

An Immigrant Neighbourhood
as a Site of Planetary Urbanization:
The Case of St. James Town, Toronto.

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Abstract

Immigration is a contested topic in a global reality defined by the spatiality of nation-states. However, in the case of South-North mobility, the public debate usually overlooks the role of colonial legacies and capitalist dependencies in shaping the patterns and trajectories of migration. On the scale of the Global North's cities, narratives tend to revolve around the immigrant enclaves as problematic or dangerous. This dissertation informs the debate with a qualitative overview of the neighbourhood of St. James Town in Toronto, an area characterized by a strong immigrant presence. Analyzing the spatiality of immigrants on the scale of the nation-state, the city and the neighbourhood itself, it employs the conceptual framework of planetary urbanization to explain the role of newcomers as agents creating and maintaining global flows of capital and ideas, actively taking part in the production of space in Canada and far beyond it. At the same time, this work examines the spatiality of an immigrant enclave as an expression of a settler colonial nation-state, highlighting the vital role of spaces such as St. James Town in global and domestic patterns of precarity and exploitation. Portraying the neighbourhood in a dynamic moment of change, both in terms of infrastructural interventions as well as population structure, this dissertation highlights the resilience and community-formation skills of newcomers as well as the great cost of spatial and social adaptation. It also points out the shortcomings of the planetary urbanization concept, underscoring the necessity to include post-colonial criticisms and a nuanced, multi-faceted role of human mobility in explaining the works of global capitalism.

Keywords: Canada, Toronto, St. James Town, immigration, enclave, neighbourhood, settlement, settler colonialism, postcolonialism, planetary urbanization, production of space, dual citizenship

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Table of Figures.....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
St. James Town within the Global Socio-Economic Flows.....	1
Background for the Study.....	4
Research Objectives and Research Questions	6
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Lefebvre’s <i>Urban</i> and Space Production	9
Planetary Urbanization.....	10
Navigating Scales: An Immigrant Neighbourhood	12
Settler Colonialism as the Socio-Spatial Framework of Analysis	12
The Dual Role of Immigrant Neighbourhoods: Extended and Concentrated Urbanization.....	14
Contribution	15
Remarks about the Research Site and the Research Design	16
Identifying St. James Town.....	16
Methodology.....	16
Frameworks and Strategies	17
The Outline of the Following Chapters	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review	20
The Theory of Planetary Urbanization as a Promising Macro Framework of Analysis Which Needs Further Scrutiny.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Urban Theory: Origins and Discourses	21
Henri Lefebvre: Envisioning the Urban Society.....	24
Brenner and Schmid: Urban Society Goes Planetary.....	26
Planetary Criticisms: No Space for Difference.....	28
Ways Forward: Scaling Ambitions Down	31
Conclusion: Where Philosophy Ends and Geography Starts.....	33

Postcolonialism as a Framework for Breaking through the Limitations of Contemporary Urban Studies	35
Introduction.....	35
How “Post” is Postcolonialism?	37
Early Postcolonial Thought and Its Impact on Geography.....	38
Postcolonial Geography Writes Back: Making Space for Difference.....	42
Conclusion	49
Immigrant Neighbourhoods in Canada	50
Introduction.....	50
Delineating the Conceptual Boundaries.....	51
Community and Belonging in Ethno-Racial Settlements of Toronto	55
Ethno-Racial Arrival Cities: Social Opportunities and Economic Markets	57
Looking Outwards: Transnational Ties of Canadian Minorities	59
Conclusions	62
Chapter 3: Profiling St. James Town: Geography, History and Population	64
Geography and Official Demarcation	64
History and Nation-Building	68
Narratives and Counternarratives	72
Modernist Architecture and Its Consequences for St. James Town	74
Introducing The Corners	76
Condofication as a Force Shaping the Future of St. James Town.....	78
St. James Town as a Hub for International Students	83
Census Data Overview	85
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	93
Overview of the Conceptual and Structural Choices	93
Conceptual and Theoretical Approach	94
Research Design Approach	94
Sensitizing Use of Concepts	97
The Levels of Theory.....	98
Grounded Theory as a Framework for Analysis	99
The Social Constructionist Approach of Kathy Charmaz	102
Data Collection and Analysis	105
Operationalizing Semi-Structured Interviews	107
Interviews as a Method.....	108

Rapport with Participants, Power Structures and Positionality	109
Researcher’s Positionality in the Context of the Research Interviews	110
Strategies of Arranging the Interviews	113
Observation Practice	114
Sampling Criteria and Recruitment	116
Documents as a Source of Research Information	120
Data Management and Ethics Concerns	121
Data Analysis: Coding	121
Chapter 5: Field Work and Data Gathering Process	125
Reflections on Conducting the Interviews.....	125
Observation Process as the Backbone of Data Analysis	130
Research Participants’ Representation Juxtaposed with Census Data	136
Gender Ratio	137
Visible Minority Status.....	138
Canadian Citizenship Status	139
Age Groups.....	139
Additional Indicators Not Based on Census	140
Data Analysis Process: Initial Coding and Focused Coding	145
Chapter 6: The Landscape of the Neighbourhood	149
Five Main Themes of Insight	149
1. Interactions with the city. Perceptions of the neighbourhood.	151
2. Built environment and life within the modernist architecture	164
3. Individual and collective ways of mitigating labor and housing insecurities	176
4. Immigrant community and communities of St. James Town	181
5. Immigration to Canada – hopes, struggles and creative adjustments.....	191
Chapter 7: Theory Formulation in the Context of the Research Questions	203
Research Findings: Local and Global Dynamics of Urbanization.....	203
1.1. How is the neighbourhood understood (focusing on its topography & symbolism) by the residents of St. James Town	204
1.2. What are the elements of the neighbourhood’s collective identity as an immigrant place of arrival?	208
1.3. What is the role of the neighbourhood for the city of Toronto?	211
2.1. How are the concentrated and extended modes of urbanization manifested in the daily encounters within the neighbourhood?.....	214

2.2. How are concentrated and extended moments of urbanization “creatively destroyed” through differential urbanization?.....	218
2.3. What elements of urban reality can be perceived as “outside” of the process of planetary urbanization?.....	220
3.1. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a site of extended urbanization within the settler colonial project?.....	222
3.2. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a node of concentrated urbanization?.....	229
3.3. How is informality employed as a copying mechanism and as a mode of self governance in St. James Town?.....	231
Limits of the research and further directions to study.....	234
Scientific and Societal Relevance of the Thesis.....	238
Policy Recommendations	240
Chapter 8: Conclusions	244
In Search for Difference	244
“Constitutive Outside” Looking Back In	248
References	250
Appendix 1: Recruitment materials and Consent Form	261
Appendix 2: Initial Codes List (NVivo Excerpt).....	265
Appendix 3: Infrastructural changes observed in the neighbourhood.....	268
Appendix 4: Other photographs of St. James Town taken by the author	273
Appendix 5: Creative Adjustments	277

List of Figures

Figure 1 / Situating St. James Town in downtown Toronto (map-of-toronto.com)..... 65

Figure 2 / The boundaries of St. James Town (City of Toronto)..... 66

Figure 3 / An administrative map of Neighbourhood No. 74 with it boundaries extending beyond traditionally understood St. James Town (City of Toronto)..... 67

Figure 4 /Locations of the participants within St. James Town 141

Figure 5 /Participants country of origin with percentage of representation..... 141

Figure 6 /Mode of arrival/status in Canada 142

Figure 7 /Housing arrangements of participants 143

Figure 8 /Number of years spent in Canada 144

Figure 9 /Initial codes as the outcome of data analysis 146

Chapter 1: Introduction

”Such little, little things keep on happening in these big, big countries.”

Raj Malhotra

St. James Town within the Global Socio-Economic Flows

Migration, despite being an intrinsic element of a human experience as a species (Shah, 2020) and as societies (Samers and Collyer, 2017; Shah, 2020;), has been politicized and weaponized within the narrative of nation states (Sharma, 2020).

The proportion of international migrants compared to sedentary populations does not differ much across decades and it usually oscillates between 3-5% of the global population being on the move (Samers & Collyer, 2017; Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2019). Politicizing human mobility has been a divide and conquer strategy most salient in the recent years, but in the North-South context, it acquires a specific meaning, enmeshed in centuries of imperialism and colonialism.

Although most of the immigration taking place internationally is confined to the realm of the Global South (McAuliffe & Ruhs, 2017), it is the public opinion in the North which is often occupied with debating immigration either as an economic, political or societal threat (Polakow-Suransky, 2017). Such narratives, often stemming from far-right talking points (although sometimes coming also from the left just to mention labor unions’ distrust toward immigrants), deprive public opinion of a deeper understanding of the role of migrants from the South in Northern societies, turning attention away from socially profound questions such as social

reproduction or global solidarities. Existing strategies of integration requiring clearly stated allegiances as well as ever-growing suspiciousness based on perceived security efforts blur the big picture further.

What everyday habits, customs and strategies are being brought along by the immigrants from the Global South? How do they shape and re-shape places of destination? Particularly, how do they affect the cities of the North, which this work focuses on? On the other hand, how are spaces of the Global South reshaped by the processes of accumulation concentrated in urban realities of the North?

Although traveling of ideas and behaviors transnationally and translocally has been described on numerous occasions (Levitt, 2001; 2011), still migration is sometimes overlooked as an urbanizing force (Ruddick, 2018), even in the most encompassing conceptual endeavours such as planetary urbanization theory (Brenner & Schmid, 2015).

This work builds on Henri Lefebvre's ontology of space as being societally produced (1974). Such a choice stems from accepting social reality and its spatialities as relational and constructed, not objectively existing and given. Also, it is a logical consequence of employing planetary urbanization theory which operates on Lefebvre's assumptions. However, trying to counterbalance academic dependency on the works of Euro-centric, white-centric scholarship (Smith, 2021), Lefebvre's work is juxtaposed with the rich literature stemming from postcolonial geography (Shabazz, 2015; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Basu & Fiedler, 2017; Basu, 2020), equipped with critical tools to describe urban realities from the point of view of difference. Particularly, postcolonialism conceptualizes the notions of a settler state and settler colonialism (Coulthard, 2014; Toews, 2018; Smith, 2021) without which Canadian urban spaces cannot be fully understood.

The choice of informing this dissertation with the theoretical framework of planetary urbanization (Brenner & Schmid, 2015) stems from the fact that its authors notice global processes which seem to fit well into the dynamics of migration from South to North - the factors impacting the migratory act, shaping the spaces of arrival in the cities of the North, as well as the places of origin. Brenner and Schmid propose their theory of planetary urbanization in relation to the emergence of new geographies of uneven spatial development, the “polymorphic, variegated and multiscalar” nature of the urban process itself (p.152) and subsequent mutations of the regulatory geographies of capitalism, by which they mean “consolidating national states and nationally coordinated imperial systems” (p.153). To capture these processes in a coherent, epistemological framework, authors identify a triad of concentrated, extended, and differential urbanization and emphasize that the process of urbanization itself has become planetary and multidimensional.

At the same time, planetary urbanization, quite paradoxically, overlooks migration itself, either as a possible form of contestation and struggle (Ruddick et al., 2018) or, even more broadly, the constitutive outside of urbanization (Roy, 2016; Oswin, 2018). Brenner and Schmid seem to focus on the structure of capitalist accumulation but not on actors within urban society, those who create spaces of difference. Addressing this important flaw of planetary urbanization is a crucial element of trying to improve the theory and enabling its useful conceptualization.

This work focuses on addressing this and other gaps in the planetary theory, namely: the omission of migration as a force shaping the urban society (Roy, 2016; Ruddick et al., 2018), overlooking the difference as a creative element of the urban reality (Lefebvre, 1974; Ruddick et al., 2018; Oswin, 2018; Derickson, 2018) and deeming urbanization a process without a “constitutive outside” (Roy, 2016). Addressing those three sets of criticisms will allow to further

improve the conceptualization of the theory and will help to situate the empirical focus of the study across scales of planetary urbanization, building on a macro scale of Brenner and Schmid's ideas, situating it on a mezzo scale of a neighbourhood (Appadurai, 1995) and conducting micro-scale empirical research using, i.e., interviews and observations to explain the dynamics of the residents' relationship with the city and the area.

Such empirical research will be conducted in St. James Town (Toronto) – a traditionally immigrant neighbourhood (Bateman, 2014; Cori, 2018). This location, having a well-documented history of immigration, manifests strong self-governance and salient informal ties (St. James Town, 2021). Within the dynamically changing landscape of downtown Toronto (Lehrer, 2009; Kern, 2016; August, 2018), it requires constant adaptation. Secondly, with a strong immigration make up, robust transnational ties and ubiquitous everyday informality, it constitutes a promising example of a chosen scale – a neighbourhood – to test the assumptions of the planetary urbanization empirically.

Background for the Study

Canada, being one of the most desired migratory destinations in the Global North, relies heavily on immigration for upholding infrastructure and services across a vast territory (Saunders, 2017). This makes its biggest city – Toronto—a crucial gateway for migrants. Obviously, newcomers are not evenly distributed across the Greater Toronto Area, but tend to exhibit certain patterns of settlement. Formation of such patterns is historically, geographically, racially and ethnically determined (Mensah, 2002).

St. James Town became such a destination neighbourhood in 1960s and kept that role ever since (Bateman, 2014). Planned and built as the biggest public housing investment in Canada then, it represented a modernist architecture for “a new man” (Zahirovic, 2007). Following modernist

assumptions of strict separation of spaces of work, leisure and transport, St. James Town was designed on the basis of Le Corbusier's "towers in the park" concept. 18 apartment towers were able to accommodate over 11 thousand inhabitants, with the desired population being white Canadians, professionals and recent graduates, willing to 'enjoy the city' before starting families and moving to the suburbs (Cori, 2018). To convey the message of unity and coherence of the Canadian project, each one of the towers was named after one Canadian city as if to represent the whole state. Thus, the conceived space, conveyed both through naming and spatial practices ordered space in a very deliberate way.

White, single males never moved in, preferring to inhabit the sprawling suburbs (Caulfield, 1994). Instead, largely because Canada significantly changed its immigration policies in 1960s, the neighbourhood became a hub for racialized immigration, but also "gave way to a host of anxieties about race, crime and public order" (Walcott, 2021, p.26), often reinforcing the racist ontology of the settler state instead of dismantling it.

According to the 2011 census, only 30% of the population residing in St. James Town were born in Canada, with the corresponding number being around 40% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2011; 2016). What is crucial is its "arrival city" character (Saunders, 2011) with 14% of inhabitants being recently arrived migrants, compared to Toronto's 7%. Non-permanent residents comprise of 8% of the population, while Toronto's average is 3.5%. Over 50% of the population are migrants which makes it similar to the city's average, but only 3 out of 4 residents are Canadian citizens and over 2 out of 3 belong to visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Average income of St. James Town residents in 2016 was CAD 41,000, over CAD 20,000 less than Toronto's average. Due to that fact, 90% of the population lives in rented apartments - twice as many as in other areas of Toronto, with 44% claiming housing to be unaffordable. At the same

time, unemployment rates and rates of relying on public assistance are only slightly higher than the city's average with university education rate being 2% *above* the city's average.

St. James Town is a community-oriented neighbourhood which is exemplified by two vibrant community-centres modestly called Corner@200 and Corner@240, heavily relying on informal arrangements (Murray, 2020; Formanowicz, 2022). Even the naming, which highlights the importance of corners as spaces of meeting and integration, gives a hint of the conceived space being claimed by migrants, along with neighbourhood's official motto - *A World Within A Block* (St. James Town, 2020). In that sense, St. James Town can be seen as an example of Lefebvre's contradictions between spatial designs and the lived experience and as such will be elaborated on in the following chapters.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

The goal of the research presented in this work was to acquire deeper understanding of how immigrants living in St. James Town in Toronto negotiate social and economic well-being within the framework of a settler colonial and capitalist reality of a Canadian city. This research investigates the everyday lives of immigrants in the urban reality by exploring their sense of belonging and affinity with the neighbourhood and the larger city, their labor and housing arrangements, and their social and solidarity networks. This research also examines the possible socio-economic synergies created by ethno-racial neighbourhoods within the Canadian experience, paying close attention to the transnational ties kept with the places of origin.

Finally, this research outlines how the socio-economic opportunities of the new country are used by immigrants in their transnational networks and, conversely, how those transnational networks are utilized in spaces of arrival. These insights are conceptualized using the theory of planetary urbanization, immigration and settlement discourses, and post-colonial geography.

The research sheds light on immigrants' interaction with the urban reality of Canada, taking into account the fact that their presence in Canada is usually defined by larger political and economic structures, such as immigration status, work permit status, the limitation of employment possibilities, the processes of credential recognition, as well as by the racial, ethnic and gender dynamics to which immigrants are subjected in Canada, often in ways different from their places of origin. This research contributes to the debate about immigrants and workers' rights. Since most of the newcomers in their first years in Canada, before gaining any of the basic rights of the citizens, are reduced solely to workers. By showcasing the mechanisms of exploitation, of economic and social exclusion, this research contributes to the improvement of integration processes in the future.

The research has the following objectives:

1. To delineate the scale of the neighbourhood and understand its relationship with the city of arrival and spaces of origin.
2. To outline how the 'moments' of planetary urbanization (concentrated, extended, differential) are manifested in a migrant neighbourhood and to inquire into "the constitutive outside" of the urban process.
3. To explain the dual role of an immigrant neighbourhood and its residents as both the "infrastructure" and the agents of planetary urbanization.

These research objectives raise the following three sets of research questions:

- 1.1. How is the neighbourhood understood (focusing on its topography & symbolism) by the residents of St. James Town?

- 1.2. What are the elements of the neighbourhood's collective identity as an immigrant place of arrival?
- 1.3. What is the role of the neighbourhood for the city of Toronto?

- 2.1. How are the concentrated and extended modes of urbanization manifested in the daily encounters within the neighbourhood?
- 2.2. How are concentrated and extended moments of urbanization "creatively destroyed" through differential urbanization?
- 2.3. What elements of urban reality can be perceived as "outside" of the process of planetary urbanization?

- 3.1. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a site of extended urbanization (focusing on the labor extraction and social reproduction) within the settler colonial project?
- 3.2. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a node of concentrated urbanization?
- 3.3. How is informality employed as a copying mechanism and as a mode of self-governance in St. James Town?

So far, this chapter has outlined the background of the research, namely the socio-economic flows situating an immigrant neighbourhood of St. James Town on a global map of interdependencies, focusing on migration. It has presented the research objectives followed by the research questions. Next, an overview of the theoretical assumptions of the urban studies and planetary urbanization will be outlined, followed by possible contributions of the project to urban

and migration studies, also situating St. James Town neighbourhood within the geography of the larger city. Finally, the methodological implications will be presented, outlining the choice of conducting qualitative research and using grounded theory method to analyse its findings.

Theoretical Framework

Lefebvre's *Urban* and Space Production

Lefebvre famously argues that social space is a social product (1991), emphasizing that space is not simply a preconceived “emptiness”, but is actively produced by a dialectical interplay of ideas, spatial manifestations, and experiences. The theory of space is an effort to introduce a universal modality of three overarching elements which would encompass the totality of spatial occurrences. These are: *the conceived*, *the perceived*, and *the lived* dimensions of space.

Lefebvre calls *the conceived space* the one of planners, of designers and ‘technocrats’ (1991, p. 38), reflected in maps, plans, schemes, policy papers and other forms of ordering, explaining and describing. *The perceived* space is the one most embedded in materiality of space. It comprises of all the elements which can be perceived, not only seen but also experienced by the whole sensuality of the body (p.39). *The lived space* is the one of experience. “It may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). The lived spaces define the world as it is experienced by each individual in their everyday lives.

Lefebvre used his theory of space to grasp the spirit of modernity of an industrialized city. However, for Lefebvre, it was urbanization that was the primary engine of capitalism, already more important and pervasive than industrialization, resulting in an ‘urban society’, reshaping space and landscapes, reaching into hinterlands (Brenner, 2014). Thus, “urban” for Lefebvre

seems to be an equivalent of the urban society, not the city as we understand it. Moreover, urban meant to be a “level” of social relations, mediating between capital, the state and the “private” (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]; Schmid, 2018).

Planetary Urbanization

Brenner and Schmid claim to notice a crisis of urban epistemology, calling for a radical rethinking of conceptualizing urban life (2015, p.151). By outlining the main premises of their emerging open-ended concept, the ontological boundaries of a new boundary-less urbanization are set. It is a process, not a confined form and it is constituted by three mutually interconnected ‘moments’: concentrated, extended, and differential urbanization (p.166). Clearly, such taxonomy is heavy indebted to Lefebvre.

The first two moments exist in a relational dialectics, mutually constitutive, entailing “operationalization of places, territories and landscapes, often located far beyond the dense population centers, to support the everyday activities and socioeconomic dynamics of urban life” (p.167).

Extended urbanization moment also includes routes of transportation, communication, and enclosures of space for the sake of further ‘development’ so, in that sense, it touches upon the violence of dispossession and capitalist accumulation. Differential urbanization is the mode which links the first two with a dialectical ‘response’ where “inherited socio-spatial configurations are continually creatively destroyed” (p.168), intrinsically related to dynamics and tendencies of the capitalist order.

Brenner and Schmid describe these processes as planetary – there is no ‘outside’ to them. Still, uneven spatial development is its intrinsic characteristic (Smith, 2010). It affects and re-creates all spaces, but it does not entail any kind of symmetric ‘development’ of those spaces.

A wave of well-founded criticisms followed the theory of planetary urbanization. Ruddick (2018) points out that in Brenner and Schmid's formulation it is almost impossible to "locate either subjects or the process of subjectivication" (p.396) and that the project erases the "embodied and embedded" ontological struggles. That also speaks to the criticisms of "urbanization of everything" by Ananya Roy (2016). Ruddick notices a striking lack of attention to the role of migration as a constitutive force in urbanization processes.

Still, it can be argued that planetary urbanization might prove to be a useful framework for contextualizing Lefebvre's urban and production of space into contemporary urban realities, particularly by redefining urbanization as an ongoing process not simply a spatial occurrence and showcasing the impact of that process on distant hinterlands, territories and people who live beyond the dense population centres. However, it does not situate difference in any particular context - this needs to be done independently through empirical research such as the one described by this work.

Conceptually, Ruddick and her co-authors point to the omission of migration while Parnell and Pieterse (2015) mention the importance of including the realities of urban arrangements of the South. As this research project expects to show, there is a dimension bridging these two, namely migration from the South to the North, facilitated by concentrated urbanization, engaging extended urbanization, becoming one of the inevitable outcomes of this dialectics. Through the dimension of differential urbanization, migrants constitute difference in urban realities of the North. If not by an active, deliberate formulation of differential spaces (such as social movements, resistance to exploitation), it takes place by skillfully navigating the dual role of being both, immigrants and residents of Canada.

Navigating Scales: An Immigrant Neighbourhood

The neighbourhood is often a key scale in urban geography (Zukin, 1989; Jacobs, 2016). In fact, that scale is often shared with migration studies, just to recall important works of Peggy Levitt (2001), conceptualizing trans-locality and social remittances, as “‘ideas, practices and know-how’, circulating between migrants and non-migrants” (Samers & Collyer, 2017, p.94). Such locality is a “phenomenological quality, which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality and reproducibility” (Appadurai, 1995, p.208).

Stemming from that sense of locality, Arjun Appadurai (1995), an anthropologist focused in cultural dynamics of globalization, describes a neighbourhood as situated community, a definable social form, where actuality and spatial potential for social reproduction are manifested (p.208). What is particularly important in the context of migrant destination areas, Appadurai’s definition does not restrict spatial forms to entities historically “unselfconscious” and ethnically homogeneous. The author calls them ‘ethnoscapes’ – neighbourhoods entailing “ethnic projects of others” and the consciousness of such projects. “Such knowledge can be encoded in the pragmatics of rituals (...) which always carry an implicit sense of the teleology of locality-building” (p.212). On such defined scale of a neighbourhood there is room for urban informality, often derived from homelands and countries of origin in different parts of the planet, providing such pragmatics of rituals, “system of norms governing urban transformation” as described by Roy.

Settler Colonialism as the Socio-Spatial Framework of Analysis

It is argued in this thesis that what defines the socio-spatial arrangement in which immigrants from the Global South find themselves in Canada is the logic of settler colonialism - a mode of coloniality on one hand, but also a framework of academic reference which describes the

relationship between the colonized and the colonizers, based on the colonizer's goal to introduce settler population to the conquered territory. That process requires much more than just force, it usually hinges on cultural and socio-political erasure of the existing populations (Coulthard, 2014), introduction of hegemonic tools of governance (religion, education, police, military; see Rodney, 2018) and capitalist-oriented infrastructure of modernity. What is understood by that is the concept of private property, the cadastral grid and arbitrary imposition of plots of land, railroad, state-created cities and towns along with laws privileging the accumulation of capital by the settlers, acquired through labour and land extraction from the Indigenous, the indentured and/or the enslaved populations (Blomley, 2004; Toews, 2018; Cowen, 2020; Sharma, 2020).

The system that promotes capitalist economic relations structured by exploitation and dispossession, founded on and justified by racist worldviews can be called racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015; Toews, 2018). Conceptualizing settler colonialism as a political and territorial logic and racial capitalism as its economic *modus operandi* is one of the profound contributions of postcolonial theory to identifying and restructuring the frameworks of contemporary geography.

Settler colonialism can be easily operationalized not as the structure of the past, but the current framework of governmentality in spaces such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa. It can be perceived through the critical analysis of the relationship of settler colonial states with Indigenous Peoples (Coulthard, 2014; Manuel & Derrickson, 2017; Toews, 2018; Talaga, 2020; Smith, 2021), other historically oppressed groups (Mensah, 2002; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; McKittrick, 2011; Lugones, 2013; Shabazz, 2015), the understanding of the international labor extraction through border and immigration regimes (Andersson, 2014;

Sharma, 2018, 2020; Walia, 2021) or the systemic inequalities and enabling infrastructures within the settler nation-states, particularly in its oppressive and revanchist urban spaces (Blomley, 2004; Burley, 2013; Jackson, 2017; Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021). Settler colonialism can be also an intersection of those factors and as such it will be operationalized in this work.

The Dual Role of Immigrant Neighbourhoods: Extended and Concentrated Urbanization

To capture the epistemological links between spaces of origin and spaces of arrival this research will test the conceptual tools provided by Brenner and Schmid's planetary urbanization framework, namely its three elements: concentrated, extended and differential urbanization.

The conceptualization of those elements hinges upon a claim that immigrants themselves, their spaces of everyday life and the ties created by them with the larger city and with places of origin play multiple roles in the triad of urbanization, depending on the role played by migrants within those larger structures and processes. Particularly, two roles outlined below will be investigated in the following research:

- 1) Immigrants are engaged in the production of space of the settler-colonial project as resources, particularly for labor and socio-spatial reproduction, controlled by immigration regimes, border securitization, labor laws, political sentiments, access to private property, neoliberal policies, and many other elements. This idea is borrowed from Simone (2004) who describes people as the urban "infrastructure":

- a) making the city productive, reproducing it, and positioning its residents, territories, and resources in specific ensembles where the energies of individuals can be most efficiently deployed and accounted for;

b) as “a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city”.

Similar concepts, based on settler state exploitation of labor and land can be found in the writings of many post-colonial authors (Sharma, 2018, 2020; Walia, 2021; Rodney, 2018; Fanon, 2007; Simone, 2004, Toews, 2018; Blomley, 2004; Cowen, 2004).

2) At the same time, an immigrant neighbourhood, its residents, its networks, informalities and spaces of everyday engagement can be perceived as a mode of concentrated urbanization (in respect to their places of origin but also to the sense of identity in the country of arrival) where people use the agglomeration, concentration, simultaneity and its infrastructures for the accumulation: of human capital, social capital, cultural capital and economic capital.

Contribution

The contribution of this project can be perceived twofold, academically and societally.

1) Academic contributions:

- a) It will provide an empirical contribution to the process of refining of planetary urbanization as a macro-level theory,
- b) It will conceptualize the theory into an empirical project, especially in the contexts which critics found being a weak spot of the theory, namely the lack of incorporating human mobility, the inability to situate the theory in any particular locality and no conceptual outside to the urban process.

2) Societal contributions:

- a) Understanding the contribution and utility of socio-spatial arrangements which immigrants bring and perpetuate in spaces of arrival will lead to a pragmatic

- perception of immigrant neighbourhoods as spaces of relative self-governance and community organizing, perhaps even as taking care of some sort of commons,
- b) Seeing immigrants' presence in the cities of the Global North as a part of a global system of economic relationship aimed at leveraging differences of status to allow exploitation (Sharma, 2020) will add to the debate about labor and political rights which migrants are usually denied of.

Remarks about the Research Site and the Research Design

Identifying St. James Town

It is crucial to state that the administrative division of St. James Town as defined by the City of Toronto does not always overlap entirely with the immigration area of the high-rise, modernist project. For instance, Statistics Canada delineates St. James Town as the area between Jarvis Street (West) and Parliament Street (East). That includes a large area of predominantly townhouses and condos.

St. James Town, as perceived historically and contemporarily for the purposes of the following research, is defined as a particular public housing investment of 1950-1960s, comprising of high-rise buildings situated between Bloor and Wellesley (North-South) and Sherbourne and Parliament (West-East). Some additional towers and even townhouses have been added to that area over time.

Methodology

Research uses qualitative methods of inquiry. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, also heavily drawing from the 3-year long presence of the researcher in St. James Town as one of its immigrant residents. Data will be also produced by the

author of the research in form of notes from observations, notes from interviews and photographs (excluding photographs of humans) and analysed using grounded theory methods.

Frameworks and Strategies

Since the theoretical framework consists of overarching concepts, research will follow a sensitizing use of those where “a few rather general and vaguely defined concepts (...) are needed to provide an orientation” (Blaikie, 2009, p.137).

There is no clear hypothesis in the following research since in the tradition followed and the methodology chosen (grounded theory) “hypotheses are proposed in response to patterns in the accumulating data, and they will be tested (...), being refined and, perhaps, discarded along the way” (Blaikie, 2009, p.37). Grounded theory requires openness of the researcher and readiness for an iterative process of refining ideas (p.137). Although the proposed research seems “heavy” with theory, theory is still predominantly a guideline for perceiving reality of the chosen locality. As Blaikie states, even with an open approach to generating theory “it is necessary to borrow or invent technical concepts” (p.162). Moreover, none of the chosen grand concepts can be directly tested in a strictly deductive approach – they need to be situated and contextualized first to examine how (and if) they correspond with the processes observed in a chosen locality.

With focusing on “why” and “how” nature of research questions, inductive strategy with strong element of abductive strategy will be used. Being iterative, it allows to “assemble lay accounts of the phenomenon in question, with all their gaps and deficiencies” (p.180) and to generate theory throughout the process.

The Outline of the Following Chapters

The next chapter will provide a detailed overview of the theoretical framework of this work. It will discuss the urban theory of the last decades and the postcolonial stance critically adding to the potential of the urban theory. The theoretical part will also discuss the geographic, social and economic implications of formulation of ethno-racial neighbourhoods in Canada, both for the cities and for the immigrants themselves.

In Chapter Three, St. James Town will be presented in detail. The history of the neighbourhood will be described, followed by the overview of the census data and the daily landscapes and narratives already described by available data.

Chapter Four will focus on methodological assumptions of this work, starting with situating the research on different epistemological spectrums, choosing research strategy and use of concepts that will lead to theory development. The details of the design will be outlined along with the methods chosen, namely the grounded theory. This method will be critically assessed with contributions of Kathy Charmaz adding to it. Tools chosen in respect to the grounded theory, namely interviews, observations and coding techniques will be mentioned.

In Chapter Five, the data gathering process taking place in St. James Town in the summer of 2023 will be presented in detail, along with its limitations and technicalities. Data analysis will take place by analysing the make-up of the interview participants juxtaposed with the census information for further clarity. Observation and reflections will be outlined, providing context for the analysis of the interviews. Coding practices will be described, showing the initial coding using NVivo software. Focused coding findings will be explained by gathering them into five main themes of insight.

Chapter Six will outline the insights of the focused coding in a form of a detailed report, informed by quotes from the interviews and reflections of the author. Next, those insights will inform the main findings of the work, presented as the answers to the research question.

Chapter Seven will serve as the theoretical contribution of this work, followed by reflections on limitations, possible future directions and recommendations.

Chapter Eight will conclude this thesis with general remarks based on the content of the preceding chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following chapter will look with more attention to detail at the body of literature that could inform further production of knowledge regarding St. James Town as a migratory destination.

First, the urban theory will be revisited with a particular focus on Lefebvrian production of space, its subsequent iterations in the form of planetary urbanization, its criticisms and a possible way forward.

Secondly, this chapter will analyse the postcolonial approach as a mode of further informing urban studies and enriching the possibly mechanistic space production tropes. With deep insight into legacies of colonialism, still being at play and impacting policies and border regime, postcolonialism provides potential explanations to the spaces of difference that planetary urbanization might not have the tools to notice.

Finally, an overview of immigrant neighbourhoods in Canadian cities will be provided, scrutinizing its role in the lives of immigrants themselves but also the city at large.

The Theory of Planetary Urbanization as a Promising Macro Framework of Analysis Which Needs Further Scrutiny

Introduction

This section aims at introducing and critically assessing the theory of planetary urbanization, positioning it within a larger framework of urban theory. To achieve this in a concise way, first a historical overview of urban theory will be presented to provide the context for further deliberations. Next, Lefebvre's concept of urban society will be discussed, focusing on its profound impact on Brenner's and Schmid's concepts. After outlining the main premises of the

planetary urbanization, its criticisms will be pointed out and commented on. This chapter will conclude by arguing that despite its limitations and the unlikelihood of becoming a dominant concept of urban epistemology, planetary urbanization - or at least its elements - can still serve as useful frameworks for empirical research, if contextualized skillfully.

Urban Theory: Origins and Discourses

Situating planetary urbanization within the larger framework of urban theory requires an overview of this diverse field. In this work, the Chicago school of urban studies is taken as a starting point of the development of contemporary urban theory (Soja, 2000; Vertovec, 2007; Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Keil, 2018) since it invested as much in sociology as in planning, drew directly from the achievements of European natural sciences and “creative spatial imagination” of European theorists, adding to it an American blend of liberal reformism, professional managerialism, and pragmatic idealism (Soja, 2000, p.85). Focusing on the microspatial organization of a city, the Chicago school created models of urban ecology, with crucial socio-spatial descriptions of immigrants and minorities’ settlements, comparatively looking at processes of assimilation, segregation, and socio-economic change (Vertovec, 2007). The Chicago school’s attempt at developing and sustaining a spatial theorization of a city (Soja, 2000) focused on a centralized conceptualization of the urban morphology, as opposed with later, de-centralized model conceived by the Los Angeles school of urban studies (Dear and Dahmann, 2011; Scott and Soja, 1996; Soja, 1996, Keil, 2018).

The urban crisis of the 1960s and the crisis of modernity in general (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]; Soja, 2000) brought the necessity to reformulate how urban spaces were understood and envisioned. Contesting but not eliminating the former search for “regularity and order” (Soja, 2000), new approaches evolved around the dynamics of industrial capitalist space, influenced by Marxism

and reformulated by such European thinkers as Lefebvre, Touraine and Althusser, establishing a new paradigm of looking into agglomerations, into mass production and mass consumption and traits established by capitalist socio-economic relationships in the everyday experience of people. Within the overarching capitalist mode of production at the core of the critique, no city remained dominant, with authors' ambitions reaching out to a more general theory –exemplified by Lefebvre's concept of urban society and the potentiality of the urban revolution (2003). Although profoundly influential, this Marxist intervention and its subsequent contribution to the spatial turn (Sheller, 2017) became the target of critique themselves, with Castells and Harvey calling Lefebvre out for “spatial fetishism” (Elden, 2004). What is important to highlight is Harvey's insight into the logic and power of capital, into how capitalism creates urban space to facilitate the accumulation processes (Harvey, 1978, 2015; Soja, 2000). Castells focused on the processes of social reproduction, performing the interests of particular social groups while deploying the power of the state (Soja, 2000). He brought to the fore the dynamics and importance of urban social movements (Castells, 1977, 1985; Roy, 2016).

The aforementioned “spatial turn”, hard to conceive without Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]), but also without the works of Doreen Massey (1984, 1991, 1994), brought more interdisciplinary approach, further blending urban thought with geography and sociology, and advancing a relational analysis of space - ‘the product of interrelations’ and ‘always under construction’ (Massey, 2005, p.9). Further contributions came from both, Castells (1996) and Harvey (1993), but also many other scholars, just to mention Soja (1996, 2000) or Sassen (1991). Building on the preceding idea of world cities (as defined by Freedman, 1982), Sassen (1991) promoted the concept of global cities to explain the relationships between international labour flows and economically dynamic, expansive cities of the North (Sassen, 1991;

Samers & Collyer, 2016), recognizing the globalization perspective and its impact on the socio-metabolic (to borrow a phrase from Brenner and Schmid, 2015) urban processes. From *world* to *global*, urban scholars soon coined the term *megacities* – “a discontinuous constellations of spatial fragments, functional pieces, and social segments” (Castells, 1996, p.407), larger and more structurally complex than their predecessors, often functioning without clearly delineated spatial boundaries of their socio-economic infrastructures (Soja, 2000, p.235).

The trend of “city-ism” becoming the dominating point of analysis coincided with the fact that in 1990, most of the American population lived in the million-or-more metropolises (p.237) and with the popular recognition that the majority of humankind, for the first time in history, also inhabited spaces defined as urban – bringing the Urban Age into the discourse (Ruddick et al., 2018). Yet, that realization also led to a plethora of alarmist claims, warning against the “planet of slums” (Davis, 2006), or authors such as Hall and Pfeiffer (2000) envisioning that “some cities of the developed world are invaded by the developing world” (p. 129).

That brings this overview to a more recent, postcolonial intervention. Roy (2005) provides a powerful critique of such alarmist claims, pointing to the shortcomings of the North-centred perspective. In a similar vein, Robinson (2002, p. 547–548) comments on the global cities being the “centres of command”, “models” for the rest of the world) with megacities perpetually described as “big, but not powerful” (p.540). She calls for a more nuanced approach, overcoming the implicit assumption of the First World “models” and the Third World “problems” (Roy, 2005).

Basu (2020) points out that postcolonial urbanists acknowledged the dangers of simply Eurocentric (and American-centric, for that matter) epistemology, offering a variety of alternatives and advancements. Roy’s (2005, 2009) conceptualizations of informality create new

openings of seeing it as a mode of space production, “defined by a territorial logic of deregulation” (Roy, 2009, p.8), not outside of state engagement but often produced by it and within it (p.148). Robinson introduces the concept of ordinary cities, calls for investigating urban processes away from the traditional centres of power (Robinson, 2013, Basu, 2020) and notices that Western academia’s emphasis on neoliberalism, applicable to Europe or North America, might lead to “misapplication” in the variety of the Global South contexts (Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Similarly, Parnell and Pieterse (2015), suggest “translational research” as a way of incorporating new theories and methodologies from the South: “Either Africa must be ignored or the theory, method and data of urban studies must change” (2015, p.241).

Henri Lefebvre: Envisioning the Urban Society

This overview of the developments in urban theory provides a sketch of the epistemic landscape into which Brenner and Schmid deploy their theory of planetary urbanization (Brenner and Schmid, 2015; Schmid, 2018). Being perfectly aware of the state of the debate in such a diverse, complex and often contradictory field as urban studies, these authors pointed out to those complexities as the *raison d’être* of a more unified approach. Quite skillfully, they acknowledge both, the advancements of Urban Age framework as well as the critical contribution of postcolonialism. Still, their theory itself stems from a particular line of thought – and to fully grasp the rationale of planetary urbanization, this chapter needs to shed some light on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of the urban.

In *Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre famously claims the complete urbanization of the society, with the urban society emerging from that process (2003, p.1). Merrifield sees that statement as partially ironic but points out that Lefebvre’s strong statement is followed by the observation that complete urbanization is virtual today but would be real tomorrow (2015). Hence, Lefebvre does

not see urbanization and “the urban” as a simple opposition to the rural. He claims that a false dichotomy and argues that “the urban” should be read as the abbreviation of “the urban society”, transcending the industrial one. The author takes this claim even further, arguing that urbanization is not a “highly developed manifestation of industrialization, but (...) industrialization has been a special sort of urbanization all along” (Merrifield, 2015, p.166). Such logic brings the urban to existence as not a material fact, but rather a process, an invisible substance. Spatial elements traditionally associated with urbanism, such as built environment, population densities, agglomeration, transportation and communication infrastructures – they are all manifestations of the urban, attributes that make it visible and known (Merrifield, 2015).

Such a conceptualization of the urban introduces unique dynamics to the urban substance – its fabric which facilitates assemblage, simultaneity, exchange and encounter (Lefebvre, 2003). In a stark opposition to it, there is separation and segregation, which for Lefebvre are enemies of the urban society, breaking “the unifying power of urban form” (Merrifield, 2015, p.171). Separation isolates information, claims Lefebvre, producing formlessness (2003, p.133).

It is crucial to grasp the distinction between separation and difference. The latter is constitutive, vital for the urban society while separation only “caricatures” difference. Difference is crucial because it establishes relationships that can later be conceived and perceived, inserted into two-dimensional space. In a stark opposition, separation constitutes a “totalitarian order”, destroys complexity (p.133). These two elements matter because they provide tension between concepts of space, with the abstract space trending towards homogeneity (exemplified by the quantitative, geometrical, and logical) and the heterogeneity of experience accentuating difference (Elden, 2004, p.147).

Intertwined in that relationship the urban can be found not as an accomplished reality, but as “a horizon, an illuminating virtuality” (Lefebvre, 2003, p.16-17). The manifestations of the urban operate through the continuous process of spatial and functional implosion and explosion, with “tremendous concentration” (of people, activity, wealth and objects) signifying the former and the projection of “disjunct urban fragments exploding into space” (suburbs, tourism, peripheries) establishing the latter (2003, p.14).

This novel framework alone, equally subversive and obscure, has served as input for detailed analysis (Elden, 2004; Schmid, 2008). However, to safely bring it back to planetary urbanization, this chapter needs to briefly mention yet another of Lefebvre’s concepts, namely the production of space (1991). Although not explicitly mentioned by Brenner and Schmid in their call for a new epistemology of the urban (2015), production of space hinges upon a trialectic process of the conceived, perceived and lived space influencing and establishing each other. This “thinking in threes” is the foundation of the French philosopher’s ontology, “a general principle applied by Lefebvre to very different fields” (Schmid, 2008, p.34). Thus, it does not come as a surprise that Brenner and Schmid have applied the same three-elements structure to their conceptualization of planetary urbanization.

Brenner and Schmid: Urban Society Goes Planetary

According to Brenner & Schmid, (2015), a significant urban restructuring has been taking place on a global scale since 1980s, drawing their rationale from the framework of the Urban Age.

They notice three distinct trends: the emergence of new geographies of uneven spatial development, the “polymorphic, variegated and multiscalar” nature of the urban process itself (p.152) and subsequent mutations of the regulatory geographies of capitalism, by which they mean “consolidating national states and nationally coordinated imperial systems” (p.153).

Drawing from such an analysis, the authors Brenner & Schmid (2015) diagnose a deep crisis of urban studies stemming from what they call the awareness of fundamental uncertainties of the urban categories and the unfeasibility of the existing tools to describe them. Here, they allude to the dominant discourse of “city-ness” – the tendency to treat ‘the city’ as the privileged terrain for urban research (p.162). They accuse this “city-ness” of being totalizing and universalizing: proliferating the triumphalist, technoscientific narratives (for instance, smart cities) and neo-positivist instincts in current debates, while at the same time allowing the simplistic and essentializing views on megacities and the “planet of slums” (Davis, 2006). On the other hand, they acknowledge the “reflexive” approaches which do not assume the existence of the subject (“knower”) and the object (p.159) but recognize their mutual interconnectedness – particularly highlighting the critical contribution of the postcolonial urbanism (Basu, 2020) juxtaposed with the Western-centric approaches immersed in the Chicago and Los Angeles schools of urban studies. Nevertheless, they approach postcolonial frameworks with criticisms, seeing them as situated always in an opposition to the North on the one hand, and fortifying themselves behind “contextual specificity” on the other.

Eventually, Brenner and Schmid pose a question: “Through what categories, methods and cartographies should urban life be understood?” (2015, p.151). And leaving no doubt about whether the question was rhetorical, they make seven elaborate claims. The first two establish that urbanization is a theoretical category - not an empirical object - and that the urban is a process, not a bounded spatial unit, which strongly resonates with Lefebvre’s framework. Later, they identify a triad of *concentrated*, *extended*, and *differential* urbanization and emphasize that the process itself has become planetary (which, as a matter of fact, is itself a quote from

Lefebvre, 2003, p.113) and multidimensional, with urban being a collective project of appropriation and contestation of the urbanization process.

Pivotal to the theory, the “moments” of urbanization seem to be, again, not-so-distant echoes of Lefebvre’s modes of space production. Concentrated urbanization focuses on spatial clustering of people, production and infrastructure, on agglomeration, simultaneity and assemblage.

Extended “moment” provides the former with the uneven “thickening” of the urban fabric by activating and transforming territories and landscapes in service of the socio-metabolic processes of the urban society. Differential urbanization is the one in which the socio-spatial configurations of urbanization are being “creatively destroyed” – established, rendered obsolete and superseded in the relentless forward motion of the accumulation process (p.166-168).

The interplay of those three mutually constitutive elements seems pivotal for the effort to possibly operationalize the planetary processes, but the authors decide to end on a softer note, arguing that the contestation potential of the urban process makes is intrinsically collective and open-ended, “produced through collective action, negotiation, imagination, experimentation and struggle” (p.178).

Planetary Criticisms: No Space for Difference

Despite these assurances, planetary urbanization faced backlash, particularly vocal in the critical urban scholarship (Roy, 2016; Ruddick et al. 2018; Derickson, 2018; Oswin, 2018).

Ruddick and her co-authors (2018) acknowledge Brenner and Schmid’s effort of summarizing and pointing out to the limits of the existing theory. Nevertheless, starting from the last thesis of new epistemology of the urban, they see the room for contestation and struggle as too constrained, with their role limited precisely to the very idea of the urban, confined by it. In their reading, it stems from the nature of the concept of “urbanization with no outside” itself – the core

assumption of both Lefebvre and Brenner and Schmid. What speaks to that is the follow up critique of the emphasis on “process over form” and of the sole focus on the capitalist project in reshaping social processes.

A similar argument is raised by Natalie Oswin (2018) who comments that: “Yes, capitalism is everywhere. But so is everything else.” (p.544) Writing from queer perspective, she adds that “there are outsides – constitutive ones – all over the place. For these reasons, queerness cannot be ‘pinned down.’” (p.544). Oswin refuses to do the translatory work of explaining the insights of queer theory for the audience of urban studies. What she calls a messy web of the material and the symbolic does not seem to be acknowledged, or even noticed by Brenner and Schmid, whose critical standpoint is still embedded in dominant frameworks and subjectivities.

Ananya Roy also refuses to engage in the scholarship of “urbanization of everything” (2016, p.813). Drawing from the work of Chantal Mouffe, she advocates for an “constitutive outside” to the urban, particularly for the rural form. She acknowledges that rural is not in any way privileged in relationship to other possible “outsides”, but her engagement in the context of the spatialities of India makes the rural context most salient for her. She suggests to “pinpoint the conjunctures at which the urban is made and unmade, often in a highly uneven fashion across national and global territories” (p.814). As such, she keeps the possibility of planetary insights open, but her stance regarding the ontological outside to urbanization is adamant.

Another argument made by Sue Ruddick et al. (2018) is that although Lefebvre’s insights are highly relevant, their reading of them is different than Brenner’s and Schmid’s. The critics underscore the importance of social ontology and the constitutive role of subjects, subjectivity, and struggle (p.390). Emphasizing the role of subjects even further, they mention the role of subject-production changing, with “austerity urbanism” and withdrawal of larger structures of

support by institutional actors across different global contexts. Moreover, they argue that the ontological struggles around the everyday are absent in Brenner's and Schmid's perspective and although such struggles are often connected to urban processes, they are not wholly subsumed by them (p.390). The current proposal of Brenner and Schmid, critics claim, leaves out the whole range of crucial insights, most notably the anti-racist, feminist, queer and postcolonial frameworks. Ruddick and colleagues conclude by arguing that the proponents of planetary urbanization overemphasize the change in urban morphology with the simultaneous occlusion of socio-spatial structures while insisting on relegating the struggle to the local level where it can neither gain potential nor aspirations to "world-making" politics. Moreover, Brenner and Schmid seem to overdetermine ontological struggle through epistemological framing which leads Ruddick and colleagues to point out that it is messy and generative ontological struggles that lead to the emergence of new ways of seeing and being (p.392).

Lastly, Derrickson (2018) calls the planetary urbanization framework – "generalized urbanization" and juxtaposes it with counter-topographies of Katz (2001) and a wide range of works by feminist and postcolonial scholars. She compares the authors' ambitions to becoming "masters of universe", with power to define and explain the world in its totality. This last argument becomes a particularly sad coda for Brenner's and Schmid's effort to write a monumental symphony of the urban – the one that opened up precisely with an attempt to subvert the totalizing concept of "the city". Nevertheless, Derrickson quite accurately addresses the elephant in the (urban) room – the fact that the framework of the completely urbanized society is "shockingly reliant on the work of European male thinkers" (2018, p.560).

Ways Forward: Scaling Ambitions Down

Planetary urbanization have managed not only to spark opposition but also some outright hostility. Indeed, it is quite troubling that a theory of that scope, founded on an in-depth analysis and understanding of Lefebvre's work, seems to fall short when it comes to conveying the spirit of his concept – the adamant insistence on difference, that which “do not come from space as such but from that which settles there, that which is assembled and confronted by and in the urban reality. Contrasts, oppositions, superpositions, and juxtapositions replace separation” (Lefebvre, 2003, p.125). This struggle between the totalizing, homogenizing and the unique, particular, the not-aligned, is one of the focal points of the urban society but also of space itself. Furthermore, it is epistemologically sound: “Difference is informing and informed.” (p.133).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that planetary urbanization can still be partially useful, it can be effectively utilized. For instance, Keil (2018) skillfully employs the notion of extended urbanization for the operationalization of the suburbanization tendencies on a global scale, seeing it as a manifestation of Lefebvre's idea of urban explosion (2003). Keil positions himself in the debate, aligning with the pleas for difference. However, putting the theoretical shortcomings aside, he provides a comparative overview of the processes of suburbanization and comes to an interesting conclusion that “much of the peripheral growth (...) cannot be linked back directly to the centre as the driving force but must instead be seen as developing a certain dynamic of its own” (2018, p.496). Convincingly arguing that sameness *here* produces difference *there*, he manages to establish a conceptual link relying on extended urbanization.

Similarly, Streule and co-authors (2020) engage the planetary urbanization framework in the popular urbanization discourses in the Global South in their comparative work outlining neighbourhood forming processes across different sites. They use the theoretical root based on

the production of space to develop a “multidimensional understanding of urbanization that highlights how social space is produced through material interaction, territorial regulation, and everyday experience” (p.5). They specifically evoke the framework of Brenner and Schmid aiming at contributing to the “development of an enriched vocabulary of urbanization” (p.4) within the planetary epistemology.

Roy herself (2016), usually evoked by the critics and not the proponents of the theory, acknowledges that even if academics agreed on the “urbanization of everything”, the processes “through which the urban is made, lived, and contested” (p.816) would still have to be empirically and analytically explained. In other words, the work which needs to be done remains the same - which leads Roy to a realization that perhaps only the empirical paths seem different between her and Brenner and Schmid.

If partially used and instrumentally utilized planetary urbanization might keep (*gain?*) relevance, perhaps its main shortcoming is its ambition and almost monumental narrative in the first place. After all, concepts of urban expansion, similarly drawing on Lefebvre’s work, appeared in social science before, without causing so much backlash. For instance, back in 1990, Chambers (2013 [1990]) noticed that “the contemporary western metropolis tends toward drawing “elsewhere” into its own symbolic zone” (p.93), explicitly mentioning suburbia and countryside, linked by networks and infrastructures of communication and mass media. In such metropolis, he argues, one cannot define “its extremes, its borders, confines, limits” anymore.

Soja relies on the idea of implosions/explosions when noticing that “*cityspace* involves a much larger and more complex configuration [that the non-urban, suburban, rural], a specific geography that, by its very definition, tends to be dynamic and expansive in its territorial

domain. It will always contain inhabited or, for that matter, uninhabited or wilderness areas that do not look urban in any conventional way, but nonetheless are urbanized” (2000, p.16).

Conclusion: Where Philosophy Ends and Geography Starts

This chapter aimed at positioning planetary urbanization within the scope of the contemporary urban theory. By providing the historical foundations and an overview of Lefebvre’s ontology of space and the urban society, it outlined the complex field of study in which planetary urbanization’s ambitions met considerable epistemological resistance and possibly dead ends. However, as argued in this work, concepts defined by Brenner and Schmid can still bring valuable insight into both, empirical research, and theory development – if agreed that even significant epistemic and conceptual occlusions are not always necessary to address at all times and that it is the context that defines that necessity.

Nevertheless, the question remains: would a non-encompassing, partial and arbitrarily used planetary urbanization still be the same concept? And then, if the most compelling parts of the planetary concept are its single elements such as implosion/explosion, complex fabric of the urban society or the trialectic approach to reality, why not letting Brenner and Schmid off the hook and simply re-reading Lefebvre?

Indeed, there is something fascinating about Lefebvre’s ability to get away with open-ended concepts, with the narrative quickly shifting from the precise to the abstract, from the everyday to the symbolic. Castells noticed that when he wrote: “the ideas of Lefebvre were so powerful that, in spite of the fact that he had not the slightest idea about the real world - not at all (...), he had a genius for intuiting what was really happening. Almost like an artist” (in Elden, 2004, p.142).

Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to romanticise Lefebvre and juxtapose him with Brenner and Schmid. Lefebvre wrote himself: “Only the philosopher, and the sociologist informed by the dialectic, and maybe the novelist, manage to join together the lived and the real, formal structure and content” (p.113). Perhaps he was too optimistic in creating the opening for the figure of the social scientist. If there is any mismatch between the task of keeping grand ideas overarching but not totalizing and the author’s fit for the task, it might not be the one between Lefebvre and the Brenner-Schmid duet, but between the philosopher and the practitioner.

Postcolonialism as a Framework for Breaking through the Limitations of Contemporary Urban Studies

Introduction

Geography as a discipline came to life as a tool of colonialism, serving the interests of the dominant powers and discourses, promoting a particular world view and simultaneously erasing and nullifying others (Blomley, 2004; Coulthard, 2014; Toews, 2018; Smith, 2021). Its scientific aspirations and the subsequent “flurry of geographic writing” (Norton & Mercier, 2016, p.11) were conflated with the European expansion, from so-called “exploration” era to the maturity of colonial regimes. It does not come as a surprise that the institutionalization of the discipline took place in the second part of the 19th century, exactly when colonialism was in its prime, with established settler colonialism on the one hand, and scramble for Africa on the other hand, giving geographic tools strategic importance, with maps, surveys, cadastral grids but also re-naming practices and “research” (Coulthard, 2014; Smith, 2021) aimed at reconfirming the *terra nullius* framework (Toews, 2018; Sharma, 2020). In other words, by creating a totally new overview of the land using the tools of science, geography was complicit in erasing former ways of knowing, understanding and giving meaning to space.

In other words, “certain spatial metaphors are equally geographic and strategic, which is only natural since geography grew up in the shadow of the military” (Foucault, 1980, p.69). However, it was not only about conquest and domination but also about the broader ontology of modernity (McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Isin, 2007, 2012; Bauman, 2013) becoming a self-perpetuating way of thinking about the world, about governance and control, description and categorization, conflating power and knowledge to the point of no distinction (Foucault, 1980).

Originating in the second half of the 20th century, postcolonialism brought critical insights into these relationships, resulting in alternative narratives, discourses and contestations with a plethora of different stances on the framework of modernity itself – where “the modern state, concept of sovereignty, and nation-making have been inherently understood as spatial products of colonial powers” (Basu, 2020, p.285). Even with some of the early postcolonial work conceived within Marxist tradition (Fanon, 2007 [1963]; Rodney, 2018 [1972]) which is by itself immersed in modernity (Jackson, 2017), subsequent decades brought criticisms to those, particularly the ethos of developmentalism (Valenzuela & Valenzuela, 1978; Frank, 1986; Hickel, 2017), not only deciphering the colonial legacies at the core of modernist assumptions (Basu, 2020), including relationships with land, nature, modes of governance and science itself (Blomley, 2004; Cowen, 2020), but also calling to overcome these legacies (Coulthard, 2014; Shiva, 2016; Smith, 2021).

In other words, the stakes are high: rich, diverse and nuanced body of academic postcolonial frameworks make claims not only to the right to describe the world, which is the *raison d'être* of academia in general, but also to *how* to describe it (Smith, 2021).

To delineate the intertwined nature of postcolonialism and contemporary geographic frameworks, this chapter will first outline the conceptual boundaries of postcolonialism and settler colonialism. Because of the limited scope of this work, only some early postcolonial influences would be described, focusing on the works of Edward Said (1979, 2012) and Franz Fanon (2007, 2008). Then, examples of postcolonial critique in geography will be outlined to highlight the reciprocal relationship between the discipline and its constructive critique, exemplified by contributions to race theory, feminist theory, urbanization discourses and to conceptualizations of power and space, along with the claims to geographic methodologies.

How “Post” is Postcolonialism?

There has been a debate about the essence of postcolonialism itself, particularly its relationship with notions such as “decolonization” or “neo-colonialism”. Indeed, some argue that the “post” prefix does not recognize that colonialism is not necessarily a structure of the past, with socio-political dependencies and economic violence still unresolved across many spaces in the world (Sharma, 2020; Walia, 2021), pointing out to the “fantastic optimism” of the “post-” in “postcoloniality” (Jacobs, 1996, p.24; Yeoh, 2003).

Sharma (2020) speaks to that confusion and argues that even achieving “decolonization” itself does not solve the challenges faced by postcolonialism. She gives the concept a double meaning – first, more functionally, as the Postcolonial New World Order, a form of ruling that substitutes demands for decolonization with demands for national sovereignty (p.15), rearticulating liberation dreams as national dreams “so that they never materialize” (p.14). The second meaning relates to the “scholarship that maps the connections forged by imperialism(s) across space and time, exposes its contemporary legacies, and politicizes the postcolonial condition extant in supposedly independent nation-states” (p.13). Focusing on the second meaning, this work will refer to postcolonialism as the “alternative narrative” to the story of capitalism as defined by European modernity (Yeoh, 2003) – not as a totalizing discourse, but as a “highly mobile, contestatory and still developing arena” (p.370) within academic framework itself. Postcolonial literature, claims Blomley (2004), deals with the impact of colonialism on both, the cultures of the colonizers and the colonized, its constitutive character for those cultures and its reproduction in present dimensions.

Early Postcolonial Thought and Its Impact on Geography

When the impact of colonization on culture is discussed, what comes to mind is the profound contribution of Edward Said (1979, 2012), particularly through his framework of Orientalism (1979). Said analyses in detail how Orientalism functions in media, travel, tourism, different dimensions of visual arts, and academia itself, but his most in-depth analysis is the one concerned with literature. Said claims that the self-described “West” created the simplistic and static idea of “the East”, first in a dialectic relationship to so called “Orient” - East Asia originally, but also South Asia, Middle East, often North Africa, and - very contextually - almost every part of the world (2012) onto which Europe (and its settler satellites) decided to impose its political, military, economic or cultural presence. This relationship always puts non-Western regions, cultures and peoples into a status of forced homogeneity, backwardness and subordination, but often also barbarity, lack of sophistication and quasi-animalistic features. Such framework hinges upon simple dichotomies where “the West” – with self-proclaimed achievements of Enlightenment and modernity – is always perceived as better: rational, developed, superior, flexible, modern and sophisticated, with the respective “other” always being the opposite to it. The legacy of Orientalism is impossible to overstate. It is not only a combination of racial, patriarchal, and imperialist stereotypes and prejudices but also a narrative in which Orientalist men are passive bystanders and women are either docile and very traditional or oversexualized and demonic objects. The narrative results in the depiction of the Orient – but as a matter of fact every chosen “other” (van Houtum, 2002), usually originating in the Global South – as playing merely a supportive role in global and local political processes, and even in their own existence.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (2012) Said broadens the scope of analysis, dissecting the relationships of the British and French colonialism with the Orient (adding to it the American hegemony) but also their engagement with the African continent, providing detailed analyses of the works of Conrad, Kipling, Austen, Defoe, Verdi or Flaubert. He juxtaposes these Europeans with creators from the former colonies: Chinua Achebe, Pablo Neruda, V.S. Naipaul or Salman Rushdie. “Without significant exception the universalizing discourses of modern Europe and the United States assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world.”, Said claims (2012, p.56). Assumed silence is one of the features of the colonial dialectics with essentializing tendencies being another one, resembling the words of Salman Rushdie from *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) about so-called “Commonwealth literature”: “Our differences were so much more significant than our similarities, that it was impossible to say what [it] might conceivably mean” (p.62).

An entirely different, perhaps less structured but more practice-oriented approach came from Franz Fanon, whose two famous works evolve around first, the experience and the double consciousness of a Black colonized individual against the backdrop of racial-colonial oppression (2008) and later, around the resistance to that oppression on a national scale (2007 [1963]).

Although distinct in method and practice, Fanon’s insight resembles the experience of Orientalism as defined by Said. Fanon writes: “It is the [colonial] settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence” (2008, p.32), highlighting the power of coloniality to shape the dominant discourse.

Even if Fanon was not an academic *per se*, his work was vital for generations of authors who used it as a point of reference. What is often borrowed from Fanon is the recognition of the psychological damage brought upon the colonized by the colonizer through the imposed sense of

inferiority, perpetuated by education, cultural and religious institutions over centuries, leading to grave cultural loss and profound psychological consequences (Fanon, 2008; Coulthard, 2014; Rodney, 2018).

The contribution of Fanon's work can be also found in his passionate engagement with the idea of nation-states and the "pitfalls" of national identity (2007). While Fanon recognized the importance of sovereignty and liberation from direct colonial structure, even highlighting the transformative potential of violence, he clearly saw that as means to an end but not the final goal – which would be the transformation of the colonized society, a self-affirmative realization of the full potential of independence, interestingly enough seen from Marxist perspective as overcoming the hegemony of the national ruling class, "raised by" colonial powers and still looking up to them.

The echoes of that work, particularly the recognition of the shortcomings of the post-independence, nation-state narratives, can be seen in groundbreaking works of Nandita Sharma (2018, 2020) where she argues that the nation-state promises where impossible to fulfill the way they were formulated by the independence movements – hinged on ideas of separated, bordered states, restricted mobility and exclusive citizenship, leading to further exploitation by a truly internationalized and mobile capital. The bleak prophecy which Fanon, in his time, saw as the impossibility of solidarity between classes, Sharma finds in the impossibility of achieving international solidarity in the border-defined reality – which leads to galvanizing social injustices (Walia, 2021) and economic injustices (Hickel, 2017) on a global scale.

Others, for instance Coulthard (2014), recognize Fanon's contribution to the understanding of colonial rule and its evolution from "a more-or-less unconcealed structure of domination" (p.15-16) to a mode of governmentality (Foucault, 1991), based on limited sets of freedoms, which are

enforced when the perpetuation of the colonial structure cannot be upheld by force alone. Such structures operate by creating “colonial subjects”, by “the production of the specific modes of colonial thought, desire, and behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination” (Coulthard, 2014, p.16).

Yet again, Marxist and structural interpretations often obscure the agency of individual actors and even communities (de Haas, 2021). Here, the contribution of Homi Bhabha cannot be overlooked, exploring “nuanced and hybrid complexities of colonial power as well as the coupling of colonial and anticolonial discourses to examine how cultural interactions and transgressions produce hybridization, anticolonial subjectivities, and vernacular relational spaces” (Basu, 2020, p.284).

This recognition of historical advancements of colonial power can serve as an introduction of settler colonialism - a mode of coloniality on one, but also a framework of academic reference which describes the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers, based on the colonizer’s goal to introduce settler population to the conquered territory. That process requires much more than just force, usually hinges on cultural and socio-political erasure of the existing populations (Coulthard, 2014), introduction of hegemonic tools of governance (religion, education, police, military; see Rodney, 2018) and capitalist-oriented infrastructure of modernity. What is understood by that is the concept of private property, the cadastral grid and arbitrary imposition of plots of land, railroad, state-created cities and towns along with laws privileging the accumulation of capital by the settlers, acquired through labor and land extraction from the indigenous, the indentured and/or the enslaved populations (Blomley, 2004; Toews, 2018; Cowen, 2020; Sharma, 2020).

The system that promotes capitalist economic relations structured by exploitation, founded on and justified by racist worldview can be called racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015; Toews, 2018). Conceptualizing settler colonialism as a political and territorial logic and racial capitalism as its economic *modus operandi* is one of the profound contributions of postcolonial theory to identifying and restructuring the frameworks of contemporary geography, built on and often still serving the settler colonial project.

Settler colonialism's relationship with postcolonialism is similar to the one postcolonialism shares with decolonialization. In other words, settler colonialism can be easily operationalized not as the structure of the past, but the current framework of governmentality in spaces such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa. Postcolonialism engages with settler colonialism through the critical analysis of its relationship with the Indigenous populations (Coulter, 2014; Manuel & Derrickson, 2017; Toews, 2018; Talaga, 2020; Smith, 2021), other oppressed groups (Mensah, 2002; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; McKittrick, 2011; Lugones, 2013; Shabazz, 2015), the understanding of the international labor extraction through border and immigration regimes (Andersson, 2014; Sharma, 2018, 2020; Walia, 2021) or describing the inequalities and its infrastructures within the settler nation-states, particularly in its oppressive and revanchist urban spaces (Blomley, 2004; Burley, 2013; Jackson, 2017; Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021).

Postcolonial Geography Writes Back: Making Space for Difference

Postcolonialism finds its strength in reversing the causality of the dominant narratives and by defining the seemingly paradoxical underlying conditioning of injustices. For instance, it is not the shortcomings of the colonized but the cultural erasure of the colonizers to be looked at (Rodney, 2018). Not the lack of capitalist values but the lack of access to ownership and land

(Burley, 2013). Not the porousness of the borders but the growing rigidity of the border regimes in the first place (Sharma, 2020; Walia, 2021). Not too little development but too much dependency (Frank, 1986; Valenzuela & Valenzuela, 1978) and so on.

However, while considering that potential of postcolonialism to subvert existing narratives, thus far this chapter have focused mainly on the relation between geography and the colonial structures essentializing populations (as described by Said) or introducing governmentality techniques which impede their socio-economic well-being and political freedoms.

Still, it has not yet recognized the importance of postcolonial discourses in highlighting difference: its skillful application of nuance, emphasizing the asymmetries of oppression and the ability to develop new concepts within the language of geography. That can be, in fact, seen as one of the main contributions of geographers (understood very broadly) back to postcolonial and settler colonial discourses.

Ranu Basu (2020) claims that “postcolonial geographers have examined how (...) historical and structural inequities between north and south relations of formerly colonizing and colonized nations are normalized through (...) spatial relations” (p.285). That can be observed in spaces of settler colonialism, the urbanisms of the Global South as well as in the dialectics between them.

Rashad Shabazz (2015) conceptualizes how the spaces of Black masculinity in Chicago are subjected to “techniques and technologies of prison punishment—policing, containment, surveillance and the establishment of territory, the creation of frontiers” (p.2) which he describes as the acts of “prizonizing the landscape”. Asking a profound question: “What happens when people are raised in environments built to contain them?” (p.3), he provides examples of the Black Belt of Chicago with rules of separation for Blacks and one-sided transgression possible

only for Whites looking for entertainment in Black districts. On a different scale, Shabazz theorizes the confining spaces of kitchenettes and their penalizing role for the Black immigrants from the south of the States, especially through their impact on Black masculinity. Building on Foucauldian framework of discipline and punishment (1975), the author describes high-rise projects as a continuation of penalizing qualities with constant, normalized surveillance and alienation of Le Corbusier-inspired architecture being a consequence of carceral mindset of institutions of modernity, always targeted against non-dominant groups within the society. “Who we are as subjects—the kind of people we are—is greatly influenced by our geographies. Language, personal habits, the kinds of foods we eat, the diseases we may become susceptible to, our sexual practices, our understanding of family, and our cultural conventions are products of the spaces we live in” (2015, p.46).

Shabazz moves on to describing the spatialities of prisons and how carceral tendencies of American state serve to contain Blackness. In a very similar way, McKittrick and Woods (2007) describe prisons as legacies of plantations, conceptualizing “black geographies” – an umbrella term for places and spaces that “reference and recuperate the historical struggles Black people have over location” (Shabazz, 2015, p.4-5).

In their influential work, McKittrick and Woods move between scales and timeframes, evoking the post-Katrina New Orleans, Underground Railroad and the oceanic experiences of the middle passage in order to complicate the usual corporeal, economic-historical or metaphorical approaches, calling for “an interdisciplinary understanding of space and place-making that enmeshes, rather than separates, different theoretical trajectories and spatial concerns” (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p.7).

In a further contribution to postcolonial geography and building on the example of plantations and prisons, McKittrick (2011) complicates urban spaces as examples of confining and restricting Black population, mentioning “urbicide” as the spatial practice of oppressing Black presence – stressing however, that such actions “shape, but do not wholly define, black worlds” (p.947). In a similar manner, Safransky describes the political ecology of Detroit (2017) based on Black dispossession while AbduMaliq Simone underscores that “black bodies often served as the raw materials for generating the new urbanisms of the North” (2016, p.212).

Postcolonial urbanists contributed greatly to exploring how urban spaces facilitate belonging and identity formulation in migratory contexts (Basu, 2006; Basu and Fiedler, 2017) and how knowledge and power are intertwined in both settler-colonial settings (Blomley, 2004; Safransky, 2017; Jackson, 2017) and in the Global South, highlighting the limits and dangers of solely relying on Eurocentric (and North American too, for that matter) urban frameworks, concepts and points of reference (Parnell & Robinson, 2012; Robinson, 2013), pointing out that significant urban transformations are underway in the South (Roy & Robinson, 2016).

Arguing for the view from the South and epistemological opening for urbanizations fueled and governed by processes inherently different from those running Northern cities, Parnell and Pieterse (2015), illustrating their claims with urban transformation processes in South Africa, suggest “translational research” as a way of incorporating new theories and methodologies. “Either Africa must be ignored or the theory, method and data of urban studies must change” (2015, p.241). Roy and Robinson (2016) also comment on the role of postcolonial critique in urban studies, insisting on seeing (plural) “urbanisms” and theories”, emphasizing difference and multiplicity - the “proliferation of imaginative projects” and great diversity of urban experiences. That emphasis on plurality and ontological complexity, not as a threat but as safe space for

theory building and inclusive inquiry is telling, particularly compared to projects such as planetary urbanization, reflecting totalizing aspirations of European scholars (Brenner & Schmid, 2015) ready to claim urban society with no “constitutive outside” (Roy, 2016).

In the light of such discourses, the work of Roy stands out when she claims that the stake in urban debate today is “a critical urban theory attentive to historical difference” (2016, p.810).

Drawing examples from India, she claims that urban question is in fact a land question, linked to the urban fabric by regulations, registers and rights. These, subsequently, are conditioned on agrarian pasts, on settlement and commercialization of land, on processes of dispossession, power and change, possibly but not entirely hinged on the works of global capitalism. “Yes, capitalism is everywhere. But so is everything else” - she could conclude after Natalie Oswin (2018, p.544).

Another strain of contemporary geographic thought informing and shaping postcolonial narratives, partially but not entirely overlapping with urban discourses, are the feminist dimensions focusing on the role of women, subjected to “epistemic violence”

(Peake, 2015, p.219) of dual indignity: where “women can and do fall away from sight in the urban from fear, exhaustion and violence” (p.221–22). Feminist geographers call for giving voice to those who are silenced and lack power (Basu, 2020), using conceptual tools such as intersectionality framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2016) or subalternity of Gayatri Spivak (2003), particularly challenging liberal feminist points of view. In addition, postcolonial discourses point to “the exclusion and silencing of racialized women both in research and pedagogical practices” (Basu, 2020, p.286).

This speaks to the work of Maria Lugones, not a geographer but a philosopher – nevertheless, her work (2013) on racialized women and gender roles under colonial governmentality is highly

significant to human geography. Lugones focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender and sexuality in order to understand what she calls the indifference of racialized men to systemic violence experienced by women of color. By engaging critically with the works of Anibal Quijano, she described the modern colonial gender system, which uses the Eurocentric, capitalist framework of gender, the “biological dimorphism, the patriarchal and heterosexual organizations of relations” (p.2) to subjugate people of color, but particularly women of color. By examples of fluid gender roles in pre-colonial Yoruba societies or the crucial role of women in Iroquois and Cherokee nations, Lugones provides a powerful outline of how slowly, but violently gender roles became skewed against women of color in the colonial framework. Moreover, Lugones engages in a broader feminist debate arguing that the conceptual tools of mainstream feminism were historically created around whiteness thus, cannot explain the unique and diverse experiences of racialized women under colonialism.

Postcolonialism has had a profound impact on how power is conceptualized and complicated, with pointing out to systems of hegemony (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Sparke, 2003), and the role of governmentality built up on legacy of atrocities (Mbembe, 2003), creating, among others, a new geography of resource extraction (Basu, 2020). Some of the examples show how intrinsically diverse postcolonial discourse is. In fact, it is hard to imagine two conceptualizations of global power and its localized manifestations as different from each other as Hardt’s and Negri’s *Empire* (2000) and Mbembe’s essay on “necropolitics” (2003). Written in a similar historical moment, they outline reality with different tools. The authors of *Empire*, seem to be inspired by the “end of history” narrative (Fukuyama, 2006), projecting the advent of simultaneity, the intangible, ever shifting power based on the hegemony of time over space (Bauman, 2013) and globalized reality of the “smooth world” with mobility’s triumph over constraint. Contrapuntal to

such narrative, Mbembe describes a very situated form of sovereignty, deeply embedded in modernity, with biopower not only controlling function of life but its “capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (2003, p.11). Mbembe sees racism and colonial legacies as the foundations of such dictum, especially in colonial spaces where the state of exception is being upheld, “where *peace* is more likely to take on the face of a *war without end*.” (p.23).

Nandita Sharma provides a historical-geographic conceptualization of power in relation to labour and markets (2018), and to immigration and citizenship (2020), showing that coloniality evolves into more subtle forms and normalizes them spatially through frameworks of exclusive nation-states, discourses of *allochtones* and *autochtones* (see also Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010), immigration regimes and growingly rigid borders, upholding the unequal relationship between the former colonizers and the colonized. Sharma’s work brings particular attention to the settler colonial states and their reverse logic of perceived “invasion” by immigrants.

Lastly, postcolonial geographers (and other scholars) emphasize the role of academia and research itself in upholding those unequal relationships, again drawing attention to settler colonial realities. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) points out to the atrocities experienced by Indigenous peoples in settler colonial frameworks in the name of research, explaining their distrust with the academia and the uneasy role of Indigenous scholars within that positionality. She asks for more engagement with methods informed by Indigenous traditions and based on long-term engagement and reciprocity, juxtaposed with the “hit and run” research which connotes knowledge extraction practices of colonialism. Positioning Indigenous scholarship along the critical lines already brought up by feminist, Black scholars or those writing from the Global South, by emphasizing the traditions of “researching back” and “writing back” (see Ashcroft et al., 2003), she highlights the role of using Indigenous methodologies to describe

realities often unknown or misunderstood by Western academics whose “cultural homeland is somewhere else, their cultural loyalty is to some other place. Their power, their privilege, their history are all vested in their legacy as colonizers” (p.7).

Conclusion

The last argument brings this chapter back to its beginning, as a reminder of the colonial origin of geography itself. By taking the reader through the early postcolonial thought and its impact on scholarship, this section tried to outline the difficult task of critical scholars engaging with the very discourses that for centuries have claimed them unequipped or unworthy of being heard.

Although discerning between colonialism in general and the governmentality of settler colonialism in particular, this work has not focused separately on the latter, trying to show the diversity of postcolonial thought across other conceptual lines such as race, gender, urbanism, and power.

By providing examples of postcolonial scholars challenging the entrenched colonial structures with new layers of complexity, nuance and subversion, this chapter aimed at showing that this task not only bears fruit and points out to new directions of inquiry in geography based on knowledge democracy, but in its endeavour of describing the “post” world differently, it might, quite ironically, bring to light diverse, rejuvenating ideas that could render the colonial discipline of geography worth preserving.

Immigrant Neighbourhoods in Canada

Introduction

Minority enclaves in North American cities are a phenomenon as diverse as the popular opinions about them. Their characteristics vary just as much as the everyday life of ethnic minorities and immigrants vary between spatialities, just to mention the obvious difference between the US and Canada. Teixeira et al. (2012) note that spatial concentration of minorities in Canadian cities (as compared to non-urban areas) is higher than across the Southern border however, the spatial distribution of ethno-racial minorities *within* the Canadian largest cities (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal) does not seem to match the higher concentration within the American cities. The most notable example and a point of contrast with American cities are Black Canadians and Black immigrants who are not only among the least concentrated ethno-racial groups but are even less concentrated than most of the non-visible minorities in Canada (Mensah, 2010).

Also, prevalent legacies of racism and discrimination faced by minorities in housing and in the labor market seem to take different forms across American and Canadian cities. Still, “both systems waste human capital and marginalize immigrants” (Teixeira, 2012, p.xxvii), profoundly shaping the experience of the lives of minorities. Spatial distribution of ethnic and racial minorities has a great impact on these groups’ well-being and economic performance (Mensah and Firang, 2007; Mensah, 2010, Teixeira et al., 2012).

To confront negative perceptions of minority enclaves in the minds of the majority, this chapter will first focus on outlining the concepts used in academic literature, namely “enclaves” and “ethno-suburbs”. It will also dissect the complexities of using ethno-racial framework almost

interchangeably with immigration when it comes to describing spatial enclaves in North American cities.

The importance of minority enclaves for community forming and residents' sense of belonging will be outlined. Next, economic opportunities of ethno-entrepreneurship will be described, followed by noticing enclaves' potential of forming and facilitating socio-economic transnational ties. This will lead to the conclusion that despite often negative sentiments of the dominant part of the society, there is no shortage of arguments showing that ethno-racial enclaves provide tangible opportunities for the people who form them.

Delineating the Conceptual Boundaries

In this work, the term *ethno-racial* is used after Mensah (Mensah & Williams, 2017; Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021). Although both “ethnicity” and “race” are social constructs, the former indicates common cultural heritage and is, to a large extent, based on self-perception. “Race” is a construct based on legacies of colonialism and serves their perpetuation (Fanon, 2008; Rodney, 2018; Sharma, 2020) - based on physical characteristics and often imposed through the perception of others. With that important distinction in mind, it needs to be noted that in settler-colonial projects race and ethnicity often bear similar socio-spatial consequences. Talking about “ethno-racial” aspects allows to see commonalities without conflating the distinct underlying notions (Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021).

To dissect the umbrella term of “enclaves”, one needs to note that enclaves might take different forms. As defined by Mensah and Tucker-Simmons (2021), the notion indicates the spatial concentration of a certain group within an urban setting (p.90). Hence, “ethnic enclaves” mean the concentration of a certain ethnic group or groups, along with its businesses, enterprises and cultural institutions (Qadeer et al., 2010; Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021). Teixeira and co-

authors (2012) conceptualize “enclaves” as neighbourhoods that “retain cultural distinction from the larger, surrounding area” (p.334), arguing that the formation of such spatialities can be both, voluntary and involuntary. That taxonomy differs slightly from the one chosen by Mensah and Tucker-Simmons (2021), who describe enclaves as rather voluntary settlements evolving within the existing structures of the society, as opposed to “ghettos”, formed as “a result of extreme social exclusion practiced by mainstream society” (p.90).

The other crucial notion is an “ethnoburb” coined by Li (1998), particularly salient in the context of North American cities and their historical tendency to “suburbanize” (Teixeira, 2012; Keil, 2018; Toews, 2018). In its simplest definition, ethnoburbs are ethnic enclaves in the suburbs, however, they usually comprise of diverse ethnic groups, characterised of high levels of everyday interaction (Teixeira, 2012). Even if a significant concentration of one group is being observed, it does not form a majority (p.335). Ethnoburbs are sometimes called “new immigrant destinations” (Winders, 2012) and “new immigration gateways” (Singer, 2004) or “arrival cities” (Saunders, 2011). That last notion is also applicable to immigrant settlements in the core metropolitan areas.

It is hard not to notice how easy it is for authors to switch between the idea of ethno-racial groups and the notion of immigrants. It can be argued that such a conflation stems from two elements: one conceptual and the other one spatial. The conceptual interchangeability could be attributed to the fact that in Western societies, with their contemporary socio-economic conditions largely built on the legacies of colonialism and its discourses (Blomley, 2004; Coulthard, 2014; Mensah & Williams, 2017; Sharma, 2018, 2020; Toews, 2018; Walia, 2021; Smith, 2021), negatively racialized (non-white) groups constitute minorities, conditionally admitted into dominant societies throughout colonial history. In that sense, the ethno-racial

minorities and many of the immigrant groups share the experience of being subjected to ongoing “othering” (see, autochton-allochton discourse in Schinkel and Van Houdt, 2010 and *Native-Migrant* discourse in Sharma, 2020). Of course, equalizing these groups would be a simplification. Some obvious examples of no actual overlap between “racialized” and “of migratory origin” would be the 19th-century immigration from Eastern Europe to Canada facing more favorable treatment than the immigrants of colour (Toews, 2018) or, on the other hand, the Black community in Nova Scotia, with its presence on Turtle Island established centuries ago, making it at least as native to the region as the white settler community, but facing harsh socio-spatial discrimination until today (see the settlement of Africville in Mensah, 2010).

Still, the conceptual proximity of immigration and ethnicity in the spatial context of North America can be understood as ethnoscapes - “ethnic projects of Others” (Appadurai, 1995), “by which Others (...) construct recognizable, social, human situated life-worlds” (p.183).

The spatial aspect follows the conceptual and historical one. In this chapter, its analysis can be reduced to the “spatial assimilation model” and its different versions. Originating from the work of Robert Park (1925) and the Chicago School of Sociology, the model argues that the incoming population, often with lower socioeconomic status and different forms of capital, settle in the inner-city areas, dominating them in terms of population composition - forming ethnic enclaves, creating successful businesses and strong communities and facilitating subsequent migratory flows in which “old, new and prospective migrants share information on the migration process” (Murdie & Skop, 2012; Mensah & Williams, 2017). Over time, migrants acquire social, cultural and financial capital through education, better employment and eventually move to the suburbs, closer to the non-immigrant population. By the third generation, immigrants can usually move to the areas of their individual preference, having been assimilated culturally and economically.

This model, although true to some degree, seems to essentialize immigrant experiences. Critics point out (Mensah & Williams, 2017) that it does not, for instance, relate to the experiences of Black Canadians due to “skin-colour racism in the housing markets of both Canada and the United States” (p.44). Such an observation overlaps with Murdie and Skop’s (2012) insight that spatial concentration patterns vary depending on groups’ ethnic and racial proximity to the dominant groups of “historically desirable”, Western European origin. Authors provide a taxonomy of three types of settlement, ranging from little or no spatial concentration (for instance, immigrants of German or Dutch origin), temporal spatial concentration (Southern or Eastern Europeans) and long-term or permanent spatial concentration, often concentrating visible minorities (Black Canadians). These models seem to be confirmed in Canadian context by localized examples from Toronto, such as Jane and Finch area or downtown areas of St. James Town (Statistics Canada, 2016), Parkdale (Mazer, 2009; Mazer & Rankin, 2011) or Regent Park (August, 2014). In Toronto, aside from various exceptions (Southern Europeans still staying spatially concentrated in downtown areas) it is important to notice that often, ethno-racial minorities move in directly to semi-suburban, larger residential areas such as Scarborough (Basu & Fiedler, 2017), Brampton, Markham or Richmond Hill (Teixeira et al., 2012).

Preceded with those conceptual and taxonomic delineations, the main topic of the advantages and disadvantages of minority enclaves can be properly addressed. This chapter will focus on three aspects of enclaves: 1) the feeling of familiarity, safety and belonging, 2) ethno-entrepreneurship as a way of leveling economic disadvantages, and 3) transnational ties. It is worth noticing that all three points are not mutually exclusive. They often overlap and create synergies.

Community and Belonging in Ethno-Racial Settlements of Toronto

“Neighbourhood Link is a place where we feel loving and comfortable”, says one of the residents of Scarborough about their community centre, in research Ranu Basu and Robert Fiedler (2017, p.36), explored how “integration” is imagined and understood by immigrants.

Highlighting the role of familiarity and belonging in ethno-racial enclaves through the example of Scarborough is particularly relevant because Scarborough is an example of an area in the GTA that is perceived by the majority in negative terms, but often appreciated by its inhabitants, majority of whom are migrants and belong to visible minority groups.

Being described in the media as “distasteful, aesthetically bleak, bland, and dangerous landscape” (p.33), Scarborough is exceptionally diverse, with its population comprising in 57% of immigrants, and 12% classified as recent immigrants (less than five years in Canada).

Moreover, only a minority of residents reported English as their mother tongue in 2006, with two thirds self-identifying as visible minorities (Basu & Fiedler, 2017, p.30).

The authors highlight the importance of public spaces which allow residents to “intermingle and influence each other on a daily basis” (p.40), where “people meet, interact, share information and acquire information” (p.35) - focusing on spaces such as religious institutions, schools, festival, grocery stores and community centres. Especially for refugees and displaced people, Scarborough provides an opportunity to engage in the process of “home-making” and “peace-building,” in the simplicity of the everyday public life where “all accents are understood” (p.41).

Another example of a sense of community associated with an ethno-racial neighbourhood can be found in St. James Town, located in the heart of Toronto (Bateman, 2014; Cori, 2018).

Compared to Scarborough, although equally associated with high-rise buildings and post-war modernist architecture, St. James Town is a much smaller, inner-city neighbourhood where over two thirds of residents are classified as visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2016), but only 30% of residents were born in Canada. 14% of residents are classified as recent migrants (city's average being 7%) and up to 8% have a non-permanent status (compared to the city's average of 3.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2011). Although the higher education levels of St. James Town populations are 2% higher than Canadian average, the income gap is striking: residents of St. James Town earn around CAD 40,000 on average, compared to the city's mean income of over CAD 60,000. That confirms Teixeira's argument that Canadian international reputation of a safe haven for immigrants does not necessarily align with the economic opportunities on the ground (2012).

Nevertheless, St. James Town's community life, the sense of belonging and familiarity seem to be also confirmed in qualitative terms, particularly in the narratives shaped by the residents themselves (St. James Town, 2020; Murray, 2020). With its official motto being "A World Within a Block," the multi-ethnic neighbourhood is proud of its demographics and its history. Aside from the municipal Wellesley Community Centre and Toronto Library located in the neighbourhood, two grassroots-based "community corners" serve the community on daily basis, providing help ranging from settlement services to free bike and free computer repairs. Summer festivals, all-year courses and meetings for different age groups are the daily reality despite harsh, socio-economic conditions and frequent police harassment. Even if far from solving the problems of racialized residents of St. James Town, community services organized around diversity and difference "provide some level of defense against racial discrimination from the majority" (Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021, p.91).

Ethno-Racial Arrival Cities: Social Opportunities and Economic Markets

Saunders points out that “in Canada, in 2008, an extraordinary 60.1% of immigrants with university degrees were working in occupations that required an apprenticeship or less” (2011, p.96). In his book published in 2011, he engages in the narrative of “arrival cities” as ethno-racial parts of Western cities, which serve as platforms for taking the first steps in the new society on one hand and as lasting reservoirs of information exchange and support networks on the other, yielding from the power of agglomeration, density, and centrality. Those characteristics of the urban society not only create and uphold ontological uniqueness and difference (Lefebvre, 1970; Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Simone, 2016) but also create tangible opportunities for minorities. As indicated by Mensah and Williams (2017), clusters allow minority groups to attain the requisite critical mass of population to support their ethnic-based economic enterprises and sociocultural institutions (p.62).

Still, the power and the paradox of an arrival city lies not in its long-lasting economic advantage – quite the opposite. Saunders argues that immigrants utilize places of high density for information exchange, engagement in informal economy, finding housing and jobs. They create lasting networks and formalized or informal structures, allowing to put “a foot in the door” of a larger city for the ones who are already there and to create useful networks for prospective immigrants. The fact, Saunders argues, that the given neighbourhood often does not provide proper infrastructure or amenities, that its reputation is questionable, and it seems somehow isolated from the “successful” city, might be deceiving. An arrival city provides affordable housing, relative connectivity, and access to information, allowing to start there and move out as soon as individual’s (or household’s) conditions improve, making room for next waves of

immigrants. From such a perspective, the same run-down, poor neighbourhood can facilitate the inflow of immigrants, paving their way into the larger city.

Such a point of view might easily be seen as problematic, mostly by justifying poverty, disinvestment and neo-liberalization of responsibility for citizens, so symptomatic for current socio-economic narratives (Hackworth, 2007; August, 2018; Toews, 2018). These reservations should be taken seriously. Nevertheless, at least in some cases of inner-city neighbourhoods such as St. James Town in Toronto, Saunders's vision matches the reality to some extent – with the percentage of new-comers being very high and with high residents' rotation, the neighbourhood can be seen as a “gateway” to the larger city.

Moreover, Saunders, despite highlighting opportunities at the cost of migrants' well-being, backs his claims with strong and diverse empirical material. Also, his vision of an arrival city overlaps with the spatial assimilation model and later academic research on ethno-entrepreneurship (Samers & Collyer, 2016).

Other authors (Massey, 1998; Light, 2005; Teixeira et al., 2012; Samers & Collyer, 2016) highlight the economic potential of enclaves, perceiving them and their inhabitants in terms of being both, entrepreneurs and wage earners, creating a reinforcing loop of business formulation, ethnic employment and ethnic clientele. Massey (1998) argues that in such instance, “immigration can, quite literally, generate its own demand” (p.32): however, such a point of view has its critics (de Haas, 2010) who point out to the lack of a conceptual endpoint to such process.

According to the latter - as mentioned before in this work - minorities, often facing discrimination in the labor market and in order to save resources, engage in creating businesses

which leverage their ethno-racial origin, be it food industry or culture-specific services (weddings, festivals, culture-specific medical services) where they can serve their own community and provide employment for people from their own or similar ethno-racial group, often creating even more demand for immigration, forming long-lasting connections between localities (Samers & Collyer, 2016; Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2019). In the long run, with more resources, ethnic businesses tend to formalize and often attract people from outside of the ethnic group itself (Light, 2005). This is why some scholars (Wilson & Portes, 1980) emphasize the employer-side of the ethnic economy, with the customer side being secondary.

Nevertheless, the economy of an ethnic enclave's does not solve the problems related to economic disadvantages of the local population, sometimes creating other complications such as further essentializing and stereotyping of given populations, associating ethnic minorities with only certain roles in the larger society. As Logan puts it: "The ethnic strategy is not a magic bullet, but neither is it a poison pill" (2003), p.381).

Looking Outwards: Transnational Ties of Canadian Minorities

So far, the focus of this chapter evolved around the ethno-racial enclaves as spaces of belonging to gradually shift attention to the economic opportunities associated with ethnic entrepreneurship and with the arrival city. However, what is equally interesting is the look into the opposite direction – the cultural and functional ties kept with the places of origin.

Henri Lefebvre famously envisioned an encompassing urban society (1970), describing its dynamics as an ongoing process of imploding and exploding. That resulted in a plethora of interpretations in the context of global capitalism, just to mention the works of Harvey (2015) or Brenner and Schmid (2015). Thus, it could be argued that just as minority enclaves can make "the urban" implode with diverse spaces of support, belonging, advocacy, everyday identity

forming, interaction and economy, they can also make them “explode” such places towards the distant spaces of transnational connections.

Transnationalism is the practice of engagement that links ethnic enclaves with places of origin of its residents, with places of cultural or ethnic affinity. “Few [read: Western] countries match Canada in the number of immigrants that they admit on a per capita basis” (Satzewich & Wong, 2006, p.1), disproportionately conflating immigration with ethnicity in Canadian context, already discussed earlier. Those newcomers as well as the established ethno-racial communities form and uphold transnational ties on a daily basis (Kelly, 2015). Although ethnic enclaves are not a *sine qua non* factor for establishing transnational ties, they surely foster and uphold them, just to remind the example of Scarborough, where “public spaces offered transnational and inter-global spatial linkages in many ways.” (Basu & Fiedler, 2017, p.39).

Satzewich and Wong (2006) argue that particularly in the Canadian context, scholars should engage in researching transnational ties because of the Canadian state encouraging immigrants to uphold those ties and because of transnationalism being perceived as both, a challenge and the extension of official multiculturalism.

The framework itself, becoming popular in 1990s, is best known through the work of academics such as Alejandro Portes (1999) or more recently Thomas Faist (et al., 2013). As a concept, transnationalism connotes the fact that migration entails repeated movements and continued transactions between spaces, including both migrants and non-migrants (Faist et al, 2013). In other words, “cross border migration inherently generates cross-border ties and practices (p.1)”.

Portes conceptualized transnationalism as economic, political and socio-cultural, both in its institutional version as well as the everyday resistance and struggle (1999). However, it was Faist

(2013) who differentiated three levels of transnationalism, focusing on kinship groups, circuits such as business or advocacy groups and the whole communities, with “dense and continuous sets of social and symbolic ties”, moral obligation and social cohesion (p. 47).

The role of transnationalism in the lives of different ethno-racial groups vary and, although its multi-sited-ness is crucial, transnationalism is to a large extent a non-localized phenomenon. Still, “stable, lasting and dense sets of ties” are crucial to its perpetuation (Faist et al., 2013, p.13) and these can be maintained and fostered easier in ethno-racial enclaves, through factors such as community organizations, religious congregations and even businesses which rely on transnational supply of goods, information or labor. For instance, Preston, Kobayashi and Siemiatycki (2006) argue that Chinese immigrants, although well-integrated into the larger city of Toronto, keep strong transnational ties which (particularly kinship and friendship affiliations) inform decisions to live in a specific neighbourhood upon arrival to Canada. Simmons and Plaza (2006) point out to spatial concentrations (plural) of Canadian Caribbean community, particularly in Toronto, pointing out to a social status distinction between urban and suburban landline codes. While describing the experiences of Black continental migrants in Canada, Mensah (2014) also acknowledges “the roles of immigrants’ transnationalism and identities in shaping their settlement and integration experience”, calling for more research in that area (p.6). Such call could be used as a landmark, signaling that even if transnational links are often established and maintained on an intimate, individual or household scale, ethno-racial enclaves can play a role in facilitating them, particularly across generations. To quote Hank van Houtum (2002) “it is not individuals but networks” who migrate.

What might inform future research into the nexus of ethnic enclaves and transnationalism is the framework of immigration industries (Cranston et al., 2018), shaping mobility patterns and

identities through offered services - be it before departure, throughout the migratory act and often long after arrival.

“How far should the migration industry be considered functionally and conceptually separate from migrants’ social networks”, authors ask (p.545), trying to position migration industries on a mezzo-level of urban experience but also in the context of international connectivity. They argue that networks which often grow into “industries” are built on reciprocal ties of kinship, co-ethnicity and community. Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft- Hansen (2013, p.6–7) define migration industry as “the array of non-state actors who provide services that facilitate, constrain or assist international migration.” They point out to the growing commercialization of such industries, as juxtaposed with the reciprocal ties. Still, minority enclaves spatially concentrate such industries, and – whether based on commercial premises or reciprocity – they provide exposure, connectivity and often employment. Thus, even if minority enclaves are often perceived as functionally isolated from the city, what might be hidden from the view is their outward exposure to the “constitutive outsides” (Roy, 2016) of urbanization.

Conclusions

This chapter started with a delineation of the concepts used, as well as with explanation of different forms of ethno-racial settlements. With the examples of Scarborough and St. James Town (both in the Greater Toronto Area), it demonstrates how such spatialities can successfully create communities, networks of support, and cultural and social reproduction. After all, “spatial concentration allows ethno-racial minorities to maintain their cultural values and practices, strengthen their social networks and, ultimately, enhance their intragroup social cohesion”. (Mensah & Williams, 2017, p. 62).

However, community is not all that ethno-racial enclaves in Canadian cities have to offer. Economic networks of opportunity for newcomers, as demonstrated by the concept of an arrival city, as well as established ethnic entrepreneurships and businesses, often provide minority members with employment, connectivity, and sense of financial success within the economy of their new countries.

Just as much as community and economy of the ethnic enclaves can “implode” the urbanization processes, it is argued that enclaves and ethnoburbs can also “explode” urban realities by fostering and maintaining transnational ties with places of origin and cultural affiliation, whether they focus on kinship groups and reciprocity or on commercialized utilization of existing cultural ties. Such a point of view speaks to Soja’s broader argument about the *cityspace* which “involves a much larger and more complex configuration [that the non-urban, suburban, rural], a specific geography that, by its very definition, tends to be dynamic and expansive in its territorial domain” (2000, p.16).

Overall, despite difficulties and systemic problems faced by ethno-racial and immigrant communities in Canadian cities, there is no shortage of arguments in favor of ethno-racial enclaves as valuable and often thriving “projects of others” (Appadurai, 1995).

Chapter 3: Profiling St. James Town: Geography, History and Population

This chapter focuses on the site of the research, namely St. James Town in Toronto, not only as a place of interaction between abstract theoretical concepts but as a lived, physical space. By delineating some of its borders, functions, and populations, this chapter lays down the groundwork for further empirical immersion into the neighbourhood. Next, the chapter provides a historical context that highlights the role of the neighbourhood in Torontonians and Canadian multiculturalism, to be followed by outlining the area's ongoing interactions with the larger city, focusing on the condensation processes and the influx of international students. The chapter ends with the in-depth analysis of the census data, explaining the socio-economic conditions of existence in that immigrant neighbourhood.

Geography and Official Demarcation

St. James Town, as it is widely known and recognized, is the almost square area between Howard Street in the North (sometimes extended to Bloor Street), Sherbourne Street in the West, Wellesley Street in the South, and Parliament Street in the East. As shown on Figure 1, the neighbourhood is located in the North part of downtown Toronto, in the very centre of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) agglomeration.

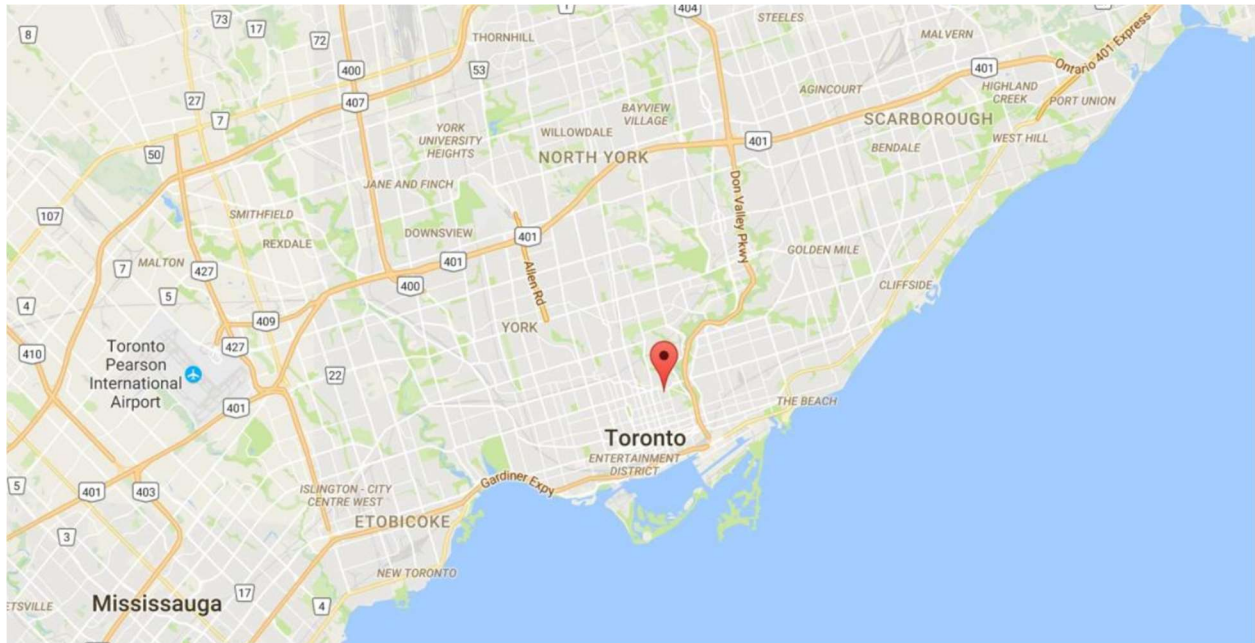


Figure 1 / Situating St. James Town in downtown Toronto (map-of-toronto.com)

Located centrally in Toronto, it is demarcated by busy streets, particularly with the artery of Bloor Street which also provides direct access to Toronto subway (Sherbourne Station) and multiple bus services (Figure 2). Even the cycling infrastructure, lagging behind in many parts of the city, around St. James Town provides a convenient mode of transportation which is not without importance when considering an ever-growing population of newcomers. Many of them do not use a car, and many rely on platform economy to sustain their presence in Canada which often means moving around the city along the bike lanes of service and good delivery tracks.

However, the historical reference and popular imaginary of St. James Town does not perfectly match the City of Toronto's delineation. Whenever "St. James Town" is mentioned further in this work, the term will refer to the high-rise area of originally modernist architecture, introduced as a novel spatial arrangement in 1960s and stretching between Bloor and Wellesley and between Sherbourne and Parliament streets.



Figure 2 / The boundaries of St. James Town (City of Toronto)

Marked as Neighbourhood No. 74, it is a part of North St. James Town, encompassing the traditional immigrant high-rise area but adding to it a large area to the West, all the way to Jarvis Street, comprising mostly of townhouses and some new condominiums (City of Toronto, 2018a).

Extending the official definition up to Jarvis Street creates a quite unpractical demarcation, putting together areas with little in common when it comes to wealth-distribution, population make-up and spatial arrangements, but also functioning quite separately from each other.

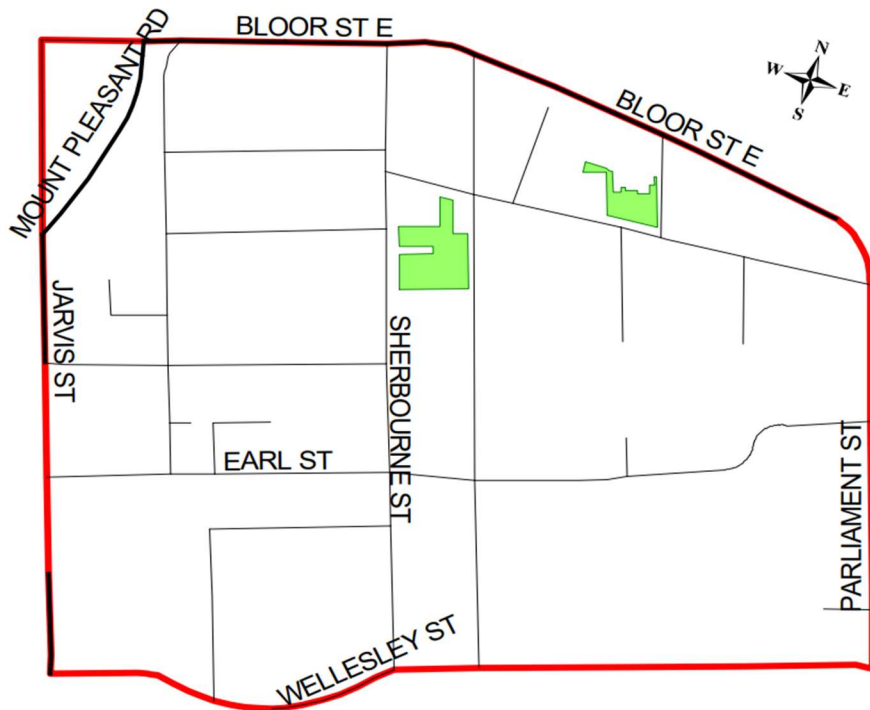


Figure 3 / An administrative map of Neighbourhood No. 74 with its boundaries extending beyond traditionally understood St. James Town (City of Toronto)

Still, St. James Town as referred to in this work is the area dominating the statistics of the Neighbourhood No. 74. Taking into account the most rudimentary metric of population count, the 2016 Census mentions over 18 600 residents living in the area (Statistics Canada, 2016). At the same time, sources focused solely on the modernist high-rise area bordered by Sherbourne Street, count the population of that very place for over 14 000 people (STEPS Public Art, 2020). It proves that St. James Town, covering little more than half of Neighbourhood No. 74 on the map, makes up for most of its population (see Figure 3).

The common delineation of St. James Town aligns with the popular narrative of the most densely populated area not only in Toronto, but in Canada, and one of the most densely populated places in North America overall (stjamestown.org, 2021).

Interestingly, the condo towers prevalent in the city since the condo boom at the end of 1990s (Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009) are often twice as tall as the original high-rise modernist towers that have established the neighbourhood and dominated the landscape of the city for a couple of decades since the 1960s. Still, the density of the area, including the townhouses, condos and commercial areas between Sherbourne and Jarvis Streets skewing the results towards more conservative estimates, exceeds 44,000 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada, 2016). To put it on the right scale, the density of the city of Toronto stays at around 4,400 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Thus, if much taller condos do not match the density of the old high-rise area, it clearly points out to the large number of people inhabiting apartments in St. James Town, largely exceeding the atomised lifestyle (often single inhabitant households) of modern condo living. This can be attributed to the informal arrangements often present in the immigrant neighbourhood with one person keeping the lease but numerous other people inhabiting the dwelling and largely confirmed by this research.

History and Nation-Building

Having mentioned Cabbagetown-South St. James Town (Neighbourhood No. 71) it is difficult to disregard the difference between this townhouse neighbourhood and St. James Town. Almost four times as large and encompassing the swaths of land all the way to Don River, it has the population of over 11,000 people and the density of 8,000 persons per square km— twice as large as the average of the city but still not matching its Northern neighbour.

The explanation for the existence of multiple official “St. James Towns” lies in the fascinating history of the area and the power of large-scale urban planning.

Going back to the 19th century, the area was known as “Homewood Estate” (st.james Town.org, 2020), inhabited by mostly the middle and upper middle class of Toronto population and comprising of Victorian houses (Cori, 2018) which are now the heritage houses of Cabbagetown (Neighbourhood No. 71). These houses stayed in place way longer than their original inhabitants who, due to the development of transport infrastructure (including public transport) could move out to more distant and spacious locations while still being able to easily access the services that the growing city provided in its core. The conditions kept deteriorating, and many of the houses were converted into boarding houses and apartment units, covering a large area stretching from Regent Park, through Cabbagetown, up to St. James Town (Cori, 2018). Increasing maintenance issues and stress on amenities only sped up the process. The area entered a state of liminality with residents often treating their dwelling as a temporary solution and the landlords not facing too much pressure on maintaining the infrastructure from the ever-changing temporary population (Bateman, 2014; Cori, 2018; Formanowicz, 2022). In that sense, the history seems to rhyme.

Post-war optimism, but also the growing search for a coherent identity of a modern nation-state, led to a large-scale intervention in the urban space, based on new re-zoning plans. The area of townhouses stretching from Bloor Street in the North down to Wellesley Street in the South got gradually leveled (Bateman, 2014) in 1950s. In the following decade, similar attempts were made to level the Victorian houses to the South of Wellesley Street, the area contemporarily mostly associated with Cabbagetown, its parks, social life and festivals. This attempt met with very strong opposition from the local population, including activists such as John Sewell who became the mayor of the City later (Formanowicz, 2022).

In hindsight, organizing efforts of the residents were key in preservation of Cabbagetown a couple of decades ago, compared with the lack of such organizing in the Northern part of the area, which led to brute interventions and displacements. This explains, to some extent, why two contemporary neighbourhoods carrying the same name (North St. James Town and Cabbagetown-South St. James Town) have such vastly different socio-economic and spatial arrangements. Moreover, the history of the area may serve as a valuable lesson and a cautionary tale amid the gradual spatial remake of downtown Toronto. That has largely to do with condofication (Lehrer, 2009; Kern, 2016) slowly encroaching over the area of the immigrant neighbourhood, discussed later in this work.

The population of St. James Town rose from under 1,000 to nearly 11,500 between 1967 and 1969 (Cori, 2018; Formanowicz, 2022). Some of the original population moved into the public housing units provided in the newly built high-rises by the Ontario Housing Coalition but many squatted the crumbling townhouses which delayed the completion of the investment. In the end, the project, completed over the span of the 1960s was the biggest housing investment in Canada and created one of the highest density housing projects of the continent until this day.

Not only did the investment re-shape the landscape of downtown Toronto forever, but it also became a living monument of the landscape of a young settler colonial nation-state. The planners of the modernist intervention did not only envision people's everyday lives in a regulated, modernist manner (Zahirovic, 2007) but they also planned to capture the imagination of the Torontonians in a large-scale nation-building effort (Yeoh, 1996).

Each of the original residential towers was named after one Canadian city, symbolically representing the territory from Vancouver to St. John's, with proud names put above the entrance to each of the buildings. The desired residents of the development were young, educated and

white Canadians, supposed to enjoy urban life during the university and their post-graduation years, before “settling down” and moving into houses (Cori, 2018). The original towers erected in St. James Town in the 1960s promised “a modern, functional, ‘radiant city’ for ‘the new man’”, as Zahirovic writes regarding a very similar housing investment in the Dutch neighbourhood of Bijlmermeer (Zahirovic, 2007, n.p.).

However, in another twist of history, that was not the population that eventually inhabited the area. The skilled, white workers preferred to take advantage of the new force shaping the spaces of the continent – newly sprawling suburbs, and paid little interest to the modernist intervention downtown. At the same time, in 1960s, the Canadian nation-state introduced significant changes to its immigration policies, for the first time truly opening the immigration streams, attracting large numbers of migrants from across the world and producing a widespread discourse of racial and cultural diversity (Kymlicka, 1995; Saunders 2017). Combined with the wave of formal decolonization of most of the colonial world, those policies created conditions for new generations of immigrants to come to Canada. Those were the original inhabitants of the high-rise towers of St. James Town, creating an obvious new symbolism and introducing it to the Canadian imaginary of what “Canadian identity” will become in the decades to come.

Still, the new immigrant population also shared the dreams of a suburban life. St. James Town was rarely the destination, becoming more of what Doug Saunders calls the “arrival city,” (2011), creating the temporary safe haven, a place where social and economic networking can take place for people to make first steps and establish their presence in a new place. Often characterised by questionable infrastructure and low standard of amenities, such places share a high degree of population rotation. Still, the lower standards, compared to the city surrounding

the arrival city, are often exactly the conditions that allow to keep low rent and a low threshold of entry for newcomers.

Unfortunately, crumbling infrastructure, problems with safety and amenities, gave St. James Town a reputation that started changing only in the last two decades when the long overdue public investments provided some improvement of the infrastructure and brought amenities for families and children. The biggest investment turned out to be the community centre and a Toronto Public branch at the corner of Wellesley and Sherbourne, equipped with a swimming pool, a gym, a basketball court and working spaces.

Narratives and Counternarratives

Symbolic representations, both exemplified by the architecture itself and by the space-naming practices, are (conscious or not) efforts to actively shape and produce space, aligned with some particular vision and power structure (Yeoh, 1996). Neighbourhoods are always stages of possible tensions between the self-reproducing force of the local community and the vision of the larger, imagined community, or the nation-state, implemented upon them (Appadurai, 1995). When it comes to the latter, “neighbourhoods are designed to be instances and exemplars of generalizable mode of belonging to a wider national imaginary” (p.192). St. James Town is a perfect example of those tensions.

Writing about the nation-state’s efforts to produce space, Brenda Yeoh (1996) states that “landscapes reinforce and naturalise prevailing social ideologies” (p.298). In light of this statement, this chapter needs to take a step back from analysing the geography and history of St. James Town *per se* and take a look from the vantage point of discursive analysis.

Yeoh, with her examples based on the spatial history of Singapore, claims that space-naming is an instrument of colonizing and occupance, and can be used both by the dominant group as well as the subordinate group, for instance immigrants (1996). Street naming decisions have been recognized as “indicators of nationalistic fervour” (Zelinsky 1983; Stump 1988 in Yeoh, 1996) or attempts to assert the conceived identity of community. Yeoh focuses on street-naming, but building-naming can easily be seen as belonging to the same category of spatial interventions. “The naming process is hence not only of toponymic significance but also embodies some of the social struggle for control over the means of symbolic production within the built environment” (1996, p.299).

In case of St. James Town, there was no tension between the settler-state and the immigrants at the beginning since, as outlined before, the new modernist intervention was destined to be an enclave of educated, prosperous and predominantly white dominant group.

However, what can be claimed, following Yeoh’s analysis of the history of Singapore is that post-war optimism of a young Canadian nation led to attempts of disconnecting with prior Indigenous histories. In Singapore, the effort was to disconnect with the colonial elements to build a new nation. In St. James Town (which is already a name carrying very distinct cultural and religious symbolism), perhaps the idea behind calling the high-rise buildings after settler-colonial cities covering the territory imagined as Canada was to re-confirm the implicit discarding of the Indigenous imaginaries of Turtle Island and to “double down” on the settler colonial narrative. Such practices have been almost routine across the territory to quote Blomley’s work on Vancouver (2004), Toews’ history of Winnipeg (2018) or Cowen’s description of Canadian Rail as the “infrastructure of empire” (2020).

Modernist Architecture and Its Consequences for St. James Town

Modernist architecture should be noticed as another aspect of space creation. Following Le Corbusier's vision of "towers in the park", the radical architectural intervention requires a certain new vision, designed for the "new man," to quote Zahirovic again (2007). But modernist architecture, with the separation of spaces of work, residence and leisure reflected the spatially deterministic idea of the neighbourhood (Formanowicz, 2022).

In the words of Rashad Shabazz (2015), Le Corbusier explicitly considered North American cities as ones requiring managing, and he envisioned to manage it through planning: "Like many planners, he saw the multiracial, multi-ethnic city as an obstacle to modernity, an obstacle that had to be managed" (p.59). The original concept of St. James Town was far from multi-cultural and followed Le Corbusier's plan quite well. The open spaces were supposed to create communities and bring people together, but open spaces with no green spaces often created deserted, unwelcoming areas.

Shabazz claims that the high-rise architecture in fact created some spaces of interaction, namely corridors, staircases and other pathways, at least in the example of housing projects in Chicago, described in his work (2015). Still, Shabazz, citing Foucault, claims that modernist housing, particularly when turned into public housing, had a strong carceral element. "Like the school, the factory, and the hospital, which are physically segregated through walls and controlled through surveillance and containment, the project needed mechanisms of segregation to ensure that the dissemination of carceral power, what Foucault termed the "communication of punishments," could be articulated." (p.58).

It cannot be stressed enough that the idea behind St. James Town was vastly different from the public housing projects, built on large scale in the post-war US. However, over decades St.

James Town grew into an equivalent of “the projects” in the public imaginary of Torontonians, often in the perception of the residents themselves and in the measurements of securitisation, increasingly imposed upon the area. “The emergence of onsite police, surveillance equipment, and physical changes to the project ushered in a new era of securitization (...). Like Bentham’s panopticon prison design, which used architecture to “induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility,” the insertion of surveillance into the intimate lives of residents made it possible for security forces to monitor resident activity.” (p.67).

Today’s St. James Town is full of security measures. The seemingly innocent intervention of putting a mesh on most of the balconies is one. It is formally designed to deter pigeons, but one can easily observe that the neighbouring condos do not have the mesh while still struggling with the bird population. “The children [here] are surrounded by wire mesh and fencing that makes their living environment resemble the catwalks of a prison” (p.67). Moreover, although still comprising mostly of rental buildings owned by private corporations and not dealing with on-site police, most of the buildings are always subject to surveillance by cameras and by private security personnel walking around. In some cases, as the “notorious” 200 Wellesley Street, 24/7 security is present at the lobby of the building. Such security measures are coupled with presence of the police, particularly at night, when police sirens are heard roaming the empty streets, almost as if in a deliberate effort to keep the population alert and on their toes (which will be described later while analysing the empirical data).

The envisioned space of St. James Town started with space-naming, but with the multicultural population moving in, the practices of exercising the “power of naming” changed too, changing the popular imaginary around the neighbourhood.

Introducing The Corners

Aside from the security-oriented efforts resembling Shabazz's description of Panopticon-like housing projects in Chicago, the perceived space, the collective use and imagined use of space in St. James Town also drastically changed since the inception of the high-rise neighbourhood.

The best example is the immigrant and community-oriented narrative around the area, the number of collectives and informal organizations and the motto of the area being "the world within a block" (Formanowicz, 2022). Official website of St. James Town (2021) highlights its diverse heritage and makes it a source of pride, potential and synergy, opposing the narrative of a "problematic" area often present in the media (Bateman, 2014).

The 'World Within a Block' is not only words. St. James Town has its annual festival, summer film screenings, food programs, the presence of multiple co-ops and two so-called Corners (Corner@200 and Corner@240), simply named after their addresses at Wellesley Street. These are well-organized, professional community centres, skillfully meandering between the formality of larger Canadian framework and the necessary informality of interaction and familiarity with an ever-shifting population (Formanowicz, 2022).

Corner@240 provides services ranging from free printing and internet access to immigration lawyer appointments, health care assistance (linking newcomers with family doctors, regular visits of health care practitioners) and a team of on-site social workers. On top of that, there is a variety of courses and lessons, designed for everyone from children to seniors. There are seasonal programs such as food sharing before Christmas holiday and many others, engaging not only the employees but also volunteers recruited from the local community.

Corner@240 is a colorful space focusing on practical utility, re-use and circular economy (Formanowicz, 2022). An IT specialist helps people with fixing computers, another person repairs bikes. The staff has managed to create an impressive “tool library” for everyone who needs equipment but cannot afford or does not want to buy it for a single use. “We fix everything that regular shops won’t fix. We store the parts. Nothing gets wasted, and we give back to the community,” says one of the staff members (Formanowicz, 2022, p.10). The store does not only serve the local population but is an important place on the Toronto map of share and re-use of resources.

Nevertheless, what is the most interesting from the point of view of creating space and shaping narratives, is the humble yet subversive naming. “The Corners” can be seen as highlighting the character of the area, focusing on what is close, nearby, accessible, safe and bonding. It is still “a world within a block” but in such narrative not only “the world” is important, but also the “block” itself and, in a similar manner, “the corner.” Corners of St. James Town are where things keep happening, most profoundly exemplified by the informal market present daily at Rose and Wellesley Streets, just in front of the entrance to Food Basics.

“Right outside of the store, local street vendors put out their merchandise, elderly people hangout, and the daily paths of many of the residents cross. This crossing is a crucial spatial practice of cornerism: the proximity of the bus stop, of the affordable grocery store, of local shops and services – it all makes interactions hard to avoid. Still, the vivid local dynamic is not simply a natural consequence of such an intersection. Rather, it is actively created around it, added to it, by street vendors and residents socializing, thus shaping, but also controlling, the rhythms of the street” (Formanowicz, 2022, p.9). What I previously called “cornerism” in the

article from 2022 is the spatial awareness of the public space and the skill, the instinct of utilizing it, of using it as a material for creation of social spaces.

Idolising such spaces would be dangerous, too. Social space is not inherently good or bad, it is a container and an outcome of activity. What is worth stating is that immigrants manage to recreate ways of being and interacting with urban space, ways often coming from their home countries and cultures. Such way are almost not present in Canadian mainstream culture and definitely not in Toronto where using public spaces to hang out (aside from parks) is mostly confined to sites of organized, capitalist consumption (Formanowicz, 2022).

On another level, elevating the idea of something as menial and dismissible as a street corner to a status of symbol and to an official name of community centre is a subversive move, particularly juxtaposed with the totalizing efforts from decades before. The large signs defining high-rises as “The Montreal”, “The Vancouver” or even “The Toronto” still hang over the entrances of the buildings but no one uses them in everyday interactions. The narrative of “the corners” does not nullify those pan-Canadian efforts directly, it does not even seem to engage with them at all. It simply points out and gives attention to something completely different, local, embedded, familiar and welcoming, at the same time apolitical and in no way antagonising – a skillful move in a place as diverse as St. James Town.

Condofication as a Force Shaping the Future of St. James Town

St. James Town, as shown in the previous sections, is far from being a static historical site, but it is a dynamic and ever-changing process which today faces some of the biggest challenges since its inception as a crude spatial intervention in 1960s.

What seems to potentially question the narrative of the corners and the practice of “cornerism” (Formanowicz, 2022) is the dynamic change faced by the neighbourhood, namely the condofication (Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009) surrounding the area from each side and the condo developments. Some of them have been planned in St. James Town itself, particularly at the place of the Food Basics store.

A brief study of the larger landscape of Toronto’s urban development and its sharp neo-liberal bend can provide much needed context, along with highlighting the role of condo-towers in dominating the downtown planning arrangements. Those spatial changes cannot be properly understood without grasping the concept of the spatial fix (Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009; Kern, 2016).

In this process, taking over large parts of Toronto in the last two decades, the immigrant character of the city only makes the rule of the corporate developers easier. It is striking how quickly the landscape has been changing and how much the dominance of the condo towers became a natural part of the landscape although not being that prevalent until as late as the 1990s (Formanowicz, 2022). The fact that downtown Toronto comprises in such high numbers of newcomers, makes it easier for corporate interests (with a complicit role of the state, discussed below) to take over particularly because immigrants are people with no memory of, and no previous attachment to their new spaces of residence. If communities or cultural sites are threatened, immigrants often are not aware of it, for it takes years to acquire even a basic historical awareness of the surrounding space. Therefore, newcomers often take the space as it is and are not the face of resistance to even the most dramatic changes, let alone the fact that they usually do not have the right to vote.

St. James Town is a great example of that. With the percentage of recent immigrants twice as high as the city’s average, the neighbourhood is quite vulnerable to spatial changes, often “just

happening” for them, devoid of a critical context of the larger city that newcomers simply cannot have. Newcomers bring different visions of development and progress, seen largely from the point of view and in the context of their own countries.

To offer a more artistic coda to the topic, the words of Dionne Brandt (2004) can be used. The Toronto-based novelist and a second-generation immigrant writes about the city of Toronto. Some parts of the book titled “What We All Long For” take place in St. James Town. Brandt writes: “immigrants are used to the earth beneath them shifting, and they all want it to stop – and if that means they must pretend to know nothing, well, that’s the sacrifice they make” (p. 4).

Putting immigrants’ vulnerability to spatial changes aside, the role of the Canadian state should be highlighted. The Canadian state has been retreating from being a dominant actor in the realm of public housing, assistance and spatial planning that left increasingly more room for the corporate developers to define the space (Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009, p.144).

Deregulation of the housing market goes hand in hand with wider neoliberal changes (Toews, 2018) that redefine the notions of individual responsibility of society members, increasingly putting it on individual’s shoulders and teaching new generations of inhabitants not to expect the state (or the city) to take any measures to equalize the access to urban space.

Such an environment creates more opportunities for financial capital, both domestic and global, governed by what Bauman calls the “absentee landlords” (2013) to invest and re-invest in the core downtown areas, even if it means shattering well-functioning spatial and social structures. In a groundbreaking approach to this process, Harvey calls it a spatial fix (1978), where capital creates a built environment “necessary for its own functioning at a certain point in its history

only to have to destroy that space at a later point in order to make way for new [...] openings for fresh accumulation” (Harvey, 2001, p. 25).

The spatial fix, driving urban processes in de-regulated housing market of the city that promotes the individualization of responsibility for one’s own living conditions, leads to “new-built gentrification” (Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009, p.142), often in the form of omnipresent condominium towers. Lehrer and Wieditz point out to particular elements of that process, namely continued suburban growth, de-investment and decline in the inner suburbs and re-investment in the inner city (2009). They argue that the condo-towers domination can be seen as a new form of gentrification – “condofication” – mostly because it is often accompanied by increasing urban poverty in surrounding spaces of accumulated wealth (p. 142). The advocates for the inner-city condo developments often evoke a poorly defined “prosperity” trickling down onto the surrounding areas. Responding to that, Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) state that gentrification in any form “transform[s] working-class neighbourhoods into middle and upper-class” (p.142) and often leads to physical or emotional (...) displacement of local communities, historically mostly low-income and mostly non-white.

To situate the theory in the actual locale of St. James Town, the example of a condo-development proposed by Greatwise Development can be evoked (Formanowicz, 2022). A proposal already submitted in 2018 suggest a complex of 5 buildings in the heart of the neighbourhood, including a 47-storey tower between Rose and Ontario Street (Appendix 3).

The five-storey podium was supposed to contain amenities and retail space. The condo tower was planned to absorb the lower floors of the existing 240 Wellesley – the building currently containing the Food Basics which constitutes the spatial framework for the informal economy and the cornerism of St. James Town. It would also cut off Corner@240 and its east-facing

residents from sunlight, leaving a merely twenty-five-metre gap between the eastern façade of the modernist high-rise and the new tower (Formanowicz, 2022, p.12).

The surrounding area was planned to be transformed into so-called “publicly accessible private open spaces” where almost anyone could be arbitrarily labeled as “a loiterer.” Such intervention would “lead to new, imposed perceptions of what is possible and what is allowed within this space, as opposed to reflecting the perceptions and needs of the inhabitants currently living there” (Formanowicz, 2022, p.13).

As for late 2023, this particular investment seems to have been halted; however, the idea, in one form or another, will come back to St. James Town. In the last few years, three different condotowers have been built and inhabited exactly on the borders of the neighbourhood, namely on the corner of Wellesley and Sherbourne Streets and on Bloor and Parliament Streets. However, two new large-scale developments are being built on a short stretch of Sherbourne leading up to Bloor, right outside Sherbourne Station. Opposite those two, a new, giant investment is being proposed between Isabella and Linden Street (around 150 metre-long stretch along Sherbourne), replacing a historical Isabella Hotel and a row of townhouses. Only this one part of the street will undergo modifications that will entirely change its current character and without any doubt will affect the inner St. James Town. Although not a part of this research *per se*, those built environment changes provide a context for the planetary processes taking place on the scale of the neighbourhood. Thus, the findings of this work can utilize that context to get a better grasp of this historical moment for St. James Town.

St. James Town as a Hub for International Students

Another angle worth highlighting in the overview of the area is perhaps less spatially consequential; however, it touches on the topic of how city-scale changes, fueled by global, macro scale processes, directly affect the micro scale of an immigrant neighbourhood.

In the last decades, Canada has put efforts to attract international students on an unprecedented scale. Although having been an important site for the international education industry (Buckner et al., 2020), in the last years Canada has orchestrated policy and marketing efforts, trying to attract as many college and university students from abroad as possible (Banerjee, 2022).

There were a record 684,385 study permits issued in the 2023 calendar year, according to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, an increase of 24.7 per cent over the previous year and 70.8 per cent rise compared with 400,590 in the pre-pandemic year of 2019 (Study Travel Network, 2024).

Becoming the third higher education destination in the world, Canada profits greatly from the international student population. In 2017 and 2018, the annual expenses of the students amassed to over 20 billion dollars a year with over three billion tax contributions in those respective years (Currie, 2020; Dennler, 2022). International education is getting close to 20% of Canada's exports to the world. Being seen as ideal future immigrants, students are often younger, familiarize themselves with the local culture over the time of their studies, the quality of their education is known and usually they develop some social networks over the time of their studies (Banerjee, 2022). For Canada, those newcomers seem to be the win-win-win solution, solving the problems of immigration, work force and export income at the same time.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of academic and media reports state that the situation of international student is in fact quite dire in the Canadian context (Banerjee, 2022). Particularly, the college students are often misled and exploited in the process of coming to Canada, with no real perspectives on acquiring the permanent resident status along the way (Kueng, 2022; 2023). The situation became so pressing that even Ontario higher education institutions took action themselves, approving new professional standards mostly to the process of recruitment of the students. Still, it turns out that an increasing number of the study permit holders, perhaps already aware of the lack of prospects, do not actually take on the studies that were the basis of their study permit issuance and many take up jobs in Canada instead (Kueng, 2023). To address the situation, citing concern about the “integrity of the international student system”, the Government of Canada imposed a cap on the number of study permits at 360,000 approved permits for 2024, a decrease of 35% from 2023 (IRCC, 2024).

Personal observations by the author, as well as the overrepresentation of the college students population in the research suggests that St. James Town has become some sort of a hub (probably one of many) for international students. It is still relatively affordable, perfectly located when it comes both to transport and the proximity of many educational institutions, not only universities but also colleges. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that the young population, particularly representing the Indian subcontinent, has increased in the last years significantly. This confirms the macro-scale trend of Indian students becoming the largest national group among international student population in Canada, the rank previously held by the Chinese (Anderson, 2024). Students often prefer informal housing arrangements which allow them to keep flexibility in the turbulent months upon arrival. Most of them work as well, using

the limited work permits associated with their study permits, but not allowing them to build any meaningful career in Toronto.

As an example of how global education industry conflated with immigration streams and global power networks affect the city at large and St. James Town in particular, bringing in a new iteration of temporary migrants living often in very precarious conditions will be a topic of later-on analysis. What is important to state at this point is that the relevance of St. James Town for international students' population only adds to the dynamic landscape of factors shaping the neighbourhood and provide context for the research responses analysed further.

Census Data Overview

The following section profiles the population of St. James Town, using the data from the 2016 Census¹ and providing some commentary on how the high degree of informal arrangements, particularly in the realm of housing, may not necessarily be fully reflected in the census information.

The official population varies slightly across years and sources. The 2006 census puts the population at over 14,600 people, while the 2011 census reports a decline of population down to less than 14,000 (stjamestown.org, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2011). This number is very similar in the 2016 and 2021 versions of the census (Statistics Canada, 2016, 2021). At the same time, the Wellesley Institute reports the population of the high-rise development at 17,100 citing residents themselves who estimated this number to be much higher at 25,000 people (Canada Public Health Association, 2024).

¹ The 2016 Census data is used instead of a more recent one because of the City of Toronto intervention which processed the 2016 Census data and adjusted it to its own municipal grid, mapping the findings of the 2016 Census onto the scale of particular neighbourhoods. That allowed direct insight into the chosen scale. No such report was found for a more recent data.

The exact number of people is, probably, of secondary importance for the reason of quite high mobility and informal arrangements.

St. James Town seems to be slightly male dominated, with 2016 census reporting male to female ratio being 53% to 47%, almost exactly the opposite from Toronto's average of 48% to 52%. The limitation of the 2016 census where the data comes from is that it does not represent other options for self-identification.

What is interesting is that St. James Town has a high reported ratio of people in their working age (defined by the census as the age between 25 and 64) of over 66% of the population, considerably higher than the city's 57% on average. At the same time, the number of working population might be significantly higher since youth between the age of 18 and 25, often of immigrant origin, is a driving force of population shift in St. James Town in the last years and they often do work to supplement their income in an increasingly costly city. The significant presence of working migrants/international students is reflected in daily life observations of the author, and it is reflected in the makeup of the interviewed group, with young immigrants holding study permits having strong representation in the research. The conflation of the changing population of St. James Town and Canada's policies regarding international students will be discussed further at the end of this section.

Moreover, numbers regarding seniors are interesting when put against the backdrop of the city at large. The percent of the population over 65 years old is twice as low as the city's average with 8% of the neighbourhood's population representing that segment, but the percentage of seniors living alone is a staggering 50% compared to 26% in the city. That can be attributed to the presence of public housing units as well as assisted living centres which are also present in the area. Another factor that incentivises the more settled part of the population to stay in the area

are the rent-controlled rental units, which keep the cap on the annual rent increases. They seem to be a safe haven for many, especially against the raising costs of living and the inflation of the early 2020s.

This also adds to lowering the average household size to 1.92 person from the city's average of 2.42 person. However, as mentioned frequently, this number can be contested by the findings of this research. Having said that, high-rise buildings entirely comprising of apartment units probably drive the average household size of St. James Town lower compared to the areas of the city which are spatially arranged into townhouses, for instance.

An attribute defining the neighbourhood in many ways and largely shaping the socio-economic conditions of it is the percentage of renter household, reaching 90%. Again, the data is representative of a larger North St. James Town and is surely even higher in St. James Town itself. For comparison, the city's average is 47%. That discrepancy cannot be overstated when it comes to how different St. James Town is from the house owning-oriented Toronto (and Canada) and how much renting the place shapes the financial futures of the population, their ways of attaching to the place and for immigrants, the way of defining themselves in Canada.

Almost twice as many people in St. James Town report unsuitable housing than in Toronto overall, and 44% claim it to be unaffordable compared with the city's 36%. Still, considering the macro-economic changes and challenges of the recent years, this number is likely to be higher.

The positive side of St. James Town is its location and access to transit. About 56% of residents commute to work by public transport (Toronto is at 37%) and the number of workers commuting to work for more than one hour a day is lower than the city's average.

Unsurprisingly, the linguistic composition in this traditionally immigrant neighbourhood falls along the lines of the larger city as Toronto is, as a whole, a city of immigrants. Residents report their mother tongue not being English in 57% of cases, juxtaposed with the city's 47%.

Language spoken at home being other than English is reported by over 30% of the population, which is only a few percentage points higher than the one of the surrounding city. Also, more than one language spoken at home is reported by 26% of the population, close to the city's average. What is interesting is that the lack of knowledge of English, stereotypically and harmfully expected in traditionally immigrant neighbourhoods, is reported by less than 3% while the city's average is 5%.

Another telling set of census data is the part about immigration statuses. With 51% of respondents being immigrants, St. James Town reflects the average of the city perfectly. What it contrasts with are the neighbouring townhouses and more wealthy surroundings of Cabbagetown, where the immigrant status is way lower, sitting at 34%. Also, the data confirms the "arrival city" (Saunders, 2011) character of the neighbourhood with the percentage of recent immigrants being almost twice as high as the city's average (13.8% to 7%). Again, the neighbouring Cabbagetown – South St. James Town is represented by only 3% of recent immigrants, highlighting the local discrepancies and adding to the story of those two areas, historically sharing the same character and going in two different directions of development.

Not surprisingly, other immigration-related factors add to the "arrival city" narrative: 8% of residents of St. James Town are not permanent residents, again over twice as much as the city's average of 3.5% and a steep difference from the wealthy Cabbagetown's average of 2.4%.

Second generation immigration is very consistent across both neighbourhoods and the city overall with a bit more than 20% of population claiming the status. However, the race and

ethnicity factors tell another story. The city's visible minority average is 51%, but for St. James Town the number is almost 67%. At the same time, for the larger neighbouring Cabbagetown, it is less than 30%, showing that the white population occupies wealthier positions and more privileged spatial arrangements, talking into the post-colonial narratives, crucial for the understanding of the socio-economic position of St. James Town's residents in a settler colonial city as well as the country overall.

Not surprisingly, confirming Nandita Sharma's theories of immigration and the power of citizenship rights (2020), while Toronto average of Canadian citizens is 85%, it is 75% for St. James Town and, just to compare, 90% for the predominantly white and much wealthier area of Cabbagetown.

The numbers of residents identifying as Aboriginal are 1% and 2% respectively, with the city's average is 0.9%.

An important number to remember is the median income in Toronto reaching CAD 65,000 and median family income being almost CAD 83,000 for the year of 2016. For St. James Town, those numbers are significantly lower with only CAD 41,000 and CAD 53,000, respectively. It is important to see, through the lens of global border and global rights governance (Sharma, 2018; 2020), that the income data intertwines with the visible minority status as well as, if not predominantly, with the immigration status.

Again, if compared to Cabbagetown (a predominantly Canadian and significantly more white area), the household income in Cabbagetown is way higher (CAD 61,000) and the family income exceeds Toronto's average by a lot (CAD 103,000). To add to this overview, the levels of residents without income at all are the same in St. James Town as Toronto's average, but

government's assistance number are quite higher (almost 14% compared to less than 10%).

Lastly, poverty level in St. James Town is reported as 40% while the city's average is 22%.

Important statistics are represented by the education data, again debunking some stereotypes about immigrants. While the city's average of higher education (bachelor's degree and higher) sits at 44%, St. James Town does not lag behind, with almost 46%. However, the unemployment rate is slightly higher than Toronto's average and the percentage of full-time, full-year workers falls slightly below the average.

Some degree of explanation often lies in the precarious status of newcomers and the lack of access to full labor and citizenship rights in Canada. At the same time, an important factor is the labor market itself. It creates significant disadvantages and barriers for equal competition with Canadians, with symptoms of that systemic inequality ranging from not recognizing credentials, limits to full-time work or infamous "Canadian work experience" requirement, poignantly questioned by Joseph Mensah in his important work (2002).

To lay the groundwork for telling the story of St. James Town as a possible community, some more information needs to be provided about families, households and even marital status.

The neighbourhood is quite younger than the city itself, with median and mean age of a little over 35 and 37, respectively. That is around 3-4 years younger than the rest of the city.

Although multi-person households (three and more) are slightly overrepresented in St. James Town, the two-person household sit exactly on the average and, as mentioned before, single households are significantly overrepresented, with 15 % over the average. That piece of data can be subjected to contradictory, or complementing, explanations, depending on the viewpoint. As much as regulated rent (often simply called "old rent" by the residents) can be seen as a factor

facilitating single living and keeping the apartment for many years even if temporarily absent, the common practice, especially in the midst of rising numbers of international students moving in from South Asia is shared living with one eligible person “in charge” of the rent. Such arrangements are not reflected in the census information. Neither the 2016 census nor the 2021 census fully encapsulates the post-pandemic inflow of study-permit holders into shared apartments, seen in the interviews and in personal observations of the author as a resident of St. James Town.

With other household data, St. James Town differs from the city’s average in almost every way. The number of single adults living with parents are way below average, which can be easily explained by the newcoming population often separated from their family that stays abroad. But the numbers of adults living alone and seniors (both over 65 and over 85) are almost twice higher than the average. The household size is on a gradual decline for the last two decades, declining with a slightly higher pace than in the rest of the city. The family data falls mostly in line with the data of the city itself, with the numbers of couples living without children being higher but multi-person families numbers being slightly higher.

The percentages of non-official languages being both mother tongues and home languages are only a few points higher than the city’s averages and, in both categories, similar sets of languages take the lead. If there is one dominant language, it is Tagalog with almost twice as many users reporting it (around 1500) as the next language reported, which is Tamil. These are followed by Nepali, Spanish, Mandarin, French, Amharic, Arabic, Hindi and Urdu.

Language data is coherent with the places of origin of immigrants to St. James Town, predominantly from the Philippines, which dominates over the category of “all immigrants.” At the same time, while still taking the lead in the “recent immigrant” category, the Philippines do

not have such a big advantage there, suggesting that although the inflow of persons from that country is consistent across decades, other countries catch up as the popular source countries, namely India and other countries in West Asia and South Asia. Interestingly, despite the high representation of Ethiopian immigration in St. James Town, this country is not one of the main source countries anymore.

Lastly, but very importantly, the visible minority status, as mentioned before, is 67% of the population. South Asian (almost 4,000 people) and Filipinx (almost 3,000) are the largest groups, exceeded only by white population of around 6,000. Black population is significantly high with over 2,000 people and Chinese population almost reaches 1,000. Still, the categories can be contested, and they do not seem to encapsulate mixed ethnicities and self-reported categories, often simplifying and over-aggregating certain groups of residents (“South Asians”, “Black”).

To conclude that part, none of those numbers are perfectly accurate. First of all, as mentioned at the beginning, the census definition of North St. James Town is not geographically the same as the outline of St. James Town defined by this thesis. Moreover, the 2016 data on which this work is mostly based, is slightly outdated and does not consider recent historical developments such as COVID-19, but also the post-pandemic inflation, the rising costs of living, etc. Also, it does not consider the ever-growing number of newly built condos, adding population to the census area every year, and reshaping not only the conditions of St. James Town itself but also of its immediate surroundings. Lastly, no census data, even the most recent one (2021) fully grasps the influx of international students to crowded downtown areas.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the conceptual and structural choices informing the research design.

Once these are discussed, the design of the study will be outlined in detail, focusing on the use of concepts, the levels of theory generated and finally, the choice of grounded theory as the method of analysing data. Later, the tools of data collection will be discussed, namely the open-ended interviews and observations, along with the strategies of conducting field research.

Overview of the Conceptual and Structural Choices

To elicit knowledge about the current state of immigrants' situation in St. James Town and to shed light on newcomers' ways of fostering and maintaining global ties on different levels of analysis, the following research uses a plethora of different strategies.

Before the research tools are described *per se*, it is important to understand the research framework and strategies chosen, since these are the factors determining the “angle” of analysis (Blaike, 2009). In other words, the approach to knowledge itself, along with the deliberate, strategic approach to acquired data will shape the outcome of the work, informing what will be stressed, highlighted and sought for in the further analysis and how the link between the theoretical and the empirical will be established.

The following section aims at outlining these interdependencies by situating the empirical research process within different methodological spectrums, particularly choosing the research approach, focusing on defining the sensitising use of concepts, explaining the middle range theory as the aim for the outcome of the empirical work in St. James Town, and lastly, explaining the choice of grounded theory as the analytical approach to data, particularly in the spirit of Kathy Charmaz's approach.

Further, data gathering and analysing tools are outlined, bringing the abstract methodological deliberations back to the empirical research and the practicalities of the field work.

Conceptual and Theoretical Approach

Research Design Approach

As Blaike states, the concepts used are the building blocks of social theories (2009, p.111) and as such, they are the form which ideas take, expressed by words and symbols. Theory, in turn, specify the relationships between concepts and why these relationships exist (p.112).

Still, the ways concepts are derived from reality may differ as well, followed by how they can be used to inform theories. In other words, the sources of concepts as well as approaches to utilizing them evoke their own characterization and Blaike differentiates between Inductive, Deductive, Retroductive and Abductive approaches (p.113) of deriving meaning from data as well as traditions of using concepts in social sciences. These approaches and traditions need to be briefly outlined to explain and justify the choices made in the research phase.

Following Blaike (2009), it can be argued that in both Deductive and Inductive, the most popular approaches to research strategy, it is “the researcher’s responsibility to select relevant concepts and to define them before the research commences” (p.113).

The Deductive approach tends to answer the question of “why” social occurrences take place and it aims at doing that using the existing theories of trying to find new theories applicable to the given context (p.85) to explain associations between social phenomena. As such, the Deductive approach, although very useful when comes to working with hypothesis, can be mainly employed to test theories or theoretical assumptions, to accept them or reject them.

The Inductive approach, on the other hand, tries to answer the questions of “what” the social occurrences are, while it aims at providing “limited generalizations about the distribution of, and patterns of association amongst, observed or measured characteristics of individuals and social phenomena” (p.83). Those characteristics are crucial in the Inductive approach as they delineate the boundaries of what is being focused on. Generalizations based on the characteristics are the desired outcome of the process. Hence, the choice of the characteristics is the crucial one and can be informed by background knowledge, theory, previous research, or perhaps even traditions within the discipline. Inductive approach, often used in quantitative analysis, should not be identified solely with such an analysis. However, what seems to be the limitation of the Inductive approach is the fact that it is often limited in time and space and does not aspire to forming any sort of universal laws governing the social world (p.85).

On the other hand, in an Abductive research strategy, the concepts and their definitions used to inform the research can be tentatively derived from the concepts used by social actors themselves in the context of the investigated topic. In other words, technical concepts are derived from lay concepts and operationalized into abstract ideas employable in the theoretical realm.

The Retroductive approach (p.87) aims at discovering underlying mechanisms that may explain a certain social phenomenon or occurrence, often manifested by some sort of regularities observed. It needs to start with explaining the regularity that is source of the academic curiosity and follows with the examination of different characteristics in the context under investigation.

The overview of the approaches serves as a demarcation of the field which, in itself, is largely conceptual – in other words, although the delineation of research strategies is crucial to structure the thoughts, the aim and the process of the research, in fact designing and conducting research cut for one specific approach is rare and perhaps even unnecessary. To put it differently, it can be

claimed that choosing one specific approach and designing the research strictly adhering to its rules would be reductive since social phenomena do not come clean cut for one of four theoretical approaches and the researcher's creativity and flexibility can be as much of a premise of successful research as a process strictly following methodological conceptualizations.

The research designed to place the immigrant neighbourhood of St. James Town within a global network of theoretical beings, from settler colonialism to space production and a possible planetary process of urbanization, needs to focus on the task at hand first, on portraying St. James Town residents and chosen global flows informing their localized everyday life. As such, the chosen approach, although mindful of the four dominant approaches, needs to be a blend of their different characteristics instead of solely exemplifying one.

Having said that, the research questions posed for St. James Town are heavily influenced by questions of "how" and "what", with the latter seemingly directing them towards the Inductive approach. In fact, limited generalizations are the aim of those questions posed and, following Blake's delineations, the results are limited in time and space. When designing research solely focused on a particular neighbourhood of a city, despite interest in its global ties, as well as stressing a particular moment in its history as the temporal bookmark for the inquiry, the resulting generalizations by the very definition will be time- and space-limited. The choice of the characteristics informing the research, ranging from what is a neighbourhood, who is a newcomer, what is a settler state and many others outlined both in the theoretical part of this work as in the up-to-date description of St. James Town, are arbitrary and aiming at a particular goal of situating planetary urbanization within the four corners of the immigrant enclave. That also suggests the Inductive approach.

Still, with the theory of planetary urbanization being contested and not having been tested or applied empirically in too many contexts thus far, the following research can be considered a “testing ground” for it, which is a characteristic of the Deductive approach. Also, the research in St. James Town centres the narratives of the residents themselves, focusing on their vision of the neighbourhood, their definitions and ontologies. That suggests a strong presence of an Abductive philosophy of research. As much as those methodological demarcations might sound confusing, they do not aim at blurring the research design. In fact, the opposite is desired by showing that as much as the general Inductive spirit will guide the data gathering process, the analysis phase and the theory formulation, the overall design is not reluctant to “borrow” and rely on methodological influences of other approaches, particularly when it may add to the inquisitive and academic value of the outcome.

Sensitizing Use of Concepts

As mentioned before, after identifying how concepts can be derived from data, it is worth to outline how they can be used to inform theories. Again, Blaike (2009) mentions four main traditions of doing that. The Ontological tradition is “concerned with establishing a set of concepts that identifies the basic features of the social world” (p.113) while the Operationalizing tradition focuses on turning concepts into variables, “with identifying the key concepts to be used in a particular study and then defining them and developing way of measuring them” (p.113). Sensitizing tradition, on the other hand, reflects the situation when the researcher starts with some rather vaguely defined concepts solely used as an orientation landmark for the research problem (p. 118). The Hermeneutic tradition focuses on the language, its everyday functions for social actors under investigation (p.119).

It is worth noting that in as much as the Ontological tradition stays very much on the theory side of the theoretical-empirical spectrum, the Operationalizing tradition is very technical and leans towards the empirical. The Sensitizing and Hermeneutical traditions bridge these two. For the research of St. James Town, already defined as situated in time and space, trying to test the embeddedness of grand concepts on a localized scale, an empirical-leaning Operationalizing way seems to suffice, putting stress on predetermined concepts and looking into how they resonate with the data gathered. At the same time, the Sensitizing tradition is more accurate, in a way that it can remind the researcher that concepts are still mostly orientational landmarks and that retaining a high degree of conceptual openness during the research process might lead to better analytical results.

The Levels of Theory

Following the classification of Blaike (2009), there are several ways of classifying the outcome of research into different levels of theory, depending on how encompassing their theoretical results are supposed to be - ranging on a scale from “mere” descriptions through relationship patterns, then establishing explanatory systems and finally, empirical testing of theoretical ideas. Blaike suggests *ad hoc* classificatory systems, categorical system or taxonomies, conceptual frameworks, theoretical systems and empirical-theoretical systems (p.130).

However, for the sake of clarity of the following work, it seems that focusing on the scope of theory levels as suggested by Denzin (1970) is more relevant. He starts with grand theories, also referred to as macro-theories which aim at explaining the important features of a society on a large scale. Then middle-range theories follow, a term coined by Merton (1967): “Each theory is more than a mere empirical generalization – an isolated proposition summarizing observed uniformities of relationships between two or more variables (p.142). Substantive theories, as

referred to as Denzin again (1970), do apply to specific problem areas such as, for instance, immigration or urbanizing processes. Formal theory, argued for by Simmel, Goffman and Homans, are based on a premise that certain universal explanations of social life, often set on a limited, all-explaining set of variables, can be delivered (Blaike, 2009).

The effort of situating the immigrant neighbourhood within the larger city, the settler state of Canada and withing the flows of planetary processes of urbanization does not offer any sort of macro- theoretical statements, particularly because from the very beginning it is geographically well-demarkated and limited and also, because its temporal dimension is set as well, talking into the idea of a certain moment of changes in the history of the neighbourhood. From Denzin's catalogue (1970), also offered by Blaike (2009), the substantive theories seem to be the closest since immigration theories, particularly at the intersection with urbanization processes are the focus of this work. Having said that, this work does not aim at developing any generalizations about immigration and urbanization processes outside of St. James Town. However, it can probably serve as a tool for studying other locations experiencing a similar set of socio-historical circumstances.

Grounded Theory as a Framework for Analysis

The choice of a method for data analysis is a crucial one for eliciting the desired knowledge from the study and forming a theory based on it. There are different ways and strategies to achieving this (Blaike, 2009).

Having said that, this work will follow the approach first suggested by Glaser and Strauss (Blaike, 2009), which turned into grounded theory, a very popular method of iterative theory creation. To shed light on the origin of this method it is important to highlight its innovative approach.

“Glaser and Strauss (1967) inspired the democratization of qualitative research—and of theorizing itself” (Charmaz, 2008, p.399). They aimed at changing the emphasis of academic analysis from testing a theory to generating it (p. 140). Seemingly, there is still a problem of academic continuity and verification of new theories. What Glaser and Strauss proposed was a method which would lead to both, creating and verification of the theory within a single, iterative process. They believed that “good theory is systematically discovered from and verified from the data of social research” (p.140). Staying highly critical of a dominant deductive approach to generating knowledge they advocated for a more inductive process, less focused and reliant on solely testing the theory.

They argue that “the adequacy of a theory for sociology today cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated. (...) We suggest that it is likely to be a better theory to the degree that it has been inductively developed from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.5).

It is worth noting that this inductive focus goes well with the mostly inductive approach taken towards the study of St. James Town. Thus, those choices provide a natural argument for the grounded theory method of generating theory.

What Glaser and Strauss suggest, according to Blaike (2009), can be put under the umbrella term of comparative analysis. Its main premise is that along the process of conceptual categories being generated from the data gathering, they can be tested, and their relevance assessed in another context. One quote which helps to pinpoint this strategy and fits perfectly to the task at hand, namely contextualizing the lives of immigrants in St. James Town, is when the authors argue that “[the] job is not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.30).

As Blaike comments, grounded theory is used for two types of theory generation, namely the substantive and formal (2009, p.140). Again, that provides further coherent argumentation for the use of Glaser and Strauss's method for the work at hand, since, as mentioned before, substantive theories apply to specific problems and contexts, without ambitions of creating overarching, grant scale theoretical solutions (Denzin, 1970). Formal theory, on the other hand, is generated at a higher level of generality and involves concepts that can be applied to a number of substantive areas (Blaike, 2009, p.141)

At the same time, it is worth stressing that Glaser and Strauss created their first iteration of grounded theory almost 60 years ago and that it has been evolving since then, opening up to new forms and being contextualized and modified along the way. For instance, the authors preferred a "pure" version of the method, which assumed concepts and eventually a theory developed from the process and case at hand, with no preconceived conceptual assumptions. This stance has been modified quite freely since one cannot function in a complete theoretical void and often, the goal of the academic process itself should be to strive for the synergy effect when existing and new concepts can merge into more accurate and powerful descriptions of reality. In the words of Lyden, "the need to generate new theory in every research context, is both a waste of good theoretical ideas and also leads to very fragmented overall theory development" (1998, p.19).

To exemplify that: the research in St. James Town borrows heavily from the previous inquiries into immigrant neighbourhoods in Canada (Basu, 2006, 2017; Mensah, 2021), the points of view advocated for by post-colonial perspectives (Blomley, 2004; Sharma, 2018, 2020; Smith, 2021) or Lefebvre's triad of space production (Lefebvre, 1991; Merrifield, 2015; Brenner & Schmid, 2015). Those valuable and insightful interventions provide ready-made concepts which, as much

as they need to be taken cautiously and ought to be skillfully applied, should not be dismissed simply for the sake of methodological purity.

Thus, it is important to highlight that what the following work mostly takes from the grounded theory innovativeness is the rationale of an iterative process, testing and scrutinizing along the way, but not the task of working in a conceptual void, as the orthodox grounded theory could advocate for. Where grounded theory provides the best fit for the context of the following work is the lack of a “pre-planned linear process of testing hypotheses, but rather an evolving process in which what has been “discovered” at any point will determine what happens next” (Blaike, 2009, p.143).

Still, there are some valid criticisms to grounded theory that should be pointed out. Blaike (2009), argues that the role of the observer seems to be unproblematic for the early iterations of the grounded theory. That is a very strong point in the context of, for instance, social research using post-colonial viewpoints but conducted within a racialized community by a scholar representing the dominant racial or ethnic group. This can be partially addressed by the honest self-inquiry and positioning oneself in the social context, even if it will not erase how the presence of the researcher’s intervention might influence the process or the responses.

Another valid critique, particularly in the light of the social constructionist as an approach used in this work, is that little consideration is given by Glaser and Strauss to the social actors’ construction of reality.

The Social Constructionist Approach of Kathy Charmaz

For the sake of “softening” the classical grounded theory method even more and updating it with more evolved approaches, Kathy Charmaz’s work will be introduced. As she claims herself, she views “grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or

packages” (p.9) and claims that grounded theory method(s) can complement other approaches to qualitative study without the need for reinventing the wheel.

Charmaz’s insight into technical steps of using grounded theory will be briefly outlined in this chapter, but what is her crucial contribution informing the following work is the differentiation between objectivist grounded theory and social constructionist approach to it (2008). The former, according to Charmaz, “seek explanation and prediction at a general level, separated and abstracted from the specific research site and process” (p.398) and mostly deal with the “why” research questions. The problematic aspect of the objectivist approach, for Charmaz, is the assumption of existing of a single reality that can be discovered by a passive, neutral observer in a “value-free” inquiry (p.401).

On the other hand, the constructionist approach, mostly attend to “what” and “how” questions and differs in the approach to a research interaction itself. First, a single glance into previous chapters of this work will show that these are questions mostly posed by this research of St. James Town’s communities. What aligns with this research project even more is the constructionist idea that understanding of the social phenomena must be located in specific circumstances of the research process (p.398).

However, Charmaz’s intervention does not only provide more flexibility, but it also introduces more sensitivity into social research, namely by re-defining the emphasis on the positionality of the researcher and interactions with the researched world – dealing with some of the criticisms by Blaike, as outlined before. Charmaz argues for social constructionism in research design that implies relativity of the researcher’s perspectives, positions, practices, and research situation, researcher’s reflexivity and depictions of social constructions in the studied world (p.398).

Charmaz does not introduce any competition with the objectivist version of the method. In fact, she claims that properly answering the questions of “how” and “what” simply provides a foundation for moving on to the “why” questions. Along the process, the social constructionist approach to grounded theory encourages researchers to make measured assessments of their methods and of themselves as researchers (p.408). Inasmuch as a social constructionist approach can “invoke the generalizing logic of the objectivist grounded theory,” it does that while taking into account the entire overview of the measured assessments, not in the absence of those, and that in can provide a more nuanced analysis that in fact considers the positionality and partiality of the researcher which is the crucial innovation to Charmaz’s method.

To define the constructionist approach more explicitly, she highlights that “reality is multiple, processual, and constructed—but constructed under particular conditions” (p.402). Moreover, the research process emerges from interactions, which is important because it implies that the process is already another social construct in itself, allowing to fully understand and utilize the power and insight of one’s positionality. Adding to that, Charmaz claims that as much as positionality of the researcher is crucial, the positionality of the participant is a part of the equation as well and should be taken into account. Such interactions create data, the researcher, and the participants “co-construct” it as the product of the process, not simply as an act of observation or eliciting knowledge from reality: “Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives, and interactions affect it” (2008, p.402).

Aiming to update the grounded theory sensitivity even more, Charmaz highlights the need to include the 21st century epistemologies and advocates for not giving the priority to the researcher’s view but to understand the participants’ views as integral to the analysis instead. While delineating the principles for “21st-century social constructionist grounded theory,”

Charmaz provides some practical guidelines, starting with treating the research process itself as a social process, not taking place in any sort of social void. Next, she suggests scrutinizing directions and decisions being made, which can be seen as a reflection of the original grounded theory iterative approach. Charmaz also suggests improvisation, both methodologically and strategically, which is a refreshing point of view in often methodologically constraining research setting. However, she stresses that collecting sufficient data is crucial in the process of discerning and documenting how social actors construct their world and meanings. That last point suggests an emphasis on saturation of data, quite crucial to recognize as the “end point” of the grounded theory process which, without such a recognition, could otherwise keep on being re-iterated indefinitely.

Highlighting the pros and cons of the grounded theory and throwing some light on the evolution of the method seems a valid demarcation in the process of explaining the potential and accuracy of it in the field research endeavour in St. James Town, Toronto. Not only the middle-range theory based on an un-binding set of concepts seems to provide a solid goal of the research. The iterative, open-ended process informed by scrutiny of positionality and reflectivity as well as highlighting the role of the researcher in the process are the exact tools that the following research requires to develop and original and societally relevant insight.

The following parts of the section will outline the tools and strategies employed in the field research and show how these tools align and compliment the chosen methods.

Data Collection and Analysis

As previously mentioned, the research process relied on qualitative methods of inquiry, applicable to the social context where perceptions, evaluations, imaginaries and narratives are meant to be explained (Charmaz, 2006; Blaike, 2009).

As Blaike summarizes it in a simple but accurate way, when speaking about the quantitative and qualitative division of data collection approaches, the difference usually comes down to the difference between numbers and words (2009, p.204). Indeed, in the inquiry into immigrants social worlds, both localized and that which reflects their global ties, this study chooses to reflect based on actors' own perceptions and narratives and for that matter, chooses the qualitative inquire – simply relying on words as the primary source of data, in a form of semi-structured interviews, often leaning towards open-ended ones, giving the participants the freedom of following the topics which are important to them, while still staying within the localized or trans-localized context of immigrant experience and daily life.

As the source of secondary data, quantitative information is also useful in the context of St. James Town, particularly while analysing the geography of the area, its mapping, macro-urban processes (still staying on the scale of the city) and, most of all, using the census data as a background information, as the foundation of situating the lived experience. Census data, categorized and well-designed by the City of Toronto (2016) already on the localized scale of the neighbourhoods (outlined before) provides a robust and valuable source of secondary data for preliminary set up of the research site. Considering that, dismissing quantitative overview would be a waste of potential even if that quantitative data has its own limitations, simplifications, or discrepancies in definitions (of the neighbourhood itself, for instance), often lacking nuance.

In other words, as much as primary sources of data are fully qualitative and narrative-based, the secondary sources rely on quantitative overview and on historical information available online through websites and articles, available publicly and in academic databases, so mixed methods are in fact used for the research.

An advantage of mixed methods is the fact that they provide some degree of comparison and synergy, even if simply to point out the discrepancies. For instance, census data can provide a goal post to point out which demographics are underrepresented or overrepresented in the data collection process, in a sense “commenting” on the quality of the sampling process.

Moreover, mixed methods, aside from being a popular approach, are considered a comprehensive tool for a couple of reasons. First of all, as already explained, strengths of one method can offset the weaknesses of another (Blaike, 2009). Also, the evidence produced can be more comprehensive and robust. Mixed methods help answering research questions that cannot be answered by one method only. In this case, with the semi-structured interviews being a dominant, primary source method, the act of observation, particularly because the researcher is also an immigrant and a resident of the area, provide context and allow the researcher to catch discrepancies between the narratives and the observed reality, for instance.

Operationalizing Semi-Structured Interviews

The preferred method of obtaining primary data is a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, offered in in-person format of 30- to 50-minutes-long conversation – directed and informed by the research questions but open to narratives, probing, digressing and interventions stemming from what the participant wants to share.

The consent form, approved by the Office of Research Ethics (ORE) at York University, was made available to participants in a desired form prior to the interview, giving the interviewees at least a couple of days to read the forms, inviting them to ask questions and address any doubts that could occur. The consent forms was signed on paper or electronically before the interview started. With the interview being only audio-recorded, the permission to record, aside from being included in the consent form, was given orally by the participants at the beginning of the

conversation. A token of gratification of CAD 30 was given to participants after the interview was conducted.

Interviews as a Method

“Most essentially, an interview is a directed conversation” (Charmaz, 2006, p.25). Such a statement may sound like cliché, but it is far from that. It points out to the conversational mode of communication, which assumes horizontality and equality of exchange. That is crucial in the context of positionality of the researcher and the participants, and the Abductive approach’s feature of openness towards taking the narratives of the participants as “the world as it is.”

Charmaz (2006) differentiates between intensive interviewing, informational interviewing and others. Still, she focuses on the intensive interviewing as the form allowing an in-depth exploration of the topic and helps to elicit the person’s individual experience, viewpoint or even world view (p.25). Since the act of asking questions is often focused on a particular topic, the interviewer often directs the conversation into details which usually do not come up in everyday life conversations. Hence, what is important from the point of view of the researcher is to listen, to “observe with intensity” and to encourage responses. It is still a conversation, but most of the talking is done by the interviewee.

Charmaz advises using open-ended questions for structuring the interview and that goes along with the open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview format designed for this research. The focus of the questions format is put on an inviting, story-telling-inducing openness where, through non-judgemental questions and intense focus on follow up inquiry, some unanticipated statements and stories may come to the surface (p.25-26). Such a format is based on balancing between allowing the participant to follow their train of thoughts and narratives, but still not deviating way too far from the topic of interest.

What is important for the choice of that method is the fact that it goes well with the nature of the grounded theory (p.28-29). In fact, they are both directed and shaped yet emergent and flexible, they ought to have a pace, but are not restricted or bound by the form. What is interesting in Charmaz's definition is that interviews already compliment other methods such as observation, which is the second method of primary data gathering for this work. Also, as much as the researcher engaging with grounded theory takes control of the data and later approaches it in an iterative, open manner, the same takes place at the stage of the interview itself. To quote the theorist herself: "the combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fit grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytic incisiveness of the resultant analysis." (p.29)

Rapport with Participants, Power Structures and Positionality

The researcher is expected to show interest and encourage the participants to say more in such a format, especially when the questions are open and semi-structured as in this case.

Charmaz pays a lot of attention to the conversation format itself: however, she points out also to how the interview differs from a casual conversation. For instance, some level of intrusiveness is allowed and sometimes even expected by the participants, so the boundaries of what is considered to be rude and what is anticipated are moved (2006, p.26). Also, summarizing, concluding, asking to clarify or elaborate are a common and desired practice, as well as changing the topic when the former point of interest is saturated.

This comes as a useful guidance in the Canadian context, where the mainstream culture, to a large extent relies on not asking personal questions at all. Questions regarding nationality, country of origin, race, ethnicity or religion often seem to be perceived as intrusive in public, academic or professional spaces, so the question which is important to be posed from the

methodological point of view is: “How to ask interview questions in such a context that doesn’t encourage asking this kind of questions?”

This leads to the positionality of the researcher, power relations between the researcher and participants and skilfully balancing between the inquisitive and the insensitive. More specifically, the problem of power relations during the interview is worth keeping in mind, not only from the social power and status point of view, but also from individual characteristics of the people meeting for the first time: “Powerful people may take charge, turn the interview questions to address topics on their own terms, and control the timing, pacing and length of the interview. Both powerful and disempowered individuals may distrust their interviewers, the sponsoring institutions, and the stated purpose of the research, as well as how the findings might be used” (Charmaz, 2006, p.27).

Moreover, the intersection of professional status, gender, race, and age may affect the direction and content of interviews especially in the setting such as St. James Town, where a plethora of nationalities, ethnicities and customs may play out, all juxtaposed with the person of the interviewer, a white male, an immigrant as well, but also an employee of a higher educational institution.

Researcher’s Positionality in the Context of the Research Interviews

To position myself in this research, some basic facts need to be outlined. I am a first-generation immigrant from Poland who got to Canada through the Express Entry program - an immigration stream which allows to gain permanent residency, even without prior presence in Canada. That is one factor that had to be kept in mind while approaching immigrants from all over the world, often not as privileged with their status and their story of arrival as I was. Although my sense of belonging is constructed almost entirely around the people who are first generation immigrants

to Toronto and I deeply believe that we share a lot of experiences, differences need to be acknowledged and respected.

I believe that the experience of the border, of months of checks, medical examinations, language tests, photos and fingerprints taken, as well as impersonal and often unpleasant correspondence with Canadian immigration authorities, contrasting with the welcoming image that the country tries to uphold – these are all the experiences we share as immigrants to the country and social or economic status does not play out much role in this part of the arrival process. The rhythms of our daily lives in Canada are also set by the same drum of counting days for citizenship eligibility, staying mindful of each piece of document which is potentially worth keeping, struggling with credit score, proving eligibility for housing applications, and so forth.

At the same time, there are major differences to recognize. Being a cis man, I need to be mindful of my position of privilege in a patriarchal society. For instance, being a cis person, I automatically fit to most of the categories of looks, behaviour, and other cultural norms favoured by the mainstream society. It is very much so with being a male living in a city largely created by men for men.

In the racialized community I live in, an important factor is being a white person. Although it is worth confessing that I have experienced becoming white almost overnight, I still need to acknowledge tremendous privilege that stems from it in a settler colonial nation state. What I mean by “becoming white overnight” is the fact that in Poland, a country culturally and ethnically isolated since the forced ethnic homogenization of the World War II until the end of the communist regime in 1989, more than 99% of the population is white.

Thus, as Eastern Europeans we do not share the same definitions and leverages used by whiteness in North American context. Racism as an *idea* of superiority is a big problem in Poland impacting its international relations and border policies: however, race-based *practices* within the nation-state almost do not exist or at least have not existed until very recently. In that sense, an Eastern European sense of superiority is quite different from the systemic racism of settler colonialism, being played out largely in the absence of groups that could be oppressed and exploited in a systemic manner.

Coming to Canada in 2020, I have experienced an intense course of both, privileges and social divisions. I felt both, how easy it is to be white in Canada, how effortless almost, and at the same time, I faced distrust from historically marginalized or oppressed communities, and I had to learn to face it and accept it.

Particularly in the context of St. James Town, being white is a privilege in a place where police or security personnel visit the buildings very often. Being financially stable and having already been equipped with a “strong” European passport puts me in a position that many of my neighbours would like to be in. Having graduate education already, working at a higher education institution, being unionized as a worker, enjoying health benefits – those privileges create synergy for well-being that separates my daily life from the hardships faced by many of my neighbours. I only hope that the relative peace of mind, the education obtained and the time available proved to be helpful in depicting and explaining the conditions of lives of St. James Town residents.

Strategies of Arranging the Interviews

What stems from the positionality of the researcher is the fact that interviews ought to be skillfully arranged for the sake of creating a safe and inviting setting for the participants. For instance, the question of where to conduct in-person interviews is a crucial one.

Not facing the COVID19 restrictions anymore make the process easier. Still, a lot of cultural or even logistic factors complicate the picture. With the timeline of conducting the interviews in the summer, it is possible to do that outdoors, and long as the audio recording conditions are good enough. Spaces of serving as *de facto* public spaces for the area such as Tim Hortons, a neighbourhood bar patio or the corridors of the Wellesley Community Centre were used as location for conducting the interviews.

Moreover, participants homes, as well as the apartment of the researcher on Sherbourne Street were used as interview locations. Having the intimacy of one's home, an undisturbed setting and coziness, can create the best conditions for a conversation about the immigrant experience however, as tempting as it is, such setting also has its limitations. Private spaces, especially in the post-pandemic reality of people used to isolation way more than before, inviting someone's to the researcher's home or visiting them at theirs can create a level of proximity that would result in a sense of discomfort and would have an effect opposite to the intended.

The researcher himself would not feel comfortable offering one-on-one meetings at a private location to women, for instance. Thinking of gender relations, especially when no one else is present at the location, could be perceived disrespectful in some cultures and social groups. It needs to be assumed that all kinds of cultural sensitivities, when it comes to gender relations, might be at play in an area as diverse as St. James Town. Thus, it is safer from the point of view of the research projects integrity and efficiency to rule out such arrangements entirely.

When scheduling the interview, one or two public locations were offered by the researcher while staying open to participants' suggestions.

Observation Practice

Another important element of the research design are observations. These are crucial to utilize the researcher's position of living on the site of the research itself, at the Westernmost edge of St. James Town. In that way, observations come naturally as an act of perceiving and noticing space and social interactions around. The fact that the author of this work has been living in the neighbourhood since the Fall of 2020 allows him to utilize the informal, deep everyday knowledge of occurrences, rhythms and, very importantly, changes.

What is worth mentioning is the fact that observations aiming at learning about the production of space in St. James Town were first used by the author in the Winter of 2020, which was associated with a graduate school course work. Later, some of those observations were used in an article written about the utilization of corners and public spaces as informal places of gathering (Formanowicz, 2022).

At the same time, the author volunteered in the community centre, namely Corner@200, located at 200 Wellesley Street. He helped with the daily activities of the community centres (taking phone calls, helping to use the computer) and assisted at reach out actions, including the COVID19 vaccination program, the food program and others. All this provided opportunities to visit spaces of the neighbourhood, including interiors of the buildings, corridors, basements and sometimes residents' apartments that otherwise could not be accessed. Having visited about a dozen of the high-rise buildings in St. James Town, the author deepened the knowledge about the built environment of the area.

However, observation per se, as a research method, has its rules and structures: “Qualitative observation means that the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site and records observations” (Creswell, 2009, p.214). Observation as a method can take different levels of engagement with the research site and is often associated with ethnographic research however, it can be a useful complementary method across the spectrum of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2009).

The advantage of observation is its temporal dimension, which is not a one-time intervention (such as an interview or a survey) but is spread out over time, allowing to notice changes, allowing to scrutinize the narratives formulated by the research. The levels of engagement and approach to observation range from non-participatory observations where the researcher has no interaction with the population researched, through passive, moderate, active and complete participation which leads almost to action research (Creswell, 2009).

There are, as in every method, some ethical concerns, particularly when it comes to participant observation. Creswell points out that “ethnographic research is always obtrusive. Participant observation invades the life of the informant (...) and sensitive information is frequently revealed. This is of particular concern in this study where the informant’s position and institution are highly visible” (p.183).

However, this work did not face this kind of ethical concerns since the observation was non-participatory, which was made easier by the fact that the investigator led his daily life in the area. Observations can bring insight into both, the strictly spatial arrangements but also the temporal ones such as rhythms, patterns, repetitiveness, and so forth.

Observation took place in three distinct spaces: publicly available ones, outside of residential buildings in St. James Town; public-private spaces of lobbies, corridors, elevators, internet cafes, community centres, shops; private spaces of residents' apartments or rooms, depending on the pandemic situation.

Sampling Criteria and Recruitment

The field research part of this work, focusing predominantly on semi-structured interviews and non-participatory observations, have been scheduled for the summer of 2023, from April to September.

Those months were chosen for three reasons. First, in the summer it is often easier to find time for the interview for some groups of immigrants, particularly international students, but also part-time workers. It is also the time when weather in Toronto is pleasant enough to encourage people to go out, be active, interact with one another and stay outside. Such environment is crucial for incentivising people to take part in the interviews, and it makes it possible to conduct them in open spaces. The third reason is that during the summer, a lot of activities can potentially take place outside, such as festivals, community events and gatherings. This is a good opportunity for observations.

Recruitment of fifty immigrants living in St. James Town took place mostly through the distribution of the recruitment fliers in public and shared spaces of the neighbourhood. The flier included basic information on aim of the research, the eligibility criteria and format. Email address of the researcher, as well as his phone number, were displayed on the flier. Also, information about the institution supporting the research (York University) was shown. Financial gratification was also mentioned (Appendix 1).

Fliers were distributed not only in the corridors of the high-rise buildings of St. James Town, in the elevators and laundry rooms, but also in public posting spaces, which there is no shortage of in St. James Town, at the community centres, shops and restaurants, and left at bus stops to make it available for the commuters.

No in-person solicitation was done, in order to avoid creating any sort of personal pressure for the interview and to make sure that the person who takes part in the research does it after making an individual decision – leaving fliers around the neighbourhood allows that more than inviting residents by making contact at the streets.

The recruitment process followed snowball sampling where the information about the research is passed within groups eligible for participation, through kinship and friendship networks and other modes of personal interaction (Creswell, 2009). Such snowball sampling is a complementary sampling technique working well along with the public display of information.

No online advertising was conducted. Although relying solely on the fliers may seem quite archaic, the author of the research design acknowledges, from own observations and experience, that in St. James Town this is a popular and efficient way of reaching out to residents, also used widely by the community centres and other organizations present in the area. Moreover, using an analogue technique somewhat equalized the access to research - some of the newcomers might not have access to internet, particularly older first-generation immigrants.

A token of appreciation of CAD 30 was provided to the interviewees.

Immigrants in St. James Town, especially while experiencing precarity and lower wages than many other residents of Toronto (Census 2016), deserve to be paid for their knowledge and expertise and it can be argued that personal experience of immigration and transgressing one

culture to immerse in another results in knowledge valuable for the kind of research being conducted. Hence, there is no reason not to provide compensation for acquiring information from the population of interest.

Not providing such token while advancing one's own career based on the knowledge elicited from the immigrants would put into question the author's intentions and engagement in post-colonial tradition of centering participants and designing non-exploitative research (Smith, 2021).

Residents of St. James Town eligible for an interview needed to meet the following criteria:

- a) being a first-generation immigrant,
- b) living in the neighbourhood for at least a year,
- c) being at least 18 years old,
- d) coming from a world region other than the US and Western Europe.

Adult immigrants are the sole focus of the research mostly because of vastly different levels of personal agency and rights that they face in their immigrant experience than children.

Moreover, the criteria of living in the area for at least a year is based on the researcher's own experience in settling into the neighbourhood. It requires some time to understand the space around oneself and to create habits and routines within the neighbourhood and the larger city. A year, especially with experiencing different seasons affecting space in Canada, is a sufficient temporal background for forming opinions.

The criteria of world region of origin stems directly from postcolonial frameworks and the historical and geographical factors. What needs to be considered in designing such research are the immigration flows, directions and necessities on a global scale. As such, the prevalent

opinion in immigration studies is that the South-North migration streams (as much as the taxonomy of South and North can be contested in itself) are the most politicized ones (Polakow-Suransky, 2017) and are given the most attention not only from the public opinion but also the securitization mechanisms. It is those streams that experience the border as a physical, emotional, symbolic and carceral entity the most (Bauman, 2013, 2016; Andersson, 2014;). For the sake of this fieldwork, it is assumed that immigration to Canada from the US as well as from countries of the Western Europe (the richer part of the EU) can be associated more with professional migration, corporate relocation, lifestyle, and so forth. It is mainly driven by choice, or curiosity of “passport equals” and as much as the South-North migration often has the same premise, there is a way smaller degree of effort necessary to move between the richer countries of the North. With equally strong currencies, the financial effort is not overwhelming. Educational and professional credentials are often easily recognized, and the non-visa tourist exchange makes borders less stringent and hostile towards the citizens of the North. But probably the most important of those factors is the reversibility of the process. In other words, moving to Canada from the US or Western Europe and then relocating back is considered a choice, without the stigma of “failed migration.”

Moreover, immigration from the North is very often immigration of the white professional majority. Being a privilege, it does not fully grasp the specificity of the settler-state socio-spatial contrasts, nor does it encounter its negative implications in everyday life. Since the premise of this research is to keep the settler colonial framework within the immigration equation, its presence may be less salient in the narratives of people for whom and by whom the global colonial order was designed.

There is still the question of other regions of the Global North, not explicitly excluded from the participation criteria. That is more of a pragmatic choice. Recruitment information needs to be concise and understandable. Mentioning the “Global North” does not meet that threshold since it is often contested (Samers & Collyer, 2017; Castles, de Haas, Miller, 2019). A different approach is to enumerate all the countries excluded from the research but mentioning Australia, New Zealand or Japan misses the point of staying concise when the chance of finding participants from this area in St. James Town is marginal.

And interesting example would be Eastern Europe, which the researcher comes from himself. Although technically the Eastern flank of the European Union has joined the prestigious club of the “developed” countries, this took place very recently and the region is still struggling with low-income levels, traditional, non-competitive economies and the stigma of being the cheap, unskilled labour reservoir of the West. Considering this, it can be argued that the criterion of non-North origin is met when it comes to the participants from Eastern Europe.

The limitation of the geographical criteria always faces the possibility of finding participants from countries that do not easily fit any of the criteria, such as Israel, Taiwan, the Gulf States and many others that might share the wealth, but do not share the cultural values or security-driven alliances that inform immigration policies. In such cases, a degree of flexibility and even intuition needs to be retained, while being mindful of other intersections that might be at play and may inform the choice of admitting the participants.

Documents as a Source of Research Information

Secondary data from various sources were used to compliment the data from the interviews and observations. They comprise of at least three types: municipal and federal documents (Statistics

Canada, City of Toronto, policy papers); online resources in public domain (NGO reports, blogs, media articles, policy papers); and academic resources (York Library resources, journals).

Data Management and Ethics Concerns

All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix 1), which indicated the limits of possible use of personal information and data collected. All communications, as well as data storage, took place through York University servers and the author disclosed his affiliation with York University. Personal correspondence such as text messages and social media encounters were stored for disclosure. For the sake of publishing of the results of the research, particularly in a form of a doctoral thesis, personal data of participants was changed and no primary data was made available to the public.

Data Analysis: Coding

After conducting the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed into text files. After manually checking the transcripts for clarity and coherence, they were coded using one of the most popular coding software packages. The step of checking is important since professional experience of the author suggests that popular audio-to-text solutions are particularly bad with recognizing accents others than those associated with residents of various settler colonial states such as US, Canadian, or Australian accents and, of course, the British accent and its variations. Hence, transcription tools often fall short when it comes to providing an accurate transcript for, again, accents from the Global South. While mostly the latter are anticipated in the research, manual overview is crucial for the process.

The next stage was coding, again informed mostly by the grounded theory framework (Blaike, 2009) and the social constructionist approach of Kathy Charmaz (2006, 2008). The theoretical approach to coding and the number of stages differs, but the important point is the moment of

saturation of data and that is when aggregating the codes may stop. Tentatively, following Charmaz, the coding stages included initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding from which the scaffolding of the theory emerges (2006).

Initial coding is the primary stage of the analysis. It is crucial because it takes the process of analysis towards certain directions which later shape the conceptual categories emerging.

Charmaz (2006, p.48) suggests that this phase ought to be kept close to data, following action words and focusing on answering the questions of “what does the data indicate?”, “what does it pronounce”, “what is it a study of?” and others.

Aside from being grounded in data, the initial codes are provisional and comparative. Provisional because they provide the tentative solutions, initial categories can change and at that stage in particular the researcher should “aim to remain open to other analytic possibilities” (p.48). They are also provisional because they can be re-formulated or simply discarded.

The next stage is the focused coding, where “codes are more directed, selective, and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding” (p.57). They follow when strong analytical directions have emerged from the iterative process of formulating and reformulating of the initial codes. The role of that stage is to synthesize and explain bigger segments of data, not only disconnected incidents, or occurrences. It meant choices are to be made while sifting through large segments of data and making sure that the codes chosen represent those segments best in order to categorize the data incisively and completely (p.58).

The step-by-step process leads through comparing data to data to formulate focused codes. Then, codes are compared back to data to check the coherence and inclusive character of the chosen codes and to make sure that the choices made are robust and representative of the data (p.60).

Charmaz also mentions axial coding, a technique developed by Glaser and Strauss to further refine the codes: “The purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding” (p.60). Still, Charmaz has certain reservations towards this stage, arguing that at best, axial coding can clarify and extend the analytical power of the codes but also, it provides a “technological overlay” and makes the grounded theory a cumbersome process (p.63). Hence, if there is a relative coherence and clarity found in the data gathered after the stage of focused coding, there is no particular reason to engage in axial coding.

The last coding stage is theoretical coding, which informs the researcher how the emerged codes may relate to each other as concepts that can be integrated into a theory (p.63). This stage provides possible relationships between developed conceptual categories and should lead to theory formulation. Charmaz states that those codes are “integrative” in a sense that they lend form to the previously collected focused codes. At this stage, an analytical story takes shape.

To understand the nature of those theoretical codes best, a quote from Charmaz can be used, indicating coding families as specified by Glaser in 1978 (p.63). For instance, there are the “Six Cs: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Covariances, and Conditions” but also “degree”, “dimension,” “interactive,” “theoretical,” and “type” coding families as well as ones that derive from major concepts such as “identity-self,” “means-goals,” “cultural,” and “consensus families” (p.63).

Under the iterative process as specific as data-informed grounded theory, there is no reason to stick to those pre-defined codes. Still, they can be taken as an indicator or simply an example of what is possible and perhaps, what direction of aggregation is desired and sought for.

After coding stages backed with theoretical sampling, a theory can emerge from the codes. Such sampling “directs you where to go” (p.100) and should be used to address the research questions.

Chapter 5: Field Work and Data Gathering Process

This chapter outlines the processes of data gathering and observation conducted in St. James Town in the Spring and Summer of 2023. It focuses on the techniques and available contexts of interview conducting, it also provides the context for the observations based on three years of residential experience of the author and provides the juxtaposition of the participants make-up with the official Canadian census data for this area of Toronto.

Reflections on Conducting the Interviews

The work, entailing fifty semi-structured interviews and observations in St. James Town, was done from May to September of 2023. The recruitment strategy, as indicated above, included mostly the distribution of fliers in strategic places, but also word of mouth and snowball sampling.

The participants contacted the researcher mostly by text message. The initial contact was followed up with an email from the researcher, outlining the goals and conditions of the research and sending out the consent form. Most of the consent forms were signed before the interview on paper. Only few of the consent forms were signed electronically.

The interviews took between 25 and 75 minutes, when there was a clear indication that someone wanted to talk more and that it was significant for the research process. Most of the interviews took between 35 and 45 minutes.

Most of the participants were previously unknown to the researcher; however, in some cases, some contacts were established beforehand. In one case, the participant was a neighbour from the same floor who expressed the willingness to participate during a conversation in the elevator. In

other case, the participant was a hairstylist previously met by the researcher in a hair salon in the neighbourhood. In a few cases, friends of friends were contacted, but in any of those cases were there any professional or strong personal ties that could have been affected by the research process or could have been affecting the interview content itself.

The token of gratitude was paid in a form of an e-transfer except for rare occasions when the participants would ask for cash, particularly when they did not use online banking.

Since the research took place over the summer months, there were many possibilities of arranging the space for the interview. The participants were always asked about their location preferences first. Only few of the conversations took places in private spaces and only when there was some degree of prior familiarity (neighbour) or when participant got recruited by snowball sampling which meant that the researcher was already a person met by a person known and trusted by the participant (often a partner or a roommate).

Quite unexpectedly, the local bar called Gabby's, located at the corner of Sherbourne and Isabella Street, became an important site for conducting the interviews, especially at the initial stages of the process.

It turned out that some of the employees of the bar were international students themselves or had strong ties with the community of international students who lived in St. James Town. Since a lot of them would be familiar with the bar or knew the staff, meeting there was not a problem for most of them, providing a safe and comfortable space. The only issue from the researcher's point of view was that the place got busy in the evenings so the quality of the conversation, as much as of the audio recording itself, would have been affected by the background noise. Hence, as often

as it was possible, the interview was be scheduled before the rush hours, preferably in the afternoons or late afternoons.

Another place which became strategically important for the research was Tim Horton's location just opposite of Gabby's, also on Sherbourne Street. This location was always suggested by the participants themselves, only showing how important of a meeting point it is for the local communities. The author's observations over the last three years confirm that particular location of Tim Horton's is usually full of people, meeting and having conversations inside.

Aside from private spaces in apartments, Gabby's and Tim Hortons, a few of the interviews took place inside or around the Wellesley Community Centre (different from "The Corner" community centres) at the corner of Sherbourne and Wellesley streets. This relatively new building was a significant investment and an upgrade of the St. James Town infrastructure in the early 2000s. Now, it is a very popular spot for sports (swimming, basketball, volleyball, gym), but also for community meetings. Unfortunately, access was not given to one of the numerous empty rooms of the centre on *ad hoc* basis, so interviews often took place in open spaces and corridors of the centre.

No locations were ever booked for the interview because very early during the process it turned out that interviews were often rescheduled or cancelled last minute. It does not come as a surprise taken that in everyone's busy life, the interview for academic research can hardly constitute a priority for anyone aside from the researcher. Some of the interviews took place outside, in the open spaces and benches between the buildings, in the squares and corners of St. James Town. It was easier to start a conversation about the public space of the neighbourhood while being physically present there.

Two interviews took place using Zoom online platform, which was the consequence of the fact that a person previously acquainted was not present in the area at a time of the interview and a decision was made not to reschedule the meetings. In hindsight, one of the main reasons why it was possible to conduct fifty interviews over such a short period of time was the fact that the strategy chosen by the researcher was to schedule and conduct the interview as quickly as possible, knowing that the research not being the priority for anyone except for the researcher would be easy to be dismissed or forgotten if given too much time.

The snowball sampling was not very fruitful. Often participants would promise to contact other people and the promise seem to have been a genuine offer at the moment of the interview but after that, there was no follow up, even if contacted about it again by the researcher. If snowball sampling worked, it would bring one new participant to the project and then the thread would usually end.

What seem to have been the most efficient recruitment strategy was in fact posting fliers again and again or distributing them in more and more places around. In St. James Town, with fliers being the most popular communication strategy, they come and go very quickly, being torn down or covered with new fliers in a matter of days. Thus, such reach out initiatives had to be repeated three or four times over the summer of 2023. Within a week or two after distributing more fliers and posters, there was always a spike in participant activity.

An important factor when conducting such in-person research is the fact that it had taken place in a changed, post-pandemic reality which, in the author's opinion, should be discussed and considered more often in describing current human interactions.

First of all, the pandemic fatigue, increased isolation and added stress took a toll on the researcher himself, making it quite difficult to find the courage to come out and talk to strangers. It was often felt in the conversations that the prolonged effects of the pandemic still lingered in people's lives and in everyday human contact. It did not make the research easier, but surely it made it more significant, perhaps allowing some participants to open up a bit more and break the ice within the post-pandemic reality just as it allowed the author to do that.

As already highlighted before, some groups are over-represented, and some are definitely under-represented. It was a difficult choice for the researcher to choose between the flow of snowball sampling and wishing to keep the research as representative of the population of St. James Town as possible. The resulting profile of participants is the outcome of that compromise.

For example, early in the research stage a group of international students was contacted, mostly representing students from India and Nepal. They turned out to be organized in an extraordinary way, having had created a robust network of self-help and assistance early in immigration experience, a network ranging from academic matters, through jobs, to housing. It was an inspiring and intriguing group, and as much as it was tempting to explore it more, there was a risk of if completely changing the demographics of the research or even changing the topic of it which was not welcomed since exploring planetary urbanization remained a priority. Hence, although more of international students from South Asia could have been interviewed, a decision was made to politely decline more offers of participation from that group.

At the same time, residents from the Indian subcontinent seemed much more willing to share their experiences than any other group and they would be the ones reaching out most often even though they are not the most numerous demographics living in St. James Town (although significantly growing in the last years).

At the same time, despite the efforts to reach out to Filipinos, the biggest ethnic group in the area, only one person from the Philippines is included in the research. The group most accurately represented are Ethiopians, who were willing to take part and were also represented by a rather diverse group of people bringing diverse stories to the research.

The detailed overview of the research participants demographics, along with a brief comparison to the census data, will be outlined in the further sections.

Observation Process as the Backbone of Data Analysis

Observations might have a reputation of almost casual, informal data gathering technique however, it is far from that (Bleikie, 2009; Creswell, 2018). They require certain rigour and discipline as well as documentation strategies. However, in the case of this particular research, conducted by a researcher who has lived in St. James Town for over three years, the lines between everyday life and research-focused observations in the field became quite blurry, even during the period of intense interviewing of the participants.

First, daily practices of going on a walk around and in the neighbourhood with an intention of immersing in the space of the area was a habit started during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns that followed. In that sense, observations of St. James Town were part of the daily routine from the very beginning of work. What stayed from most of those walks are numerous photographs from a period of more than three years (Appendix 3 & 4).

What became possible through such unstructured but longitudinal observation was noticing of changes that took place in the neighbourhood. These can be grouped in the following categories:

1) Condo towers being built around the neighbourhood

The running joke that “Toronto has two seasons – winter and construction”, is actually more of an insightful comment, particularly true in downtown areas where the sound of construction rarely leaves one’s ears. Through the sheer presence and living in the building facing Sherbourne Street, the author could notice the rise and completion of condo towers in at least two locations: at 159 Wellesley Street East and two towers built as one investment called Via Bloor at 585 Bloor Street (but in fact on Howard Street, on the edge of St. James Town).

2) The emergence of a growing number of signs indicating that “a change is proposed for this site.”

Such a sign indicates that the project is registered as a proposal at the municipality and might be built in the future. Another aspect of that process is public consultation process which is advertised mostly by fliers found in one’s mailbox. One of the newest proposals, announced in the summer of 2023, indicated the construction of a big condo complex between Isabella Street and Lynden Street along Sherbourne Street. That is a stretch of around 150 meters in where the landmark Isabella Hotel (converted into a shelter for unhoused people during the COVID-19 pandemic), Gabby’s (the bar where the local population hangs out) and multiple townhouses are situated.

Another spot where significant change has been proposed already before 2020 is situated at 240 Wellesley Street, about to displace Food Basics, the famous informal market next to it and the community service-oriented Corner@240. That proposal, investigated and reported in detail already (Formanowicz, 2022) suggested changing public space into privately owned public space (POPS), reaching far into the spatial tissue of St. James Town. Despite such a significant proposed change, the large part of the population and even the social workers from Corner@200 and Corner@240 were largely oblivious to these plans. The proposal at 240 Wellesley Street

seems to have been stalled, perhaps by the pandemic however, the author has observed that “changes proposed for the site” are very poorly advertised which unfortunately correlates with a sort of apathy of the residents when it comes to space around them. During the off-the-record conversations about these proposals, residents vocalized the suspicion that consultations, often organized only via phone and early in the evenings on workdays, practically make it impossible for residents to show resistance *en masse*.

In 2023, a new poster indicating proposed changes appeared on Sherbourne Street, between St. James Town and Sherbourne TTC station, adding to two massive investments having been conducted on the east side of Sherbourne Street already, in a short stretch between St. James Town and Bloor Street.

3) Start of major investments and a closing of St. James Town West Park (Appendix 3).

In the last two years, two new construction sites emerged on the 300-meter stretch between the North-West corner of the neighbourhood, demarcated by the park and Bloor Street. This stretch is crucial because it links the residential area of the whole neighbourhood with Sherbourne subway station. Aside from being just a nuisance as constructions tend to be, the new intervention, bringing two high-rise towers (one is supposed to be partially a hotel) is expected to bring enormous stress on the infrastructure along with the demand for all types of services. It can result in functionally displacing (Kern, 2016) many of the residents who spend time there. In fact, the process has started already. Some of the interviewees indicated that the park which used to be a nice place for children to play is not accessible anymore. The proximity of the construction site, fences and scaffolding, let alone the noise, practically take its function as a communal park away from the community.

4) Influx of international students, mostly from the Indian subcontinent

Living in St. James Town as a researcher means that the process of gathering insights about the neighbourhood starts way sooner than the official research. One of the themes which surprised the author the most was the fact that in the span of one summer, namely the one of 2021, many young people, identified by the author as of South Asian origin, started appearing in the area, mostly along Sherbourne Street. That was quite a significant change when it comes to numbers but also changed the rhythm of the neighbourhood to some extent, bringing ways of interaction familiar from home countries to St. James Town. As much as on sunny days of Spring, Summer and Autumn, the area can be quite lively with people sitting on benches or walking around. Children can be often heard playing, the basketball court between Sherbourne and Bleecker streets is often used. Aside from that Rose Avenue Childcare Centre and Rose Avenue Jn Public School, placed in the heart of the area and equipped with a big sports court, is often the site of children's play and sounds of life echoing between the towers of St. James Town.

In the evenings, groups of people hang out, drink alcohol and sometimes even sing underneath the trees growing along Ontario Street. However, this particular spot, not well-lit and often filled with rubbish, food remains and so forth, is considered the dangerous one by many of the residents, linked to substance abuse and treated as a place for selling drugs. Hence, some consider it a no-go zone.

Still, what the new, young, South Asian population brought from their home countries is hanging out in groups, walking in groups and making the neighbourhood more active especially in the evenings. On a warm night, a person can hear Northern and Southern Indian languages and see groups of young people occupying the corners or just roaming around, especially along the Western-most edge of the area. Often, the hallways of the buildings become a meetup spot too,

with people coming and going, waiting for others to come down, joining, leaving, greeting and so on. Long before starting the research, the thought that “this is how a campus should look like” occurred to the author. Also, a lot more of young people from South Asia could be seen in the elevators, often in small groups, too. On the weekends, one can see them moving in and moving out, in the constant population exchange rhythm of St. James Town.

It came with immense satisfaction for the researcher to finally be able to meet members of this community at Gabby’s at the beginning of the interview phase. In fact, most of them turned out to be international students at colleges, not universities, in and around Toronto, usually also working after school hours.

The collegiality of spending time reflects what the researcher has observed in ways of being in the cities of India, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. However, that would not take place spontaneously in a new setting without the crucial bonding element – housing. In that sense, the interview phase added explanation to processes noticed through observation.

The networking practice of finding roommates through social media or within the college cohorts will be described further. At this point, it is enough to notice that international students, particularly from South Asia, became a significant force of re-shaping the neighbourhood, especially its North-West corner, however without acquiring any particular emotional affiliation to St. James Town itself.

5) Substance Abuse Practices

Another insight that would not easily come out of a time-limited, scheduled observation but stems from the experience of living in the area, is the recognition that as much as homelessness is not a topic in St. James Town *per se*, surely substance abuse and a feeling of a restlessness is.

The researcher's personal experiences and observations show that the presence of people experiencing homelessness, so often talked about in the interviews, does not seem to be reflected in public spaces of St. James Town more than in other areas of that part of downtown Toronto. It could be argued that more often unhoused populations spend time around service centres along Isabella Street, further South in Allan Gardens or in and around Tim Hortons and Freshco at Sherbourne Street than in the streets of St. James Town with modernist-design not being a truly welcoming arrangement as such.

However, a significant part of population of St. James Town itself, a population that this research managed to reach in a very limited extend through the interviews with the residents of the assisted living building of 490 Sherbourne Street where HIV & Substance Use Program is located, is facing ongoing mental health struggles and various of sorts of suffering, substance abuse and restlessness. This sense of restlessness in this part of the city, reaching but not associated with St. James Town only, comes with evidence of almost daily shouting sprees by people on the streets (often targeted at no one), people acting unpredictably, occasional presence of needles and crack pipes in staircases, spilled food and drinks in elevators, even excrements in common indoor spaces.

Some people end their suffering jumping from the balconies of St. James Town (at least three occurrences known to the author in the span of three years). Perhaps it does not come as a coincidence that in her novel *What We All Long For*, a story of immigrants in Toronto, Dionne Brand (2005) places the suicide scene exactly in St. James Town.

This picture of restlessness and suffering, often hidden in the apartments and staircases until it cannot be contained anymore, is one that affects the neighbourhood and its residents as a daily reminder of misery and the slippery slope that live can become any day. It also forces the

residents to always stay alert, even in situations which do not seem to entail stress, for instance while buying their morning coffee or entering the building they live in – such sentiment is also reflected in some of the interview material.

6) Securitization of St. James Town rental buildings and spaces between them

Linked directly to point five, it can be observed that over the last years Medallion Corporation enhanced security measures in and around their buildings along Sherbourne Street. Moreover, there is a 24/7 security desk (not a concierge but strictly security personnel) in the most “troubled” buildings, particularly in 200 Wellesley Street with strict watch of two people monitoring the traffic and not allowing anyone who does not get buzzed in from the inside.

For some, it gives a sense of safety, for others it adds to the restlessness of the area, especially knowing that most of the security personnel are exactly those 20-year old college students who just came from South Asia. If not literally the same people, the security personnel is still being recruited from similar cohorts coming to Toronto in the post-pandemic years (reflected in the interviews). From the more analytical perspective, it speaks to the governmentality and the controlling nature of the modernist design (Shabbaz, 2015), as described in previous sections.

Research Participants’ Representation Juxtaposed with Census Data

As much as the research conducted for the sake of this work was a strictly qualitative project, it is appropriate to juxtapose the basic demographic information with available census data. The goal of such an analysis is not to aspire to a quantitative overview – the sample is rather too small for being representative and providing any statistically valid results. Still, it seems informative to investigate how the census information is reflected in the make up of the fifty interviewees, simply to assess how representative the interviewed cohort is for the

neighbourhood. When discrepancies occur, it is insightful to shed light on why they occurred, explaining not only the population dynamics but also the repercussions of the study design.

Data from the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2016), showcased before in this work will be employed below in the following areas of inquiry: male/female ratio, visible minority status, the possession of Canadian citizenship, and belonging to a particular age group (as defined by the census).

Gender Ratio

A quick glance at the male/female ratio shows a skewed representation within the research cohort and exposing one of the main weaknesses of the study. With the census population sex ratio being 1.12 (112 men for 100 women) and the study showing 2.12 (34 men and 16 women), the study is clearly not representative of the gender balance of St. James Town. As much as qualitative studies do not aim for representativeness, the gender imbalance in the study is worth commenting on.

First of all, as indicated earlier, the accuracy of any ratio is as precise as the size of the sample. With thousands of participants, the census quantitative study had a fair chance of showing probable results. A qualitative glance into the lives of fifty people has many strengths but fair representation of the population is not one of them, especially when snowball sampling is used. Aside from two examples of spouses or romantic partners, all the instances of snowball sampling turned out to be gender “path dependent” meaning that women invited women and men invited men to the study. With a slight advantage of male participants at the very beginning, that only exacerbated the differences.

The other reason is the fact that St. James Town seems to be a very male-dominated neighbourhood in the first place. The male/female ratio of 1.12 is already high but juxtaposed

with the Toronto's overall ratio of 0.92 is shows a remarkable difference and begs for a separate inquiry. Reasons for that might be numerous – the most obvious one would be pointing out to the immigration-led population make up, fueling the theories of immigration being a gendered (male) endeavor – which the author does not agree with.

The third reason for a skewed result is the difficulty in recruiting women, faced by the researcher. As much as trying to maintain gender ratio on equal levels was one of the main assumptions of the empirical study, from the beginning it did not seem feasible. The profile of the researcher might be a factor as well. A man behind the research, with a name indicating a white male of Eastern European origin might not have been a compelling person to share life stories with, especially for women of color who represent most of the women in the neighbourhood, due to numerous historical, cultural and social circumstances linked to the legacies of colonialism.

Another explanation that might contribute to such a skewed gender representation can be associated with a significant overrepresentation of gay male population in the research. That stems from the fact that St. James Town is neighbouring the Village, a historically and culturally associated with mostly gay male culture many of whom chose to live in the vicinity of that area of Toronto.

Visible Minority Status

The next factor to discuss is the self-identification as a person of color. What is crucial to disclose is that there was no questionnaire to fill out and in fact this ratio is based solely on the “identification” by the researcher which in itself may be considered problematic. At the same time, self-identification should not be overemphasised in an urban setting of a settler colonial

state in which identification or rather racialization (Mensah 2017, 2021) is an everyday, implicit practice.

Participants from Asia, Latin America or Africa, not having any Caucasian background, identified as members of visible minority, whereas one Caucasian American and four Eastern Europeans were counted as white. With a strong representation of citizens of Israel (three participants) and following the recent poll which shows that 92% of American Jews identify as white ([Pew Research Centre, 2020](#)), the participants were also ascribed to that category.

The results show that exactly 80% of the participants were people of color and 20% are white. The 2016 census results indicate that 66.9% of St. James Town's residents identify as members of a visible minority.

Canadian Citizenship Status

The number of participants with Canadian citizenship was relatively low, with only 38% of them being Canadians already. At the same time, 56% did not have a Canadian passport and there was no clear indication in 6% of cases.

The census data shows that 74.7% of residents do have a Canadian citizenship. Still, this large discrepancy is easily explained by the fact that the census takes into consideration all of the residents whereas the qualitative research conducted for this thesis focuses on immigrants and, as the following information will show, mostly on the newcomers who are not likely to acquire a citizenship within the short time after their arrival.

Age Groups

The study captures the representation of the age groups of residents of St. James Town quite well with a slight over-representation of people in their working age. That can easily be explained by

immigration system which prefers people from this age group to settle in Canada. Some 18% of the interviewees belonged to the age group of 15-25 years old (the corresponding figure for St. James Town's per the national census is 12%) and most of them are represented by the large group of international students, as discussed above. The age group between 25 and 64 years old, being the working age group, is represented by 78% of participants (the national census indicates 66.7%). The seniors represent 4% of the neighbourhood's population (the corresponding figure for St. James Town's per the national census is 8.7%). This indicator stays very much within the line of fair representation.

Additional Indicators Not Based on Census

Other categories described by a brief analysis of the research data, not overlapping directly with the census categories, but presenting equally valuable insight are: location in St. James Town, country of origin, status/mode of arrival, housing arrangement and years spent living in the neighbourhood.

20 out of 50 participants lived somewhere along Sherbourne Street, which is the most "gentrified" street and the frontline of condominium building processes. Still, other parts of the neighbourhood, located to the East from Sherbourne Street, are also represented well (Figure 4).

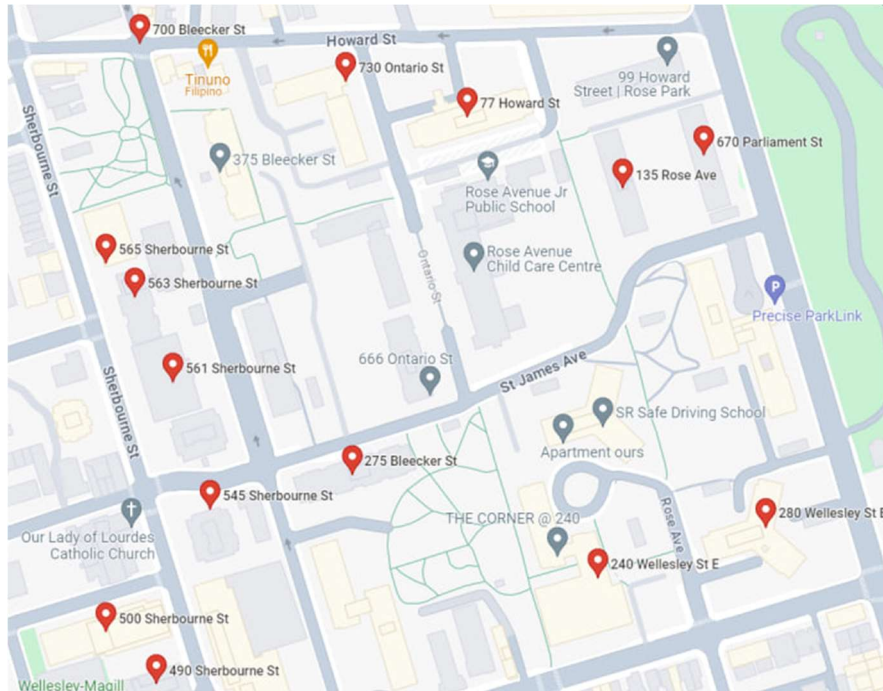


Figure 4 /Locations of the participants within St. James Town

The country-of-origin chart shows important insight into the interviewed group of participants.

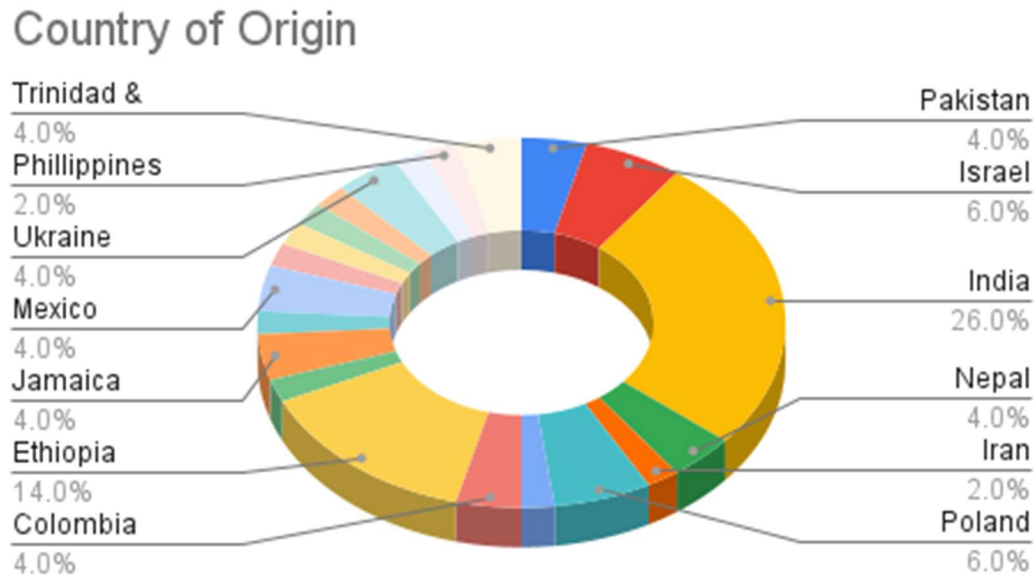


Figure 5 /Participants country of origin with percentage of representation

As can be seen from Figure 5, the population interviewed is quite diverse, with a strong representation of the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan and Nepal constitute 34%), with Ethiopia representing 14% and followed by a quite diverse range of countries. The 2016 census specifies the category of mother tongue languages with a high advantage of Tagalog, followed by Tamil, Nepali, Spanish, Mandarin, French, Amharic, Hindi and Urdu. As stated before, Tagalog is definitely under-represented in the study; however, all of the languages from the list are represented in the interviews as mother tongue languages except Mandarin (Tamil is not certain as a mother tongue but is mentioned used when spoken to relatives).

The category of status or mode of arrival is one not based on official immigration categories, but it rather focuses on the channel or the reason to come to Canada.

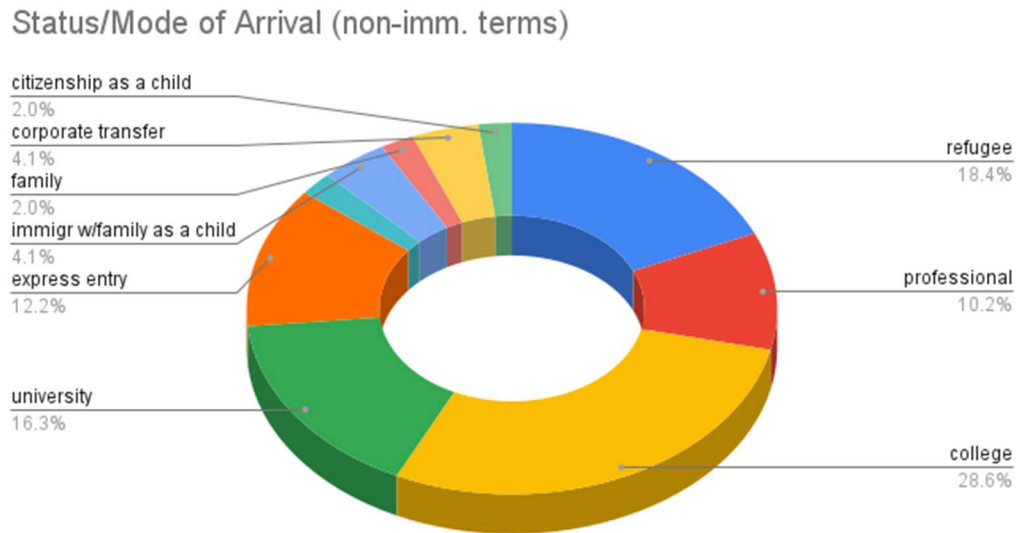


Figure 6 /Mode of arrival/status in Canada

The mode of arrival of the interviewees is equally diverse, as can be seen from Figure 6. The “university” and “college” categories are there only to differentiate between two types of

institutions but on aggregate they represent the 45% of people who came to Canada on study permits, also indicating the growing trend of international students settling in St. James Town as their first stop in Canada.

Skilled workers (not delineated by a questionnaire but based on the content of the interviews) comprise of the “professional” category, the “corporate transfer” but also, surely the “Express Entry” category and constitute another 26% of participants, probably debunking the myth of St. James Town being mostly a residential area for unskilled labor. The category of refugees, with 18%, is very close to the corresponding figure for the city which stands at 21% (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The next category is the one reflecting housing arrangements.

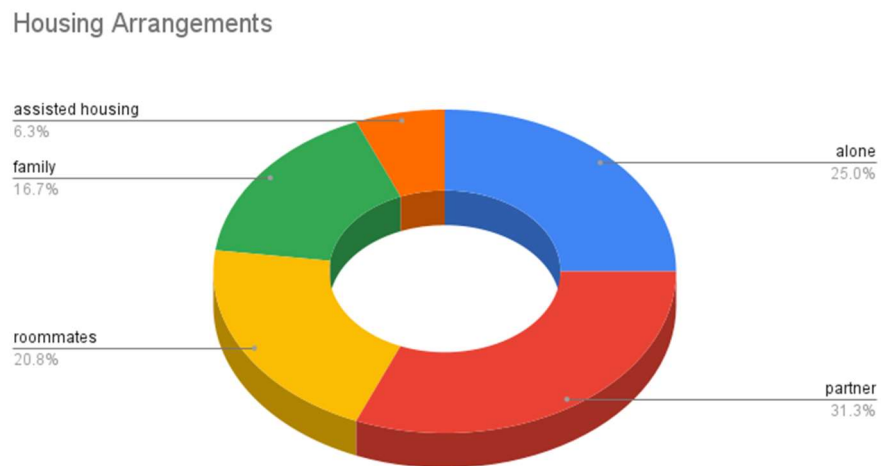


Figure 7 /Housing arrangements of participants

As can be seen from Figure 7, most of the interviewees live alone or only with their partner. Assisted living is a separate category but often in fact means living alone in the apartment.

The 2016 census describes living with two or more people as not that frequent in the area (only slightly over 20% altogether) but among the participants of the study 20% indicated living with roommates and 16% stated that they lived with their family. That is already a higher percentage than the census representation. Partially, it can be explained by the number of international students participating, but there are doubts if the census data really covers all the unofficial living arrangements for which having roommate is a good example.

The last category of data describing the participants of the study is the number of years spent in Canada.

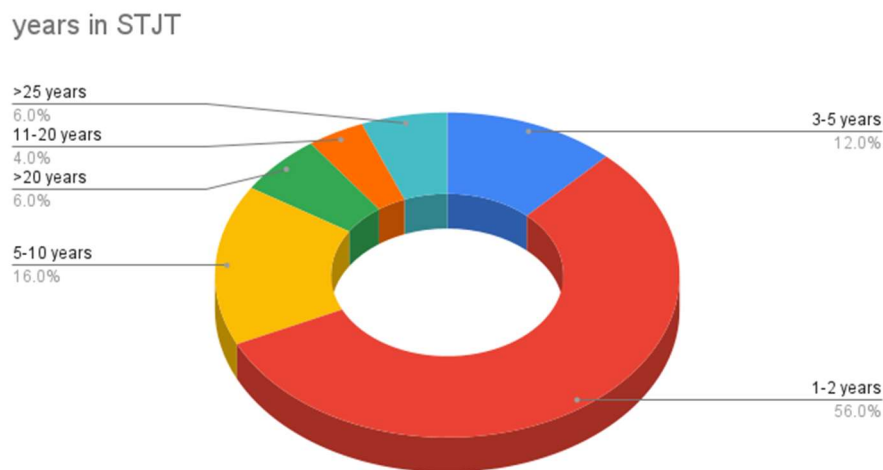


Figure 8 /Number of years spent in Canada

The majority of the participants have been in Canada only for a year or two (Figure 8). Another 30% have been to Canada for 3-10 years. Participants who have been in the country for more than 10 years constitute only 16% of participants.

There is an advantage of having newcomer's perspective being a predominant narrative. It focuses on the first impressions and on the current situation regarding available resources,

networks, hardships encountered and many other factors that this study needs to grasp to present St. James Town against the backdrop of planetary urbanization.

At the same time, there are significant limits – for instance, the possibility of re-creating the process of change taking place in the neighbourhood. Newcomers do not have any memory of the place, no point of reference. At the same time, having over 40% of more “experienced” migrants among the participants seem to be a healthy balance to the “fresh from the boat” narratives among the newcomers.

Data Analysis Process: Initial Coding and Focused Coding

As outlined in the methodology chapter, the data analysis took place according to the principles of grounded theory, mostly as an Inductive method used at the very first stages of analysis.

Further coding practices implemented more Abductive elements of incorporating the narratives of participants into the overall theory generating process. Just to reiterate, the aim of this work is, among others, to confront the theory of planetary urbanization with a specific, grounded locality, which does not mean testing the theory of planetary urbanization *per se*. Since the theory is a macro-level theory, it cannot be entirely tested on a micro-level of a strictly situated location. Hence, the idea of a creative confrontation of the grand theory with the micro-locality is a more accurate description, Inductive in a sense that it results in a situated theory, but Abductive in a sense that it centres and incorporates the narratives, points of view and multiple realities of people whose daily lives it aims to describe.

Grounded theory tools turned out crucial for selecting and grouping sets of ideas, divided through initial coding. That allowed to find the groups of topics which quickly reached the point of saturation, to see the narratives about the immigrant lives and the neighbourhood acquiring a certain shape and to identify different points of view within the saturated themes.

The coding took place using NVivo software. As showed in Appendix 2, the initial sets of themes were formed into codes which themselves remained empty, grouping all codes in the particular subcodes. That is the method the author developed working on different qualitative projects and it is one of the ways to keep the data clean, allowing for an equally clean thought process to take shape.

Figure 9 shows only the preliminary theme codes (13 themes) but Appendix 2 shows the particular codes within each group adding up to 77 codes with around 5-20 references each.

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Belonging to...	0	0	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Daily Routines	0	0	1/2/2024 7:12 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:16 PM	DTF
Future Plans	0	0	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF
Home Country Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Home Country Ties	0	0	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF
Housing	0	0	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF
Job	0	0	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF
Misc. Insights and Analysis	0	0	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
Outside of PU_Spaces of Difference	0	0	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Reasons For Immigration	0	0	1/3/2024 4:58 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
STJT Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Toronto Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:35 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Toronto Life Infrastructure	0	0	1/2/2024 7:16 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF

Figure 9 /Initial codes as the outcome of data analysis

The initial codes are grouped into categories as follows: Belonging to... (with subcodes based on scale of analysis such as “Canada”, “Home Country”, “Transnational Belonging”, “Toronto”, “St. James Town”, “immigrant community” etc.), Daily Routines, Future Plans, Home Country Life & Space, Home Country Ties, Housing, Job, Misc. Insights & Analysis, Outside of Planetary Urbanization (Spaces of Difference), Reasons for Immigration, Life & Community in St. James Town, Life & Space in Toronto, Life Infrastructure in Toronto.

Those 13 initial groups allowed to gather initial findings (5 main themes), derived from focused coding upon saturation of the given areas of investigation. Focused coding was a process of

eliciting groups of meanings and observations that would show some degree of interdependency and mutual connection.

Also, what was also important at the stage of the focused coding was revisiting the research objectives repeatedly, linking the richness of coding back to the main aims of this work. In that sense, at each stage the question of validity of the gathered material for the main premises of this study was posed. Those themes will be elaborated on in the following sections however, what is important to state at this point is that according to the grounded theory methodological prescriptions and the actor-centred sensitivity of Kathy Charmaz (2008), the process of findings formation was both iterative and centred around the narratives of the participants.

The coding effort was to recreate the narratives, rhythms, and daily routines of the participants to be able to recognize what the planetary urbanization processes, experienced through the specific locality of St. James Town as well as the city space, interactions with the border, but also with the foreign labor and housing market, mean in daily lives of immigrants in Canadian urban centres. Also, another big area of analytical focus was to see how the ties with the home country – experienced through emotional attachments, cultural practices, rhythms - sprung between two or even more time zones, and eventually the financial ties, money flows but also investments and plans, play out in everyday realities.

The themes presented below will point out to the richness of opinions about the neighbourhood and the city, as well as the participants' assessment of the situation at the places of origin – these two are also subjects (and actors) within the planetary urbanization processes not only through their built environment but also policies, national and social narratives, and economic interactions, both independently from and depending on each other.

Scales are crucial for the geographical inquiry; however, it is important not to fetishize them or keep them artificially separate. In this work, it is argued that first of all, they need to be seen as a spatio-temporal rhizome of interactions, intertwined and formative to each direction – in other words, having reciprocal impact on each other, between each scale of analysis. The second focal point of this thesis, based on Lefebvrian understanding of space and social life, is that the individual perspective, or lived experience, is the one most loaded with meanings, emotions, and narratives and for this reason it is taken as the point of departure for telling a story of the immigrants of St. James Town.

The results of the focused coding can be outlined in the form of 5 main themes followed by elaboration on those 5 coding themes in the next chapter. These are:

1. Interactions with the city and popular perceptions of the neighbourhood in the context of Toronto.
2. Built environment and life within the modernist architecture; public spaces and ways of using shared space by immigrants, affected by perceptions, prejudices, preferences and habits brought from home countries.
3. Individual and collective ways of mitigating the labor and housing insecurities.
4. St. James Town as an immigrant community. Networks and individuality, having one's community and noticing others, the existence of immigrant solidarity or lack thereof.
5. Reflections, emotional struggles, hopes, creative adjustments and perceptions of difference as experienced by the immigrants.

The next chapter presents and explains the research material gathered into these five themes which are based on the focused coding. Subsequent theory formulation will take place in a form of answering of the research question presented in the chapter after.

Chapter 6: The Landscape of the Neighbourhood

This chapter focuses on presenting further insights on the empirical part of the study by elaborating on the five themes formulated.

The main themes are complimented by sub-themes in which quotes from the interviews will be presented and juxtaposed with each other, serving as the presentation of the interview data material. This chapter concludes the empirical data analysis which is followed by theoretical contribution.

Five Main Themes of Insight

To paint a meaningful picture of the landscape of the neighbourhood it is useful to remind us of the words of Arjun Appadurai, who defines the neighbourhood as a situated community, a social form, where actuality and spatial potential for social reproduction are manifested (1995, p.208). “Neighbourhoods are inherently what they are because they are opposed to something else and derive from other, already produced neighbourhoods” (p.212).

This could not be more insightful in the context of St. James Town. There are unique qualities of that particular neighbourhood, defined not only by the convenience of a centrally situated locality and its often run-down infrastructure which keeps rents attractive – although it is definitely the surface-level mechanism of how the neighbourhood is “opposed to something else.” In this case, “something else” is the expensive and shiny *image* of downtown Toronto, even though it is often only an image, where pockets of poverty and even more run-down infrastructure can be found everywhere in the city center.

The identity of St. James Town seems to be derived from a process much deeper ingrained in its history, defined by the dialectics of what it was meant to be as the highly ordered symbol of unity and prosperous grandeur and of what it became – a messy, incoherent, and alive home of hope, “given away to” and creatively governed by immigrants (Formanowicz, 2022). It is also defined by the dialectics of what Canada wants to be seen as and of whom it needs to maintain its image – a welcoming land of opportunity, juxtaposed with the low-wage, inaccessible, often exploitative reality of arrival to its main cities.

In the following sections, the crude and often internally incongruent landscape will be painted in detail however, taking into account the richness of stories, cultures and circumstances which create St. James Town on a daily basis, the analysis of the data should likely be more of a scaffolding on which further questions and further inquiry could be based on. Below, the main nodes of this scaffolding will be outlined and elaborated on in the coming sections, descending from the level of interactions with the city, through the built environment to levels of community and the individual (or a household) – the last of which often explodes with insight into a plethora of further interactions with another city or cities, localities and communities somewhere else.

It is important to note at this point that interviews’ excerpts cited have sometimes been adjusted grammatically as long as they would still convey the opinions of the interviewees clearly.

Dealing with the original interview transcripts would often cause difficulty for the reader and would take attention away from the content and the processes described. Some omissions were made when the content was not relevant for the point being made and marked with three dots in round brackets. Some missing words were added for explanation, marked with square brackets.

1. Interactions with the city. Perceptions of the neighbourhood.

1a) Perceptions of the city as an explanation of St. James Town's attractiveness

Public spaces in Toronto

Public spaces in the city are largely appreciated by the immigrants and living in St. James Town pays an important role in accessing them. However, there is an obvious difference between the perceptions of the city in the summer months and throughout the rest of the year when it is cold.

A former international student, now a banking professional in his 30s, an immigrant from Saudi Arabia says: *"We only get two months or three months in summer. So that's why I would try to spend it as much as possible outside."* (Interview 12)

Another professional, from India, who came to Canada with her husband confirms:

"I think the most favorite for us is harbour front. We keep going there often. You have a bus which directly takes you there from here; there's a lot of greenery here which is so beautiful with great walking trails and all that." (Interview 25)

Many of the participants, especially the ones with stable financial position confirm the attractiveness of the waterfront. When it comes to planning events and hang-outs, St. James Town rarely appears on the map and if yes, in rather vague terms. A 40-year-old professional from Israel says: *"Especially in summer times, I look for events or festivals or fairs in the city, and sometimes it could be also in James Town. Yeah, there was a festival there."* (Interview 03)

A recent immigrant from Pakistan points out access to cultural offer adjusted to his values:

"Sometimes me and my wife, we just start walking on this road and we go to Nathan Phillips

Square, we enjoy some events over there. We eat something - because we as a Muslim we eat halal food. So, we have like tens of hundreds of options here.” (Interview 18)

What can already be observed at this point is the fact that getting to places on foot is an important factor to many of the newcomers. A female international student from India claims with enthusiasm:

“I never knew I would love walking alone on the streets. I never knew that part of me. But after coming here, there have been, like, unlimited times that I've walked alone. And I love walking alone. I do not enjoy walking with people anymore. It's just very beautiful. The city is.”

(Interview 08)

At the same time, opinions about moving around the city vary a lot. As much as public spaces are often appreciated, when asked about details, participants see a lot of shortcomings. Asked about the street life in Toronto, even in the summer, a chemical engineer from Israel admits:

“The role of the street in Toronto is only to get you to another confined space. That's it, like, it does not have any other role. It's not fun walking.” (Interview 02)

Parks and the waterfront get a lot of credit, but streets of Toronto rarely get positive reviews from the newcomers. A college student admits: *“Downtown part is very busy all the time.*

There's a lot of noise, all the time. There's a lot of traffic.” (Interview 08)

One of the participants, a man from Trinidad provides interesting insight into the street life:

“You see tourists quickly walking around Toronto like “I'm going from [one] interesting thing in Toronto to another interesting thing in Toronto as quickly as possible, because if I linger, someone's going to come talk to me” (Interview 48).

An immigrant from Ukraine compares Toronto to European cities and admits that downtown area in a European sense does not seem to exist in Canada (Interview 49).

A sense of hectic and nervous character of downtown is conveyed in many conversations as soon as people get into the details of the city life. A young professional from Trinidad points out to the emotional cost of living in the core of Toronto:

“People who haven't been here and haven't lived here - no one understands. No one can imagine Toronto being so hectic and especially when they see those photos, CN tower, everything's nice. (...) But for people who live there, you can't go outside for a simple mental health walk without being vigilant (...) You take that for granted if you live somewhere quiet and peaceful (...) but here you got to keep your guard up.” (Interview 48).

Why living in the city, then? For obvious reasons of accessibility to work, to the communities that share similar values. A finance specialist from Mumbai, in his early 30s, admits that the alternative is not too compelling:

“If you're an immigrant and you are earning whatever the level of money you need money to survive a decent life, you have to go to the suburbs and then you need a car. (...) I would feel so isolated if I lived in suburbs in the GTA instead of downtown Toronto, that I would just go mentally crazy.” (Interview 46)

The sense of isolation and the scare of the suburbia is something that particularly people from Mumbai seem to react to. A young professional working in finance remembers being outraged upon coming to Toronto:

“Come on, guys, what are we doing here?? You are the First World - you need to have better transportation. I thought that I was looking at the wrong map of the subway because there were

only two lines. Are you kidding me?! I have packed my life and I've come to the city where they have two trains!"

Most of the people whose opinions have been cited above have spent a relatively short time in the city, not more than a couple of years. On the other side of the “experience” spectrum, a woman from Eastern Europe has even stronger opinion although she has been living in the city for around 30 years. She calls Toronto a labor camp.

“I've been calling it like that for a long time. But it depends on how you look at it. You want to find job? [There are] tons of jobs. But is it a good place to spend your time off? No, no.”

(Interview 41).

Affordability of the city

A Brazilian international student, who works as a manager in Tim Hortons, tells a story that can be heard all over Toronto: *“Yesterday I went to have dinner with my Brazilian friend. (...) I spent almost \$100. Yeah. And I said, oh, my gosh, I can't do it every weekend because I don't make a lot.”* (Interview 38)

Particularly newcomers, often already struggling with access to well-paying jobs, bear very high “access costs” of the entire realm of details that mount up to a very unsustainable first months or even years. These can range from first-time phone contracts, rent prices fresh off the market, all sorts of deposits and guarantees that people without stable employment, no credit score or no rental history encounter at the beginning.

An extreme example of those “access costs” is explained by a freshmen year college student from Northern India.

“Before coming to Canada and after getting admission in the college, we have to deposit \$10,000 in any bank we want like Scotia or CIBC. So, we have to pay them the money and after we reach here, they send us like \$2000 on the first month and after that every month they send us \$700. They give us our money back basically, but it's like a pocket money.” (Interview 08)

Such practice, not only condescending in a purely colonial manner (as if suggesting that immigrants are not trustworthy enough to deal with their own money and thus should be treated as children) but also simply financially unfair (banks surely do use the money deposited by the students), limits the agency of the students and through a lack of access to their own money, diminishes the resilience in cases of emergency. Also, it pushes them straight to the realm of low-skilled work, since the “pocket money” from the Canadian bank will hardly cover the living expenses. Of course, an argument can be made that families back home often support the child with additional money, but the one-time expense of \$10,000 which cannot be accessed easily, puts additional stress on the family which carries the burden of the costs of tuition, living and housing – where, as mentioned in the material below, the landlords sometimes demand a 12-month rent upfront.

The research in St. James Town coincided with an influx of college students to the buildings along Sherbourne Street and because of that, the problems of the international students need to be taken into account as the struggles of the new residents of the neighbourhood. However, there are other prominent streams of newcomers. Many people get to Canada having a refugee status and aside from the stigma it carries, their first years can be extremely hard in the city.

Single mother from Uganda having arrived in Canada as a refugee and leaving her three children behind, summarises it shortly: *“Even for a person like me who just has one child [in Canada]*

and tries to be as basic in my expenditure as possible - it's so expensive. What's \$100 these days? It's nothing." (Interview 27)

As it can be easily noticed, well-to-do people also live in St. James Town. A US-Mexican couple with one of the partners working at the university and the other one being self-employed, share a similar narrative about the high cost of living despite drastically different circumstances:

"You know, we wanted to move closer to downtown. Me and [name], we love the city, but price is very high. (...) Toronto is so expensive that, even [if we] make good money. Right now, together we make close to \$9000 and we come to be a little bit, like, negative sometimes with our expenses." (Interview 30)

1b) Relative affordability of housing in St. James Town

This subchapter focuses on the relative affordability and accessibility of St. James Town. The stress and sort of a "rite of passage" experience of finding housing will be elaborated on later.

"Bidding wars"

An Indian professional who acquired Express Entry and got to Canada already as a Permanent Resident along with her husband had the financial security and documents to apply for housing in more prestigious or simply newer locations than St. James Town – which means most of the locations around, particularly the condo towers so ubiquitous in downtown Toronto. Despite that, she recalls the stressful ambience of competition on the rental market:

"I felt like they were just trying to come up with this bidding war. They are just creating it. They'll end up getting a lot of inquiries. And then one person will quote more than someone else and that's it." (Interview 25)

Because of this competition, the couple chose a more structured and less competitive process of applying for housing in St. James Town, where most of the towers are rental buildings run by

real estate corporations and not private owners. However, such locations are out of limits for people with no substantial savings or credit score. Express Entry newcomers are in a way better situation. Because of their permanent status, at least the application process limits the role of realtors who usually profit of the “bidding wars” the most. This also shows that, opposing the well-established view, immigrants sometimes do prefer formal solutions over informal ones, particularly if they feel protected by the formal and – what is crucial here - if they have actual access to such a formal process. A professional couple with well-documented income or at least some significant savings has such access.

A single man from Pakistan who has been in Toronto for around a decade, does not seem to like newer locations at all: *“Condos are expensive. But the condos have nothing, like there's no place to even, like, put the bed inside.”* He admits that the costs of rent are something he considers:

I moved here because I still pay less than the rent [elsewhere] in Toronto and moving anywhere else would mean [an] increase. Yes, other places have advantages, but I don't feel that it's so important to me right now” (Interview 02)

Others are still not convinced: A Nepalese British student in his late 20s says: *“I looked at reviews from many places and somehow this place had good reviews. It's not great, but reviews, you know... The rent is still expensive, and they're bumping it up again. If I need to upgrade, I'm looking for somewhere else.”* (Interview 5)

“Old rent”

The Pakistani man quoted above describes the rent control as the desired state, again compared to the condos. *“New buildings (...) don't have any rent control. They can always tell you in six months: Ok, we are increasing the rent this much”* (Interview 01)

Such information might be irrelevant for some of the wealthier newcomers or homeowners, but in St. James Town which functions solely on rent, this is basic knowledge:

“Because if you move [out], then you're starting to pay all the new market price.”

(Interview 22).

For some, it is a tactical move to save the money, like for the financial specialist from Hungary quoted above, but for a Ukrainian retired engineer in his early 80s, this is a matter of survival: *“If I leave my apartment now, somebody who moves in will pay double. If I move to another part of the city, I won't be able to survive.”* (Interview 40)

The resident from Trinidad who has lived in St. James Town for a couple of years already with her husband, is also very conscious of the value of the “old rent”: *“The second we move out, they can jack the price up how much they want. We are still, I think, probably one of the last places in the city where you can have a two-bedroom apartment for under \$2000.”* (Interview 34)

The dynamics of keeping the rent locked for as long as possible is an important force regulating the real estate market in St. James Town, but the consequences go further than that. The “old rent” gives stability and predictability, but also ties people to a place with a very strong idea of insecurity of moving out, of being afraid of moving out to anywhere else, even if the place itself is not that compelling.

1c) St. James Town being a convenient location

In general, international students do not have access to old rent since signing a contract with a rental corporation requires a good credit score, rental history or, preferably, a permanent status in Canada. Still, St. James Town has been becoming of a housing hub for that group of immigrants, mostly due to its location and proximity to many of the colleges students attend.

Many of the opinions expressed by the participants sound like the one cited below:

“I like to be here because I have everything at stone’s throw distance, and I know the neighbourhood well now.” (Interview 20)

“The bus stop is right outside the apartment, and funny enough, it’s the same bus that takes me to campus, drops me off right at my workplace. I literally go downstairs, hop on the bus, and go straight to work. It’s so convenient.” (Interview 43)

Many of the international students share the same sentiment, particularly appreciating the convenience of St. James Town during the winter months.

“Line 2 is very near, and the bus stops are at a walking distance. In winters, this becomes a lifeline, because if you are upset or something, you want to [just] get there, you want to enjoy.” (Interview 18)

If students cannot obtain rental contracts with the corporation directly, how do they manage to stay in St. James Town? It requires a degree of informality, explained in the further sections. Having said that, people who have access to the formal and secure solution of a stable rent also appreciate the location of the neighbourhood.

The long-term resident from Pakistan is not enthusiastic, but quite pragmatic about the location:

“Yeah, it’s not the greatest place. It’s not the fanciest, but it’s still ok. It’s close to public transportation, which is really important to me. It’s close to the village, which is important to me, too.” (Interview 1)

And Israeli professional admits: *“I mostly live there because it’s really cheap - there’s nothing [else], there’s no, like, extra value.”* His priorities are set.

“Well, it's all about location, location, location. And if you're working from home and you don't really need to be close to your workplace, I would say it doesn't matter. If it's a good price and it's easy to commute for your daily life, it's close to your arrangements, to your shopping - that's basically what's important.” (Interview 3)

The proximity to the Village is important for the gay residents as they often repeat a very similar statement: *“Yeah, it's not the greatest place, (...) but it's still OK. (...) It's close to the Village, which is important to me. No, I'm not considering moving out of here.”* (Interview 02).

As it can be easily noticed, there are different rationales behind moving in *and* staying in St. James Town. Centrally located, convenient to all, from international students being close to their colleges to gay residents who appreciate the proximity of the Village, the neighbourhood plays its role as an affordable sweet spot. For those who do not have specific preferences, it is still central enough, with two subway lines and the whole network of buses available. What is rarely mentioned but can be noticed in the corridors and elevators of the neighbourhood, a lot of people use bicycles. City bike station is also right outside of the neighbourhood, along Sherbourne Street and the network of bike lanes in that area of the city is one of the best ones available in the GTA.

1d) Accessing other services

As mentioned in the previous sections, the infrastructure of public services available to the residents of a traditionally neglected area improved significantly in the recent years. The public school, day-care, two community-run service points and one large, very-well equipped community centre are available. Particularly the latter, with a swimming pool, basketball and volleyball courts, lecture halls and the chapter of the Toronto Public Library all located in one large building at the corner of Sherbourne and Wellesley Streets, cannot go unnoticed.

The big community centre often appears in participants' descriptions of space: *"I go to the Centre because there's free gym and swimming pool and all these activities."* (Interview 08)

It is also an occasion to socialize: *"They have a beautiful, Olympic-size swimming pool. I've made some friends there. I go in the morning, at 7:00. I'm an early riser."*

(Interview 20)

For some, the community centre is an attractive add-on to a convenient location. For those who can afford private services or have a sufficient work benefits coverage, it is of secondary importance. For others, these services are vital – not necessarily the sports-oriented offer of the Wellesley Community Centre but the access to the helpful network built around the smaller, seemingly less impressive Corner@200 and Corner@240, located – as suggested in their names – at 200 and 240 Wellesley Street East.

The single mother with a refugee status in Canada mentions the Corner@240: *"When I moved to this place, I didn't have a lot of equipment. You know, like fitting curtains, for example. You can go borrow drills [there]. You can borrow a lot of things and at no cost."* (Interview 27)

She continues: *"I live alone as a woman, so there are things I can't do, so I'm able to take my stroller there to have it fixed. Yeah, they have a lot of things that they teach people, including balcony gardening."* (Interview 27)

A recent immigrant who arrived in Canada with her husband and a young child, appreciates The Corner as well:

"A lot of people who do little stitching and sewing jobs are here. And you know about the Corner@240 where you can get everything done, right? They have great café, too. There, you

would get a meal for \$5. (...) Every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 12am to 4pm you get a meal, with a big bowl of soup, big meal and a salad for \$5.” (Interview 17)

The only criticisms noticed in the study are raised not about the services offered but about how the community centres are run. A professional social worker, originally from Ethiopia, raised in St. James Town, elaborates:

“The people that are coming and running these community centres are not from the neighbourhood. That also has a huge impact, right? They're not part of the community, they don't really know the kids. They come and go. They have no connection. But when you're living in this community and you're living and working in that community centre, you know the kids. If you don't know the kids, maybe you know the parents. I mean, somehow you have that interaction with them.” (Interview 23)

1e) A gateway neighbourhood and a temporary solution

Despite the advantages of St. James Town, it remains a place where people come and go, often treating the neighbourhood as a temporary solution. Aside from the people who have been raised in the area and have accepted it or the ones who appreciate the advantages of the “old rent” above other factors, many of the newcomers see the place as a first stop into their Canadian experience. If they do not manage to stay or their priorities change, sometimes St. James Town is, both, the first and the last stop.

A PhD student who came to Canada from India with her husband and a child notices that too:

“Most of the people I know in this neighbourhood live here because it's downtown. People keep moving, coming, going back to their countries.” (Interview 17)

That speaks to some of the opinions expressed by those who are the most recent newcomers. The engineer from Israel says: *“If I have another job or whatever, I might move out of here.”*

(Interview 02)

Also, the oldest residents of the area see that the place is “permanently” transient. The refugees from Ethiopia, who has been in the area for a decade at least, and up to three decades in some cases, share the sentiment: *“They come and go, they come and go, always new faces. You always see new faces”*. (Interview 32-35)

Another Ethiopian, a lady probably a generation younger than the participants cited above, explains the pattern with much empathy:

“A lot of them [newcomers], they move [in] here, they build, they work and they move out. They're a transitional community. (...) They find it convenient because in the middle of downtown, you have access to everything easily. Once they learn everything, they tend to move out, find bigger spaces, a little bit outside of downtown. Some of them they stay, but a lot move.”

(Interview 24)

Yet another group of people seem to emigrate from St. James Town “internally,” not engaging with other residents too much. Without any intention to move out, they share the opinion that *“it's a poor neighbourhood and most of the people don't like it. [We? They?] don't want to connect with those people. I don't want to be racist or anything.”* (Interview 01)

There is a group of people who, having known the place for a long time, seem to really appreciate it and have no intention of going anywhere else:

“Not needing your car, not having to pay for the TTC [Toronto Transit Commission], you can get anything you need done in this neighbourhood. That's what is also attractive about this. This is why I never want to move.” (Interview 23)

But the reasons mentioned by that particular resident are beyond sheer convenience. She highlights the importance of the community and the safety of her children:

“My daughter's three. Most people around here - they know her. Like, that's community to me because I feel safe. Yes, I feel safer having her [here], because [if] people see her without me or my partner, they're like “what are you doing here?” (...) There's so much support. They're not my blood, but I know them. And if anything, I can always, you know, counsel them to support me. So that's another reason I would never move. That's community for me”.

2. Built environment and life within the modernist architecture

2a) Modernist architecture and the quality of the built environment

To capture the sentiments and opinions of the condo-dwellers on the other side of the Sherbourne Street from St. James Town, the researcher interviewed one of them. Their opinions, voiced just from across the street, were full of judgement and apprehension:

“I don't know who is taking care of that part [of the city], but it's not clean. It's not. I can see the broken window, a broken balcony, some minor construction. Just like, like, it's not a healthy environment for people to live in for a long run.” (Interview 36)

Just on the other side of the street, back “in” St. James Town, opinions are starkly different. A grad school graduate from Jamaica who has found his second home in Canada, calmly admits:

“I think they've been putting in a lot of work. They've fixed the road, across. They're doing a lot more maintenance work on the roads. So, I think slowly but surely this place is becoming, it's breaking down that stigma that this is a bad place to live.” (Interview 43)

Some of the longer established residents tend to be optimistic as well. *“I think they try to do some facelift-type of thing. I think that you become what you see. For instance, if you see your neighbourhood is clean, people tend to keep it clean.”* (Interview 24)

The sentiment among the people who live in the area can be summarized by the opinion of the newcomer from Mexico: *“I think James Town is great. It just would have been nice if the management or the people that live in each building do a little bit more for the community, I think”* (Interview 31)

2b) Perceived overcrowding

Even if more lenient towards the infrastructure itself and quite happy with the public services, some of the residents, especially the more established ones are not enthusiastic about more people moving into the area.

In some cases, it is quite surprising to hear opinions like that expressed by immigrants themselves: *“It's going to change a lot in few years if they don't stop, you know. Many immigrants [are] coming over here, you know, it's going to change.”* (Interview 1)

For others, it is not about more immigrant per se, but about the fact that the “immersive” Canadian experience they hoped for them seem to be nothing more than a different version of their home country reality. A young professional from India, in his late 20s, notices:

“I feel awfully, there are a lot of immigrants coming to Canada and I feel like there are less of Canadians and more of immigrants. Sometimes we don't feel like you are in a different country, especially in this neighbourhood. If you see, there are a lot of Indians.” (Interview 25)

Even the members of the same diaspora, as vast and diverse as Indian diaspora is, differ in opinions. For the man cited above, the “Indianness” of the area was a disadvantage, but for women who came to Canada with their families (Interview 17, 19), and who try to navigate more traditional societal gender role, the presence of other Indian families is reassuring as well as the access to the entire infrastructure of ethnic food and home-based products. Such ongoing supply of home-based products and services can't be accomplished without a high concentration of a given ethnicity.

“I felt very comfortable when I came. Even on the snowy day, something that we do not experience back home, it felt easy, even for the taste, in terms of cooking. I like cooking. You get all the ingredients. I never felt out of home.” (Interview 19)

At the same time, more established residents often do not seem to be enthusiastic about the influx of international students and younger, often single population, even if they have been in the exact same situation a couple years back: *“There used to be a lot of families there. But now when I see, actually as I am working here and living here now, it's more of the students too, like immigrants only.”* (Interview 04)

In some cases, it almost seems that the apprehension for more immigrants moving in is something supposed to indicate people's established position in the society. It would make sense from the standpoint of the “learning curve of arrival” or even the “expenses curve”, mentioned

before in the context of the disproportionately high costs of settling in. Each year of relative stability seems like a sort of a “cashback” from Canada in terms of social position and status.

Differentiating themselves from newcomers, some people might feel better about themselves.

One of the respondents mentioned: *“Everything seems like a trap for the first year”* (Interview 31). Perhaps by distancing themselves from the hardships of the first years, immigrants try to highlight their progress in the society. In that way, some of the immigrants can maintain building up their sense of stability even if sometimes it takes up the form of complaining about immigrants who came after them.

In some cases, complains do not seem to have much to do with immigration itself. A long-established resident in her late 50s, as matter-of-factly as possible, points out: *“They're trying to cram more people into a confined space. Space is not inflatable, you know.”* (Interview 41)

2c) Utilizing public spaces

The obvious reflection about public spaces in St. James Town needs to be stated: *“Well, maybe, you know, the summer is coming, so maybe this will also change the perspective a bit because through the long winter months nothing happens.”* (Interview 02)

Indeed, St. James Town, like most of the downtown spaces, is a completely different scene in the Spring and Summer months. Like a temporary glimpse of hope in an abusive reality of Canadian weather, the summer allows residents to change the perspective.

The same participant adds: *“You see that people use the streets a bit more, maybe because this is what they are used to [back home]. I think so. (...) Me and my friends would sometimes just go walking. And I feel that we're not the only ones.”*

The author's prolonged observations of St. James Town, especially in its busiest part at Sherbourne Street, prove that particularly the international students as a group quickly made themselves comfortable in the open spaces of the high-rise neighbourhood.

"We sit there in the evening. I have many friends who are regulars here [in the bar where the interview is taking place]. We play like cricket and all in the park there." (Interview 05).

The same resident adds:

"It's very multicultural. I feel like I meet more non-Canadians than Canadians in this area. It might just be because of that building. (...) But normally you meet people from everywhere across the world, even, here, like you. There's a lot of people from a lot of different countries here. It's very diverse. Everyone seems relatively nice."

Often, when the conversation moves from Sherbourne Street towards the East, the "actual" St. James Town, the participants tend to be more reserved.

An established young professional from Poland claims:

"Well, I'm not so much into the neighbourhood. I took a walk few times around here, but to be honest, I don't feel that pleasure walking through the high-rise buildings. I mean everything to the East of Sherborne. The same thing when you go the South of Sherbourne. It's starting to be a little bit creepy". (Interview 11)

Also, some of the newcomers who are parents have mixed feelings about the safety of the area but they appreciate the infrastructure for children, the proximity of the childcare and the school:

"Saint James Town has both merits and demerits. I'll start with the merits. What I love about it,

for instance, is that right now that my son is a toddler, I am very happy that they have an early-on, very close to my apartment.” (Interview 27)

Again, the points of view vary a lot depending on whom you ask. The residents who actually do reside “inside” St. James Town and not on its boundary streets, embrace the place more and see it as it is – just another residential area.

An immigrant from the US who lives with his partner in a high-rise at the corner of Wellesley Street and Parliament Street, exactly on the diagonal opposite from the busy Sherbourne Street corner, is quite enthusiastic about the place: *“I always like finding new paths, new shortcuts, new ways to get to my house (...) So in a year and a half, I think I have explored most, kind of, corners and parking lots.” (Interview 31)*

The oldest participant of the study, a retired engineer from Ukraine in his early 80s who has lived in St. James Town since the 1980s, admits:

“From the beginning, I love this place. Because first of all, it's kind of a normal community. It's like - you have small children, you have big children, you have parents, you have grandparents. It's a normal place.” (Interview 40)

A man from Trinidad provides an interesting insight into the public spaces of St. James Town but also the entire downtown area overall: *“You have various sorts of mental issues, various sorts of “anythings”. There's so much specialization that an average large city doesn't have the infrastructure to keep up with it. In the advent of mass communication technology, the Internet and all these sorts of things, there is just this dissonance, disconnect of psychological awareness and capability, and the sheer number of psychologies crammed into a small space and the forced organization of that... So yeah, that is the whole thing.” (Interview 48)*

2d) Perceptions of safety

The topic of safety is probably the most saturated, and at the same time the most incoherent theme of all the themes touched upon in this work. It seems that a plethora of aspects share the perspectives and narratives that people follow. On one hand, it might be as simple as the cognitive difference between the places of origin and the way that a North American city functions.

At the same time perceptions seem to be shaped by how normalized (or not) substance abuse and mental health issues are in a community one belongs to. Sometimes, there is the need to tell an interesting story which often ends up “exoticizing” the neighbourhood, pointing out to its alleged dangers and extremes.

A popular opinion sounds like the one of a Pakistani man, who says that *“it becomes scary at night. I don't want to get in trouble because there's so many people over there who are, like, you know, a little bit off the rails and they are addicts. And they are scary.”* (Interview 01)

Aside from rather generic opinions about homelessness and substance abuse, some raise concerns about a particular spot, an informal marketplace right in the centre of St. James Town, next to Food Basics.

“They should not be in the middle of a living neighbourhood when there are families and children. Come in the evening and stay in there and you will see what kind of people are coming there - drug addicts. (...) Rosedale will never allow it. Cabbage Town will never allow such thing. We are poor and powerless and voiceless. They can impose it on us. That's all.”

(Interview 40)

There is some importance to that statement. It can be easily claimed that very rich Rosedale or affluent Cabbage Town, mostly comprising of home-owners, would not allow many things that renting, aspiring and often confused newcomers living in St. James Town allow – the proximity of the Toronto Fire station, police harassing the neighbourhood with sirens every night, ongoing fire alarms with no possibility to mute the sound (unlike in the newer buildings), never-ending construction, etc.

This dialectic between the settler-colonial city and its workforce confined to modernist high-rises will be addressed in the next chapter from the point of view of postcolonialism and the interactions of the established powers and the incoming, conditionally admitted populations. However, when it comes to homelessness, substance abuse, addiction and mental health issues, the problem is not simply “allowed” from the outside but is partially an internal struggle of the neighbourhood itself, precisely due to the factors outlined before – the harassment, unpredictability and an ongoing stress stemming from these.

The single mother says: *“I’ve also noticed people do a lot of drugs. I mean in this country, I know people do drugs, but it’s really kind of prevalent in this place. So, it worries me. If I had a teenager... But by and large, I would say the merits outweigh demerit.”* (Interview 27)

The problem of substance abuse is one thing, and homelessness is the other, although they are often conflated, in both the media stories as well as the stories of the residents.

“I heard there was a big homeless issue, but they don’t seem to bother you at all.” (Interview 05)

The same man adds: *“Everyone’s just minding their own business and most of the homeless ask ‘you got a dollar?’”. That’s the worst you’re gonna get.”*

Many of the opinions sound exactly like the following one: *“Never had anything happen to me, but I have heard stories like few of my friends were chased down the subway”* (Interview 06), what suggests that perhaps there are more stories circulating in the neighbourhood than there are factual occurrences.

Asked about the difference between safety in Toronto and Delhi, one female college student says: *“Hmm, good question. I've lived my life in Delhi. So, I know more places. There I can drive around easily, so that's a plus. [Here], I need to take the TTC I'm hearing all the horror stories about.”* (Interview 06)

Another female student from India, perhaps based on the intuition of someone who comes from a populous place, claims: *“The only good and safe thing about downtown is that there is a lot of people around you. It's always busy. So even though people do act out, you are safe at the end of the day. Nobody can like openly attack you.”* (Interview 08)

However, sometimes the insecurities extend to participants' homes: *“I don't feel very comfortable with being alone. I keep telling this to my husband. (...) Sometimes he comes late at night, so I keep telling him that I don't feel safe and comfortable.”* (Interview 17)

One of the more established residents, a woman from Ethiopia who moved into St. James Town with her family as a child, offers a completely different point of view on safety and drug issues, so infamous in the area:

“I knew they're drug dealers or whatever [in the past], they just hanging out and talking. So, for me that was safety because I knew them and they knew me. I knew they wouldn't do anything to me because they know me and my neighbourhood. So that made me feel safe. (...) It was weird because they would protect the neighbourhood.” (Interview 24)

She continues: *“People [are] dying in their buildings, and you know, those things are happening, but that is more of the system’s fault. A lot of these people, they are supposed to have case workers. They don't have no one checking in. So that's basically, you know, the stigma that they have created and put on Saint James Town. But basically, it's just people suffering in their own personal space”.*

2e) Condofication around St. James Town. “Encroaching little by little”.

Shrinking public spaces

One of the obvious examples is the small park along Sherbourne Street which has been fenced, cut in half and by the end of 2023 it was entirely unavailable to the public. This intervention has to do with yet another large-scale construction, one of just a few anticipated by the residents. The photographs of the process of the closure and re-definition of that stretch of St. James Town is shown on the photographs available in Appendix 3.

Perhaps due to how recent the disappearance of the park was, many participants mention it while describing the changes in the area, especially participants who have children. A young father, immigrant from Ethiopia, notices: *“This one used to be a playground for the kids, but not anymore. It's been taken by the condos. (...) If you want your kids to play now, you have to take them [somewhere else].”* (Interview 21)

The problem is not only about the convenience but it also raises concerns about children’s safety.

A young mother says: *“Because you don't have a lot of places for kids to play, to run around, so have to be constantly watching and, you know, monitoring because there are car's running.”*

(Interview 23)

“The way they designed it was really for young adults, not for kids. And there's so many kids in this neighbourhood. So, I actually saw the sign [informing about the proposed change] and I

participated in the conversation. I told them, like, this is for young kids and there's so many kids - where are we supposed to go?" (Interview 24)

Although very necessary, this kind of involvement and concerns raising comes from more established immigrants. More recent immigrants, as hopeful as they are, seem to be busy with established their own lives and securing basic needs for their family - from work, through housing to permanent right to stay in Canada.

"A newcomer who works two jobs, they're literally going to work and coming home, they don't have time to see what's around, what is the same, what's not. They just making sure that they have food on the table." (Interview 24)

Topics such as playgrounds or encroaching condofication, although noticed, are taken simply as facts: *"We used to just have a park here. [The other day] I was just walking by. Disappeared."* (Interview 04)

Condo buildings

Some people get emotional about the changing situation: *"Jesus, this place is gonna be rotten with just sky-high buildings. (...) Apparently a lot of foreigners buy housing here because they know it's going to, you know, skyrocket. Not skyrocket, but still keep consistently going up."* (Interview 05)

Some people seem hopeful about the new residential towers in the neighbourhood: *"Honestly, I think so because the neighbourhood is very old and once you build new constructions, it's bringing new populations, and the mix of the population is good. I think it's healthy for any neighbourhood."* (interview 03)

A young professional from Jamaica has very similar views on the matter: *“I personally think it helps. Toronto just needs more capacity in terms of housing, so condos or apartments -whatever it is like. I think we just need to build more. I think the condos have helped because again, more buildings or residential properties means more people and that also brings in more diversity.”*

(Interview 43)

In a typical neo-liberal narrative, the “upgrading” of the neighbourhood is sometimes coupled with the idea of solving the perceived safety issues:

“Maybe they're going to take care of it and we won't see so much of, you know, people with needles or anything.” (Interview 11)

Some of the residents do not have strong opinions about changing situation, although they cannot help but notice it: *“I always wonder about the amount of the condos they build downtown. It should bring rents down a little bit, but it's not. I wonder how is that.”* (Interview 21)

Long-established residents see the process as disturbing for the community: *“People are moving away because it's become very chaotic; you've got all these high-rises coming up and it's making it difficult for people to create that community.”* (Interview 23)

As much as some residents see it as simply a thing happening, some perceive it almost like a deliberate attempt to change the social structure of the neighbourhood.

A middle-aged lady from Jamaica lives partially in St. James Town and partially in her home country. She is very proud of Jamaican culture and makes sure her children go back to the Island often enough. As a person vocal about the matters of settler colonialism and an active community member, she admits:

“I fear that there's a plan to eventually gentrify the whole community. I think they're just encroaching little by little. I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I believe in a chain of events. I know that scenarios are created to create another scenario to create another scenario. To reach a particular result. And eventually, these condo owners are going to complain against us. They're going to say that they're being harassed by us. (...) until they eventually find a solution to get us out. And I think eventually these private owners will fold and sell.” (Interview 26)

Similarly, condos sometimes spark the sense of insecurity in the established residents: *“[I feel] anxiety of, like, wondering when I'm going to get told: ‘hey, we're knocking your building down and you're gonna have to find a place to move.’”* (Interview 45)

That’s the opinion of a young professional from Trinidad. She adds: *“I'm pretty sure the costs of various things will go up as they start, you know, attracting higher class people. You know, when richer people are moving in, they're like ‘I don't want the supervised consumption site near to my condo. I don't want these. (...) Yeah, that's something I worry about, having people losing access to the resources in their community that they need.’”*

3. Individual and collective ways of mitigating labor and housing insecurities

3a) Multiple temporary housing arrangements as a rite of passage for newcomers

The annual addition of thousands of condo spaces to the area seems to contrast starkly with the stories of struggling on the housing market. These struggles, the liminality of residence and the unpredictability of the city life for newcomers, resonate with the darkest scenarios already laid out by the participants from the Jamaica and Trinidad.

“From there, we moved to another one... So, imagine carrying a one-year-old and all your luggage seven times over in six years from Toronto, Vancouver back to Toronto - and within Toronto six times.” (Interview 17) As exhausting and stressful as it is, this is not a solitary example. The words of a PhD newcomer who arrived in Canada from India with her partner seem to be reflected in the stories of a lot of people.

A newcomer from Pakistan admits: *“As a new immigrant, housing is something which... one of the biggest things which disturbed me, in a way.”* (Interview 18)

The rite-of-passage character of the housing struggle often starts with an obvious lack of documents such as rental history or credit score: *“Because we didn't have any history or anything, we have to pay upfront for six months”* (Interview 30). Observations and anecdotal evidence confirm examples of landlords' demands of up to 12 months of rent in advance.

Obviously, such precarity costs newcomers a lot more than it would cost established residents equipped with proper documents, contacts and references needed. What adds to the precarity is the ongoing increased spending in the first months upon arrival, seemingly having no end.

“I was living at Airbnb for a month, which is again a big chunk of expense. After that, I joined a couple of student groups because I used to go to school at Humber and we used to have our class group and then, you know, the other local groups.” (Interview 15)

From solving the housing shock with simple, but expensive solutions such as hotels or Airbnb, newcomers, students in particular, naturally move into informal solutions found online, particularly on social media. In this utterly stressful time, they try stick together. For some of the immigrants, this pattern never really changes.

3b) Shared housing, informality and flexibility of housing arrangements

As mentioned already, for international students, informal arrangements are the norm, since they share the immense difficulties in finding decent housing. A student of statistics at the University of Toronto, an immigrant from Ivory Coast mentions: *“Being international students, we find ourselves being rejected a lot just for those two simple facts - being international students and not having jobs, not having stable jobs. [Then] we looked mostly through Kijiji and Facebook marketplace.”* (Interview 39)

A college student from India explains how it works from there: *“One person rents and then, they just invite their friends. (...) Once they're moving in, some other friends have to move or the room is empty.”* (Interview 04)

The same person adds: *“People, they often know each other from back home. If they're coming together, they probably take [apartment] together. But it's pretty hard for one person to come.”*

However, some people get lucky. A young man from India says: *“I just found them randomly, I didn't know anyone when I moved to Canada. Two strangers, two roommates, two friends, and then - we're classmates, you know.”* (Interview 15)

In such precarious and trust-based environment people sometimes try to make choices based on the “old-country” affiliations and codes of conduct.

“I met one person [while looking to rent a room] and he was, fortunately from my country and my state, he was Indian. So, he told me: “I don't have to ask anything since you are from my state. Come and I can give you [the room].” (Interview 29)

Indeed, finding roommates from similar cultural background is a common practice, as shown on the flier photographed in St. James Town (Appendix 4).

However, this cannot be seen as a rule since in many cases it is not a criterion at all. A young woman who came as a student a year prior to the interview, explains: *“There are three more people [in the apartment]. Yeah, it's full diversity. One is from UK, one from Nigeria, one from Japan. He just moved in. I'm from India.”* (Interview 06)

Although not used in discriminative manner, cultural differences seem to complicate the coexistence to some degree.

“Ok, so the girl from Nigeria has different eating habits. (...) And I eat Indian food. And then when it comes to the person who's from UK, I have lived in the UK for four years, so it's not that difficult. So, we can talk about stuff. (...) The one from Japan he has just moved in, like, 3 days ago, so it's... he does not speak English, not too good, like broken English. It makes it difficult to have a proper conversation.”

3c) Temporary jobs and “landing a Canadian job”

Often, delivery work is the first source of income for newcomers, especially international students (Interview 15, 28). Less often self-employment or any form of starting own business takes place in the initial years, but it's not unheard of (Interview 30, 44).

Unsurprisingly, proper employment is associated with proper documents: *“I think that a passport will open doors for a lot of government organizations. My plan is to look at working for the government in a similar role [to the one currently held] for let's say the City of Toronto, the City of Brampton, the City of Mississauga or even TPC for that matter.”* (Interview 20)

However, the road to that is extremely long and leads through sacrifices and life routines unimaginable for the established residents, let alone most of the people born with a Canadian passport. The first year or two are particularly harsh on newcomers.

“I used to open the gym and work from 7:00am to 3:00pm, and my next shift at Rogers used to be from 5:00pm to whatever, because it's Rogers Centre - so [I work] until the fans leave the stadium (...). So, I used to work from 7:00am to 3:00pm and the time from 3:00pm to 5:00pm, I used to deliver food with Uber. And then finish off at, like, 11-11.30pm. By the time I'm home, it's like 12-12.15am or something. Go to bed, get up in the morning and start my day again at 5.30am. That's how my day was, and I have almost worked for 20 hours a day.” (Interview 15)

On top of that, the infamous demand for Canadian experience which keeps students confined to low-skilled jobs, is still ubiquitous, and it doesn't come as a surprise that some people decide to fake their resumes or lie about their skillsets – although it usually doesn't take them far (Interview 17).

Interesting ideas about the causes of such fetishization of the Canadian experience are described by the graphic designer from Ukraine: *“Here in Canada, if you are good, you rather make other people worry because you can disturb their comfortable life. (...) [If they] have an option to receive services from somebody they don't know, services [which] are good and cost not so much, they will choose expensive, bad services from somebody they know (...) That's what they call “Canadian stability”.*” (Interview 49)

Still, not all the work-related experiences are that bleak. In fact, the study encounters a relatively high degree of highly skilled workers “landing” desired job as well as a relatively high number of international companies' internal transfers (Interviews 22, 29, 46). These participants seem to be unbothered by the overall state of the labor market for newcomers. Having said that, those lucky ones still share the anticipation of awaiting a permanent status, the same aspiration to fit one way or another.

Once a satisfactory job is found, immigrants appreciate the Canadian work setting.

An Express Entry holder from India explains:

“When every Canadian is nicely watching Netflix and Amazon Prime at 8:30pm, I'm sitting and working on my laptop, so that is one of the bigger reasons that I was looking out for something more Canadian. Canadian companies work for 7 hours, 7.5 hours, 8 hours, but I think they are more productive. They are more efficient and they're more effective.” (Interview 20)

A young professional couple in their first years in Canada says: *“Just because of the work culture, we are getting a great work-life balance here. I'm getting a lot of time to explore during the weekends - to explore some new places within Toronto.”* (Interview 25)

Some, especially those who came to Canada anticipating a lot of struggle ahead, seem to see a clear point in that struggle:

“You need to come to Canada with a clean slate, with an open mind. Just embrace the opportunity you get. If it's related to your field, it may come with the lowest salary job or the lowest minuscule job. Just take it up, as far as it's in your field. Trust me, in a year's time you will be happy for yourself, you will be getting opportunities that you never ever dreamt of.”
(Interview 20)

4. Immigrant community and communities of St. James Town

In the previous chapters, the physical landscape of St. James Town was outlined, considering its place in the larger urban tissue of Toronto. The housing and labor arrangements were explained along with a plethora of different approaches and perceptions of the first years upon arrival. The remaining, but very significant questions, are the ones about the community - what does a

community mean in the context of immigration to Canada, what does it entail on an individual scale, and can the efforts to create one be caught in any institutionalized form.

4a) Limited interactions and lack of sustained relationships with non-immigrants outside of work environment, especially with the white population

Some of the views on the sense of a community are quite radical. The truth is that for people who do not want to interact with other people in daily life, Toronto is a good place to hide. An established immigrant from Eastern Europe, few years before her retirement, says:

“Ok, let me put it this way. I have no friends in Toronto. I have acquaintances from work. Some are closer acquaintances. Some are more distance acquaintances. But that's it. I'm shut down to Toronto. I'm shut down to watch Toronto. I hate it here.” (Interview 41)

Aside from such individual preferences, what is important to start with is to notice that the idea of a community, whatever it might entail, almost never assumes a community with white people. On the contrary, it is often built and maintained in the opposition to a dominant Canadian culture which is perceived as “white culture” despite its self-identification as a haven for diversity and inclusion.

Immigrants, mostly due to their difficult experiences upon arrival, do not get deceived easily, and gravitate towards spaces where they feel safe and comfortable. According to the sentiment among the interviewed immigrants, very often white people in Canada simply do not seem to have the will or capacity to provide that.

Among factors such as skin color and ideas about the inferiority of a given culture, accent-based discrimination of newcomers is an obvious, still very much accepted form of soft “othering.” It seems such an obvious mechanism taking place in multicultural Toronto that it does not even get explicit attention in the interviews unless seen in a specific context. A very interesting example

comes from a conversation with a Nepalese-born citizen of the UK, who has arrived in Canada as an international student, seeking for “new challenges”.

“An English accent seems to get you a long way on this planet”, he notices, speaking from the perspective of being a person of color, but having a British accent, which is often welcomed by the mainstream Canadian society with an almost servile enthusiasm. His observations speak directly to the descriptions of neo-racist practices of accent-based discrimination mentioned by Lee (2006).

“I feel like international students from where English isn't the first language will have a lot more difficulty in embedding themselves, and I feel like a lot of them form little groups within themselves to make that process more smooth, which is really understandable. You have your own people to help you. If you see people walking across the road, you'll see a lot of Nigerians hanging out together, Indians hanging out together. They keep in their little groups, which, you know, probably helps them a little.” (Interview 05)

Indeed, almost no lasting interactions between the white population of Toronto and the immigrants are noticed in the study.

The Nepalese-British man continues: *“They're nicer to me because... I've seen the way some international students are treated. (...) I've never had anyone give me any sort of shit, and I've seen a lot of international students get shit. I feel like it's also because they'll struggle to defend themselves in such situations, like getting into any confrontation, they won't know how to rebut, to come out of it. So, they're left very vulnerable, which it's not fair - which probably explains why they try and stay within their groups.”*

A social worker from Colombia mentions: *“I don't want to say white culture, but Canadian culture can be really cold”* (Interview 13).

In that statement, the conflation of white and Canadian is apparent. Aside from strong academic nuancing of that issue and the full right of the non-white citizens of Canada to consider themselves Canadians, a bit of empathy and experience makes the interchangeability clearly understandable. Also, in the interviewing process, it was often noticed by the author that the participants seemed to choose words very carefully while talking about the mainstream culture. In other words, when they said “Canadian” in certain contexts, it seemed that they would say “white” if the author was not a white person.

As ubiquitous as it is, the accent-based othering also affects white immigrants.

A woman from Poland, working in customer service, confirms the observations of the Nepalese-British student:

“I came across a lot of, like, no, I wouldn't say racism, but when people heard my accent, they were trying to mess with me. (...) Sometimes I had to ask the customer to repeat themselves. A bunch of teenage guys were trying to mess with you because, well, that's their first language. (...) I don't get the connection with Canadians, because I would feel that I'm worse than them.”

(Interview 13)

What she elaborates on reflects numerous conversations, almost daily conversations among immigrants and the sentiments they share.

“Even if sometimes I feel like I have a good accent, so many times people didn't understand me because I said something just slightly differently. And they corrected me - and it was such a

small difference, such a stupid difference, that sometimes I feel that maybe it's them who are stupid."

As much as such claims are made by a white immigrant who suffers from the othering practices of Canadians, still it doesn't stop her from making discriminatory statements about other immigrants, particularly people of color. That shows that even rejection by the mainstream society does not push many people towards overcoming their own prejudice. Repeatedly, Eastern European immigrants in the study seem to lose perspective easily and showcase the worst traits of white sense of superiority, even if themselves rejected by Canadian whiteness.

A woman from India who got to Canada via an international company transfer, is quite blunt:

"White people are like: you know what, you guys are too many, there's too many of you and if I have to help everyone... I just can't keep doing that!" (Interview 46)

A PhD student from India claims: *"There's favoritism, and there's all kind of subtle, subtle racism that will happen in organizations."* (Interview 17)

Some statements of exclusion are particularly heartbreaking, but often the exclusion becomes normalized – and avoided onwards when the feeling of disillusionment, hurt and resentment prevails. People who come to Canada with their highest skills, focus and hopes, feel mistreated, misunderstood and underrated, if not ridiculed, in their new home country.

An Iranian immigrant in his 40s, although having embraced being Canadian fully and rejected Persian culture for not accepting his sexual orientation, has a very sobering perspective: *"There's nothing called friendship here. I guess friendship is just a contract and it's like a transaction here. It's very, very transactional."* (Interview 09)

A woman from Trinidad summarizes the situation with a statement which is the key to community formation for many of the immigrants, aside from where they come from:

“They say that Canadians are polite. Trinidadians are friends.” (Interview 45)

4b) The meaning of a word “community”

People asked about finding “their community” in Toronto often show different ways of defining the word. Early on in the study, the question about “community” has become kind of a vocabulary exercise regarding the meaning of the word itself, exemplifying not only the cultural diversity, but almost inexplicable ontological differences people bring to St. James Town.

Asked about “her community”, a student from India immediately referred to her religious community: *“There is one friend living with me who was from India. I knew him from India from the same college. So, he is from my same community.”* (Interview 08).

Conflating community with a religious group took place in some other interviews too. Others see that as a rule even if that is not their own point of view: *“I think here, in this area, [community] would be probably ethnicity and religion. I think the definition of a community here might be different than the community that we have in the Middle East.”* (Interview 09)

Following on that insight, a bank employee in his 40s, sees “the community” in Toronto as something limiting:

“They are with their own people. Latinos with Latinos, Persians with Persians. (...) They get very close when they come here. But that comes with the price (...). If I would have been with Persian community, I would have not been successful in my career.” (Interview 09)

He continues, philosophically, pointing out of the window, to the opposite side of the Parliament Street: *“My definition of community is the cemetery. That’s the best community because they’re all the same.”*

A lady from Ethiopia, who has been raised in St. James Town, uses the term “community” interchangeably, as a group bounded by a certain locality, as well as the religious-ethnic group. *“People are moving away [from St. James Town]. (...) It was a lot more communal, but now it’s not as it used to be.”* (Interview 23)

Similarly to the Persian man, for her the community is, on one hand a source of grounding and stability, but also a controlling force that one sometimes needs to break out from.

“I really don’t have any friends in my community. I don’t have anyone from inside the society. I’ve done various things. I’m definitely the first female to ever join the army from my society. So, I’ve always broken their law in the sense.”

People do not seem to forget how things were and *felt* in the country of origin. Often, the question of community pertains to whether they have the energy and means to recreate it where they are now, or it is just a distant memory. *“Back home community means stability. You know your neighbour from childhood until the end. There isn’t much of moving around. (...) But here you come, you see new faces quite often and that breaks down the traditional sentiment of community that you grow up with.”* (Interviews 32-35)

Even the Persian man who admitted to resenting Iran as a place which had caused him so much suffering, admits:

“[Back in the home country] we have a lot more friends. A lot more enjoyable things to do. Here, there’s nothing. Like I would say smallest, simplest thing would make you happy there, but

here those doesn't mean anything because there are so many choices, so many chances, so many other things, so many ambiguities, so many stressful things that you need to deal with here. That takes away from you the... the... the... peace of mind". (Interview 09)

4c) Inter-immigrant discrimination and prejudice

"It would take a lot for a thick-skinned person like me who doesn't care about things like discrimination, because I'm very open minded. But you can easily feel discriminated in their comments." (Interview 27)

These are the opinions of a Ugandan woman about Indian women whom she meets at the daycare centre.

Confessions about discrimination from other immigrants are rare, but sometimes what can be heard is some dissatisfaction with the presence of other immigrants.

A Pakistani refugee, while speaking about the Indian community, claims": *"Too many of them [come]. Mostly it's a specific country where they come from over here and... we want different people over here. We don't want a specific country to come over here and you know, have their own niche." (Interview 01)*

4d) "A strict mosaic" – critical views in multiculturalism

After this close-up inquiry into people's views on their own place in the life of Toronto, after insight into their communities, it is natural and important to look at their views on the "Canadian mosaic" itself, on this slogan so eagerly repeated by the mainstream culture, but less willingly echoed by the people who make up the mosaic. And similarly to the slogan, things seem optimistic and promising on the level of general statements however, when getting into details, interviewees are more apprehensive.

It needs to be noticed that the study gathered some positive and hopeful views on Canada.

“Multicultural Toronto gives you an opportunity, you can be surrounded by people who are different. You can learn from them and see how they live. And I’m very curious about that. And in terms of job opportunities, Toronto has a lot [to offer].” (Interview 09)

At the same time, this person sees the problem of a very strict mosaic of Canadian multiculturalism: *“In very small communities they know each other, they are just restricted to themselves. They would never try to make friends with other nations.”*

Some people, even if not certain what the problem is, are not happy with how things work under Canadian multiculturalism. A finance professional from India in her 30s, claims:

“My closing statement, if we’re closing now, would be that Canada is a melting pot – a bad melting pot. I don’t know what can be done to resolve it, but I think that there is something that Canada is missing.” (Interview 46)

4e) Efforts to create a sense of community and agency

Still, many people try to figure out what Canadian multiculturalism lacks and try to make things better and easier, for themselves and for others. The observation-based experience of the author led him to a couple of St. James Town Residents Council meetings. The informal organization created with the help and under the umbrella of Corner@200 aimed, among other things, at addressing tenant rights, attracting the attention of the local politicians to the issues of the neighbourhood or to deal with safety concerns in an organized manner. In fact, the research described in this work took place in the formative months of the organization.

One of its leaders, an immigrant from India, says: *“Four or five of us [people volunteering at The Corner@200] got together and the idea was to form a Residence Council, a residence association, for this neighbourhood, because it’s extremely diverse. To basically flag and*

highlight and address issues that residences in this neighbourhood have. (...) So, we started doing that, so by now we can say that we're somewhat of a strong organization, we've recently had a very successful town hall. This is our plan, to have four different town halls this year. (...) We are inviting Kristyn Wong Tam, our MPP, and she's going to come. And Chris, Chris Moise is our city councillor." (Interview 17)

Kristyn Wong-Tam MPP is a Canadian politician who has been representing Toronto Centre in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario since 2022 as a member of the Ontario New Democratic Party. Chris Moise was elected the City Councillor for Ward 13 in 2022. Indeed, the group established and kept substantial ties with both politicians, aiming at putting St. James Town on the map of Toronto when it comes to community organizing.

Indeed, some of those attempts seem to have been noticed by people rarely interested in the local events. *"We don't do that much with the community, but we went to a Council meeting last time, at the Community Centre. The meeting, it was about... it was something going on with the rent."* (Interview 30)

The town hall with Kristyn Wong-Tam, also attended by and volunteered at by the author of this work, was a success however, it also created some tensions. A peaceful and friendly gathering of around 30 people at one point was held in the presence of four or five police officers and it sparked diverse reactions only showing how diverse the immigrant community actually is and how differently people, coming from different backgrounds, perceive the same occurrence.

In fact, cultural backgrounds seemed less important than social ones. People coming from impoverished regions such as the Caribbean islands and having strong ties to North American history of oppression, particularly Black residents, had a much stronger negative reaction to the

presence of police force at the meeting than middle- or upper-middle-class Indian immigrants who would see the presence of the police as something perhaps adding status or importance to the occasion. Young leftist activists seemed to have the strongest resentment towards the presence of the police whereas some of the main organizers tried to justify the presence of armed personnel in a room where residents brought their small children to meet their local councillor.

There is something really telling about that situation - something that speaks to the ongoing tensions and misunderstandings that are at the core of the grand confusion characterising St. James Town: the diversity of life stories, approaches and points of view, together with drastically different agendas, but also different stakes and levels of having “skin in the game,” seem to create a cloud of impossibility hanging over the community organising there.

In fact, by the end of 2023, the Residents Council stopped functioning. One of its fractions, young activists with very communist rhetoric and language (notably, mostly not immigrants) reportedly carried on with the goal of organizing a tenant rights group in downtown Toronto however, the angle of a group focused on St. James Town seem to have been lost.

5. Immigration to Canada – hopes, struggles and creative adjustments

As much as it might seem that perceptions of Canada have already been expressed many times in the gathered material, it might also be argued that so far, the descriptions focused on processes and mechanisms impacting residents of St. James Town in relation to that neighbourhood. The opinions outlined below are meant to depict the wider sentiment of immigrants to Canada caught by the research, often impacting their sense of well-being as much as their future plans.

5a) Perceptions on Canada itself

Opinions about Canada

“Canada is not so different from Brazil. I came here to Canada to study and because I wanted a different life. And I see Canada is starting to become like Brazil, that prices are getting high, all this stuff is higher. It’s the same in Brazil. So why am I going to stay here? Far from my family. To be the same like in Brazil?” (Interview 38)

Such statements conveying a sense of disillusionment have been quite prevalent in the study. Many of the participants either did not like to be in Canada or did not believe in any tangible success awaiting them.

A graphic designer from Ukraine claims: *“Canada is an extremely slow country and maybe kids of those immigrants can build something, or maybe grandkids. But actually, those immigrants will have no chance to build anything at all.”* (Interview 49) Asking about how he explains to himself the fact of staying in a place that he has such strong negative opinions about, he admits that he also sees it as temporary, despite having the Canadian passport in his pocket: *“I didn’t lower my expectations, but I’m learning in the process how not to get disappointed.”*

Student from India has a bit less nuanced point of view when he compares Canada to India:

“This country is much calmer and cooler, so they don’t have too much of anything. They don’t do any wars. They don’t have much crime. Yeah. They have only good news here.” (Interview 04)

Overall, such statements are rare. Perhaps having something to do with a strong immigrant culture in India, participants from that country, especially in their first years, mostly show positive and optimistic attitudes: *“Something I like the most about Canadians is the way they talk, how they interact with people and how welcoming they are. They’re very polite and very kind towards people. That is something I feel that Indians lack.”* (Interview 25)

Many highlight the financial possibilities. A bartender and student from Colombia admits:

“I love Canada. I'm very happy. The quality of life is good. Any job gives you the option to survive properly. I've just worked at the coffee shop, and it has gave me everything. I'm paying everything.” (Interview 37) Still, met a half a year later, he admitted making plans to leave.

Is it Canada or is it immigration?

Often, the question seems to be: “Is it Canada or is it the immigration experience itself”. One of the theoretically most privileged immigrants, a white man who came to Canada because his Mexican partner was not allowed to stay in the US, summarized the hardships of immigration in a way that might help explaining how easy it is to conflate the stress of immigration with perceiving Canada in negative terms:

“When I go home and I tell people about life in Canada and I'm saying: “Being an immigrant is tough, you know, every day there's something new”, they cannot imagine that. People think “Well, Canada is such a great country, you speak English.” So like, what's the problem, you know? No. There are lots of small things that you have no idea about. Everything seems like a trap for the first year”. (Interview 31)

Similar sentiments are shared by others: *“You need to find yourself in a completely new situation with no contacts, no social networks, and basically alone, and it took me some time to realize that first 2-3 years were particularly hard when I moved in. But, you know, as humans we are very resilient. We can get used to any hardship - and I was probably in denial. But then once I got very comfortable in Canada, I realized that this time we're talking about, was in fact, fucking difficult.”* (Interview 44)

Cultural differences

Interestingly, immigrants are sometimes scared of the strict political correctness setting (often designed to protect them) which they do not fully understand, and they feel threaten by it:

“I’ve seen people getting fired for using wrong pronouns.” (Interview 10)

Having said that, the process of crossing the borders of cultural differences is dialectic and very much alive. An immigrant from Ethiopia describes his first interaction with a person whose gender he was not able to tell.

“Where I come from, there’s no gay marriage and stuff like that, you know. (...) I never heard about it until I came here. So, I see this one person, different from what I know, and I ask him: “Why you’re wearing clothes like a woman”. He was not happy with me. But he asked me: “Are you new here?” And then he explained it to me. It was like a culture shock for me, because when I came here, I was almost 30 years old I haven’t heard about it for 30 years. [The person] said: “It’s not nice, the way you ask. You have to be careful, he explained.” (Interview 21)

5b) Social mobility and the feeling of being physically stuck

A 40-years-old Ukrainian immigrant notices quite philosophically: *“[The first-generation immigrant’s] destiny is like one of a salmon. In the river, when they just need to spread their eggs. Yeah, and to pay all attention to hatch those eggs.”* (Interview 49)

Although not directly connected, this statement resonates with the words of his compatriot, an 80-years-old retired engineer who arrived to Canada as a refugee from the USSR.

“If I leave my apartment now and somebody moves in, [they] will pay double. If I now move to another part of the city, I won’t be able to survive.” (Interview 40)

Refugees from Ethiopia, especially older ones, also seem tied to St. James Town in their older years: *“Especially my health is concerning. You know, I have a medical problem. So maybe three months is maximum [in Ethiopia]. I have medication for three months. That’s it. So, I have to come to Canada.”* (Interviews 32-35)

His friend, a middle-aged man taking care of his own brother who is struggling with mental health, admits: *“If I go back home and I take my brother to Ethiopia, he can’t survive [there] – medication is expensive.”*

In that context, the doubts of a young professional from India, a woman in her 30s, seem to be of vital existential importance. People who still have many possibilities open, who did not make their final bet on Canada, ask themselves a similar question:

“Canada hasn’t felt like home for six years, so I don’t know if I want to wait another six years and realize that I’ve wasted those years trying to find what feels like home.” (Interview 47)

5c) Daily ties with countries of origin

Contact with friends and family

Most of the participants, especially the international students and young families, admit that they keep in touch with their families daily, using, above all else, WhatsApp and sometimes FaceTime. Some of them talk to parents even more than once a day, adjusting the day activities to time zone differences. The strongest ties are maintained within the Indian diaspora.

“I’ll say “Mom, wake me up in so many hours” - due to the time difference. If I say 6:00 pm, she’ll wake me up at like 6:00 pm Indian time. So, I tell her “Wake me up in like 9-10 hours from now” and she will do that.” (Interview 06)

Every day [we talk] two times – [otherwise] they will not let me breathe if I don't call. So, it's night here and it's morning there. At night, I must call. And in the morning, it's night there. So, at that time - another call. I call twice a day to talk to both of my parents.” (Interview 08)

Both of these young women, coming to Canada as college students, seem happy with their strong ties keeping them grounded and comforting them in the stressful first years of immigration.

Another aspect of staying in close touch is visiting each other, a big part of life for the diasporas.

The visits often last relatively long. *“When my parents came in, [we had] just one bathroom. [There were] four of us staying so it was a little challenging because I knew they'll be staying there for a couple of months. And then my husband's parents, my in-laws, came. They wanted to see their granddaughter.”* (Interview 19)

Friendship ties are mentioned too and seem to be important but often they cannot be compared to the collectivist spirit that some immigrant cultures have when it comes to keeping the family close. Knowing that, it is even more heartbreaking to hear the stories or ties completely severed or limited to the minimum.

“I do not have even one person [there]. I don't speak Farsi [anymore]. I won't even speak it for my mother.” Asked about talking to his family, the man says shortly: *“Once a month. I don't call. Usually they call.”* Being persecuted for his sexual orientation in Iran, he decided to become a completely new person in Canada: *“I was so traumatized when I was in my country that - I should not use this word “hate” - but I really hate it. What I went through there is to the point that I did not want to even remember the language of that country.”* (Interview 09)

Following the news

Immigrants in St. James Town do not only follow the news, but also comment on social and political topics on a daily basis, particularly if their main group of friends are their compatriots.

There was not much insight into what kind of news are being followed, but as much as, for instance, Israelis were keen on watching mainstream media (the interviews were conducted in the summer of 2023), the Indian participants (often being a younger group) often mentioned Internet sources, citing specific reasons for that:

“They are independent, they’re like the real ones. So, I listen to podcasts and all. It is more the real media now. Others, they sold out. It used to be good, but not anymore. So, I just follow the independent [sources].” (Interview 04)

Interestingly, some participants reported an automatic change of content which slowly excludes the news from their home country: *“Google is very smart. The feeds that they give me are all related to Canada. They don't give me much of India feeds. So, I need to go into google.in and then get the Indian news.”* (Interview 20)

Asked if they follow Canadian news or the news from back home, interviewees admit watching the news from back home. Following the Canadian content seems to be more of a conscious effort. *“Absolutely yes! No, definitely. India and Mumbai definitely. And my Instagram feed, too. I follow Indian news and all of that, yes.”* (Interview 46)

Of course, as for each of the topics, there seem to be outliers: *“There are benches outside of the building, for smoking. So, I’m just sitting there one time and then there’s a guy that’s already a Canadian citizen, but he’s Filipino. And we talk about things happening back home and he*

mentions to me - oh, I don't want to talk about politics and the economy of the Philippines. We're already here in Canada, just leave it there in the Philippines.” (Interview 42)

5d) Financial ties, investments and retirement plans

Remittances

However, there is a continuation to the anecdote cited by the Filipino interviewee. His neighbour, a person who did not want to talk about the politics of the Philippines, turned out to be in a hurry for work, as he had three jobs in Canada.

“Why, I asked? Why do you have three jobs? So that I can send more money back home in the Philippines, he told me. You see? You don't want to talk politics, you don't want to talk about economy. But you know, you are still part of this - of course, absolutely!” (Interview 42)

This example shows the intertwined, multi-layered canvas of loyalties, efforts and goals which, often at a first glance, seem to be confined to one space or mindset, but very often reach further, encompassing multiple commitments and realities.

The Philippines is a specific example because it is one of the few countries where sending remittances is institutionalised by the state and where the state actively supports and facilitates both, the immigration outflows and the money inflows (De Haas et al, 2019).

Some participants mention sending remittances on a regular basis or at least from time to time, upon request. *“Last time my brother asked for money to install security cameras, so I just sent the money and then [they got] probably installed. I haven't talked to him yet.”* (Interview 01)

Others, even if not actively supporting their families back home, have a strong sense of commitment and even debt towards their relatives, particularly parents. A young Indian woman

explained that her sister and herself always pay for their parents' plane tickets and expenses like trips or home appliances because they feel they owe it to them. (Interview 47)

Investments and retirement

Multiple participants mentioned, more or less directly, that they have some perspectives or actual investments in their countries. Some mention it explicitly, but also, it is not a topic that people like to share easily so it might be assumed that financial, transnational ties are even stronger. Numerous off-the-record conversations with fellow immigrants in the span of the three years of living in St. James Town gave the author of this work a strong conviction that, even if not mentioned explicitly – and very often not disclosed to the new home country in the tax records – people often keep family assets or own investments in the country of origin.

“I want to make the best use of the cash that I hold and I'm still not able to buy anything in Canada. So, I've decided to maybe invest in a house in Poland as quickly as possible and just, you know, have something tangible.” (Interview 44)

The probability that such statements might be valid in more cases than explicitly noticed in the interviews also comes from the fact that many of the participants do not wish to stay in Canada upon retirement. Sometimes it comes from the disdain for the Canadian winters but sometimes from the idea of family obligations.

In some rare instances, the allegiance is strong towards the country itself. A young Nepalese student says: *“There are lots of responsibilities for me. Coming from the developing countries, (...) I have to do something for my home country only. I want to be the counselor in a mental health-related field. So, I just came here to get more knowledge so that I can use it back in my country.”* (Interview 08)

Most of the interviewees asked about retiring in Canada admit that they do not want to stay there.

Some are very pragmatic about it: *“I don't see myself retiring here in Canada and the reason is that life is extremely expensive and being an immigrant of almost 40 years [old] here, it's almost impossible to earn enough money.”* (Interview 49)

If more immigrants make such calculations, the question is – can one really build a sense of belonging in a country in which comfort will never be achievable?

5e) Creativity and coping mechanisms

“I wake up in the morning, cook myself two tablespoons of barley, maybe some lentils, open a can of tuna. That will last me until the evening. That's what freedom is. If I was born 200 years ago, I would probably be a monk, you know?” - says the retirement Ukrainian engineer.

(Interview 40)

There seems to be a degree of choice but also the necessity of poverty.

In the midst of his monk-like live, the older man is very creative, trying to make sense of the world around him and release his frustrations through regularly sent email newsletters (sometimes daily) as well as poetry books, sometimes self-published, sometimes still waiting to be published. His frustration with the Canadian society, particularly with what he calls “the WASP culture” carries a lot of pain.

“When finally making contact with you, a Toronto WASP usually displays a more or less convincing (depending on his skills as a social actor) friendly smile, showing as many teeth as possible without causing any permanent damage to his face. Do not be easily deceived by this. It is neither friendly nor smile. It is just a protective mask used specifically for such occasions.”

(sent to the author on August 8, 2023; permitted to use; the whole essay attached in Appendix 5)

In fact, creativity and humor seem to be well established tools of resistance, but also emotional “self-maintenance” for immigrants. An Ethiopian-Canadian scholar Tewodros Asfaw, whom the author of this work is fortunate to call a friend, once told a joke based in St. James Town, referring to the plight of Ethiopian diaspora.

“An Ethiopian newcomer comes into Tim Hortons on Sherbourne and Isabella, where all the other Ethiopians meet up. He walks up to a group, enthusiastic and impatient, asking: “Friends, now once I’m here, what should I do to really crack the system, to really get into the system.” “It will take time”, they reply. “But don’t worry, you will get there”. Months later, they see him in torn clothes, in the middle of Sherbourne Street, shouting absentmindedly into space. “Oh yes”, they nod their heads. “He got there. He got into the system.”

Such jokes, as terrible and harsh as they seem, reflect a part of reality of life at Sherbourne Street where shouting at people (real by-passers or imagined foes) takes place, without exaggeration, almost every single day. The topic of substance abuse resurfaced in the chapters above on many occasions, not only as a safety concert but also as a reflection of struggle, pain and feeling of being a strange person in a strange land. It haunts other immigrants, even those who are successful and optimistic, as the reminder of a “slippery slope” of their new reality, of something that in fact might happen if they do not pay enough attention.

Intoxication of any form, often more accessible than a friendly person to talk to, seem to be obviously a dangerous, but guaranteed short term relief from anxiety and loneliness - the awkwardness of immigrant existence - in a country that needs immigrants, but in direct contact often finds them a nuisance. The country does not want to hear their accents in coffee shops, it does not want to see the tiredness of students on bicycles delivering food on a snowy night and does not want to believe that these newcomers *did* have a full life, they were resourceful, self-

confident and perhaps even admired before coming to Toronto. Over time, it becomes difficult for the immigrants to keep believing these facts themselves. In such cases, creative outlet of any sort, in a form of a horrible joke or an angry pamphlet, might go a long way, taking people through, at least, another day.

Chapter 7: Theory Formulation in the Context of the Research Questions

In the previous chapter, the data gathered by the empirical research was described in detail. The research process, based on the interviews, was supported by ongoing observations and author's experience of living in St. James Town for three years.

This chapter will outline the research findings based on the categories presented in detail in the previous chapter (created as the outcome of focused coding using grounded theory techniques). Those findings, being also the theoretical contribution of this work and following the logic of the research questions, will serve as the theory formulation stage according to the grounded theory method. The chapter will conclude with the section on the limitations of the work, possible future directions, and recommendations.

Research Findings: Local and Global Dynamics of Urbanization

Research findings allowed to gain insight into the physical and social landscape of the neighbourhood and to catch the dynamics of the ongoing production of space. Also, interactions with the larger city were outlined to provide understanding of the role of St. James Town within the city of Toronto. Insights into housing and labor markets, coupled with informality and precarity of solutions, showed the role of St. James Town in Canadian immigration system, particularly during the first few years after immigrants' arrival. However, insight into well-established immigrants' lives was also found, allowing to understand not only the first years but also the later stages of immigrant's presence in Toronto. Finally, the ties with countries of origin were demarcated showing the rich interactions of this particular neighbourhood with the world outside of Canada.

With such insight, research objectives of this work can be brought to perspective and the research questions can be juxtaposed with the research findings.

1.1. How is the neighbourhood understood (focusing on its topography & symbolism) by the residents of St. James Town

The first objective of this work was to delineate the scale of the neighbourhood and understand its relationship with the city of arrival and spaces of origin followed by specific research questions.

This section will focus on diverse topographies of the neighbourhood, differentiating between its Western side along Sherbourne Street and the "inner" St. James Town, to the East. It will also discuss the functions of the area in the life of the residents: for many of the newcomers it is a temporary solution, it is a convenient location for more well-to-do residents, and a vital source of services for others.

The topography and mapping of St. James Town seems straightforward, but it has its nuances. The square-like shape between Sherbourne Street in the West, Parliament Street to the East, Wellesley Street in the south and Bloor Street to the North has very strong visual features, consisting predominantly of modernist high-rise buildings. In fact, the Northern border on Bloor Street is the official demarcation but functionally and in the narratives of the participants, as well as in terms of modernist architecture, is set on Howard Street. The stretch between Howard and Bloor streets is left for the subway (Sherbourne Station), townhouses and the construction sites. Sherbourne Street, the Western-most stretch of the neighbourhood, plays an important role in the life of the area. That's where many of the shops are located, as well as Tim Hortons, hair saloon and other spaces of commerce. Also, the Medallion Corporation's rental office is located there which is somehow important because many of the residents live in their rental buildings. Further

down the street there is the entrance to Wellesley Community Centre and to Toronto Public Library. Being a busy street for cars, as well as having bike lanes on each side and bus stops, as well as the subway station, Sherbourne is a busy street on the stretch to Wellesley Street. On the other side of the street condo towers are located and more of them are planned or constructed already. That means that the residential traffic is likely to increase even further.

In the summertime, this is a lively and pleasant street. People sit outside, likely in groups, and what can be easily observed is that it is mostly the newcomers, particularly international students who hang out utilizing these public spaces along Sherbourne Street. In fact, the presence of international students along Sherbourne Street is confirmed in the interviews – most of the student interviewees live in shared apartments along this street.

For them, St. James Town does not seem to be an important location of its own. Particularly those who live on Sherbourne Street, when depicting the neighbourhood do not often mention the large area “behind” Sherbourne. In fact, it seemed that “St. James Town” was a name that many of them were not familiar with.

It can be understood for a couple of reasons. International students are the most recent newcomers so they might not have been exposed to many of the nuances of the local topography yet. Their busy life is stretched between colleges and workplaces. They appreciate living on Sherbourne Street due to its excellent location, but a lot of time will pass before they sense the identity of the area – if they even stay there long enough.

At the same time, they are the ones who bring the vibrant, rejuvenating ambient to that part of the neighbourhood even if the existence of “the neighbourhood” is of secondary importance to them. They gather in public spaces, outside of the buildings, sometimes meet in the lobbies.

They play cricket in the alleys or just walk around. When the patio of the local bar is open in the summer months, many young faces can be seen there.

So much attention is paid here to Sherbourne Street because it is a sort of a frontier. First of all, the condofication of the area presses from exactly that side, bringing lasting changes. Also, the children's park which was infamously torn down in the last months of 2023 is on Sherbourne Street – in a way it exemplifies the fears of what those lasting changes might entail. From that point of view, Sherbourne Street is the laboratory in which the changes coming to St. James Town as a whole can be observed and tested. This particular street is a site of an important questions – will St. James Town keep its relevance and in what way will it merge with the rest of downtown, since the merging process, led by the condo-infrastructure, seems inevitable.

The fact that international students and many of the newcomers living on that street do not know about “St. James Town” stems from the fact that they are still on the learning curve of Torontonians topography, but it might also show that, particularly from its West side, the neighbourhood does not “advertise” itself too much, does not keep its identity.

A very interesting thing can be observed in the interviews conducted with residents who live along Sherbourne Street. People with balconies facing the West with an outlook of the larger city, often do not consider themselves living in St. James Town. Some even admit not going “there” ever.

The stigma of the place being “sketchy” is so strong that in many cases when the author of this work mentioned living there, Torontonians would get intrigued in the way that suggests readiness to completely exoticize the place in their imagination. Indeed, exoticized it is, even in

the interviews. As much as St. James Town is surely a place of ongoing struggle with mental health, some residents seem to actually like mentioning “needles lying on the ground.”

“I used to live in the *projects*,” a Palestinian Canadian told the author a while back in a clear attempt to add a rough twist to her life. When asked about the details, it turned out that she lived in St. James Town – which technically was not ever created as a public housing project.

Do some of the immigrants exoticize the neighbourhood, perhaps to add to their story, perhaps to try to gaze from the outside at the area, a point of view of an established Torontonians? Perhaps. That is fine as long as it works for them as a creative adjustment in their stressful arrival.

At the same time, many of the residents, especially with windows and balconies facing the inner St. James Town – the high-rise buildings, the views and sounds of the neighbourhood - seem to have a much stronger positive affinity with it. They mention hearing children play, they mention the basketball court and its sounds.

The residents who live in the “inner” St. James Town often feel its strong identity, especially those who have lived there for many years. Interviewees often see the particular topics, such as safety, residents’ well-being, renovations – as issues specific to St. James Town, not just “the area” as many of the residents at Sherbourne Street see it. Also, more established residents are quite interested in the state of the neighbourhood, but that often stems from the fact that they receive public assistance or subsidies and use the community centre facilities. From that point of view, the state of the neighbourhood directly affects their wellbeing. In a similar way, more recent immigrants also use the public infrastructure of the area and are way more invested in it when they have children and use the services available for them.

1.2. What are the elements of the neighbourhood's collective identity as an immigrant place of arrival?

This section will describe St. James Town as a site of unique symbolism based on lived diversity, different in practice from a rather abstract Canadian multiculturalism. That translates to public spaces having a more organic, unassuming and inviting role, creating a welcoming setting for both, newcomers and more established residents. St. James Town is also an easily accessed space of immigrant services, focused on its transnational ties and some degree of informality.

However, for most of the immigrants it is just a functional space they do not consider staying in. As much as the diversity brings some distrust and sometimes resentment towards other migrants, what binds the neighbourhood is a shared experience of being “othered” by the rest of the city.

All of the participants highlight the diversity of the area and its immigrant character. This is an obvious characteristic of the neighbourhood, but it would be too far-fetched to imply too much of a symbolism upon the place.

Indeed, the official website of the area, linked with the Corner@200 and Corner@240, mentions proudly that the motto of the neighbourhood is “A World within a Block”. The subtle and skillful way in which that narrative adds a degree of resistance of “true diversity” to the official Canadian rhetoric of surface-level multiculturalism is impressive, particularly in a setting where very diverse groups, traditions and upbringings function well together (Formanowicz, 2022).

Aside from that, the Corners do a wonderful job of providing relevant services and also a sense of belonging, or at least a presence of a helpful hand to many. Similarly to other places on the map of the city. “Neighbourhood Link is a place where we feel loving and comfortable,” says one of the residents of Scarborough about their community centre, in research conducted by

Ranu Basu and Robert Fiedler (2017, p.36), where authors aimed at exploring how “integration” is imagined and understood by immigrants.

Similar elements of integration and belonging can be found in “The Corners.” Various formal and informal organizations, co-ops and groups are present in the area, both in the indoor spaces but also in the form of festivals, activities for children, stands with organic, local food, and so forth. Particularly in the summer it can be easily claimed that St. James Town is there, vibrant and proud. Its central area, a park next to which a year-round street market is open, just outside of Food Basics, can really serve as an example of how public spaces should function – with free-of-charge, open access, places to sit down, corners where rounds and people can actually meet. St. James Town and its residents seem to be proud of this uniqueness.

In the City of Toronto, described by some of the interviewees as a place “with no public spaces,” where “streets only serve to move from point A to B,” such an organic, inviting space is of utmost importance. Also, Toronto’s “public spaces” in the summer are to a large extent patios, which are not public at all. The infrastructure to sit down and enjoy the sun, aside from parks, come at a steep price of food or drinks. St. James Town, largely due to its reputation of a poor place, resists that. Residents and their friends or relatives who visit them can find urban spaces which are open and relatively inviting but are not parks or patios.

At the same time, St. James Town is home for thousands of people with thousands of stories and different motivations. As much as the spirit of St. James Town is definitely felt and present on its streets, especially in the summertime, for many the area is simply a stop on a journey. For some, it is a convenient spot in the middle of downtown Toronto, for others it is an affordable location in the difficult beginnings with the dream of a suburban house in mind.

For hundreds of international students, it is a place “here and now.” For them, struggling with limited-time visas and work permits, busy lives with the aim of securing their presence in Canada – for them St. James Town is just a name. The problems of security do not seem to be “their” problems, public infrastructure or new investments in the area do not bother them simply because the area itself is not of much importance to them.

Indeed, it is a safe space for immigrants. It can be noticed in the interviews that people feel a bit more at home in this particular neighbourhood and the fact that they can find food ingredients, access to Internet or Western Union so close to their home makes the intimidating reality of Toronto a bit more pleasant. With being a space comprising almost entirely of immigrants, it is a place where perhaps people can put their guard down a bit. In that sense, the immigrant identity of the area is utilized and appreciated by the residents.

Still, St. James Town can be an “immigrant” place only as much as immigration to Canada is a coherent, definable social process. And it hardly is. The fifty interviews conducted for this research show a vast degree of differences between newcomers. Do they, the immigrants, feel that they have much in common with one another? Not more, perhaps even less, than people who already consider themselves Canadian.

In the research, some degree of resentment towards certain populations could be noticed, with one complaint of actual discrimination by fellow immigrant residents. With people of different age, cultural background, gender and sexuality being interviewed, it would be impossible and perhaps naïve to assume that their identity as immigrants is at the forefront of their daily existence and creates solid affinity with strangers who also happen to live in that area.

Having said that, what comes to the forefront of the daily experience is the negative side of arrival to Canada – the feeling of being “othered,” of not fitting into the mainstream Canadian society, or of not being accepted. Some of the newcomers are more successful than others and more hopeful than others – however, in a sad irony, this impossibility of feeling truly comfortable and letting the guard down, particularly in front of white Canadians, is the source of the “collective identity” of struggle that bring together this vastly diverse population.

1.3. What is the role of the neighbourhood for the city of Toronto?

This section will show the role of St. James Town as a haven for arrival, a spatial container for struggles, frustrations and emotions, where diversity and inclusion work organically. St. James Town plays the “nursery role” off the larger city and perhaps because of that, allowing some self-governance and autonomy of the immigrants, the larger city of Toronto “lets the neighbourhood be.” At the same time, the stigmatization of the area by the larger city and residents themselves makes it unclaimed by anyone. Lastly, Toronto shows some revanchist tendencies towards St. James Town and by perpetuating settler colonial structures of control it adds to the restlessness of the residents.

The experience of struggle, mentioned before, leads to the role which St. James Town might play for the immigrants who have become its residents. In that way, it plays a role for the larger city. It is a sort of a “safe space”, containing people’s frustrations. It is inclusive not by choice and deliberate display but by necessity and everyday experience of “minding own business”. In that way, it is not the top-bottom, guarded inclusivity of institutionalized political correctness that some of the interviewed newcomers seem to find tricky if not oppressive. It is a lived experience of existing next to each other.

The St. James Town Resident Council experience, as short-lived as it was, provided a fascinating insight into radical, affirmative inclusivity of gender identities, sexual orientations, age groups, different degrees of being physically able, statuses in Canada and obviously, races and ethnicities, without feeling the need to put that inclusivity into any big statements and forcing it under the umbrella of implicit “Canadianness.”

In other words, St. James Town is a space of relief for many of the immigrants who live there, providing the larger city with a controlled, spatially-contained site of adjustive attempts where the process of arrival, with its ups and downs, can take place.

“What happens when people are raised in environments built to contain them?” (Shabazz, 2015, p.3). It seems that immigrants tolerate it for a long time. Sometimes - as long as it takes, as long as the dream of moving out is still alive and feasible. For many, St. James Town indeed feels like a “waiting room” to Toronto and that is an important role that it plays for the larger city - with its relatively lower prices, informal ways of arranging housing, public transport accessibility which is used *now*, but will be forgotten once the house in the suburbs and a car are bought.

The stigma of poverty and safety concerns keeps the mainstream society away from the neighbourhood – for now, since the condo-towers are rising everywhere around it.

As mentioned before, sometimes the neighbourhood is stigmatized by its own residents, perhaps because often they see themselves “on their way out” of there. In fact, many talk about moving, many of the people interviewed will not even be in Canada a few years from now.

In that sense, unfortunately, St. James Town does not belong to anyone. The city does not fully claim it and neither do the immigrants. Downtown Toronto stigmatizes the neighbourhood with little verification and most of the immigrants see it as a temporary solution. Those established

residents who see the place as it is –experiencing problems but also alive and definitely unique, often do not have the platform to share those views.

What needs to be noticed when the interaction between the city and the neighbourhood is discussed, is the confrontation with Toronto as a settler colonial space – taking St. James Town back to its inception as a space designed for the white population, a symbol of unity.

Upon becoming a symbol of immigration in the middle of downtown, it witnesses some degree of revanchism from the larger city. Indeed, being a safe space for people who do not feel comfortable among the predominantly white population, it is still the space of ongoing harassment from the police force.

Police cars drive on empty streets at night with the sound signal on, sometimes making it deliberately annoying by switching it on and off, repeatedly – often, many times in one night.

The example of the townhall meeting where multiple armed officers were present at the peaceful assembly of residents (many of whom brought their small children) was already mentioned as something many of the participants found disturbing. Police is present in some of the buildings, particularly the infamous 200 Wellesley. That building also has a 24/7 security personnel in the lobby. Police come to the Corner@200 friendly and smiling on a daily basis too, but their presence is a statement of control. Possible use of force is a fact, particularly when considering that St. James Town consists mostly of historically oppressed groups for whom such presence can be disturbing.

Toronto Fire Services is another example. Indeed, their work is vital, but the amount of noise, the number of cars they come with, and the length of fire alarms during interventions in the middle of the night cannot be only ascribed to the sheer density of the neighbourhood. Neighbouring

very rich Rosedale and affluent Cabbagetown, St. James Town is a site of noise and stress that would surely not be allowed by the more influential residents of those areas.

Of course, these examples can be easily justified by the necessity or any other reasonable explanation. However, it still does not explain the presence of state force. Simply taking a walk through the neighbouring areas is enough to feel the difference.

As much as such opinions might seem exaggerated to someone who has not lived in St. James Town, residents seem to grasp the meaning of constant noise harassment intuitively. One of the participants noted sarcastically: “Fire alarm in the building. Just great! We are all suffering equally, now we are community!”

Is it possible that such statement is closer to the truth than one might think first? It is probable that from the point of view of Canada, and Toronto as its proudest urban endeavor, seen as rhizome of state control, regulations and soft powers, St. James Town is very much perceived as a community – needed but unwanted, and because of that, subjected to ongoing micro-aggressions or, at least, disrespectful indifference.

2.1. How are the concentrated and extended modes of urbanization manifested in the daily encounters within the neighbourhood?

The second objective of this work was to outline how the ‘moments’ of planetary urbanization (concentrated, extended, differential) are manifested in a migrant neighbourhood and to inquiry into “the constitutive outside” of the urban process.

In this section, a critical overview of the concentrated and extended urbanization concepts is being provided, informed already by the findings of the research. It argues that indeed perceiving St. James Town as a process, according to Lefebvre’s ideas of the urban, is a promising

approach. However, the process is not linear within the diversity of interests and needs. On top of that, the settler colonial legacy of Canada and Toronto needs to be acknowledged, taming St. James Town as a space of difference, particularly through the presence of armed forces and controlling mechanisms. The interplay of the concentrated and extended modes of urbanization are exemplified by treating the area as a reservoir of space and of labor, particularly by the condensation processes and functional displacement being a probable future of the area.

Concentrated and extended modes of urbanization are one of the three constitutive “moments” of urbanization, as defined by Brenner & Schmid in the article which conceived the notion of planetary urbanization (2015).

As much as the authors claim that they do reject the notion that agglomeration represents the privileged or even exclusive terrain of urban development (p.167), they still notice the concentrated mode of urbanization as one in which agglomeration processes take place through firms, workers and infrastructure clustering together (p.166). What is really new here, compared to the traditional, city-centric view of urbanization? Nothing much except the fact that, following Lefebvre, the authors see the urban as a process, not a bounded spatial unit.

Thus, within this analysis, based on planetary urbanization as the theory in question and St. James Town as a testing ground of this theoretical approach, the assumption that the process is indeed the focal point of the approach needs to be taken very seriously.

In fact, St. James Town, seen from the perspective of three years of daily life and of half a year of a particularly strong empirical focus, is nothing but a process – it is an ever-changing dialectic, or perhaps trialectic, spatial occurrence of discourse, of narratives being manifested in space and shaping that space through different sorts of repetition and assertion.

St. James Town is a process as such from its inception, starting as a symbol of unity, over time gravitating towards the manifestation of difference and novelty – a postcolonial world making itself at home in the centre of the colonial project.

However, the settler colonial project, manifested by a city created to a large extent on the idea of nationhood with the Canadian flag waving on every corner, would not simply let go and “make room” for the new, powerful narrative of diversity and Lefebvrian difference.

Indeed, Canada made durable and significant concessions by embracing multiculturalism as its main characteristic and export product. However, claiming multiculturalism as inherently Canadian is questionable at best and the lived experience of the everyday rhythms of St. James Town seems to show the city and Canada itself that such multiculturalism is not enough.

What almost seems to be the passive aggression of the Canadian mainstream multiculturalism towards the actual Lefebvrian difference conveyed by the immigrants choice of dislocating themselves and re-rooting in a faraway land is this sort of revanchism, displayed by the police force, by the public services, by the indifference of noise imposed on everyday life, as if St. James Town was an empty space of spatial intervention and not the most densely populated area of the country.

Manifestations of functional displacement (Kern, 2016) can be seen in numerous research participants’ complaints about the erasing of the small, but very useful park where children could play or in the existing anxiety that the last remnants of affordable housing will vanish following “rich new residents complains against us” as one of the participants mentioned.

In that way, the concentrated forces of agglomeration and the spatial fix of capital (Harvey, 1978; Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009) do seem to treat St. James Town as its extended reservoir of

space. Although Brenner and Schmid claimed that extended urbanization involves “the operationalization of places, territories and landscapes, often located far beyond the dense population centers, to support the everyday activities and socioeconomic dynamics of urban life” (2015, p.167) and St. James Town is not far from those centres at all, it might only show how distant the mainstream society, the financial capital and perhaps the state itself renders the neighbourhood. Such dynamic cannot be fully understood without the critical insights of the post-colonial theory.

In other words, the observations derived from this study suggest that the idea borrowed from Simone (2004) who describes people as the urban “infrastructure”: making the city productive, reproducing it, and at the same time functioning as “a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city”, is a very accurate description of the relationship between St. James Town and Toronto.

Does the city respect its reservoir of labor and reproductive force, and – more than anything – the reservoir of hope for the future, which established Canada might lack in the post-pandemic and post-political present day? Or does it see St. James Town as a place onto which force and spatial interventions can be imposed, since immigrants are new to the country, confused and voice-less?

Particularly, the encroachment of the condo-world, of the impressive bright lobbies and small, dark apartments hidden above them, of concierge desks limiting access to those towers of private property, reiterates St. James Town as terrain subjected to possible redevelopment by private capital. The proposed interventions stay outside of the borders of the neighbourhood for now - except of this particular, blunt intervention which for now seem to have been halted (Formanowicz, 2022). Still, building a 47-storey tower in the proximity of 25 metres from an

existing high-rise building and of erasing the community corner, the informal market and the green space for families, is alarming as an idea that someone might have had and invested in.

2.2. How are concentrated and extended moments of urbanization “creatively destroyed” through differential urbanization?

This section argues that the differential moment of urbanization, as defined by Brenner and Schmid, does not consider or at least does not operationalize forms of being and resisting outside of capitalism too well. Even if noticing them as such, authors assess their functioning from the standpoint dialectical with capitalism. In such a way, the spaces of difference are treated in a reductionist manner. In St. James Town, a diversity of forms, organizations and ways of being are present in the area as such but are also connecting it to other structures in Toronto.

According to Brenner and Schmid (2015) “concentrated and extended urbanization are inextricably intertwined with the process of differential urbanization, in which inherited socio-spatial configurations are continually creatively destroyed in relation to the broader developmental dynamics and crisis-tendencies of modern capitalism” (p.168). Lefebvre referred to it as the “implosion-explosion” dynamics (1970) which Brenner and Schmid associate with “the perpetual drive to restructure socio-spatial organization under modern capitalism” (p.168).

The authors seem to notice the potentiality of urban struggle and different sorts of movements in shaping the modern capitalist reality of urbanization, but they also see it “rendered obsolete and eventually superseded” by the accumulation processes and industrial development (p.168).

From such perspective, the forces of differential urbanization seem to play the role of Sisyphus of capitalist urbanization. Still, authors admit that “new urban geographies are thus constantly being produced through the dynamics of differential urbanization, whether within large urban centers or across extended operational landscapes” (p.176).

During the pandemic, Toronto seem to have been a site of many hopeful initiatives that showcased this energy of differential urbanization that authors describe. The number of self-help groups, neighbourhood organizations and even city-scale *ad hoc* initiatives appeared, aiming to soften the blow of lockdowns and layoffs, just to mention The People's Pantry. It was an informal organization created by graduate students from Torontonians universities that established an impressive network of financing, of grocery supplies and fresh food makers, linking them with people in need. Volunteers on bicycles and in cars delivered food each day for the long months of 2021 and way into 2022, the author being one of them. Nevertheless, the organization did not establish itself into a long-term project.

Similarly, although on a smaller scale, the aforementioned St. James Town Residents Council, which had ambitious plans and a quite energetic crowd of volunteers but did not manage to establish themselves into a more tangible entity can be an example of a differential moment of urbanization.

However, do these outbursts of energy and collective action always have to become something more tangible, something lasting? Brenner and Schmid write from the perspective of capitalism for which such a question does not even make sense. The only logic of capitalism is establishing itself and further growth. In that sense, whatever does not "make the cut" of surviving and growing, is not worth the attention.

Perhaps, simply put, the concentrated and extended urbanization moments do not grasp the potential of possible alternative logics and meanings of what does not serve their own purpose. Thus, they see the "difference" as defeated and incorporated into their own ways of being, without having the tools of noticing the value of existence of things which do not last, which are momentary, prone to change, vivid but unstable. Surely nation-states, sanctifying each year of its

existence as an accomplishment and celebrating each round anniversary with abundance of means, do not understand or appreciate what does not last, either.

If not capitalism and not the state (if they are claimed to be different; Toews, 2018; Sharma, 2021), there really does not seem to be any grand player to see “difference” as anything more than a force “temporarily disruptive.” Yes, Brenner and Schmid claim that “creative destruction is the *modus operandi* of capitalist forms of urban development” (2015, p.176) but still, such claims do not transgress the logic of capitalism and its internal discourse with itself.

2.3. What elements of urban reality can be perceived as “outside” of the process of planetary urbanization?

Drawing from the previous section, this part argues that spaces of difference are present in St. James Town in forms of community organizing or people’s own, resilient ways of being, individually and within their communities. Also, the neighbourhood is a space of difference in itself - adjusting but presenting counter-narratives to “mainstream” Toronto. Seeing St. James Town as a form of an arrival city (Saunders, 2011) allows to point out to how the neighbourhood as a whole functions as a creative outside, providing tangible outcomes in a form of successful arrival stories. It also shows how easy it is to overlook these mechanisms when approaching the area from the reductive point of view on “difference,” as it is currently framed in the theory of planetary urbanization.

The inability to imagine anything existing outside of it is a shortcoming of the theory that does not see beyond capitalism. Obviously, arguments that a certain *Leviathan* or *Empire* are omnipresent and omnipotent are not new, but they often prove to be simplistic or simply false, like the famous claims about the “end of history” which follow a similar logic of no-real-outside.

Particularly in the context of a locale so diverse as St. James Town, it can be argued that the whole constellations of difference are easily omitted when one tries to examine populations coming from different social and political systems, having different beliefs, values and even cosmologies. Surely, it needs further inquiry, perhaps from angles radically different from the social theories employed in this work.

St. James Town from 1960s onwards is a space of difference itself, established although changing, in its persistent subtlety. It met grand ambitions of a modernist plan with a calm and patient presence of generations of immigrants. To the hopes of the brave new world of post-war prosperity of a settler colonial project it replied with an unassuming charm of “the world within a block.” Indeed, St. James Town suffered a lot of negligence, stigma and it still does suffer, but it does not aspire to “win” any fight. With an undeniable richness of NGOs coming and going, co-ops and informal activities of neighbour groups, gathered around the Corners and beyond, St. James Town aims at simply “being” in Torontonionian space, of allowing people to exist and focus on their own goals.

In that sense, similarly to the idea skillfully grasped by Doug Saunders, St. James Town resonates with the notion of an arrival city. An arrival city, although still embedded in a capitalist agenda, can be easily claimed to be an example of a differential moment of urbanization within the capitalist logic of growth and conquest (Saunders, 2011). The arrival city, often “a spatial product of others” (Appadurai, 1995), doesn’t really exist for itself. It serves as a platform for making first steps in the new city for people who cannot, most often for financial reasons, settle anywhere else. Remaining underfinanced, sometimes even excluded from the main city and its services, the neighbourhood appears a failure of the larger city for decades, but in the meantime it provides a platform for success (even if only equalized with survival) for generations of

newcomers. In that sense, not serving itself but people who leave it when they feel strong and comfortable enough, it goes contrary to the logic of a capitalist city.

More often than not, an arrival city gets taken over by the larger city which finally claims it, for instance in a form of gentrification. Hence, Brenner and Schmid could claim that an arrival city is an example of a differential moment, eventually taken over by a concentrated mode of urban development reaching out to its extended potential. That is one way to put it. The other one is acknowledging the thousands of stories of successful arrival, of dreams fulfilled, of urban space serving its purpose of nursing and nurturing newcomers into readiness to move out.

The idea that differential moment of urbanization only serves the advancement of the capitalist project is quite reductive and this “moment” of urbanization is underrated within the theoretical interventions of Brenner and Schmid. In its present theoretical shape, it does not sufficiently capture the complex realities of St. James Town.

The above sections addressed the second objective of this work, namely, to outline how the ‘moments’ of planetary urbanization are manifested in a migrant neighbourhood and to inquiry into “the constitutive outside” of the urban process. It can be argued that as much as the concentrated and extended moments of urbanization accurately depict many of the processes taking place in St. James Town, its potential as the “constitutive outside” does not sit comfortably with the theory in its current form.

3.1. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a site of extended urbanization within the settler colonial project?

The third objective of this work was to explain the dual role of an immigrant neighbourhood and its residents as both, the „infrastructure” and the agents of planetary urbanization.

This section argues that just as the differential moment of urbanization is something that planetary theory struggles with, similarly, authors struggle with including postcolonialism along with its creative potential of explaining difference. It is true that immigration does need the connectivity of “mainstreams” across different spaces to uphold its global flows. In that sense, immigrants to St. James Town are very much agents of concentrated urbanization moments reaching out to the peripheries, not some abstract “agents of difference.” Still, even this thickening of networks of exchange cannot be properly described without the postcolonial critique of the origins of those flows, their directions and without the explanation of how the extractive and oppressive legacies of global colonial framework still play out in immigration to sites like St. James Town. It takes place particularly by reducing their presence to providing cheap labor and being responsible of the social reproduction of the city, while not willing to integrate their collective identities into the Canadian mainstream.

To start, it needs to be admitted that Brenner and Schmid (2015) have skilfully outlined the mechanisms through which the concentrated and the extended moments of urbanization exist, intertwined within the capitalist project even if the differential urbanization is something that doesn't fit well within their theory.

As mentioned, differential urbanization might not be the strongest point of planetary urbanization. It overlooks ways of functioning, ways of being beyond the ontologies of growth, lasting and expansion.

Similarly, on a different level of analysis, Brenner and Schmid notice postcolonial writing that tries to look at the urbanization processes from a new angle, but their main point of criticism is a bit patronizing, just as the approach to difference. They claim that indeed, postcolonial urbanisms have undergone “maturation and consolidation,” but have not provided the field with

a “fully fledged urban epistemology,” due to too much diversity of thoughts and points of view (p.160).

Again, and similarly to the point about difference itself - just as difference seen solely from the totalizing point of view of capitalism, with its relevance assessed by capitalist tools, plays only a subjective role to the narrative of capitalism and thus, cannot be really creatively and ontologically *different*, a similarly biased perspective seem to take the steam out of the theory of planetary urbanization which sees the diversity and the lack of a coherent new research paradigm as its limit - and not its potential.

The authors also criticize the postcolonial approach for centering the city as the privileged site of analysis and criticize the fact that, allegedly, postcolonial thought sees rural as outside of the omnipresent urban – which does not fit Brenner and Schmid’s idea of extended urbanization reaching out to those “conditions of possibility” and far-away “zones”.

This point needs to be addressed when analysing the extended urbanization in the context of St. James Town. It seems reasonable to start with the common ground.

The authors make a valid point when claiming that some city-centric epistemologies include the notion of rural-to-urban migration which does not hold water in the context of the urban society (p.169), the intertwined nature of social occurrences, transgressing spaces and employing simultaneity and homogeneity. In fact, the rural and urban division has been blurred so profoundly by technologies of simultaneity and global chains of production that anything categorised as “strictly” rural in a traditional sense could immediately aspire to a UNESCO status. Relatively self-reliant systems, either natural or societal, are becoming a scarce

occurrence and planetary tendencies of capitalism, the “monoculture of the mind” as Vandana Shiva calls it, is an obvious culprit.

Indeed, immigration systems are largely subservient to those chains of production and the totalizing urban interconnectivity. Transnationalism in fact fits into planetary epistemologies very well. “Tuning in” into transnationalism requires certain levels of financial or social capital.

Crossing borders, particularly the ones between the Global South and the North, rarely is the movement of populations inherently “rural,” distant, disconnected or shielded from the implosions-explosions of capitalist cycles. If it happens, by family reunification or perhaps refugee streams from conflict areas, research like this one has limited means of reaching them.

For that and other reasons, people who “make it” to Canada are very much agents of the “thickening and stretching” of the urban fabric (p.170). That takes on multiple forms: arrival from villages in Eastern Europe in a transgression of spaces of the “first” and “second” world (particularly when speaking of older refugees from the USSR or Czechoslovakia). Also, arrivals from towns in Punjab or Gujarat within the logic of education industries or following transnational spaces of faith and religion, as in the example of an Ethiopian immigrant who wanted to marry someone “from the community” even if “the community” means people present on a different continent.

Particularly, the new strain of immigration into St. James Town, but not to Canada *per se* - the international students - is a clear form of the concentrated spaces of an ambitious and often ruthless Canadian knowledge export industry, backed up by the tools of policy, diplomacy and skillful nation-state branding, reaching out to activate and transform places which it sees as a source of revenue, labor and, perhaps future citizens (Formanowicz et al., 2024).

The running joke that “C in Canada stands for Chandigarh” or bumper stickers saying “Hariyana” drawn against the backdrop of the CN tower, exemplify this thickening and densifying of an urban fabric, not in a form of financial and population flows only, but also in shaping new cultural references and symbolisms. On a policy level, the Express Entry or Provincial Nominee Programs are ways of attracting transnational inflows or of “sealing the deal” with those who are already here. The research participants often use those streams of arrival in a model example of the concentrated reaching out to the extended.

But these tools, employed by immigration governance, labor market and the insatiable hunger of higher education recruitment industry, cannot be seen without the lens of labor extraction, of a coloniality-induced “dream of a better life in the West/North” and without pointing out to Canada’s indifference to the low quality of life of the people it invited in.

The intertwined nature of border security and the needs of the capitalist economy to expand and contract, the labor market depending on its localized needs, the spatial fix of capital actually reaching out to savings of people from places far away in order to reiterate the old or squeeze in new branches into saturated economies (such as the growth of international education in the college sector, juxtaposed with universities) – these things can be simply seen as planetary urbanization occurrences but instead (or on top of it), then must be seen as movements within the postcolonial world which is still based on resource and labor extraction, guiding inflows towards former colonial centres or their settler colonial projects.

That is the aspect of postcolonial insight and necessity that Brenner and Schmid seem to underestimate. For instance, Nandita Sharma provides a historical-geographic conceptualization of power in relation to labour and markets (2018), and to immigration and citizenship (2020), showing that coloniality evolves into more subtle forms and normalizes them spatially through

frameworks of exclusive nation-states. The struggle of many of the residents of St. James Town cannot be explained without pointing out to those techniques of colonial control, from “othering” based on skin color and accent, to the “subtle” and “normalized” practices of shielding the comfortable Canadian labor market from the newcomers by the requirements of Canadian education, experience, driving licence and so on.

Planetary urbanization does not see labor extraction the way that racial capitalism defines it. It sees the mechanisms and structures of capitalism but does not pay enough attention to the specificity of the settler colonial project within it.

Authors such as Mensah (2002), Blomley (2004) or Toews (2018) have operationalized how the colonial projects always take a specific stance towards the populations that it needs, but doesn't want to fully allow in, and Sharma has translated that into a global scale of immigration regimes and labor control (2020). The language of private property and erasure employed in Canadian cities leads to displacement, as defined by Blomley (2004). In downtown Toronto, it can be noticed in the penalizing practices towards the unhoused or immigrant populations on a micro scale and in the gentrification tendencies of the city in form of condo towers on the bigger scale.

Following, among others, Toews' work about the city of Winnipeg (2018) and Rodney's classic work on the structures of colonization in Africa (2018), it can be claimed that “othering”, racism and refusal to facilitate belonging of the new, aspiring Canadians, mostly Canadians of color, keeping them in the liminality of St. James Town for years or for decades, can be explained by the logic of racial capitalism. That logic shows that the colonial project, exemplified by the concentrated urbanism of the colonial city of Toronto, does not construct discriminatory walls around St. James Town for racist reasons, but keeps racist reasons relevant for the economic rationale of labour extraction.

It is an obvious observation that in the platform economy landscape, particularly in the midst of the pandemic, delivery personnel consisted mostly of Black or Brown young man. It got confirmed in the interviews, pointing out to numerous experiences of precarious jobs. Interviews also show that international students often need to keep two jobs. But what needs to be kept in mind is that, at the same time, they need to deposit substantial amounts of money in Canadian banks upon arrival. Another example: the impossibility of finding decent housing without Canadian credit score or references have been also described in detail. They can all be traced to exclusionary, colonial tropes and to capitalist structures serving a global city to provide it with cheap labor.

What is left to be said is that the City of Toronto, using the infrastructure put in place by the Canadian state, keeps immigrants of color confined to certain realities which renders them a handy reservoirs of extended urbanization potentialities.

That is particularly painful because newcomers come exactly to bridge postcolonial transnational realities of historical dependencies with their own lived experience. Canada feeds the world with the dream of a better life in the Global North which draws directly from the self-confidence and lack of self-reflection of the colonial masters. Upon arrival, even if conditionally allowing entry, Canadian urban structures take over the task of managing the dreams and expectations of newcomers without too much sensitivity or empathy.

It can be easily noticed that those years of liminality are better seen from the postcolonial perspective of scrutiny of a settler colonial logic than from simply the mechanistic and not-historical-enough statements of planetary urbanization. In other words, the concentrated and extended modes of planetary urbanization might explain the mechanics of the urbanization processes, but they do not explain its struggles.

3.2. What is the role of St. James Town and its residents as a node of concentrated urbanization?

This section argues that aside from being an extended (even if situated next door) potential of concentrated moments of global capitalism and colonialism, St. James Town, by the individual and collective agency of its residents, also functions as their own “concentrated” moment, being an important node of global ties which cannot be grasped by the logic of nation states and single allegiances. These ties create a well-functioning, even if obscure and largely informal, network of transnational imaginaries and realities. St. James Town exemplifies how much struggle and compromise such networks often require, how much fatigue they carry, at the same time being the outlet for immigrants’ agency and hopes.

It is crucial to highlight complex realities of immigrants, who often see themselves as agents of the concentrated mode of urbanization just by the sheer fact of “making it to Canada”, being tentatively accepted by it. Through such actors, just as much as the community and the economies of the ethnic enclaves can “implode” the urbanization processes, it is argued that enclaves and ethnoburbs “explode” urban realities by fostering and maintaining transnational ties with places of origin and cultural affiliation.

Immigrants (and their structures) often bring their own mainstreams that feed into the concentrating tendencies of Canadian multiculturalism – the Indian middle class, the educated Middle Eastern professionals, Eastern Europeans leveraging their European passports, Filipino skilled-workers putting themselves in the remittance machine of their home country. Those immigrant groups, as incoherent and diverse as can possibly be, perpetuate the transnational reality of the extended moment of urbanization as imagined by Brenner and Schmid, providing the concentrated agglomeration and simultaneity with the uneven “thickening” of the urban

fabric by “activating and transforming territories and landscapes in service of the socio-metabolic processes of the urban society” (p.166-168).

As the agents of their own concentrated moments of transnational urbanism, they skillfully navigate the infrastructure of St. James Town as a space both *inside* and *outside* of the Canadian clustering of privilege, global power and financial capital. They activate distant places, different time zones, languages and skillsets in service of customized allegiances and loyalties.

The middle ground which they often build, their own internal St. James Town of not belonging, “paid off” by the prestige of the Canadian passport and income, is a tricky sweet spot which Canada tries to claim in the form of taxes, allegiance and responsibilities. However, even the totalizing aspirations of a colonial capitalist project, in which land and people are both extractable resources, cannot entirely control those ties, flows and interests.

In that sense, the houses built in distant homelands, the retirement dreams of sunny places which help survive tough winters, the respect of compatriots back at home – these are the urbanisms entirely constructed and played out by the immigrants and their agency.

As much as they are intimate and private, creating contextualized bridges between the domestic and foreign selves that no institution can fully grasp, they do create lasting, tangible connections between spaces and territories, feeding the concentrated urbanisms with externalized moments involving transport, financial, educational and many other sorts of services, such a process cannot be easily claimed by the reductive territorial logic of the nation states.

To understand how powerful and lasting the connections made by this transnational immigration-nation are, the post-colonial insight into the excluding and including territoriality of borders and nation-states of Nandita Sharma becomes useful.

As oppressive as the present times border global regime is, and as colonial as its roots are (Sharma, 2020), immigrants learn to leverage the cross-border realities against each other to their own benefit, the benefit of their families, communities and places where their hearts truly are. Often, they do it almost unconsciously, like the Filipino immigrant who claimed no interest in the home country but kept three jobs in order to send money back home. Others employ their different identities very cautiously, like the Muslim Ethiopian woman who successfully established her educational business far away in Dubai.

3.3. How is informality employed as a copying mechanism and as a mode of self governance in St. James Town?

This section describes how the daily informalities of St. James Town help to navigate larger structures of arrival in the city which is not welcoming. Two modes of informality were observed – the more apparent one, filling the lanes and corners of the neighbourhood with informality of exchange and (mostly aid-centred) services. Interestingly, this mode is the “informality rooted in formality” as it mostly engages people who live in the area for years, have an established status, often within the structures of public assistance. The other one is the informality of the newcomers, revolving mostly around housing issues, rooted in the inability to access the formal housing arrangements.

Informality of St. James Town is as salient as the settler colonial regulations allow. In other words, the relative autonomy of the neighbourhood is always mediated by the larger structures and rules enforcement.

Both kinds of informality require elaboration. The first one is the one of small-scale market, allowing to find, buy, access something cheaper - outside of the regulated structures. That mode is spatially quite defined by the proximity to Food Basics, the little green space and The

Corner@240. It is really a unique feature of the neighbourhood, unlike any other thing seen in downtown Toronto, surely not on that scale. It resembles a “farmers market of poverty” where instead of neatly packed fresh produce, a person can buy used DVD, clothes, electronics and virtually anything that someone has left around the neighbourhood and that looks saleable. Some research participants claim that the market is a front for drugs sale and that many of the goods sold are stolen from packages delivered all over the area.

Near to that place, there are vegetable produce stands and even a small food truck that operates daily in the warmer months. These are run by small immigrant businesses and co-ops.

The food distribution and aid networks operated by The Corner@240 and The Corner@200 are also based around this epicentre of informality. The services offered by the informal community centres, ranging from music instrument lessons to tax advice seem to be immersed in an unassuming, cozy atmosphere of personal contact and little-to-none formal arrangements. That is a nice change compared to rather formalized Torontonion life and even in comparison with the Wellesley Community Centre, its front desks and slightly intimidating long corridors.

Those networks, frequented by some residents of St. James Town and entirely ignored or watched with voyeuristic fascination by others, show how the economy of exchange, of contact, of utilizing corners and public benches can be established in an organic manner even in a goal-oriented and fast-paced city of Toronto.

However, contrary to that “street informality” of the neighbourhood, there is also a well-documented larger informality of housing arrangements - probably of labor arrangements too, although this research has barely encountered it.

It is not clear to what extent the street informality facilitates or takes part in information exchange fuelling the larger informality of housing. Possibly it does not overlap at all because, interestingly, the street informality is the activity and mode of being of more established residents. People lining up for food or standing at the corners around Food Basics are people very much immersed in the neighbourhood, living there for a long time or having established connections with the place. That insight comes from the times when the author of this work volunteered at Corner@200, distributing food around those areas in 2021 and 2022. There was always a sense of familiarity and recognition even if the author, as a recent newcomer, was not a part of it. Interestingly, the street informality is the informality of a very *formalized* structures of housing and embeddedness – “old rent” residents, subsidized housing dwellers and people who are established residents and often Canadians for a long time now.

That contrasts with the informality of fliers and social media post – of newcomers who scramble to find housing, roommates, or any sort of rent without the papers required by the demanding housing market of Toronto. Exacerbated by the increased presence of international college students in the last years, this phenomenon is quite well-documented in numerous interviews, mostly with Indian and Nepalese students. Also, some young couples mentioned housing arrangements such as informal renting, even being scammed by distant friends in this realm of informality.

This informality of newcomers is, again, contrasting with the informality of long-established residents which is an informality of slow pace, of repetition, of the established everyday. The informality of the newcomers is a highly mobile, digitalized one, almost entirely relying on social media groups, apps and advertising websites. It is fast-paced and doesn't show much stability – people move between apartments, change roommates, etc. The inflow and outflow of

residents is as intense as the reality of the first years upon arrival and the first years of adult life, often combined.

It is worth noting that this housing rite of passage is often a crash course in adulthood. The stories heard in the interviews are fascinating, with almost overnight transitions from the comfort of family houses (in many places accompanied by domestic help and no actual house responsibilities) to the reality of complete self-reliance, domestic chores and everyday life decisions, while simultaneously learning to live with a diverse crowd of people in a global city.

But not many of the student participants, with the astonishing intensity of their Torontonians lives, seemed upset or exhausted. Aside from the struggle of survival in the city, of long hours and stressful new responsibilities, they seemed mostly energized, perhaps living the adventure of their lives. As long as it stops being an adventure and Canada finally gives them a real shot in finding comfort, the time spent in St. James Town may be a story they will keep telling for a long time to come.

The above sections address the third objective of this study, namely to explain the dual role of an immigrant neighbourhood and its residents as both, the „infrastructure” and the agents of planetary urbanization. It can be argued that immigrants skillfully play both roles, navigating between them and channelling their agency in an often unwelcoming environment.

Limits of the research and further directions to study

The limitations that this research faced were two-fold. First of all, the post-pandemic reality in the cities which has experienced one of the longest lockdowns on the global scale with only brief moments of summer relief, was not an easy environment to delve into empirical research. The

second set of limitation stemmed from the modest scope of the study and the shortcomings of the research design and its execution.

Finding fifty participants interesting in opening up about the details of their daily lives right after the pandemic which lasting effects have not been fully assessed was not an easy task. It was quite difficult also for the author himself to lift the task of inquiring into the life of his neighbours suddenly, after very limited social interactions, even despite occasional volunteering and participation in the life of the community. After almost two years of fully remote work and no in-person interactions with the academic community, that task felt impossible at first, probably impacting some of the first interviews the most.

Because of that, on the one hand, some of the ice never got broken when it comes to participants openness to inquiry and, on the other hand, many questions simply did not get asked because they felt too intrusive or intimate.

The other obstacle was the diversity of differences between the researcher and many of the research participants. Interestingly, people seem to have opened up a little bit more when the author admitted that he was not in fact a Canadian researcher but an immigrant himself. Situating himself as a resident of St. James Town, familiar with the contexts and locations, helped to navigate the conversations and make them more casual.

In some cases, participants wanted to simply express themselves freely. In fact, an opportunity for an honest conversation about their experience, hour-long and solely focused on them, for some came as an invitation to truly share their stories. That lead to stories not always being relevant to the research. Considering the post-pandemic reality of solitude for many, along with the struggle present in so many of the stories, the author deliberately did not try to curb those

narratives and did not direct them back into the interview questions, even at the expense of the research agenda. As much as those decisions are not regretted at all, they might have impacted the precision of some insights and resulted in some missed opportunities.

The last element having some impact on the research itself was the race of the inquirer. As a white person, the author has been treated differently – sometimes with more initial suspicion, sometimes with more careful formulation of opinions which, particularly from the perspective of postcolonial analysis of daily interactions between participants and the Canadian society, might have been stronger or more insightful.

The gender of the researcher seemed to have been of smaller importance than initially anticipated when it comes to contact with women directly recruited for the research. However, what was noticeable, the requests to interview male participants' spouses, sisters or other female relatives, except of one situation, have been met with silence or dismissal.

As a result of this and other factors, the gender dimension of the research is skewed towards the male population of St. James Town despite the author's efforts to maintain balance and to include the voices of women, particularly women of color, in the debate. Fortunately, those who took part in the research were mostly more open and talkative than men who often seem to have been tied by rules of not complaining and not opening up about their experiences. Also, women's voices were centred in the choice of content representative for the research findings.

Probably the gendered perspective, most notably at the intersection with race, ethnicity or religion could have been more salient in the analysis and that is possibly an important shortcoming of this inquiry. Sometimes, however, it was a deliberate choice not to include those

intersections when the research material seemed to obscure or limited. So, in a way, the limitation comes back to lower representation of women in the researched group.

The author is aware of the fact, that some of the populations were not represented at all. Three years of observations and daily life, visits at the supermarkets and seeing groups of people hanging out in the summer months gave him a quite a good vision of the immense diversity of not only ethnicities and languages, but also different levels of visibility and even contact with the Canadian mainstream outside of the lanes of St. James Town. In other words, St. James Town does not consist only of what is visible, but of vast, hidden landscapes of difference, “outsides” of urbanization processes that this research could not reach.

Large scale inquiry into those landscapes is recommended, perhaps with more nuanced tools or more varied tools used. With research of a larger scope and with a more diverse research team, a richer insight could be acquired, and new dimensions of nuance could be outlined. With a neighbourhood that big, that diverse and that dynamic, perhaps it would come up with an entirely different set of findings.

What is also recommended is a longitudinal study of individual residents and groups. As much as this research was rich with intuitive grasp of many factors stemming from ongoing presence of the author in the neighbourhood, people who were interviewed were mostly met once and only a snapshot of their realities could have been captured. Especially with the neighbourhood changing so profoundly, with the condo-reality of Toronto throwing shadows at the buildings of St. James Town, following the paths of immigrants in that part of the city could bring fascinating results.

Having said that, further inquiry into the social movements on the scale of neighbourhood is advised, even those movements and initiatives which are most momentary, most modest in size

and resources. The pleasure of watching the short-lived experience of the St. James Town Residents Council, its goals and agendas, but also a sheer excitement of some of the residents of meeting others regularly, having something to do, staying active, staying relevant, staying visible – was a humbling and important journey into the “outsides” of the planetary, of the global, of the “large-scaled”. Even if not “constitutive”, these outsides deserve attention, sincere interest and – more than anything - humility.

Scientific and Societal Relevance of the Thesis

The thesis sought to understand the macro-scale theory of planetary urbanization in the context of St. James Town—an immigrant neighbourhood in Toronto. Its scientific relevance stems from the fact that it examined how the principles of the theory can be applied to a micro-scale environment and showed that, in fact, many of its premises can be noticed and described within the socio-economic landscape of St. James Town. The research also showed that as much as the concentrated and extended moments of urbanization are applicable quite well to this specific context, the differential moment of urbanization is somewhat problematic—it seems to overlook many of the social spaces and practices present in this immigrant neighborhood, treating urban “difference” quite instrumentally.

That leads to yet another scientific contribution. It is the observation that planetary urbanization without postcolonial commentary only describes capitalist mechanisms that largely known already, such as core-periphery dynamics, spatial fix of capitalism and its uneven development. This research shows that it is only the postcolonial critical frameworks of inquiry that adds much needed context, historical accountability and agent-centered approach to a macro-scale theory such as planetary urbanization (Brenner and Schmid, 2015).

Moreover, the multiplicity of realities and struggles encountered within the urban setting of St. James Town make a strong argument not only for a critical understanding of the role of a settler colonial framework under capitalism, but it also supports the ontological plurality and scientific openness to ways of interpreting the democratization of knowledges, methodologies, and points of view outside of the Western academia.

Lastly, this research described the dynamics of the condo building process, its threats and consequences for the entire neighborhood as well as for the insecurity of its residents. It provided the necessary scientific input to the uncontrolled urban development driven solely by private investment and little to no regard for communities it physically or functionally displaces. This input also serves as a societally relevant observation, providing an alarming commentary amidst neo-liberal tendencies of Canadian urban development.

The social relevance of the thesis also comes from the fact that it debunks many of the popular opinions about immigrant settlements. Among other things, it shows a highly skilled and motivated population even if not united under an umbrella of any specific “community”. Also, the thesis shows the profound role of the St. James Town neighborhood for the economic and social reproduction of Toronto and, in the context of the official multiculturalism of Canada, since the entire country depends heavily on immigrant settlement and integration..

The research not only showed a resilient urban setting, playing a vital role for the city, but also provided a timely insight into the lived experience immigrants in Canada overall, a country which is now struggling with affordable housing and shrinking economic opportunities for newcomers. The struggles described in this work show that the immigration system, based on work permits, temporary or limited work permits, often leads to dead-end jobs, precarity and abuse of immigrants in the labour market.

Lastly, the societal relevance of this research stems from the fact that it sheds light on the mental health and addiction crisis present in downtown Toronto and shows how it is perceived or, in some cases, experienced by immigrant themselves. Hopefully, such insights will pave the way to policy interventions that incorporate the experiences of immigrants, fostering both mitigation and adaptation efforts and coordination in the process.

Policy Recommendations

The recommendations based on this work will focus on possible solutions regarding St. James Town and its surroundings only, refraining from formulating large-scale suggestions regarding immigration or urban policies.

The reason for that has to do with the fact that having based the entire work on postcolonial critique and a highly critical assessment of capitalist practices on the local and global scale, it might be tempting to formulate claims to large-scale solutions however, these can easily present no real value except being well-wishing slogans and general statements, as it often happens regarding politically-loaded topics.

The empirical research was conducted in a specific location so the recommendations should perhaps keep focused on that locality as well.

One thing that comes to mind is the role of St. James Town Residents Council – a grassroots, bottom-up organization which perhaps did not survive too long, but its demands are worth mentioning. During the meetings of the council, it was the residents themselves who discussed and chose topics which should be prioritized on the scale of the neighbourhood so the recommendations of this work, in a way, can give voice to them.

Many of the residents mentioned safety as a topic but ideas differed from one another. What was often mentioned was the necessity to provide sites of safe consumption of drugs, with access to clean needles and legally non-threatening environment. As much as it might sound counterintuitive for many, in a neighbourhood where substance abuse and drugs-affected behaviors are a daily problem, it is a valuable insight. Drugs are being accessed anyway, by any means necessary, so creating sites of safe consumption is a form of harm reduction.

Others talked about physical safety, such as construction elements or electric wires hanging loose, uneven pavements being a concern of those who have difficulty walking. It should not even be a point of discussion, but in St. James Town things often go very slow and, as concluded before, voices of the residents are often not heard. Also, the nature of demands show that safety might mean something as simple as an even pavement. Also, a robust overview of infrastructural needs of St. James Town could be done quickly and at relatively low cost, bringing improvement not only to the built environment but also to residents' sense of agency.

Moreover, the topic briefly mentioned at the meetings of the Residents' Council was the need to address the unnecessary noise, namely police almost "showing off", excessively using their signal arsenal. The fire alarms, prevalent in the neighbourhood, were mentioned too, as something that affects the well-being of people who work remotely but also the large population of the area who have difficulties moving around and are largely confined to their apartments. Such claims show that there is a number of residents who think that the "systems of alarming," as necessary in the city as there are, are used in an excessive way and surely could be re-designed.

What always seemed important for the residents were tenant rights and organized resistance against building more condominiums in the area. The details of the tenant rights infringements

were not clear – it seems that education and accessibility of information is something that could be improved.

However, regarding the condo-towers, residents had a sense of complete powerlessness. They reported being rarely informed about the public consultations and even if, they claimed that the consultations were designed in a way actually preventing them from taking part. For instance, consultations would take place only by phone. That means that the line could be busy for the entire duration of the consultation meeting and there was no way of verifying who was actually calling or – if anyone really was. Also, the timing of the consultation was often problematic, overlapping with many of the residents' work schedules. Certainly, something that should be done for the residents of St. James Town and other locations in Toronto is improving the transparency of the process and provide better access to it, on the residents' terms.

Surely, further decentralization towards self-governance is important for the self-organization and agency of the residents. This research has shown that there are a lot of people who are interested in the future of the neighbourhood and are willing to take the lead. That should be encouraged and facilitated by the structures represented by the community centres, perhaps in cooperation with real estate corporations governing many of the buildings – particularly that Medallion Corporation, for instance, has a long-standing practice of engagement with the community. What seemed rather disappointing was the indifference of the city counselors to take any practical steps towards residents' aspirations and demands. Political will is crucial to make any changes but no politician ready or willing to focus on St. James Town seemed to be found.

The last recommendation is to look for employees of the community centres among the residents of St. James Town. Many of the lower-ranked or volunteering staff comes from the neighbourhood, but it should also be the case when it comes to people employed full-time or

occupying executive positions. Of course, as always when it comes to recruiting immigrants, the topic of certification and relevant qualifications would come up however, what this research has found is that there are many highly-skilled and experienced residents living in the neighbourhood. They should be put in charge of the structures which role is to provide aid and assistance to their own residential area.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

In Search for Difference

The study provides a portrait of St. James Town in a very interesting moment in time. The shock of the pandemic has largely subsided, but many of its consequences, in a form of alienation and financial instability, lingered. On top of acute economic or psychological stress, immigrants living in St. James Town's very often must deal with the precarity of their status in Canada which complicates the picture even further.

Simultaneously, other possible changes, if not threats, emerge or come back after being put on hold by COVID-19. The most significant promise of change comes from the condofication practices of the City of Toronto, of giving physical and symbolic space to large-scale private investments at the cost of public services and infrastructure.

With condo towers being built or planned around St. James Town from all directions, changes to the social structure of the neighbourhood are imminent, in a form of price hikes, more zones of private security and means-assessed exclusion. The closing and tearing down of a small green space where children used to play is a modest but accurate example. The park has disappeared in silence, although the change was noticed and contested by the interviewed residents. What happens to spaces that no-one accidentally asks about in some small-scale research like this one?

St. James Town is historically a profoundly resilient place, and it has proved it over decades of adapting to the city of Toronto. The city has changed from a post-war poster child of Canadian prosperity, it was a site of a large-scale multicultural experiment, to eventually reach the current

phase of “smart” ideas and neoliberal dreams of capital. The question remains whether Toronto and the larger project of Canada can and want to respect the dreams of the newcomers, too.

St. James Town, as crucial as it is on the immigrant map of Toronto, sustaining the inflows and outflows of population for over a half of century now, remains mostly functional and transitory. Newcomers do not move there because they dream about that location – they move in particularly because they dream of different ones, often more prestigious or more peaceful, but via St. James Town they can get there. At the same time, the neighbourhood, aside from its role as a nursery of Canadian beginnings for many is simply convenient and affordable, a place where one can live without a car and still access the entire city with ease.

The interactions with the outer city, despite the hopes of immigrants, are mostly functional. What many participants admit directly or indirectly, being an immigrant in Toronto is difficult mostly because of the sense of not-fitting in, a constant reminder that this city is “someone else’s” which stays with them in many forms. In the light of insights from fifty interviews and a three-year-long observation of an immigrant neighbourhood, a Canadian slogan “We are all immigrants” sounds like shallow coquetry of settler colonialism, still largely governing the reality of Toronto.

Immigrants struggle to get out of the stigmatized bubble, both physical and symbolic, of not being enough, constantly aspiring to something - Canadian work experience, Canadian friends, Canadian accents and many more. The end goal of a Canadian passport makes a lot of things easier, but the chase of belonging does not end there. The lack of outside-of-work, sustained interactions between many of the immigrants in St. James Town and the Canadian mainstream society confirms these claims.

St. James Town and the larger City of Toronto seem to stay separated, and the levels of struggle, bias and resentment cannot be explained solely by the socio-economic framework of capitalism but require the nuance of postcolonial experiences and critique. These allow to highlight the intricate but predictable networks of settler colonial sentiments waved into the global structures of power that bring people to St. James Town and then govern their everyday lives.

From such a standpoint, it is possible that for the larger city, St. James Town is a space which can be claimed, that requires “an upgrade,” for people’s “own good.” Such tropes are centuries-old, but perhaps exactly because of that they run as deep ruts in systems of governance which keep inviting, keep on tempting, but then keep multiplying demands, moving the goalposts further and further away.

The role of St. James Town, not only as a source of space for private residential investments but also as a reservoir of cheap labor is yet another evident finding. Even without the testimonies of residents but only with the census data, compared to the neighbouring areas, the residents of St. James Town, despite working as much and being as educated as their fellow Torontonians from, let’s say, Cabbagetown, have significantly lower levels of income, not to mention their share in wealth. With the population of youth and working age residents being 68% combined (higher than the city’s average by almost 10 points), high levels of education and median household income less than two thirds of Toronto’s average income, St. James Town is a reservoir of labor, speaking not only to the post-colonial and global border governance theories but also to the global flows suggested by planetary urbanization framework.

Indeed, the theory of planetary urbanization notices the built-in inequalities of capitalism, but its totalizing tendencies to provide globally relevant description, simply because of those ambitions,

loose grasp of details. While trying to position themselves towards postcolonial critique in an inclusive manner, Brenner and Schmid do not leave room for a true democracy of knowledge.

Their theory rightfully sees urbanization as a process and St. James Town, a place so dynamic and woven into multi-scalar structures of change, is a neighbourhood where such nature of the urban society can be noticed very clearly. It is a site of both, the concentrated moments of urbanization reaching out to the hinterlands of the global structures and of those hinterlands nesting themselves in the centre, creating and reaching out to their own extended urbanizations to build networks of financial comfort and growth.

But those networks are not only based on tangible goals and agendas; they are forms based equally on affinity, sense of responsibility, longing, resentment, sometimes only on fading memories. The more transnational affiliations of St. James Town residents are claimed by grand theories, in favor or against capitalism, claimed by nation-states or bordering regimes built on the suspicious nature of colonial legacy, the more inadequate, abstract and rigid these structures turn out to be. To bring the argument back to the planetary urbanization – it provides the tools to depict the global flows and mechanisms, but it does not explain the struggle and the motives.

It almost seems that Brenner and Schmid have provided urban scholars with the perfectly fine concentrated and extended modes *of their own theory*, while leaving the differential urbanization to be conceptualized completely anew. Perhaps through lack of attention, perhaps because of not having the lived experience of being a part of an ever-aspiring world, they do not focus on the lived and felt dimensions of difference - but also hurt and frustration - without which St. James Town cannot be portrayed in an insightful manner.

“Constitutive Outside” Looking Back In

“Through what categories, methods and cartographies should urban life be understood?” Brenner and Schmid ask (2015, p.155). Among others, through putting a spotlight on the constitutive role of new arrival, of spatially contained hopes and frustrations, and by doing that with a sincere assumption of equality of knowledge.

That cannot be achieved without the foundation of a postcolonial scholarship and experience, but also not without a taxing suspicion towards surface-level notions of institutionalised multiculturalism, inclusion and tolerance. Equality of knowledge means that sentiments towards ways of being and knowing cannot be seen solely from the point of view of one-dimensional “progressive values” which often, as well-intentioned as they are, end up backing up Western exceptionalism. To put it bluntly - a society which demands to know one’s pronouns but refuses to understand one’s accent is not an inclusive society.

“Difference” that the critics of planetary urbanization evoke so often needs to cut deeper, defined from the constitutive outside of the “planetary urbanization of knowledge” – even if it means outside of what Western academia is comfortable hearing.

Such an “outside” can be sought, among others, in the juxtaposition of notions which have not been juxtaposed too eagerly before. Deep and honest debate might result in admitting that the actual melting pot of cities where Urdu and Hindi or Malayalam go hand in hand with English in both, movie songs and street abuse, is perhaps a sort of deeply ingrained experience of multiculturalism that Canada is afraid of and in fact not interested of having.

Perhaps, the disregard towards accents other British or American is nothing but a fierce defence from a simple truth that immigrants raised in multi-language societies are already *better*

educated than their settler colonial peers, whose societies were built on exceptionalism-fueled reduction for so long that they never developed the skill of hearing and understanding.

Perhaps the debate should go as far as to admitting that someone who managed to organize, navigate and survive the physical, financial and emotional ordeal and prolonged uncertainty of the immigration process (and arrival) has all the credentials they need – in other words, that migration is a skill *in itself*.

Post-colonial framework of criticism needs to be a part of an immigrant experience in diversity of forms, including academic self-imagination. If we can have Feminist scholarship, if we can have Black scholarship, Indigenous scholarship, we need explicit Immigrant scholarship, one which takes visionary insights of scholars such as Nandita Sharma and scrutinizes the concealed tactics of nation-states and their institutions – including academia - in protecting imaginary lines in the sand.

Life and experience - the body, the mind, and the memory – this is what is hidden behind the term “immigrant”. For now, newcomers to St. James Town and to many other places do not seem to get a chance to realise the potential that those bodies, minds and memory bring, until and unless they prove that they fit into the Canadian canvas – which is often not based on tolerance, but merely on tolerating difference. By the time they prove what is expected of them to prove, they are often different people, constantly aware of the “Canadian” gaze, and too tired to engage in the new life which they fought for with such hope.

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Appendix 1: Recruitment materials and Consent Form

Recruitment flier



photo: pevets-mwabonje

Looking for Participants

Adult immigrants to Canada who currently live in St. James Town, Toronto.

Who is Doing the Research
Dominik Formanowicz, a PhD student of Human Geography at York University is conducting this study as a part of doctoral research.

Who Qualifies
Adult immigrants to Canada (excluding the US and Western Europe origin) who lived in St. James Town for at least a year and who can speak and read English fluently.

Purpose of the Study:
to learn about immigrants' lives in the urban reality of Canada, explore the social and economic ties with Toronto as well as the connections kept with countries of origin.

How Can You Participate
One-on-one interview (max. 60 min), in person, conducted in a public space in St. James Town.

A gratification of 30 CAD is provided for your time.

YORK UNIVERSITY  Please contact: dominikf@yorku.ca

The Consent Form:

Informed Consent

Date: _____

Study Name:

An Immigrant Neighborhood as a Site of Planetary Urbanization: example of St. James Town, Toronto.

Researcher name:

- Dominik Formanowicz, doctoral study level (PhD) in Human Geography at the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University. I am the Principal Investigator.
- dominik.formanowicz@gmail.com

Purpose of the Research:

- The goal of this research is to acquire deeper understanding of how immigrants to Canada, focusing on the ones living in St. James Town in Toronto, negotiate social and economic well-being within a framework of a settler colonial and capitalist reality of a Canadian city. The purpose of such research is to shed more light on immigrants' interaction with the urban reality of Canada taking into account the fact that their presence in Canada is usually defined by larger political and economic structures, such as immigration status. This research will try to investigate the possible socio-economic synergies created by ethno-racial neighborhoods and their diversity but will also pay attention to the transnational ties kept with the places of origin by immigrants. Finally, this research will look into how the socio-economic opportunities in the place of arrival are used by immigrants in their transnational networks and conversely, how those transnational networks are utilized in spaces of arrival.
- The method used in this research will be mostly interviews, where open-ended question will be asked to immigrants living in St. James Town. The first group's participation criteria will be: first generation migratory origin (excluding the US and Western Europe), being a resident of St. James Town (for max. 10 years) and being over 18 years of age. Other criteria would be speaking and understanding English, both spoken and written. A max. of 50 participants would be recruited.
- Other methods used would be observation of the urban environment of St. James Town neighborhood, notes and photography (excluding portraits and photography that would allow identifying individual people).
- The anticipated outputs are the written doctoral dissertation, at least one academic journal article and presentations to present at conferences starting from 2023 onwards. The electronic copies of the research outcome will be also distributed among institutions involved in St. James Town's everyday life and among the participants of the study.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

- The role of the participant is vital to the studies because the research is focused on their life experiences and hopes to reflect their real-life situation in St. James Town, Toronto.
- Participants will be asked to give their full name when signing the consent form and providing a phone number for communication purposes.
- Participants will be asked to take part in an interview of 30-60 minutes which will be audio recorded.
- The token of gratification of CAD 30 will be offered to participants in cash or in a form of e-transfer (if participants are comfortable with giving their email address).

You should be given some reasonable time (5-7 days) to read and sign the consent form.

Risks and Discomforts:

1

- The risks associated with this study come from the emotional vulnerability of describing difficult experiences, possibly entailing feelings of embarrassment or discomfort.
- These risks will be mitigated by transparent and clearly delineated data gathering procedures, particularly by participants' right to refuse to answer, to terminate the process, and to withdraw consent for further data usage. All the data will be safely stored, kept confidential, and anonymized before any quotes are published.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

- Participants may benefit from the opportunity of sharing their individual stories with the researchers, and having possible hardships recognized and acknowledged.
- The researcher will benefit from gaining insight into the topic of his analysis – that might advance the knowledge of integration practices in Canada. Personally, the researcher will benefit by acquiring the material necessary to write his dissertation.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise, and you will still receive the promised inducement.

In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

- The interview will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken during the interview.
- Signed and scanned consent forms will be kept separately on a password protected computer, separately from any associated data.
- The individual interviews will be audio-recorded by a recording device and the audio-files will be transferred to a password-protected computer immediately after the interview. The researcher will transcribe the audio-files, at which point, the audio-files will be destroyed. The transcriptions will be stored on a password protected computer. The transcripts will not contain participant names. In that way, later publications will not include participants names.
- The data will be stored for 2 years and will be destroyed in September 2025 by being removed from the computer disc.
- Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.
- Your data will be safely stored in a password-protected computer disc and only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to this information.
- Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.
- The data collected in this research project may be used – in an anonymized form - by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional REB. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

- Recordings (audio) will be saved in a password protected file to research team members' local computer, not the cloud based service.
- Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at dominikf@yorku.ca or my supervisor, Joseph Mensah at and/or jmensah@yorku.ca or call him at (416) 736 210. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Geography at gradgeog@yorku.ca and/or (416) 736 2100.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____ consent to participate in a study called "An Immigrant Neighborhood as a Site of Planetary Urbanization: example of St. James Town, Toronto" conducted by Dominik Formanowicz. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Participant

Signature _____ **Date** _____
Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)

1. Audio recording

I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant Name: _____

Appendix 2: Initial Codes List (NVivo Excerpt)

1) The list of the initial codes

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Belonging to...	0	0	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Daily Routines	0	0	1/2/2024 7:12 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:16 PM	DTF
Future Plans	0	0	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF
Home Country Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Home Country Ties	0	0	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF
Housing	0	0	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF
Job	0	0	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF
Misc. Insights and Analysis	0	0	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
Outside of PU_Spaces of Difference	0	0	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Reasons For Immigration	0	0	1/3/2024 4:58 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
STJT Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Toronto Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:35 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Toronto Life Infrastructure	0	0	1/2/2024 7:16 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF

2) The list of subcodes created in each initial code category

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Belonging to...	0	0	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
friendships	12	19	1/3/2024 3:50 AM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:58 PM	DTF
shared belonging	8	11	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:59 PM	DTF
to Canada	15	16	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:58 PM	DTF
to Home Country	11	13	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:52 PM	DTF
to immigrants	12	22	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:30 PM	DTF
to STJT	11	13	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 9:19 PM	DTF
to Toronto	7	7	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 9:27 PM	DTF
Daily Routines	0	0	1/2/2024 7:12 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:16 PM	DTF
daily rhythms	11	14	1/3/2024 3:42 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 11:07 PM	DTF
emotional	16	28	1/3/2024 6:11 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:45 PM	DTF
following news in CA	11	13	1/3/2024 3:43 AM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:43 PM	DTF
groceries_necessities	10	10	1/2/2024 7:13 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 11:01 PM	DTF
habits changing	11	18	1/4/2024 12:16 AM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:36 PM	DTF
hanging out	18	32	1/2/2024 7:18 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:50 PM	DTF
Future Plans	0	0	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF
determined by work_immigr	9	9	1/3/2024 4:09 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:00 PM	DTF
Leaving Canada	7	10	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:49 PM	DTF
not specified future plans	7	9	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:59 PM	DTF
Staying in Canada	11	14	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:53 PM	DTF
Home Country Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Home Country Ties	0	0	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Home Country Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
arranging things HomeC	4	5	1/3/2024 4:02 AM	DTF	1/17/2024 9:20 PM	DTF
customs & cultural diff	18	29	1/3/2024 4:55 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:14 PM	DTF
quality of life HomeC	10	18	1/3/2024 4:00 AM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:45 PM	DTF
street life	4	6	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 10:26 PM	DTF
Home Country Ties	0	0	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF
contact with friends_family	28	38	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:53 PM	DTF
financial ties	8	10	1/2/2024 6:59 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:01 PM	DTF
following news etc	13	19	1/2/2024 7:02 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:43 PM	DTF
modes of communication	7	7	1/2/2024 6:59 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 5:34 PM	DTF
money sending tech	2	2	1/3/2024 3:42 AM	DTF	1/3/2024 4:06 PM	DTF
Housing	0	0	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF
difficulty finding housing	10	14	1/2/2024 7:30 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:04 PM	DTF
housing search	15	20	1/3/2024 3:46 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 10:25 PM	DTF
housing_informality due to high requierm	9	11	1/2/2024 6:57 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 10:19 PM	DTF
housing_personal connections	11	14	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:13 PM	DTF
subsidized housing	6	11	1/4/2024 4:30 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 11:02 PM	DTF
Job	0	0	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF
Misc. Insights and Analysis	0	0	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
Outside of PU_Spaces of Difference	0	0	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Reasons For Immigration	0	0	1/3/2024 4:58 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
STJ Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Job	0	0	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF
difficulty level job	8	11	1/3/2024 4:17 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 10:56 PM	DTF
discrimination privilege SHOUOLD BE HIG	12	33	1/3/2024 5:12 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:40 PM	DTF
finding job_formal	3	3	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 3:40 PM	DTF
finding_job_informality	3	4	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 5:51 PM	DTF
international prof. streams	3	7	1/16/2024 10:01 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:32 PM	DTF
multiple jobs	2	3	1/8/2024 4:20 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 9:49 PM	DTF
own business self empl	2	4	1/17/2024 6:38 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 10:59 PM	DTF
platform economy	2	3	1/8/2024 4:19 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 5:38 PM	DTF
Misc. Insights and Analysis	0	0	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
catchy frazes	22	53	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:46 PM	DTF
Outside of PU_Spaces of Difference	0	0	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
outside of planetary urb	3	13	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 12:37 AM	DTF
Reasons For Immigration	0	0	1/3/2024 4:58 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
american dream	4	5	1/4/2024 5:37 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 3:32 PM	DTF
curiosity challenge	5	5	1/3/2024 5:00 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
immigration problems elsewhere	2	3	1/17/2024 6:52 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:42 PM	DTF
lifestyle and opp for children	6	7	1/9/2024 4:42 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:07 PM	DTF
safety concerns at homeC	3	5	1/17/2024 5:28 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:42 PM	DTF
sexual orient tolerance	2	2	1/4/2024 4:04 PM	DTF	1/4/2024 6:47 PM	DTF
STJ Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
STJT Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
- attachment to STJT	4	5	1/2/2024 7:28 PM	DTF	1/17/2024 9:54 PM	DTF
- changes in STJT	4	5	1/2/2024 7:21 PM	DTF	1/16/2024 9:24 PM	DTF
- community_STJT	26	64	1/3/2024 3:53 AM	DTF	1/18/2024 10:32 PM	DTF
- life in the streets of STJT	16	25	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 3:51 PM	DTF
- location & afford	19	26	1/2/2024 7:41 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:51 PM	DTF
- old rent	7	8	1/3/2024 3:56 AM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:18 PM	DTF
- population	0	0	1/2/2024 7:22 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:22 PM	DTF
- safety_STJT	23	42	1/3/2024 3:50 AM	DTF	1/19/2024 3:39 PM	DTF
Toronto Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:35 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
- affordability TO	11	18	1/3/2024 3:56 AM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:35 PM	DTF
- Canadian vs imm isolation	18	50	1/4/2024 4:12 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:48 PM	DTF
- imm changing the city	5	5	1/3/2024 3:58 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 10:35 PM	DTF
- moving around in TO	12	16	1/3/2024 3:49 AM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:15 PM	DTF
- people distanced social ties weaker	5	8	1/4/2024 4:07 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:16 PM	DTF
- public services health educ	10	17	1/3/2024 4:12 PM	DTF	1/18/2024 11:08 PM	DTF
- public spaces	10	19	1/2/2024 7:36 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 3:54 PM	DTF
- quality of life TO	20	35	1/3/2024 3:58 AM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:56 PM	DTF
- settler colonialism	1	5	1/17/2024 12:18 AM	DTF	1/17/2024 12:22 AM	DTF
- street life TO	11	12	1/2/2024 7:35 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:37 PM	DTF
- work culture	9	24	1/4/2024 5:10 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:55 PM	DTF
Toronto Life Infrastructure	0	0	1/2/2024 7:16 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Belonging to...	0	0	1/2/2024 7:26 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Daily Routines	0	0	1/2/2024 7:12 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:16 PM	DTF
Future Plans	0	0	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:40 PM	DTF
Home Country Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:33 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Home Country Ties	0	0	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:58 PM	DTF
Housing	0	0	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 6:56 PM	DTF
Job	0	0	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:15 PM	DTF
Misc. Insights and Analysis	0	0	1/4/2024 4:01 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
Outside of PU_Spaces of Difference	0	0	1/16/2024 9:11 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Reasons For Immigration	0	0	1/3/2024 4:58 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:20 PM	DTF
STJT Life Space Community	0	0	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:19 PM	DTF
Toronto Life & Space	0	0	1/2/2024 7:35 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:17 PM	DTF
Toronto Life Infrastructure	0	0	1/2/2024 7:16 PM	DTF	1/23/2024 12:18 PM	DTF
- community centre	16	21	1/2/2024 7:20 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:20 PM	DTF
- credit score	1	1	1/2/2024 7:30 PM	DTF	1/2/2024 7:30 PM	DTF
- finding services	12	14	1/2/2024 7:16 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:18 PM	DTF
- formality of life in Canada	13	15	1/2/2024 7:29 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:56 PM	DTF
- immigration permits limits	9	10	1/4/2024 5:17 PM	DTF	1/19/2024 4:45 PM	DTF

DTF 91 Items

Appendix 3: Infrastructural changes observed in the neighbourhood

The condo investments-related changes observed in the neighbourhood (historical Google Maps screens and author's photographs):

1) The erasure of St. James Town West Park



1) The park in September 2021



2) The park in August 2023

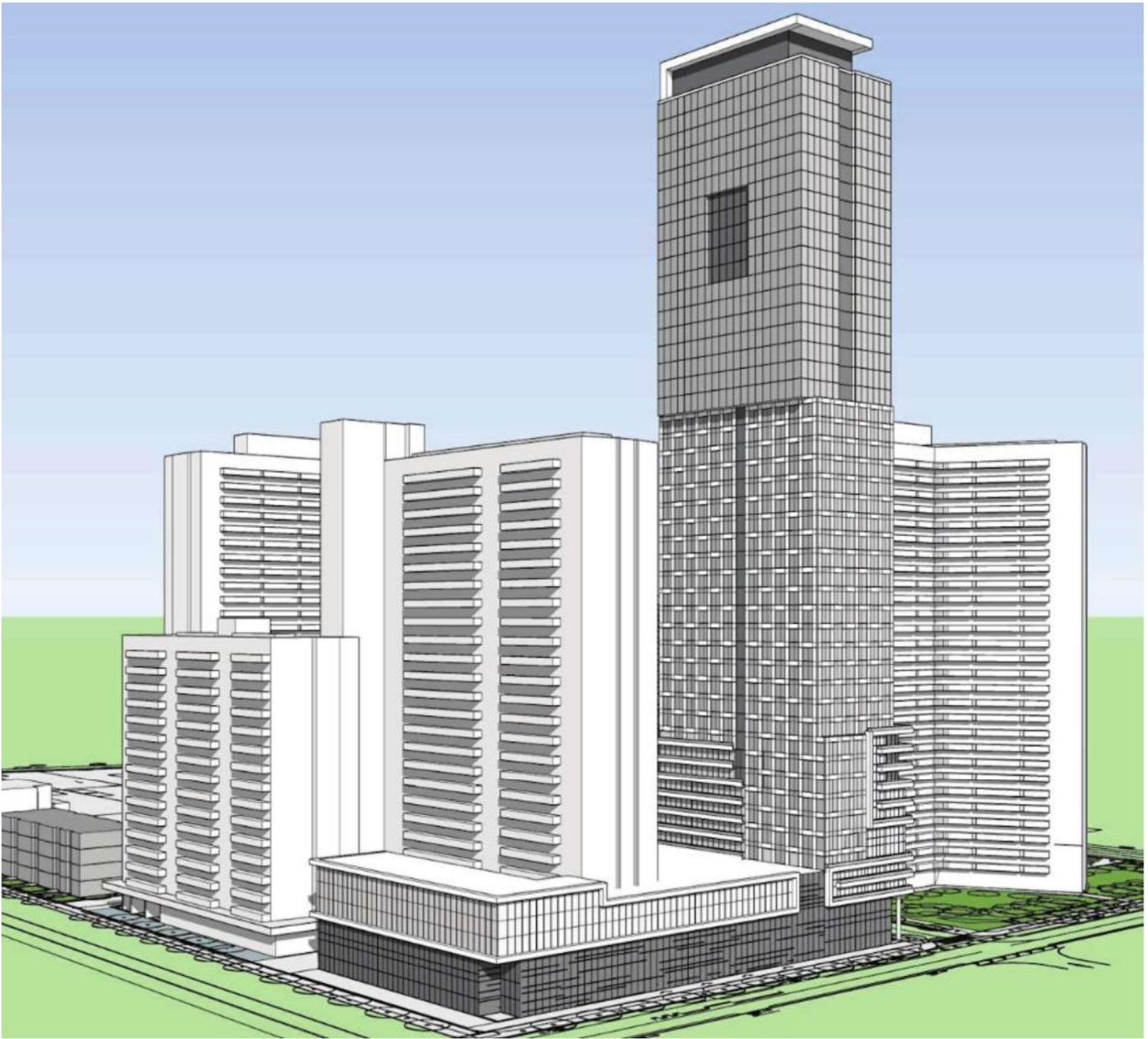


3) *The remains of the park in March 2024*



4) *A tree left intact among the remains of the park (photo author)*

1) Proposed changes in the area exemplified by notice boards, visibly contested.



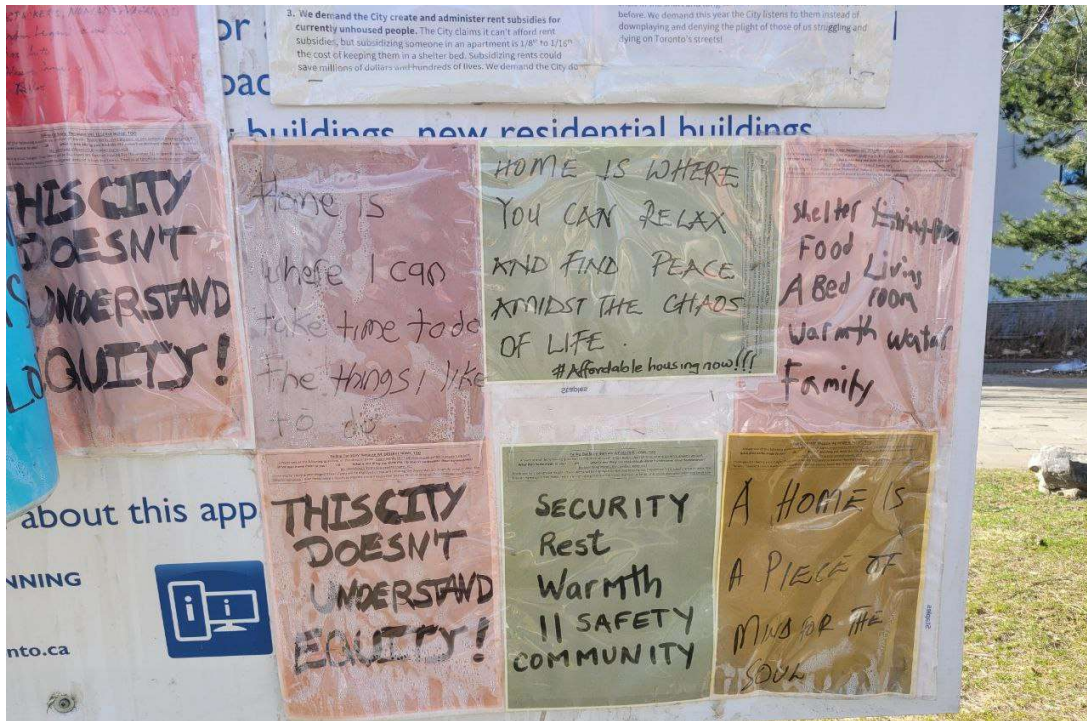
5) The largest, so far, proposed intervention, also seen on the notice boards below. Greatwise Developments (source unavailable anymore)



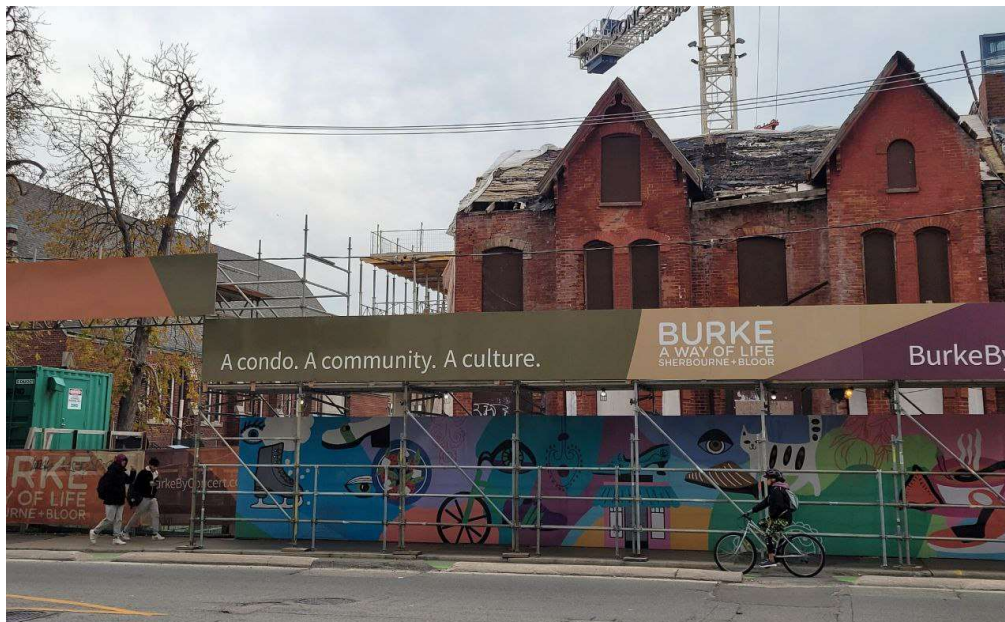
6) The infamous proposed change introducing a 52-storey building "on top" of 240 Wellesles Street, along with many smaller buildings and Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS).



7) A notice board further West, still in strict downtown, saying "Let's Meat The Fords"



8) In 2023, there was a street art initiative inviting unhoused people to write what home means for them on pieces of paper. Later, those pieces of paper were attached to the notice boards.



9) Condo-world visibly trying to "buy into" the narrative of "community" and "culture" while it is taking space away from the communities and their cultures.

Appendix 4: Other photographs of St. James Town taken by the author



1) View from the Northern edge of Cabbagetown into St. James Town



2) View to the West, outside of St. James Town, from Sherbourne Street



3) Housing informality in St. James Town



4) Two separate condo constructions on the stretch of 300m between St. James Town and Sherbourne Station. The view from the edge of St. James Town, to the North. In the front, relatively intact St. James Town West Park (photo taken in July 2023)



5) Informal market and the green spaces of Ontario Street (around October 2020)



6) Messy spaces of the "inner" St. James Town (Winter 2022)

Appendix 5: Creative Adjustments

„How To Tame a Toronto WASP”, an essay by one of the research participants [Written consent to publish acquired. Original font and format]

HOW TO TAME A TORONTO WASP

For those new arrivals to Toronto (otherwise known as the world class city wannabe) who, when first confronted by the essentially incommunicative nature of the Toronto WASPs, go through a successive gamut of emotions, starting with surprise, then irritation, and eventually ending in frustration and anger (for such an experience makes them feel, rightly or wrongly, rejected) here are a few suggestions on how to deal with this somewhat perplexing and disagreeable phenomenon.

Making an initial contact with a Toronto WASP must be unquestionably the number one step in taming him. But one can't, obviously, make such a contact without first approaching a subject.

Yet, this usually proves to be a rather difficult task in itself, since the average Toronto WASP doesn't like strangers, especially ones trying to get too close for his liking to him.

As a result he can be easily scared away, i.e. he will do his darnedest to avoid any proximity whatsoever with the stranger, even at the expense of appearing openly and sometimes extremely rude.

And so, keeping this in mind, the best thing to do when spotting a Toronto WASP is to remain motionless and wait. Hopefully, he will get used to your presence and, after concluding that you do not pose any immediate danger, eventually approach you himself.

In taking such a bold first step he is probably motivated by natural curiosity, for even WASPs must possess it, being a part of the animal world in general and the human race in particular, though they rarely display it overtly and almost never ask any questions, unless they are personal (which is an entirely different matter as we shall see later) evidently considering it to be a sign of weakness. And nothing is more abhorrent to a WASP than to appear weak and not in full control of himself in any given situation.

When finally making contact with you a Toronto WASP usually displays a more or less convincing (depending on his skills as a social actor) friendly smile, showing as many teeth as possible without causing any permanent damage to his face. Do not be easily deceived by this. It is neither friendly nor smile. It is just a protective mask used specifically for such occasions. And it simply means that he still doesn't trust you and would rather have nothing to do with you, but has to accept his fate stoically, lest be accused of being impolite.

Then follows a ritual exchange of meaningless "how are you", "fine", "nice weather, eh" and couple more equally trivial phrases. Now, this is a very important, even crucial moment. Under no circumstances try to put any meaning in this short encounter. If you do, you lose him just when you think everything is going well. The WASP shuts like a clam and starts to move sideways like a crab. Believe me, I've seen it many times - a clam and a crab in one body.

Now, one thing you have to know about a Toronto WASP is - he doesn't like conversation, it is not in his nature. When forced by circumstances he may stoically (but visibly impatiently) endure some more or less meaningless chat. But anything even remotely serious he finds absolutely unbearable. And if you are a kind and compassionate person you shouldn't press him to do so. For it is like forcing chickens to fly. They just can't. They may look like the real flying birds with all these beaks, feathers and wings, but they are not. Some times in the past they probably could fly like any other normal birds but it was such a long, long time ago that it is hard to believe in it now.

And so, I'm sure, it is with the WASPs. For in the past they must have been able to converse since they have all the necessary apparatus for that. But somehow, through the centuries of evolution, they probably had lost this ability and only God knows when, why and how.

Now, coming back to step one - the first encounter - if you are lucky enough and manage to avoid all those initial pitfalls (like being serious or, god forbid, even mildly controversial, which is another no-no to a Toronto WASP) you can proceed to the next stage and start actually talking to each other.

Very soon, however, you realize that it is you who is doing almost all the talking by answering seemingly endless numbers of questions, which, if put together on paper would bear very close resemblance to a rather elaborate job application form.

At the beginning you are, naturally, flattered that some stranger has so much interest in you. Until at some point it dawns on you that he doesn't so much want to know about you as wishes, primarily, to avoid saying anything either about himself or just about anything else for that matter.

But, as long as you are willing to be, for a lack of a better word, interrogated, such a "conversation" can go on and on, until you, either by accident or intentionally, try "to turn the tables" and begin to ask him the questions. The response is as immediate as it is unequivocal - the clam shuts and the crab moves sideways.

There are, of course those rare occasions when it's physically impossible for a WASP to get away from you. For example, let's suppose that both of you are in a moving car on a busy highway, or, take another example, in a high-rise elevator stuck between the floors (fortunately for a WASP there aren't too many similar examples of such an extreme sort one can come up with).

And let us also suppose that you are completely oblivious of his desperate situation (impossibility of escape), cruel and insensitive person as you are (but what else one can expect from all these uncouth newcomers?)

Naturally, you keep insisting, subconsciously of course, on continuing the conversation, disregarding all those silent messages the WASPs are, supposedly, so good at, but which are absolutely incomprehensible to the rest of us.

So, what does a Toronto WASP do in such a hopeless situation?

He suddenly becomes deaf and mute. At the beginning, while still talking, you don't pay much attention to it. But very soon you discover that a WASP doesn't hear you. His face, not very expressive under normal circumstances, freezes in a kind of blank and silent mask. He becomes almost motionless and sometimes it goes on for such a long time that you start to wonder if he is still alive.

One of the surest ways, it seems, to lure a WASP into conversation is to use food as a bait. Apparently, the simple wish to talk to another human being could not be considered by a WASP as a sufficient reason to meet him, unless some kind of eating is involved. Hence, the popularity of such an expression as "Let's have lunch together" which is just another, more attractive, I suppose, way of saying "Let's meet and talk".

Of course, one should never underestimate the almost limitless ability of a WASP to find yet another way of escaping undesirable dialogue. Even food could be used by him as a means to this end, since having one's mouth filled with food is a perfect excuse for not saying anything.

As, for instance, at parties, when there is a real danger of being drawn into conversation, WASPs usually carry around a plate of food, always ready, when threatened by somebody who wants to talk, to start eating in order to render themselves instantly incapable of responding.

Now, if you are still waiting to find out how to tame a Toronto WASP, I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you. I don't know myself. I've tried many different ways to do it but invariably without any tangible success. My personal conclusion is that Toronto WASP as a species is too evasive to be tamed.

Moreover, I strongly believe, not only on the basis of my own experience but also of those in a similar situation as mine who shared their feelings with me, that the Toronto WASPs in general consider themselves to be much smarter than the newcomers to waste their valuable time on talking to us.

P.S. Of course, one may say that not all Toronto WASPs are the same. Perhaps it is true, but they sure try very hard to conceal their differences and, at least outwardly, are very successful in doing so.

1990, Toronto