, housing, educational opportunities, and the physical environment (Beatty et al. 2008). While an attempt to evaluate the policies and practices of the NDC is beyond the bounds of this paper, other scholars have cautioned that the renewal policies fail to address the ways that people actually experience poverty and may aggravate social exclusion and non-participation (Gosling 2008; Mathers et al. 2008).

Assessments of the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) program in the United States have been much more contentious than reports on the NDC strategy. The EZ/EC was initiated in 1993 and launched in 1994 by the Clinton Administration as a community empowerment program to, “enable communities to take responsibility for their own futures” (HUD 1994 in Gittell 2001: 4). The strategy includes federal provision of block grants to community agencies and tax incentives for zone businesses. Freiler’s backgrounder report indicates contradictory goals in this program that “have not been linked to a coordinated structural strategy to address poverty and deprivation” (2004: 25). Limitations have been charged at the targeted nature of the zones, which fails to build connections beyond place to actually affect change and also misses many individuals and communities in need. Other analyses of the EZ/EC approach have suggested that the program primarily benefits the private sector and government at the expense of residents and community agencies. Too little opportunity for meaningful control over decision-making and agenda-setting in local communities, along with the failure to think beyond ‘place’ have brought charges that the EZ/EC has facilitated gentrification in inner city neighbourhoods. Hence, the EZ/EC has been characterized as a “missed opportunity” that has failed at facilitating the empowerment of local residents (Dockrey-Ojo and Velarde 1996; Gittell 2001; Hyra 2008).
These findings are particularly prescient in the Toronto case. Despite the cautious caveats provided in the SNTF background research, particularly Freiler’s report, the final call for action wholly ignores and neglects to delve into the mixed and contradictory arguments surrounding neighbourhood effects research. Instead it adopts an unreflexive affirmation of this contentious approach:

Neighbourhood decline is characterized by the out-migration of better-off families, overall depopulation, low income levels and dependency on income support programs, high crime rates, high substance abuse rates, high mortality rates and loss of businesses… Research from the UK, the US and Canada confirms that neighbourhood conditions affect the health, school readiness, educational attainment and employment of their residents (SNTF, 2005:12, emphasis mine).

This neighbourhood effects orthodoxy expressed by the SNTF is in large part supported by a celebratory affirmation of the United States and UK examples, again without reference to the limitations and failings that were outlined in the background reports.

Although produced prior to the development of the SNTF, PBPC, as the catalyzing report for the priority neighbourhoods strategy, has garnered an enormous amount of public attention and influence. In PBPC, United Way makes the case for investment in neighbourhoods, citing success in the US and the UK. The report boldly proclaims that the United States has seen an “astonishing turnaround in the number of high poverty neighbourhoods in that country” (UWGT 2004: 3, emphasis added). The report upon which this heralding is based is entitled “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s” (Jargowsky 2003). In which, Jargowsky does affirm that a number of high-poverty neighbourhoods have seen a reduction in poverty. However, virtually all of these were in inner
cities, whose deconcentration of poverty occurred in parallel to poverty growth in the surrounding suburbs, Jargowsky notes:

the poverty rates actually increased along the outer edges of central cities and in the inner-ring suburbs of many metropolitan areas, including those that saw dramatic declines in poverty concentration...it is notable that in a decade of widespread economic growth…the fact that inner-ring suburbs declined during this period is really quite astonishing (Jargowsky 2003: 12).

This finding is buttressed by a recently released report by the Brookings Institute, which has found that from 1999-2008 suburban poverty in the US increased by 25%, and that the majority of racialized groups now live outside the city centres (Kneebone and Garr 2010). This relationship between downtown gentrification and racialized suburban poverty is stark in Toronto. Over the last two decades, Toronto has become increasingly divided and segregated by race and income. The predominantly white middle to upper-class areas along the subway line in the former core city of Toronto have enjoyed rising incomes by over 20%. Meanwhile, the former suburban boroughs have experienced dramatic economic decline and are now home to lower income earners and recent immigrants who are displaced by the high-cost of living in the city (Hulchanski 2007). This spatial segregation and concentration of poverty is not natural nor purely the result of resident ‘choice’ in neighbourhoods. Rather it is underpinned by a constellation of broader forces, including: economic prioritization of the downtown as the site of the ‘world-class’ city; deindustrialization and the growth of the low-wage service sector; land values and the building of low-income housing on cheap land in the former suburbs; racial exclusion of newcomers and state failure to recognize foreign credentials; cuts to social spending at the federal and provincial level; inadequate transportation and outmoded infrastructure in
historically neglected areas of the city (Bunce & Young 2004; Kipfer and Keil 2002; Walks 2001).

These findings emphasize that ‘targeting’ the complexity of poverty cannot be confined to treating its manifestation in neighbourhoods. The SNTF background research clearly identifies common pitfalls shared across place-based strategies. Many fail to build networks beyond individual localities to address systemic issues or do not facilitate grassroots leadership in developing process, goals, and an agenda for change. Strategies that focus primarily on local effects of poverty typically only address symptoms and fail to initiate structural solutions. Given that all of this is recognized in the SNTF founding documents and that the entire framework was spurned by the PBPC report on concentrated poverty, it could be expected that the PN strategy would draw on the tri-partite support for the strategy to mobilize local knowledge into a concerted anti-poverty strategy. Instead, however, at all levels of the strategy we see an explicit emphasis on service delivery and social capital building. There is no direct engagement with poverty or economic issues and no attempt to push for policy change at upper-tiers of government. Since social capital is posited as the ‘solution’, we might then flip the question around to ask: what is the problem that the framework is set up to address? First, an excavation of how social capital is conceptualized by its advocates can illuminate the types of problems and solutions to which it is mobilized.

4.2.4 Social Capital and Capacity Draining

The concept of social capital has become popular in the community development sector and urban policy-making to emphasize the important role that social relations and networks play in building strong communities and collective efficacy. Place-based strategies, in particular, have focused on building social capital in impoverished neighbourhoods. An assumption that underlies these approaches and much of the research that supports their formation, suggests that
high-poverty neighbourhoods are lacking in social capital where residents are conceived to be socially isolated, disengaged and disconnected from mainstream societal norms (Wilson 1987). One of the most popular theorists on social capital is Robert Putnam whose book, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community (2000), has attracted a significant following. Putnam sirens an alarm that democracy is at risk in the United States based on widespread civic disengagement. This he concludes by measuring a sharp decline in group and organization membership since the 1960s, a process suggested to have been aggravated by the development of suburban sprawl and technologies that have negatively impacted the shared use of collective spaces for face-to-face interactions. In this conceptualization, social capital is equated to involvement in civic and social organizations, and it is this form of social capital that must be revived to (re)invigorate democratic society.

The SNTF background reports draw on social capital research that defines the concept as “those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems” (Sirianni and Friedland cited in Freiler 2004). The report relies heavily upon Putnam’s research to distinguish between bonding and bridging social capital as the difference between close, supportive relationships within communities and more distant horizontal connections between members of different types of communities and backgrounds. A clear preference for strengthening bridging capital is expressed, in order to enhance “porosity” rather than “solidarity” (Freiler 2004:13), in order to connect residents with mainstream norms and to attract middle class residents to the area (Freiler 2004: 12-16). Other researchers are more sceptical of this approach, noting that, “as devolution and contracting-out have intensified competition and divisiveness between cities and regions as well as between different social groups…civil society and the forms of civic engagement embedded in it are no longer, if they ever were, only of the benign and democracy enhancing kind” (Mayer 2003: 123). Putnam’s
model also tends to favour mainstream middle class organizations, such as PTAs and veteran clubs, that do not resonate with many residents with lower incomes, or even, some would argue, to people living in decades beyond the 1960s (Gittell 2003).

Social capital is not merely a benign predictor or enabler of collective efficacy but can also exacerbate socio-economic inequalities and exclusion. The precise definition of what the concept entails and its effects have multiple explanations and similarly wide-ranging impacts on the ground. Pierre Bourdieu has employed the term to describe the networks, norms, knowledges, and practices that reproduce power, privilege and inequality (1986). Failure to explicitly recognize and challenge these broader structures and processes that contribute to social inequality and marginalization, further and invisibly reinforces their effects. When social capital ‘building’ is focused narrowly on promoting engagement through organizations in order to fill a perceived lack of social capital, other forms of social capacity are not recognized as ‘social capital’. Forms of social organizing typically found in high-poverty neighbourhoods are routinely ignored or marginalized by the social capital approach, for example, adversarial politics, building social networks for survival, strong solidaristic ties and skills that may be less valued by middle class sensibilities (Body-Gendrot and Gittell 2003; Curley 2010; Mayer 2003). As a result, the PN documents marginalize and devalue existing forms of social capital in the neighbourhoods targeted for external support for ‘capacity-building’.

While the problem is often framed as a need to build social capital in poor communities, many residents of impoverished communities tend, in fact, to exhibit exceptionally high levels of community involvement. The problem is not necessarily a gap in social capacity but the barriers that economically and racially marginalized people and collectives face in attempting to actualize their ideas and initiatives (Curley 2010; Ilcan and Basok 2004; Perrons and Skyers 2003).
Margit Mayer argues that the institutionalized social capital that is employed and sought through ‘community governance’ economizes social relations, bridging the gap between market and state by encouraging behaviours that conform to, or at least do not challenge, the capitalist system (2003). Social capital becomes both the means and end through which third-sector organizations assume the power to cultivate social cohesion and inclusion in the existing structural arrangement. As such, movements and groups that seek radical change fall outside the purview of this new “peculiar understanding of a (harmonious) relationship between civil society and the state inherent in the social capital perspective” (Mayer 2003: 119). Place-based targeting of social capital obfuscates the broader structural forces that perpetuate poverty and inequality while legitimizing, yet masking, behavioural modification of ‘the poor’.

Still, given its predominance in the field, the concept of social capital retains some utility, though more precision is needed when defining what exactly it entails. An explicitly political approach that focuses on systemic change and recognition of local strengths and needs offers a more supportive capacity-building form of social capital. To draw on Bourdieu and Mayer’s notion of social capital means moving away from cultural or behavioural solutions to a more reflexive effort to confront structural challenges as well as power differentials at local scales. Doing so can also facilitate the strengthening of social networks, skills and relationships by more directly learning from and encouraging collective education of grassroots knowledges. Many authors have argued that organizations, neighbourhood resources and public spaces have important roles to play in supporting strong networks of trust, place attachment, and collective safety (Curley 2010; Morenoff et al. 2006; Small 2006). However, the actual practices of engagement can mean many things. It is critical to recognize that merely attending meetings, events, sitting on a board or joining a committee does not unequivocally equate to self-empowerment or skill and network building. In short, a bad model of social capital
misdiagnoses the problem as one of social isolation and drains capacity, while a positive model of social capital draws on local skills to identify broader processes of privilege and marginalization while deepening connections within and across communities. Because KGO is a very organized community that had many active residents contributing 20-50 hours a week to activism and/or volunteering prior to the arrival of ANC, it is a particularly informative case study for analyzing how the resident engagement and social capital side of the PN strategy rolls out on the ground. How is this framework reworking relations of community organizing and governance? Which forms of social capital are facilitated through the ANC structure? Which are curtailed?

4.3 Part B. Institutionalizing Community: Action for Neighbourhood Change

Institutionalize: to make into an institution : give character of an institution to : to incorporate into a structured and often highly formalized system: to put in the care of an institution – Merriam-Webster dictionary

“Many institutions, from prisons to monasteries to asylums, deliberately want to control and manage their inmates such that they conform and do not cause problems…

The model of outer and inner worlds mirrors the individual’s outer and inner world. The institution needs to create inner models where the institution is introjected as accepted normality and the outside the institution is projected as a bad object”.-Changing Minds Sociology

4.3.1 Structuring Community Development: Action for Neighbourhood Branding?

The United Way funds ANC sites in all 13 Priority Neighbourhoods, while a United Way selected local organization manages the project and the ANC staff members. The United Way’s
aim for the ANC is to cultivate grassroots community development. However, the structure and governance of the broader initiative is pre-established by the United Way and its design does not draw upon the knowledges of local residents or agencies. In fact, the priority neighbourhoods do not have a choice of whether or not they even want an ANC centre, as one community agency worker remarked: “The ANC was coming no matter what, and they wanted to do something entirely new…It scared us, it scared the whole community” (Interview 18, ESS staff). Indeed community agencies had to compete for the opportunity to trustee the project; agencies that did not want to see an ANC in the community felt coerced to apply due to the fact that it would be coming either way. The bidding process was wrought with tension; it introduced competition into a community of social agencies that prided themselves on collaboration. For instance, it was originally proposed that the pre-existing residents’ group, Residents Rising, would do the organizing work in Orton Park and residents at Gabriel Dumont, a First Nations’ housing complex, would do their own engagement work internally. This idea was dismissed outright by the United Way as it did not fit the project guidelines that there be solely one agency trustee. Yet, being that the ‘end-goal’ of the broader ANC framework was to establish a residents’ association in each of the PNs, initiation into KGO demanded adaptation. This was a community that was already well organized and encompassed a much larger population than the other twelve.

So it’s quite a bit different I think than what ANC was intended for. It’s intended for a much smaller community, we’ve got about a 20,000 person community and really most of the ANCs you know, are looking at four or five thousand and intended to develop a neighbourhood association, which we started with.
...The ANC model was designed for a community that didn’t have any organizing. So that has made it interesting. We went through a lot of meetings last spring with stakeholders from NAP and Residents Rising and Storefront trying to figure out what the heck ANC looks like in this community? (Interview 18, ESS staff)

While the promise of new resources for community engagement was appealing to local agency workers, it was clear that the new ANC project was not merely a source of funding, as it may appear at first sight, but rather a whole new framework of community governance (Ilcan and Basok 2004). Because the priority neighbourhood boundaries are drawn based on census tract agglomerations, in practice they fail to resonate with residents’ lived geographies and communities of affiliation. Hence the PN designation, along with the ensuing targeting of the artificially bounded ‘neighbourhoods’, in fact cultivates the neighbourhoods that are ostensibly ‘naturally’ given (Rose 1996).

Part of us, ANC, we were trying to, we have to identify...There’s only two professional capacities that have that catchment area, the Action for Neighbourhood Change project and the Community Development Officer for the City of Toronto but no-one else shares that concept of this area so how do you talk about an area that no-one has a concept of as a cohesive area. You have to keep pushing *branding*... There’s still no cohesive identity, there never was. People identify with the intersection that they’re closest to. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

You know, uniting a neighbourhood that is really artificially, geographically constructed is a difficult, difficult thing. At the same time, I mean ANC wants a united voice, I don’t know that we need a united voice. I’ve never been sort of that sense that we’re ever gonna get everybody together and have them vote on what they want. It’s more
we’re hearing from pockets and this is all voices that are being taken into consideration when decisions are being made. (Interview 18, ESS staff)

The delineation and branding of ‘community’ institutes a new realm and location of governance by the city and United Way defined neighbourhoods, which effectively brings new political jurisdictions into being. As much as community is celebrated as the ideal (and naturalized) terrain of action (Ilcan and Basok 2004; Rose 1996), this territory is strictly limited by the bounds of the model. The arbitrary designation of these geographical boundaries has impacted similar limitations on the political sphere of the communities for the purpose of organizing, in terms of both boundaries and possibilities.

Even at the level of the ANC and the thirteen priority neighbourhoods, there were common struggles experienced by residents, such as: transit inaccessibility through both high-fares and inadequate service; unemployment due to lack of foreign credential recognition and systemic racism; explicit racism; and inadequate housing. Local organizers reported attempts to address these issues in unity across numerous ANC sites but found no support for building a broader movement.

There were some issues that are obviously very regional, very focused on the neighbourhood. But I think obviously some of the larger issues tie all the neighbourhoods together and as a neighbourhood you’re kind of powerless, I have to say. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

The powerlessness of neighbourhoods to define their own parameters did not stop there; indeed the primary powers of definition and agenda-setting were assumed by the UWGT and implemented through partner agencies. Aside from establishing the jurisdictional boundaries of
the communities, the ANC institution also enacted stipulations on the nature and structure of the organizing that would take place there, “It’s very restrictive you know, the way they want to work with communities” (Interview 15, Scarborough resident and community organizer). The cultivation of the United Way brand through the ANC sites marks a palpable diversion from their well-known model of providing core funding to member agencies that define their own mandate and activities. Member agencies are funded to fulfill a specified mandate, deliver, and report on measureables to United Way. The membership model offers agencies a clear contract, accompanied by a sixty-five page document on brand identity guidelines (United Way 2009) dictating how they must and ways they must not use the United Way brandmark. This model is rigidly structured but member agencies maintain autonomy over their day-to-day operations. Conversely, the ANCs are not merely funded by the United Way, they are thoroughly branded as United Way projects.

Normally, you’re a United Way Member Agency and that’s how they brand you.

You do this as a United Way member agency. You know, it’s funded by the United Way, that’s where the branding begins and that’s where the branding ends. In terms of your mandated activities, you’ve got a lot of autonomy to determine your activities and you’re just getting funding and as long as the funding is going towards certain activities, I think that’s where it stops. Whereas this, United Way was exerting a really strange form of control over this new Action for Neighbourhood Change brand. So instead of saying here’s this pool of funds that we’re going to put out to Member Agencies to fund community organizing activities under their organizational grant, we’re going to brand it across the city as a single project, Action for Neighbourhood Change. And we’ll design this project and deliver it as a package for a partner to implement.
From what I understand that’s a totally different ballgame from what they’ve been in.

(Interview 17, former ANC staff)

This reorientation of the United Way brand was formally encoded in 2003, when they adopted a “community impact mission”\(^{29}\), signalling the agency’s expansion into direct interventions in community governance. The ANC framework is the first wide-scale initiative of this sort and reports from KGO community organizers suggest that the strategy has constrained the flexibility and vitality of existing organizing practices. Overarching pressures to build, maintain, and protect this new ANC brand infuse daily practices and impact agency staff working relationships with one another and with local residents.

A former\(^{30}\) coordinator of capacity building expressed their own struggles with managing the UW relationship while attempting to serve the needs and desires of the community:

They want things done in a certain way, they don’t always communicate that, but it’s there. At the same time they’re not willing to take ownership over certain aspects of it that would help, help coordinate this brand in a more effective way.

I knew that there were things I wasn’t doing, that United Way wanted me to do but I wasn’t prioritizing them because they seemed to take away from the real work, it didn’t make sense. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

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\(^{29}\) http://www2.unitedway.ca/uwcanada/content.aspx?id=207&langtype=1033

\(^{30}\) This former ANC staff member left on their own accord to take up new employment. The explanation given from this employee’s former manager was that they were “very torn between the two models, the storefront, which aligned with [their] personality and [they] took the job and the UW” (Interview 18).  

149
At the same time, this staff member expressed some autonomy in reworking the limitations of the model in order to better address the needs of the community, albeit not without fear of recourse.

So all you have to do is figure out the bare minimum that United Way wants to maintain happiness and then you work around on the fringes trying to push into those areas that are more controversial than sewing clubs and the ESL classes…

…I always felt like I was treading water, dangerous waters.  (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

Stepping outside the boundaries of a mere funder, UW has taken on a disciplinary and directional role with staff, one that confounds even a seasoned executive director.

They sent three people to speak to [them] about it and it wasn’t okay how can we move forward…[the staff member] had already sent an email apologizing that [they] made a mistake and hopes we can move forward.. They spent an hour saying, ‘you did this, you did this, you did this…

So that is frustrating because I’m trying to foster a certain kind of culture and a kind of supervision and a kind of approach. Yet, this is a relationship with a funder, goes directly to staff, bypassing me and calls [them] on the carpet for stuff. Which is very difficult…This is the only model I’ve ever heard of like this, where the United Way contacts staff. If Trillium came down to regularly visit with [staff] and told them, ‘no you need to do it like this’, it would seem really, really weird.  (Interview 18)
4.3.2 Community Inc.

*Envisioning a “community where everyone is engaged”*—UWGT Staff

“Volunteer, volunteer, volunteer. *How can they live volunteering?*” –KGO Community member and program worker

The convoluted institutional framework of the ANC model was also cited as a source of confusion. The United Way, as initiator of the framework, empowers the trustee organization to act as both agent and subject in delivering the ANC project to ‘subjects’ or residents in KGO (Dean 1999). Members of the community and the trustee organization felt it was unclear as to where responsibility and accountability lie and were frustrated over the “lack of intentionality” behind the broader initiative.

One explanation is that Storefront is trusteeing the ANC project, so then whose project is it…But it’s United Way’s project, are we trusteeing it on behalf of the United Way? I can’t get my head around it and I’m good at this stuff. (Interview 18, ESS staff)

The question of ‘whose project is it?’ is a particularly perplexing one. A better entry might be to ask where residents fit into this resident engagement model. How does incorporation of community organizing into the institutional structure of the ANC project impact the primary goal of engaging residents? And autonomous forms of resident organizing?

The resources that ANC brings to the community are widely valued by social agency workers who have acquired new funding and influence over community projects. In combination with existing networks, the funding is seen to offer potential to bring organizing to a new level. The Storefront, as the trustee organization in KGO and also a well-respected local hub, has
sought to keep residents at the forefront of all organizing and initiatives in the community, including the ANC.

We’ve been able to look at it as a whole. This isn’t a NAP thing. This isn’t an ANC thing. This isn’t a Storefront thing. This is a community thing and I haven’t yet seen any other communities where they’ve been able to get as many people to get on board with that way of thinking as Kingston-Galloway has. (Interview B2, ESS staff)

However, the relationship has been difficult to navigate. The funding comes along with a set of prescriptions that limit the creativity and responsive organizing that has made KGO a vibrant community. This has particularly weighty implications for the well established community group, Residents Rising. This group, which predates the ANC arrival in KGO, developed its structure, philosophy and goals in a collective manner based on the skills and capacities of the founding group:

Starting from a clean slate in any community is the right way to do it because every community is so different and if you come in with a formula or you come in with a lot of academic learning than it’s not necessarily going to work depending on the players in the community and the needs. (Interview B9, Scarborough resident, former Residents Rising coordinator)

Crediting the way that Residents Rising was able to develop on support from a foundation that did not superimpose an agenda or ‘measurables’ onto the grant, this community worker added:

And because ANC, Action for Neighbourhood Change, hadn’t already been in this neighbourhood, we were able to do a lot of really good groundwork for ANC now coming in the neighbourhood. ANC is still, United Way is still bound and
determined to do things with their formula, but I think having really done a lot of the engagement work and the development work it’s going to be a project that now ANC can go to a different level in this community than it has in other communities.

(Interview B9, Scarborough resident, former Residents Rising coordinator)

Although hope runs high for the possibilities suggested under the new funding, the actual impacts contradict the stated goals of the ANC, raising the question of whether it is possible to steer grassroots community development from above. Indeed, rather than asking what the community needed or how the entry of the ANC could be eased, the early days of ANC were consumed by a United Way-mandated ‘Vitality Survey’. This was despite the fact that the transitions that were taking place in the community as a result of the ANC arrival were creating tensions between established groups and leaders within the community. One community member that has been involved in the transition spoke to this:

How are you going to name it? How are you going to locate it? What would be the identity of the project? How are you going to manage the…so there are prescriptions... Again United Way has its own. They’re very strong about their identity. And this ‘we want to do it this way’ in a prescribed form and it was a very hard negotiation to say that ‘your prescription is not going to work here.’

In the beginning there was tension and the transition wasn’t planned well enough… And I think there wasn’t enough communication… So who is going to do the work? All the information from Residents Rising wasn’t passed on to [ANC staff], so I realized that, oh my god, things are not good…Try to explain what kind of complimentary role with Residents Rising ANC has. You know, funding has finished, how do you continue that work? And this is where we invited ANC… for
some people do they understand trusteeship? Some people, do they understand, you
know, United Way’s, you know, policies and procedures? Storefront’s role in
it…they don’t have the background. (CURA Interview 13)

Community workers and residents have felt strain when the United Way’s commitment to
promoting its brand identity comes into conflict with groups that are trying to operate organically
through collaborative partnerships. This contest between an open model of grassroots organizing
and an ownership or branding approach exacerbated the struggle over where to locate and how to
mark the new ANC space:

It was already, it was faith-based space that was used by Residents Rising and others.
And United Way didn’t mind doing work, you know building on Residents Rising’s
work but they wanted a neutral space that can be marked as ANC space… They
didn’t want to be injected into someone else’s space, they wanted their own space,
you know. They don’t mind having others, but it’s “our space”. You know, we have,
I think that United Way is very big on branding and brand packaging. So that was a
huge issue. But for us, you know, it didn’t matter, we needed a space. (Interview
B13, Scarborough resident/activist)

This territoriality coupled with the lack of accountability in governance relationships is
counter-productive to the goals of cultivating capacity and engagement. It seizes rather than
supports residents’ autonomy and redirects it into organizing that is institutionalized and branded
by the United Way. Residents are encouraged to participate in projects but are not involved in
the overall design of the ANC. While there is a strong set of prescriptions and expectations
placed upon the ANC sites and local residents by the UWGT, the influence in the other direction
is unclear. Residents are expected to engage and generate ideas for projects, campaigns, and
outreach to enhance their own ‘social capital’, yet the United Way and the ANC are not accountable to them. Residents are not invited to sit on the United Way board, nor are they architects of the ANC governance structure.

As a result of the practices and philosophies driving the ANC’s social capital model, residents are launched into a perpetual cycle of endless volunteerism.

People still need to make a living, unless someone is making a living there are only so many hours to volunteer and then they need to pay their rent… And we’re very lucky in this community that people are doing so much for so little. Like I said before, we have a large newcomer population here that are told again and again by employers, ‘oh, if only you had Canadian experience’, so they’re trying to like, get something. But then the opportunity isn’t there because there’s no money to hire people. (Interview 4, Scarborough resident and program worker)

Indeed, in the context of an economically challenged neighbourhood where many residents are highly skilled and educated yet unable to find full-time work, excessive volunteerism can contribute to burn-out and disappointment when there is little opportunity for paid-work or leadership capacity. More broadly, this cycle of volunteerism contributes to a form of workfare that serves the neoliberal state, where residents take on the role of self-responsibilization and community development; work that is increasingly the purview of third-sector agencies.

The Quick-start grant program provides a core example of this form of workfare in practice. The initiative is designed to support resident-led start up projects with one-time infusions of cash but it demands an onerous level of accountancy and countless hours of unpaid
work. A former staff member sums up their perceptions of resident exploitation under the Quick-start program:

I think they wanted residents to be doing the outreach for the program and recruiting people and training people how to write grants and then approving the grants and like this whole elaborate thing. Where I kept thinking, getting people to do the non-profit work was almost like the ANC was non-profit in training. There was always a part of it to me that just thought, this is ridiculous! To expect people to do this as a volunteer thing. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

The Quick-starts have been further criticized because they unwittingly set projects up to fail. After contributing hours of administrative work and grant writing to secure a $5000 grant for a community project, residents are ineligible to re-apply for future funds to build or maintain their initiative. As individuals, community members are not eligible to apply for other forms of funding unless they partner with an established agency and compete for limited pools of piecemeal funds. Indeed the core issue is that quick-starts support short-term projects in line with targeting, but do not encourage long-term initiatives.

A similar issue of sustainability plagues the broader ANC project within the current political-economic context of the social service sector marked by government roll-back of reliable core funding which has been replaced by short-term project grants. In the aftermath of this contextual shift, the United Way has grown increasingly powerful as a core funder, which has since enabled the organization to assume greater governance responsibilities but without

31 The Storefront has attempted to mitigate the disappointment that arises from this fallout by establishing a Community Trust to support community projects on an ongoing basis, yet this still necessitates institutionalization of ‘resident-led’ projects.
democratic accountability. Although the United Way proudly boasts that they provide ANCs with sustainable, long-term funding, the severing of more than half of the site budget after the second year from $250,000 to $100,000 suggests otherwise. The drastic monetary reduction means that staff and programs get cut while igniting a desperate entrepreneurial effort to maintain existing projects. The close proximity between some of the PNs means that ANC sites are likely to compete against one another to secure alternative means to continue their work. Local agency workers described this approach as non-sensical and detrimental to long-term community organizing.

We’re going to pump all of this money into the community and granted, some of that money is purely for engagement and things like that but a lot of that money is for staff. So if at the beginning of your model you’ve determined that you really need staff, why would? My point is, is that, if it’s viable that you hire someone in the first place, why isn’t it viable that you hire someone later? I just don’t get that, it makes no sense to me. (Interview 4, Scarborough resident and program worker)

The answer under the ANC framework is that residents “are expected to take it over. Residents will lead the action for neighbourhood change project” (Interview 17, former ANC staff). The difference is that residents are expected to take over the non-profit work as volunteers in support of a framework that is pre-set by the ANC. Most of these volunteers live in public housing, many of whom suffer from ailments that prevent them from working fulltime and they struggle to make ends meet. This form of “non-profit in training” (Interview 17, former ANC staff) not

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32 The ANC budget reduction from an initial $250,000 in the first two years to $100,000 annually thereafter is built into the model and imposed across all thirteen sites.
only functions as workfare and the cultivation of ‘active citizenship’, it also overburdens residents with commitments and time demands that prohibit more autonomous activism.

Meanwhile, despite the persistent calls for involvement, many residents expressed during focus groups, that there are no opportunities for leadership through the agencies in the community. Others expressed frustration that the community development workers recently hired to organize in KGO have been brought in from other areas rather than drawing on the skills and knowledges (or local social capital) of current active residents. Despite the United Way’s insistence that they are “experts” at identifying the kind of people that “are good at this [community development] kind of work” (Interview B17, United Way staff), one community member that has attempted collaboration across ANC sites, has had a contrasting experience:

Advocacy also requires a lot of strategy, we’re not giving it to people. I also believe that some of the workers hired at different ANCs, they have zero or below average knowledge of community development, social movement, resident engagement and advocacy…This is what I’m very critical of…their capacity is really, really poor. They don’t have any vision so they’re just doing what the United Way says. United Way can’t do everything, you have to identify what is needed and take it to United Way for them to support you. You need to train them as well! They are the ones who are training residents, with no skill whatsoever and it’s not helpful at all. (Interview 15, Scarborough resident/activist)

This observation destabilizes the common stereotypes around social capital in poor communities. In this case, the so-called ‘experts’ are failing to generate the necessary stocks of social trust and efficacy precisely because of their lack of capacity in movement building and advocacy. This
suggests that the purpose behind the ANCs is less about building social capital, but about establishing United Way’s authority over community governance.

Similarly, the above passage provokes deeper concerns surrounding the explicit depoliticization of activism that occurs through incorporation into the ANC framework. While the resources enable new activities that could not otherwise be supported in under-resourced communities, the institutional structure also constrains other pre-existing forms of mobilizing:

Where this is institutionalized. There’s money attached to it, which is really good but then there’s all this liability. You know, we had to push back to get to be able to... We could buy people subs from Mr. Sub but we couldn’t pay people to cook for each another, that’s my favourite example, eventually we were able to do it but like, it actually puts up barriers for the community to build. ‘No you can’t get in that car with that person, No you can’t interact with that person because now we’re an institution, we’re an organization, we’re incorporated, we’re a corporation and you can’t interact with individuals that way because we could get sued’. And that’s painful, that’s really painful. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

Again, the way that ANC was designed has a very specific mandate and specific deliverables and it’s very difficult for people to come out of the barriers. I think the notion of investing in social capital was great but how it was framed is challenging. (Interview 15, Scarborough resident/activist).

Through this institutionalization, community organizing comes to align with market models of accountancy and liability, including the implementation of minute taking and corporate sponsorship of practices that had previously been free of market modalities (cf. Mayer 2003;
The ANC establishes supports for building a residents association, but as indicated above, those walls also set boundaries that delimit both who is in and who is out, as well as what kind of activities are actionable.

4.3.3 Community by Exclusion

One resident noted that connection to the ANC and to the storefront is a form of power that is unequally enjoyed and contributes to exclusion in the community. Others consolidated this point by repeatedly emphasizing that these agencies are the “gatekeepers” (Interview 27, Scarborough resident).

And people who are connected to the networks get more privilege than anyone else…Whose well connected to the Storefront? Who is not? That also changes the power balance, I tell you. And to me that is the biggest factor at this moment. You can use certain mechanisms for people to be engaged and that can be counterproductive at times. (Interview B15, Scarborough resident/activist)

For those tapped into the network, there is a high degree of support but one resident activist expressed that it is nearly impossible to “do it without them” (Interview 27); autonomous projects are frowned upon or cast as invalid because they do not conform to the broader neighbourhood project. At the same time, the very construction of the residents’ association as the preferred form of engagement establishes a mainstream model of organizing that excludes other ‘communities’ within KGO, those that do not fit the ideal of a responsible citizen (Cruikshank 1999; Rose 1996). This most perceptibly impacts people with mental health struggles, those living in transitional housing, and sex trade workers. When questioned about whether they attempted to organize with residents of the motel shelters, residents’ association
members deflected responsibility, citing that they “worked too hard to build community” (Interview 23) to work with those considered to be transient.

The people we have most interaction with is in public housing, not much with transitional. They’re not really seen as part of the community because most don’t stay there… I don’t think it’s our responsibility… I guess we can reach out to them, but it’s very difficult because they’re not part of our networks and if they were they’d get a lot of support… often they’re very isolated and it’s very difficult to reach out to them so we just work with who we can get a hold of. (Interview 24, Scarborough resident and community organizer)

Mental health struggles elicited stronger aversion than motel residency. This is in spite of the fact that depression, chronic stress, and other illnesses are pervasive in this neighbourhood that has lost a number of residents to suicide: “So yeah, I think if anything is going to drag this community down, keep it down, I think it will be mental health issues” (Interview 1, Scarborough resident and community organizer).

Sex trade workers are similarly slighted as a ‘problem’ that is unwanted in the ANC cultivated community. The majority of the women that do sex work in KGO also experience precarious housing situations, many of them are mothers, have suffered abuse and/or have physical or mental healthcare needs that often go untreated as they face ongoing discrimination and judgement based on their line of work. As a result, women that experience high levels of risk on a daily basis have limited avenues for support or public participation:

Sex work has also been pushed further into the margins in Scarborough and also downtown. It’s shocking how little mainstream support there is for sex worker
programs, and harm reduction. They support it in theory but not in practice…refuse to give program space, resources. (Interview 21, community program worker)

Interviewees raised concerns over the nature of the organizing that does take place, querying whether festivals, meetings and barbecues will actually transform life chances, “the ANC's, are much more interested in organizing the community market than in fighting poverty and crime” (Interview 21, community program worker). One resident has described the ANC efforts so far, as a missed opportunity to address policy and systemic issues: “Investment in social capital is bringing people together, whether it's working is another question…In terms of poverty reduction it is not making any difference” (Interview B13, Scarborough resident/activist). This resident has approached multiple ANC sites in an attempt to develop a coordinated effort to fight poverty but has been met with resistance. “Poverty reduction needs to be linked with the grassroots…how do we impact change? Address policy? If you don’t do this, what is the point?” (Interview B13, Scarborough resident/activist). This resident poses a key question, if poverty reduction isn’t the point of social capital building, what is? Shifts in the form of organizing that have taken place since inception of the PN framework suggest that the new mainstreaming of targeted community development works to relieve dissent rather than poverty. The framework responds to discontent arising from poverty and offers support for resident organizing but does so in a highly circumscribed way that does not challenge the structures and policies that exacerbate poverty. More disruptive forms of resident organizing are constrained or depoliticized as they are funneled through the ANC model. Participants noted that the emphasis on festivals, gazebos, and celebratory events missed the point; that they were distracting activists from more concrete issues while excluding people with more precarious needs from participating in neighbourhood ‘change’:
What do you do after having great samosas and a chocolate fondue festival? What happens after that? (Interview 15, Scarborough resident/activist)

It’s totally to squash insurgency, it’s funded and directed by the city! They don’t touch that stuff with a ten foot poll…There are steps before the festivals and gazebos to reach…Those folks are not able to go, enjoy the festivals and markets and stuff, people need to have a basic standard of adequate living. (Interview 21, community program worker)

The institutional framework that plays such a foundational role in the ANC is not employed toward a broader project of structural change despite the heralding that ‘change’ is the purpose behind the strategy (Ferenc 2011, October 15: R2). Although the thirteen ANC sites are mandated to attend cross-site meetings that bring together ANC staff from each PN, there has been no perceived effort to cultivate coordinated cross-site actions to leverage that institutional power. A former ANC worker comments on what they saw happening at cross-site meetings:

Nothing. I guess, I felt like. You know what the idea of the cross-site meeting is, is like this opportunity to network with other sites and share challenges and successes and that was always how it was framed. It just turned into a little update session that didn’t really have a lot of structure. Never got really critical about the work that we were doing and never really took the opportunity to add value to what we were doing…It took me three meetings just to get an item on the agenda. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

The key items missing from the ANC agenda are the targeting of systemic social change and poverty reduction. Although one can argue that gathering residents and promoting social capital
is foundational to building a broader movement, the depoliticization of poverty through the strategy does more than just fail to eradicate it. By obscuring dependence on corporate wealth and the neoliberalized state, this targeted approach to governing the impoverished further entrenches inequality, which solidifies ‘community dependence’ on third-sector intervention.

There’s just key things that needed to happen from United Way for that to be, for Action for Neighbourhood Change to be an effective movement and to use it’s potential for power properly, and to address anti-poverty initiatives. Frankly, United Way, they wanted to get into anti-poverty stuff because everybody knows that’s where the real change is, but they’re so mainstream that they’re scared of their relationships with the city and their relationships with rich donors. You want to rock the boat, the individuals want to rock the boat but everybody knows that organizationally, presenting a sewing club that newcomer women come to, that has childminding and whatever, is really safe and nice. But it doesn’t get to the grit and it doesn’t really address why people are living in a particular way, why gaps in income are increasing in North America. Cross-sites. There’s a lot of potential there but I never felt like it was coming close to living up to its potential…

So there’s no real effort to eliminate poverty or to improve the lot of the people that live there. (Interview 17)

However, though the strategy does not tackle poverty or economic justice, it does prompt change in the neighbourhoods in which it operates: it institutionalizes and sanitizes activism. The ANC framework erects barriers around communities and particular forms of (more radical) organizing while facilitating social service style community development. The strategy certainly brings people together but it directs the nature and structure of that organizing into a prescribed
formation yet relieves the United Way of responsibility as they purport that it is ‘all up to the
neighbourhoods’. This enables the United Way to promote the ANC as one of their success
stories, that they have empowered residents to take charge (Ferenc 2011, October 15: R2). But if
the supposed ‘resident-led’ projects fail, than that failure is not on the UW because they left the
‘tools in the hands of the residents’.

At the same time, those success stories come with a price that is paid by local communities
but financed by the corporate donors that are so “vital to fundraising” (Rubin 2011, October 15:
R4). Under pressure to secure the requisite funds to provide core support for member agencies
and conduct social research, as an organization the United Way relies on the packaging of
success stories to convince people and businesses to donate (cf Smith 2007). These stories are
most effective if they evoke sympathy for needy communities, communities that United Way is
‘making a difference in’. Direct corporate donations accounted for as much as $21 “of the $113
million raised last year (2010)” (Rubin 2011, October 15: R4), with another $15 million from
payroll deductions and an estimated $55 million from individuals contributing more than $1000
who are also speculated to have donated at the corporate level. The relationship is symbiotic.
Corporations receive a refundable public relations boost and the UW meets its fundraising target,
depthening its foothold in the structure of power and governance in Canadian society. If the UW
actually did aim at unseating corporate power and structural causes of poverty we could expect
an immediate claw-back of donations that would jeopardize the one source of core funding for
member agencies. As much as they provide essential resources for social services and programs,
the UW’s branding impediment supersedes the need for critical reflection to improve practices
and social outcomes:
It’s good to see the work funded, it needs to be funded, but United Way’s probably, it would have been way better if it was done in the traditional model or if they really just put themselves out on a limb. Everybody’s got their shine on in the non-profit world. The last ten years have been, gotta put forward a positive face, gotta eliminate the guilty emotions that have been solicited by like World Vision videos and stuff like that. For years and years and years now it’s been this reaction like that. The United Way seems to typify it, to the point where they stagnate their organizational learning by not being critical about what their doing, just for a second to be critical and say, ask for critical feedback. Because you can’t improve, and you can’t learn as an organization if you’re always just leading with that shine. You’ve always got a shadow side and eventually that shadow side is going to catch up with you, one way or another because you’re gonna become totally ineffective. So I feel like the ANC project suffers from the best examples of that. (Interview 17, former ANC staff)

My purpose here was not to discredit the United Way, indeed hundreds of vital social service organizations depend on their funding. While, there is much room for improvements in practice and management of the ANC project, responsibility does not lie with the UW alone. Although the UW conducts groundbreaking research documenting social trends and calling for action on poverty, in practice they are much more limited in how far they can push institutional boundaries. The same post-welfarist system that valorizes charity while destabilizing social citizenship is what elevates the social service sector to the point of creating fourth state status but without direct accountability to residents or citizens.
4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed two key questions: how does a neighbourhood shift from in decline to priority? And, what are the impacts of the Toronto Priority Neighbourhood on community organizing? I have demonstrated that the PN strategy represents much more than a mere program or funding allocation but indeed advances processes of neoliberal governance. This form of selective social resource distribution is predicated on a rejection of welfare state ideals of universality and an embrace of competitive individualism where citizens must contribute to the needs of a ‘civilized’ and entrepreneurial nation. Accompanied by the retreat of the state from direct provision of social welfare programs has been the downloading of this responsibility to third sector agencies, which has made them “doubly responsible” for providing services and for training “community members to assume their moral duties” (Ilcan and Basok 2004: 130). The concept of targeting zeroes in on those ‘problem people’ that are seen as not yet in possession of the skills and values needed to succeed. Hence, neighbourhoods and residents are targeted because they are ‘in need’ of assistance. The magic bullet of engagement is expected to cure their pathological behaviour so they can join the ranks of mainstream actors creating opportunities for themselves.

The internalization of these neoliberal modes of responsibilization and entrepreneurialism is pervasive and permeates even well-meaning approaches to poverty management and community development. The Toronto Priority Neighbourhood Strategy was designed in response to an alarming concentration of racialized poverty, combined with decades of neglect and underinvestment in thirteen inner suburban neighbourhoods. This investment and coordination of social services and programs has been absolutely crucial to help narrow the gaps in access and infrastructure in some of Toronto’s most marginalized communities. However,
despite tri-partite funding for the strategy there has been no coordinated action or explicit intent to target poverty through policy and collaboration with upper-tiers of government. The result is a missed opportunity to employ knowledge generated on the ground, in ‘places’, to establish broader policy-oriented solutions. Rather, than target poverty, this approach targets ‘the poor’ themselves through new governance structures that operate through the cultivation of ‘community’ and institutionalization of community organizing.

The above issues were most clearly manifest in the roll-out of the Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) strategy, as analyzed in the KGO neighbourhood. The key limitations stem from the targeted focus on the ‘effects’ as opposed to the causes of poverty, which immediately severs the ‘solution’ from the core problem. The ANC model does not at any point orient explicitly around poverty elimination or economic justice, as expected it does nothing to advance or promote structural or policy change. Instead, the ANC mandate to build social capital and resident engagement in the priority neighbourhoods takes aim at changing individual behaviours to ameliorate the ‘risks’ rather than the production or even the effects of poverty. This process results in the individualization of problems that have deep structural roots, while offloading responsibilities onto individuals and perpetuating the stigmatization of whole communities. Residents are called upon to take responsibility for their own fate and that of their newly defined community that has been cultivated through the PN framework. Yet the institutional practices of the ANC thwart community ownership over the initiative and channel autonomous forms of activism into the branded ANC project.

Although community members have demonstrated exceptional social capital and skill in community organizing, both prior and independent to the ANC and PN designation, the expanding influence of the PN network means that those that are unconnected are excluded or
marginalized from the primary force of ‘change’ in the neighbourhood. The consequences are severe. Because the PN strategy and the ANC in particular are positioned as a solution to poverty with the semblance of resident leadership, the failures of the strategy to create change in poverty outcomes appears to be the fault of the residents. Few stop to question the misdiagnosis of a perceived lack of social capital that at once drains the capacities of residents while naturalizing stereotypes and stigmatization of ‘the poor’. This response to poverty that is directed toward managing the ‘impoverished’ actively prohibits more fundamental social change. It does this by both obstructing and upholding the values of the neoliberal state through the management of ‘community governance’, and through it, the constraint of social mobilization. United Way’s dependence on corporate wealth, combined with the entrenchment of community dependence on the social service sector, effectively contains, transforms, and redirects activism in poor communities into maintaining the very same relations of power that perpetuate poverty.

The increasingly widespread concern over the suburbanization of inequality and concentrated poverty, however misguided the solutions may be, is imperative. A movement away from behavioural explanations for poverty to one that accounts for and targets structural causes is essential for building relationships needed to develop more responsible practices of change. Residents possess considerable knowledge and experience that can directly contribute to more reflexive decision-making in and beyond communities. This can only happen if power is distributed in a way that actually recognizes and takes direction from those that experience the effects of political-economic inequalities and social marginalization.
5 Conclusion

*Events belie forecasts; to the extent that events are historic, they upset calculations. They may even overturn strategies that provided for their possible occurrence. Because of their conjunctural nature, events upset the structures that made them possible...Under the impacts of events people and ideas are revealed for what they are.*  
(Lefebvre 1969: 7-8)

*Racisms become institutionally normalized in and through spatial configurations, just as social space is made to seem natural, a given, by being conceived and defined in racial terms.*  
(Goldberg 1993: 185)

At the beginning of this dissertation I introduced two questions that motivated my writing: How is suburban decline produced? What do responses to suburban decline illuminate about current regimes of governance, and the potential for social change? I approached my research as a political intervention in partnership with activist organizations, social agencies, and Scarborough residents to contest the systemic and policy instigators of social polarization and concentrated poverty. Over the course of this work I have probed the underlying dynamics through which the production of suburban decline re-spatializes inequality between city and suburb to reproduce relations of socio-spatial dominance and marginalization. Analysis of suburban decline locates the manifestation of political-economic and imperial forces that are reshaping relations of power globally, and at the sub/urban scale. By tracing the interconnections between suburban expansion and inner city decline and repositioning it in relation to the reverse trend that we’re now seeing in suburban decline and downtown gentrification, I have
demonstrated that these broad trends are not merely seminal to contemporary urban change. They are also interlinked through systems and practices of dominance and oppression that are built into the colonial state. However, when I started this research process in 2006, I was occupied by a different, yet related question. I spent the first few years of my research asking whether contemporary socio-spatial shifts in sub/urban landscapes were prompting a new political habitus and social space for radical change. Though my perceptions of this potential have continued to motivate my activism, it has at many times confounded my research process and theorizing. That I have been forced to focus on an ongoing recasting of colonization in the production of sub/urban space speaks to exactly why understanding the causes and implications of ‘suburban decline’ is crucial. Increasingly, suburbs are spaces were (post)colonial struggles are taking place, prompting new modes of management and control but also exposing vulnerabilities in dominant structures of power. It is through these vulnerabilities that new spaces of radical potential for counter-narratives and alternative models of politics and action may take root (Lefebvre 1991; 2003; Thoburn 2003).

While there is an extensive literature on the effects of gentrification in the communities in which it takes place, there is very little research that examines its broader impacts, perhaps even enablers, in adjacent regions. My work fills a gap by not merely asking and seeking to theorize this question but in attempting to contest these impacts in practice. Similarly, suburban decline itself remains understudied with the vast majority of research still responding to inner city decline and the parasitic effects of suburbanization (e.g. Beauregard 2006). While it is clear that low-density development is ecologically unsustainable, in taking a metropolitan approach I attempt to develop a more nuanced analysis of suburban development, expansion, and decline in relation to the central city.
Although the relationship between inner city decline and postwar suburban growth is well-known, the inverse co-constitution of suburban decline and gentrification has not received sufficient scholarly attention. This inversion—occurring in cities all over North America—flips the myth of suburban conformity on its head. Inner suburbs are now home to growing populations of lower income residents, new immigrants from the Global South, and indigenous peoples (Hulchanski 2007; Short et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2001; Walks 2001). Meanwhile the residue of suburban homogeneity, sprawl, and racial exclusion legitimizes hostility toward older suburban spaces, which propels social distance between the gentrifying centre and the inner periphery. Consequently, the segregation of suburban poverty appears as natural when it is actually produced through complex imbrications between racialization, political-economic marginalization, and ongoing colonialism.

The escalation of suburban poverty and racial segregation is an alarming trend that has stirred cities all over Canada and the United States to develop responses to suburban decline. Yet, development and implementation of policy has thus far been short-sighted, with a focus on immediate effects of decline rather than analysis of its historical production—as demonstrated by ‘targeted’ social policy and gentrification strategies that have been gaining prominence in Canada, the US, and the UK (Beatty et al. 2010; Cowen and Parlette 2011; Curley 2010; Freiler 2005; Gittell 2001; Helms et al. 2007). The co-dependence between city and suburb, evident through rotating decline, demonstrates that gentrification is not a panacea to sub/urban disinvestment. Through suburban decline we simply see the respatialization rather than alleviation of urban poverty and marginalization (Jarkowsky 2003). This reality demands more fulsome analysis of how systemic structural inequalities drive the social practices that become concretized through sub/urban space; specifically how interlocking systems of oppression
underpin the colonial nation and national space. In turn this requires taking responsibility for inherited white privilege in attempting to build more equitable spaces.

I argue that legacies of colonization and imperialism have been, and are, fundamental to the constitution and maintenance of Canada as a ‘great white’ nation of the Global North (Baldwin et al. 2011). The construction of racial hierarchies with Euro-white populations imposed at the top, have long been employed to mark ‘difference’ and a supposed inferiority of those who are cast as ‘raced’. The systems of colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and capitalism are mutually constitutive. These systems of domination form the bedrock of the Canadian colonial state and infuse national institutions through which their violence becomes systemic and invisible. The production of space, as in patterns of sub/urbanization, points to the ways in which hierarchy and oppression are inscribed and naturalized through socio-spatial relations (Dua and Robertson 2009; Goldberg 1993; Peake and Ray 2001: Razack 2002; Wallis et al. 2009). However, moments of social struggle are also moments of destabilization that make structures of domination and control visible and hence vulnerable.

Other scholars have demonstrated that suburbs are central to analysis of the massive shifts in political-economy, patterns of urbanization, and social relations during the postwar period (Kelly 2009; Kruse and Sugrue 2006). The image of Bourgeois utopias that has a strangle-hold on popular understandings of suburbs resonates with dominant practices occurring in the postwar period (Davis 1990; Fishman 1987; Sennett 1970). Suburban expansion was tightly entwined with nationalist priorities to rebuild and stabilize the ‘nation’ after the war by promoting mass production and consumption while mitigating the threat of communism and labour strife (Harris 2003; 2004; Kelly 1993; May 1999). Welfare state benefits and credit-financing for ideal citizens –white, nuclear families –to purchase suburban homes, literally
helped to reproduce white, middle class hetero-normative social dominance in sub/urban space and in the nation (Strong-boag 1991). Although, these dominant imaginaries were never fully realized in practice, the history of suburbs as bastions of exclusion and emblems of the postwar Fordist state is central to the ways in which ‘suburban decline’ is problematized and addressed.

Condemnation of suburbia has segregated city and suburb in the literature and in spatial practices, which has reproduced social distance between centre and periphery. Categorizations of suburbs as banal, homogenous, and iconic of sprawl and regressive politics, reproduces suburban stigma and hostility that is projected onto residents. This is particularly problematic when the new diversity of inner suburban residents are increasingly racialized, poor, and struggling to navigate deteriorating and inhospitable landscapes. Frameworks of environmental determinism deny and stunt the potential for change in suburban spaces, which have often been, and are currently, key sites of social and political change.

Contemporary shifts in the global economy have forced open the previously restricted Canadian border to immigrants from non-European countries. Neoliberal globalization has threatened the National state with irrelevance and has functioned to normalize the rollback of state spending on social programs and services (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Brodie 1996; Jessop et al. 2005; McDowell 1991; Peck and Tickell 2002). Deindustrialization of countries in the global north has devastated livelihoods and sub/urban spaces alike. All of these trends threaten the suburban dream and with it, national discourses of belonging that are premised on white settler socio-spatial dominance. ‘Suburban decline’ encapsulates two crises: the dissolution of the social welfare state and the encroachment of racialized ‘others’ onto the white space of sub/urban and national belonging.
This dissertation examined moments of social struggle that have emerged in response to suburban decline in the Toronto inner suburb of Scarborough: the demolition of a retail mall that functioned as a rare source of community space in the dispersed suburban landscape; controversy surrounding the implementation of the Kingston Road motel shelter system; and the introduction of the Priority Neighbourhood framework for investment and ‘resident engagement’ in Toronto’s declining suburbs. In each of these struggles we see both a destabilization of existing power structures and new mechanisms of control to contain the threat posed by new populations and modes of organizing.

The Kingston Road motels illuminate the dual production of inner suburban decline and the re-centering of wealth and privilege through gentrification of central Toronto. This process was itself reliant on inherited structures of domination that are rooted in ongoing practice and effacement of colonialism that ‘places’ racialized and impoverished others into devalued spaces. The changing demographics brought on through new migration patterns, and encapsulated by the motel shelters, represented the encroachment of the ‘other’ onto the white space of the suburban and national imaginary. The motels themselves can be seen as a containment strategy to maintain socio-spatial distance between the emerging ‘third world’ within Canada and the ‘first world’ of ‘Canadians’, even as these divisions were upset by shared spaces, such as schools.

The 2005 implementation of the Priority Neighbourhood strategy was positioned as a direct response to the crisis of concentrated suburban poverty. Yet the strategy targets the behaviours of the impoverished themselves rather than the causes and effects of poverty on those that experience it. This new framework epitomizes the shift away from welfare state universalism and an embrace of one form of neoliberalization. In relation to the globalization of governance, space matters profoundly. Through this glocalized strategy, ‘place’ is mobilized in
powerful ways to naturalize spatial inequalities and re-spatialize borders around political activity or crises that threaten the nation state and neoliberalism. ‘Responsibilizing’ non- or non-ideal citizens through ‘resident engagement’ led by third-sector organizations is employed as a technique to manage abject populations and stifle dissent (Ilcan and Basok 2004; Mayer 2003). Through governmentality practices of self-rule and social management, the colonization practices of the state are recast and diffused through third-sector organizations.

Meanwhile, the struggles surrounding the demolition of Morningside Mall demonstrate new and unexpected appropriations of privatized suburban space for public use. Though we saw the (actively opposed) physical destruction of this new social space, returning the site to its function as an auto-oriented shopping plaza for middle class residents, we also see an emergent politics of anger and hope for developing and claiming a new differential space for social transformation (Lefebvre 1991: 52). This anger and hope is what drove my activism and research and where I see the potential for a postcolonial-marxist politics to push for the dismantling of hierarchal social orders and toward a more equitable sub/urban space.

Because of the dominant narratives and histories surrounding suburbs, they are powerfully associated with white, middle class nationalism. Consequently, these spaces are central to reworking the borders of citizenship, redefining who belongs in suburban spaces and in the national narrative. At a point where cities and suburbs in the global north are increasingly defined by immigration from the global south, the patterns of segregated suburban poverty evokes hope for a “magical urbanism” (Davis 2001; Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005), a potential for radical politics.

The crises surrounding suburban decline—as evidenced through the three struggles analyzed in this dissertation—identifies fault-lines in the dominant hegemony. These moments
of struggle are simultaneously key points of destabilization. Analysis of these particular moments in this specific place illuminates the politics of control and containment through processes of colonial and neoliberal governance. By identifying these processes at work I seek to make a political intervention in denaturalizing and unsettling relations of dominance and oppression that are built into socio-spatial structures and practices. Through the formation of new networks and an historical-materialist account of the intersecting structures of dominance that are remaking sub/urban space we are brought back to Lefebvre’s method of regression-progression (2003). The Amazing Place coalition that informed this dissertation was an attempt to unite living theory with actionable knowledge in order to harvest the seeds of a new space for transformation. As Lefebvre comments on the abstract space of global capitalism, I would concede, that “despite—or rather because of—its negativity, abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space ‘differential space’, because, inasmuch as abstract space tends toward homogeneity…a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences” (Lefebvre 1991: 52).
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Appendix 1: Reverse Chronological list of articles for media analysis in paper two

1. It's check-out time for Scarborough's storied motel strip
   

2. HOME OF THE WEEK / A CHALET IN THE WILDS OF SCARBOROUGH
   

3. Suspect in stabbing leaps to death off bridge
   

4. Man, 54, in custody after double shooting
   

5. Police negotiating with man to surrender after allegedly abducting 10-month-old daughter;
   [Toronto Edition]
   

6. Mystery man sought in woman's death; [Toronto Edition]
   

7. The king of Kingston Road; [Toronto Edition]
   

8. Three charged, others hunted in brutal Toronto gang rape;; [Final Edition]
   

9. Little-known banker slays giant: Options weighed, then popular incumbent dumped; [Toronto Edition]
   
10. ‘Gimme shelter’

11. Three charged in Scarborough motel slaying; [ONT Edition]

12. Father who cut toddler’s throat pleads guilty, gets life sentence

13. Rental market opening up, study suggests: Vacancy rate nears 3% in buildings with 50 or more units; [Toronto Edition]

14. ‘It’s going to be the Wild West’: Plan lacks restraints on development, critics say; [Toronto Edition]
Peter Kuitenbrouwer, National Post, Don Mills, Ont.: Sep 17, 2002, pg. A.16.FR

15. Residents split on community redevelopment

16. Avenue of dreams: Under Toronto’s new Official Plan, the future is in Scarborough; [Toronto Edition]
Peter Kuitenbrouwer, National Post, Don Mills, Ont.: Jun 1, 2002, pg. TO.1.FR

17. Hundreds bid Alexis farewell

18. Eviction turns strangers into saviours; [National Edition]

Elaine Carey, Toronto Star, Toronto, Ont.: Jun 9, 2001, pg. B.01
20. When a simple room would do; [Toronto Edition]

21. New tide of refugee claimants swamping Toronto shelters

22. You just knew there would be a sticky thing: She's head over heels and has managed to kick her habit; [Toronto Edition]

23. Mother's dilemma: sick baby, no OHIP; [Toronto Edition]

24. City Council in action: trashier than Adams Mine

25. Hatred case ends in acquittal

26. A warm place to call home

27. Homeless threat haunts families on the edge; The solution? Build the political will to create more affordable housing; [1 Edition]
   Frances Bula, Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: Oct 23, 1999. pg. 1

28. Soaring numbers tax Toronto's family shelters Serious concerns raised as underfunded hostels strain under an ever-increasing load of more, and longer, stays

29. Child poverty all too real on dingy strip A stretch of Kingston Road puts faces to grim statistics in a new Toronto study
30. Scarborough by-election; [1 Edition]
   **Toronto Star**. Toronto, Ont.: **Sep 22, 1999**, pg. 1

31. Racial attacks on the rise in Toronto; [1 Edition]
   Michelle Shephard. **Toronto Star**. Toronto, Ont.: **Aug 17, 1999**, pg. 1

32. [In his June 16 letter, Gerald Whyte of Toronto states that Scarborough does not permit emergency shelters for the homeless and disadvantaged]; [1 Edition]
   **Toronto Star**. Toronto, Ont.: **Jun 23, 1999**, pg. 1

33. Warm days fail to reduce homelessness: 'Doesn't fit normal cycle': Year-round shelters can't cope with increased demand; [Toronto Edition]

34. Skinheads being singled out in gypsy demo, lawyers say: Charged with hate crime; [Toronto Edition]
   Desmond Brown. **National Post**. Don Mills, Ont.: **Apr 14, 1999**, pg. B.3

35. Ootes rapped for position on low-cost housing fund: Deputy mayor out of touch, says task force head; [National Edition]
   Don Wanagas. **National Post**. Don Mills, Ont.: **Jan 21, 1999**, pg. B.2

36. Gypsies in Heaven Whatever happened to those 1,500 Roma who came to Canada last year, sure they would find Paradise on Earth?

37. Homeless numbers may double Winter shelter closings, influx of men will contribute to increase

38. The hope and heartbreak of motel people: Refugee claimants jam Toronto's Kingston Road strip. April Lindgren and Jacquie Miller report.; [Final Edition]
   April Lindgren and Jacquie Miller. **The Ottawa Citizen**. Ottawa, Ont.: **Mar 8, 1998**, pg. A.6

39. Proposed tightening of immigration laws sparks Toronto demo; [Final Edition]

40. Hope is Gypsies' greatest asset OPTIMISM / Vista of future buoys penniless Roma.

41. 8 charged over anti-Gypsy protest Men, youths accused of promoting hatred

42. Race to the bottom leads to all Ontario

43. Public buildings considered for homeless shelters Metro committee cites cafeteria as example of place to house transients as hostels are overwhelmed by demand

44. Laurels . . . no darts; [Final Edition]

45. Metro hostels adopt emergency measures Shelters taxed to capacity by Gypsy influx set aside beds on 'priority system' for first time

46. Gypsy influx floods shelters Metro hostels, already overtaxed, pushed 'precariously close' to capacity, officials say

47. If banks can fund tennis tourneys . . .

48. SHELTER The drift to the bottom Among the surging number of single mothers who have taken refuge in temporary shelters in Toronto are an entirely new class of homeless - formerly secure career women. The biggest fear for all the families is how the distressing conditions will affect the children.
49. Officer aids children shivering in bus shelter at night Scruffy off-duty appearance draws wary response from pair

50. Clubs offer sports and crafts for 'problem' kids; [Final Edition]
   By Ashante Infantry TORONTO STAR. Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: Nov 21, 1996. pg. SC.3

51. Costly motels serve as housing shelters Expense double that of welfare rates
   MARGARET PHILP. The Globe and Mail. Toronto, Ont.: Feb 21, 1996. pg. A.1

52. The welfare plans of Les Lenkowsky

53. Johns on the spot sent to school Metro Toronto fights prostitution by targeting customers, and judges will offer men with no records a choice between a day in class or a trial.

54. 7 charged with fraud against poor Government accused of failing to protect the vulnerable

55. TORONTO IN BRIEF Two charged in killing

56. TORONTO IN BRIEF Metro slayings total 74

57. TORONTO IN BRIEF Slain motel clerk identified

58. Woman slain in motel room was to go to granddad's party; [ME1 Edition]
   Wendy Darroch TORONTO STAR. Toronto Star. Toronto, Ont.: Feb 20, 1990. pg. B.7

59. Girl's disappearance the stuff of parents' nightmares Cry for help by 16-year-old went unanswered
60. Man charged in killing in Scarborough motel

61. Boys, 12 to 15, charged as pimps, report says Toronto called centre of juvenile prostitution

62. Man faces charge of attempted murder

63. Board picks consultants on Guild Inn

64. Scarberia: in praise of urban banality

65. GREAT GETAWAYS Step right up to Scarborough's surprises]

66. Pistol-whipped motel owner orders bullet-proof shield

67. Accusation of murder prompts mistrial ruling in slaying-plot case

68. Asked by boss's girl friend to kill lawyer, man says
Appendix 2: Interview Participants

Primary Interviews, specific to dissertation:

1. Scarborough Resident (Guild) and Community Organizer
2. Caring Alliance Member
3. Scarborough Resident (TCHC)
4. Scarborough Resident and Social Agency Staff
5. Family Residence Staff
6. Scarborough Homelessness Committee former member (committee has disbanded)
7. Caring Alliance Member
8. Scarborough Resident
9. Scarborough Resident
10. Scarborough Resident
11. Scarborough Resident
12. Scarborough Resident
13. City of Toronto Staff
14. Scarborough Youth Worker (former)
15. Scarborough Resident and Community Organizer
16. Guildwood Village Residents Association, President (former)
17. ANC staff (former)
18. Social Agency Staff, East Scarborough Storefront
19. Caring Alliance Member
20. Social Agency Staff, East Scarborough Storefront
21. Social Program staff, outreach and harm reduction
22. Streets to Homes staff
23. Residents Rising Member
24. Residents Rising Member
25. Residents Rising Member
26. Guildwood Resident
27. Residents Rising Member
28. Scarborough First Nations Resident

Secondary Interviews, derived from related collaborative research project:

B1. Native Child and Family Services staff
B2. East Scarborough Storefront staff
B3. City of Toronto staff
B4. Public Health Nurse
B5. Tamil Mental Health Program support staff
B6. Young Women of Colour program leader
B7. Tamil program leader
B8. Metcalf Foundation staff
B9. Food Security program leader
B10. Youth Challenge Fund staff
B11. United Way staff
B12. ANC staff (former)
B13. Community Resident
B14. Gabriel Dumont Non-profit Homes, staff
B15. East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, staff
B16. East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, staff
B17. United Way staff
B18. TCHC staff