Non-profiting for “a more inclusive creative city”

Tracking the gentrification frontier from Toronto’s downtown to the disinvested inner-suburbs

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Abstract

By tracking the shift to "more inclusive creative city" planning from Toronto's economically-prioritized downtown to its disinvested inner-suburbs, this Major Paper argues that the non-profit sector is increasingly playing an instrumental, although often overlooked, role in the production of gentrification. As entities that coincide with urban economic restructuring from managerialism to entrepreneurialism, non-profit organizations are emerging as necessary players in public-private partnership redevelopment projects because of their special abilities to maintain cost-cutting agendas, re-direct public funds, legitimize private capital flows, and build consensus through program delivery. The paper examines the non-profit organization, Artscape, as it spearheads the new trajectory in Toronto's creative competitiveness agenda with an initiative called *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC). The context is set for this case study through an overview of how Toronto's socio-spatial polarization has been exacerbated by specific "place-based" municipal programs, while highlighting the instrumental role of the non-profit sector in extending the creative city's geographic reach.

For thirty years, Artscape has played a catalytic role in the transformation of now gentrifying/gentrified downtown Toronto neighbourhoods through the development of artist housing and "community cultural hubs," while maintaining a contradictory anti-gentrification mandate. Setting a philanthropic gaze on Toronto's inner-suburbs as its next frontier, the organization has re-packaged the creative city script as a therapeutic solution to so-called inner-suburban "blight." Artscape's first CSOC development in the racialized, low-income area of Weston is expected to serve as a model for other inner-suburban neighbourhoods. The Artscape Weston Hub is embedded in a broader privatization and densification scheme and is positioned as the centrepiece of a "revitalization" strategy that aims to brand Weston as a destination for private investors, visitors and upscale residents. An investigation into the local critical discourse leading up to the construction of the non-profit-led, "inclusionary" project reveals correlating displacement pressures now faced by Weston's marginalized residents. Drawing from the case study, this Major Paper concludes with considerations to some possible routes of anti-gentrification resistance in the face of political threats posed by the non-profit sector.

Foreword

My Major Paper synthesizes the two areas of concentration in my Plan of Study: “Neoliberal Urbanism” and “The Non-profit Sector.” The research presented here, along with coursework, field experiences and literature review, has achieved the following Learning Objectives:

To develop my knowledge in…

1.b. critical perspectives on urban development processes and the particular ways cities have become central sites of neoliberal experimentation.
A pivotal point in my studies at MES was the encounter with the various explanations for gentrification, and how it has evolved into a global urban strategy. My curiosity in the urban periphery, and particularly Toronto’s inner-suburbs, emerged as I developed a deeper understanding of the consequences of economic prioritization of inner-cities, and a desire to surface voices of marginalized geographies.

1.c. how concepts of culture and creativity are differently mobilized through grassroots and professional practices, policy, and planning, as well as the precarities and tensions wrought by culture-led urban development.
The research gap that I attempt to address in this Major Paper was initially identified in my review of critical literature on the creative class/city script.

2.a. the non-profit sector: its emergence and persistence, and its implications on governance, citizenship and political social movements.
Coming from previous employment experience in the non-profit world, I entered MES with a concern for the sector’s sustainability. My discomfort with its compromises within “funding traps” is what motivated me to explore more complex (unsympathetic) political-economic analyses of the non-profit sector and the multi-pronged position it holds in neoliberal capitalist restructuring.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

North American cities have witnessed not only the return of economic prioritization of inner-city cores, but also an interrelated rise in suburbanization of poverty (Cowen, 2005; Parlette, 2012; Parlette and Cowen, 2010; Young and Keil, 2014). Populations displaced from the "creative" inner-city by rising property values and rents continue to migrate to its peripheries. Deindustrialization has also hit many suburban areas, contributing to precarities associated with the global rearrangement of labour. Indeed, the "rise of the creative class is associated with a new class structure, and new forms of inequality" (Leslie and Catungal, 2012:112). The "flipside" of the new, so-called creative economy, lifestyle and landscape is its increasing dependence of a growing low-wage, highly racialized and feminized service sector (McDowell, 2013). Over time, the creative inner-city is appearing less inclusive, and rather white, more affluent, and favourable to male incomes (Leslie and Catungal, 2012; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2011).

Such a polarized landscape is evident in the city of Toronto, where predominantly white, middle to upper-class areas along the subway lines in the former core of the city have experienced rising incomes (Hulchanski, 2007). This is flanked by adjacent pockets of a shrinking middle-class, while the city's post-war inner-suburbs have seen a dramatic economic decline and are now home to recent immigrants and predominantly racialized lower income earners (*ibid*.). The well-known report titled *The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization Among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005* (*ibid.*), published by the Cities Centre of University of Toronto, has illuminated this trend, which began roughly in the mid-1970s.

The Canadian welfare state over the past three decades has seen massive cutbacks, downloading responsibilities to lower level governments and without corresponding funding, which resulted in the fiscal crisis of municipalities. Slow economic growth led to the "reassertion that only the private sector is productive" (Lemon, 1993:279). Toronto then went through a dramatic policy restructuring in the 1990s, with Premier Mike Harris's "Common Sense Revolution" which included more austerity measures, realignment of services between the province and the city and property tax reform (Fanelli, 2009). Following amalgamation in 1998,[1] the new City of Toronto embraced a more entrepreneurial stance to governance, which emphasized public-private partnerships and policies for repositioning Toronto as a competitive city within the context of a global economy (Desfor, Keil, Kipfer and Wekerle, 2006; Donald, 2002). "Reurbanization" or municipally-managed gentrification became an essential component of Toronto's strategy for continued economic success (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009; Slater, 2004a). The municipal government's adoption of the creative city planning framework in the early

[1] The new City of Toronto disbanded the former "Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto" and amalgamated the former constituent City of Toronto and post-war suburban boroughs of Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough.

2000s stressing “quality of place” as a key driver for economic success (Florida, 2002) strengthened this trajectory in Toronto’s plans for global competitiveness.

The policy fixation on “place” has put inner-suburban neighbourhoods “in the shadow of Toronto’s glamour zones” (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009:140). Also known as the “in-between city,” these neighbourhoods are spatially located between Toronto’s downtown and its expanding outer suburbs (Young and Keil, 2014). Mainstream characterizations focus on the in-between city’s supposed “acultural and uncreative” hybrid postwar built environment – a mix of aging high-rise apartment blocks, single family homes, post-secondary institutions, warehouses, shopping plazas, wide roads – which is “not seen to conform physically or socially to the image of dense, clustered districts” (Bain, 2013:212) associated with the downtown. News media are often preoccupied with instances of racialized crime in the neighbourhoods located outside of the inner-city. Toronto’s inner-suburbs have been stigmatized, structurally disinvested, and are often represented as having problems in need of solutions (Boudreau et al., 2009:120).

The *Three Cities Within Toronto* (Hulchanski, 2007) report has sparked wide and necessary debate over the spatialized and polarizing socio-economic gap in Toronto. However, the issue has predominantly become a concern of policymakers, think tanks, non-profit organizations and increasingly, of developers who perceive the evidence of *exclusion,* rather than *inequality* (Mayer, 2003) among city residents, as a potential threat against the creative competitiveness agenda and the region’s development as a whole (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009:140). While some of the biggest criticisms of creative city agendas are that they mask, and indeed, exacerbate inequalities along lines of class, race and gender (Leslie and Catungal, 2012), remarkably, the response to revelations of deepening socio-economic disparities in Toronto has led to the idea of building a *more inclusive creative city* (e.g. Bradford 2008; Noble 2009; Toronto Arts Council, 2016); that is, “to spread the gains of the creative economy … to develop strategies to close the gap … to make sure all Torontonians can use their creative capabilities and as such contribute even more to economic growth” (Florida, 2007, n.p.).

The creative city agenda in Toronto has recently placed greater emphasis on engaging racialized and low-income populations, largely via non-profit-led programming. In tow, a few “revitalization” agendas have been proposed for the city’s disinvested inner-suburbs, to be transformed in the creative city’s competitive image (Keatinge and Martin, 2016; Leslie and Hunt, 2013; McLean, Rankin and Kamizaki, 2015; Poppe and Young, 2015; Rankin and McLean, 2015). To achieve the goal of greater inclusivity in Toronto’s creative city agenda, a new initiative called *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC) emerged in 2013. The initiative has been introduced and spearheaded by Artscape, a non-profit organization that has championed the creative city script as a think tank, consultant and most notably, though its arts-oriented real estate developments in Toronto’s downtown. Through CSOC, Artscape is aiming to apply the same urban development approach to Toronto’s inner-suburbs.

Key concepts and gap in research

Coined by Charles Landry in the late 1980s, but popularized by Richard Florida in the early 2000s, the "creative city" is based on the concept of revalourizing urban neighbourhoods in order to attract a mobile "creative class" that is dynamic and entrepreneurial. The creative city is a "vehicular" urban planning framework – or a consequential "meta-policy" (Peck, 2012) – that globalizes and mutates in different contexts. It has been argued that the creative city script has emerged and traveled so far only because it is minimally disruptive of the neoliberal urban agenda (Leslie and Catungal, 2012; Peck, 2005; 2007; 2012), of which gentrification has become "the leading edge" (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007:xvii).

Creative city strategies of civic boosterism and trickle-down economics are applied as solutions to a variety of urban issues in an era of austerity (Patterson and Silver, 2015). Thus, the strategies are often under-funded but heavily mandated (Peck, 2012). As a reflection of this trend, community arts interventions have proliferated in the urban setting, and arguably have gained the status of an investment rather than public expenditure (Grundy and Boudreau, 2008). Accompanying emancipatory concepts such as *inclusion* ("tolerance," "diversity," "mixed communities," "collaboration," etc.) are central to the creative competitiveness language that contradictorily promotes gentrification. More broadly, such de-politicized inclusion agendas appropriate the language and practices of political struggles while promoting weak social ties such as charity, "identity politics" and "quality of life" development (Buccholz, 2012; McLean, 2014a; Prujit, 2013; Totcherman, 2012). In doing so, this discourse effectively nullifies concepts of strong social ties such as conflict-based organizing, unionization, wealth re-distribution and citizenship entitlements (Grundy and Boudreau, 2008; Leslie and Catungal, 2012).

This Major Paper examines Artscape, a non-profit organization, in relation to the City of Toronto's adoption of the creative city planning framework. For 30 years, Artscape has been recognized as a "catalyst" for transforming downtown Toronto neighbourhoods through the development of artist live/work spaces and "community cultural hubs." While these neighbourhoods are now gentrifying/gentrified, the organization tactfully maintains an anti-gentrification mandate with the concept of inclusion in the creative city. Setting its gaze on Toronto's inner-suburbs as its next frontier, the organization has begun promoting creative city-inspired redevelopment as a philanthropic "healing" solution to so-called "blight" (Jones, 2015). The case of Artscape, and in particular, its new project in the inner-suburban neighbourhood of Weston, is used to illustrate two intimately and inextricably interconnected processes underpinning the creative city: the active production of gentrification and the emergence and persistence of the non-profit sector.

Gentrification through collaboration

Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly (2007:xv) define gentrification as "the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use." On the broader scale, gentrification can be understood as a mass re-

investment into North American inner cities for the past several decades. Neil Smith (2002) argues that it has evolved from a marginal urban process in the 1960s to a popular and widespread "global urban strategy." Indeed, gentrification is deepening as cities have become strategically important arenas for neoliberalization, and key sites for where it is forged in practice (Peck, Theodore and Brenner, 2009). They have become targets of neoliberal rollback strategies because of their particular position in Fordist-Keynesian systems of production/reproduction and likewise, have been used to legitimize roll-out programs as "loci for innovation and growth, and as zones of devolved governance and local institutional experimentation" (*ibid*., 57).

In the search for new ways to accelerate the movement of investment through the urban system, cities have taken on an entrepreneurial form of governance in which public-private partnerships are key (Harvey, 1989). These partnerships are inherently uneven and generate market-friendly policies of deregulation (Miraftab, 2004). The city's assets, including publicly owned land, are opened up to private entities, through favourable zoning changes and other incentives in exchange for typically minimal public benefits. Areas of disinvestment – a fundamental economic precondition for gentrification (Smith, 1979) – are redeveloped for "higher uses," increasingly in the form of densification, which promises a higher tax base for the city and greater returns in capitalist accumulation for the private sector. Thus gentrification can be understood as the exploitation of the "rent gap": the disparity between the rental income of a property under its current land use, and the potentially achievable rental income, which is raised by expanding urban development (Smith, 1979:545).

Gentrification by definition does not benefit all (Richter, 2010). An actively produced process that involves rent increases, police harassment, affordable housing crises and the displacement of working class and racialized populations, hence requires legitimation (*ibid.*). "Urban renaissance," "renewal," "regeneration" and "revitalization" have been the optimistic terms used to describe a predominantly white, middle class resettlement of inner cities in mainstream media. Gentrification is often presented as being synonymous with a healthy real estate market and explained by trickle-down economics as a positive public policy tool (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007). Likewise, civic boosterism, consensus-building or "participatory planning" have become central concerns of both practice and theory of "revitalization" (Harvey, 1989; 1997; Richter, 2010). Thus, there is often an inclusionary aspect of public-private partnership projects that purports to operate "openly and with the best intentions toward democratic accountability" (Mendel and Brudney, 2012:2) and sometimes under the banner of serving the marginalized (Miraftab, 2004). Therefore, a third actor – the non-profit sector – is increasingly included as community representation, or "the embodiment of the aspirations of low-income minority residents" (Fraser and Kick, 2014:1447), in urban restructuring and development projects. In this arrangement, the non-profit organizations assume roles of social provisioning (e.g. "community benefits"), program facilitation (e.g. "community consultations"), and often act as intermediaries between partners.

Scholars have noted that critical scrutiny of the roles of non-profit organizations in urban governance and neighbourhood redevelopment is much needed and yet remains one of the

least developed areas of study in urban research (Arena, 2012; Fraser and Kick, 2014; Saberi, 2013). There are few studies that exist in the U.S. context. Of significance, is John Arena's (2012) book about the contradictory role of non-profit organizations in facilitating the removal of poor, black residents from inner-city New Orleans (post-Katrina), in support of the privatization and demolition of public housing. He emphasizes that this process was not only performed through punitive state strategies, but also "by more consensual apparatuses and practices in the form of nonprofit complex" (*ibid.*, 183). In Chattanooga, Tennessee, James Fraser and Edward Kick (2014:1446) find that "city-building non-profits" were established by the municipal government "to draw private investment into areas that are targeted for revitalization by realigning people and place." They emphasized that, like in Arena's findings, the marginalized residents of the targeted neighbourhood, typically excluded from city-building decisions, became the focus of interventions "aimed at creating space for capitalist investment" (*ibid.*, 1447).

One study in the Canadian context by Gordon Roe (2009) reveals how non-profits providing harm reduction services to poor populations of Vancouver's downtown eastside intertwined with gentrification processes by entering into partnerships with businesses and developers and by fixing a "therapeutic community" status to the area. He contends that the organizations' implementation of "a model for the enlightened and efficient management of the socially marginal" (*ibid.*, 75) in which residents became "clients," catered to gentrifiers' anxieties over the perceivably uncontrolled space, and reinforced broader interventions such as redevelopment and eventual displacement. Roe's study builds off of Dylan Rodriguez's (2007) argument that fear is a necessary political and cultural condition that has given rise to, and maintains the existence of the non-profit sector, which works symbiotically with (and is not oppositional to) policing and incarceration of marginalized populations. The following section explores more such critical perspectives on the non-profit sector.

The non-profit sector and its colonizing/displacing effects

The non-profit sector has achieved a "wide and often unquestioned legitimacy" (Pudup, 2008:1233) for "doing good" (Fisher, 1997) and its supposed ability to "magically do "more with less"" (Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay, 2012:40). As a neoliberal roll-out mechanism that exploded in the 1980s, dubbed the "shadow state" (Wolch, 1990), the non-profit sector accelerates the decentralization of social safety nets by attempting to fill this void. In other words, it is a form of privatization, which is therefore inherently in conflict with the welfare state. The non-profit sector's emergence signals a new relation between the state and civil society (Shragge, 2003). It operates on various scales (local, regional, national, global, etc.), reflects a range of politics and objectives, and has moved far beyond the traditional charity model to economic development (e.g. micro-credit lending; producing "cheap" employment; etc.) (Evans and Shields, 2000; Eikenberry and Drapal Kluver, 2004; Shragge, 2003). There is an extensive academic literature concerning the non-profit sector and the serious implications it poses for citizenship, political social movements and more broadly, governance. The following are some key arguments found

in this literature:

- Signalling a departure from any existing universality, the sector exacerbates inequalities by producing "differential citizenship" or a "two-class welfare state" where social services are not available to all due to an uneven geographical landscape of targeted funding and related "client selectivity" (Lake and Newman, 2002).

- The non-profit sector's reliance on precarious and voluntary labour further complicates this arrangement (Baines, Campey, Cunningham and Shields, 2014). It capitalizes on personal ethical responsibilities, moral persuasion, emotional involvement (Vrasti, 2011) to effectively take on downloaded responsibilities formerly carried out by the state. It also creates a minority of high-salaried positions (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012).

- Funding dictates the non-profit sector's activities and thus is controlled by elite agendas of privatization, while tax breaks for donors re-directs money away from the public and to specific initiatives (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007; Wolch and Geiger, 1985).

- The growth of the non-profit sector relies on the displacement of social movements ("disciplining dissent") through the institutionalization, professionalization and cooptation of their activities (Arena, 2012; Choudry and Shragge, 2011; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007; Mayer, 2009; Shragge, 2003). By accepting short-term gains such as funding, movements shift from "protest to program" or "service critic to service provider" (Roe, 2009:78), and become less concerned with structural and systemic transformations to relations of power (Arena, 2012).

- The governing position, including significant lobbying power, that the non-profit sector can assume in the process of a decentralizing government is part of this political threat. Posing as neither "public" nor "private," it operates within a "third space" that often promotes deregulation. Because these organizations are not elected democratically, accountability becomes a critical issue (Arena, 2012; Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay, 2012; Choudry and Shragge, 2011; Wallace, 2009; Warrington, 1995).

Objectives and methodology

This Major Paper examines the roles played by non-profit organizations in urban governance and development by specifically drawing on a critical body of research concerning the gentrifying forces behind the City of Toronto's adopted creative city planning framework and related questions of citizenship and social justice (See Catungal, Leslie and Hii, 2009; Grundy and Boudreau, 2008; Leslie and Catungal, 2012; Leslie and Hunt, 2013; Mathews, 2010; McLean, 2014). "Consensus" appears as an ongoing theme throughout the Major Paper to loosely describe the collaborative governance – networks of public, private and non-profit

actors on varying scales in Toronto (e.g. city-wide and neighbourhood-based) – that has been key to the establishment and implementation of Toronto's creative city competitiveness agenda. One significant consensus actor, Artscape, was identified as most appropriate for the main case study of this Major Paper for two reasons:

First, Artscape has been recognized as "the most pronounced voice advocating for the creative city" (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009:143) in Toronto. Artscape is mentioned, although anecdotally, in almost every single study critiquing creative city planning in Toronto because it has been involved in the redevelopment of a number of downtown neighbourhoods. As a non-profit organization, however, it has largely avoided scrutiny (from some scholars, but more generally the public).

Second, and as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Artscape is spearheading an initiative called *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC). This initiative, framed as an inclusionary project, is significant because it seemingly diverges from Toronto's prevailing downtown-centric creative city script. Artscape's CSOC pilot project in the inner-suburb of Weston presents the opportunity to contribute to an existing body of research studying the preliminary applications of creative city agendas and other such gentrifying plans in Toronto's inner-suburban neighbourhoods (See Keatinge and Martin, 2016; McLean, Rankin and Kamizaki, 2015; Poppe and Young, 2015; Rankin and McLean, 2015), as well as in other cities (For Vancouver, Canada see Jones and Ley, 2016; Wollongong, Australia – Barnes, Waitt, Gill and Gibson, 2006; Edinburgh, Scotland – Kallin and Slater, 2014; Lyon, France – Rosseau, 2015).

Each chapter in the Major Paper (summarized in the following section) builds on the next to reveal the development of a creative city-inspired gentrification "frontier" (Smith, 1996) as it increasingly encroaches on Toronto's disinvested inner-suburbs. The detailed investigation of Artscape in this process necessitates a complementary perspective on gentrification, as it jumps between multiple scales and dimensions (e.g. city, organization, neighbourhood). I employ what Loretta Lees' (2000) describes, "a geography of gentrification," an approach that understands gentrification as a process configured under interlocking geographical scales; interwoven with racial issues; informed by discourse; and, as a process that is actively produced and financed (*ibid.*). However, while I examine the roles of public and private actors (and partnerships between them), I place the non-profit sector at the center of my investigation as "spatially and historically specific entities that coincide with the shift of urban government from a managerial role to taking on entrepreneurial trappings" (Fraser and Kick, 2014:1449). By doing so, this Major Paper aims to respond to what Jennifer Wolch and Roger Geiger (1985:357) called for long ago, in their concern about the rise of corporate philanthropy: to track "the geographic targeting of gifts"; or, in other words, to track the geography of non-profit functions as products and vehicles of uneven development. In brief, this investigation merges the geography of gentrification with the geography of the non-profit case study, by detailing:

- hard non-profit operations (e.g. funding, partnership arrangements, geographical presence) and how they play into supply/structural causes of gentrification (e.g. state

policy, patterns of investment and disinvestment, urban restructuring);

- soft non-profit operations (e.g. programming, civic engagement, discourse) and their intersections with demand/cultural causes of gentrification (e.g territorial stigmatization, artistic interventions, the media's interpretations of neighbourhood changes); and,

- the accompanying politics of these merging geographies: social dynamics, power struggles and conflicts, and particularly the political agency of racialized poor populations who are most often targeted by philanthropic interventions, as well as most at risk of displacement.

Organization of Major Paper and research methods

Chapter 2 of the Major Paper sets the context for the main case study, Artscape. Through a review of policy, literature, and news media discourse, this chapter identifies the conditions that have led to the emergence of the organization's *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC) initiative. It provides an overview of how Toronto's socio-spatial polarization has been exacerbated by specific "place-based" municipal programs, while highlighting the instrumental role of the non-profit sector in extending the creative city's geographic reach.

Chapter 3 follows the geography of Artscape: its 30-year history, roles in public-private partnership-led real estate development and leadership in the creative city agenda. This investigation is supplemented with highlights from an interview conducted with one Artscape staff (See Appendix 3). Centered in this investigation, however, is a detailed analysis of a speech delivered by Artscape's CEO, Tim Jones. I discuss the organization's contradictory discourse that frames gentrification as an inclusionary process; and, how this discourse, rooted in a philanthropic gaze, is mobilized further to legitimize creative city interventions in Toronto's inner-suburbs in anticipation of its CSOC pilot "hub" development in the neighbourhood of Weston.

Chapter 4 continues to track Artscape's geography as the organization "touches down" in Weston. It does so by detailing key moments leading up to the construction of the "Artscape Weston Hub." This development, according to policy documents, is positioned as the "community benefit" of a broader public-private partnership-led redevelopment, and as the focal point of Weston's official "revitalization" strategy, which targets the high-density, racialized poor area of the neighbourhood. Through field observations over the period of one year (fall 2015 – fall 2016; See Appendix 1), and eight semi-structured interviews with neighbourhood residents (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3), this study explores how a creative city intervention in an inner-suburb of Toronto is embraced and resisted when it is presented as an inclusionary project and philanthropic solution to prolonged disinvestment. It exposes the crucial roles played by Artscape and local proponents (affluent residents and non-profit organizations) in building a consensus on this process, and ultimately, how the most

marginalized residents in the neighbourhood are implicated in, and affected by, the impending gentrification.

The concluding *Chapter 5* summarizes and draws from findings in the case study of Artscape and the local critical discourse emerging from the neighbourhood of Weston to consider: What does inclusion into the creative city truly entail for Toronto's inner-suburbs? The chapter then explores some possible routes of anti-gentrification resistance in the face of political threats posed by the non-profit sector.

Positionality

An element of "critical reflexivity" (Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010) has been crucial to this research, as it has involved interaction with people and place, as well as social phenomena of which I am certainly not an objective observer. Accordingly, I acknowledge that my research process and analysis are informed by my multiple and contradictory subject positions: white settler; precarious non-profit worker and student researcher; downtown dweller; artist and consumer of the arts within a neoliberal context. It is equally important to acknowledge: 1) my relationship to the main case study in this Major Paper, Artscape – my previous "insider" experiences of employment in the community arts, which took place in one of Artscape's buildings. Stretching over four years, these experiences with one of its tenant organizations have served as the core inspiration for this research; and, 2) my relationship with York University – a site of corporate power entrenched in the process of gentrification and use of police repression of the inner-suburb of Jane-Finch, Toronto. Together, all of these positions both inform and complicate my engagement with, and analysis of, the data procured in my research.

Chapter 2: Context

"THAT NEW HARMONY … HEALTHY CITIES FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN CREATION AND DESTRUCTION"
– CITY OF TORONTO, CULTURE PLAN FOR THE CREATIVE CITY, 2003, PP. 26

The *Culture Plan for the Creative City* was adopted by the City of Toronto in 2003 to position the city as an "international cultural capital" (City of Toronto, 2003:4) attractive to world-class creative industries and internationally mobile creative individuals. New investments began to flow into the city. Provincial and federal governments, for example, committed $233M, in addition to $700M of private capital, towards what was dubbed Toronto's "cultural renaissance": the building or redevelopment of eight major cultural institutions (Jenkins, 2005). Investments also prioritized the redevelopment of "creative clusters": economic hubs comprised of new media ventures, arts venues, commercial and non-profit spaces. This redevelopment included the preservation of heritage buildings, strengthening of business improvement areas (BIAs), fast-tracked re-zoning and development approvals, and increased subsidization of artist studio/living spaces. The accompanying residential boom, largely in the form of middle-class resettlement, has encompassed an unprecedented amount of new-build high-rise condominiums (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009); and, the gradual privatized redevelopment of public housing sitting on coveted downtown land, into "mixed-income communities" (August and Walks, 2011; August, 2014a; 2014b).

Standing as ready-made allies of the creative city project were many non-profit arts organizations such as the Toronto Arts Council (TAC), which had been lobbying over many years for recognition of the arts as a social and economic development tool (TAC, 1988). The *Culture Plan* (2003) resonated with the TAC and other non-profit organizations; and, they were able to put it into practice, engaging in various development projects (Patterson and Silver, 2015), often representing the "community benefits package" that comes along with many public-private-partnership-led redevelopments in the city (Mathews, 2014). Large-scale non-profit organizations have been responsible for mega arts festivals such as Luminato, and Nuit Blanche, and other signature corporate-funded events meant to stimulate citizen participation, volunteerism and added hype to Toronto's cultural renaissance (McLean, 2010). To receive new funding, smaller non-profit organizations have also professionalized, and shifted mandates to suit the social agendas of the creative city. They have also become increasingly market-oriented, recreating themselves as "creative social enterprises" and models of "ground up" entrepreneurship. Now often promoting themselves as "city-builders," these non-profits have also become the face of creative city's valourized "diversity" – embodying the meritocracy, as Leslie and Catungal (2012:116) argue, that creates "an illusion of equality."

Together with a relatively small circle of artists, elite cultural institutions, consulting firms, City officials and real estate developers, the non-profit sector completed the "cultural city consensus" (Patterson and Silver, 2015) or "creative competitiveness consensus" (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009), which took on characteristics akin to an urban regime (Patterson and

Silver, 2015:269). The creative city project was not only conceived as a cultural planning tool, but as well as a "management philosophy within the administration of the city" (Boudreau et al., 2009:192), guided by a politically ambiguous blend of neoliberal economics with selective progressive ideas (James, 2012:3; Keil, 2000). This thinking exhibits a strong bias towards private developer interests, while the public sector continues to erode (Kipfer and Keil, 2002).

Parallel strategies of creativity and priority

The creative city project in Toronto, however, was not developed in isolation. The adoption of the *Culture Plan* coincided with the surfacing of a watershed report published by the non-profit organization United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) titled *Poverty by Postal Code* (2004), which cited a deepening concentration of racialized poverty in the inner-suburbs. This was followed by record-setting instances of gun-related fatalities in 2005, which was coined as "the year of the gun." While racialized youth in the inner-suburbs were largely the victims of these incidents, it was the fatal shooting of a white middle-class teenage girl, caught in crossfire in the heart of downtown, that sparked new anxieties. Mayor David Miller, who had been busy championing the creative city project downtown, called for a city-wide *Community Safety Plan* (City of Toronto, 2004). This led to the formation of the *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy* (TSNS) (City of Toronto, 2005), a "place-based strategy" which targeted 23 out of Toronto 140 social planning neighbourhoods[2] – all located in the inner-suburbs – as "most in need" based on the availability of community services, levels of gun and gang violence, and other socio-demographic indicators. The neighbourhoods were further grouped into 13 official "priority neighbourhoods" intended for new investment from all levels of government, much of which did not materialize as hoped (Horak and Moore, 2015).

The TSNS was a partnership effort between the City and the United Way, which was responsible for administering programs and funds to a number of social service organizations. With matching funds from private sources, the total amount of funding for all 13 priority neighbourhoods accumulated to roughly $225M between 2005 and 2011 (Dale, 2013). More police services were deployed in targeted priority neighbourhoods, with the expectation that this would lead to a reduction in crime (Boudreau et al., 2009). Much like the creative city strategy, priority neighbourhoods saw increased governance of non-profit organizations, either new or existing, which were contracted for program delivery and to "define the *modus operandi* of social change" (Parlette, 2012:124). Ultimately, the respective placed-based strategies in Toronto in the early-mid 2000s neglected the fact that economic prioritization of Toronto's downtown creative city project necessitated disinvestment of the inner-suburbs. As a sort of "quick-fix" solution, the creation of priority neighbourhoods problematically focused on geography as the basis of crises, rather than the expression of the systemic problems of

[2] Built from Statistics Canada Census Tracts, boundaries and socio-economic data for 140 neighbourhoods in Toronto are used by the municipal government and social services to inform local planning decisions.

capitalist urban development (Parlette, 2012).

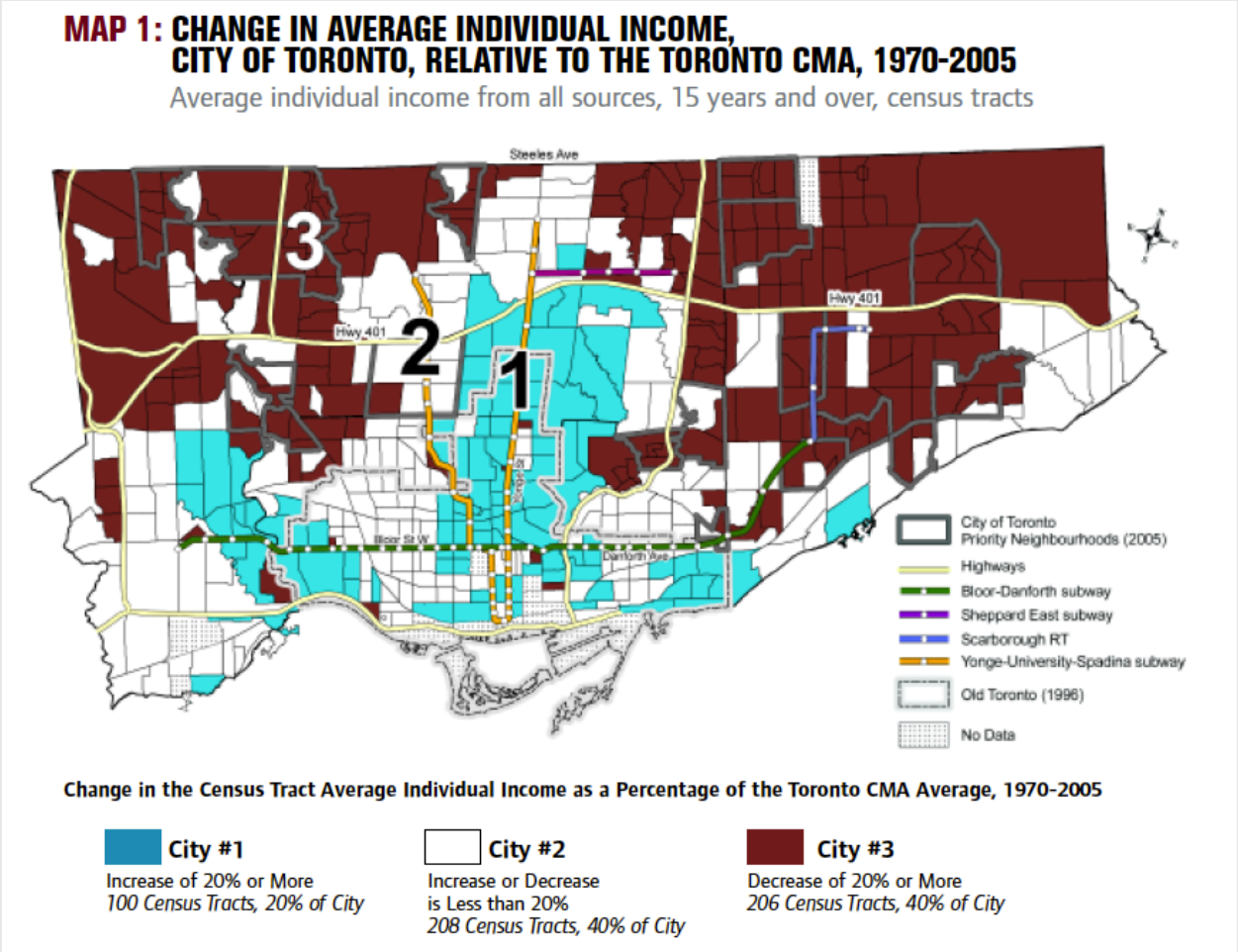

Figure 1. The "Three Cities of Toronto" map by David Hulchanski (2007). Priority neighbourhood boundaries are outlined in grey within City #3, which largely corresponds with the inner-suburbs.

The rise of community arts

Seen as a tool for democratizing the arts, one of the fundamental ways creative city ideals have broadened their geographical reach outside of the downtown is through "community arts" (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009; Grundy and Boudreau, 2008). The *Culture Plan*, while claiming to be city-wide, acknowledges that there are barriers to accessing the arts, and calls for integration of "at-risk" youth, racialized communities and immigrants into the creative city agenda (City of Toronto, 2003). The community arts concept applies "creativity" and the arts in the form of citizen participation, public performance and self-help activities, to a variety of social challenges. Indeed, the arts sector is expected to extend its funding and competency to fill in the gaps left behind by austerity measures targeting social services (Boudreau et al., 2009;

Grundy and Boudreau, 2008; Leslie and Hunt, 2013). Thus, community arts initiatives are typically led by non-profit organizations, and centred around an exchange between an artist (or in other ways empowered individual or group), and a target population defined *a priori* as "in need of" empowerment, access to creative/expressive skills, etc. (Kester, 1995). The typical therapeutic rationale behind community arts practice is also intertwined with the encouragement of entrepreneurship, responsibilizing marginalized individuals and communities for the systemic challenges that they face, such as unemployment (Leslie and Hunt, 2013).

The proliferation of community arts, particularly within racialized communities in Toronto, builds on the legacy of a program called *Fresh Arts,* which was established by the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) in 1992 following the Yonge Street Riots that broke out on May 4th of that year. The protests were led by the Black Action Defence Committee (BADC)[3] in solidarity with the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, and against the racism of the Metro Toronto police force, responsible for the shooting of 22-year-old Jamaican immigrant, Raymond Lawrence (Bradburn, 2011). The protests prompted Ontario Premier Bob Rae to declare that racism was a systemic problem that merited further investigation (*ibid*.). The TAC saw this declaration as an opportunity to argue for the arts "to become incorporated into the social and economic development strategies of the local and provincial state" (Anonymous, former TAC member, personal communication, January 28, 2016). *Fresh Arts*, funded by the provincial government, focused on targeting youth in "marginalized communities" and would eventually birth rap star Kardinal Offishall, who later attributed much of his international success to the program (Kameir, 2015).

The case of *Fresh Arts* exemplifies how struggles can be shifted "from protest to program," and how non-profit organizations are able to defuse conflict-based organizing by leveraging new funding pools on the backs of crises,[4] offering marginal advances, and then providing "more desirable outcomes."[5] By luring in targeted racialized youth with isolated success stories of the close-to-impossible progression to a career in the arts, along with opportunities to be heroic "change-makers" in their own neighbourhoods, non-profits have created "a vulnerable pool of inexpensive labour" (Kamau, Nguyen, Patterson and Lorinc, 2016:354) to be channelled towards partnership activities such as place branding. Murals, as one example of community arts practice, are admired for covering up crumbling public infrastructure, or apartment tower buildings neglected by their absentee landlords (Charlton, Bardnt, Dennis and Donegan, 2013). A city-wide *Community Arts Action Plan* (City of Toronto, 2008:25) has been developed,

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[3] BADC was established in 1988 after the police shooting of Lester Donaldson. The organization is responsible for the establishment of Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which remains to this day. The SIU's responsibility is to investigate incidents involving police shootings to reduce police discretion bias. Unfortunately, the unit currently includes many former police officers who have allegedly, on numerous occasions, excused offences made by the police force.

[4] Apparently, instances of gun-related violence or a homicide in a given inner-suburban area of Toronto, have come to be understood as an "optimal time to apply for grants" (Kamau, Nguyen, Patterson and Lorinc, 2016:358) among some local non-profit organizations.

[5] See Grundy and Boudreau (2008) on the contradictions of audit culture pervading the non-profit arts field.

presenting such initiatives to be "a powerful tool for neighbourhood renewal" and as an investment rather than expenditure (Grundy and Boudreau, 2008).

Community arts programming plays a key role in Toronto's Strong Neighbourhoods strategy, especially with the help of publicly-funded Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs) (City of Toronto, 2008). The programming, with its inward, therapeutic focus, however, hones the containment of priority neighbourhood status, while nurturing an outward look that is concerned with luring in private investment rather than questioning issues provoked by austerity.[6] Although community arts may be meaningful for engaged participants, it should not be confused with solutions to systemic inequality (Leslie and Hunt, 2013).

From priority to improvement

Despite efforts made by community arts programs, "glamourous zones tend to remain in the city centre, at the expense of the in-between city" (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009:197). Indeed, it has been argued that the demarcation of Priority Neighbourhoods has contained poverty rather than eliminating it (Parlette, 2012). A new report by the United Way, *Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty*, published in 2011, updated the original document to emphasize that not only inner-suburban neighbourhoods are poorer than the inner-city, but within them, poverty is increasingly concentrated in high-rise apartment tower communities. The unfair practice of police carding and profiling based on race has become a much bigger issue in priority neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, there has been political push-back from small pockets of more affluent inner-suburban areas concerning their decreasing property values attributed to the stigma associated with the priority neighbourhood label.

In light of increasingly apparent disparities between Toronto's downtown and its inner suburbs, the more recent revamping of both creative city and *Strong Neighbourhoods* strategies suggests that there is a new creative competitiveness consensus emerging, that considers the future of Toronto's inner-suburbs.

Towards making space

The revamped creative city plan, *Creative Capital Gains* (City of Toronto, 2011), while celebrating community arts and recommending the creation of two new inner-suburban Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs), demonstrates the state's reluctance to invest in Toronto's inner-suburbs. It dismisses outreach to the inner suburbs and in priority neighbourhoods as being, "complex and resource-intensive activities" (*ibid.*, 18). Instead, it highlights the

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[6] See Heather McLean's (2014a and 2014b) studies that offer insight into the ways artists have exposed or contested the contradictory connection between community arts interventions and gentrification. Unfortunately, this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter, but is considered to some extent in Chapters 3 and 4.

importance of the non-profit arts organizations that play a key role in leveraging investment from public and private sources in the development of Toronto as a creative city.[7] *Creative Capital Gains*, however, notes a particular concern that non-profit arts organizations suffer from lack of affordable space in the inner-city. This concern has led to the establishment of a research project called *Making Space for Culture*, featuring a map-database of cultural spaces as well as results from ward-by-ward consultations identifying "underused spaces, or spaces which can be adapted or repurposed for cultural use … at reduced cost" (City of Toronto, 2014a:1). This project is perhaps what has partly prompted the creative city consensus to turn its gaze towards the inner-suburbs, perceived to be "lacking culture" (evidenced by a dearth of cultural spaces and facilities). Under the rationale of inclusion and diversity in the arts, projects of some downtown-based non-profit organizations have begun to shift towards serving inner-suburban communities.

(De)stigmatization for cost-saving revitalization

The City of Toronto began a review of the *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods* (TSNS) strategy following the adoption of *Creative Capital Gains*, admitting that the priority neighbourhood status "sometimes has a stigmatizing effect, making potential business investors or homebuyers apprehensive about locating there" (City of Toronto, 2012a:8). In 2014, City of Toronto, identified new "neighbourhood improvement areas" (NIAs) – the chosen name to redress the issue. With a new measuring system, Toronto's 140 social planning neighbourhoods were scored as most-to-least "livable" from 1 to 140. This hardly de-stigmatizing method identified 31 NIAs that fell under a set benchmark. Eight out of the 23 social planning neighbourhoods that made up the original 13 priority neighbourhoods were excluded in the new strategy (See Figure 2). The results have baffled some community organizers and non-profit workers who contend that some of the neighbourhoods excluded still have high needs – while, curiously, downtown neighbourhoods such as Regent Park and Parkdale, both undergoing dramatic gentrification processes, were designated as NIAs.

The new *Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020* (TSNS 2020) calls for a greater emphasis on "the outcomes being achieved in communities, rather than what the city is putting into neighbourhoods," as one City social development officer explained in a media interview (Kane, 2014). In line with this shift, no new public funding appears to have been directed to TSNS 2020. As of late 2016, a mere $12M was allocated exclusively for improving public spaces in the 31 NIAs over a four-year period (City of Toronto, 2016a). In place of any significant funding, entrepreneurial City programs that operate in partnerships with the private and non-profit sectors and identify "revitalization" as their key goal have been reoriented or newly established to support the TSNS 2020 strategy – as "*de facto* programme[s] of suburban renewal" (Poppe and Young, 2015:616). The Tower Renewal program, for example, seeks to re-

[7] According to Toronto Arts Foundation (2016), for each $1 invested by the City in the non-profit arts leverages $8.25 in revenue and an additional $11.77 from other levels of government and private sector.

zone for commercial uses and higher densities, and facilitate "place-making" initiatives in inner-suburban apartment tower neighbourhoods (*ibid*.). Similarly, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is planning privatized redevelopment of social housing complexes into mixed-income communities (i.e. injecting middle-classes into concentrations of low-income households). Another program was recently proposed to promote "economic revitalization in distressed retail areas," including strengthening the presence of inner-suburban business improvement areas (BIAs) as well as immigrant entrepreneurship. Reflecting the TSNS 2020 mandate, this program is suggested to be carried out with the emphatic shift "from *capital* improvement to *capacity* improvement" (City of Toronto, 2015a:6, original emphasis). The TSNS 2020 strategy thus far signals continued state disinvestment in the targeted inner-suburban NIAs, while emphasizing greater involvement of non-profit organizations, private sector and residents themselves.

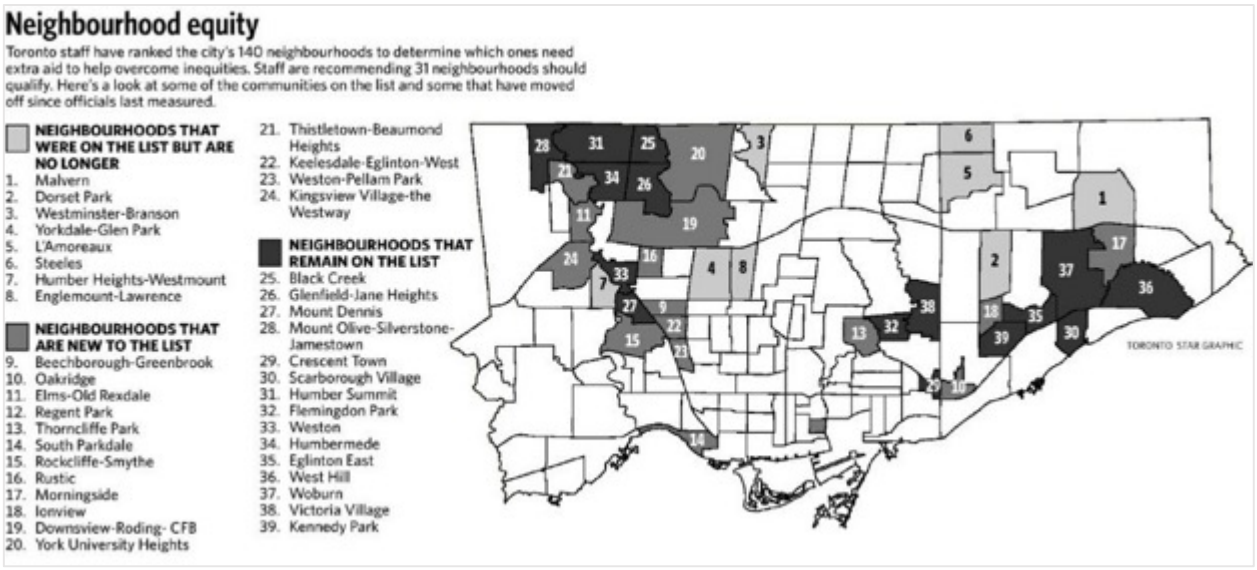

Figure 2. Map of Toronto showing former priority neighbourhoods and new neighbourhood improvement areas (NIAs). Source: Toronto Star.

A consensus on the next frontier

"GET A PROGRAM. GET WITH THE PROGRAM … GET TO KNOW ME. OR, YOU KNOW, LET'S JUST FILE THE DIVORCE PAPERS NOW."
– JOE FIORITO, LET'S TRY SOME CROSS-CULTURAL POLLINATION, TORONTO STAR, 2015

Informed by the *Making Space for Culture* project, and merging with it the programs associated with NIAs, a new partnership initiative called *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC) was established in 2013. CSOC seeks to apply the creative city model to Toronto's inner-suburbs under the banner of confronting "inequitable access to arts and culture activity across Toronto neighbourhoods" (Artscape, 2014:2). Initiated and directed by Artscape, a non-profit

organization that has championed the creative city script in Toronto's downtown, CSOC formally includes: City Departments (Culture, Parks Forestry & Recreation, Toronto Public Library); public agencies (Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), Toronto Arts Council (TAC) and Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF)); large charitable foundations (Ontario Trillium, United Way); and, inner-suburban LASOs (Arts Etobicoke, East End Arts, Lakeshore Arts, North York Arts, Scarborough Arts, Urban Arts). Also included is Manifesto, a well-connected non-profit organization that promotes hip-hop culture and that co-chaired the development of *Creative Capital Gains* (City of Toronto, 2011) alongside Richard Florida and the creative competitiveness consensus elite (McLean, 2014a:2165). As a first step, CSOC has undertaken collaborative in-depth research and cultural mapping in the inner-suburbs (Artscape, 2014).

CSOC institutionalizes a growing media discourse that views "inclusion" and harmony between Toronto's downtown and inner-suburbs as key to creative competitiveness planning and Toronto's image as a "diverse" global city. While much of this discourse attempts to tackle the stigma attached to the neighbourhoods, highlighting they too deserve development that Toronto's downtown has enjoyed, it occasionally mystifies the inner-suburbs as a sort of blank slate: "the swaths of empty land that make these areas so bleak are also the spaces where regeneration will occur" (Hume, 2015, n.p.). Some news media have picked up on shifts in policy, celebrating new NIA-related programs and potential for transit-oriented development as Toronto seeks to expand its rail lines into underserved inner-suburbs. A small handful of academic papers proposing "revitalization" for the inner-suburbs have also surfaced. Notably, Michael Noble's *Lovely Spaces in Unknown Places: Creative City Building in Toronto's Inner Suburbs* (2009), hinges on exoticization of ethno-racialized groups and everyday life in the inner-suburbs, and largely attributes socio-economic inequalities to "poor urban form" that, with lower market land value, has potential for "adaptive re-use."[8]

An annual CSOC conference takes place to build on this discourse of creative city planning for inner-suburban neighbourhoods and to facilitate partnerships between public programs, such as Tower Renewal, and non-profit organizations. The event celebrates creative city planning as a response to social challenges and harnesses the energy of community arts initiatives towards new developments. It disseminates knowledge on building consensus through community consultation and participatory planning, and how to use available policy tools, with a focus on private investment (Creative Spaces Partnership Exchange, field observation, November 2, 2015). While CSOC itself has a low public profile in Toronto, it has considerable ideological significance because it signals an update of the creative competitiveness consensus from its downtown-orientation to one that that purportedly embraces the inner-suburbs, while hinting at potential exploitation of the state-produced rent gap. As well, it reflects a shift in public-

[8] This growing discourse informing shifts in Toronto's creative competitiveness consensus is in line with Richard Florida's revised book, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2012:385), where he bypasses criticism and proposes "creatification of everyone." At an Urban Land Institute (ULI) symposium in Toronto which focused on emerging trends in "city-building," Florida declared that integration of North American suburban regions into urbanity is the "next challenge" (Novakovic, 2015).

private partnership towards a *non-profit sector leadership,* which is not only symptomatic of the state's cost-cutting agendas (Catungal and Leslie, 2009), but threatens a form of privatized control over a vulnerable social environment.

The next chapter examines Artscape, as a key example of a non-profit organization entrenched in Toronto's creative city agenda, and as it leads the creative competitiveness consensus towards development "outside of the core."

Figure 3. Cultural mapping exercise at Creative Spaces Outside of the Core roundtable meeting in 2013. Source: Toronto Artscape.

Chapter 3: The utopian city-building organization

Among the many non-profit organizations active in Toronto's creative city agenda, Artscape (formally Toronto Artscape Inc.) stands out as the leading promoter of the creative city agenda. Artscape calls itself "a not-for-profit development organization that makes space for creativity and transforms communities" (Artscape, 2015a). Its portfolio currently includes ten properties in some of Toronto's most gentrifying/gentrified downtown neighbourhoods – artist housing, multi-purpose buildings, and its well-known "community cultural hubs" – with 2,373 people working or living in the buildings, as well as 116 organizations and businesses housed. Within the properties Artscape manages there are 32 public venues such as performance spaces and galleries. It boasts its non-residential rents to be equal to 42% of gross average market rent in Toronto's downtown and midtown. Affordability for artists has been always a key goal in Artscape's property investments: it claims to have saved them $3.6M collectively in commercial and residential costs in 2014 (*ibid.*). Winning numerous awards for its flagship architecture, community development and "social entrepreneurship," Artscape has been described as a "utopian NPO [non-profit organization]" (Landau, 2014). It has also been designated one of the City's 11 "Major Cultural Organizations."

Artscape is a powerful organization. It enjoys strong ties to the municipal government, as well as provincial and federal governments. Some of Artscape's biggest supporters are among the most influential developers in Toronto such as the Daniels Corporation and Urbancorp and elite new urbanist architects, such as Joe Lobko and the Zeidler Family. For the past decade or so, a handful of journalists have been on hand to cover Artscape's developments in a celebratory fashion in local mainstream newspapers (e.g. Gallant, 2010; Hume, 2012). Artscape's sponsors/donors, whom it calls "stakeholders," are numerous. Among the biggest contributors are corporate banks such as TD Bank, and a number of wealthy family charitable foundations, some who have cumulatively donated over $1M each. Tim Jones, Artscape's CEO, who has refused to disclose his salary publicly (Lorinc, 2015a), also falls into this category of "lifetime supporters," who donate up to $100,000 to the organization (Artscape, 2015a). As the external face of Artscape, responsible for the organization's public relations operations, Jones has built up a powerful discourse on "creativity" and "transforming communities" both on the local and international stages, calling on "corporate social consciousness" to address urban challenges (Jones, 2016).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Artscape is that it emerged in 1986 as an anti-gentrification project, exclusively concerned for the agency of artists in Toronto (Artscape, 2016). Curiously, it has maintained this anti-gentrification stance while being deeply entrenched in a number of "revitalization" schemes and as it continues to expand with its creative city mantra as its "frontier" logic – even beyond its home city. In 2014, for example, the organization proudly opened its first "social franchise experiment" in Vancouver, and is now looking to expand into "new markets" (Jones, 2015). Back in Toronto, the organization

currently has three known properties in development (seven, according to Dixon, 2015), one of which will be the anchor in the city's own version of mass waterfront redevelopment from brownfield to a site of multiple condominium complexes: "The City of Arts" (Patterson and Silver, 2015; Starr, 2015). Most significantly, Artscape has turned its attention to Toronto's inner-suburbs though its *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* initiative. Artscape is spearheading this largely non-profit-driven endeavour with its pilot "community cultural hub" development in the neighbourhood of Weston (which will be examined in detail in Chapter 4).

This chapter investigates Artscape as a "major agency playing a lead role in culture-led regeneration in Toronto" (AuthentiCity, 2008:15), and as it prepares to make its first jump outside of Toronto's gentrifying/gentrified inner-city to the disinvested inner-suburbs. It examines Artscape's operations from the perspective of the varying roles the non-profit sector plays in society and the effects it can have on governance, citizenship, and politics. It also considers how the entrepreneurial non-profit organization interacts with public and private sectors (via funding and other supports); and subsequently, the role Artscape plays in gentrifying Toronto neighbourhoods. Finally, the chapter seeks to understand how Artscape mobilizes concepts of inclusion into the creative city to legitimize gentrification (featuring Jones's monumental speech reflecting on 30 years of Artscape's operations)[9] and how this politically seductive discourse advances to set a particular gaze on Toronto's disinvested inner-suburbs.

Producing spill-over effects from the arts accommodation crisis

Artscape emerged from the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) in 1986 with the mandate of protecting artists from gentrification in Toronto's downtown core. It became an "arms-length" agency of the City[10] after it lobbied along with the TAC to have the "arts accommodation crisis" as well as the economic advantage of artists to be recognized in the Official Plan (TAC, 1988; TAI, 1991). Central to this recognition was new public funding for Artscape, which allowed the organization to enter the real estate market during a deep slump in the early 1990s. Its first few buildings providing artist studio spaces were opened in the Queen Street West "art zone" – the poster child neighbourhood of corporate commercialization of Toronto artist communities at the time (Donegan, 1989). These projects, mandated to relieve artists from poverty, attempted to replace the typically illegal practice of artist live/work tenure in industrial buildings. The Artscape philosophy reflected the broader Jane Jacobs-inspired movement of historical preservation, "anti-homogenization" and anti-suburbanization; as well as celebration of

[9] This speech was delivered November 26, 2015 at a *MaRS Global Leadership* event in Toronto. MaRS is a non-profit corporation, which calls itself an "innovation hub." It helps entrepreneurs, mainly in the technology sector, to start up and grow their companies. Located in downtown Toronto, MaRS is considered the lynchpin of a network of innovation centres across Ontario.

[10] This refers to the old City of Toronto prior to the 1998 amalgamation with the five boroughs into the new City of Toronto.

"diversity," which was also becoming embraced by the municipal government.

The subsequent development of Artscape facilities in the 1990s was aided by some key state mechanisms such as: 1) funding from all levels of government; 2) $1 per year leases granted on City-owned properties in primarily industrial and/or working class neighbourhoods; and, 3) the re-zoning of such areas from industrial to "mixed use" and "live/work," opening them up to residential and retail uses. The establishment of Artscape Non-profit Homes Inc. in 1994, as a subsidiary corporation of Artscape, allowed the organization to provide state-subsidized housing. Handpicked Artscape tenants would therefore have to pass state-regulated income means testing as well as qualify as professional artists under the Draft Canadian Artist Code.[11]

The increased state assistance to the arts encapsulated by Artscape in Toronto aligns well with David Ley's (1996) observation between the expanding cohort of what he called a "cultural new class" and the alteration of rationale behind the allocation of land use in Canadian urban contexts. The clear impetus behind establishing Artscape cultural facilities in the 1990s, in neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village, West Queen West and Parkdale, as well on the Toronto Islands, was to use the presence of artists as a driver for capitalization. It was expected that the presence of artists would provide a perceived steady increase in investment behaviour, a "revived confidence," and thus, the lessening of "risk" for new in-movers, investors and developers in neighbourhoods that were deemed "blighted" (for cases in New York City, see Mele, 2000; Zukin, 1989). The use of Artscape as a vehicle for transforming neighbourhoods is symptomatic of the state's cost-cutting agenda (Catungal and Leslie, 2009) and the enabling mechanisms used to anchor Artscape in certain neighbourhoods signals what Tom Slater (2004a) has exposed as "municipally-managed gentrification." As Sharon Zukin (1989:124-125) revealed long ago in the case of New York City, "a small amount of public expenditure on the arts can have a great effect on the city."

As such, Artscape has gained a local reputation for prompting "spill-over effects" (Jones, 2004) in downtown Toronto neighbourhoods characterized by the proliferation of "galleries, hotels, cafés and specialty retail" that collectively become "a huge magnet for residential development" (Jones, 2015). Yet, it remains silent about the irony of artist displacement related to some of its projects (Blackwell, 2006; Van Eyk, 2010) as well as some of the project partners' anti-poor agendas.[12] Indeed, under the guise of an "anti-gentrification" position, Artscape's

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[11] The Draft Canadian Artist Code can be found on Artscape's official website: http://www.torontoartscape.org/sites/default/files/Defining%20a%20Professional%20Artist_Draft%20CAN%20Artists%20Code_0.pdf . It is not clear who established it and when. It appears as though Artscape is the only organization in Canada that uses it.

[12] For example: After they rallied against proposed additional social housing for low-income residents (Berzins, 1992), the Parkdale Village Business Improvement Association (PVBIA) embarked on an initiative to "clean up" and restore the neighbourhood to its middle/upper class origins (Slater, 2004a), and convinced Artscape to develop an arts centre with affordable artist housing in a vacant City-owned building in the neighbourhood. Artists, the PVBIA was convinced, would "improve the physical appearance of the district" and jumpstart a "revitalization" in Parkdale (Berzins, 1992).

"poverty relief" efforts for artists reflect what Adrian Blackwell (2006:33) described as, "a complex reorientation of urbanization toward the city, a shift that was radical in its concern for the agency of existing neighbourhoods and communities, but reactionary in its strategies of 'white painting' and urban cleansing." While immigrants, for example, made up 40% of the Queen West neighbourhood in the 1970s (Flavelle, 1985), the "arts accommodation crisis" successfully became the centre of focus in the municipal government's agenda and media, thanks to the TAC and Artscape.

The uncritical embrace of Artscape projects in downtown Toronto neighbourhoods cannot be divorced from the flipside: the unwelcomed patients released into the streets from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) – a focal point of West Queen West for over 100 years – during the provincial government's mass deinstitutionalization in the 1990s to accommodate cuts in social services (Slater, 2004a); as well, as the criminalization of homelessness under the provincial government's *Safe Streets Act* 1999, which, Jennifer Adese (2007) argues in her masters thesis, laid the groundwork for the emergence of the creative city in Toronto by eliminating the visibility of racialized, ethnicized, and "*in*tolerable" poverty in the downtown core.

The creative turn

The emergence of Richard Florida's creative class thesis in 2002 strongly re-affirmed Artscape's mandate of retaining artists in the downtown as well as its budding role as a "city-builder" (Jones, 2015). In 2003, Artscape hosted an international conference called *Creative Places + Spaces*, featuring Florida himself (who now sits on the Artscape's board of "Ambassadors") and Jane Jacobs as keynote speakers. According to Artscape, this was "a watershed moment in the advancement of the creative cities movement in Canada" (Artscape, 2016).

The "creative turn" in Artscape's operations in this period involved increased private investment, understood as a much more viable strategy for "creative place-making" (a term which Artscape claims to have coined in 2006) in the context of continuing cuts in state social spending.[13] In stride, it launched another corporate subsidiary in 2006, the Artscape Foundation, for the purpose of procuring private tax-deductible donations. Artscape also began to identify itself as a "social enterprise," a model that marries social development and business interests, which has been adopted by non-profit organizations for more "self-sufficiency" (as in, independence from public funding). Artscape's "social entrepreneurship" has been realized through its roles as: 1) a think tank – essentially "manualizing" (Peck, 2005) creativity-led gentrification, conducting research on the cultural sector, speaking internationally, facilitating educational "how-to" workshops for interested non-profit organizations and private sector, and

[13] Artscape defines "creative place-making" as "the emerging and evolving field of practice that aims to leverage the power of art, culture and creativity to act as a catalyst for change, growth and transformation of place" (Artscape, 2013:10).

advancing a host of public policy goals and university curricula; 2) a consultant to U.S., U.K. and other Canadian municipalities inspired to develop their own creative city strategies; and, 3) as a landlord – with the development of seven more significantly larger and robustly financed (multi-million dollar) properties in Toronto since 2003. The latter is the organization's primary "business with a social purpose," which now accounts for 65% of its annual revenue, while public funds now only account for 3% (Artscape, 2015a).[14]

Since the emergence of Toronto's creative city consensus in the early 2000s, Artscape's facilities became embedded in much larger private projects located within a number of downtown neighbourhoods designated by the City as "Regeneration Areas" (rezoning allowing for intensification of development on sites that were home to industrial warehouses). An example of this is the 2003 opening of Artscape studios in the Distillery District, a 158-year-old, 13-acre industrial park in Toronto's east end that has been "revitalized" into an "'arts, culture and entertainment' precinct directed towards middle to upper class patrons" (Mathews, 2014:1020). In what Vanessa Mathews (2014) emphasized to be a rapid (rather than incremental) form of gentrification, Artscape was cast as the "community benefit" through an agreement between the City and the developer under Section 37 of the *Ontario Planning Act*. This tool allows private developers to break zoning by-laws by increasing density (therefore, increasing profits) in their peripheral condominium projects, by partially or fully funding so called "community benefits." Section 37 has been controversial in Toronto because there are no standards or baseline for how it works or what local residents should expect in exchange for a big change in their neighbourhoods (Moore, 2013). Typically, developers benefit doubly from this arrangement, as the presence of the arts/artists – which enter under the provision of "community benefits" – becomes a selling feature of their condominiums (Sandals, 2013).

Henceforth, the Section 37 agreements have become key to every Artscape development. The use of this planning mechanism is also how the organization has been able to create "affordable housing out of thin air" (Gallant, 2010). Artscape has bought condominiums at greatly reduced prices, renting some, but selling most of them as a new business endeavour in "affordable" artist homeownership. Thus, by taking advantage of densification occurring in Toronto's downtown, Artscape is celebrated for producing "win-win-win" situations (Artscape DIY, 2016a) for, supposedly, the "arts community," the private partners, and the City. In this public-private-non-profit arrangement, however, the City's control over development is increasingly diminishing:

> *[Artscape] has been trying to use all of these tools. What can I do to get a little piece of the pie over here? How much is the City able to do? Very little. But*

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[14] Revenue from Artscape's consultancy practice paid for with public funds is, of course, not counted in Artscape's public funding total (some examples of current and past Canadian governmental clients include City of Brampton, ON; City of Guelph ON; City of Mississauga, ON; City of Vancouver, BC; Halifax Regional Municipality, NS; Town of Canmore, AB). While the organization touts little reliance on public funds, this revenue can be perceived as "hidden" public funding.

> *what can it do to take what's happening in the growth of the city and the density that people are trying to build and ensure a piece of it? (Liz Kohn, Artscape Director of Communications, interview, February 5, 2016).*

Artscape's projects that most epitomize the so-called "win-win-win" development formula are its "community cultural hubs." One of the most notable examples is the Artscape Wychwood Barns, a reclaimed 100-year-old streetcar barn located in a high-end residential area of Wychwood Park. One commentator of *The Globe and Mail* sarcastically called it, "a tableau of gentrified urban cool" (Lorinc, 2015a). Another example is Artscape Youngplace, a former public school, built in 1914 and located just a few blocks away from the organization's very first artist housing property. It is considered to be "the social heart of West Queen West" (Bielski, 2013). Both hubs are celebrated locally as successful heritage preservation projects.

Artscape's hubs differ from its other properties because they are supposedly "created in response to the needs and aspirations of numerous stakeholders," such as "artists, local residents, non-profit organizations, governments, philanthropists and businesses" (Artscape, 2015a:4). Thus, the hubs are where Artscape demonstrates its commitment to community as they were built "from the ground up" (Artscape, 2016) through public consultation. The construction of both Wychwood Barns and Youngplace hubs depended on favourable public and private financing arrangements. In the case of Youngplace, this also included the sale of publicly-owned land. The spaces within the hubs are rented (permanently or short-term) or sold to arts-oriented businesses, non-profit organizations, and community arts groups, but remain open to the public. The Wychwood Barns' mixed-use design also houses state-subsidized artist live/work units.

Daniels Spectrum is one of the latest Artscape hubs to be developed. A $38M project, this hub has played a significant role in the privatization and redevelopment of Regent Park, Canada's oldest and largest subsidized housing project located in Toronto's downtown eastside. Opened in 2012, Daniels Spectrum is notably different from the other hubs because it is not conceived as a heritage preservation project – quite the opposite. Particularly, it is also the first project in which Artscape intentionally engaged with a marginalized and territorially stigmatized community. Ironically, however, while Regent Park residents who participated in the "ground up" planning process initially decided to name the building "The Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre," The Daniels Corporation (the developer responsible for the redevelopment of Regent Park) promptly purchased the naming rights for $4M (Townshend, 2015).

Prior to the redevelopment, the majority of Regent Park residents were low-income people of colour, most of whom were immigrants (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009). Spearheaded by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), an entrepreneurial public housing authority, in partnership with The Daniels Corporation, the new $1B redevelopment entailed a "social mix" arrangement that would reduce the proportion of state-subsidized housing from 100% to 25% (August and Walks, 2011), while the rest become middle-to-upper market-rate condominiums. Over several development phases, all social housing units were replaced, although 29% of them were relocated outside of the neighbourhood (James, 2012). A number

of academic studies have detailed the discontent of original Regent Park residents in the neighbourhood as it is remade for middle-class residence and lifestyle (August and Walks, 2011; August 2014b; James 2010; 2012).

As the TCHC and Daniels have made considerable efforts to suppress local critical debate about the redevelopment (August and Walks, 2011), the role of Artscape's Daniels Spectrum hub's in the redevelopment of Regent Park was to address the "perceived need" of accessible, relevant cultural infrastructure (Artscape DIY, 2016b). The hub now houses several non-profit organizations, hallway galleries and a theatre. It also seeks to attract non-residents to this new "destination," sporting the motto of "Rooted in Regent Park, Open to the World" (Daniels Spectrum, 2016). This seems to have worked. As one *Toronto Star* columnist stated, "there was a time Torontonians avoided Regent Park like the plague; now they seek it out like a breath of fresh air" (Hume, 2012, n.p.). The neighbourhood's famed diversity is celebrated at Daniels Spectrum by cultural events and programming, which are also used to justify Regent Park's broader "revitalization." For example, an annual fundraising event called *The Journey* organized by Artscape for wealthy corporate donors, features a musical performance by local racialized youth which emphasizes the positive aspects of their neighbourhood's redevelopment (namely the Daniels Spectrum hub).

From poverty relief to wealth generation

Artscape's mission, according to the organization, has shifted from "poverty relief" for artists, to "wealth generation" (Artscape, 2016). While the meaning of "wealth generation" remains ambiguous (Liz Kohn, Artscape Director of Communications, interview, February 5, 2016), it is clear that this shift has manifested in Artscape's uncritical acceptance of privatization and densification in Toronto, as the organizations survival appears to now be largely dependent on these processes. Artscape has evolved into not only "the most pronounced voice advocating for the creative city" (Lehrer and Wieditz, 2009:143), but as well as a vehicle for private investment and diverted public funds, in its continued role in municipally-managed gentrification in Toronto.

However, as implied in the case of the Daniels Spectrum hub, Artscape's expansion across Toronto has not been without debate and controversy. There have been ideological battles between the organization and artists over the years (Anonymous, former TAC member, personal communication, November 10, 2015). There has been social tension caused by Artscape's operations and developments, such as its ethical responsibilities in its role as a landlord (Lorinc, 2015a). Artscape has been accused of acting on behalf of special interests (Berland and Hanke, 2002) and attempting to usurp another non-profit arts organization's real estate development (Lorinc, 2015b). Separate entrances for market-rate condominium residents and affordable artist housing tenants at Artscape's Aqualina Bayside Lofts (one of the organization's waterfront projects in development) have been criticized in *Metro News* as a design choice that appears to be mimicking New York City's infamous "poor doors" (Smith Ross, 2014). Meanwhile, local discussions have been stirring over Artscape's tenants as well as

visitors/users of the buildings becoming progressively more affluent, especially as it shifts to providing ownership opportunities (Lorinc, 2015a; Sandals, 2013).[15]

From the broader perspective of the city, there is no shortage of academic studies of gentrification in the neighbourhoods that Artscape purports to have "catalyzed" or played a key role in "transforming."[16] Despite the conflicts and contradictions, Artscape has managed to very successfully retain a high-profile altruist public persona based on an emancipatory discourse centered on inclusion in the creative city.

Figure 4. One of Artscape's signature annual fundraising events, "Salon", at Artscape Wychwood Barns, 2015. Photo by Maurizio Calero. Source: Toronto Artscape.

[15] Patrons of the farmers market at Artscape Wychwood Barns, for example, were found to be predominantly white, middle class, and not reflective of the neighbourhood's socio-economic diversity in one study (Campigotto, 2010).

[16] Liberty Village – Catungal and Leslie, 2009; Catungal, Leslie and Hii, 2009; Wieditz, 2007; Parkdale – Slater, 2004a; 2004b; 2005; Queen West / Triangle – McLean, 2001; Van Eyk, 2010; Distillery District – Mathews, 2014; Regent Park – Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009; August and Walks, 2011; August, 2014b; James, 2010; 2012; 2015.

Figure 5. Artscape staff and selected non-profit arts tenants visit future Daniels Spectrum site in Regent Park, 2011. Source: Toronto Artscape.

Place-making for keeps

Neil Smith (1996) predicted that "gentrification" would become a "dirty word." Tom Slater (2006:739), a decade later confirmed this prediction and added that the term had also become sugar-coated, or in his words, "latte-soaked." In the case of Artscape, both trends can be seen in its powerful but grossly contradictory discourse on the creative city. The perspective of "emancipatory" or "positive" gentrification that neutralizes its negative image (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007), is not new in the Canadian context (Slater, 2004b). However, Artscape updates this discourse by maintaining an "anti-gentrification" stance throughout its 30-year practice.

In a speech in November 2015, Artscape CEO, Tim Jones, proposed to "unpack" a "mysterious phenomenon" that seems to be "driven by nebulous factors." He insists, "it's time that we developed a more sophisticated understanding about the dynamic of culture in communities" (Jones, 2015). He begins by referring to the "SoHo effect," a term coined to describe an ironic process that occured in New York City's SoHo neighbourhood, in which artist-initiated gentrification eventually worked to displace artists. The SoHo effect, he argues, is a concept that has "outlived its usefulness" and must be put "in the rear view mirror." Jones "hate[s] this narrative," dismissing it as "a tired old story about artists and urban development," a story

which the media loves, "because it's full of drama."

> *Because you've got the evil developers as the villains, and you've got the artists as the hapless victims of their own success. It implicates artists as the agents of yuppification of neighbourhoods. It paralyzes the creative community and the policy makers are throwing their arms and saying 'nothing can be done'. And it demonizes growth and change (Jones, 2015).*

Instead, Jones would like the public audience to focus on what he believes are positive collaborative city-building efforts that Artscape has led by example, such as in the development of its Daniels Spectrum hub in Regent Park:

> *We learned there that it was possible to break out of the usual roles that pitted the developer, the housing agency, the community activists, the municipality, and artists against each other. We learned how to find common purpose among us, and how to build value together. And we've demonstrated, I think, that when we're able to do this, not only can we build all kinds of social capital and social infrastructure, and wide range of different programs, you can do this because together, we're creating a multi-billion-dollar market for residential development (Jones, 2015).*

In the beginning, Artscape presented artists as the victims of gentrification in Toronto, emphasizing structural constraints against their lifestyle preferences. This was, on the outset, a problematic tactic, as it placed these concerns over the threat continuously posed to the working poor and racialized communities of being priced out of the city (Deutsche and Gendel Ryan, 1984; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007; Makagon, 2010; Slater, 2006; Zukin, 1989).[17] Today, the empathy for the "embattled settler" (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007; Slater, 2006) has remained, but also has been harnessed to present artists as "agents of change" and key to partnership-led redevelopments. Elsewhere Jones has said: "years ago, we'd be invited to come wave placards outside buildings where people were being evicted. It's just not a very effective strategy… We're trying to get beyond the sorry story of artists as victims" (Gallant, 2010). Rather than making demands, Jones (2015) suggests that one must bring "value to the table" instead: "We've been thinking about creative space as a need that somebody had to take responsibility for, rather than a resource and an opportunity for investment." To illuminate this idea, Jones provided the "inspiring" example of Toronto's waterfront, where pollution was once a problem that no one wanted to take responsibility for, until it was turned into an opportunity for privatization and profit accumulation for investors and developers.

Calling for culture to be embedded in every single development and the broader urban

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[17] In an influential and uniquely unsympathetic article, Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan (1984:104) argue that, "to portray artists as the victims of gentrification is to mock the plight of the neighborhood's real victims."

planning system (rather than solely developing stand-alone cultural facilities), Jones frames Artscape's projects as "disinterested revitalization, while implying the original meaning of gentrification at the same time" (Blackwell, 2006:30). Far from de-mystifying (as his speech was intended to be), one way he does this is by blurring any distinction between what he calls "a multi-billion-dollar market for residential development," "revitalization," the "SoHo effect," and "gentrification":

> *So, some of you are thinking, 'well, what about gentrification?' You know, attractiveness and growth are good problems to have. If we understand how culture creates value and urban development, if we know that that value is going to be generated is predictable, we can leverage it to accommodate artists and provide space for low-income people and accommodate urban growth at the same time (Jones, 2015).*

As shown in the above quote, the other way Jones de–politicizes gentrification is by suggesting that gentrification (diluted down to "attractiveness" and "growth") can be achieved without the negative effect of displacement. Indeed, Jones goes even further to argue that Artscape's projects, all along, have been prototypes in so called "creative place-keeping," citing as prime examples the organization's artist housing projects housing hand-picked tenants in the West Queen West/Queen West Triangle, which has since become arguably one of Canada's most famous gentrified neighbourhoods (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007). As described by Jones (2015), its "creative place-keeping" projects in condominium high-rises, are also examples of "inclusionary zoning." This is a market-oriented approach to dealing with the City's failure to provide enough social housing is currently being considered by the provincial government (Monsebraaten, 2016) while the waiting list swells to a record high of 165,000 households (Monsebraaten, 2014). As exemplified by Artscape, there is no guarantee that this deregulatory strategy of using density-bonusing agreements with developers will produce housing that is affordable to the most marginalized populations in Toronto. Thus, the terrible irony of the term "place-keeping" perhaps does not require elaboration (*who really* gets to "keep" the neighbourhood?).

There are more than enough hints of Artscape's "ideological victory" (Smith, 2002:446). The media has done a fair job parroting the organization's ideas – one outlet, going as far to suggest that Artscape is "reversing gentrification" through its creative city developments (The Monocle Daily, 2013). Artscape has displaced the very understanding of displacement as inherent to the gentrification process. It has done this by deploying strategies often used by gentrification agents; that is, by "carefully selected language to fend off criticism and resistance, organized around a narrative of competitive progress" (Slater, 2006:738). Among the many roles the non-profit organization can play in urban development, the role of the "moral compass" (Choudry and Shragge, 2011) is quite canny in this case as Artscape steers the understanding of gentrification from a political question to one of "the good versus the bad" (Slater, 2014). A critique of conflict-based organizing and dismissal of gentrification as a mere narrative that is sensationalized in the media clears the slate for the promotion of consensus-building and

middle-class resettlement as an unquestioned objective. By presenting gentrification as a moral conundrum and maintaining a focus on the empowerment of artists in urban development, attention is diverted away from the actors who actively produce gentrification, such as landlords, bankers, urban property speculators and the state (Slater, 2006; 2014). This is replaced with easy-to-digest promises of inclusion in the face of growing spatialized socio-economic inequalities in Toronto.

From challenges to opportunities

Seizing the moral high ground necessary for painting gentrification as a "good problem to have," Artscape's conversation about creative city development has shifted from the downtown towards Toronto's inner suburbs. Jones (2015) presents this new trajectory in focus from the perspective of a polarization between the two areas: "Toronto is becoming an increasingly divided city. There is not only a growing gap between the rich and the poor, but also a growing sense of unease between the downtown and the suburbs." The understanding of this polarization, however, does not go beyond this statement. It also begs the question: What triggered Artscape, whose philosophy was so influenced by Jane Jacobs' *anti-suburban* movement, to look towards Toronto's inner-suburbs, and particularly former priority neighbourhoods (some of which are now designated "neighbourhood improvement areas" – NIAs) for future developments?

Artscape's interest in building "creative spaces outside of the core" perhaps, was sparked in 2009, when the City of Toronto requested that Artscape shift its functions towards the city's priority neighbourhoods in return for a formal multi-year funding agreement (City of Toronto, 2009). In a letter response, Artscape defensively clarified its operational independence from the City, and that its choice of projects is only heavily influenced by "when a private donor or senior level of government steps forward with an exciting new opportunity" (Sharpe and Jones, 2009, n.p.). Artscape also expressed reluctance to develop projects in priority neighbourhoods:

> *Artscape projects respond to market needs and conditions. Given that our projects are self-financing once operational, Artscape only proceeds with ones that have the market conditions creative people need to thrive and strong market demand for tenancies (ibid.).*

The organization nonetheless offered the City a "feasibility study" on the application of its community cultural hub model to the priority neighbourhood of Weston-Mount Dennis (two combined inner-suburban neighbourhoods in Toronto's north-west). Curiously, a report by Artscape predating this letter by two years states that it had already "begun to explore collaborations with community groups in suburban areas such as Weston/Mount Dennis"

(Artscape, 2007:14).[18] Thus, in 2011, Artscape "responded" to a City of Toronto Request for Quotations (RFQ) asking for such a feasibility study. In a classic Floridian fashion, Artscape's study indexed and measured the number of residents working in the cultural sector as well as existing "cultural and creative assets and resources" in the neighbourhoods of Weston-Mount Dennis. By Artscape's standards, the study found a very low level of participation and production in this sphere. It also conveyed concerns about the safety of the neighbourhood, as well as the presence of a poor population, which meant that there was limited ability to afford and access creative/cultural provisions (Artscape, 2011).

Despite these perceived challenges, the idea of a creative/cultural hub in Weston-Mount Dennis was deemed feasible on the premise that there was found to be a demand for commercial, work and program space in the neighbourhood (according to resident-interviewee responses to a narrowly-designed survey), which conveniently correlated with the "significant demand" for artist live/work accommodation from across the rest of the city. According to Artscape (2011:55), "the combination of the two [demands] offers the potential to attract and retain creative capacity in the neighbourhood and to create a critical mass of creative activity and business opportunity." By moving in "creative people," Artscape noted, sustaining a hub will be more viable, and a diverse mix of tenants would ensure a new creative "micro economy" (*ibid.*, 18).

> *The introduction of a hub that clusters dozens of creative people together in a neighbourhood has been demonstrated in other Toronto neighbourhoods to have a dramatic and catalytic effect. Such developments can put challenged neighbourhoods on the map for creative people, attract businesses such as galleries, cafes and specialty retail and set the stage for broader regeneration (Artscape, 2011:3)*

Finally, the feasibility study mentioned, although did not attempt to address, some of the resident-interviewees' concerns that "the introduction of artists and culture workers might cause property values to rise and the displacement of less affluent renters in the area" (*ibid.*, 48).

It is not totally clear what changed Artscape's position on developing in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods, though one can only speculate that there was a particular "opportunity" presented at some point or another. This chapter now returns to Tim Jones' speech to consider how the non-profit organization's interest in building "creative spaces outside of the core" is rationalized.

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[18] Oddly, the report, *Vision 2011: Thinking Big About Culture-led Regeneration*, has also been retracted from online public access, while many similar Artscape reports remain.

Setting the gaze on Toronto's inner suburbs

While Jones (2015) calls for more "concerted creative place-keeping efforts" in gentrifying/gentrified downtown neighbourhoods, he calls for a seemingly different (but essentially identical) treatment for Toronto's (not-yet-gentrified) disinvested inner-suburbs:

> *Imagine if we engage culture as a form of urban acupuncture, embrace the idea that pinprick of urbanism can create huge change. That there can be methods of healing in cities where by stimulating nerves and unblocking channels, releasing pressure – we're able to solve problems and also to transform challenged neighbourhoods into vibrant, healthy areas (Jones, 2015).*

"Urban acupuncture" is a term *du jour* is borrowed from yet another "urban guru," Jaime Lerner, an ex-mayor of supposedly the "greenest" city in the world, Curitiba, Brazil (Power, 2009). The concept suggests the use of small-scale interventions to change the broader urban context, essentially promoting trickle-down theory with the expectation of "spill-over effects." Also key to Lerner's urban planning style is "using only massive creativity and tiny budgets" (*ibid.*), or in other words, using cost-cutting initiatives and responsibilizing citizens for public services such as garbage removal (as he is known for doing).[19] Below is a quote from Lerner, as it bears stressing the insidious disease-cure metaphor that is mobilized in this concept to rationalize highly mandated but fiscally modest investments (Peck, 2012):

> *Strategic punctual interventions can create a new energy and help the desired scenario to be consolidated. This is "Urban Acupuncture": it revitalizes a "sick" or "worn out" area and its surroundings through a simple touch of a key point. Just as in the medical approach, this intervention will trigger positive chain-reactions, helping to cure and enhance the whole system" (Lerner, 2011).*

As Julia Todoli (2007:51-52) argues, such metaphors in urban planning are drawn on at key moments "to deliberately present a biased view of a situation or event" and are "often used to mystify the impact some redevelopment processes will have upon the affected residents." "Territorial stigmatization" (Slater, 2015) is central in the use of this metaphor, and can be easily perpetuated through heightening anxieties surrounding "decline" or "blight": "We may be living in the most liveable city in the world, but you don't actually have to look very far to find urban blight. And when you start looking for it, you actually see – it is everywhere" (Jones, 2015). This is mirrored in Jones's recalling of West Queen West before it became "the second coolest neighbourhood in the world" according to *Vogue* (Remsen, 2014):

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[19] Lerner is also known for pedestrianizing an entire commercial throughway over one weekend without any prior public discussion; and, as the inventor of the *DockDock,* a glorified electric personal mobility device, which he insists should replace cars and public transport, as well as vehicle proprietorship for citizens (it must be rented from corporations) (Power, 2009).

> *Twenty years ago walking down the street, you're likely to encounter all the vestiges of poverty: people in social distress; there's marginal retail; an overabundance of used appliance stores; and many of them out on the street, you have to navigate around them. Ossington Avenue, now the home of the hipster, had the highest retail vacancy in the entire city. It was a tough neighbourhood. One where most people didn't see a lot of hope or promise for the future (Jones, 2015).*

Simultaneous "deterritorialization" is also central to the powerful disease-cure metaphor. As Smith (1996:11) states, "the more events are wrenched from their constitutive geographies, the more powerful the mythology," meaning, erasing or re-writing a social histories of place strengthens the desired narrative that serves particular interests. That is, by failing to consider the political-economic structures that produce such disparities between Toronto's inner-city and inner-suburbs, the symbolic structure of urban acupuncture reinforces the notion that neighbourhoods are the problem, rather than them being the expression of the fundamental problems to be addressed (Slater, 2015). Thus, Artscape trains a particular *gaze* on Toronto's disinvested suburbs – as mystified spaces of "blocked channels," "built up pressure," and "unease," (Jones, 2015), rather than geographies that have been structurally disinvested, that are spaces of struggle, and are simply places where actual people live and work. This gaze presented by Jones (2015) targets Toronto's inner suburban landscape as the "patient" or "recipient" and includes the precarious artist as the "expert" or "social worker":

> *So what if we looked for opportunities to take a page out of Jaime Lerner's book and then enlisted artists to tackle urban blight? You know, that typically artists in Toronto earn less than half of their income from their creative practice, so there's a lot of unused talent that could be put to work in all kinds of great ways, and I think tackling urban blight would be one fantastic way.*

This proposed "healing" intervention, essentially a classic patronizing philanthropic relationship, resonates with Florida's key concept of attracting a "creative class" to a targeted locale for revalourization. With its emancipatory twist, the idea simultaneously justifies fiscally modest investments in an already disinvested setting.

Conclusion

The case of Artscape demonstrates that non-profit organizations can play a key role in the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods. More specifically, the organization's position within partnerships and state cost-cutting agendas reveals the amount of energy that is necessarily put towards legitimizing gentrification and building consensus through a discourse centered on inclusion in the creative city. No different from Artscape's double-speak on gentrification, its use of metaphor for proposing to "heal" Toronto's inner-suburbs with "culture" is, at best, a

tool used to introduce redevelopment and at worst, to present gentrification ("investment") as generally "good" in comparison to continued disinvestment ("blight"). Continuing to track the geography of the "utopian NPO," the following chapter details what has, and is expected to come from the proposal of "making space for creativity" in the form of seemingly innocent "pinpricks of urbanism" in Toronto's disinvested inner suburbs. Development has been underway for Artscape's first project outside of the inner-city, and Jones (2015) is already promising it to be a replicable idea:

> *Next week City Council is poised to sign off on our first major project – we're so proud of this – called the Artscape Weston Hub. It's another highly innovative deal involving the City, the Rockport Group applied as the developer, Artscape, and a bunch of community partners. Imagine if we replicated this Weston model in a dozen neighbourhoods across the city to catalyze the re-imagination of our suburbs, to begin to knit the city back together through culture.*

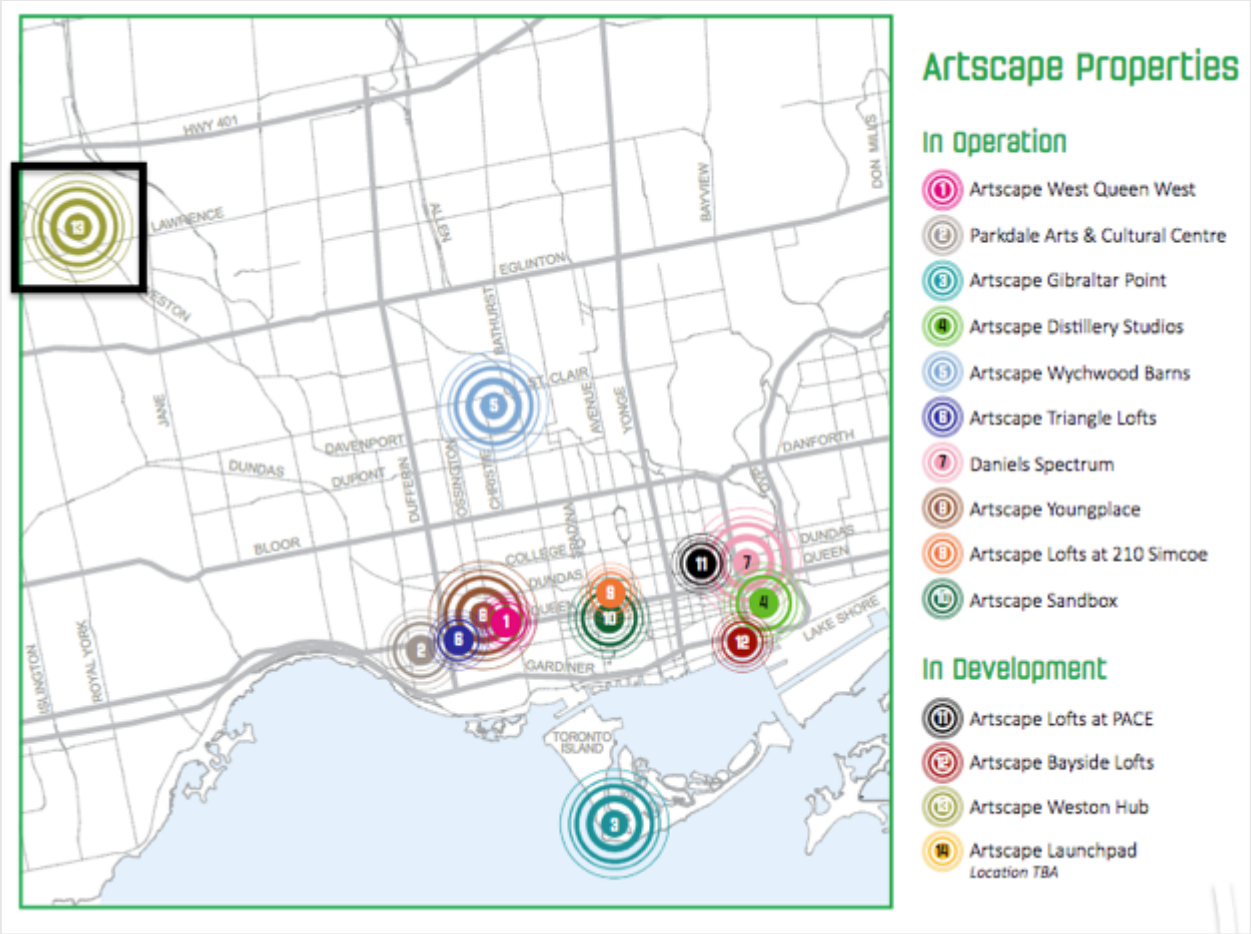

Figure 6. Map of existing Artscape properties and those officially in development in Toronto. Location of Weston Hub highlighted in box. Source: Artscape, 2015a.

Chapter 4: The Weston Project

"THERE IS GOING TO BE A REVITALIZATION IN WESTON. THAT'S WHAT WE WANT. FOR YEARS AND YEARS I'M HEARING FROM MY COMMUNITY, 'I DON'T WANT TO GO DOWN TO WESTON ROAD. WE DON'T HAVE GOOD RESTAURANTS. WE DON'T HAVE COFFEE SHOPS. WE HAVE NOTHING.'"
– YORK-SOUTH WESTON WARD COUNCILLOR, FRANCES NUNZIATA, ETOBICOKE YORK COUNCIL MEETING, NOVEMBER 10, 2015

The above quote encapsulates the discussion at the Etobicoke York Council meeting held in fall 2015 regarding the Toronto inner-suburban neighbourhood of Weston and its main thoroughfare which radiates in a north-west direction from the inner core. The council meeting centered on the final proposal of the highly-anticipated "prescription" to the perceived condition of having "nothing" in Weston – the Artscape Weston Hub – before it received its official seal of approval from the City of Toronto Council in December 2015.

In a room full of mostly white, single-family homeowners, attendance at this council meeting was visibly not representative of Weston's demographics in terms of race, ethnicity and income levels. One resident-speaker announced, "Artscape is coming to Weston. This is huge for our village." Considering Artscape's real estate portfolio in Toronto's gentrified/ying inner city, to a number of attendees the significance of the organization choosing Weston as the site of its first "creative space outside the core" was equated to winning a lottery. Slated to be opened in 2018, the new Artscape Weston Hub promises to be the catalyst for Weston's planned "revitalization." As one member of the local Residents' Association pointedly reminded the meeting, Weston is no longer a City-designated "priority neighbourhood," but a "neighbourhood improvement area" (NIA).

Weston's NIA designation, along with several other factors, has put the neighbourhood under significant redevelopment pressure. The City of Toronto identified the neighbourhood's high concentration of post-war residential apartment towers (32 in total), as appropriate for its Tower Renewal program to change the conditions of "vertical poverty" (City of Toronto, 2012b). Interest in "revitalizing" Weston was also prompted by the redevelopment of the GO Train Station and most significantly, the construction of the Union-Pearson Express (UPx) station at Weston's main intersection, Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road. Built and operated by Metrolinx, the Province's regional transportation agency for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, the UPx rail line was developed to relieve business-class types of "the anxiety of a journey between downtown Toronto and Toronto Pearson Airport" (Union Pearson Express, 2015). Such significant transit infrastructure development has become a popular impetus to further urban development not only in Toronto, but across the country's urban centres (Jones and Ley, 2016). Inspired by Artscape's feasibility study for a cultural hub in Weston-Mount Dennis (Artscape, 2011), the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2012b) was developed under the premise that Weston had experienced close to no private investment during Toronto's building boom and that new transit infrastructure alone

"will not be enough to stimulate developer investment" (*ibid.*, 5). The Artscape Weston Hub as a "Signature Initiative" – the centrepiece of the plan for branding Weston as a new "destination" – is not only expected to jump-start the process of new private investments, but also play a key role in the 2021 Revitalization Strategy's long-term objective developing Weston into "a healthy, economically diverse and fully integrated community" (*ibid.*, 7).

The future Artscape Weston Hub is a direct culmination of Artscape's goal to expand its efforts outside of Toronto's downtown and build a "more inclusive creative city." To be located in the centre of the racialized, low-income area of Weston, the Hub is expected to serve as a model for other inner-suburban NIAs. However, as will be explained here, the Hub is only one component of a much larger commercial/residential redevelopment project managed by a complex public-private-non-profit partnership. At the time of writing, the construction of the project has begun (summer 2016). This chapter recounts some key events and local neighbourhood discourse leading up to this moment. It explores how creative city-inspired gentrification targeting an inner-suburb of Toronto is embraced and resisted by local actors when it is presented as an inclusionary project and "therapeutic" solution to prolonged disinvestment. The case study exposes the crucial roles played by Artscape and the broader non-profit sector environment in building a consensus on the process of gentrification in Weston; and, ultimately, how the most marginalized residents in the neighbourhood are implicated and affected. Perspectives captured through interviews are supplemented with online discourse from a neighbourhood blog covering local news and events (WestonWeb.ca), and site and field observations over the period of one year (fall 2015 – fall 2016) in addition to the aforementioned council meeting where the Weston Project plans were approved (for list of field observations see Appendix 1). Before turning to the neighbourhood's critical response to the Artscape Hub and broader redevelopment plans, the chapter begins with an overview of Weston's history, socio-economic geography, and development of the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy*.

From "home of the bicycle" to disinvestment

The inner-suburban neighbourhood of Weston is situated in north-west Toronto at the main intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue, south of the major highway 400. Formerly independent of Toronto, Weston was first established as a British colonial settlement in 1796, on a First Nations trading route along the Humber River (Weston Village Residents' Association, 2016). Construction of the Grand Trunk Railway (presently Canada National Railway) and the Bruce Railway (now Canadian Pacific Railway) in 1856 and 1869 led to the expansion of many local industries in Weston (*ibid*.) and development of a local identity of a prosperous manufacturing town, with many household brand-names such as Moffat stoves, Kodak film, and Canadian Cycle and Motor Co. (CCM) bicycles. Hence, Weston was and is still often referred to as "the home of the bicycle." The town eventually incorporated into the Borough of York in the 1950s. This was followed by the development of nearby major shopping malls and, starting in the mid-1960s to 70s, a process of deindustrialization which over the next three decades led

to severe losses in manufacturing jobs, only to be replaced by low-paying service work (where once stood the CCM factory is now a Tim Hortons fast food restaurant) (Nugent, 2013).

Because of its devalued rents, Weston steadily throughout the 1980s and 90s became a home for residents on fixed income (social assistance residents and seniors), as well as for recent immigrants from the Caribbean, the Americas and East Africa because of its proximity to Toronto's Pearson International Airport (Nugent, 2013). In 1998, Weston (as a part of the Borough of York) was amalgamated along with the other five boroughs into the new City of Toronto and austerity measures related to this restructuring pushed Weston into further decline. Today, Weston is situated in the second-lowest average income provincial riding (*ibid.*). Out of the approximate population of 19,000, more than a quarter of Weston's residents have a household income of less than $34,646, the state poverty threshold for a household of three in 2011 (City of Toronto, 2014b).

Geography matters

In the City of Toronto's place-based response to suburbanized poverty, Weston, combined with neighbouring Mount Dennis to the south, was identified as one of thirteen priority neighbourhoods in 2006. This resulted in an increased police presence aimed at the centre of the neighbourhood and disproportionately racialized youth. Crime had been, and continues to be, an issue in Weston. However, street gangs have been found to be predominantly youth navigating poverty (Powell, 2013).[20] Nonetheless, Weston fell within one of the most heavily carded[21] areas in the city in 2010, and while crime levels have more recently gone down, the same police presence has remained (Rankin and Winza, 2012). Like other priority neighbourhoods, Weston has seen an increase in non-profit governance and has experienced the stigma attached to the designation. Because it was ranked 18th-lowest out of Toronto's 140 social planning neighbourhoods in the City's "Neighbourhood Equity Score" in 2014, Weston received the new "de-stigmatized" neighbourhood improvement area (NIA) designation (City of Toronto, 2014c). Little has changed in socio-economic stability since either priority neighbourhood or NIA designations. One indicator that demonstrates continued poverty in the neighbourhood is that Weston residents are most at risk of homelessness throughout the entire city (Paradis, Wilson and Logan, 2014). The higher than city-average unemployment rate of 10%, as well is one of the biggest challenges faced by the neighbourhood (City of Toronto, 2014b).

With continuing immigration, approximately half of Weston's residents are foreign-born and more than half (58%) are "visible minorities" (City of Toronto, 2014b). At the same time,

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[20] Weston street gangs like the infamous Five Point Generals, for example, could not afford cars and rather, commuted by public transit (Powell, 2013).

[21] Carding refers to the highly controversial practice of police stopping individuals, typically in a "high crime" neighbourhood, and recording their personal information.

however, a consistent minority of white middle-class residents has remained in Weston. As seen on the city-wide scale, income disparity and racial inequality has manifested in a pattern of residential segregation in Weston. As one interviewee, a blogger for WestonWeb, explained, the perceived marker that divides Weston is the railroad line cutting through the neighbourhood:

> *There's the wrong side of the tracks, there's the right side of the tracks. Of course, I say that tongue-and-cheek. But, I live on one side of the tracks. The other side of the tracks is not nearly as wealthy as my neighbourhood. For us, more than most – the geography just matters. It really matters – it shapes all of what's really going on (Norman, interview 1).*

Indeed, Canadian 2006 census data indicates that the north-east quadrant of the neighbourhood (north of Lawrence Avenue and east side of the tracks), characterized by its heritage single-family homes (built before the 1940s), is predominantly populated by white, middle class families.[22] Throughout the rest of Weston (in the south-east quadrant and the central area along Weston Road and the Humber river, on the other side of the railroad tracks) is where the majority of residents live, including the neighbourhood's racialized population (See Figure 10 below). The residents in apartment towers alone represent 59% of Weston's population (*ibid.*) and any residents in this higher-density area have a median household income below the state poverty threshold.

[22] This area, perhaps not coincidently, is where Artscape's mapping research found the presence of "cultural workers" (or members of the "creative class"), whereas the rest of Weston had too low of a count to justify a creative city-inspired "revitalization." This finding is one of the reasons that made the idea of a Hub in Weston "feasible" (Artscape, 2014).

Figure 7. Looking north at main intersection in Weston, Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue. Source: author.

Figure 8. Heritage homes in Weston's north-east quadrant. Source: author.

Figure 9. The railroad tracks dividing Weston, looking south. Source: author.

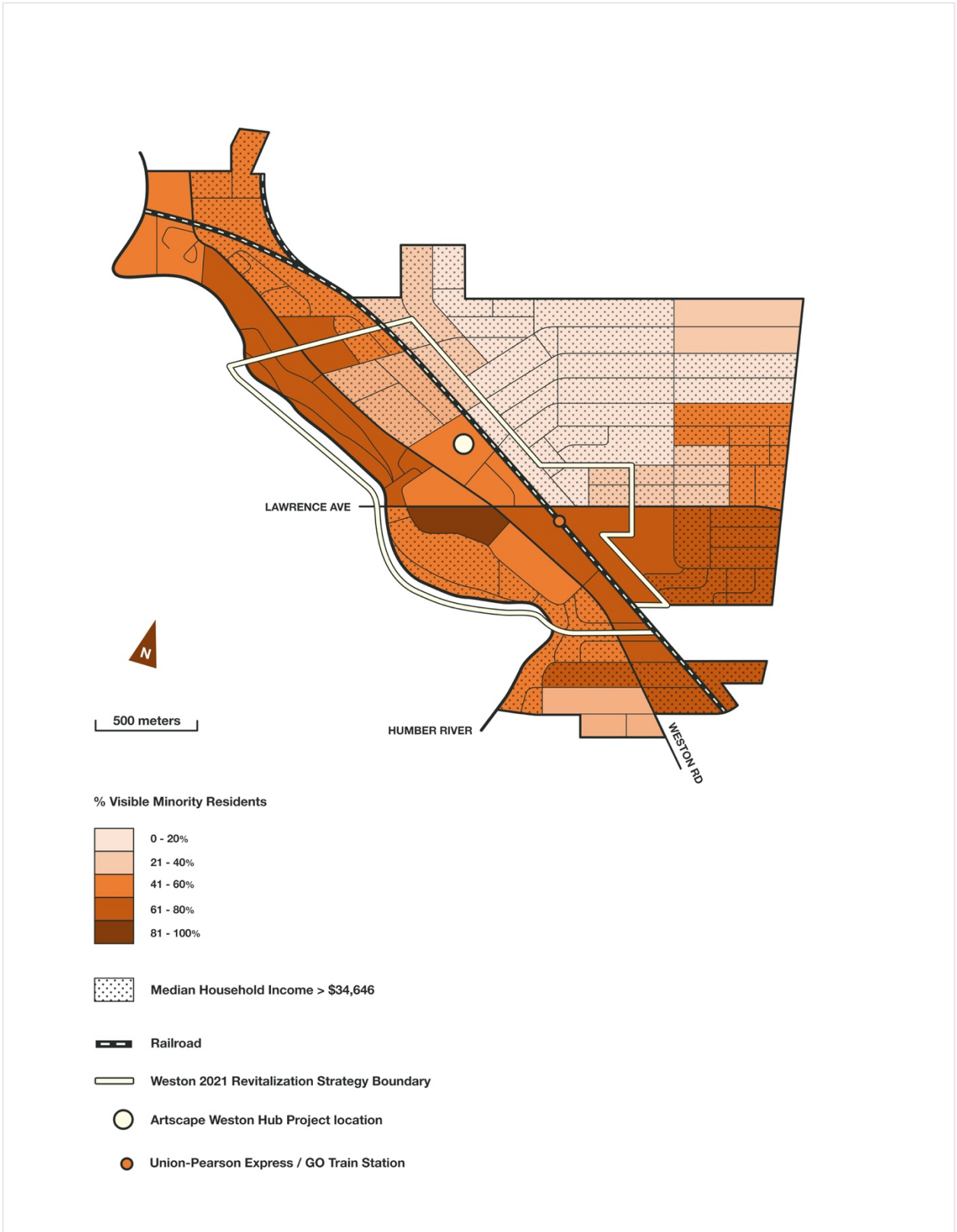

Figure 10. Map of Weston demographics and Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy Boundaries. Sources: 2006 Census of Canada; City of Toronto. Note: Data on Dissemination Area level.

The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy

Artscape's presence in Weston is largely supported by a key allied group of about a dozen individuals from the neighbourhood's more affluent north-east quadrant. These individuals serve in overlapping leadership roles in the Weston Village BIA (WVBIA), Weston Village Residents' Association (WVRA) the Weston Historical Society, Weston Heritage District, and environmentally-focused Clean Train Coalition. They also have strong ties to, and support from local politicians: both the ward councillor and the Member of Provincial Parliament. Politically-charged, the group is responsible for initiating many civic actions in Weston, such as pressuring the City for new police surveillance cameras to be installed in the neighbourhood, to specifically target gang-related violence (Alcoba, 2013). Many of the same individuals, under the name The Weston Community Coalition, fought for the UPx station in the neighbourhood in order to "put Weston back on the map" (Jenkins and Artuso, 2008); and, clearly, succeeded. New-build, transit-oriented development seems contrary to their heritage preservation efforts; however, it lines up with the north-east's interests in shaping the future neighbourhood identity with a history that frames Weston "as a space for local pride and middle-class respectability" (Fumia and Duncan, 2013:17). Their narrative of a neighbourhood "in need of reclamation" has been key for justifying the ward councillor's call for "revitalization" in Weston. The group recognizes Artscape's ability to jumpstart such a process, and that this process cannot be achieved without incentives provided to the private sector (Artscape Weston proponent, personal communication, May 31, 2016).

Artscape's feasibility study for a cultural community hub in Weston (Artscape, 2011) boosted confidence in the idea of developing a broader neighbourhood plan. The study was followed by a series of consultation exercises that would inform the official *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2012b). Notably, a three-day "design charrette" was led by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a non-profit think tank and lobbyist for the real estate community, along with the City of Toronto and Metrolinx. The charrette reviewed implementation of the City's Tower Renewal program in Weston, a proposal to upgrade Weston's 37-year-old farmers' market, and a possible site for a community cultural hub. Densification was the proposed direction for Tower Renewal efforts, which was largely unpopular among attendees who were mostly from Weston's north-east (Poppe and Young, 2015).

The "Weston Town Centre," the site of the Weston's farmers' market, became a key focus of the charrette, and a preferred location for the Artscape Weston Hub: a publicly-owned parking lot administered by the Toronto Parking Authority, municipally known as 22 John Street.[23] This site had become "a dead zone" according Laura Albanese, the local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) (field observation B). Street traffic on John Street, a secondary commercial street which jets off Weston Road and across the railroad tracks, had been cut off for years due

[23] John Street in Weston was named prior to City of Toronto's amalgamation and is not to be confused with John Street in downtown Toronto.

to Metrolinx's railroad construction activities for the UPx and GO train stations, leading to decreased attendance of the weekly farmers' market and the worry that this area "could potentially attract unwanted activities and make people feel unsafe" (Albanese, field observation B). While the geographic focus of the charrette was Weston's "downtown" (See Figure 10), the concept of "revitalization" in the discussions mostly referred to improving neighbourhood quality for single-family homeowners in the north-east quadrant and did not address the future of racialized, low-income residents in this area, who also were visibly not present at the event (Poppe and Young, 2015). General proposals were to improve walkability, beautify neighbourhood streets and maintain heritage preservation efforts, all of which "implicitly suggested decreasing the visual profile" (*ibid.*, 619) of residents living in Weston's dense centre.

The *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy* (City of Toronto, 2012b:1) claims to be "a long-term neighbourhood approach aimed at guiding reinvestment, redevelopment and capital improvements." The *Strategy* essentially seeks to apply a creative city gentrification formula, which will be driven by four key themes (*ibid.*, 7):

- Improving *Community Safety* to make Weston "a desirable place to live and do business";
- *Branding* a community identity and marketing Weston as a *Destination* to attract people and "provide a more stable environment for private investment";
- Improving the *Public Realm and Connectivity* to public spaces (parks, Humber River, public seating areas, etc.) to "assist in dispelling safety concerns" and, "indicate to investors and the community that a larger revitalization process is underway"; and,
- *Social Development and Community Cohesion* to enhance "access to education, training, employment opportunities and social services."

The *Strategy* cites the Artscape Weston Hub as the "Signature Initiative" for branding Weston as a destination (City of Toronto, 2012b). A new pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks reconnecting both sides of John Street has been built by Metrolinx to correct the inaccessibility to the site of the future Artscape Weston Hub sitting immediately on "the wrong side of the tracks."

Figure 11. The Humber River, bordering the west side of Weston. Source: author.

Figure 12. The new Weston Union-Pearson Express (UPx) and GO station, south of Lawrence Avenue. Source: author.

Figure 13. John Street looking from Weston Road. Metrolinx pedestrian bridge re-connecting both sides of Weston in the distance. Source: author.

Figure 14. Artist rendering of John Street as re-imagined by ULI. Source: Urban Land Institute Toronto, 2013.

The Hub: a collaborative project

Referred to as the "Artscape Weston Hub" in policy documents, it is in fact a component of a much broader redevelopment scheme that was approved by the City of Toronto Council in December 2015 (City of Toronto, 2015d). To avoid confusion, and for the purposes of this paper, the "Hub" portion is distinguished from the larger redevelopment, which is referred to here as the "Weston Project." The Weston Project includes the redevelopment of the parking lot at 22 John Street administered by the Toronto Parking Authority and the podium of an adjacent residential apartment tower known as 33 King Street[24] – with a footprint of approximately 1.75 ha (4.32 acres). The ownership of 33 King Street recently transferred to a company called Woodbourne (formally Woodbourne Capital Management). Standing at 31 storeys, the building is home to predominantly low-income seniors and immigrant families. It has been stigmatized as a site of murderous crime, and widely described by residents in Weston's north-east as a "blight" (field observation B). Beneath the tower is a large podium that holds a multi-level parking garage and a large vacant space on its ground level that was originally designed to serve as an indoor shopping square. The only two occupied commercial spaces at 33 King Street include an employment services centre for immigrants, and a small convenience store frequented by apartment tower residents and children from the two neighbouring schools.

[24] King Street in Weston was named prior to City of Toronto's amalgamation and is not to be confused with King Street in Toronto's downtown.

The publicly-owned parking lot at 22 John Street was deemed “surplus” and the Toronto Parking Authority issued a call for “expression of Interest” for its sale in 2012, specifying that the new private owner must build a cultural hub on the site (City of Toronto, 2015b). Rockport (formally The Rockport Group), one of Toronto’s leading-edge luxury high-rise developers (in fact, the first to build condominiums in Toronto), promptly applied with Artscape as its partner; and, in 2013, the City of Toronto authorized the sale. By 2015, a public-private-non-profit partnership between Rockport, Woodbourne, Artscape and the City of Toronto (departments including Toronto Parking Authority, Affordable Housing Office, Economic Development & Culture, Parks and Recreation) as well as the architectural designs for the Weston Project were officialised. The City generously redirected the proceeds of the sale to Rockport back into the Hub portion of the development (City of Toronto, 2015d).

Figure 15. Weston Project Site. 22 John Street (fore) and 33 King Street (aft). Source: author.

A fraction of the newly privatized 22 John Street lot will undergo new-build redevelopment: Rockport’s 30-storey, 370-unit market-rent apartment tower and seven at-grade townhouses (City of Toronto, 2015b). While rental housing development has been very rarely seen in the last four decades in Toronto, Rockport is looking to the rental market now that state rent

controls that eventually discouraged rental development boom of the 1960s-70s do not apply to newly-built residential buildings (Pigg, 2015). The Rockport tower's height, though, greatly exceeds the zoning by-law requirement of the area of eight storeys, which was amended in exchange for "community benefits" under Section 37 of the *Ontario Planning Act* (City of Toronto, 2015b). Brokered by the ward councillor, the "benefits" to be provided by Rockport include the construction of the Artscape Hub and 26 "affordable"[25] artist live/work units on the ground level of 33 King Street's podium (leases to be signed with Woodbourne for Artscape and the City of Toronto); as well as the construction and maintenance of an "Artists' Courtyard" and "Publicly Accessible Open Space," which will host an "Enhanced Weston Farmers' Market" (*ibid*.) – albeit a significantly smaller one.

As newly designated "Municipal Capital Facilities"[26] and because of Artscape's non-profit status, the Hub and artist live/work (state-subsidized housing) units will be exempted from related development charges, planning application, building permit fees and property taxes (City of Toronto, 2015d). Presumably because Woodbourne will be benefiting from new tenancies in 33 King Street, the private company is expected to provide "community benefits" as well: notably, to make available 238 parking spaces in its parking garage for incoming tenants of Rockport's rental tower at 22 John Street, and Artscape's artist live/work tenants (*ibid*.). Woodbourne has additionally secured the tenancy of a storage locker business likely owned by Rockport (as it is in the storage business as well), that will span the majority of the ground level of 33 King Street's podium. This tenancy is noted in City planning documents related to the Weston Project but is not necessarily considered to be a part of the larger redevelopment's creative city concept.

Designed by elite architects, engineering consultants and urban design/branding firms[27], the Weston Project is touted to be "a revitalized mixed-income community comprised of new affordable and market rental homes, community and cultural space, shopping and public transit" (City of Toronto, 2015d:15).[28] The Project's plans are justified by municipal policies such as the Tower Renewal mandate and latest culture plan, *Creative Capital Gains* (2011); and, by federal-provincial policies as an "Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario" according to construction hoarding signage at the site (field observation D).

The cost of the development of the Hub, along with the artist social housing units and publicly-

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[25] The state-subsidized artist live/work units will be 80% of average market rent of the area, which is determined by the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

[26] "Municipal Capital Facilities" are property tax-exempt City-owned properties leased to non-profit organizations "who operate for the benefit of the community" (City of Toronto, 2013:2).

[27] Including: BA Consulting Group Ltd., Terra Plan Landscape Architects, Graziani + Corazza Architects Inc., Bousfields Inc., and Entro Communications.

[28] The "Artscape Weston Hub Project," or "Weston Project" for short, refers to the public-private-non-profit partnership and the entire redevelopment encompassing the Hub: artist live/work units, Artists' Courtyard, publicly accessible outdoor space and the Rockport tower and townhouses. This also unofficially includes Metrolinx's John Street pedestrian bridge and the new TPA parking lot.

accessible (privately-owned) space, accumulates to roughly $11M in government spending, but apparently with no direct impact on the City's budget. Rather, the City's contribution consists of the public land sale and the numerous waived development charges. This funding includes $1.5M from the Section 37 agreement with Rockport (City of Toronto, 2015d). It also accounts for the expropriation of an adjacent property, municipally known as 14 John Street, to be redeveloped as a small TPA parking lot (City of Toronto, 2015b).[29] An additional $3M in operational funding for the Hub itself will be partially covered by Rockport and the remainder through Artscape's external fundraising (*ibid*.). This operational fund will supplement Artscape's "social enterprise model" for the Hub, which involves sub-leasing space to community arts non-profit organizations. Among the "community benefits" provided by Rockport and Woodbourne, the Hub, comprising a mere 8,200 square feet of the entire redevelopment, is widely understood to be the "benefit" for the residents of Weston in place of a lack in community centres in the area.

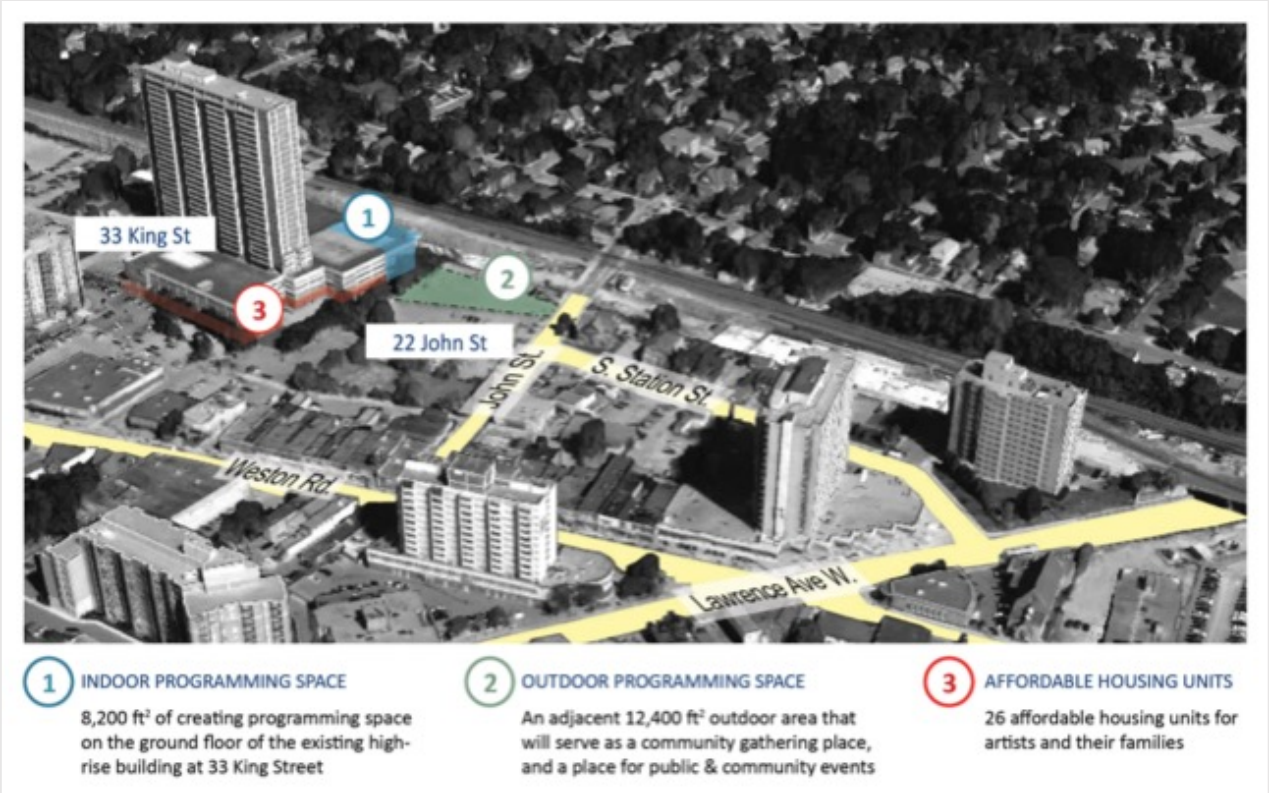

Figure 16. Map of Artscape-facilitated spaces in the Weston Project (excluding Rockport's residential development and storage locker facility). Source: artscapeweston.ca.

[29] All figures are presented in Canadian Dollars (CAD) and approximated for simplicity.

Figure 17. Artist rendering of entire Weston Project. Source: rockportweston.com

Figure 18. Weston Project aerial architectural rendering on Weston Project construction hoarding. Source: author.

Railroaded: discontent on both sides of the tracks

The chapter now turns to the local critical discourse on Weston's revitalization plans and the Weston Project, including the Artscape Hub. Introduced are themes that emerged in eight semi-structured interviews conducted between fall 2015 and summer 2016 (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for details on interview process and codes). The majority of interviewees are intentionally from the west side of the railroad tracks to reflect Weston's demographics and to highlight the perspectives of, and issues faced by marginalized residents less considered in official public planning exercises. What this section reveals, however, is that the neighbourhood divide in Weston, beyond residential patterns, is much more nuanced. The interviewees hold multiple subject positions, including some that appear contradictory. The interviewees, including two residents of 33 King Street (Weston Project site) are involved in a number of local neighbourhood-oriented organized activities (for example, a drop-in centre, anti-poverty research, the arts, etc.), some of which indirectly intersect with Weston's "revitalization" plans. Most have appeared at least in one public consultation regarding the *2021 Revitalization Strategy* or the Weston Project.

Anti-tower

Residents of Weston's more affluent north-east quadrant, who were overrepresented at public consultations, expressed the most vocal opposition to the Weston Project, specifically the re-zoning and density-bonusing agreement for Rockport's 30-storey apartment tower. Feeling cheated by the process, they painted the Weston Project proponents – Residents' Association, BIA and the local City Councillor – as an elite group that made backroom deals with Rockport and the City. A leaflet the opponents distributed urged other Weston residents to, "Say YES to the 22 John St. revitalization but say NO to a 30 storey building!" (See Figure 19). The situation was said to be reminiscent of the corruption and local protests surrounding the proposals for the 33 King Street apartment tower in 1974 (Sullivan, former MP, interview 8). The opponents argued that the Rockport tower's height as inappropriate for Weston's "small town effect" and heritage district landscape. They maintained that the tower will add to the "blight" in the neighbourhood, referring to existing high-rise residential buildings, and would be setting a dangerous precedent for future developments in Weston. One fierce critic of the Weston Project plans who stood against the development of 33 King Street in 1974 also accused the City of wrongfully funneling public money into the private building, which will be holding the Artscape Hub, artist live/work units and storage locker facility: "This is not about building a cultural hub or revitalizing Weston … This is a project that's been run through Tower Renewal. It's really about revitalizing 33 King Street" (Harris, north-east resident, field observation B).

The opposition's focus on the negative aesthetic of the Rockport tower appeared to contrast with the views of the Weston Project proponents, who believed, rather, that the Rockport tower would diminish the visibility of so-called "blight" and correct "what clearly didn't work at 33 King Street" (Bennet, north-east resident, field observation B). In fact, both saw "blight" (ostensibly the code word for visible racialized poverty) as the problem in Weston, but had divergent views on the Rockport tower as the solution. Both proponents and opponents, however, were speaking for Weston's future, barely considering the possible views of Weston residents living in the high-rise towers, which, for many are the only affordable housing option. As one Weston Project proponent said,

> *I don't think we have any of the residents of King Street that are here that would say they'd be against the height. What we have here is primarily landowners, wealthy landowners who live in the core [north-east quadrant] of Weston which seem to be against this kind of development (Alderson, Residents' Association member, field observation B).*

The north-east interviewees who opposed the tower, nonetheless, reflected on the underlying meaning of "revitalization" in Weston expected to follow the development of the Weston Project:

> *There's this tension, right? I am a middle class white guy. I think that upper*

> *middle class white guy things are underrepresented in Weston. I'm sure other people disagree. We don't have good restaurants. The ones we have are not that good. We have one coffee shop that just opened up. We have no bars or pubs (Norman, interview 1).*

The Weston Village farmers' market, though considered "messy" in comparison to other sleeker downtown markets, was defended by opponents against the Weston Project, that will significantly decrease space available for stalls and impede accessibility for farmers' trucks (Murray, 2015a). More broadly, north-east critics also questioned why an Artscape development in an NIA would receive significantly less public and Artscape funding than the organization's Wychwood Barns hub located in a more affluent neighbourhood (Murray, 2015b); and, how Weston was going to accommodate for the approximately 1,400 new Rockport tower residents with its already crumbling public infrastructure (Sullivan, interview 7). Former local MP, Mike Sullivan, was concerned for pedestrian safety on King Street, a high-traffic street, once hundreds of new cars from the Rockport parking garage will be spilling out onto the road. He also doubted the future of the Somali and Caribbean festivals that also take place at the parking lot at 22 John Street (interview 7). Though, generally welcoming of Artscape and the Hub portion of the development, the north-east's aesthetic-focused anti-tower response to the Weston Project drowned out the concerns of the potential impact that this development may have on the majority of Weston residents, who are actually living at the site and within the bounds of the area targeted by the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy*.

Figure 19. Newspaper article from 1969 about original 33 King Street design and protests against it (left) and anti-tower flyer circulated in 2015 (right). Sources: Weston Historical Society; WestonWeb blog.

Not “nothing” on Weston Road

An underlying assumption for the need of the Weston Project and broader revitalization is that Weston currently has little to offer its residents. “There’s nothing here” is a common refrain mostly expressed by north-east quadrant residents. They support the idea that the Artscape Hub / Weston Project will brand Weston as a “destination” for investors, visitors and upscale residents. A contrary view is that Weston is already a destination (Abdo, 2012). There are, in fact, very few storefront vacancies, and most of the businesses along Weston Road serve recent immigrants and residents of nearby apartment towers. Ethnic-oriented businesses further draw in predominantly Caribbean and East African immigrant populations from across the city and Greater Toronto Area to this section of Weston Road (*ibid*.).

The West End Local Economic Development (WELED) is a research group made up of local organizers, non-profit workers, and youth from Weston and neighbouring Mount Dennis formed with the objective of highlighting and supporting this significant economic activity in the neighbourhoods (Abdo, 2012). Katherine Rankin, Heather McLean and Kuni Kamizaki (2015) – partnering academic researchers – found that many businesses along Weston Road double as largely overlooked, but important social spaces in the context of ongoing disinvestment in community centres. The research framed the commercial district more broadly as a site of struggle in the face of discourses that erase it as “nothing” and developed the concept of “racialized class projects” to reveal the complicity of development planning with processes of displacement and structural racism (Rankin and McLean, 2015:217). According to two WELED participants and local non-profit workers, Shadya Yasin and Cutty Duncan, this concept also applied to Weston’s *2021 Revitalization Strategy* and the Weston Project:

> *The [Weston Village] Residents’ Association, the Councillor, the small group involved – they’re complaining that there are too many hair salons. But it’s not that it’s too many salons, it’s just that it’s black people are running the salons. However, the same amount of salons you can count on the Weston Road strip, you go to Yonge and Eglinton [an elite Toronto neighbourhood], you see the same amount of salons and barber shops. That’s something I always find fascinating (Yasin, interview 4).*

Propelled by “elite histories of prosperity,” Weston’s north-east’s political dominance overshadows urgent anti-racist and anti-poverty struggles in Weston (Fumia and Duncan, 2013:15).

> *It seems like a diverse neighbourhood scares people. So we don’t talk a lot about it, but we go through this passive aggressive politic in our local neighbourhood to ensure one group stays in power, and we never get the ownership and buy-in from people who actually live here to really get involved in changes. So it’s really a tough road to go down. It’s very difficult to get the buy-in when you can’t show how we can make a difference and if they’re*

> *always concerned that the dominant group may be working against them. Especially when people are new to the country, and they're coming from war-torn places where you can't trust the government (Duncan, interview 4).*

Marginalized Weston residents, including businesses, are often not even aware of local development plans (Yasin, interview 4), and face further difficulty in meaningfully participating in civic actions and grievances while they focus on earning a living (Nugent, 2013). In the general absence of dissent, the *2021 Revitalization Strategy* and Weston Project at its focal point are, however, inadvertently justified by fear-driven notions of "nothingness" and "blight" from Weston's north-east.

Figure 20. Businesses (restaurant, furniture, beauty supply, e-cigarette, tailor, bar, barber shop, hair salon) on Weston Road, south of Lawrence Avenue. Source: author.

The residents of 33 King Street

33 King Street, home to predominantly low-income seniors and racialized, immigrant families, has become a contested space. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the ownership of the building changed hands as the proposal for the Artscape Hub began to solidify. One resident of 33 King Street apartment building insists that the new owner, Woodbourne, "knew that this was happening – the UP [Union-Pearson] Express station, the Artscape Hub coming to Weston – and they went for the money" (33 King resident A, interview 6). Interestingly, Woodbourne has been the quietest of all the Project's partners, and often not even included as one in public events. After making improvements to the building (residents only reported aesthetic improvements of the interior), the company qualified for a "Rent Increase Above Guideline" which led to significantly increased rents for tenants. Another 33 King Street resident-interviewee attempted to organize a tenant association to confront the rent increases through legal means. Meanwhile, residents saw the Weston Project plans increasingly encroaching on their building and amenities that they rent; spaces perceived by the planners to be "underutilized":

> *I did go to a meeting one time with regards to the plans that they had, with a couple of other tenants from the building. They were showing about how there are this many parking spaces not being utilized at 33 King Street. And two of the other guys who use the garage said, 'no, no, there's not that many available.' So I brought it up, and they said, 'oh yes, there's extra spaces.' And the two guys said, 'where are they? Where are the extra parking spaces they're talking about?' (33 King resident B, interview 5).*

The Weston Project and the Artscape Hub were partly born out of the opportunity of applying the Tower Renewal program to 33 King Street. Yet, the residents of the apartment tower will not have direct access to the Artscape Hub (the "community benefit") in the podium beneath them; and, instead, they will have to go outside and walk around to the other side of the building. This was confirmed by the Vice President of Artscape, in response to questions asked at public information sessions (field observation C; D). If 33 King Street is being "revitalized," the benefits from this process for tenants are difficult to see.

Figure 21. 33 King Street residential tower and podium from north side of Weston Project site. Source: author.

Against the "Walmart of the arts"

Oppositional perspectives on the Weston Project have also come from some local artists. The director of Artists to Artists Foundation (AAF), a small, stubbornly self-funded group of multi-ethnic artists located in south Weston, claimed that the idea for a creative city-inspired Weston revitalization actually originated from AAF's neighbourhood-oriented arts activities and discussions. AAF, as explained by the group's director, Jacklyn Thomas, had been aspiring to

"use the arts to transform" Weston by hosting international artists, beautifying storefronts, and partnering with other groups in the neighbourhood for special events (Thomas, interview 3). However, AAF has faced some road blocks in collaborations with north-east actors:

> *One day, I was [at the BIA office] and I was taking down the art to put up new art, and one of the members of the BIA came up to me and said, 'what are you doing stealing?' This man behaved so badly. There was this white man up in my face, and he thought I was stealing the artwork (Thomas, interview 3).*

Thomas was also shocked and disappointed in what followed the conversation she had with the ward councillor, Frances Nunziata, regarding the development of an arts-oriented neighbourhood vision that AAF had for Weston: "She saw the opportunity and said 'I have an idea'." When the City of Toronto called for a feasibility study for a cultural hub in Weston, Thomas says there were no opportunities given to other groups to apply for funding to do the research: "In the end, Artscape got it … Everything was so tightly packaged."

While AAF has similar ideas of philanthropy-based arts missions and the creative city script, the director charges Artscape for entering neighbourhoods and "creating needs." Counter to AAF's grassroots-oriented vision for Weston, Thomas likens the non-profit organization to a multi-national corporation that stifles local economies:

> *I did my research. I looked where the [Artscape] projects were, and how they operated, and they were all the same, from one place to the next … It's like Walmart. As I told [Artscape Vice President] Pru [Robey]: 'Artscape is the Walmart of the arts. And even when you're not art, you position yourself as art, and when you move in, everything gets sucked out.' I told her, I said 'you suck the life-blood out.' And then she says to me, 'people feel like they're losing something –' and I said, 'well, for your information, we are not losing a damn thing because we never had anything in the first place' … We didn't take anything in the first place. We came in here, scaled around on our bare bums and we made it work. And we want to continue that.*

A powerful organization like Artscape appearing in Weston with its own agendas threatens AAF, which also speaks to the inherent competitiveness within the realm of non-profit/philanthropic intervention. In contrast to Artscape's promotional discourse of collaboration with public-private partnerships, Thomas maintains that "artists should never compromise" when it comes to funding opportunities. Keenly aware of cooptation forces at play, she expressed her concern for the racialized poor population in Weston: "They are not paying attention to the chips that are being moved in their name."

Building a creative competitiveness consensus in Weston

The rest of the chapter now hones in on the roles played by non-profit organizations in building a local creative competitiveness consensus in Weston, reflective of the one seen on the scale of the city (See Chapter 2), and particularly, the effects of Artscape's assumed governing position in the neighbourhood's future. The Artscape Hub constitutes the "community benefit" of the Weston Project, the "gift" to the neighbourhood in return for densification and privatization of publicly-owned space. Like Artscape's inner-city hubs, the hub in Weston is to be, purportedly, "created in response to the needs and aspirations of numerous stakeholders" (Artscape, 2015a:6).

The "stakeholders" introduced thus far have included the official public-private partnership (City of Toronto, Rockport, Woodbourne, Artscape) and other key state and non-state groups: Metrolinx, ULI, and local proponents in Weston. Joining the small proponent group in the predominantly white, more affluent north-east, some non-profit organizations located within the targeted zone for "revitalization" have been invited to "represent" Weston's marginalized populations in Artscape's participatory planning exercises. The non-profit environment in Weston complicates the political terrain in relation to the Weston Project and the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy*. This consensus-building process led by Artscape ultimately achieves the perception that the neighbourhood is involved in the Weston Project, and emphatically centres the local attention on the "community benefit," the Artscape Hub.

The local non-profit environment

Non-profit organizations hold important positions in Weston as many directly engage with the most marginalized residents in the neighbourhood who also depend on their services provided in the context of continued state disinvestment. Mostly established during the non-profit boom of the 1980s and supported by the City's former priority neighbourhood strategy, the non-profits provide basic needs, settlement and employment services, language training, recreational activities, and encourage entrepreneurship. At the same time, the organizations play other roles that serve to maintain Weston's "therapeutic community" (Roe, 2009) status and legitimize interventions such as Artscape's creative city "healing" solution for the inner-suburbs (Jones, 2015):

First, the increased governance of non-profit organizations in former priority neighbourhoods such as Weston has a de-politicizing effect on local grievances (Parlette, 2012). This is an inherent tension in the sector that has the ability to mute any potential challenges to the status quo, and ultimately maintain state disinvestment; something that the AAF director, Jacklyn Thomas, claims to have observed in the neighbourhood: "The politicians give a little bit of funding to people who are more likely to open their mouths, and that way they keep them quiet" (interview 3).

Second, the non-profit organizations are contracted for program delivery to demonstrate the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy*'s "Social Development and Community Cohesion" theme (City of Toronto, 2012b). For example, one non-profit carried out a "place-making" program in 2013 under the City's Tower Renewal mandate, which was expected, somehow, to better equip low-income apartment tower residents with finding employment opportunities (*ibid.*, 9).

Third, the non-profits cater to local fears associated with visible racialized poverty ("blight"). Indeed, non-profits are also well-regarded by Weston's more affluent north-east because they are understood to defuse anticipated youth criminality. For example, one Christian-based organization offers space in which local youth can "hang out away from the streets" and it provides recreational programs specifically, in its "quest to make Weston a better and safer place" (Frontlines Toronto, 2015).

Fourth, non-profit community arts and neighbourhood beautification activities play key roles in Weston's public realm. Some were identified by Artscape as the few "cultural assets" in the neighbourhood. These organizations are perhaps more prepared to shift mandates to suit the social agendas of the creative city and to "play an important role in mobilizing support" for the Hub (Artscape, 2011:48).

UrbanArts

In operation in Weston Mount-Dennis since 1988, UrbanArts (formally UrbanArts Community Arts Council), stands out as one of the most significant organizations within Artscape's local consensus. It is one of six City-funded inner-suburban Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs) and a key partner in Artscape's *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC) initiative. UrbanArts has been active in Toronto's community arts field that links creative city policy with priority neighbourhood objectives. For example, following Toronto's "year of the gun" in 2005, UrbanArts ran *ASAP: After School Arts Program*, explicitly as a crime prevention program for local youth (City of Toronto, 2006). Beyond such programs that focus on music, digital media, and visual arts, UrbanArts connects with the broader resident population of Weston by organizing a number of annual showcases including the *CultureShock Community Arts Festival*, and the BIA's *Best of Weston Multicultural Festival*. It is responsible for many public realm projects in the neighbourhood, that intersect with its apparent urban development and branding goals:

> *UrbanArts was created for a purpose … I was at one meeting, and I remember [an UrbanArts staff] in the meeting said, 'we've been doing this for 30 years – trying to make changes in the neighbourhood and trying to make improvements in the neighbourhood, and we still can't get a Starbucks here.' I think that UrbanArts was created with that in mind. And when you look at it, they use community development and they use resources that are available, you know – marginalized people of colour (Duncan, interview 4).*

Like other local non-profit organizations in Weston, UrbanArts is celebrated as a do-gooder organization, for empowering "at-risk" youth in creative entrepreneurial endeavours that also provide a "better image" for Weston. Creative activities of racialized youth in Weston have been directed towards neighbourhood beautification projects under non-profit direction, some of which appear to be more in line with the ideals of Weston's predominantly white north-east quadrant:

> *They're painting all of these colonial histories of the neighbourhood that have nothing to do with their realities, with their families, and their histories, in terms of their footprint in this neighbourhood … So, whose stories are really being told through these processes? It's a typical sort of – I don't have a better word other than 'race discourse' – in the non-profit sector, and how the community is being used. And when I say community, I'm talking about specifically racialized youth and their families, and how they're used to get away with a particular 'vision' versus looking at what the reality is (Yasin, interview 4).*

More recently, UrbanArts has been active in public artwork that challenges stigmas in Weston and Mount Dennis. Such works that celebrate diversity and hip hop culture are largely accepted as non-threatening to north-east Weston's heritage preservation efforts under a creative city vision of Weston. Youth participants are inspired by guest artists who have, for example, produced albums for internationally-famous rappers such as Drake. In fact, Drake recently dedicated a song to his brief upbringing in Weston, which builds on his branded narrative of "started from the bottom now we're here."[30] Such an unrealistic "from rags-to-riches" storyline typically mirrored in the community arts field promotes an acceptable "empowerment" that marries anti-racist notions with individual self-determination and pro-market values (For case in New Orleans see Arena, 2012).

UrbanArts' community arts activities have successfully gained the status of an investment by embodying the "homegrown" creativity of racialized youth in the Weston Project consensus. The fact that Rockport became a key sponsor of UrbanArts' *CultureShock Festival* in 2016, speaks to the usefulness of the organization's community arts activities in branding the Weston Project acceptable for middle-class sensibilities. It is also no surprise that UrbanArts claims to have recently experienced a rapid growth in funding and capacity (Mckintosh, UrbanArts executive director, field observation E).

> *[UrbanArts] sees the opportunities available – the grants to support marginalized groups – and they find a way to capitalize on that, and push*

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[30] Youth from UrbanArts and other such organizations attend an annual Toronto event, the *OVO Summit*, organized by Drake with the help of public funding, to encourage racialized youth entrepreneurialism (Ransome, 2014). Drake's spring 2016 album, *Views from the 6ix*, where the song "Weston Road Flows" is featured, is widely-celebrated in Toronto for increasing the city's creative competitiveness status on the global stage.

them in that direction that is actually counterproductive. But [participants] are unaware of it, and unaware of the politics, and so you end up having some groups coopted (Duncan, interview 4).

Figure 22. "Weston Then and Now": Part two of three-piece UrbanArts mural at Weston's main intersection portraying a transition in demographics in the neighbourhood. Source: author.

Focus on the community benefit

As per standard "from the ground, up" Artscape development practice, the organization hosted numerous public engagement and consultation events regarding the Hub over several years in Weston. An Artscape Weston Steering Committee was formed to facilitate this consensus-building process. The committee included three north-east proponents (representing or involved in the Residents' Association, local business, BIA, Historical Society), the executive director of UrbanArts, an Artscape Board member, and the executive director of the Association for Corporate Growth Toronto Chapter.

The steering committee, along with Artscape's Vice President, a number of Artscape staff,

student interns, and the ward councillor and local MPP, assisted in leading a "visioning" workshop for the Hub in the fall of 2015. Out of a room of approximately 50 individuals, the majority appeared to be the workshop facilitators themselves, and overwhelmingly employees of local non-profit organizations. Others present were a small group of youth chaperoned by UrbanArts staff, seniors who use the recreational spaces of partnering organization, the York West Active Living Centre, and a small handful of seemingly un-affiliated individuals (field observation A). The visioning workshop asked the participants to imagine the Hub in the year 2025, and how it would have changed Weston by that time. The exercise narrowed down to ranking mostly prescribed options of possible activities that could take place in the Hub.

In line with positioning the Artscape Hub as Weston's "destination" within Weston's *2021 Revitalization Strategy*, the main theme of the visioning discussions was the desire to position the future Hub as an "attraction" for non-residents and particularly capturing attention from Toronto's downtown (field observation A). This theme, however, contradicts the concept of the local "community benefit," as the Hub's relatively small physical capacity for both locals and outsiders will inevitably be limited. To put this into perspective, the Hub's footprint was calculated by a WestonWeb blogger to be only 1% of the entire Weston Project redevelopment's square footage (Norman, 2015a). As WELED member, Shadya Yasin, reflected on the consensus-building process: "this whole big hoopla about Artscape – it's actually poignant because you'd think you're getting this huge arts centre, but you're really not" (interview 4). Not once was the rest of the Weston Project mentioned in Artscape's visioning workshop.

Artscape's visioning workshop, a strangely childlike exercise in asking for limitless "gifts," left little room for critique. The comments of AAF director, Jacklyn Thomas, who disrupted one breakaway table's easy-going discussion by expressing her fear that the "hub will divide the community," were not recorded. She apologized for being "negative" (field observation A). One UrbanArts youth spoke of themes such as diversity, inclusion, community, etc. – pinning down the most current buzz words in the non-profit arts funding sphere, which received immediate applause from the room (field observation A). According to Thomas, some non-profit organization employees publicly voice support for the Artscape Project while privately expressing skepticism to the idea: "people that I know didn't feel in their heart that it was right … and then, all of a sudden, I see them changing to fit a narrative." Adhering to a local urban development script can boost the non-profit organizations' legitimacy and open new opportunities which keep organizations afloat. It can even be beneficial for personal careers in the local non-profit sector: "I have seen people actually change where they live because they believe that this is going to be advantageous for them. It becomes a little too schizophrenic for me" (Thomas, interview 3).

This is not to say that all individuals are engaging in Artscape's consensus process solely in the interest of their organizations or personal careers. Many care deeply about conversations about potential local assets in Weston and the material concerns of its marginalized residents. However, in the context of prolonged state disinvestment, simply by engaging in Artscape's consensus-building exercises as "representatives" of the marginalized population in Weston,

they perpetuate uncritical acceptance of any type of "investment" into the neighbourhood. Interestingly, the Artscape consensus process does not appear to engage some organizations located in closest proximity to the Weston Project site, such as the Al-Rowda Masjid Islamic Education Guidance Centre and church-based but more anti-poverty oriented Weston King Neighbourhood Centre. A representative from the latter organization denounced the process as "really a propaganda thing to sell the idea of how lucky we were to get [the Hub]" (Moffat, interview 2).

The Weston Project requires some degree of approval from Weston's residents to justify public funding in a privatized redevelopment. Artscape "started from an inside track" by allying with predominantly white, middle-class proponents "very actively promoting Artscape's vision" (Sullivan, interview 7) from Weston's north-east. In the context of a neighbourhood with deep socio-economic disparities, Artscape mobilized local non-profits to complement the backing from north-east proponents, thus creating an illusion of diverse and united neighbourhood support for the Weston Project. Artscape's consensus, with its heavy emphasis on process, rather than power relations (Poppe and Young, 2015), further maintains the local focus on the meagre "community benefit" of the Weston Project, effectively diverting attention away from social challenges and structural inequalities in the neighbourhood. Rather, the inward consensus-building process in Weston nurtures a creative competitiveness attitude that is receptive to, for example, utilizing the available inexpensive/free creative labour of local racialized youth to draw in people and investment – for the neighbourhood's "improvement." WELED member, Cutty Duncan, summarized his thoughts on the consensus on the Hub: "This is just the first step … I think that the important thing that Artscape has done is that they have a foothold now, and what [Weston] looks like in 15 years might be a whole different thing from what it looks like now" (interview 4).

Figure 23. Artist rendering highlighting the Artscape Hub in the Weston Project. Source: City of Toronto, 2015c.

Artscape: "changing who is here"

As discussed in Chapter 3, Artscape has rationalized the gentrifying creative city planning framework as an emancipatory process to be applied to Toronto's disinvested inner-suburbs under the disease-cure metaphor of "tackling blight" with artists as supposed empowered "healers." Thus, Artscape's presence in Weston is welcomed by proponents who expect it will "encourage more artists to move to Weston as a more affordable alternative to downtown Toronto, while allowing them to enrich our neighbourhood" (Albanese, local MPP, field observation B).

From a more critical perspective, Artscape is coming to Weston "to create an environment that makes it easier for other people to come in," and ultimately, "changing who is here" (Duncan, interview 4). This can be seen in the way Artscape is positioning space opportunities in the Weston Project, which reflects the interests of Toronto's elite creative competitiveness consensus that privileges the agency of artists and non-profit arts as they face increasingly unaffordable rents downtown. For example, tenancy in the 26 artist live/work social housing units was not guaranteed for local Weston artists because Artscape already has an extensive waiting list of artists from across the city. Likewise, while it was suggested that spaces in the Hub would accommodate local arts groups, the call-out for applications – framed as an "inclusive process" (Robey, Artscape Vice President, field observation C) – was city-wide. As noted by Yasin, who was later included as a member of the Artscape Weston Steering Committee: "They already had their agenda set and that was very clear: it's about bringing in culture into this neighbourhood. Why? We already have culture" (interview 4).

Artscape organized public information sessions for groups and individuals interested in applying for tenancy or program delivery at the Hub. With a show of hands at one of the sessions, a majority of attendees were community arts non-profit organizations from outside of Weston, likely seeking their first spaces or more affordable rental opportunities outside of the inner-city. The few attendees from Weston were noticeably less-organized racialized youth who asked questions about what it meant to be incorporated as a non-profit organization – an eligibility criterion for tenancy (field observation C). At one of the sessions, Artscape's Vice President, Pru Robey, described the future Weston Hub in relation to the organization's ten existing properties as similar to the Artscape Wychwood Barns in mixed-use design, but "conceptually, like Daniels Spectrum" (field observation C).

The fact that the Hub in Weston will be positioned on newly privatized land at the centre of the racialized low-income area to be transformed into a "mixed-income community" certainly makes it comparable to Artscape's Daniels Spectrum hub in Regent Park (See Chapter 3). Hailed by proponents city-wide, the Daniels Spectrum hub concept was framed as a de-stigmatizing initiative that helped "re-write a new narrative for a community that was once troubled" (Jones, Artscape CEO, field observation D). This approach, applied to Weston, also includes the creation of an inviting environment attractive for potential private investors and middle-class in-movers.

> *The new construction that's there in [Weston] is there to signal a change to people on the outside … It signals that 'the neighbourhood is about to shift. Let's get in on the ground, and it will shift in a way that will make us more comfortable there, and it will shift to something we're more used to' (Duncan, interview 4).*

Several interviewees predicted that as Artscape steadily moves into Weston, with its local consensus base secured, poor racialized residents who may have been initially excited about the Hub will discover that it was not created for them – or, as one put it more blatantly, "they're going to walk by [the Hub] on the way to the bus" (Sullivan, interview 7) **–** and that the broader changes to come with it will make them increasingly uncomfortable in their own neighbourhood.

Figure 24. Artist rendering of "Artists' Courtyard" publicly-accessible privately-owned space in the Weston Project. Source: City of Toronto, 2015c

From priority, to improvement, to where?

Embedded in the Artscape concept is that gentrification can be achieved without the negative

effect of displacement. Yet displacement is inherent to the process of gentrification, and there is already evidence that it has begun as a result of the Weston Project.

While the Project privileges in-coming tenants of the Rockport apartment tower and Artscape's artist tenants, the current residents of 33 King Street, site of the Artscape Hub, are starting to move out due to increased rents imposed by Woodbourne, the new landlord.

> *They're working hard, making ends meet, but I mean, if those rents keep going up… One lady just moved out last month and she's been here for a very long time. And it was just so sad to see her go. There's also been many people who've moved out and it didn't work out, so they tried to move back. Nobody could ever move back in … I've heard – and this is from more than one source so there must be some truth to it – that they're counting the days 'til they can get all of the old tenants out of here. And I don't know where they're going to go after that because a) there isn't enough affordable housing, and, b) there isn't enough public housing (33 King resident A, interview 6).*

The concern that Woodbourne, a Weston Project partner, may be actively trying to displace current residents at 33 King Street[31] aligns with an unfortunate typo detected in the City document detailing the Section 37 "community benefits" agreement for the Weston Project: rather than "existing" it read, "*exiting* and additional rental housing at 33 King Street" (City of Toronto, 2015c:6, emphasis added). To make matters worse, the apparent Freudian slip was made in reference to a commitment that Woodbourne freeze rent rates only *after* Artscape and its artist sub-tenants secure tenancy in the building's podium. The discovery of this misprint is reminiscent of Kanishka Goonewardena's (2004, n.p.) uncovering of multiple "symptomatic slips" in Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*: "No sophisticated psychobabble need be summoned to explain why some people see 'development' when they read 'democracy'; and say 'compete' instead of the harmless English word 'complete'."

The one 33 King Street resident attempting to organize tenants against rent increases, unfortunately did not find any success. She quickly lost any support she might have had from other tenants when they could not see how they could launch a strong enough fight: they were up against not only their landlord, but as well as the Weston Project consensus. The resident herself was eventually forced to move out of 33 King Street because she could no longer afford the increased rent (interview 5).

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[31] Woodbourne has gained a negative reputation among anti-poverty activists. Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) highlighted the situation of 33 King Street resident Andrew McLean to bring attention to the failure of a provincial government computer program to allocate monthly social assistance cheques on time (Chown Oved, 2015). Woodbourne was quick to unfairly evict him. OCAP successfully prevented the eviction until McLean found new accommodations.

Displacement pressures have been experienced not only on the site of the future Artscape Hub, but gradually in other parts of Weston as well. “So the question is: what happens to the poor people?” asks WELED member, Yasin. “Just push them out of the city further north or west?” (interview 4).

As the Weston Project was being approved by the City of Toronto in December 2015, the Toronto Chapter of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) marched in protest towards the local MPP’s office to bring attention to rising rents in Weston, as well as failures of rent control (Rainford, 2015).[32] Some buildings closest to the Weston Project site are starting to be bought up, which poses a possible threat of evictions of the ethnic-based business tenants located in them (Yasin, interview 4). This signifies that not only are Weston residents’ living situations becoming more precarious, but so are their businesses and social spaces. Similarly, many long-time vendors of Weston’s farmers market have indicated that they will not be returning once the Weston Project has opened, because the market space will be much smaller (Norman, 2015b). The timing of displacement and displacement pressures in Weston correlates well with the incoming Weston Project, but also neighbourhood’s shift from a City-designated priority neighbourhood to a neighbourhood improvement area (NIA). This designation is understood to be a positive development according to Weston’s north-east Project proponents.

Meanwhile, the concern of the tower opponents in the north-east that the Project would set a precedent for future development appears to be justified. Indeed, one large townhouse complex is already under construction, and at least two proposals for new residential developments in the neighbourhood are in the works, requesting the same density-bonusing agreements as the Weston Project (Norman, 2016a; 2016b). It is barely a secret that high-rise apartment complex closest to the UPx train station in Weston’s south is projected to be densified with new development, and that the entire south-east quadrant of Weston is currently being speculated by developers for a large mixed use redevelopment, as it has been confirmed that owners (two churches and a bank) are willing to sell their properties (Sullivan, interview 7). Although the north-east tower opponents are unhappy, their heritage district property values have gone up. The prices of homes sold in Weston have increased significantly, by approximately 32% between September 2014 and September 2016 (The Globe and Mail, 2016). The Weston Village BIA proudly attributes rising property values directly to the anticipation of Artscape’s presence in the neighbourhood (westonvillagebia.com, 2016).

The Artscape Weston Project: Afterword

“HAPPY IS THE DAY

[32] ACORN is a national member-based organization. The Toronto/Weston Chapter describes its mission as “to effectively represent and champion the interests of Canada's low and moderate-income urban citizens on the critical issues of social and economic justice” (Fumia and Duncan, 2013:2).

TO BREAK GROUND
TO START THE CONSTRUCTION OF OUR HUB
A SPACE WHERE WE CAN ALL DANCE TO THE SAME BEAT OF OUR DRUMS
THROUGH ARTSCAPE WE HAVE AN ARTS SPACE WITH
WALLS SPLASHED WITH THE COLOURS OF OUR COMMUNITY
AS WE UNIFY AND COME TOGETHER IN THE HEART
WHERE FARMERS MARKETS THRIVE
AND ARTISTS COME ALIVE
WHERE MORE BUSINESS OPENS UP
AND MORE HOUSING HELPS US WELCOME MORE MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY
…
WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF SOLIDIFYING THE FOUNDATION
LAYING DOWN THE BRICKS AND MORTAR TO BUILD TALL TOWERS OF SUCCESS
TOWERING OVER THE STATISTICS WHICH ARE FAR BENEATH US
WE ARE ON OUR WAY UP
BREAKING CEILINGS AS WE GO
THEY CALL US THE WILD WILD WEST
BUT WE ARE ONLY WILD IN OUR AMBITIONS TO MAKE THIS HOME A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL OF US
SOMETIMES A FEW BAD APPLES TRY TO SPOIL OUR BUNCH
AND THEY MAINLY GET THE ATTENTION OF THE NEWS STATIONS
BUT OUR FAMILY TREE IS ROOTED IN LOVE
AND WE KNOW THE STRENGTH OF OUR FOUNDATION"
– EXCERPTS FROM AN ODE TO WESTON, SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE BY PAULINA O'KIEFFE AT THE ARTSCAPE WESTON HUB "GROUNDBREAKING" CEREMONY, JUNE 22, 2016

An official "groundbreaking" ceremony complete with DJ music and a red carpet was held in June 2016 to launch the construction phase of the Artscape Hub / Weston Project. Attendees were offered refreshments from Weston's newest coffee shop, and a free ride home on the UPx train. More than symbolic, the event, in fact, commenced at Union Station in the heart of Toronto's downtown. From there, the new UPx train delivered the assembled dignitaries to the Weston Project site. The ceremony itself was diluted to a congratulatory affair among Weston Project partners – City of Toronto representatives, Rockport and Artscape (Woodbourne's attendance was uncertain) – as well as key local proponents such as the Weston Village BIA and Residents' Association (field observation D). Toronto's mayor John Tory opened the long string of speeches:

> *It's not a day, and never is it a day, really, to figure out why it happened or whose fault it is – but it's clear to me that over time, Weston has been one of those communities that has not had full access to the full range of opportunities that the community deserves.*

Mayor Tory was elected under the visionary banner of "One Toronto," which called for socio-

economic disparities in Toronto to be addressed by a more business-friendly environment, to boost the city's global competitiveness (johntory.ca, 2014). He declared that the Weston Project demonstrates this vision as one of the best examples of a public-private-non-profit partnership that he had seen. Tory added that the development of the Weston Project was indicative of what has already happened in other poorer Toronto neighbourhoods, implying that Weston was on the right track: "We are beginning the process of renewal."

Rockport CEO Jack Winberg expressed delight over sparking what is expected to be a chain reaction of new private investments in Weston. To get the most praise from all speakers, however, was ward councillor Frances Nunziata, who, throughout the planning and consultation process, emerged as a champion of the Weston Project. Without her brokering a worthwhile deal for private partners Rockport and Woodbourne, Artscape would not have landed in Weston. She echoed that this "unique" partnership "will help bring new life to Weston." Artscape CEO Tim Jones reminded the audience of opportunities for applying the same collaborative, creative city approach to other inner-suburban neighbourhoods: "Why not do this – if we can do it here in Weston – in Etobicoke, in North York, East York, Scarborough?" In typical Artscape style, a spoken word performance by a local non-profit arts worker summed up the groundbreaking ceremony, vowing to redefine Weston as, "a home that is so rich, it's hard to feel as poor as they want to make us out to be" (O'Keiffe, field observation D).

Figure 25. The groundbreaking event also concluded with a photo opportunity with all partner representatives and speakers (white helmets) and group of local youth who were selected as apprentices with the construction company contracted for the Weston Project (orange vests). Photo by Mauricio Calero. Source: Toronto Artscape.

Figure 26. Construction hoarding surrounding Weston Project site the day of groundbreaking ceremony. Source: author.

Chapter 5: Summary & Conclusions

The preceding two chapters have followed the geography of Artscape, a powerful non-profit organization leading the creative city agenda in Toronto with strong ties to the private and public sectors. The organization's 30-year history of partnership-led real estate development revealed a shift from "poverty relief" efforts for artists, to ambiguous "wealth generation," under a contradictory anti-gentrification mandate of "making for space for culture and transforming communities." The development of Artscape's more recent *Creative Spaces Outside of the Core* (CSOC) initiative and the Weston Hub as its pilot presented the opportunity to reveal a non-profit-led, creative city-inspired gentrification frontier as it encroaches on Toronto's disinvested inner-suburbs. The case of the Weston Artscape Hub Project in Chapter 4 covered the period leading up to construction and, through this investigation, demonstrates how the non-profit assumed a governing position in the so-called "revitalization" of a neighbourhood that was already under significant redevelopment pressures (namely, the construction of the Union-Pearson Express station, City of Toronto's Tower Renewal program and the neighbourhood's new Neighbourhood Improvement Area designation). The *Weston 2021 Revitalization Plan* was conceived with the help of a non-profit real estate lobbyist group, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), targeting the predominantly racialized and poor centre of Weston and positioning the future Artscape Weston Hub as the catalyst for the process.

The complex public-private-non-profit partnership that formed in the development of the Weston Project (various City of Toronto departments, the Rockport Group, Woodbourne Capital Management and Artscape) has restructured space for new private capitalization in Weston. Several findings point to the fact that this process originated behind the scenes. Officially, however, it originated from a feasibility study for a community cultural hub in Weston (Artscape, 2011), in response to the City's call for proposals released exclusively for Artscape's application. Subsequently, the City issued the sale notice of a "surplus" publicly-owned parking lot, which was intended for a partnership that had already formed between Artscape and Rockport. The City, therefore, played a facilitative role in opening up space for privatization and, additionally, the repurposing of the adjacent residential building's podium for potential "higher uses." It provided incentives to draw in the private partners – deregulation of zoning requirements and a density-bonusing agreement in exchange for securing Artscape's presence in the development (the Hub, 26 artist live/work units and publicly-accessible outdoor spaces). This arrangement doubly benefits the private partners, Rockport and Woodbourne, as Artscape becomes the vehicle for public investment to be funneled into the artistic aura that is expected to boost the value of their residential properties. The main point to be taken from the case of the Hub is that none of the Weston Project could have been achieved without the non-profit partner, Artscape.[33]

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[33] Former MP Mike Sullivan insists that if the Hub costed only 1.5M in private "community benefit" funds and the rest of the public funding was "not real money" but revenue from the public land sale and "forgiven money" (exemptions for various development charges), then City of Toronto could have afforded to build a community centre for Weston independently, and thus avoided the entire Weston Project (interview 7).

The restructuring of space to make room for the Weston Project was accompanied by a realignment of people by creating a local consensus on the redevelopment. Artscape was allied with Weston's elite, a very small predominantly white, middle class group that holds an influential position in the racially and economically-segregated neighbourhood. These proponents uphold a narrative of Weston's "lost golden age," current "blight" and fears of perceived racialized crime, which was operationalized to justify Artscape's intervention in the neighbourhood. The other "ready-made" ally was UrbanArts, a publicly-funded non-profit organization that has built Weston's image as a hotbed for racialized youth creativity and entrepreneurship. To complete the local consensus base, Artscape drew in other non-profit organizations to "represent" the majority poor and racialized population residing in Weston. This was crucial as this population dominates the area targeted by the *Weston 2021 Revitalization Plan* and thus will be experiencing much of the effects of the Weston Project redevelopment. The elite and non-profit groups rallying around the Project have provided the appearance that the "diverse" neighbourhood is involved. Furthermore, this consensus acts as a diversionary initiative, directing attention to the Project's "community benefit," the Hub, and away from the broader redevelopment and changes in the neighbourhood. As one interviewee explained, this local consensus accompanying the public-private partnership locks Artscape's "foothold" in Weston.

Looking beyond the Artscape Hub portion of the Weston Project, the newly privatized space on "the wrong side of the tracks" in Weston will see a new-build residential development with market rent rates that implies a middle-class resettlement in a largely poor area. This is anticipated to spark the rebirth of a Weston Road commercial area that will be more suited for middle-class consumption and lifestyles. The resettlement will be aided by new connectivity routes leading directly to the new "destination." As seen in its previous creative city-led developments, Artscape is creating the appearance of steady investment activity in Weston and therefore an attractive place for outside investors. Related to this are some indicators pointing to impending gentrification: house prices and rents increasing; opportunistic non-profit workers moving into the neighbourhood; commercial buildings bought up around the site of the future Project; and, new, dense residential developments being proposed and built. While the redevelopment is touted to be a step forward for "affordable" housing in the city (with a mere 26 units exclusively offered to hand-picked artists), Weston's poor residents and ethnic-oriented businesses are facing displacement pressures. Due to the rent increases imposed by one of the Project's private partners, Woodbourne, the residents of 33 King Street have already been experiencing displacement from – not coincidently – the site that the Weston Project will be standing on.

At the time of writing this conclusion (November 2016), Artscape has pushed on with its "conflict-free" city-building functions by opening a public discussion on the proposed "look and feel" of the Weston Project, and specifically, a dramatic colour palette to wash over 33 King Street's walls. Non-negotiable in this discussion, however, was the new "corporate identity" and name for the entire redevelopment (which, throughout the planning process was ambiguously referred to as the Artscape Weston Hub): the "Weston Common" (Robey, field

observation E). An appropriation (and perhaps a misspelling) of an old concept ("commons"), "common" suggests that the Project is neither public nor private space, but a designated "third way" community space, separate "from the hard sell of the market" (Blackmar, 2006:50). While it clearly discounts public space altogether, the Vice President of Artscape explained, "inclusivity is contained in the idea of the common" (Robey, field observation E).

The creative city philanthropic "solution" and the false choice of inclusion

The amalgamation of five municipalities into the new City of Toronto in 1998 brought on austerity measures, and among other related effects, led to the new City of Toronto's increased reliance on the non-profit sector. The magnitude of the City's annual transactions with the sector now is estimated at almost 10% of the City's total operating budget (City of Toronto, 2016b). The reliance in the context of neoliberal restructuring is based on the sector's ability to draw in outside/private investment into the city and provide unpaid labour for downloaded responsibilities. In 2007, total volunteer hours in the province of Ontario equalled to 422,000 full-time jobs (Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2011). Over time, corresponding public policy has exacerbated spatialized inequalities in Toronto: place-based strategies that view impoverished neighbourhoods as "problems" in of themselves rather than as the expressions of structural inequality, and simultaneously, certain "qualities of place" as entrepreneurial solutions to such problems. In tow, Toronto's culture and arts policies supported the economic prioritization of the downtown, which accelerated the criminalization and displacement of the homeless, working poor and racialized residents who did not fit within the city's adopted "creative" image. The subsequent poverty-induced, racialized crime descending in from the inner-suburbs stunned this gentrifying space in 2005. Stigmatization and increased policing of newly City-designated "priority neighbourhoods" ensued, and related funding pools were channeled through the non-profit sector. Operating on the backs of crises and catering to fears, the non-profit organizations (in particular, the Toronto Arts Council) successfully leveraged this funding towards community arts activities incapable of addressing systemic causes of socio-economic inequality (Leslie and Hunt, 2013); that, instead, de-politicize and entrepreneurialize inner-suburban youth towards a desired outcome of "a particular image of Toronto as a tolerant and inclusive city" (*ibid*., 1187).

Within a decade of Toronto's "creative turn" and in light of increased – rather than decreased – spatialized inequalities, "inclusion" has emerged as a concept central to creative competitiveness among an elite consensus group of City officials, non-profit organizations and developers. The self-correcting policy approach of "de-stigmatizing" priority neighbourhoods, now Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), appears to have opened up space for extending the creative city strategy in redressing the issue of "exclusion" in Toronto. It aligned perfectly with policy concerning the "arts accommodation crisis" in the inner-city – the search for more affordable spaces for the non-profit arts ("making space for culture") (City of Toronto, 2011; 2014). The non-profit arts field, with Artscape's leadership, has institutionalized this re-alignment of the parallel place-based policies through the CSOC initiative under the rationale of

"closing the gap" in accessibility to the arts to be addressed by urban development and private investment. The CSOC has effectively honed the creative competitiveness consensus gaze towards Toronto's disinvested – and more affordable – inner-suburbs as an opportunity for exploiting the state-produced rent gap.

Achieving a sort of monopoly on arts-focused development in Toronto, it is hard to imagine any other actor leading the CSOC initiative other than Artscape. The non-profit has built up its strong reputation not only in Toronto, but across Canada and even internationally, through its real estate portfolio, consultancy practice, and a politically seductive "anti-gentrification" discourse that fuels the perception of "doing good." This discourse removes any structural analysis (of class, race, disinvestment and displacement, etc.) from gentrification by privileging a select clientele group of artists as its "true" victims. As an excellent example of a "progressive" non-profit organization, Artscape carefully defends its stance with anti-statist ideas and a critique of conflict-based organizing that depicts political positions outside of non-profit consensus as "unrealistic," "extreme," "self-defeating," etc. In place of concepts of strong social ties, Artscape promotes collaboration with public-private partnerships, and so-called "corporate social consciousness" (Jones, 2016) – or, in other words, the marketization of social services. Through citizen engagement and public consultation, Artscape is now steering public discussions away from whether spaces and services should be privatized, to *how* they ought to be privatized (See Arena, 2012:185). Like many non-profits organizations today, Artscape's existence depends on privatization, as well as densification.

When it became more clear that there were "opportunities" rather than "challenges" in Toronto's inner-suburbs, Artscape extended its rationale for gentrification as "a good problem to have" (Jones, 2015) by portraying the neighbourhoods as in need of "healing," and re-introducing empowered (but under-employed) downtown-based artists as social workers to "tackle blight" (*ibid.*). The creative city planning framework presented as a therapeutic, philanthropic solution to prolonged structural disinvestment in Toronto's inner-suburbs is a repackaging of Florida's key concept of attracting a creative class to targeted locale. This idea is justified by the flawed theory that private development and an injection of artists, middle-class in-movers and visitors will benefit less fortunate neighbourhood residents through a "trickle down–" or in Artscape's terms, "spill-over" effect. Artscape used a disease-cure metaphor of "urban acupuncture" to mystify possible impacts of such underfunded ("small budgets") but heavily mandated ("lots of creativity") future suburban redevelopment.

Projecting the Weston Hub Project as its model for CSOC, Artscape is now looking to apply the same formula to a number of other inner/suburban neighbourhoods, to "put challenged neighbourhoods on the map for creative people" (Artscape, 2011:3). In Lawrence Heights, the privatization and middle-class resettlement of a large public housing complex inspired by Regent Park's redevelopment will include an Artscape Hub that will supposedly "serve both existing and future residents as revitalization transforms the neighbourhood over the next 20 years" (Artscape, 2015b:6). In the east end of the Greater Toronto Area, "they want to know the 'policy conditions', 'potential partners' and 'public interest' in this kind of project" (Anonymous, Artscape intern, personal communication, March 8, 2016). Also, in the inner-

suburb of Jane and Finch, politically-charged residents and artists are already divided on Artscape's potential presence in their neighbourhood (Richard De Gaetano, Social Planning Toronto non-profit, personal communication, March 9, 2016).

The emerging creative competitiveness consensus led by Artscape poses a "false choice" for Toronto's inner-suburbs, as it describes reinvestment of *any kind* as generally good, of course, in comparison to continued public disinvestment (Slater, 2014). It is increasingly argued by municipal governments that in light of downloaded costs and responsibilities by higher levels of government, there is no alternative to (more often than not state-aided) gentrification (Jones and Ley, 2016). This theme was epitomized in the planning process for the Artscape Weston Hub Project: "If you want to improve your community, you need to accept change. If you want to keep things the same, then don't complain" (Nunziata, ward councillor, field observation B). The notion of a false choice was anecdotally captured in the interviews with residents in Weston, who expressed discontent with the Project and broader neighbourhood "revitalization": "Everybody says 'change' as if that is good in itself, but what are we changing?" (33 King Street resident A, interview 6). Changes that interviewees would like to see would address some of Weston's most deep-set issues, such as the exceptionally high rate of unemployment, unjust police harassment of racialized youth, and the chronic poverty cycle perpetuated by predatory money lender schemes. These concerns were contextualized within broader systemic issues of racism and effects of a globalized capitalist economy on local labour markets.

As the creative city script is increasingly presented as a solution to a variety of structural problems (that should be the responsibility of the state), it maintains the false choice of gentrification. Such interventions that emphasize "quality of place" can easily claim successes once "problems" have been displaced from the given place.

> *In fifteen years they'll be able to say, 'we don't have an unemployment problem in Weston anymore. You can see, everyone here is making $80,000 per year now, and we don't have an issue here anymore.' But those people still have the issue but they're just not in the neighbourhood anymore (Duncan, interview 4).*

The case of the Weston Hub Project can be understood as less of a test of Artscape's already well-seasoned, predictable "add artists and stir" formula applied to a neighbourhood down Toronto's urban hierarchy, but more generally, how public disinvestment in Toronto's inner-suburbs is being continued. The shift from priority neighbourhood to the new NIA designation appears to be only revalourizing targeted Toronto neighbourhoods, providing no significant public investments and rather, *de facto* relying on the non-profit sector and entrepreneurial City programs (e.g. Tower Renewal) to draw in private investment. The *inclusion* of new private investment as well as new middle-class residents, the case ultimately reveals that the pursuit of the "more inclusive creative city," as championed by the non-profit sector, is merely a

euphemism for a gentrification frontier penetrating into Toronto's inner-suburbs.

Reflections and considerations for the other side of the frontier

In sharp contrast to Artscape's discourse, the local critical discourse in Weston contested the revitalization proponents' visions for improvement and Artscape's creative city approach, demonstrating how these merging ideals reinforced marginalization based on race and class. Interviewees claimed, for example, that Weston Road with its many ethnic-oriented businesses is already a "destination," revealing what McLean, Rankin and Kamizaki (2015:1296) have argued to be "extraordinary omissions in prevailing discourses of emptiness and deficiency" in Toronto's inner-suburbs. Notably, the interviewees challenged the widely-held perception of non-profit organizations "doing good" by exposing: how inherent competition and funding schemes in the sector compromise political debate and discipline skeptics to adhere to given social and urban development agendas; the exploitative nature of non-profit's neighbourhood change agendas that conscripts racialized youth in a process that simultaneously undervalues, or ultimately seeks to erase their families, neighbours and social spaces; and, non-profits' uncritical and active involvement in facilitating the creation of an "inclusive" space that is more comfortable for the middle-class. The critical discourse in Weston also exposed vulnerabilities in the political agency of a poor racialized population, and how the local elite and non-profit environment maintain the general absence of dissent in the neighbourhood.

The vocal and more affluent north-east Weston residents brought up important concerns about privatization, deregulation of official planning principles, densification and continued disinvestment. Unfortunately, their focused aversion to the incoming Rockport high-rise apartment tower overlooked the effects these issues would disproportionately have on population living within the bounds of the *Weston 2021 Revitalization* plans. One case that brought this to light was the 33 King Street residents who disputed rent increases imposed by Woodbourne and the Weston Project plans that handed their vehicle parking spaces to new Artscape and Rockport tower tenants. This attempt deflates a perception in Weston's north-east that high-rise apartment tower residents are indifferent to changes occurring in Weston – or, "don't give a shit," as one Artscape Weston Steering Committee member bluntly said (personal communication, May 31, 2016). While no significant opposition was mounted against the Weston Project in the end, the powerful dialogue found in Weston reminds us that, "there are two sides to any frontier" (Smith, 1986:34): "We mustn't be frightened to think, to feel, to inform and to investigate, and it doesn't mean that you don't want change" (Thomas, interview 3).

The non-profit sector, increasingly embodying the gentrification frontier, enjoys a "powerful in-between status" (Roe, 2009:77), posing political threats to which challenges can be quite difficult to articulate. Further, non-profits are constantly reinventing themselves to suit creative city social agendas, habitually appropriating the language and practices of social movements, and therefore complicating the political terrain. John Arena (2012:86) warns about the rise of

"progressive"-type non-profits as the one studied here, that, despite their seemingly pro-poor mandates, ultimately work to stabilize middle-class/elite rule:

> *In the context of expanding privatization, poor people displacement, and state social service dismantlement, we can expect that foundations and their non-profit acolytes will play an increasingly important role in helping to smooth the way for neoliberal restructuring and managing the social fallout.*

Targets of disinvestment are most vulnerable to becoming targets of philanthropy and accompanying privatized control under neoliberal (sub)urban restructuring.

> *Understanding the roots of [non-profit] actions and contradictions – which are structural rather than rooted in character flaws or simplistic selling out – will be crucial for popular, antiracist, working-class movements to both effectively confront the ruling class's soft power in the form of NGOs and mount an effective challenge to the neoliberal capitalist agenda (ibid., 214).*

Movements challenging gentrification schemes have begun to recognize the roles played by the non-profit sector in these processes. In Toronto's rapidly gentrifying downtown eastside, the Queer Trans Community Defence has been fighting the 519's (a non-profit organization servicing the LGBT community) $100M development of an exclusive recreation centre as a "community benefit" component of a larger redevelopment. They are asking: What will the City do to address the direct loss of shelter beds? How will the new condominium developments affect the neighbourhood? What are the implications for sex workers in the neighbourhood? Denouncing the exploitation of the queer community's name by the non-profit, they state there is "no pride in gentrification"[34] and accuse the 519 of contradictorily "waving a rainbow flag over the destruction of poor communities" that happen to include many LGBT people (Jefferson Lenskyj, 2015). Similarly, in New York City, the Queens Anti-Gentrification Project rejects public-private partnerships and identifies key moments to disrupt municipal re-zonings and incentives offered to the private sector. They have challenged non-profit-administered "affordable" housing projects, exposing that affordability is only tailored to a privileged set of clients under a sugar-coated anti-gentrification / "inclusionary zoning" mandate. In response, the Queens Anti-Gentrification Project (2016) has adopted a slogan: "the anti-gentrification movement will not be funded."[35]

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[34] This is a play on the name of the largely corporatized LGBT parade and festival (locally referred to simply as "Pride") that creative city policies celebrate for championing the concepts of inclusion and tolerance, and for raking in significant private and public revenue each year.

[35] This is a play on the title of the well-known book critiquing the non-profit sector, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007).

A call for counter-mapping the Trojan horses

Through a multi-scale analysis, this Major Paper has demonstrated that the non-profit sector is increasingly playing an instrumental, although often overlooked, role in the production of gentrification. As entities that coincide with urban economic restructuring from managerialism to entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989; Fraser and Kick, 2014), non-profits are increasingly becoming necessary players in public-private partnership projects because of their special abilities to maintain cost-cutting agendas, re-direct public funds, legitimize private capital flows and build consensus. Non-profit organizations are deeply entrenched in place-based activities of uneven development that both target places for disinvestment as well as opportunities for capitalist accumulation. No matter how "progressive" they may seem, funding controlled by elite agendas ultimately dictates the non-profit's activities, while tax breaks for donors re-direct money away from the public and to specific initiatives, and accelerate the retrenchment of the welfare state.

By tracking the creative city planning framework from Toronto's downtown to the city's disinvested inner-suburbs, this Major Paper has followed one non-profit organization's geography as it merged with a geography of gentrification. A great part of this geography was the "progressive" organization's powerful, coopted social justice rhetoric. As the widely unquestioned non-profit sector takes on bigger roles in urban governance and neighbourhood redevelopment, the hope is that more research can expand on the discussion that researchers have begun (See Arena, 2012; Fraser and Kick, 2014; Roe, 2009) and the one I have presented here. There is a certain urgency in "mapping the frontier line" (Smith, 1996) that is increasingly being embodied by the non-profit sector under the banner of "inclusion," that operates in a largely deregulated, unaccounted "third" space (the "shadow state"; the "ghost economy"), acting as a Trojan Horse of neoliberalism (Arena, 2012; Barry Shaw and Jay, 2012; Harvey, 2005; Miraftab, 2004; Wallace, 2009). *Why*, *where*, and *how* does funding become available? *Who* is it provided by, and *to whom*? – and, *to what end*? By revealing the answers to these questions, such counter-mapping could foster the advance of the oppositional side of the gentrification frontier that rejects the false choice of philanthropic "gifts" of "inclusion" and instead, strives towards dismantling inequality.

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Appendices: primary research conducted

The following appendices describe the primary research conducted for this Major Paper, including field observations and interview process.

Appendix 1: field observation codes

Code in text (Chapter 4)	**Field observation description and location**	**Speakers mentioned in text (Chapter 4)**	**Field observation date**
A	Artscape Weston Hub "Community Visioning" workshop York West Active Living Centre, 1901 Weston Road, York, Toronto.	Jacklyn Thomas, Director of Artists to Artists Foundation (AAF)	October 15, 2015
n/a (Chapter 2)	Creative Spaces Partnership Exchange (conference hosted by Creative Spaces Outside of the Core) Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge Street, Toronto	n/a	November 2, 2015
B	Etobicoke York Council meeting considering official Artscape Weston Hub proposal York Civic Centre, 2700 Eglinton Avenue West, York, Toronto	Dan Harris, resident opponent of Weston Project	November 10, 2015
		Dave Bennet, resident proponent of Weston Project	
		Gary Alderson, resident proponent of Weston Project	
		Laura Albanese, Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) of York-South Weston	
		Frances Nunziata, ward councillor of York-South Weston	
C	Artscape Weston Hub tenant application information session	Pru Robey, Vice President of Artscape	March 15, 2016

	York West Active Living Centre, 1901 Weston Road; and, site visit at 22 John Street, York, Toronto.		
D	Weston Project "Groundbreaking Ceremony" 22 John Street, York, Toronto	John Tory, Mayor of the City of Toronto	June 22, 2015
		Jack Winberg, CEO of The Rockport Group	
		Frances Nunziata, ward councillor of York-South Weston	
		Tim Jones, CEO of Artscape	
		Paulina O'Kieffe, community artist performer	
E	"Community Update" on the Artscape Weston Hub Urban Arts, 19 John Street, York, Toronto.	Pru Robey, Vice President of Artscape	November 14, 2016
		Marlene Mckintosh, Executive Director of UrbanArts	

Appendix 2: interview process

The following is the description of the study conducted, as outlined in the Weston interviewee consent form:

The Artscape Weston Hub has gained considerable support of local groups, but as well as critique. The main objective of this study is to gather a range of perspectives on the development and broader revitalization plans to explore the merits and dangers of creative city planning visions. The central questions guiding this study are as follows: 1) How is municipal creative city planning received, negotiated, celebrated and resisted when it proposes re-investment into a disinvested neighbourhood? 2) How do the local visions for the neighbourhood's improvement reinforce or challenge racialized and classed exclusions? 3) In what ways do community / non-profit organizations play key roles in neighbourhood revitalization plans, and what are their successes and challenges in encouraging local engagement / involvement?

The following is a list of sample questions asked in the semi-structured interviews:

- How would you describe Weston?
- What kind of impact(s) have the "priority neighbourhood" and new "neighbourhood improvement area" (NIA) designations had on Weston?
- Can you tell me about your participant experience(s) in public consultations on the Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy and the Artscape Weston Hub development?
- What roles have different individuals and groups played in the development of the Artscape Weston Hub?
- What opportunities do you see coming out of the Hub, and broader neighbourhood change?
- One of the main objectives of the Artscape Weston Hub development is to make Weston a "destination." It is expected to draw in more private investments, and new residents and visitors. What effect do you think this process will have on the neighbourhood?

Further notes on interview process:

The Weston residents who engaged in interviews were largely identified at field observations and largely through a snowball sampling technique. A request for an interview with Artscape's Vice President Pru Robey, the Weston Project lead, was declined.

Appendix 3: interview codes

Code in text (Chapter 4)	**Name(s) and description / affiliation**	**Interview date**
1	Adam Norman, blogger, WestonWeb.ca	November 6, 2015
2	Lang Moffat, Weston King Neighbourhood Centre	January 12, 2016
n/a (Chapter 3)	Liz Kohn, Communications Manager, Artscape	February 5, 2016
3	Jacklyn Thomas, Director, Artists to Artists Foundation	June 8, 2016
4	Cutty Duncan, member of West End Local Economic Development (WELED) Shadya Yasin, member of WELED and Artscape Weston Steering Committee	June 10, 2016
5	Resident of 33 King Street B	June 13, 2016
6	Resident of 33 King Street A	June 24, 2016
7	Mike Sullivan, former Member of Parliament for York-South Weston	July 8, 2016