

FROM LEIFWORLD TO CITY LIFE:
RETHINKING HOW THE CULTURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN CITIES ENGAGES
URBAN ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Since the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the winter of 2020, city governments around the world have faced extraordinary demands from citizens for services, expertise, and leadership. Urban administration has rarely been so involved in everyday life. Yet, during this time, reflexive fear, justifiable criticism, and malicious disdain of public initiatives and civic authorities seem to have undermined the status of urban administration as a representation of the public interest. The links that connect everyday experiences to urban administration have become strained to the extent that there is a waning certainty as to how "the city" as a collective project is constituted and realized. City governments and those who study urban society and culture, now face the task of re-examining fundamental questions about how urban administration engages urban life.

Accordingly, in the most general sense, in this dissertation, I ask how urban administration comes to make sense to the people it serves. I aim, specifically, to foster an interest in the definition of the situations for administrating cities using a cross-disciplinary approach that engages traditions of urban theory, reflective analysis, hermeneutics and cultural sociology. I do this by looking at how these traditions elucidate the relationship between urban lifeworld and administration as it is found in various contemporary practices of city governance and urban life.

Through this analysis, I suggest that the relationship between lifeworld and urban administration is established in practical conditions, but these conditions are ultimately grounded in participants engaging in self-reflective modes of theorizing the city as a situation for taking action, a process I will refer to as order-making.

This notion of order-making is not merely an attempt to formulate a method of analysing urban administration. Nor does it simply provide an account of an individual's encounter with institutions of urban administration. Instead, the analysis proposes a way to re-consider those who

are involved in the administration of the city, both in formal and incidental ways, as active agents in the urban community engaged in the ongoing and collective project of theorizing the city as an order-making situation. This study highlights order-making as it is entrenched in the messiness and details of everyday urban culture, yet it also shows that order-making extends beyond the limits of the commonplace so as to produce an enduring order, or form, of the city itself. In this sense, what might be called the movement toward order-making underpins a multiplicity of engagements with administration while attending to the permanence—or, the formal goodness—of the city as a type of community. This enquiry thus supports a radically pluralistic grounding for urban administration by exploring what fundamentally connects the diversity of urban experience with the singularity of administration.

Instead of assessing specific administrative policies and practices, this dissertation steps back to consider a broad view of administering the city to see what underpins the relationship of the urban lifeworld to the administration of city life. To do this, I consider questions such as: How do people conceptualize the city as a project? What part do everyday routine, memory, and meaning-making play in administration? How does the administration of cities engage forms of urban lifestyle and even the notion of the good life? How is the urban community made and remade?

This analysis, in sum, aims to elucidate how order-making occurs in the confluence of legalistic and customary experiences of city life to clarify the realization of the city as a form of community.

I consider order-making in four contexts of urban administration: city planning, gentrification, technology, and theory. I first consider details of order-making as people discuss city planning at a local administrative tribunal. Next, I expand the focus by considering order-

making within the context of neighbourhood gentrification and how gentrification epitomizes order-making as the desire to reconcile personal experience and identity with the city at large. I then turn to the technology of smart cities to address ways order-making connects technology to the problematics of the urban lifeworld. This sets up a discussion about the notion of making within order-making, which is subsequently treated in terms of social theory. It is in this last main discussion that I consider the engagement of the lifeworld with urban administration as a way of engaging the city as an externalized ‘thing’. In a closing discussion, I briefly outline a program for future research, suggesting ways urban order-making might contribute to an effective response to current challenges facing city governance.

Throughout this dissertation, I aim to expand the discussion about what connects everyday urban culture to urban administration in establishing a sense of order. The analysis hopefully helps turn attention to new ways in which institutions of urban administration might become better attuned to the plurality of cultural and historic experiences that now constitute much of the social life of contemporary cities. It offers an analysis of administration in terms of being self-reflexively aware of mundane actions, incidental memories, and the taken-for-granted patterns of everyday life, so that an array of experiences might not just reshape administrative practices to make outcomes just and fair but also substantially redefine the epistemological grounds on which such practices are grounded, that is, the ethos of doing urban administration. This involves imagining new ways of thinking about entrenched notions of administrative authority so that institutions of community order-making accord far more with the global, diasporic, and post-colonial dynamics of urban communities. In that sense, this work hopefully contributes to new ways of ensuring cities remain accountable, meaningful, and worthy of trust amid a period of disorientating change.

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Preface

At the Service Counter, a Personal Reflection

Years ago, I worked for the City of Toronto. I was a front-line administrator managing case files for a service called the Committee of Adjustment. Property owners and builders could apply to the Committee for exceptions to zoning regulations controlling the height, bulk, and placement of new construction. On the surface, it was a simple process. Applicants arrived at the Committee's service counter on the ground floor of Toronto city hall. They would hand in building plans, fill out forms, and pay a fee. I would review the documents, then register their file in the city's computerized tracking system. Soon after, I would send a notice of the application to the neighbours, the local city councillor, and other City departments. On the hearing date, the Committee, a tribunal of five citizen appointees, would listen to the applicant making their case and to anyone else who wished to speak. Then, the Committee would decide the matter with a show of hands. Yet, at a deeper level, there was much more to the story.

First, the process was confusing. Most people I greeted at the counter had little experience with urban planning. They felt bewildered and intimidated. Even professionals—the smartly dressed architects, planners, and lawyers—seemed unnerved as they engaged in the machinations of zoning-variance adjudication. With its discretionary power to issue exceptions to the zoning code, the Committee of Adjustment did not always follow explicit rules and policy. It operated where the letter of municipal zoning law was set aside for some sort of obscure code of good planning, civic responsibility, and ward politics. The people who arrived at the counter where I worked entered a mysterious process. To pass through, they had to come to terms with the city

they knew through personal experience, and also the city they would come to know through administration. How did they administer to this community as a collective project?

That ad hoc quality of public administration is related to the second reason why the Committee was intriguing. Under the formal procedures was a hidden layer of engagement. At the service counter, as applicants filled out the paperwork, they would often chat about their project and the circumstances that led them to file with the Committee. They would share a joke or some bit of personal experience. At the service desk, I heard about family drama and tragedies, gossip about parties, bigoted misgivings about neighbours, investment schemes, and retirement plans. Each variance application seemed to be shadowed by a backstory that, while never appearing on building plans or official records, nevertheless followed the file as it moved through the administrative process, from the front-desk intake to the Committee's final decision. While each case was technically about zoning, in practice, each also signified a complex interplay of social relations, personal narrative, and culture.

At the time though, I had little appreciation of this. Fresh out of planning school, I was eager to show my professionalism and efficiency, not my ability to chit-chat. The talk at the service counter seemed time-consuming and distracting. It was unclear how all of this even related to the proper ways of doing city planning. To me, the talk seemed to collide with the ideals of impartiality and detachment that I had learned were necessary for the fair and just administration of city affairs.

After a couple of years of working for the Committee, I decided to take a leap and move overseas to study architecture. I found a graduate program at the University of Hong Kong focusing on the conservation of historic buildings and sites. Its hands-on approach was exciting. On field trips around Hong Kong Island and the New Territories, my colleagues and I studied ornate temples,

lush parks, rugged tenement buildings, and busy workshops. We learned to document and preserve buildings and to recognize the value of sites that served as monuments to an intricate social history. But what struck me most was not the ‘hardware’ of architecture or landscapes; it was rather the ‘software’ social interactions that made these places vital and meaningful. I saw how an exquisitely preserved building could be empty of meaning while a shabby apartment block might house a wealth of cultural history sustained by the routines and memories of its occupants. That is why during these trips we could find ourselves spending as much time enjoying leisurely lunches in local cafes or talking with people on the street as we did on field notes, building measurements and photo documentation. Intangible culture, we saw, gave life to the tangible heritage of the city.

What I learned in Hong Kong forced me to reflect on my experience in Toronto. I started to think that the chit-chat at the service desk was perhaps not so problematic. Perhaps it was in some way essential to administrative procedures. Did it contribute to the Committee of Adjustment’s work? Did it reveal something hidden in city administration? While these questions stuck with me, a way toward answering them remained elusive.

On returning to Toronto, an architecture firm hired me to help handle its growing roster of heritage-conservation projects in the city’s thriving downtown. The work placed me at the crossroads of historical narrative and urban planning, where the city’s intricate and dynamic cultural identity was colliding with its hyperactive real-estate market. Yet even though my job joined historical research and urban development, I continued to struggle to see how the prosaic experiences of urban culture might accord with professional practices of heritage conservation and planning. Only slowly did it become clear that what hindered my progress was how I was framing these issues. I was approaching these problems as an urban planner and heritage-conservation

expert, and so my questions remained centred on a particular perspective of city building based on disciplines such as architecture, design, planning, and public policy. What I needed instead was a new perspective and a far more expansive approach. It was from that point that I started to reconsider some of the basic ideas of city building and slowly came to see the issue in terms of what C. W. Mills (2000) called the craft of sociology. This dissertation follows this shift.

PART I: Introduction

Chapter 1: Problem Statement

Context: Cities Under Stress

In Canada and around the world, cities face a period of extraordinary uncertainty. This is evident in volatile finance and real-estate markets, an accelerating pace of technological change, the climate crisis, and the brutal persistence of systemic racism along with a painful confrontation with colonial legacies.

Starting in the winter of 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic added yet another strain. We saw haunting images of urban life: empty streets in Paris, New York office towers abandoned, major cities such as Wuhan and Milan entirely shut down, desperation for medical services in Mumbai, and the cessation of Hong Kong's vibrant street life. In Toronto, the effects were perhaps not as dramatic but were nonetheless significant. Here, social cleavages became all the more conspicuous as wealthy neighbours fled to countryside homes while vulnerable 'essential' service workers struggled to keep the city going. Public spaces took on the look of a wartime emergency, with gated playgrounds, locked public buildings, and long queues in front of shops. The way people spoke to each other altered. Friendly small talk with neighbours was infused with fearful questions: Can I go south this winter? When can the kids go back to school? How do I pass by someone on the sidewalk, buy my food, and care for elderly parents? What if work shuts down? What if I get sick? When will this whole thing end?

At the same time, the pandemic also proved that urban life has maintained a certain indomitable momentum. In the first year of the pandemic, cities as varied as Toronto, Lagos, and

Chongqing, for example, experienced steady growth in municipal services and housing.¹ Moreover, the pandemic has occurred within a broad trend of global urbanization. For instance, the United Nations (2018) has forecasted that, by 2030, there will be 706 cities with populations of one million or more and between 2018 and 2030, the world will add 10 more mega-cities of 10 million people for a total of 43, with a world population that is half urbanized. The vanguard of urban development has certainly shifted from historically urbanized areas of Europe and the Americas to regions in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (United Nations, 2018). In terms of population, high-rise construction, transit development, and public health, cities in these continents now represent the vanguard of urbanization. The global urban transformation is a global cultural transformation.

The momentum of urban transformation is also evident in the way information technology has become indispensable to both institutional organization and the conduct of everyday life. During the early stages of the pandemic, as streets, parks, schools, and offices were vacated, the semblance of normal civic order was maintained by makeshift assemblages of digital-payment systems, video-conferencing software, and social-media.² And while this shockingly swift leap to digital services was on the surface a matter of technological ingenuity, more fundamentally, it also represented a momentous disruption to established ways of administrating cities. It was a ground-

¹ For example, despite uncertainty Toronto house prices increased 13.5% in 2020 (Altstedter, 2020), Chongqing's gross domestic product expanded by 3.9% (Xinhua, 2021), and major infrastructure projects were completed in Lagos (Ogynbiyi, 2021).

² I am thinking of how communication technology allows people to safely engage administrative systems. Governments have turned to tracing apps and digital media, sometimes successfully, to manage and disseminate critical public-health information and with the aim of ensuring that cities remain viable. During the harshest phases of quarantine, for example, urban life was sustained by video streaming, work-from-home Zoom sessions, and unending exchanges of text messages and homemade social-media content (Kasinitz, 2020).

shifting change that came to be expressed in passionate debates about public-health measures, the proliferation of anti-government conspiracies, and even the passive-aggressive withdrawal from public life into the private realm of hyper-nesting and bread baking (Powers, 2021). During the crises, when cities demanded the most from governments, there was palatable anxiety about what urban administration should do to sustain everyday urban life.

A deep reappraisal of urban administration was also key to the global protests in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement that focused attention on municipal-police malpractice in the summer of 2020. In Toronto and cities elsewhere around the world, the intense questioning of a key function of urban administration unfolded. On the streets of cities, Black Lives Matter came to mean a massive re-evaluation of local administrative authority.³ Likewise, calls to defund city police departments revealed how urban administration is connected so closely to basic matters of human dignity. It showed how municipal budgets, legal power, and mundane experiences in the city are bound to a common yet often unseen cultural infrastructure (Norton, 2014b).

These extraordinary events have brought to the surface fundamental questions about how cities transform and how city dwellers attend to such change or, in other words, how cities are administered. The study of administration, therefore, has become an inquiry not just about routine public policies and programs but also about the fundamental *problem* of problem-solving in cities.

³ A widely covered example of a municipal authority serving as the stage for this movement was the massive yellow Black Lives Matter mural painted on 16th Street leading to the White House in Washington DC. Of course, this was not unprecedented. In July 2016, for instance, Black Lives Matter Toronto used the city street when it stalled the massive Pride parade to demand an end to municipal-police involvement in the annual event and to draw attention to a lack of Black representation in Pride organization. (CBC News, 2016 July 16).

This means that an examination of the administration of cities must address the ways the conceptual framework of the city is constructed, dismantled, and rebuilt.

In this sense, a discussion of urban administration must consider the fine strands of culture, such as a sense of familiarity and permanence, memory, experience, and imagination, that tie community together. Yet, even looking at it this way, urban administration still transcends what is personal and commonsensical because it ultimately operates in reference to laws, procedures, and policies that by design and in practice resist the specifics of everyday urban life. Accordingly, to understand transformation in cities means reflecting on the grounds on which members of urban communities engage administration on two discordant registers of culture and policy: how they conceive of the two within one community; how they make administration tangible and genuine; how they act within the cultural context of their city while along with others reflexively attending to a notion of community as an object of care. The task of grappling with these issues is certainly not straightforward.

Problem Statement

In this dissertation, I ask how people make sense of cities, how they use personal experience to conceptualize a sense of order in urban life, and how that order-making process occurs in practice. This is about seeing how what is particular and localized in urban experience relates to what is generalized and impersonal about a city. Developing an experience-based perspective of urban order accordingly involves asking how self-reflective common-sense accounts of the city inform the engagement with administrative institutions of policy-making. The initial task is to understand, in the words of ethnographer Dorothy Smith, ways “the work and practical reasoning of individuals and the locally accomplished order that is their product become

an expression of the nonlocal relations of the professional and bureaucratic discourse of the ruling apparatus” (Smith, 1987, location 3313). There are several aspects of this approach that will be discussed throughout the dissertation but are worth briefly highlighting before moving on. First, order-making involves moving experiential or local knowledge to the domain of administration, and this disturbs the distinction between the two areas. As administration and the lifeworld intermingle, each is redefined. Second, the confluence of lifeworld and administration produces a new orientation that allows participants⁴ to move toward a form of community as something that stands as a commonly recognizable project, or as a ‘thing’ that is made and remade. It is a form of the city that participants in urban administration thereby confront both as an externality and as an inward product of self-reflective. In the Durkheimian sense, the external factuality of order-making is an accomplished order of things that stands as a non-localized condition or presence, a thing that is encountered yet it comes from beyond experience.

This means the city is rendered as a community and as a collective project so that the city becomes a matter of decision-making and action. The city emerges from order-making, but it is making that bears a resemblance to classical artisanship that is intimately tied to experience, rather than the mastery of modern technique that is seemingly so estranged from human agency (Habermas, 2007). It is this sense of making in order-making that Hanna Arendt (1998) addresses in her lucid interpretation of Plato’s *Republic* where she suggests that Plato shows the notion of

⁴ To emphasize this, I use the term ‘participants’ rather than the more conventional ‘member’ to refer to individuals. My intent is to emphasize the agency and productive capacity that is perhaps understated by the term member and its association of being a subset of an existing body.

community is approached under conditions that are analogous to making an object. I'll return to this in chapter eight.

Third, in the process of order-making, the notion of community as a 'thing' is simultaneously encountered as what is both fleeting and permanent just as making something, in a more conventional sense, involves both change and endurance. In defining the situation of order-making, participants draw from their memory, storytelling, vernacular theorizing, and a multiplicity of biographical and collective cultural identities that constitute their urban lifeworlds. But it is how these lifeworlds furnish conceptual resources for theorizing the city that is key, rather than the lifeworld itself being identical to their conception of the city. Order-making, as I will consider in the following chapters, thereby underpins the notion of administration as making something, but also as a confrontation with the defining limits of the act of making (McHugh, 1993).

A fourth point that should be noted is the implications of order-making. Engaging the notion of making within urban order alters the analysis of city administration. Instead of looking at policies and procedures involved in running a city, a focus on order-making instead turns attention to interactions to shed light on underlying conditions participation. The approach offers a potentially clearer understanding of the processes of defining situations for administrating the city. Analysis of order-making in this way engages interpersonal interaction as a theoretical space where, amid routine experience, memory, and vernacular discourse, administration engages the presence of the urban culture. Within conventions of discourses about city life is the conceptual context that engenders a situation for acting on cities collectively while defining such a situation as "the object as a course of action" (Blum, 2003, p. 53).

Fourth, what is counterintuitive about order-making is that it entails an orientation to the city that does not inevitably compel uniformity or discipline. Participants do not fall into line so to speak; nor are they pushed. The movement certainly involves agreement but here agreement is not compliance nor is it consensus. Instead, the participant's engagement with the administration solidifies the specificities and differences embedded in the resources of lived experience. Their engagement with urban administration comes to be enacted through the differentiation of lived experience. With administrative engagement, the plurality of participant experience is often blurred and disrupted so that instead of nullifying differences in generalized interpretations and narratives, the orientation to the city reasserts differentiation in the ongoing definition of the city as a problem-solving situation. (Blum, 2003). Not only does engagement with processes of administration channel the cultural products of experience and memory, but it also necessitates a type of conceptual labour whereby the plurality of urban culture comes to the surface where it is theorized, reformulated, and accounted for from within that engagement.

This has direct implications for urban administration in the context of the plurality of urban culture. Order-making, as a project of defining a situation for action, means the plurality of experience is essential to the attendance to the city as a thing that is made and remade. In this context of order-making, lifeworld is theorized in a movement orientating to a horizon of formality—in this case, the city as a communal project—and with this movement, the variation of experience is drawn together, articulated, amplified, and contested in an inherently messy process. Experiences of life in the city overlap, morph, and merge as they are rendered as resources for administration and for attending to the city as a 'thing'. In this way, the act of making a *thing* of the city involves administration orienting to ending form of community that is found at the limit

of making, and accordingly, it includes participants finding themselves “being in the grip” of what they make (Blum and McHugh, 1984, p.136).

This approach may at first seem to be no more than abstract speculation. Yet, as I hope to show, it applies to urgent challenges facing cities. I will expand on this in the next section, but to start with, I want to lastly take note of why the question of order-making in administration is particularly timely. The analysis proposes a way of recognizing participants in administration as self-reflective agents of order-making. It shows how participants not only engage urban administration but also how they enact the necessary conditions for administration, that is, the situation where administration is rendered present and actionable. This analysis treats participation in administration in a way that is like how vernacular language and architecture are studied, that is, it is treated as a social action that weaves together theorizing, self-reflection, and practice. As in these parallel activities, order-making in administration consists of a fluctuating movement between the immediacy of everyday experience and the formalism of collective action which both reproduces and creates forms of action. Participants engaging in urban administration might be similarly regarded as vernacular theorists because, like people who are engaged in vernacular building crafts or those who are immersed in vernacular language, they formulate, or theorize, some sort of relationship to their actions. Accordingly, the role of experience, memory, and cultural life are accentuated in this account of urban administration. The approach to order-making discussed in the following chapters places notions of culture in a position closer to the core of administration than what we commonly find in the research literature and popular discourses about urban governance. This shift moves away from treating culture (in whatever form) as an influence, factor, or appendage of administration. Instead, it locates cultural life at the heart of administrative

action, for it provides an essential resource for defining what it is to attend to the community. Moreover, this analysis of order-making also clarifies the ways culture relates to the situation of making. This suggests new ways of informing, sustaining or displacing entrenched notions of administrative authority. The analysis marks a path leading to a more nuanced understanding of administrative order, reduces the dependence on the figure of the idealized citizen, and shifts to a nuanced sense of participation that is potentially more attuned to the cultural dynamics of post-modern and post-colonial cities.

Approach

To conduct this analysis, I examine order-making in four settings of urban administration related to city planning, neighbourhood gentrification, smart-city technology, and social theory. I start by discussing the details of order-making by looking at how people talk about city planning and design at hearings on discretionary land-use zoning cases. Next, I expand the focus by considering order-making within the context of neighbourhood gentrification and how gentrification epitomizes order-making as the desire to reconcile personal experience and identity with the city at large. I then turn to the technology of smart cities to address ways in which order-making connects technology to the problematics of the urban lifeworld. This sets up a discussion about the notion of making within order-making which is subsequently treated next in terms of social theory. It is in this last main discussion, that I consider the engagement of the lifeworld with the administration of cities as a way of engaging the city as an externalized ‘thing’. A concluding chapter briefly outlines a program for future research, suggesting ways urban order-making might contribute to an effective response to current challenges facing city governance.

In sum, in this dissertation, I seek to clarify what binds urban administration to everyday urban culture to show ways of administrating cities that might better respond to the nuances and dynamics of contemporary urban communities. By shedding light on the conceptual space created by the convergence of culture and administration, I hope to highlight the central place of lived experience within the city as an everchanging communal project. This inquiry begins at the confluence of three themes: (1) cities in transformation, (2) the lifeworld of the city, and (3) urban administration.

Lifeworld and the City

The notion of the lifeworld developed out of phenomenology as a way to discuss the “taken-for-granted ‘common-sense reality’ of the social world as it is lived by ordinary individuals” (Harrington, 2016, p. 341). The term is attributed to Alfred Schutz, who introduces it in *The Structure of the Life-World* as “that providence of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense” (Schutz and Luckman, 1932/1967, p. 3). Schutz’s students and collaborators, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966/1991) popularized the concept with their widely read *Social Construction of Social Reality*, in which they emphasized the lifeworld as a starting point for a sociological analysis of knowledge. They emphasized the interiority and individuality of the lifeworld, for example, they noted, that

the world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991, Location 495)

Stated in this way, the allure of the lifeworld notion is obvious. It validates a commonplace ideal of individualism, emphasizes the role of people in their ordinary capacities, and positions the self-

defining individual as a central agent in the social world. Moreover, a reality originating from interior life is extended to a wider field of interpersonal relations to provide a thoroughly liberal and democratic account of social phenomenon, that is, an account of the ‘everyman’ contributing to the construction of social structures.

At the same time, what is appealing about the lifeworld also introduces a set of difficult questions. If the lifeworld is founded on commonplace experience generally corresponding to a sense of the ordinary (or orderly), how is such correspondence maintained? What is the basis of the regularity of the everyday?

Another student of Schutz, and his biographer, offered a response. While the origin of the lifeworld is subjectively meaningful conduct, Helmet Wagner (1983) suggested that the concept is ultimately about interactional phenomena occurring in the “public world” (pp. 110–111). Moreover, the concept of the lifeworld is not merely about an individual discovering a shared reality with another. It also orients the individual toward collective action that brings about change in the community. In doing so, it destabilizes the predictable everydayness of subjective experience because it transcends the immediacy of the lifeworld once it becomes part of the administration of the collective project. This is evident in what Wagner identified as the third component of Schutz’s concept. Wagner summed it up in this way:⁵

1. Lifeworld is independent of, and prior to, all sociological theories and constructs...
2. Lifeworld produces doubts that may or may not be resolved in or after the course of experiences from which they arise...

⁵ Here Wagner quoted from an article by Schutz’s collaborator, Aron Gurwitsch (1962) titled “The Common-Sense World as Social Reality: A Discourse on Alfred Schutz.”

Lifeworld occurs to us as a “public world” and an “intersubjective world.”... simultaneously “we take it for granted that our fellow men take the world for granted in substantially the same way as we do.” It is only on the basis of such assumptions that social interaction and all forms of social co-operation become possible and, more often than not, can be carried out successfully and to the satisfaction of all concerned. (Gurwitsch, 1962, as cited in Wagner, 1983, pp. 110–111)

This leads to the point that lifeworld is a concept rooted in practical application. As Ruth Ayaß (2016) recognized, there is a distinctively action-oriented component to Schutz’s thinking, in that lifeworld “is determined by the pragmatic motive, i.e., the world is perceived and interpreted as something which can be altered by human action, but also as something which in turn influences our action” (p. 521). For both Wagner and Ayaß, what at first blush seems to be primarily an analysis of psychological or ‘subjective’ social construction is a way of framing practical problems of public engagement. The concept of lifeworld, specifically, addresses the inner life in tandem with the outwardly tangible, productive, and commonplace phenomena of public life. Problematic matters rooted in the lifeworld extend to the situationally accountable orientation work of collective action. The lifeworld concept, therefore, provides a useful way of thinking about meaning-making within collective action.

If the notion of the lifeworld is an entrée to a broader discussion of social action, this suggests that collective action also must be realized, first, within some sort of common protocol, or situation, and second, as an engagement between the realm of the lifeworld and such a situation.

The *situation*, or relationship to external grounds of action, is not only an abstract notion but is realized through tangible experience and mutual accountability. Indeed, Schultz affirmed that “the course of life is a series of situations” (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 113). For Schultz, the situation may be routine or problematic. Either way, it involves some sort of determination or

definition even though the process of formulating a definition itself is ambiguous. Schutz, for example, seemed first to argue that the situation is defined externally: “In every situation, the ontological structure of the world is imposed on me. The situation is absolutely *limited*: knowledge of this is a basic element of the stock of knowledge” (Schutz and Luckman, 1973, p. 114).

Yet soon after, he seemed to assert that the definition arises from a subjective experience:

To be able to act in the situation, I must determine it. The situation is, as was said, already predetermined—through knowledge of the limitation of the situation, knowledge of the structuring of subjective experience in it, and knowledge of the biographical articulation of the situation. All this belongs to the basic elements of the stock of knowledge and “automatically” enters into the determination of any situation. This situation is also “open.” (p. 114)

Accordingly, the definition of the situation occurs between what is “imposed” on the individual and what is “determined.” Still, either case implies that the definition of lifeworld situations is a matter primarily of a subjective, individualistic engagement. Indeed, this is reinforced by the illustrations Schutz used to introduce the issue (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973).⁶ Yet it would be a mistake to think the definition is formulated in isolation. Social situations, as Schutz explained, are “reciprocally determined by the partners in the situation” (p. 116). Others are involved so the definition of the situation is therefore formulated by engagement and interaction occurring on conceptual grounds of commonality that are “to a great extent socially objective, above all, in language, as a highly anonymous system of meaning” (p. 116). The notion of the lifeworld does

⁶ He uses the example of chopping wood as an example of defining a routine situation and meeting someone and forgetting their name as a “open” or problematic situation. (Schutz & Luckmann, 1966/1991, pp. 116–118)

not only imply subjective knowledge creation (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) but also the formulation of an order of interaction.

Once placed in the context of a sort of public life, Schutz's lifeworld-situation problem starts to illuminate a set of remarkable problems about the experience of urban life relating to conceptualizing the city as a problem-solving situation. For instance, how does the inner life engage the situation of urban administration? Conversely, how are contexts and situations of policy-making authorized under the auspices of the lifeworld?

Two noteworthy responses shed some light on the importance and limitations of these questions. The first is Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography, and the other is Mathew Norton's recent work, developed within the scope of the cultural sociology associated with Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith (Norton, 2014b; Alexander & Smith, 2010).

Dorothy Smith (1987) addressed the convergence of the everyday lifeworld with the world of institutional power. Simply put, she emphasizes the influence of institutional forces on the domain of personal life and how that interaction produces the lived reality of administrative engagement. For Smith, a central task of social analysis is understanding specifically how everyday, 'real' experiences are redefined by the abstract power of institutions, how the interaction between the concrete and abstract creates patterns of social organization, and how those patterns redefine immediate tasks of the lifeworld. Smith sees this as resulting in

the work and practical reasoning of individuals and the locally accomplished order that is their product become an expression of the nonlocal relations of the professional and bureaucratic discourse of the ruling apparatus.

The accountability procedures of institutions make some things visible, while others as much a part of the overall work organization that performs the institution do not come into view at all or as other than themselves. Local practices glossed by the

categories of the discourse are provided with boundaries of observability beneath which a subterranean life continues. (Smith, 1987, Ebook Location 3313)

Accordingly, often-neglected and taken-for-granted matters such as manual labour, feminized household work, and childcare produce situations where abstract institutional structures are rendered visible and real. A force of order-making, in a sense, enters the context of the lifeworld, where it becomes effective and real. Therefore, the everyday lifeworld is where sociological analysis of order ought to be directed for it is here that we see the force of institutional power as lived experience enacted in the ‘particular character of the work’ of everyday experience. Smith further explained that

the relation of the local and particular to generalized social relations is not a conceptual or methodological issue, it is a property of social organization. The particular “case” is not particular in the aspects that are of concern to the inquirer. Indeed, it is not a “case” for it presents itself to us rather as a point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process. The problematic of the everyday world arises precisely at the juncture of a particular experience, with generalizing and abstracted forms of social relations organizing a division of labour in society at large. One process is that by which the actual work that people do in its particular forms—using a lathe, building wooden forms for pouring concrete, welding on an assembly line, washing dishes in a restaurant, typing on a VDT—is entered into relations in which the particular character of the work drops out of sight. (Smith, 1987, Ebook Location 3219)

Smith’s institutional ethnography is significant because it shows a way of identifying the binding tissue connecting the individualization of lifeworld to collective social order in the in situ application in the everyday experience of institutional “ideology” (Smith, 1987). The definition of the situation, accordingly, is found in ways that actions (Smith, 1987) engage the particularity of

lived experience while at the same time moving such experience toward a relation to forms of collective, or institutional order.

Similarly, Norton (2014a, 2014b) addresses the confluence of lifeworld and social order. Yet instead of seeing the relationship in the intermingling of institutions and private life as Smith does, he found that social order is rooted in a background of what he calls *cultural infrastructure*. For Norton (2014a, 2014b), the relationship between the lifeworld and collective action creates patterns of structural and symbolic interactions. The subjective definition of the lifeworld is accordingly defined by mechanics of intersubjectivity manifest within “cultural systems as systems” (Norton, 2014b, 182). As he explained,

the model of culture in action developed here departs from the individualizing imageries of beliefs and cognition to focus on meaning as a relational construct, collectively created in concrete social situations that are colligated through their common orientations to trans-situational codes and structures of meaning (p. 181)

Impersonal (or perhaps transpersonal) cultural systems—such as beliefs, and identities—consequently shape a priori conditions of interactions between the lifeworld and collective action thereby setting up social mechanisms that structure interactions. In this way, by addressing the definition of the situation, Norton (2014) asks how situations might be delimited within a broader realm of ‘culture’ and finds that common, institutionalized forms of culture constitute the backdrop that is essential to the structuring of the lifeworld. He thereby connected the definition of the situation to “cultural infrastructure (Norton 2014a).

In these ways, Smith and Norton both maintained that the relationship of lifeworld to collective action is unquestionably a matter of culture. Yet here, the explanations diverge. While Norton thought that the relationship of lifeworld and collective action is somehow founded on a

structure (or infrastructure) of common cultural forces, Smith's institutional ethnography located the cultural foundation of institutional action in the prosaic personal lived experience defined by the tangibility of material factors. In these ways, the arguments Smith and Norton have made mark their respective pathways leading from a crude individualistic sense of lifeworld to a more integrated interpretation that acknowledges the importance of context or situations.

I am similarly interested in facing this problem but instead of accepting the cultural infrastructure as a given, as I feel they do, I see the situation of the lifeworld within collective action as involving some sort of cognitive agency or theorizing for all involved. Rather than attributing order-making to institutional–lifeworld interaction or cultural mechanisms, I see the cognitive and mnemonic resources of participants as being central to forming a situation for engagement. My interest is in the conceptualization of the city within the scenes of collective initiatives, such as urban administration, which are theorized as order-making by those who engage in these actions. I expand on this further at the end of Chapter Two, where I introduce my discussion of the problem of defining the situation. However, first, I need to explain what I mean by urban administration.

Administration

The study of the urban political community has largely dwelt on questions of leadership and of issues deriving from such questions. Leadership exemplifies the power and agency of the community. The traditions of community analysis, following Machiavelli, Plato, and Hobbs, have represented the identity of a community in terms of embodiment and endurance, in the person of the leader or the *body* of the political corporation. Yet while the 'ship of state' might be steered in the wheelhouse by the captain and officers, out of sight, under the waterline, and up in the rigging

far above deck is administration. The realm of administration is immersed in routine and dullness. Everyday problems, ultimately, form the problems of administration.

In cities, administration can be profoundly mundane and predictable. It is encountered through the weekly garbage pickup, paying for street parking (or a parking ticket), waiting in the rain for the bus, reserving a popular library book, or playing in a park. Yet just as it involves nondescript experiences, urban administration also shapes cities deeply and on a massive scale. We walk neighbourhood streets without considering how they are designed to accommodate below-grade infrastructure. We visit a local library without noticing its effect on child literacy or the mental health of seniors. We see children enjoy a playground without considering how it might create a pleasant microclimate or how it might boost property valuations. Engagement with urban administration is usually unremarkable, but each instance involves confronting the city as an organization, as a structure or, more generally, as some form of social order. Consequently, the encounter with administration is an occasion to consider, even fleetingly, the city as a mode of living together among friends and strangers. Below the surface, the enaction of urban administration directs us toward an enduring relationship between the lifeworld of those who live in cities and the communal force of institutional policy. When examined carefully, we can detect ways this relationship is fraught with ongoing conflict, ambiguity, and uncertainty. The relationship takes on a discernible form only when realized in a movement toward administering the city.

In this sense, urban administration is like vernacular architecture. For instance, in a community barn raising, participants work together to construct a structure without reference to an explicit, formal design. Such projects are organized not by a set design or an architect, but as

the community converges and talks through what is to be done. The designing process is conceptual and iterative for it occurs through social interaction, and the product is realized only in that it comes about by collaboration and contention, and specifically, by addressing some sort of order within those exchanges. What is notable about ‘architecture without architects’ (Rudofsky, 1964) is that it is not merely a reproduction of customary construction methods. While the collaboration process is embedded in the community members' history, vernacular construction emerges from the creative discourse between the past, present, and future. As architectural anthropologist Marcel Vellinga (2006) pointed out, the vernacular conceptualization of building is a living tradition in that it both conserves memory and directs cultural resources of memory toward innovative, productive, and forward-looking actions. The power of vernacular architecture is found in the ability to apply both prospective and retrospective orientations. Accordingly, to grasp how urban communities constitute forms of problem-solving in administration, we ought to first understand the parallel ‘vernacular’ practices of policy-making. Just as vernacular architecture connects the past to the future in the lifeworld experience, so too does administration connect the lifeworld of city dwellers to formal structures of administrative policy.

This leads to a second point. As ubiquitous and mundane as it is, urban administration is also puzzling. Municipal administration is commonplace yet frustratingly impenetrable. For instance, it has long been associated with party-machine politics, backroom deals, cronyism, and patronage (Banfield & Wilson, 1966). It is common to hear grumblings about city-hall bureaucracy and red tape in the press. Tammany Hall even remains a byword for political patronage a century

after that notorious political machine in New York City was dismantled.⁷ Likewise, tropes of dysfunctional bureaucracy are found in popular films and literature, such as dishonest police officers, zealous bureaucrats, or Byzantine procedures.⁸ In scholarly literature, urban administration has likewise been cast as being regressive, small-minded, authoritarian, and self-serving.⁹ Yet these tropes of administrative failure in popular culture and scholarship paradoxically expose an underlying expectation that administration ought to be manifest as some type of orderliness. The effectiveness of critique comes from revealing the vulnerability of administrative systems to human folly and desire against a certain alternative. Whether it is the greed of the corrupt vice squad depicted in Sidney Lumet's classic film, *Serpico*, or the rational self-interest of department managers identified in James Buchanan and Robert Tollison's influential public choice theory (1972), even the sharpest indictments show the expectation that administration should produce order. When it is not orderly, there is scandal, injustice, and ruin. The expectation of some sort of impartial, rational, and predictable decision-making remains the steadfast standard by which urban administrative practices are judged. Order remains the grace of administration.

⁷ In a recent column published in the Sun chain of newspapers in Canada, commentator Jonathan Goldberg (2020) wrote, "The least ideological politicians in American life have always been the heads of political machines, such as Boss Tweed of Tammany Hall or the mayors of cities like Chicago. In such places, high-minded complaints about principles are easily assuaged with a construction contract or a monopoly on hot dog concessions at the ballpark."

⁸ Classic examples include *Serpico* and *L. A. Confidential* (policing), *Chinatown* (land planning), and *Brazil* (bureaucracy).

⁹ For example, popular suspicion of public officials is buttressed by *public choice theory* (PCT), a prevailing framework of public administration studies that has influenced neo-liberal reforms since the 1980s. Developed in large part as a critique of Weber (Udehn, 1996) and promulgated by economists such as Lindblom (1959), Stigler (1971), Niskanen (1968), and Buchanan and Tollison (1972). PCT suggests that administrators' actions are motivated by rational self-interest, like those of any other actor in a liberal market economy (Buchanan & Tollison, 1972). The connection between PCT and smart cities would be worth considering in detail in a future research project.

The Mess

Yet if we look inside day-to-day administrative practices, orderliness is not obvious. There is no smooth-running engine under the nicely sculpted hood. City administration is messy. It is erratic, petty and personal, obtuse, and at times even ridiculous. Even well-informed participants struggle with basic procedures as they strive to understand administrative problems and administrative problem-solving itself. The basic what's-going-on-here feeling disturbs participants, and this instability can lead to cognitive, discursive, physical, and emotional labour being directed at a seemingly minor matter. I illustrate this with an exchange that occurred at a Committee of Adjustment hearing. Here, the Chair and a fellow Committee member ask an architect about a proposed house. While each speaker is well-informed about building design and zoning regulations, we see how easily they become entangled in confusion to the point that the exchange becomes nearly unintelligible:

CHAIR: But you realize these [parts of the building] are underground.

COM. MEMBER: ...above grade ... the above grade length of the dwelling then at the first floor is...

CHAIR: Well, we'll have to ask Mr Rose [the architect]

ARCHITECT: ...sixteen, and it says right here.

COM. MEMBER: That's the ... nineteen...

COM. MEMBER: That's the first floor.

ARCHITECT: Two floors.

COM. MEMBER: Two floors. What is the rest of it? Around nineteen? I think I saw nineteen.

ARCHITECT: So back here, it is sixteen point nine plus a little bump-out that brings it to seventeen point six.

COM. MEMBER: Ok. The entire dwelling above grade?

ARCHITECT: Yes.

COM. MEMBER: Yes.

(Committee Member, Committee Chair, and Architect, 405 Glenayre Road, Lines 19–210)¹⁰

We see this confusion again in a second passage from another Committee hearing. Instead of talking about technical specifications, in this exchange, the Committee is simply trying to identify the name and address of a neighbour who is to testify before it. The exchange begins with the neighbour, Ms. Pappas, approaching the podium. I quote much of the exchange to illustrate the time, effort, and discursive work involved in navigating the messiness:

PAPPAS: Hi. Good afternoon. There is not like three ninety-six. My house is three ninety-eight. But, these people...

CHAIR: Sorry, your address is?

PAPPAS: Three ninety-eight.

CHAIR: Three ninety-eight. And, your name.

PAPPAS: The one is three ninety-six. Must be. Three ninety-eight's my house.

CHAIR: There is no three ninety-six?

¹⁰ These transcripts of City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment meetings are of video archives proved by the City of Toronto. See the Chapter 3 of this disseration for further details.

PAPPAS: Exactly. And I'm here to tell you the number three ninety...

CHAIR: First of all, can I get your name?

PAPPAS: Mrs. Pappas. Maria Pappas.

CHAIR: Pappas, Ok. So, three ninety-eight, your right...

COM. MEMBER: Is she on the corner?

PAPPAS: I'm forty-one feet and now they want to build this huge [house].

CHAIR: So, this is three-ninety. So, this is three ninety-eight.

PAPPAS: No, no, no. To the right. To the right.

CHAIR: Three ninety-six.

[?]: It's the opposite corner.

PAPPAS: Three ninety-six. That's three ninety-eight. My house. My property.

CHAIR: Three ninety-eight.

PAPPAS: Yes. There is a very big confusion.

CHAIR: So, there is something wrong with the way it is labelled, or?

PAPPAS: I'll explain to you, please.

CHAIR: Ya, ok.

PAPPAS: When this property three ninety-four [had] been for sale, [it was as] thirty-three feet. And now, we receive this notice fifteen point seventy-five metres. And I'm wondering how this came.

CHAIR: I'm sorry, when [and] what was for sale?

(Neighbour, 294 O'Connor Avenue "Maria Pappas", Committee Member, Committee Chair, and, Lines 224–252)

As these passages show, the work of even a simple administrative procedure— adjudicating a set of zoning variances—is fraught with difficulty. The speakers struggle to confirm minute details, and in doing this they work to form some basic agreement about the topic at hand. The back and forth ends up being a sort of dance they practise awkwardly as they try to synchronize a common understanding of what they need to address.

It is by way of conceptual improvisation that participants in administration overcome the limitations of their subjective perspective and expedient self-interest. Messy exchanges and everyday practices of urban administration, I suggest, reveal something essential about the making of cities. Accordingly, my thesis is that understanding city administration and the ways it might respond to changes in urban society requires a firmer idea of how people develop a sense of order through vernacular, self-reflective theorizing. An understanding of change is realized in ways the realities of the lifeworld fold into the common, accountable sense of urban order. This process implies a conceptual movement inherent in defining a common order of the city that shuttles between the specifics of personal experience and the generalizability of the community. The narrative threads of the lifeworld are woven into a general pattern, or what more accurately can be called an order. This weaving of urban-administrative order consequently involves participants shifting focus from their experience and lifeworld to essential questions about the phenomenological encounter with their urban community: What are we dealing with here? What meaning does this situation entail? What is to be done in this situation? In this state, they come to encounter what it is to administer, that is, the trouble in confronting the thing that they attend to, care about, or act on.

Outline and Organization

This dissertation comprises three parts that move from the specific to the general. The first, Part I, develops an approach to the problem of order-making in cities. It includes this introductory chapter, Chapter 1, which delineates a starting point of inquiry at the nexus of urban transformation, lifeworld, and administration. The following chapter, Chapter 2, surveys ways the problem of order appears in past research on urban administration and decision-making.

Part II considers how the order-making problem is addressed in practical circumstances of urban-planning administration. Chapter 3 explains why the study of committee-of-adjustment hearings offers a useful occasion to study urban order-making. It also outlines methods developed for this purpose. The results of this study are in Chapter 4, which details ways in which a hearing nurtures specific discourse or grammar. I note how at the initial stages of a hearing participants introduce various rhetorical devices that are then supplanted by a different way of talking, or new grammar, that is oriented to the hearing as a distinctive experience. Chapter 5 continues from this point to look at the middle stages of a hearing when participants are immersed in the hearing. I suggest that participants at this point start to reconstruct their sense of the hearing by theorizing their role within a broader situation of the city. This process of reformulation involves drawing cognitive and mnemonic resources from their lifeworld experience, whereby their experience of the hearing and their exterior and prior experience is conceptualized somehow as a common ethos or situation of discourse. In other words, participants at this stage are working to re-establish a sense of order in the city as the hearing develops as an instance of a city event. The last section of Chapter 5 focuses on the concluding stages of a committee hearing. This considers how the ad hoc theorizing of order is drawn back toward an orientation to the generalized practice of institutionalized, administrative decision-making as committee members prepare to cast their votes.

In sum, Chapters 4 and 5 develop a roughly sketched model of hearing procedures: From initial rhetorical devices comes an in situ grammar that demands the theorizing of the hearing using lifeworld resources, and from this reformulation, comes a final (though imperfect) orientation to the formal structures of administration.

The analysis of committee hearings developed in Part II is applied to a broader context in Part III, where I shift from legalistic and institutional forms of administration to informal ways of *administering* the city beyond the confines of city hall. Administration in this broad sense means attending to the city as a community or project. Chapter 6 considers the way this broad form of administration appears in the gentrification of neighbourhoods, specifically in the way the intimate and private sphere of a home provides a position of order-making engagement with the city. I use discourses about staging homes for sale and about home renovations to illustrate how the lifeworld combined with home making builds toward a conception of acting on the city as a form of order. If the movement in Chapter 6 is from the particular to the general, Chapter 7 is the reverse. Instead of thinking of how an individual's lifeworld engages a broad concept of the city, I discuss ways that discourses on 'smart-city' technology move from its broad application of urban administration to the concrete experiences of the urban lifeworld. I intend to show that even the absolute abstraction of such technology is rendered comprehensible and meaningful only by an orientation to the particularities of the urban lifeworld. This means that such technology invariably becomes subservient to a vernacular of urban theory. Chapter 8 transfers these discussions to the field of urban theory. I suggest that the theorizing of administration leads to an idea of defining a situation of administrative urban order and that such a definition is analogous to making or crafting an object. Likewise, this making involves opportunities and limitations that thing-making imposes. The

implication is that the engagement of the lifeworld with the realm of urban administration is inextricably linked to in situ methods of order-making. This points the way to linkages between distinct yet affiliated approaches to the sociology of community, including work on cultural infrastructure (Norton, 2014), studies of interpersonal encounters with administration rooted in more pragmatic sides of ethnomethodology, as well as more theoretical approaches connected to the traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology (Blum, 2003; McHugh, 1968). The final chapter, Chapter 9, is forward-looking and speculative. It outlines ways the analysis I present might apply to future administrative systems as a way of reversing historical limitations of participatory administration and confronting abuses of municipal and police power. This last section can be read as a rough outline for future research work.

Summary

Cities face a period of upheaval. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep-set vulnerabilities of urban life, highlighted doubts about the capacities of cities and urban administration and driven many to re-examine established ways of living alongside and near others. Confronting the disruption is not merely a matter of shoring up established institutions, nor does it mean abruptly casting them aside. What merits greater attention, instead, are the foundations of urban governance, the actions of civic order-making that ground administration in the life of the city, and how people who live in cities make sense of administrating for the good of community. The study of urban order cannot dismiss the messy indeterminability of urban life and the culture of everyday interactions, nor can order-making be treated as merely a reflexive affirmation of established power. Instead, the task is to reclaim order from entrenched conventions to see how order-making occurs within the everyday cultural forces of life experience.

In this context, there is a pressing need for new approaches to sociological analysis. This is particularly true in the study of cities and the multifaceted urban communities that cohere to various senses of order. Whereas it might have made sense in the past to analyze cities within certain boundaries of cultural and intellectual traditions, it no longer seems helpful to rely on sui generis explanations such as treating cities as merely the product of national progress or the conquest of a particular civilization, ethnicity, or people. At the same time, the degree of adherence to systems of capitalism or modernization also seems unable to fully account for the ways cities operate worldwide, especially if the subaltern experiences of urban life are to be fully considered. To think seriously about cities, therefore, now means considering an enormously broad range of geographic, historical, and ideological influences that shape the imagination, logic, motives, and theorizing of those who make these cities happen. For this reason, the study of how cities operate has become more intriguing.

I present in this dissertation a response to basic questions about city administration: How do people in cities conceive urban administration? How do they cross the in-between space where the lifeworld engages the world of public policy? What are their ways of thinking and talking about the city as a collective project?

My research suggests administration at its core involves a creative force. It is built around an ad hoc process of linking everyday life experiences to administrative policy to establish a sense of order. It is a process that mixes concrete conditions with abstract forms of the city to provide the grounds for acting on the city, not only for individuals but also for a community to act collectively. To understand urban administration, therefore, is to first recognize a generative *disorder* at its core, a disorder that fosters the cultural ‘space’ or ‘infrastructure’ for realizing urban

order-making as a communal project. It is about allowing a situation to unfold whereby an outlook on the city based on experience confronts urban administration as an image or icon of a community in action.

Chapter 2: Literature

Overview

The urban community has long served as a setting for the study of social order. From the formative period of modern sociology came an interest in ways that individuals and small-scale affiliations in cities contribute to broad dynamics of identity and politics, how those forces shape social and spatial patterns, and how social structures, in turn, frame realities of the everyday lifeworld. Today, there is no shortage of research on this relationship. There is a steady stream of books, articles, and reports offering insight into ways it might be nurtured and improved. However, as the following survey of this research and theory shows, there is something about the nexus of everyday life, administration, and urban order that remains obscure.

While there are compelling theories of engagement that identify reasons why people may or may not take part in administration, there is comparably little about ways that people make sense of administration in everyday practices. There is much research on theories of administration but little about theorizing administration. Most often, the conceptual work of defining the relationship between experience and city administrative policy is discussed outside the subjective position of engagement. Theories typically offer *ex post facto* theories of participant engagement rather than examining the *in situ* theorizing of participants. In other words, it is yet unclear how urban theorizing operates in the situation of urban experience, and this suggests there is a need to explore the relationship as it is formulated in the moment of engagement, how such situated theorizing animates administrative policy and, conversely, how *ad hoc*, practical theorizing situates the engagement with administration.

To begin examining this conceptual ad hoc zone of engagement, I work within the broad scope of urban sociology and proceed to focus on phenomenological aspects of the problem with what could be called an ethnographic point of view. In other words, I'm interested in the question of the phenomena of city administration as people confront it or, more precisely, how they confront it alongside other members of an urban community. In this chapter, I start by surveying the main contours in research on the engagement of lifeworld and city administration. This account of the main approaches to the urban-order question leads to the suggestion that there is value in looking at theorizing as a form of interaction to illuminate the long-standing question of how cities serve as sites of order-making.

Background

The matter of order-making in politics has long been central to the Western canon of social theory. An interest in order-making in administration, however, is relatively new.

Plato's philosopher-king, Machiavelli's prince, and Hobbes's overlord are examples of archetypal political theory that might first come to mind when considering the notion of order. But it is an interest in order in general, beyond the top echelon of statecraft, that surfaces only in the wake of early modern sociology of the late 19th century and after. By the 1960s, the study of low-level order comes into focus. Rather than looking at order-making at the scale of cities or neighbourhoods, this new interest explored order in the day-to-day urban experiences of individuals (Jacobs, 1961; Lipsky, 1969; Lynch, 1962). Nevertheless, it is worth remembering this approach developed within a broader context of research on cities and theories of urban community.

An early interest in order-making in cities is found in studies published during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, at a time of rapid urbanization in Europe and the United States. Among

the more notable were Fustel de Coulanges's *Ancient City* (1864/1955), Henri Pirenne's *Medieval Cities* (1925/1952), Georg Simmel's essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903/1995); and Max Weber's *The City* (1921/1958). These works, among others, set out urban order as a topic and appropriate urban administrative order-making as modern sociological inquiry. Accordingly, urban order-making has been treated by asking about the historical development of cities, the social conditions that give rise to the urban community, and how the urban order in modern society has affected individuals. In the writing of W. E. B. Du Bois the full complexity of order-making in modern cities came into view (Morris, 2015).

In his writing spanning several decades, Du Bois reflected on an inextricable bond between urban order and individual experience, which grew in part from his immediate understanding of endemic anti-Black racism, the personal indignities and triumphs as a Black American scholar, his sociological research, and the political advocacy he upheld. Du Bois realized that everyday life constituted a primary condition for realizing urban order and that by considering this closely, there comes a particularly lucid understanding of the broad cultural, historical, and economic dynamics of urban society (Chandler, 2014). Moreover, he saw that the two domains are each dependent on the other: daily life is entrusted to urban order just as order relies on the flow of routine personal experience. The bond between the two can reinforce stability and structure. Yet, as was clear to Du Bois, this 'positive' reinforcement could be reversed, unleashing a cycle of chaos and violence. In either case, whether the order of cities was productive or degenerative, the connection between mundane experience and social order remained essential to Du Bois' profound analysis of the urbanization of American life.

His understanding of the complex relationship between personal experience and social order is apparent in a statement he made near the end of his life. It sums up a long, intimate, and very often distressing engagement with the question of order and experience:

Had it not been for the race problem early thrust upon me and enveloping me, I should have probably been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the established social order into which I was born. But just that part of this order which seemed to most of my fellows nearest perfection seemed to me most inequitable and wrong; and starting from that critique, I gradually, as the years went by, found other things to question in my environment. (as cited in Lewis, 2009, Epigraph).

This interest in urban order runs throughout his early study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899/1967). Here Du Bois deftly addressed order as an ongoing question of city life, one that appears explicitly in various contexts, from personal space and the local community to the global dynamics of colonization. For instance, he wrote of the catering guild led by Black business owners who fostered a culture of fine cuisine and elevated the city's sense of style and taste. He offered an analytical survey of streets and blocks, demographics of the 7th Ward, and detailed accounts of migration. He suggested that the city is also ordered by ethical and moral frameworks, the influence of vice, prayer, and intimacy.¹¹

¹¹ While outside the scope of sociological research, it might be noted that Du Bois' fiction also showed an interest in urban order. His short science fiction story "The Comet," for example, echoes the Book of Genesis with an account of a Black bank clerk who survives the annihilation of New York City by a comet only to find that the sole other survivor in the city is the daughter of the bank's manager. The two find refuge on the top floor of the bank's skyscraper headquarters and, thinking they are the last two on earth, turn to thoughts of perpetuating humankind. It is only at this tender moment, that they are proved wrong when a search party barges in, joyful to find the woman but outraged to see her companion (Du Bois, 1920/2018; Brown, 2017).

Du Bois was not merely interested in order because it might explain the functions of the city. Rather, it was the oscillation of order and disorder that was most striking in his writing (Brown, 2017; Morris, 2017). Two decades later, in the essay “Of Beauty and Death,” he vividly described the East St. Louis anti-Black pogrom of 1917 that killed at least 39 Black citizens and depopulated large parts of the city (Keyes, 2017). The violence, for Du Bois, was the product of both the local white hostility and broader pressures: discrimination that barred Black workers from unions and the fraternity of work, moral degradation and vice stemming from a lack of leadership, the geographical legacies of slavery, and frantic industrial mobilization driven by global conflict. “Of Beauty and Death” is a study of urban disorder as much as it is a shockingly vivid account of human brutality.

Years after Du Bois published *The Philadelphia Negro*, Robert Park¹² and colleagues at the University of Chicago would follow a similar path in developing their analysis of order-making in cities (Park & Burgess, 1925/1984). Their analysis also focused on the relationship of everyday life, the construction of social structures, and spatial patterns. The Chicago School’s framework, like that of Du Bois, recognized that order arose through everyday urban experience. However, the Chicago School’s approach marked a sharp departure in an important sense by treating the everyday experience as a naturalistic phenomenon in a way that deviated significantly from Du Bois (Morris, 2015). For Du Bois, urban order was an essentially humanistic, moral, and historic endeavour within a Hegelian sense of history-making (Lewis, 2009). Order-making was intimate,

¹² The relationship between Du Bois and Park is notable. Park, before moving to the University of Chicago, served as the assistant and ghostwriter of Du Bois’ nemesis, Booker T. Washington, while at the Tuskegee Institute. (Lewis, 2009).

fateful, and tragic for it flowed from and to the immediacy of personal identity and biographical experience. As a Black man who endured the brunt of racism and as a brilliant social critic and activist, Du Bois's theoretical understanding of order remained inseparable from the tangibility of lived experience.

In contrast to Du Bois, the Chicago School treated urban order in a far more detached manner. In a sense, order operated outside the scope of everyday experience, far from individual agency, self-reflection a memory. This meant order could be recorded and observed, as a scientific study of natural phenomena. Once the Chicago School freed urban sociology from the confines of ethos or meaning, it could treat the city as if it were an organism and the urban order as a 'natural' cycle of generation, stasis, and decline (Park & Burgess, 1925/1984). Whereas the Chicago School thought urban order was like the city's metabolic system, for Du Bois, order represented something more akin to its psyche or soul.

From their analysis, the Chicago School developed a robust and widely influential program for studying urban communities. The city, accordingly, was to be analyzed as a topic detached from personal experience and immersion in everyday routine. It was to be regarded primarily as a concentration of strangers, who formed bonds with each other out of natural necessity. These bonds would stem from social structures, such as ethno-racial identities, that were analogous to ecological processes. A central task of the urban sociologist was to discover and describe the dynamics and principles that gave rise to these structures. The intimacy and ad hoc qualities of city life were consequently rendered moot and the memory, positionality, and thinking of city dwellers were regarded as unimportant factors. The population was simply uprooted and cast out of history by forces of enslavement, migration, and urbanization (Da Silva, 2007)

From this standpoint, the subjects of sociological analysis are distinct from the analyst (sociologist), not only in terms of class, education, or race but, more essentially; in terms of the ontological relationship to the city as a knowable phenomenon. It is a position that theorist and scholar Denise Ferreira Da Silva (2007) has called the transparent “I”. With the perspective of the transparent I, the analyst applies the power of reason to expunge from the subject (the urban community) agency and self-determination, for the I forsakes the situational grounding (or ethos) of their thinking. They ignore the situation of thinking in the interest of establishing an ideal ‘scientific’ standpoint. As a result, the presence of the analyst in the situation of the city too becomes largely invisible, or at least incidental. Furthermore, there is little chance they will seriously consider ways that the subjects they study employ resources of situational thinking. Elements such as experience, memory, and routine are left out of models of urban order as a result. Lastly, subjects who live in cities and who constitute urban order by their actions are stripped of the situation of such actions. They are considered to be a mass of strangers who are fundamentally indifferent to others and nonreflexive about themselves and the city at large. They instead move instinctively according to underlying forces of culture, economics, and history. Each one is a part of the city, but the city is not part of any of them.

This sense of urban order, as it emerged through the work of the Chicago School in the early 20th century, came to be widely accepted among a growing cadre of professional planners and administrators following the Second World War. For much of the 20th century, the study of urban order-making largely concentrated on quasi-biological imperatives and systems mirroring ecological systems (Jacobs, 1961; Mattern, 2021; Steenson, 2017).

However, beginning in the 1960s an alternate humanistic sense of urban community was gradually rediscovered. Like what Du Bois espoused, theorists such as Jane Jacobs (1961), Michael Lipsky (1969), and Keven Lynch (1962) started to think again about the social order of cities in terms of complex or cultural relationships. They began articulating ways that locality and ethos connect community members to institutional structures. Central to this movement was the recognition of an urban order that occurred ‘on the street’ in parallel—and often in contradiction—to official and professional practices of urban planning and governance. Moreover, this revival was rooted in the assumption that order involved a population of individuals who had agency informed by memory and self-awareness. The subject of study was redefined as the compilation of everyday people (i.e., normalized) forming a community. This meant that the institutions of urban administration based on formal and systematic order-making operated in contrast to the lived experience of the ‘people,’ with their supposedly spontaneous, authentic, and self-organizing ways. As a result of this framework, the question of urban order became somewhat subsumed by a dichotomy between forms of urban administration and forms of everyday urban life. The separation between institutions and community members thereafter made the question of order a subset of other discussions, such as community participation or institutional democratization. When it was directly addressed, urban order was often pigeonholed as a matter of policing.

An illustration of this is the response to one of the most extensive studies of urban order in the United States, known as the Kerner Report (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; McIlwain, 2020). Issued as the final report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the report aimed to identify the causes of the community uprisings in U.S. cities in the summer of 1967 following the assassination of Martin Luther King. The report traced the

breakdown in effective and meaningful urban administration to a history of urban white supremacy, anti-Black violence, and racialized segregation in American cities (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). Yet this analysis was squashed by a hostile reaction, which meant the full picture of order-making was largely relegated to matters of policing.¹³ Instead of enriching the discussion of urban order, the idea of urban order was degraded to an evermore narrowing scope centring on techniques of surveillance and enforcement (Hackworth, 2019; McIlwain, 2020). To some extent, discourse about urban order in North American cities has remained ensnared in this paradigm. Even today, talk of order is frequently relegated to the regressive politics of policing or to debates about enforcement and surveillance. Talk of city order, admittedly, still seems far removed from the intricacies of historical narrative and the plurality of lived experience in cities. It may even seem to be the antithesis of urban culture.

In this context, contemporary urban research usually approaches order indirectly, focusing on circumstances and procedures in which urban order is articulated and conceptualized rather than overtly addressing order as an object of analysis. When it is treated it almost seems to be a by-product of studies of other phenomena.

The next section considers several areas of urban and sociological theory that approach the question of urban order. The section serves as an overview of current research on the question of

¹³As McIlwain (2020) explains, the “Kerner Report detailed the tragic outcome that white racism wrought on black America. It also showed the nation a way forward. But the nation brushed it aside. The greater tragedy, however, was that Washington, and the emerging computing research and development establishment, tipped their hand. They would increasingly harness the computers’ hardware and software capabilities to further oppress, rather than liberate, the Negro” (, p. 217).

urban order, especially as it relates to the confluence of everyday life and formal urban administration.

Venues of Urban Order

I suggest four fields, or *venues*, where the study of order-making in cities can be readily identified in current and recent research. I summarize the four here before surveying some of the literature representing each approach.

- (a) Decision-making. The study of bodies such as tribunals and committees that deal with matters of land use, zoning, and urban design. The key question in this literature is how these bodies respond to the everyday experiences and values of constituent communities within the larger patterns of decision-making in urban planning and public policy.
- (b) Encounters. Analysis of public encounters with administrative systems, focusing on the process of interactions in the urban community. This includes both interpersonal exchanges between administrators and individuals, encounters with institutions such as municipal committees, and interactions mediated by physical spaces, including the pattern of encounters between people in public spaces such as streets and parks.
- (c) Communication. The study of communication techniques used in urban administration, such as storytelling, rhetoric and deliberation, and communication technology that establishes a sense of community.
- (d) Theorizing. The study of how the administration of cities is conceptualized and how notions of community are applied and made accountable to others. While ‘theorizing’ encompasses the whole tradition of political philosophy, I focus on two approaches:

ethnomethodology and reflective analysis. I argue that theorizing is useful, and perhaps underutilized, as a means of recentring the matter of order in urban administration. It is particularly relevant to timely questions about cities and their administration because it asks about essential relationships that bind specific pragmatics of everyday life to the broad conceptualization of institutional actions. In other words, looking at administration in terms of theorizing helps illumine the ways that urban administrative order makes sense within the ordinariness of city life.

Decision-Making

One place to begin a study of order-making in administration is where decisions are made. Decision-making pushes order to the foreground grounds of administration. Perhaps in no other condition are the grounds more exposed than in the decision-making at administrative tribunals. *Administrative tribunals* ('committees' or 'panels') are court-like bodies that apply administrative rules to specific cases. Administrative tribunals are found overseeing a broad range of matters such as municipal business licencing, human-rights disputes, telecommunication policy, and environmental-resource management. In city planning, administrative tribunals are commonly used as an intermediary between public consultation, policy, design, and construction. This is especially true for administrative tribunals overseeing zoning appeals.

Administrative tribunals are complicated. They combine aspects of discretionary judgment with the mechanistic implementation of rules or policy. In doing this, they demand that all participants, members of the tribunal and those appearing before it, consider what within the specifics of a case is of general interest. They demand that participants confront the meaning of the details in a case in the context of the general community, and so tribunals confront the question

of what that situation is. Tribunals addressing matters of city planning, accordingly, are occasions to witness constructive processes of establishing a sense of order in the city. This point I will return to this in detail later.

On the surface, administrative tribunals have various functions. In one sense, they operate like law courts. They tend to hold hearings allowing adversarial parties to argue a position about a matter using evidence and testimony. In another way, tribunals are also legislative because they are delegated powers from legislative bodies to implement laws, regulations, and rules (Farmer, 1974; Rose, 1983). This often means filling in missing details of laws by interpreting legislative intentions. At the same time, tribunals function independently. To a certain degree, they are neither part of the courts nor legislative bodies. They sometimes provide a counterbalancing force to these institutions (Farmer, 1974; Mualam, 2004).

Administrative tribunals are now a vital feature of modern urban administration, especially in land-use planning. Mualam (2004) suggested that the growing complexity of public-policy systems has led elected officials, courts, and the public to allow administrative tribunals to assume a growing array of responsibilities. Nominally apolitical, tribunals are seen as a way of providing “quick and efficient conflict resolution” by utilizing expertise and by referring to objective evidence to make difficult decisions and resolve conflicts (p. 371). Nominal decision-makers can then dodge the thorny details of urban planning and administration (Altshuler & Gomez-Ibanez, 1992; Mualam, 2004). As specialized decision-making bodies, tribunals provide experts with a forum whereby technical details of a problem can be readily discussed. This also means that peers can cross-examine highly technical evidence to ensure discussions are grounded in the orderliness

of professional and scientific practices. In this sense, the tribunal model is seemingly weighted toward rationalistic argumentation as opposed to political posturing or legal manoeuvres.

Tribunals also offer another advantage, one that might seem counterintuitive. Some have argued that, while favouring expertise, administrative tribunals also help ‘outsiders’ challenge policy and law. The administrative tribunal does not require the clout needed to lobby lawmakers or the financial resources to move a case through legal proceedings (Mualam, 2014). For this reason, it has been argued that administrative tribunals can effectively check political power by testing a grievance against factual criteria or written regulations in what is commonly called *merit-based decision-making* (Clinch, 2005). Tribunals, including the committee of adjustment, potentially offer a stage for individuals and marginalized informal groups to confront entrenched legal and political power that normally authorizes public policy.

Administrative tribunals in these ways permit a distinctively transparent and accountable means of engaging administration. The study of administrative tribunals has been seen as a useful though imperfect proxy to study the openness of decision-making processes (Willey, 2005) and the place of individual rights in the face of institutionalized power (Clinch, 2005), particularly in city planning and development. Tribunals exemplify ways in which formal structures of city-planning administration, such as zoning, policy, and laws, affect the material and social conditions of communities. They link the broad perspective of city building to the particularities of site-specific construction and development. For instance, states typically empower land-use tribunals to adjust laws in consideration of the practical circumstances of specific cases (Donovan, 1962; Sampson, 2001; Zhao, 2011). Donovan’s (1962) commentary on U.S. zoning-variance committees provided a succinct summary of this function:

Zoning legislation has been adopted by states throughout the country to permit the regulation of land uses according to comprehensive plans. Typically, legislation vests authority for the adoption of the local zoning ordinance in the local legislative body, and the administration of the ordinance is committed to the discretion of an administrative body appointed by the city council or county board of supervisors. Administrative discretion includes the authority to confer individual relief in the form of variances from the strict terms of the ordinance. Since variances legalize land uses that are inconsistent with the comprehensive zoning restrictions established by legislative act, state statutes and local ordinances usually contain definite restrictions on the exercise of the variance power. At the same time, however, judicial review of variance was very limited. Unless the decision is clearly arbitrary or an abuse of discretion, the courts will usually respect the administrative decision. Moreover, few applicants for variances are represented by legal counsel, and appeals of any sorts from administrative variance decisions are infrequent. (p. 101)

Donovan's statement also introduces a second important point. Administrative land tribunals tend to deal with low-level, site-specific cases that attract little oversight. However, the culmination of exceptions can risk undermining the integrity of planning policy. Moreover, the tribunal allows incrementalism that degrades the strategic integrity of public policy on which legal measures are founded. While this is certainly a valid concern, there is an important rebuttal: those characteristics of specificity, narrowness, and routine ensure tribunal processes maintain a certain degree of integrity (Rose, 1983). As Rose argued, a tribunal's authority to 'bend the rules' is legitimized because it is situated so close to a practical notion of reasonableness that arises from considering a particular case in detail. It is this condition of decision-making that ensures tribunals maintain a justifiable authority to supersede normal legal imperatives. Rose (1983), explained,

My thesis is that piecemeal local land decisions should not be classed as either "legislative" or "judicial"; these rubrics are drawn from a separation-of-powers doctrine more appropriate to larger governmental units. Piecemeal changes are quintessentially

local matters, and any jurisprudential test of the reasonableness of piecemeal changes must identify and build upon the factors that lend legitimacy and institutional competence to local decision making. (p. 846)

While commentators such as Donovan and Rose dwelt on their legal functions, others have emphasized the historical context of land-use tribunals (Altshuler & Gomez-Ibanez, 1992; Mualam, 2004; Owens, 2004). Owens' historical analysis of municipal zoning-review boards, for example, suggested that local land-use tribunals, such as the City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment, evolved as a counterweight to comprehensive municipal land-use-zoning ordinances. Zoning-review boards, in providing a case-specific appeal process, served to ensure property owners maintained some reprieve from the far-reaching and oftentimes intrusive power of zoning control. In the early development of land-use zoning, these local appeal processes effectively protected property rights and thereby shielded zoning ordinances from constitutional challenges (Owens, 2004). By placing zoning appeals at the low end of the legal hierarchy, individual property owners and municipalities furthermore were generally able to manage the fine balance between private interest and public policy within local affairs. This resulted in the development of low-end jurisprudence insulated from more systematic forms of decision-making found in the upper tiers of the state.¹⁴

¹⁴ Owens (2004) adds a somewhat obscure point that is interesting. He suggests that administrative tribunals revive an antiquated medieval legal notion of dispensing power, which was originally the prerogative of the monarch to relieve individuals from the burdens of law (Owens, 2004). The significant aspect of this dispensing power is that it relied on a direct communication between the legal figurehead (i.e., the monarch) and the subject for it be valid and that it was a matter of the monarch withholding the law rather than modifying it. While now obsolete, aspects of dispensing power, such as relief, personal appeal, and discretion, are found today in Committee of Adjustment zoning-variance hearings.

This analysis is echoed in an early analysis of Ontario's committee-of-adjustment system by J. B. Milner (1918–1969), who chaired the Toronto Committee of Adjustment in the late 1950s (York University Archives, 1992). Milner thought that the committee-of-adjustment system was a suitable way of fine-tuning zoning and planning policies but also recognized that it was fraught with ambiguity. As he explained, in the 1950s, the Ontario government sought to manage the boom in post-war urbanization by pushing local municipalities to develop comprehensive planning policies in the form of statutory official plans (Milner, 1957). To make planning more palatable to local politicians, the province allowed municipalities to establish committees of adjustment once an official plan was in place. For local politicians, the committee-of-adjustment system was appealing because it enhanced the influence of their realm of local and neighbourhood politics on the formation of planning policy. However, as Milner (1957) suggested, the local discretionary power of the committee-of-adjustment system ended up driving the system, leaving planning policy as little more than a paper exercise.

This power to “adjust” a by-law is usually much desired, and since, in Ontario, the power to zone long preceded the present concept of an “official” plan, councils have been suspected of adopting [an official] plan solely to qualify for a committee of adjustment. If the legislature intended the “plum” to encourage planning, it has only half succeeded, for many of the plans are plans in name only, and yet the Minister can hardly refuse them since he does not want to discourage a “plan” that might, in the future, be amended and developed into a sophisticated piece of community planning. (p. 1169).

Because zoning laws and official-plan policy typically provided few statements about goals, principles, or objectives, a committee of adjustment was forced to “work out its ideas from other sources as well, and where there is no [substantial] plan, from other sources exclusively” (Milner, 1965. p. 9). If the rules were to be ‘adjusted,’ then a higher level of order was needed to consider

the rationale for planning regulations or, in other words, the policy framework that governed specific policy. As Milner rightfully recognized, the committee-of-adjustment system confronted a paradox. Consideration of specific and practical aspects of planning regulations unexpectedly led to discussions about policy rationale; narrow technical assessments became broad assessments of order-making.

Despite the challenges, Milner noted, the committee-of-adjustment system in Ontario gradually developed a degree of integrity. In 1970, land-use lawyer R. S. Rogers made this defence of the system in a lecture to the Law Society of Upper Canada: “[As] an independent body, free of political influence from the city council, the committee of adjustment is an important decision-making body within the field in which it operates, which can influence the people of the community” (p. 212). In his view, these administrative tribunals represented a satisfactory way of resolving conflict, and he did not see it as fine-tuning or undermining planning policy as Milner did. For Rogers, the primary aim of the committee system was to transcend local policy and politics to arrive at an impartial verdict. This stood in contrast to Milner’s model that anchored committee decisions, at least nominally, in the policy aims set out by municipalities. The contrast between Milner and Rogers was repeated more recently. In his historical study of Toronto’s planning policy, White (2016) emphasized the importance of the committee in fine-tuning planning policy. In contrast, Moore (2013) maintained that the committee still is of marginal importance, having “little influence on the politics of urban development in Toronto” (p. 45).

Encounters

Since the late 1960s, the study of institutional forms of city order has been complemented by the study of day-to-day interactions. This coincided with the ‘back to the street’ view of urban

studies championed by Jane Jacobs and Keven Lynch, which revived culturally-informed components found in the work of W. E. B. DuBois. What I will label as order-making rests on an understanding that urban administration is not purely institutional. Rather, it is a hybrid of formal procedures and informal community-based practices. The study of interaction thereby directly engages the space between the realm of the lifeworld and the domain of formal policy-making.

Part of this interactive approach to city administration is the role of routine. Routines provide a sort of intimacy and logic that binds front-line public-service workers and ‘clients’ together within a single situation (Bartels, 2013; Lipsky 1971; Lipsky 1980; Valverde, 2012). Each encounter is a product of mass encounters, of years, spent issuing parking tickets, teaching classroom lessons, or managing client files. This built-up momentum of routine frames each encounter so that both service workers and the people they serve operate under the aegis of what experience. It is this framework of repetitious experience that carries them into their engagement. It is also that which sets conditions for them to act during that engagement and even sets conditions for them to reflect on these actions. This position stands in clear contrast to the widely understood sense of administration as a nominally impersonal service. Weber’s legal functionalism (1947) is thereby spoiled by the personalization that Lipsky (1971, 1980) and others discovered on the front lines of administrative organizations.

Lipsky found that front-line administrators did not operate precisely according to prescribed procedures governed by law and policy. Between the background of policy and the front line of service was always some slippage. Lipsky accounted for this by paying attention to how administrators think about their work. He found they see work as a ‘flow’ of tasks, cases, and repetitive interactions. Each engagement is treated as a type within an overall taxonomy, as

evidence of their improvised sense of order. Only because a case or client relates to the order does it come to mean something to the administrator. In turn, the management of workflow is integral to a self-reflective sense of order.

What interested Lipsky, then, was how order forms and how it affects those involved in interactions. Accordingly, order-making represents a key question of administration. But for Lipsky, the background order of interaction comprises a set of codes (or stereotypes) that administrators develop through improvised self-reflection and as a result of the practical necessities of their duties. Lipsky (1971) explained this using the following illustration:

Consider the rookie patrolman who, in addition to responding to his conception of the police role, must accommodate the demands placed upon him by

- (1) fellow officers in the station house, who teach him how to get along and try to “correct” the teachings of his police academy instructors.
- (2) his immediate superiors who may strive for efficiency at the expense of current practices.
- (3) policy executives who communicate expectations contradictory to station-house mores; and
- (4) the general public, which in American cities today is likely to be divided along both class and racial lines in its expectations of police practices and behaviour. (pp. 394–395)

In this example, the officer develops coping strategies that give rise to a practical synthesis of his mandate within the reality of his lifeworld. The officer thereby theorizes their conditions of work within an administrative role that is workable within a web of rules, local customs, and informal imperatives (Lipsky, 1971). It does not mean the patrolman ‘goes rogue’ or deliberately forsakes rules or legal procedures, although that is a plausible outcome. Coping is more commonly done by absorbing an assortment of demands emanating from administrative policy and legal structures

that result in the officer developing his informal code of practice. It is this vernacular code that is used to interpret specific conditions when interacting with clients. In a commentary on Lipsky, Koen Bartels (2013) added,

Street-level bureaucrats have to find ways to make policy work for concrete situations and problems, while having limitations of scarce time, energy, financial resources, and information. In response, Lipsky showed, they develop coping mechanisms, i.e., mental shortcuts such as stereotypes, catchwords, and principled beliefs that categorize clients and often sustain unequal treatment. (p. 471)

For front-line urban administrators, a reflexive understanding of their role is realized within the conditions of being a self-reflective theorist of order. They not only adjust work assignments to meet explicit aims (such as departmental policy or performance measures) or unspoken values (such as professional codes and customs), but also they do so by conceptualizing the communities in which they engage in this work. They adapt ways of theorizing social order in client interactions so that individuals subject to their authority come to represent comprehensible parts of an imagined whole. From such order-making comes a logic that imprints meaningfulness to particular engagements. From this cognitive scheme, the administrator can, in practice, define ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students, select ‘worthy’ among ‘unworthy’ social-support recipients, or distinguish citizens from suspects. In short, front-line administrators act on a sense of social order arising from their sense of order-making in the face of complex urban conditions. Yet, what are those complex conditions?

Returning to Lipsky (1971), we see this poignantly illustrated in a hypothetical case of a police officer flagging down a car driven by someone the officer identifies as Black.

It is a common feature of organizational behavior that individuals in organizations need to develop simplifications, or some kind of “shorthand,” by which they can make

decisions quickly and expeditiously.... A policeman develops simplifications which suggest to him that crimes are in the process of being committed.... This is a cliché of organizational behavior.... But it is portentous, and not trivial, when we recognize the conditions under which these simplifications tend to be developed in stereotypic ways with racist orientations. When a [B]lack man driving through a white neighborhood is stopped by a policeman merely because he is [B]lack and therefore (according to the policeman's mode of simplification) suspiciously out of place, he has been stopped for good reason by the policeman, but for racist reasons, according to this aggrieved citizen. (p. 395).

The case shows that the action of the municipal administrative system represented by the officer and the engagement with administration represented by the driver is enclosed within the order-defining context in which identity, such as race, accrues from certain conditions of urban life. The officer's racist "shorthand," based on a theory of social order, becomes an unyielding condition that defines the logic of the encounter for all involved. The driver is effectively trapped in the officer's imaginative framework of urban order, and she must navigate the structure regardless of the conditions of the engagement, the officer's manner, or their situation before being stopped.

Legal-administrative order in the city thus forms in conditions created by interpersonal encounters, encounters that are deeply tied to a personal sense of the city. What is most significant in this analysis is not necessarily how policy objectives are alternately realized or subverted by the practical aspects of public encounters, which is Lipsky's main point. Understanding the difference between policy aims and their practical implementation in administration is important. Nevertheless, the key matter in front of us about how this difference exemplifies order-making is that it shows the way a public encounter generates the reflexive and practical version of administrative policy-making enacted within a situation defined by the theorizing of urban community. When the encounter with administration occurs in a situation of urban life, when

policy ideas are put into practice, the order-making culture of the city is imparted in the logic of administrative action. And so, the encounter with the public is realized as a collective action oriented to some theory of public order.

This implies that public encounters are inherently unstable and problematic (Bartels, 2013) because there are moments when participants test the working presumption that a city is a form of order. Testing order produces tension as it occurs within an ad hoc zone between two poles, between nominal imperatives and practical limitations. When navigating this murky space, participants draw on experience to define those poles just as they define the multitude of actions that occur in between. The discussion of public encounters and street law is in this way about mundane interactions redefining the social order as represented in urban administration. Order-making, as I will discuss further, is therefore rooted in the work process of defining the situation for engagement (McHugh, 1968).

An approach that builds from Lipsky's work is found in Mariana Valverde's (2012) studies of street law. Instead of looking exclusively at interpersonal interaction between a single administrative agent and an individual client as Lipski does, Valverde focused on front-line encounters in relation to low-level institutional structures. These include often overlooked branches of municipal governance such as business-licencing appeal boards, property-standards enforcement, neighbourhood community groups, and committees of adjustment. These organs of local power tend to operate between formal aspects of politics and law and the street-level domain of front-line administrative prudence. These semi-formal bodies of street-level administrative practice, Valverde (2012) showed, employ pragmatic notions of "ordinary prudence and common sense" form at the margins of formal law codes (p. 79). In this context, a balance of legalistic

institutions and the influence of political expediency means administrative authorities who enforce law and policy do so under the influence of institutionalized tactical discretion. For example, top-level administrators tend to embrace a cosmopolitan view of urbanism and accordingly make policies to cultivate a heterogeneous community. In contrast, those on the front line maintain a fine-grained perspective that picks up on the local cultural nuances of city life imperceptible to their colleagues working from city hall (Valverde, 2012).

Public Space

While Lipsky (1971, 1980) and Valverde (2012) examined how a sense of urban order shapes administration, others have posed a slightly different question: How does interaction coalesce as a form of generalizable order? In other words, instead of asking how order-making shapes an encounter, the emphasis is placed on how encounters are constructive elements of collective order-making.

A well-established approach underscores the role of the physical urban environment in the formation of urban order (Lofland, 1973; Lynch, 1963; Whyte, 1988). In these studies, the urban landscape of the city takes the place of the front-line administrator or street-level bureaucracy. They concentrated on specific urban landscapes and building typologies, and how an individual's engagement with such urban landscapes shapes their conception of social order. One common tenet in this type of research is that order arises through observable links between personal routine and physical space. A clear example of this approach is found in William Whyte's (1988) influential

studies¹⁵ of public spaces in New York City, which document patterns and social and physical order. For example, in observing a crowd pass through a doorway, he noted how certain patterns emerge:

Given a chance, people will head for the door that is already open, or that is about to be opened by somebody else. Some people are natural door openers. But most are not; often they queue up three or four deep behind an open door rather than strike out on their own. (Whyte, 1988, p. 175)

Whyte's (1988) studies of street life are compelling for they imply a certain empirical rigour in analyzing order-making. Whyte's studies involved teams of note-takers observing busy streets and technicians setting up cameras to record where people sit in parks throughout the day. The approach also holds out the prospect of using urban design to address complex social problems. Since Whyte implied that order is produced by physical spaces, it follows that changing physical spaces could improve the social conditions of the city, an approach that is known as *place-making*. Yet even though the emphasis on tangible elements of interpersonal interaction seems useful, notions of place-making also present a certain risk of becoming overly deterministic by conflating physical urban landscapes with urban social order.

With this caveat in mind, it is still worth considering physical urban landscapes as sites where people coordinate collective actions and where practical actions seem to manifest a generalized code of city living without falling into the trap of environmental determinism. I will

¹⁵ Whyte's research about street life and American urbanism was widely read. It is the foundation of the influential advocacy group Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org/article/wwhyte).

briefly touch on this question by considering two classic publications, one by Kevin Lynch and the other by Lyn Lofland, as well as recent work by Marvin Horgan.

How can the tangible urban landscape be considered within the process of order-making without resorting to environmental determinism? A useful response is found in Kevin Lynch's foundational study, *The Image of the City* (1962). Instead of thinking of how people react to environments in a behaviouralist sense, Lynch focused on an individual's imagination of geographical space as a medium that connects the two poles of spatial order and social order. What makes Lynch's thinking interesting decades after his book was published is that it shows that specific individual actions in the city cumulate as experiences and that such experiences form cognitive patterns used when engaging the city. For example, walking from home to the store allows the city dweller to construct a mental image not just of their route but also of the city as informed by their experience of the city's physical landscape. Lynch rightfully recognized that the layout of a city alone does not determine the subject's image construction or how they interact with the urban landscape. The image of the city is instead embedded through the memory of spatial construction so that elements of the city's physical environment become encoded over time as an abstract 'grammar.'¹⁶ Lynch identified the elements of this process: path, landmark, edge, node, and district. These order-forming elements are used to assemble mental maps of urban spaces. The

¹⁶ Lynch should be differentiated from Christopher Alexander's (1977) well-known *pattern language*. Lynch insightfully shows patterns emerging as reflections of routine experiences whereas Alexander treats patterns a normative element of urban systems. Because of Alexander's extensive influence in the field of computer-software design, it would be interesting to compare the two approaches in relation to emerging smart-city technology. (For a detailed discussion of the influence of Alexander's idea of urban form in software and computer-system design, see Molly Wright Steenson's (2017) excellent study, "Architectural Intelligence: How Designers and Architects Created the Digital Landscape.")

city dweller constructs their map of the city, which allows them to engage with the physical environment, and that engagement with the physical city is reciprocated in the further development of the mental map.

This typology of mnemonic elements provides a vocabulary for talking about the design of cities while respecting the multiplicity of life experiences. For Lynch (1963), it is the ways of knowing the urban environment that create conditions for order-making. His approach allows us to see urban dwellers enact ways of engaging with the cityscape and, to a limited degree, self-reflectively conceive that interaction. The well-planned city therefore might arise from the culture of orderly experience. Yet while Lynch (1963) respected the in situ conception of the urban environment in forming a sense of order, the reflexive sense of a subject remains somewhat vague. We see the cognitive process of imagining routes and spatial relationships (or mental maps) in action, but how is that process thought through, and how does it occur in conjunction with other processes, especially as they occur collectively in a community setting?

Marvin Horgan's (2019) study of conflict among strangers in public spaces offers a useful answer. Horgan built on Lynch (1963) by considering the self-reflective cognitive process of order-making as it occurs in the physical context of urban life. Like Lynch, Horgan (2019) considered the specifics of the subject being present in urban public space. Yet, instead of formulating a set of basic pattern structures as Lynch did, Horgan explained self-reflective order-making in terms of a moral structuration of the city. What he called an "urban interaction order" (p. 10) manifests as "the endogenous interactional organization of collective life amongst copresent strangers in public spaces" (p. 10). Interpersonal conflict in public spaces, accordingly, uncovers the generation of order within city living that is simultaneously produced in situ because it is recognized as being

enduringly normative. Specifically, as Horgan notes, the identification of disorderly behaviour requires parties to conceptualize a standard of what is nominally polite and appropriate within the situation in which the incident occurs. In this way, the nexus of subjective experience, encoding, and physical space found in Lynch's grammar is situated within the broader and ongoing development of a self-reflective and mutually accountable culture, or what might be called the *culture* of a city.

This leads to the question of how individual identity and self-presentation occur within collective conceptions of urban life. Lyn Lofland's (1973) classic study, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space*, is helpful in this way. Lofland traced deep historical patterns of order-making by studying the customs of engaging strangers in cities. This analysis identified order-making explicitly in methods of recognizing members of a community and the correlating self-presentation of such members. She wrote lucidly about how in medieval towns fashion and attire came to signify a whole cultural system of social status and belonging. In a modern city, as she explained, this order of fashion was supplanted by other ways of managing orders through the self-control of personal space and demeanour, such as in the ways someone sits in a waiting room or how one person approaches another along a sidewalk (Lofland, 1973). While attire no longer so explicitly marks a person's standing in a social hierarchy, still social order is expressed in cities through personal appearance, mannerisms, and movement (Lofland, 1973). What is notable in this analysis is that the administration of the modern city as a general form of social order is, like its medieval predecessors, bound to an intimate realm of personal action and self-representation. Not only that, but Lofland also shows even minor modes of engagement contribute to the ongoing formulation of public life. In doing so, *World of Strangers* presents the

city as a problem-solving project constituted through the self-reflexive interaction of individual members within the community.

Communication

Since the late 1980s, the field of administration studies has maintained a strong interest in how forms of communication influence policy-making and organization.¹⁷ Within the subfield of urban administration, the so-called argumentative turn reframed urban planning in terms of “ordinary-language processes of policy argumentation ... constituted by and mediated through communicative practices” (Fischer & Gattweist, 2013, p. 2).

This perspective has allowed a substantial re-examination of administration that brought to light various elements of communication that had been overlooked or dismissed in earlier system-based theories. The argumentative turn cultivated respect for elements of communication such as narrative (Fischer and Gattweist, 2013; Forester, 1999), storytelling (Hayden, 1995; Sandercock, 2003) truthfulness (Lynch & Bogen, 1996), rhetoric and ethos (Hyde, 2004), dramatology (Frances, 1994; Hajer, 2005;), and hermeneutics (Yanow, 2007). As Fischer and Gattweist (2013) wrote, the “argumentative turn, in this regard, seeks to analyze policy to inform the ordinary-language processes of policy argumentation, in particular as reflected in the thought and deliberation of politicians, administrators, and citizens” (p. 2).

In this way, administration becomes real principally through speech acts, and therefore the nature of speech is regarded as the basis of civic order. That focus on communication, in turn,

¹⁷ The argumentative turn was inspired in large part by Jurgen Habermas's critique of technocratic power and a concern about inclusivity (Behagel et al., 2019; Fischer & Gattweist, 2013).

opened a channel between theories of participation: if the form of the city is shaped by communication in a broad sense, then it is critical to understand who gets to have a voice in this process. This is connected to a second major tenet of urban administration, that is, the right to the city.

The right to the city is broadly associated with Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and more widely read work by Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Brenner, et al., 2011; Harvey, 2003). According to Harvey (2003), the *right to the city* is defined as “an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image” (p. 941). The nominal conception of the city being free and open to all means urban administration must likewise be a venue for open communication. Understanding what constitutes inclusivity in conversations, arguments, and deliberations cultivates a genuine sense of urban governance. The well-ordered city both supports and responds to a multitude of perspectives to accommodate individuals’ desire for free self-realization. At its centre is a moral obligation to a sense of justice, as Peter Marcuse noted,

For the demand for the right to the city is a demand for a broad and sweeping right, a right not only in the legal sense of a right to specific benefits, but a right in a political sense, a claim not only to a right or a set of rights to justice within the existing legal system, but a right on a higher moral plane that demands a better system in which the potential benefits of an urban life can be fully and entirely realized. (Brenner, et al., 2012, p. 34)

The right to the city sets up the elementary questions of the argumentative turn: Who takes part in administration? How are people and communities represented in administrative processes? How are participatory rights secured and exercised? Accordingly, the right to the city inevitably leads to a discourse on personal identity (Camacho, 2005; Clinch; 2006; Ellis, 2006), for it demands

clarification as to *who* is taking part in urban administration and how, in that process, identity is asserted and negotiated. The right to the city stems from the rights of self-expression, human dignity, and freedom of movement.¹⁸ But the right to the city also engages a broader discussion. It confronts doctrines of property rights and *NIMBY* (not in my backyard) politics in local administration.

The study of urban administration cannot avoid the well-known discourse on the politics of property ownership. Generally, NIMBY is a shorthand for the politics of homeowners who oppose changes they fear will imperil the value of their property. While the NIMBY acronym has been widely used since the early 1990s in both scholarly and journalist writing, the phenomenon itself has been traced to opposition to urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s (Dory, 2017) and crises over industrial pollution, the most notable being the Love Canal crisis in the 1970s (Eranti, 2016). Nevertheless, the commendable grassroots origins of NIMBY politics are also inseparable from patterns of intolerance, xenophobia, and racism that have also energized homeowner activism (Davis & Bali, 2008; Dear, 1992; Rothstein, 2017; Shertzer et al., 2016; Wilton, 2002;).

While some scholars have gone as far as to condemn NIMBY as a symptom of deteriorating civic culture, (Dear, 1992; Smith & Marquez, 2000), this judgment obscures an important point. NIMBY politics exhibit a commonality of culture and order-making even when they are most appallingly reactive: they manifest when open discourse degenerates. In examining the politics of discretionary zoning in California, Manville & Osman (2017) argued that NIMBY dynamics were

¹⁸ We see this in play out in studies looking at the discord between the expression of cultural identity and the potentially oppressive power of institutional administrative structures (see, for example, Hackworth & Stein, 2012; Manville & Osman, 2017; Qadeer & Agrawal, 2011; Rothstein, 2017).

more precisely a consequence of the collapse of local authority. Wilton (2002) reported that local homeowner resistance often conflated communities with veneration of white racial identity, which stands in opposition to more humane and reasonable senses of urban order. Local NIMBY discourse anchors race superiority to specific spaces to conflate a personal identity with a localized historical imaginary: “Attention to the spatiality of ‘race’ suggests that groups may legitimize claims to an ethnic identity by grounding them in the historical geography of a particular place.” (p. 307). The perverse order-making of racial apartheid, of course, has been played out repeatedly at the local level of neighbourhoods in North America in localized and city-wide discussions related to housing development or school administration. Mundane, local planning actions, such as subdivision-approval processes, infrastructure planning, or school-district management, are used as tactics of discrimination (Rothstein, 2017). Overtly technical decisions are grounded in a covert program of subverting formal legal order with a subtle program of racial supremacy. The result is a dualistic course of rational public administration operating alongside a covert program of anarchy and violence, of breaking community-based identity using the tools of ordinary administration. Moreover, the façade of administrative law usurps the claim of orderliness by posing as the agent of everyday reality, or of normality itself. As political historian Richard Rothstein (2017) made abundantly clear in his study of racism in American urban-planning law, a thin pretense of legality long belied a pervasive disorder imposed on communities that continued to uproot social bonds and destroy household wealth.

In these ways, the broad scope of the argumentative turn includes problems that have dominated recent discussions about city administration: participation and forms of discourse, the right to the city, NIMBY politics, and the suppression and assertion of identity. The main

accomplishment of the argumentative turn is that it places language at the centre of administrative practices (Fischer & Gottweis, 2011). This perspective exposes the complexity of communication and its power within institutional decision-making processes. It shows that with language comes action, and that the language of administrative policy-making crosses in and out of the realms of everyday experience and vernacular language. At the same time, some have argued that the emphasis on language that arises from the argumentative turn can result in an analysis that is contrived and restricted (Fischer & Gottweis, 2011). As Behagel et al. (2017) noted, the argumentative turn implies “an implicit preference for discursive and formalised descriptions of policy processes over more practice-based and informal ones” (p. 2). Moreover, the focus on oral and written policy-making can neglect other forms of communication equally prevalent in administration. This is perhaps most apparent when considering how administrative processes are now tightly coupled to the determinates of communication technology and computer engineering (Apprich, 2017; Behagel et al., 2019; Coletta & Kitchin, 2017; Mattern, 2017).

Traditionally, public administration was situated, both conceptually and spatially, in a defined site of debate and argumentation. It happened through spoken language, face-to-face encounters, and paper documents. Now, it is widely recognized that such processes are dispersed through networks, agents, and data (Tufekci, 2014). As a result, the situation of urban administration is far more ambiguous.

Current research on urban administration expands beyond the study of language to include a broad range of communication technology. For example, Patrick Watson’s (2018) discussion about whether to rebuild or demolish an aging expressway in downtown Toronto shows how, in the course of the debate, common-sense notions of the city were subtly incorporated into an

awareness of computerized traffic modelling. The technology did not replace the messy construction of political debate and form an alternate decision process; rather, it supplemented an attitude of civic responsibility.

Others have underscored, however, that non-human factors such as communication systems do need to be recognized as agents at each level of decision-making, as ‘actors’ (Latour, 2005; Marres & Lezaun, 2011). Even standard questions of city-planning policy and administration are formed alongside a ubiquitous and tacit integration of discourse and technology. It is a subtle partnership that anyone who attends a public meeting can see, as the presentations and the audience questions occur alongside the use of projectors, attendee email lists, and computer renderings. This is perhaps even more so now as video conferencing technology is replacing face-to-face meetings, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication technology is not only there in the room but also in the conversation.

Furthermore, as many have suggested, components of non-human communication are not merely appendages of debate. A more fundamental change is occurring. As science and technology scholars Noortje Marres and Javier Lezaun (2011) explained, enlarging the scope to non-human communication challenges basic assumptions about discourse:

With its emphasis on the role of materials and artefacts in the public organization of collectives, this mode of inquiry stands in stark contrast to those traditions that define publics and their politics largely in discursive, linguistic or procedural terms—traditions that put forward a vision in which the emergence of true public action requires divesting actors from the object-dependent qualities of their everyday lives. (p. 490)

Community and administration in this way might seem to be subsumed in the politics of technology (Latour, 2005; Tufekci, 2014). Still, key aspects of face-to-face discourse continue to be essential, though in a slightly different guise. A movement toward technology in the study of

administration is not leading to a choice of one over the other. Instead, what we see emerging is a synthesis of humanistic and technocentric analysis.

This is especially apparent when focusing on new smart-city technologies (Townsend, 2013). Because computerization profoundly changes common conceptions of urban administration (Luque-Ayala, & Marvin, 2020; Mattern, 2017a; Mattern 2017b; Townsend, 2013), technological systems do more than reshape civic engagement. The aggregation and emersion of technology redefine the city as a “large, complex, and varied epistemological and bureaucratic apparatus” (Mattern, 2017a, para. 18). Both the ‘what’ and the ‘where’ of urban administration change. This recognition in turn leads to the redefinition of the social situation of public decision-making, or how the technology forms a site for practising the politics of data (Ruppert et al., 2017).¹⁹

The administration of the city is transformed into a platform or operating system of computerized data collection, sensing, processing, and algorithms (Luque-Ayala & Marvin, 2020; Powell, 2021). This transformation facilitates, in turn, a logic and style of decision-making rooted in cybernetic engineering (Powell, 2021). Accordingly, there is a growing need for understanding such politics within a localized situation (Loukissas, 2019), that is, how *situating* happens within the new conditions of data politics of the smart city.

This discussion allows us to shift “away from a solutions-oriented approach [of technology] to a process-oriented one—one that draws the boundary of abstraction to include social actors, institutions, and interactions” (Selbst, et al., 2018, p. 2). In this sense, we come back

¹⁹ Ruppert (2017) provides this definition of data politics: “Data politics is concerned with not only political struggles around data collection and its deployments but how data create of new forms of power relations and politics at different and interconnected scales.” (p. 2)

to the starting point of talking about mundane encounters with urban administration. The difference is that something is now uncanny about that encounter. It is familiar yet strange.

The data politics of the smart city draw us to the mundane experiences of the city while upending our sense of familiarity. For instance, we still wait in the cold for the bus, but we can track its arrival in real-time. We still queue politely when it arrives, but we tap a card linked to a digital account once on board. We find seats as before, but once settled we are in isolation, transfixed by our phones. The encounter with the digital realm of city life does not transcend the messy circumstances of urban life. When technology integrates with urban administration, it instead engages in a messy, phenomenological relationship with the city. As a result, urban experience is incorporated within communication technology while, at the same time, the city as a social order also incorporates that technology. Technology becomes part of the concrete legal-administrative body of the city, in things present there and in the encounter with the bodies and minds of those who make the city home. Like the city itself, smart-city technology becomes a common imaginative thing of urban administration.

At this point, the discussion moves from interaction to substantiation, or from the relationship of city experience to urban administration to the substantiation of what exists in this relationship. This effectively redefines the encounter between the administrator and the client as a new sort of problem of ethos, or what Garfinkel (1984) identified as the *known-in-common* aspect of accountability (Watson, 2018). The problem of communication in turn becomes a problem of theorizing.

Theorizing

So far, I have discussed literature that treats order-making in cities in terms of decision-making institutions, personal and environmental interaction, and various forms of communication. What is underdeveloped in these approaches is the foundational analysis of order-making as a problem. The tendency is to marginalize orderliness by treating it as a phenomenon arising from conditions and relationships, like a by-product of civic culture, landscape, or communicative structures. Little attention is paid to what order is in a practical sense. It is not at all clear what the work of forming order entails and what the situations are that allow for such work. In contrast, literature that I label as ‘theorizing’ treats the question of order as its primary problem. Theorizing reveals taken-for-granted order-making. In doing that, it directs us simultaneously toward the study of everyday, tangible experiences and the abstraction of social form.

Ethnomethodology and reflective analysis are two approaches that are particularly helpful in thinking about the relationship between everyday life and order-making. Both approaches examine the problem of order-making in the context of interpersonal interaction, both consider interaction as a way of defining a situation, and both consider the formation of order-making as it develops incrementally, especially as it unfolds in debate and decision-making. While the distinction between the two approaches is examined in detail in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting here that analysis of elementary ways in which everyday experiences in cities engage administration as an orientation to, or as a movement toward, order-making. To state it simply, ethnomethodology and reflective analysis show how engagement itself defines the terms and conditions for engagement. From this standpoint, considerably greater sensitivity and precision might be gained when tracing order as the common ground of urban administrative policy and the

transformation of cities. Focusing on the theorizing of order—and not just theories of urban order—reanimates latent agencies of the urban lifeworld in its relationship to urban administrative institutions. The lifeworld is thereby placed within the zone of ad hoc order-making. This reframes the situation of order-making as a principal problem of urban analysis and thereby forcefully challenges the dogmatic and authoritarian assertions of social order with a radical counter-assertion: that order-making in communities such as cities is deliberative and life-affirming. The making of order grounds city administration, even in its many alienating technological forms, within the idiosyncratic production of urban culture.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology looks at how individuals and collectives formulate a situation for working through collective processes: it locates the *ethnography* of social *methodology*. Despite obvious differences, ethnomethodology supports a tradition of administrative sociology initiated by Weber.²⁰ The genealogy can be traced to Harald Garfinkel's critique of Talcott Parsons' action theory, which in turn was a response to Weber's studies of social order (Heritage, 1984). Another line can be followed from Garfinkel back to Schutz's critical analysis of Weber's interpretive sociology (Schutz, 1932/1967). Whereas Parsons treated actions as occurring within a given situation, and Schutz treated the situation as cumulative historic circumstances, Garfinkel (2002) suggested the situation for action happens in making action accountable, almost like the

²⁰ Personal connections also reinforce this intellectual genealogy. Garfinkel studied under Talcott Parsons at Harvard (Heritage, 1984), and Parsons worked with Max Weber's brother, Alfred, at Heidelberg before publishing his widely read translation of sections of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [Economy and Society], as noted earlier (Parsons & Henderson, 1947).

construction of a ‘social fact’ in the Durkheimian meaning of the term. In other words, the *method* of working toward action stems from the emerging *loci* of a situation, or *ethos*, of an engagement.

Ethnomethodology’s program of making sense of interaction has underpinned the study of order-making in various contexts, such as record-keeping at a medical clinic, coffee tasting, crosswalks, urban-planning-policy debates, and design studios (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Liberman, 2013; Oak, 2012; Watson, 2018). Ethnomethodology seeks to clarify what happens as people engage in collective projects in relation to a world beyond their immediate encounter, even if proponents might maintain that they are agnostic about underlying social forms. This externality of order-making was evident in Garfinkel’s (1967) early and well-known study of jurors, where he discussed how the “features of the actual and potential social structuring of court and outside scenes...[were] treated as ethically and morally required uniformities, i.e., the normative orders of interaction outside of as well as within the court” (p. 107). And, years later, he again insisted that a broad sense of order-making remained a cornerstone of his work. As he explained,

the programmatic task of Ethnomethodological studies [is] to specify the naturally accountable work of making and describing the social facts of immortal, ordinary society. These are the things of social order—the phenomena of society that Durkheim was talking about... [as the] worldly and real work of making things. (Garfinkel, 2002, pp. 92–93)

This orientation to the order arising from the “worldly and real work of making things” is comparable to Lipsky’s (1971) discussion of order in encounters, which I discussed earlier. Whereas Lipsky (1971) was interested in the relationship between two parties, such as a police officer and a citizen, ethnomethodology integrates the practical interactive experience of a confrontation with shared, accountable forms of order-making, or with the force of Durkheimian social facts rather than the rhetorical tactics and interests of individuals. In this way,

ethnomethodology helps establish a platform to study urban administration as a generalized order because it subtly melds the matter of communication with the question of social order as a phenomenon. It allows us to think about the situation in which public administration occurs *in relation to* the ongoing constructive relationship between notions of administration and community. Yet as we look at how the urban lifeworld engages urban administration, as I will in examining zoning-appeals hearings, gentrification, and smart-city technology, another element appears. What is not elucidated by ethnomethodology are questions about the conceptual horizons of decision-making, questions such as How can biographic experience and the stock of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1996; Noa & Elam, 1996) be a meaningful component of administrative policy? How does pragmatic experience inform an encounter with urban administration? How does experience inform a way of conceptualizing the city as a form of collective order?

Reflective Analysis

Reflective analysis (or analysis) stands in contrast to ethnomethodology. It looks at the lifeworld as it arises through self-reflection occurring within the community and thereby understands order-making primarily as the affirmation of collective action. The affirmation of the collective is realized

through the notion of shared being not only the ethical implications of any social bond but also conveys the need to conceive of community not abstractly but as a practice of affirming the principle for which a social formation purports to stand. (Blum, 2019, p. 250)

Reflective analysis in this way extends the analytical horizons beyond interaction and discourse, and beyond institutional structures, language, and the phenomenology of social encounters. It rises above aspects of the immediacy of interpersonal encounters and the agnostic pragmatism assumed

by ethnomethodology. To think of urban administration in terms of reflective analysis, therefore, means looking at self-reflection as an avenue for approaching the urban community as a ‘thing’ as opposed to pseudoecology or a cybernetic network. It is a matter of understanding the city itself as a “problem-solving situation where the very problem to be solved is the continuous clarification of the situation, that is, of the object as a course of action” (Blum, 2003, p. 53). Instead of interpersonal communication being accepted as *prima facie* evidence of situated order-making, order-making is found in the “dialectical engagement with the grounds of speech itself” (McHugh et al., 1974, p. 17). The ‘mess’ of administration is due to the confluence of language and experience that occurs when moving toward forming a course of action. Urban administration involves not only the work of defining the situation for acting but also a confrontation with the limits of defining such a situation. Accordingly, it reveals ways in which interactive communication is oriented to an absolute, or a good, within the ‘social fact’ of urban order.

At this point, we begin moving beyond ethnomethodology’s interest in situated account-making to ask how such accounts come to terms with community-making. Specifically, in both reflective analysis and urban sociology, the central question is how the individual conceives the community. Yet before moving further toward the domain of theory, it is useful to pause and consider how self-reflective action has been treated in the tradition of urban sociology. The seemingly hypothetical concerns of reflective analysis are not distant from core questions posed by early American urban sociologies. As Kieran Bonner (1997) noted, the self-reflective understanding of the city was a basic problem that drew the attention of early American sociology. For members of the Chicago School, such as Charles Wirth, this remained a central question of urban sociology, as Bonner explained:

The analytic concern for Charles Wirth is with the individual as a particular knowable and knowing actor, and with the kind of communities that seek to develop or inhibit this actor. For Wirth a community is superior when it makes this kind of actor possible. The principle implied or recommended here is the importance of knowing other as a particular individual who in turn has the opportunity to develop a “conception” of the whole and of his/her own part in it. The notion Wirth seeks to articulate is the idea, in Raymond Williams's terms (1973, 165) of a “knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable.” It is this idea of a knowable person who simultaneously has the capacity to “survey the city as a whole and his part in it” that motivates Wirth's analysis of the city. (Bonner, 1997, p. 180)

Early stages of modern American urban sociology addressed the “surveyability” of a community (either urban or rural) that permits a “conception of the whole and one's place in that” (Bonner, 1997, p. 181). That perspective portrays the individual in the city as both a self-reflective analyst and an unhindered actor. Specifically, it treats the actor’s analysis as a process of reflection that situates actions within a theorized community. The lifeworld, therefore, encounters community in defining a situation for action very much like one situates speech acts within a discourse. This is illustrated in Peter McHugh’s early work, *Defining the Situation* (1968), in which he sought to connect the question of the lifeworld to the problem of defining a situation for decision-making actions. For McHugh, the problem of defining the situation was integral to social institutions. In his analysis, what is clear is that actors’ interactions with institutions represent the basis of institutional authority to the extent that such authority is made comprehensible only through the relationship. In McHugh’s words,

an institution must in some way be experienced to continue or change, and thus an institution can be said to exist at the level of interaction. Further, interaction *must* occur before the institution can be said to exist at all, even for its own sake, and in its own macroscopic terms. Being conceptually interdependent on one hand, and directly

observable in social action on the other, we must understand action before we can methodologically be said to have observed institutions; and an understanding of action will also provide an understanding of institutions embedded there. The existence of each level is a condition for the existence of the other, and so, if we know about one we will also know about the other. (p. 11)

On this basis, McHugh (1968) initiated a program of analysis that reprises a basic question that shaped early urban sociology: What is the synthetic interdependence of lifeworld and formal institutional structures? He continued:

Thus, the relationship between definition and institution poses no ineluctable paradox. Accordingly, we can ask how members can be said to be *conscious*, if by that we mean defining their situations. We need to describe how members define their situations, how objects are meaningful, and how that meaning shifts over the course of one's association with these objects. (p. 11)

This argument that McHugh presented is invaluable in understanding how the process of engagement defines institutions of decision-making. It illuminates ways in which the *impersonal* social object of the decision is inexorably formed in a fluid *interpersonal* definition of a situation. The social object does not arise from an anonymous process (such as an economic structure or social structure). Rather, parameters of situational interaction are bound to institutional engagement. Through interaction, a situation is defined, in that situation are the limits of an institution, and with that institution comes a common project within limits. The emergence of limits, therefore, is somewhat counterintuitive, for the process that begins with the open-endedness of interactive talking ends up exposing the thresholds of 'talk' as the interactive situation is defined. McHugh's understanding of a defined situation accordingly offers clues as to what happens within the interaction between the everyday lived experience that constitutes the lifeworld and the world

of urban administrative policy, a social object present in the discourse of the city, which is the definition of the urban situation.

Introducing the Situation

To understand how people encounter administration is to consider what they do to conceptualize this engagement. If the situation of engagement is not taken for granted, if it is problematic or elusive, it becomes a problem that can be analyzed. The conditions of engagement are of interest not only to the researcher but also to those participating in the engagement. For participants, establishing the reflexive protocol of engagement constitutes a course of decision-making, a road map for establishing meaning in the actions of themselves and others. How is the situation constituted? How does it become present and real to those involved?²¹ In *Defining the Situation*, Peter McHugh (1968) sought to demonstrate a way of overcoming this problem by first asking if the in situ work of defining basic terms of engagement could even be observable. Could ‘defining’ be untangled coherently from engagement to be an analyzable phenomenon?

To address these questions, McHugh (1968) discussed a laboratory experiment he had conducted as a graduate student working with Harold Garfinkel.²² McHugh’s summary of the experiment provides an initial framework that I will use in the following chapters to consider order-making within the relationship of everyday urban lifeworld to urban administration. Although the

²¹ The origin of the question can be tracked to the Thomas Theorem, attributed to Dorothy Thomas and William I. Thomas (Merton, 1995) that states "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." (Thomas and Thomas, 1928, p. 562)

²² The research was conducted when McHugh worked with Harald Garfinkel (Schüttpelz, 2019). McHugh in his book notes Garfinkel’s analysis of the experiment published as a chapter in “Common Sense Knowledge of Social Structures,” *Theories of the Mind* (Scher, 1963, pp. 20–28). Commentary on the experiment is also found in Garfinkel’s *Studies of Ethnomethodology* (1969). See Schüttpelz (2019) for a detailed account.

experiment did not address administration, McHugh's interpretation of the results, I suggest, sets up a specific way of studying the conceptions of order-making that applies to the study of cities. It outlines a way to study city life that contends with the "diverse reactions and replies imagined of others who co-inhabit the same intellectual space" (Blum, 2019, pp. 245–246).

In McHugh's experiment, volunteers were invited to the lab under the pretense that they were to help test a new type of telephone personal-counselling service. When they arrived, the subjects were instructed to initiate a call to the counsellor. They could ask any question they wished about a personal problem and each question, they were told, would be answered with either a single 'yes' or 'no'. However, unknown to the subject, the set-up was a ruse. There was no counsellor, and the yes/no responses were completely random.

This was designed as a sort of *breaching experiment*, meaning that contriving a disorienting experience by using the random pattern of responses caused norms of interpersonal communication to become apparent to researchers observing the exchange (McHugh, 1988; Heritage, 1984). In this case, the random responses upset the research volunteer's ability to use routine patterns of conversation. However, McHugh's observations were not merely about interpersonal communication; he was also interested in what was exposed once communication norms come under stress.

As McHugh (1969) reported, even when receiving random responses, the subject would try to maintain the exchange as if the councillor was working in good faith. They would develop presumptions and notions to make sense of the random pattern. They drew on earlier responses to find meaning in new answers, a phenomenon McHugh associated with Mannheim's documentary method (McHugh, 1968). So long as the random pattern of replies somehow could be assembled

to construct an account of the situation as a counselling service, the subject would proceed with the session, despite being confused and frustrated. Only once the ‘fit’ became grossly untenable would the volunteer doubt the legitimacy of the session. This struggle to maintain a narrative is shown in the following exchange as recorded in McHugh’s report. Here, the research subject asks the ‘counsellor’ about a family member’s attitude toward a romantic relationship. When the response is surprising, the subject talks through a rationale that maintains the fiction of the counselling service.

Subject: Will he ever change his feelings about her?
‘Counsellor’: No.
Subject: Hmm. Really? This isn’t easy to take even though I can see what you mean. You told me that it doesn’t matter whether he is told, or even if he sees her he’ll stick to his guns and always be against it. This means I can’t go on worrying about what he thinks or changing his mind, but concentrate on seeing that he doesn’t interfere. (McHugh, 1968, pp.94–95)

The subject used personal experience during the session to patch up ‘holes’ in the account by respecifying what the counsellor had said earlier (“you told me...”) to reconstruct a meaningful narrative (“This means I can...”). Moreover, the exchange shows practical life experiences are used as a conceptual resource to repair the narrative (“even if he sees her”). This shows how the ‘counselling’ session forms conditions for assembling personal experience within a narrative of administration—in this case, the administration of mental health care. This might seem obvious. After all, storytelling is a rather common and unremarkable mode of engaging others. Yet what McHugh noted in the experiment is something more interesting.

The experiment, as McHugh understood it, is instructive for two main reasons. First, it demonstrates the observability of defining situations by documenting practical ways a subject

participates in the session. As the subject confronts personal problems, we see a confrontation with the conditions of that encounter. As such, there are then two parallel types of encounters: the encounter with the ‘councillor’ and the encounter with the conditions or situation of the engagement. These two are clarified as being interconnected because of how the subject comes to define and redefine a situation through the subject matter of the conversation. The problem-solving orientation of asking questions reveals the trouble with the encounter. The subject asks questions about his issues to establish an intelligible situation with the councillor and also to address the substance of his problems.

Second, the experiment showed that methods of establishing an intelligible situation are represented in discernable ‘devices’ (McHugh, 1968). In short, it showed that the research subject’s lifeworld view was present together with rhetorical tools for making that lifeworld active and apparent in discourse. As McHugh (1968) summarized in the introduction of the study,

To the degree that the way men define things makes a difference, and to the degree that some kind of definition must take place if there is to be social action, then a description of the definition is a description of one of the elements of social order.

We shall go about this by describing how a definition comes to be so given the existence of perspectives already determined by society, culture, and reference group. It is a study of the devices by which meaning is assigned or not, rules are invoked or not, actors are made aware or not, from which flows the substance and content of any particular interaction. Because all theories presuppose these devices I suggest that making them explicit and observable will generally improve sociological knowledge.

(p. 20)

The laboratory experiment in this way made visible the devices found in a more general context, in “any particular interaction” (McHugh, 1968, p. 20). At the same time, the question of defining the situation is particularly useful in the study of institutional order. As McHugh (1968) pointed

out, situation-defining interaction is a necessary precondition for institutional organizations. The definition of the situation is foundational to the way institutions are experienced and can be said to be a fact of experience:

This is not to say that standards of the actor are always right. It is only to say that the standards of the actor, his way of making definitions, are the bases of actions, and that actions are the analytic bases of institutions. An institution must in some way be experienced to continue or change, and thus an institution can be said to exist at the level of interaction. Further, interaction *must* occur before the institution can be said to exist at all, even for its own sake in its own macroscopic terms. (p. 11)

With this in mind, if we are to consider city administration as an example of such an institution, then the task of defining the situation, and thereby confronting the task of order-making, unfolds as a conceptual orientation to the city. The work of defining the situation of engaging city administration, therefore, constitutes something *to* the urban community, as an engagement, and *through* the urban community, as a conceptual resource effectively grounding the talk of the city

Recognizing that the work of defining the situation leads to a clearer understanding of order on both an interpersonal and institutional level. I propose, therefore, to engage the messiness of urban administration in a way that is like McHugh's analysis of the 'councillor' breaching experiment. Specifically, I ask how engaging urban administration involves the self-reflective work of defining situations of engagement and confrontation with the limits of that effort. I'm interested in how defining the situation for doing urban administration reveals the irresolute ambiguity at the core of the relationship between the lifeworld and the policy. This means that, instead of seeking to resolve the 'mess' so often found in urban administrative engagement, I aim to question what messiness might reveal about attaining a sense of the city as a collective project.

As I address in Chapter 8, concepts discussed to this point, such as the messiness of administration, the definition of the situation, and urban order-making can be understood against a wider framework of theorizing administration. By that, I mean that theorizing administration moves the analysis beyond questions about interpersonal communication, the engagement of individuals with institutions, power structures, or even the effective execution of a program or policy. Instead, theorizing begins to reveal part of what makes collective action, founded on the diversity of experience and knowledge, somehow let urban administration move toward a form of community.

In the next chapter, I build on McHugh's interest in analyzing the definition of situations. I look at how situation-defining work unfolds in an open-ended condition rather than in a laboratory experiment. In contrast to a single research subject, I will look at how groups of people engage in making sense of a situation. And, instead of an artificial counselling service in a lab, the scene will be actual hearings of a municipal land-use tribunal. By doing this, I aim to clarify the notion of the definition of the situation as it relates to practical conditions, and secondly, to consider how such work relates to a sense of community, both in its social and physical manifestations.

PART II: Committee of Adjustment

Chapter 3: Methods

The City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment as a Study Site

A *committee of adjustment* is an administrative tribunal established by municipal governments in Ontario to grant exceptions to zoning regulations. A construction project that violates certain zoning-bylaw standards, such as exceeding caps on height or density, may be granted what is called a *variance* following a public hearing. With the variance, a nonconforming project still can receive a municipal building permit.

A committee of adjustment is a fertile site to study how people make sense of the engagement between everyday life and urban administration. It provides a naturally occurring breaching experiment that shows what happens when norms of administration (zoning bylaw) are disrupted. Like the councillor in McHugh's (1968) experiment, a committee of adjustment operates without an easily discernible foundation. The whole zoning-variance review process is predicated on something beyond a written zoning code. It breaches conventions of rule-based administration and therefore uncovers the work of defining the situation of the city as a real experience, as something that is encountered and administered but also experienced.

There are two main reasons why the committee of adjustment is useful in this way. First, it operates outside formal rules for land-use administration, as what the urban-planning profession calls 'discretionary planning.' It depends on committee members' judgment to assess possible exceptions to rules. While discretionary decision-making is a common aspect of planning, it is still enigmatic. Research about it was characterized as "the black box of zoning literature," by Manville and Osman (2017, p. 69). The black box of zoning variances is particularly interesting because, while the committee of adjustment modifies formal rules, it nevertheless remains attentive to a

style and language of rulemaking as it also upholds vague conventions of legal procedures. In considering a minor variance, the committee engages the legal order of the city, as represented in the zoning bylaw, at the same time as it recognizes a second, conventional, order of things beyond the written law. In this way, minor variances are examples of conventional order superseding formal rules (i.e., the zoning bylaw). But, if there is a sense of legal fundamentalism at play here, it is realized paradoxically, within a context of practical expediency. The committee decides in response to a specific proposed building project, for a specific site, and in front of a specific audience. Each project is treated *de novo* so that in granting a variance, the committee does not set a precedent and does not alter the zoning bylaw. Rather, the discretionary judgment of committee members takes the place of the authority of the zoning-bylaw scheme for a certain site. In this way, each zoning variance represents a discrete test of the integrity of land-use zoning as the exemplification of ordered city making. This is how the committee of adjustment calls to account—and so disturbs and makes visible—the taken-for-granted order encoded in the zoning-bylaw. Each committee-of-adjustment hearing resembles a breaching experiment (Garfinkel, 2002; Heritage, 1984) in that an implicit order becomes visible and problematic when violated by the variance. More important, this disturbance also resembles an encounter with the ongoing problem of making the city intelligible. The committee of adjustment hearing uncovers a foundational question about what the city is and the situation we defined for ourselves as we address it.

A second reason to examine committees of adjustment hearings is that they are recorded, and these recordings are available to the public. While urban-planning debates are documented in many other sources, such as in policy papers, ethnographic studies, and newspaper and media accounts, the video record of committee hearings offers certain advantages. Unlike published

reports, the footage is unrehearsed and unedited. It shows debate unfolding at the time and in the place of decision-making. The footage includes lively and unscripted debates. The video record also shows both experts and laymen talking about bringing order to the city and because the Committee of Adjustment is open to the public, the footage provides a record of the depositions of a broad range of speakers. They present oral arguments, documents such as architectural drawings, photographs, letters, and occasionally professional or expert opinions. In these ways, the hearings are interesting as discrete, practical, and well-documented accounts of city planning.

The videos do not necessarily document rhetorical skills or thoughtful argumentation. Often the discussion gets bogged down in details and trivial conflicts—a fight about the size of a window or the height of a dormer. Still, what is important about these micro-disputes are the ways they bring forward a variety of formulations about the basis for making decisions about the city and the conventional grounding of city making. The specifics of the arguments are narrow, yet they provide a useful proxy for studying how people situate themselves as they engage in urban administration.

Before looking at the hearings, I want to briefly explain how a committee of adjustment functions and where it fits within the organizational structure of municipal planning in Ontario.

Ontario's urban-planning system²³ is largely decentralized. The province sets broad policies, aims, and procedures, leaving local governments to fill in and enforce the details. Municipalities use two main tools to do this: an official plan and zoning bylaws (Toronto Official

²³ While 'urban' planning or 'city' planning is commonly used, it should be noted that what is called 'urban planning' in Ontario also addresses rural and sparsely populated areas such as 'unorganized townships.'

Plan, 2015; Toronto Zoning By-Law, 2019). Both govern matters such as the height, bulk, and use of new and existing buildings. Every building project in the municipality must conform to both documents. However, if a proposed building project does not, a proponent can ask the city council to pass a bylaw amending the Official Plan or zoning bylaws governing the development of their property.

In Toronto, these amendment procedures are central to how the City reviews large-scale urban development. The way the City writes its policies almost guarantees that any large-scale projects will require amendments to the Official Plan or the Zoning By-Law.²⁴ That means when a large building is proposed, the proponents need to go in front of Toronto City Council for approval. This ensures local councillors maintain a hand in what would otherwise be a bureaucratic approval process. The councillor can then ensure the project can produce desired community benefits and generally conforms with community expectations.

However, not all building projects merit political oversight. A project might conform to the broad policies of the Official Plan but still violate specific requirements of the Zoning By-Law. If these are small-scale projects, such as adding to the back of a house or replacing an older home with something new, the zoning issues are likely too inconsequential to justify the attention of a city council (Ontario, 2018; Owens & Brueggemann, 2004; Kent, 1993; Sampson, 2007). As a

²⁴ For instance, the nominal maximum height near the mid-town intersection of Yonge Street and Bloor Street ranges from 18 to 61 metres, or about 6 to 20 storeys (Height overlay map, Toronto Zoning Bylaw 569-2013, (City of Toronto interactive zoning map viewer, https://map.toronto.ca/maps/map.jsp?app=ZBL_CONSULT, yet there is no building planned or being built there that is anywhere close to that limit. All exceed 50 storeys (Urban Building Database, 2019, urbandb.com)

result, a city council delegates power to adjust zoning rules to a tribunal of citizen appointees serving as a committee of adjustment.

A committee of adjustment has two principal functions. The main one, noted above, is to consider appeals made by property owners for relief from municipal zoning bylaws.²⁵ A typical case might allow the construction of a new house that stands a few centimetres taller than the zoning bylaw allows. The relief is called a *minor variance*. While I discuss the ambiguities of this term later, a minor variance or variance can be understood simply as an exception to a specific rule. The committee of adjustment's secondary function is to address certain matters of property ownership, such as *granting consent* (approving the severance or the division of properties), clearing titles, and approving long-term leases.

Proposed minor variances are usually identified by the committee in brief statements that reference the relevant section of the zoning bylaw, what is permitted by that section, and the variance proposed. Examples of three variances are reprinted below:

REQUESTED VARIANCE(S) TO THE ZONING BY-LAW:

1. Chapter 10.10.40.30.(1), By-law 569-2013 The maximum permitted depth of a detached dwelling is 17.0 m. The altered dwelling will have a depth of 22.19 m.
2. Chapter 10.10.40.40.(1)(A), By-law 569-2013 The maximum permitted floor space index of a detached dwelling is 0.60 times the area of the lot (157.19 m²). The altered

²⁵ This is described in Section 45 (1) of the Ontario Planning Act (2019): "Powers of committee": "The committee of adjustment, upon the application of the owner of any land, building or structure affected by any by-law that is passed under section 34 or 38, or a predecessor of such sections, or any person authorized in writing by the owner, may, despite any other Act, authorize such minor variance from the provisions of the by-law, in respect of the land, building or structure or the use thereof, as in its opinion is desirable for the appropriate development or use of the land, building or structure, if in the opinion of the committee the general intent and purpose of the by-law and of the official plan, if any, are maintained."

dwelling will have a floor space index equal to 0.78 times the area of the lot (204.53 m²).

3. Chapter 10.10.40.70.(1), By-law 569-2013 The minimum required front yard setback is 2.91 m. The altered dwelling will be located 1.57 m from the west front lot line.

4. Chapter 10.10.40.70.(3), By-law 569-2013 The minimum required side yard setback is 0.45 m. The altered dwelling will be located 0.20 m from the north side lot line.

(Toronto & East York Panel, April 26, 2017)

While these are somewhat understandable, this is not always the case. For anyone not well-versed in municipal planning law, the language of the variance might be hardly discernible. For example, a variance for an outdoor deck states,

2. Chapter 10.5.40.60.(1)(C), By-law 569-2013 A platform without main walls, attached to or less than 0.3 m from a building, with a floor no higher than the first floor of the building above established grade may encroach into the required rear yard setback 2.5 m if it is no closer to a side lot line than 0.3 m. In this case, the rear ground floor deck encroaches into the required rear yard setback and will be located 0.16 m from the west side lot line

(Toronto & East York Panel, April 26, 2017)

Adding further confusion, the list of variances may refer to more than one bylaw. Toronto's current comprehensive zoning-bylaw system includes the current code along with the antiquated zoning law that is the legacy of now-defunct municipal governments that were amalgamated with the City. This means some variances address regulations found in hard-to-locate binders published decades ago by municipalities that are now almost forgotten.

Process

In Toronto, the minor-variance process begins with the owner of a property (or their representative, such as a lawyer or architect) applying at the Committee of Adjustment office. Before the office accepts the application, the applicant is encouraged to consult with relevant City

departments, especially if the property is subject to special regulations, such as natural-ravine protection or heritage-conservation standards (Toronto Committee of Adjustment, 2017). The applicant must ensure the submission is complete, meaning it includes drawings of the existing building and all proposed construction, a site plan and property survey, and a City-issued zoning-review report that identifies any necessary variances.²⁶ Depending on the circumstances of the proposed construction project, other supporting documentation may include civil-engineering reports, arborist or tree-protection studies, and photographs. The City charges a filing fee based on the type of project proposed.²⁷ Once accepted, clerks in the Committee's office register the file in the City's tracking system and set a hearing date. Before the hearing, they send notices to the owners of properties near the site to inform them of the application. The notice includes a list of the proposed zoning variances, an image showing the proposed construction, and information on ways to comment either in writing or at the hearing. The Committee office also gives the applicant a brightly coloured notice sign that must be posted on their property at a set time before the hearing. Notices are also circulated to city departments and the ward councillor. While the public response to the notice might be coordinated through a neighbourhood homeowner association, commonly it is individuals who take the initiative on their own after receiving the notice in the mail.

²⁶ It is common for the applicant seeking a variance to first apply to the City for a building permit. In that process, an examiner in the City's building department checks the drawings to ensure the project complies with the Zoning By-Law. If there are violations, the examiner will issue a brief zoning-review report to alert the applicant of the need to go to the Committee of Adjustment. That report is the basis of the variances (Toronto Committee of Adjustment, 2017).

²⁷ In 2019, the fee was set at \$1,612 for a minor-variance application related to additions or alterations to small residential buildings (with three units or less) and \$4,691 for all other types of projects (Toronto, 2019). >

On the hearing date when the application goes before the Committee of Adjustment, the Committee Chair announces the file by inviting the applicant to make a short oral presentation. Committee members may then ask follow-up questions. Next, the Chair sees if any neighbours are present who wish to speak about the proposal. Once they are done, the Chair usually allows the applicant to respond. And, while there is no cross-examination, Committee members at this point may also pose questions either to the applicant or the neighbours, usually to clarify or confirm some factual point.

Once the discussion has run its course and all who wish to speak have had their turn, the Chair asks Committee members for a motion to vote on the matter. A member moves either to support, refuse, or defer the case, and the Committee votes on it by a show of hands. Once the Committee has voted and the hearing is over, anyone involved in the process can appeal the decision to a separate tribunal.²⁸ If the Committee approves the variances and no appeal is launched during a set waiting period, the file can move forward in the building-approval process to the final building-permit stage.

Organization and Operation

The Toronto Committee of Adjustment operates according to the Ontario Planning Act (2019), the Ontario Statutory Powers Procedure Act (2019), and regulations established by the City of Toronto Council and by sitting members of the Committee of Adjustment (Toronto Rules of Procedure, 2017). Toronto's Committee of Adjustment system is organized based on the City's

²⁸ Until recently appeals were to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The Ontario government dissolved the OMB in April 2018. The Local Planning Appeal Tribunal was subsequently merged with other tribunals to form the Ontario Land Tribunal, as of June 2021 (Ontario Land Tribunal, 2022).

four administrative districts.²⁹ Etobicoke, York, and Scarborough districts are served by a single panel of members while Toronto & East York and North York each have two panels. Each district schedules hearing dates twice a month throughout the year.

Each panel has five members with one serving as chair (Toronto Rules of Procedure, 2017). Members of the Committees are citizens appointed by City Council for four years coinciding with the Council term. Members are typically people who have been involved in city building, such as land-use lawyers, community activists, policymakers, or former municipal politicians.

The four City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment panels processed a total of 2,970 cases in 2017 (City of Toronto Open Data, 2018). Of the four districts, Toronto & East York, which covers the downtown and pre-1950s suburbs, were most active with (34%, 1,024), followed by Etobicoke York (26%, 774); North York (25%, 757), and Scarborough (14%, 404). The bulk of the files were zoning variances compared to property severances, as shown in Table 1. Most zoning variances were for small residential buildings with three or fewer residential units,³⁰ as shown in Table 2. Additions or alterations to small residential buildings accounted for about half the total files, and another third involved the construction of new buildings of this type.

A considerable proportion of the houses built in Toronto are approved through the Committee of Adjustment process. About 15% of the new-house building permits issued in the

²⁹ The districts roughly correspond to former municipalities that were amalgamated in 1998 to form the current jurisdiction of the City of Toronto.

³⁰ A *residential unit* is defined in the City of Toronto Zoning By-Law as a “living accommodation for a person or persons living together as a single housekeeping unit, in which both food preparation and sanitary facilities are provided for the exclusive use of the occupants of the unit” as per s.s. 800.50 Defined Terms, (220) Residential Dwelling Unit. of City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013 (2013)

city³¹ in 2017 needed a minor zoning variance of some type. Also, the Committee of Adjustment approves most files: about 80% of the variance requests in 2017 were granted.³²

³¹ This I calculated by dividing the number of variances for small projects (under the category as “new building, 3 units or less”) by the number of building permits issued for “small residential buildings” ($n = 6,882$) in 2017 (City of Toronto Data Portal, 2018).

³² The number of consents is less reliable since 17% of the files were blank where the outcome was to be recorded in the record published on the City of Toronto Open Data portal (2018). Accordingly, the data should be treated as an indication rather than as a hard statistic.

Table 1*City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment Files in 2017, by Type of Application*

File type	Number of files	% of total
Zoning variances	2,757	93%
Consent & clear title	213	7%
Total files	2,970	100%

Note. Adapted from City of Toronto Open Data (2018).

Table 2*City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment Files in 2017, by Type of Project*

Type of project	Number of files	% of total
Addition/Alteration, 3 units or less	1,347	46%
New building, 3 units or less	1,054	35%
All other zoning variances	354	12%
Consent and clear title	215	7%
Total	2,970	100%

Note. Adapted from the City of Toronto Open Data Portal (2018).

Methodology

Data Sample

In this section, I describe the process of selecting the sample of Committee of Adjustment meeting recordings I analyzed.

To examine the Committee of Adjustment hearings, I focused on video recordings that documented five Committee of Adjustment hearings that occurred at Toronto City Hall in 2017. I used a total of 102 minutes of raw footage for my sample.

The video record was created using a single stationary camera installed by the City of Toronto as part of a pilot program to live stream meetings on the City website and to create an archival record of the proceedings (Toronto Chief Corporate Officer, 2017). As Figure 1 shows, the video camera captured a committee room and the Committee of Adjustment panel facing the camera, sitting behind a U-shaped conference-room table at the far end of the room. People speaking to the Committee were at a podium at the open end of the ‘U’ with their backs to the camera. Microphones installed in front of each Committee member and at the podium recorded the audio. Each Committee and staff member could switch their microphone off, which meant that they controlled their part of the audio record (although sometimes members forget to do this, and their comments were recorded). I obtained the recorded video from the City of Toronto’s Facilities Customer Support office for a fee of \$40 per meeting.

Figure 1

Screenshot of the Committee of Adjustment Meeting Video Recording of the Hearing for 394 O'Connor Drive, January 18, 2017



Note. Committee members are at the far end; City of Toronto staff are seated to the left; Community participants are at the podium in the foreground (Toronto Clerk's Office, 2017)

Selection of Cases and Transcription

To identify Committee of Adjustment hearings to study, I first downloaded a database of Committee of Adjustment files from the City of Toronto's open data portal (City of Toronto Open Data, 2018). This listed all the Committee files closed in 2017 and information on each file about:

- Address of the subject property
- Committee district of the file (e.g., Toronto & East York, North York)
- The Committee's decision (approved, refused, or deferred)
- Type of work (new residential building, non-residential addition, etc.)
- Description of the work (example: "To alter the existing two-storey townhouse building containing one live/work unit by constructing a third-storey addition with a mezzanine and a secondary suite")
- If anyone objected to the application at the hearing (for Toronto & East York district files)

From this main database, I selected files for Toronto & East York. This was the district I know best from personal experience, and I had once worked at that district's office. From this selection, I excluded files that had been appealed so that I would be working on those where the Committee's decision recorded on the video was final. I also excluded those where the "Anyone Object at Meeting" column was marked "No" to ensure that the sample included hearings with active debate.

Because the City of Toronto issues video recordings on DVDs that cover an entire Committee of Adjustment hearing date, I wanted to find dates that had a high number of contentious files. A secondary consideration was to order DVDs of hearings from various times of

the year to broaden the sample. With these considerations in mind, I ordered digital recordings for these hearing dates:

- January 18, 2017
- April 26, 2017
- July 26, 2017
- August 9, 2017

I scanned several hearings from these dates looking for hearings that involved applicants, Committee members, and neighbours fully engaged in debate. The five cases I settled on to study in detail were

- 405 Glenayre Road (August 9, 2017) – To build a three-storey detached house with an integral garage. Duration: 32 minutes
- 7 Relmar Gardens (April 26, 2017) – To build a new three-storey detached dwelling with an integral garage. Duration: 16* minutes (*the last part of this hearing was not recorded on the DVD)
- 367 Margueretta Street (April 26, 2017) – To alter the existing two-storey detached dwelling by enclosing the front porch. Duration: 17 minutes
- 40 Parkview Hill (April 26, 2017) – To construct a new two-storey detached dwelling with an integral garage. Duration: 17 minutes
- 394 O'Connor Drive (January 18, 2017) – To sever a property into two undersized residential lots by consent and construct a house on each of the lots. Duration: 20 minutes

Transcription

The next step was transcription. At first, I experimented with documenting both syntax and non-grammatical elements, such as pauses, stutters, and interjections. I also tried noting the position and actions of the speaker, such as standing at a podium or speaking off-camera. However, as I began to examine these test transcriptions, it became clear my focus would be on the more substantial elements of interaction, elements that contributed to the conventional course of the hearing. For this reason, I limited the transcription to grammatically structured communication.

The transcripts are primary documents that serve as the basic evidence supporting my analysis of the Committee of Adjustment. In the following chapters, I cite them by referring to the property address, the identity of the speaker, and the line numbers of the transcript. The following is an example of my citation convention:

APPLICANT: We comply with the rear yard. But the way it has been measured, it's been measured to the walk-out that we have at the rear. So, for that reason, the setback at the rear has been taken to the steps and not to the rear wall of the dwelling.

(Applicant, O'Connor Drive, Lines 69–72)

In terms of interpretation, I use the transcripts in a semi-systematic way. I treat passages or statements as observable speech acts. By that, I mean that I see what the speaker says as their way of engaging the hearing. The emphasis, then, is on the speech as a practical, semantic act as opposed to a representation of a hidden process, psychological or otherwise.

Finally, I changed the names of individuals when names appear in the transcripts while keeping the real addresses. I reasoned that I did not want to needlessly publish anything about the individuals even if they were acting in a public forum that was recorded with their consent. The

original names and addresses are all available in documents held by the City of Toronto that are available to the public.

Participants

The Committee of Adjustment hearings brought together participants representing various perspectives, as noted earlier. There were experts and laymen, confident and apprehensive speakers, publicly minded and privately motivated. Still, the sample was limited and did not fully reflect the general population of the city. Most hearings were about houses, and the applicants and respondents identified themselves as occupants of houses rather than dwellings that tended to be more affordable, such as rental flats, apartment buildings, or condominiums. My set of transcripts included no reference to ‘rent’ or ‘affordable.’ Moreover, the fact that construction projects discussed at the hearings involved access to substantial up-front costs meant that the hearings involved people who had commensurate personal financial resources.

The participants’ identities were not explicitly stated. When each came to the podium to speak, the Committee asked them to identify themselves by name and address. While some aspects of identity might be associated with surnames or even accents, inferring much from the cues would only lead to superficial or misleading analysis. Visual clues about the identity of speakers are limited because they faced away from the camera recording the hearing. In terms of gender balance, of the 14 people recorded speaking to the Committee in the hearings transcribed, only two did I

identify as female.³³ The Committee of Adjustment panel was comprised of five members, four male and one female.

Other aspects of identity entered the discussion incidentally, for example, when one participant referred to another ('this is my wife joining me,' 'this man has waited' 'she lived there' etc.). On occasion, participants might know how long they or others had lived in their homes. Occasionally there is mention of personal behaviour or trait. For instance, in one case those present heard about an applicant's smoking habit.

Personal identity and capacity were occasionally acknowledged as they related to participation. In one case, a participant apologized to the Committee for his English (Neighbour, Margueretta Street, lines 85–87). In another, the participant pleaded for compassion because of his unfamiliarity with the Committee process: "Just to let you know, I've never been before been at a hearing. And actually, I've been warned that I might embarrass myself today. I hope that will not be the case." (Neighbour, Glenayre Road, Lines 186–193)

More broadly though, such self-referential remarks were about claiming to represent everyday experience, that is, participants positioning themselves as reliable, good-faith witnesses. In objecting to a complex construction proposal that involved a lot severance and three new buildings, a neighbour, for example, told the Committee,

Um, we're not architects but looking at the pictures we are given, the houses seem much deeper than the existing house, even the one on the plan, the house that is the one next door. I guess at three ninety-two. The houses are bigger because the lots are smaller, but they've made them deeper. They are going to be two storeys. I get it. You know it is not

³³ The gender tally is limited as it is based my assessment of gendered first names, not on self-stated gender identities.

so much a height thing for us. My concern too is the fact that one of the driveways, its part two is on Airley, there's going to be a parking pad. I don't know if whether it's a parking pad but it's at the back of the lot. (Neighbour, O'Connor, 172–185)

In this instance, the speaker disclaimed any expert authority in judging zoning administration. Their claim to authority rested on their ability to address specific details of the case. A similar rhetorical move is seen here: “Mr. [Chair], I have no objections to the size of the house. And I wish them all the best with the building and my only one concern is my privacy, which will without that tree be compromised.” (Neighbour 1, Parkview Hill Crescent, Lines 167–176). Yet another example is again about trees, but at a different site: “I think, again not being an expert, first time here, I heard from others that there is about a twelve-inch diameter, in terms of taking down trees by the city” (Neighbour, Glenayre Road, Lines 186–193).

The three passages above demonstrate speakers presenting themselves as witnesses claiming a specific outlook. Each contrasts a particular view of the development project that is distinct from that of an expert, but it is a view that is not completely uninformed. The authority they claim is based on a direct understanding of the site as it relates to routine, common sense, or patterns of city living. In doing so, they write themselves into the hearing as an outsider who can ‘see’ what the insider overlooks or takes for granted, but also as an insider within the lifeworld of city living.

Talk

The transcripts are a starting point for asking how a relationship between city life and urban administration is constituted. Each Committee of Adjustment hearing is an occasion for deciding on a set of zoning variances according to an established legal structure. That suggests that Committee members, the applicant, and other participants direct interactions toward the goal of

deciding a case, or that each speaker diligently focuses on that problem. Yet what we discover instead in the transcripts is communication that seems unrelentingly fractured, and frustratingly unfocused. Sentences are incomplete, statements are interrupted, and there are farcical misunderstandings. Much of the discussion is about participants figuring out what is being discussed. Beyond that, participants encounter problems using the overhead projector, knowing where to stand, what to look at, and whom to address. These only add to the challenge of respecting differences in cultural and linguistic differences and rhetorical styles.

The following passage illustrates this well. An applicant has just finished their opening speech to the Committee. As the Chair responds by trying to recap the zoning variances, the discourse becomes muddled, almost to the point of comic absurdity:

CHAIR: One rear, one front deck above that because it says some of the comments, talk about decks.

APPLICANT: There is a lower-level deck which is not part of the variance that is at grade.

CHAIR: At the front or back?

APPLICANT: At the back.

CHAIR: OK. But the one at the front is the one that is oversized by...

APPLICANT: You look. The green section is at the back of the house.

CHAIR: OK.

APPLICANT: So, we're discussing...

CHAIR: That bay window is at the top, at the front and it's above?

APPLICANT: No. That's at the back of the house.

CHAIR: That's the back of the house?

APPLICANT: The bay window is at the back of the house.

CHAIR: Ok, I see.

PM1R: And the deck is right above the bay window?

APPLICANT: Maybe I can adjust [the projector] so we can get the whole, ah.

CHAIR: Ok. Now we can. That's better. Ya.

APPLICANT: So, this is Parkview at the front.

CHAIR: OK.

[INAUDIBLE]

PM1L: Just to clarify what may be confusing...

APPLICANT: Sure.

PM1L: That's not the lot line at the back.

APPLICANT: That's not the lot line. That's just to show that two, all the houses are staggered on an angle. Ya.

PM1L: OK.

APPLICANT: It's not. Apologies if it reads that way but it's not. Um, so the next variance has to do with the side yard, interior side yard of point nine [metres]. Again, that relates to the green section which is a one-storey garage bump-out that we needed in order to make the space work inside. So that section where we have the one-storey bump-out we have a reduced setback of point nine, which is...

CHAIR: The rest of it complies?

APPLICANT: The rest of it complies. We actually went over and beyond the bylaws to provide an extra point three metres.

CHAIR: OK.

(Applicant and Chair, Parkview Hill Crescent, Lines 53–87)

I quote this exchange at length to reiterate the point made in the introductory chapter, that the talk at the committee is rarely smooth. Typically, participants struggle to move a hearing forward through coherent discourse. There is vagueness, farce, and miscommunication as much as there is effective dialogue. Participants do not 'naturally' or intuitively habituate to the 'public space' of the hearing. Yet, this endemic difficulty is not necessarily a defect. Nor is it a result of conflict between the speakers or even a lack of knowledge about the matter they address. In the case above, the applicant is, after all, talking about their project, and the Chair has extensive experience dealing with zoning and building plans. The difficulty appears instead to be rooted somehow in setting up

a rudimentary alignment of understanding. The Chair and applicant struggle to establish *what* is to be discussed. The confusion shows the necessity that each speaker think through ways of clarifying what is to be discussed and how to define the situation for pursuing such discussion. How does all this get sorted out? In the following chapter, I will address this question in detail.

Chapter 4: A Vernacular Grammar of Interaction

Grammar

In the preceding chapters, I set out the task of looking at order-making in the definition of the situation and suggested that the definition of a situation of discourse might inform a deeper understanding of how day-to-day experience engages administration in cities. I also provided a rationale for using Committee of Adjustment hearings as a natural breaching experiment to examine this issue.

To consider what it means to define a situation in the practice of urban administration, in this chapter I will ask how participants at Committee of Adjustment hearings assemble argumentation and meaning-making in relation to the circumstances of the hearing. I am interested in how each participant works toward defining the scope and purpose of the hearing itself, and not necessarily toward the outcomes or the fairness of the process. In practical terms, defining the situation is observable in ways that participants ask key questions about what they are enacting. In the context of the Committee of Adjustment, one key question is ‘What constitutes a minor variance?’ Debates about what constitutes a minor variance from the zoning code can be treated as a proxy for questions about the underlying order of the Committee process. The importance of these debates is that such discussion isolates the minor variance as a discretionary, case-specific matter that is validated according to a sense of urban order even as it transgresses the City’s Zoning By-Law. The minor variance is a breach that challenges actors to step beyond the givenness of written bylaws and confront a sense of order itself. It compels talk of the city as a situation of order-making and, in this way, the question of what defines a minor variance provides a practical occasion for studying a phenomenological encounter with urban social order. The question exposes

the conceptual tension between the formal, legalistic order of the city and pre-legal informal notions of the city as an intuitively social or cultural order. In this sense, participants in Committee of Adjustment hearings first specify a grammar defining their relationship to urban administration.

Accordingly, this chapter aims to elucidate procedures for addressing this relationship as a common matter of concern. It explores the first practical stages of participating in an administrative hearing, which parallel the first steps of collectively imagining the hearing as a distinct event that is experienced. These initial stages lay the groundwork for a grammar of the administration rooted in the hearing. This grammar is the basis of subsequent chapters that consider how, once a grammatical protocol for engagement is imitated, people utilize linkages connecting urban cultural experience to administrative practices. In other words, this chapter looks at the iterative development of grammar that enables conceptual work, which is the topic of the following chapters.

The analysis of the grammar of the Committee of Adjustment hearing centres on the problem that participants encounter in simply defining what constitutes a minor variance. This question is treated as a proxy for asking how administrative action comes to be seen, known, observable, and articulated. This ‘knowability’ or ‘communicability’ of the minor variance indicates ways that urban administration comes to be present through the collective discussions. As I suggest, the encounter and problematization of the idea of the minor variance destabilize the strategies that participants bring into the hearing. They are disarmed. Their rhetorical devices are superseded once the talk becomes interlaced with the experience of the hearing as an event, as participation in the hearing and the hearing itself are amalgamated. In a sense, the shift moves the orientation of talk from one of contributing or advising (i.e., ‘input’) to experiencing and making.

Accordingly, the chapter is set out as follows. I first outline the problem inherent in defining a minor variance. I look at the legal and policy context of planning, which makes this a problem first place. Next, I identify attempts in policy and formal codes of administrative practice to define a minor variance. In the following section, I turn to informal definitions that arise from debates at Committee hearings. I then begin to analyze instances in the hearing transcripts where such informal processes occurred. To do this, in the next section, I point out what Peter Eglin (1979) called *rhetorical devices*,³⁴ initial claims that purport to approach a problem with a quasi-methodological approach in an attempt to frame an opinion as objective fact. I then trace a subsequent transformation of discourse by examining four cases where these devices were used in debates about minor-variance definitions. These case studies show, I suggest, that a mode of talking that uses rhetorical devices at the initial stages of the hearing is supplanted as the meeting progresses by a grammar that is endogenous to the hearing as a distinct event.

Defining a Minor Variance

Distinguishing what constitutes a minor variance is an ongoing task for Committee of Adjustment members and for those who speak at Committee hearings. At first glance, the task seems clear. The Committee is authorized to use discretion to grant exceptions to zoning bylaws that regulate such matters as the mass, height, and use of buildings. The power operates within limitations. The Committee is not allowed to change the Zoning By-Law, nor can it grant variances

³⁴ Eglin (1979) explained, “While I shall pay some attention to the rhetorical devices by which each observer asserts the factual status of his account, what I wish to analyze in the main are some of the methods of practical reasoning used in third-party accounts [of urban conflicts] which attempt to reconcile the two versions, that is to resolve the reality disjunctures between them” (p. 368).

that circumvent zoning standards or that are contrary to the objectives of the Zoning By-Law. It can only look at the specific circumstances of a case and decide if certain zoning standards can be relaxed to accommodate construction that maintains existing building patterns.

The question of defining a minor variance becomes far more problematic if we consider what it is not. A variance is not a zoning-by-law amendment, which compared to the minor-variance process entails an extensive program of study and consultation. We can take, to illustrate, a recently approved Zoning By-Law amendment for a site at 26 Birch Avenue in mid-town Toronto. The Birch Avenue project required a zoning amendment to permit a row of townhouses that would double the density permitted by the zoning bylaw (i.e., double the ratio of building floor space to total lot area). To apply for the amendment, the developer had to submit various documents, each of which was prepared by various accredited professional consultants. Among other items, the package included detailed architectural drawings, a planning-rationale statement, a traffic impact study, and a servicing and stormwater management report (Goldberg Group, 2018). Additionally, the zoning-amendment application process involved City of Toronto staff holding at least one public meeting where concerned parties were able to learn about the proposal and raise questions and concerns (Toronto Development Guide, 2020).

A by-law amendment is also political. The local city councillor usually keeps tabs on community discussions. They commonly attend public-consultation meetings and speak directly with the parties involved. The councillor also has a role in introducing the by-law amendment to the municipal legislative process, where the amendment is first considered by City Council's planning committee before it moves up to the district-level Community Council and finally to City Council for final approval (Toronto Development Guide, 2020). If the City Council decision is not

appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal (formally the Ontario Municipal Board), the zoning-by-law amendment is final, and the townhouse proposal can proceed. In all, the rezoning process can take years to complete from the time all the required documents and reports are submitted to the point when approval appeals are exhausted. In sum, amending the Zoning By-Law is a complicated, expensive, and lengthy process. Nevertheless, what is being done in rezoning remains clear. It is an alteration of the Zoning By-Law to accommodate new development. The procedure, documentation, and public consultation are all oriented to ‘working’ on the by-law. In contrast, a minor-variance process happens with less time but more ambiguity. While there are formal definitions of a minor variance, simply defining what a minor variance demands that participants engage in an ad hoc task that occurs at the margins of conventional law, policy, and administration.

Formal Definitions of a Minor Variance

Formal definitions of the term “minor variance” ought to be considered before we look at how the term is used in practice. While formal definitions have a certain legal and political weight, it would be a mistake to assume they are either more precise or influential than informal usage.

A core formal definition of a minor variance is found in the Ontario Planning Act, in the section that describes the functions and powers of a committee of adjustment. The Act states that a committee can

authorize such minor variances ... as in its option is desirable for the appropriate development or use of the land, building or structure, if in the option of the committee the general intent and purpose of the [zoning] by-law and the official plan, if any, is maintained. (Section 45 (1), Ontario Planning Act, R.S.O. 2019)

A second definition, published on the City of Toronto’s website (Toronto Process & Participation, n.d.) provides more clarity. It lists four tests the Committee of Adjustment is to use to determine if a development proposal merits a minor variance:

- (a) The proposal is appropriate for the development of the land and/or building.
- (b) The general intent and purpose of the City’s Zoning By-Law is maintained.
- (c) The general intent and purpose of the City’s Official Plan is maintained.
- (d) The variance requested is minor.

A few important points are worth noting about this list that hints at the ambiguity of the minor-variance process. First, Tests (a) and (c) refer directly to the documented urban-planning policy. However, Tests (a) and (d) imply a certain arbitrariness and circularity; namely, a genuine minor variance needs to be “appropriate” and “minor”. Tests (a) and (d) recall the famous assessment by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart about obscene pornography: “I know it when I see it” (Supreme Court of the United States, 1964).³⁵ What is appropriate and minor accordingly rests on the circumstances of the case and how Committee members engage in the act of adjudicating it. Tests 1(a) and (d) tell us that Committee members need to first confront what is particular about the conditions of the zoning variance to determine if that variance is merited. That suggests that the hearing involves the process of confronting the particularity of the site of the proposed minor variance. Accordingly, the determination of “minor” depends on members engaging in the

³⁵ Justice Stewart’s statement was “I have reached the conclusion, which I think is confirmed at least by negative implication in the Court’s decisions since *Roth* and *Alberts*, that, under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, criminal laws in this area are constitutionally limited to hard-core pornography. I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description, and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that” (Supreme Court of the United States, 1964).

decision-making process directly and having direct experience of the question at hand, and that means the problem of employing jurisprudence outside regular, policy standards and generalizable administrative procedures. Because they must see “it” in front of them for them to know it, each case is a violation of Weberian values of rule-based administration, but it is also a phenomenological encounter with the city.

What is important too in this is how this circumstantial judgment of the Committee of Adjustment members must also be maintained in concert with formal parameters of the urban-planning policy, that is Tests (b) and (c). A minor variance must not only satisfy the Committee members’ situated judgment of what is appropriate and minor but it must also be tested against the text of the City’s Zoning By-Law and Official Plan. The ad hoc encounter with the city thus retains and redefines an orientation to the normative order of zoning law.

Informal Definitions

Along with formal statements defining a minor variance, participants in Committee of Adjustment hearings, including lay people, experts, and Committee members, also work to establish a parallel, informal definition of the term. While they may be familiar with the formal and legalistic definitions of a minor variance, the way they understand this term is by engaging in an iterative and reflexive engagement at the Committee hearing. The process is iterative because, as will be examined, participants tended to start with an initial definition. They arrived at the hearing with a sort of argument or position about what they expected the hearing would address. The idea of what a minor variance allowed them to devise rhetorical devices to argue their position. Yet as they started participating and as they applied these initial rhetorical devices, their talk mutated into something seemingly more ambiguous and more embedded during the hearing. As

they engaged in the hearing, the devices they had brought into the discourse appeared to break down and a new grammar of ‘variance talk’ emerged within the discourse of the hearing. That new grammar became present, and the participants became conversant in an endogenous way of speaking particular to that particular hearing. The improvisation created the situation to which the language and argumentation need to attend. The definition of the minor variance is thus formulated as a definition of the situation of urban order-making. In other words, the variance, as a breach in the nominal order of the city exemplified by the zoning bylaw, becomes accountable to a sense of what it means to administer to the city as that sense emerges through the messiness of the hearing.

Rhetorical Devices

I have identified in the committee-hearing transcripts two rhetorical patterns that I label the quantitative device and the fixing-the-problem device. The *quantitative device* is evident when a speaker takes issue with variance in terms of quantity; for instance, if they argue there are too many variances or the quantitative divergence from the zoning regulation is excessive. The second, *fixing-the-problem device*, is used when speakers are referring to variance in terms of a specific problem or as a method to rectify a mistake or fault in the planning process. In the following sections, I discuss two examples of the quantitative device and three examples of fixing the problem. For each, I first look at the examples in terms of their superficial usage before exploring more subtle ways they bring to light the process of theorizing about order-making in administrative accountability.

Quantitative Device: Case 1

I begin by looking at two instances from a City of Toronto Committee of Adjustment hearing in which the speaker takes issue with the number of variances requested for a single

building project. The passage shows the speaker following a strategy of defining what is proper for the Committee to consider. The problem was glossed as a matter of quantity—that there are simply too many variances. Yet what belied this argument was the matter of how the hearing became an accountable decision-making situation:

Neighbour: I seriously take issue with the application before you. As far as I understand there are nine requests for minor variances. In my limited knowledge, nine is a lot and I don't believe most of them are minor.

(Neighbour, Glenayre Road, Lines 201–204)

Here, the speaker has pointed to the fact that the applicant was asking for nine variances for their project and expressed the opinion that nine appeared to be an excessive number. This position seems simple enough except that the speaker also claimed that “most of them” were not “minor”. This adds a qualitative assessment, or what is minor about a minor variance, to an argument about the number of variances. There are then two qualifications—one quantitative and one qualitative being used in tandem, so that there are three elements to the argument being formulated: (a) the total number of variances is excessive; (b) some of these variances are not minor, and (c) on balance, there are more not-minor variances than minor ones. What we see then is that the number of variances itself is used as an improvised technique that reveals certain sub-elements used to judge the merits of the case. What at first glance appears as a simple argument uncovers a multi-layered process of thinking through grounds for judging the proposed variance.

Quantitative Device: Case 2

In Case 2, the speaker also suggested that the number of variances was the basis for rejecting the variance proposal. Due to the number of variances, the speaker claimed, it was unreasonable to expect anyone to be able to assess the project:

Neighbour: And I'll just like to say that I don't know the number he quoted, but I counted 33 notes [or] variances he wanted to do here. And I don't know how 33 could begin to be considered to be minor.

(Neighbour, O'Connor Drive, Lines 196–198)

The statement seemingly appeals to a common-sense understanding of what constitutes a reasonable number of variances. Even if the variances were each minor, they were beyond comprehension because there were so many. One could infer from this that the speaker had some knowledge of other Committee of Adjustment files. Because they said 33 variances are too many, it suggests they had some sense of what constitutes an acceptable number. But in this instance, the main point is the challenge the speaker presented to his audience, including the Committee and others in the room, of comprehending the variances concurrently. Just what that tipping point is between an acceptable and excessive number of variances was to be determined by the group. The test was the ability of the group to think through the proposal.

The statement also dwelt on a theme of unaccountability or unknowability: “I don't know the number he quoted”; “I don't know how 33 could begin to be considered to be minor.” What appears to be at work here is that the number of variances is cast as something that Committee members could maybe comprehend, but it is not what an average person, such as the speaker, could reasonably process. What is being pointed out is the problem of different levels of understanding, which makes the application dubious in the context of public decision-making. It appeals to what Watson (2018), in echoing Garfinkel, called the “known-in-common” aspect of accountable decision-making. Taken one step further, the known-in-common is not limited to an immediate situation of the Committee of Adjustment hearing because it has a second meaning that is connected to what is beyond the confines of the hearing room, as I will explain.

Where the speaker said, “I counted 33 notes [or] variances he wanted to do here.” I suggest that “do here” has two meanings. First, it addressed the situation of the Committee hearing, the situation where the applicant wished to get the variances approved. But also, “do here” can be read as meaning the construction site and even the variances when realized in a physical form in constructing the building. The “variances he wanted to do here” are the building itself, and so the assessment of what that building will be in the end—its effect on the neighbourhood or the city in general—is being presented as something that defies what can be known in common in terms of physical urban space. Watson (2017) wrote about this as *common-sense geography*, which is a physical manifestation of knowing something in common. Common-sense geography “deals with how members use geographic references or concepts in the course of talk-in-interaction, or to vet the plausibility of future plans” (p. 64).

In the excerpt from the Committee of Adjustment hearing, vetting the proposal involved testing it against the known-in-common ability to foresee what the building plan would be once it is realized as a constructed building. In other words, the speaker was asking rhetorically, “Could you (an any-person) imagine such a building? Could you imagine what all these variances are ‘doing’ on the ground, at this site? Can we all see what is being done here?” The rhetorical mechanism makes clear the work of imagining the work of coming to terms with collective order-making.

Fixing-The-Problem Device: Case 1

The second rhetorical device I want to consider is labelled ‘fixing-the-problem.’ This also appears in practice, as we can see in the following passages. In the first case, an applicant explained why their project would not provide the required amount of permeable ‘green’ landscaping. They

said that a right-of-way running behind the house restricted how the backyard could be changed. The variance allowing substandard landscaping, accordingly, was not about exceeding the parameters of the Zoning By-Law but rather about allowing an otherwise normal project to be built despite abnormal property-ownership conditions. It is in this sense that the applicant deemed the variance to be “technical”:

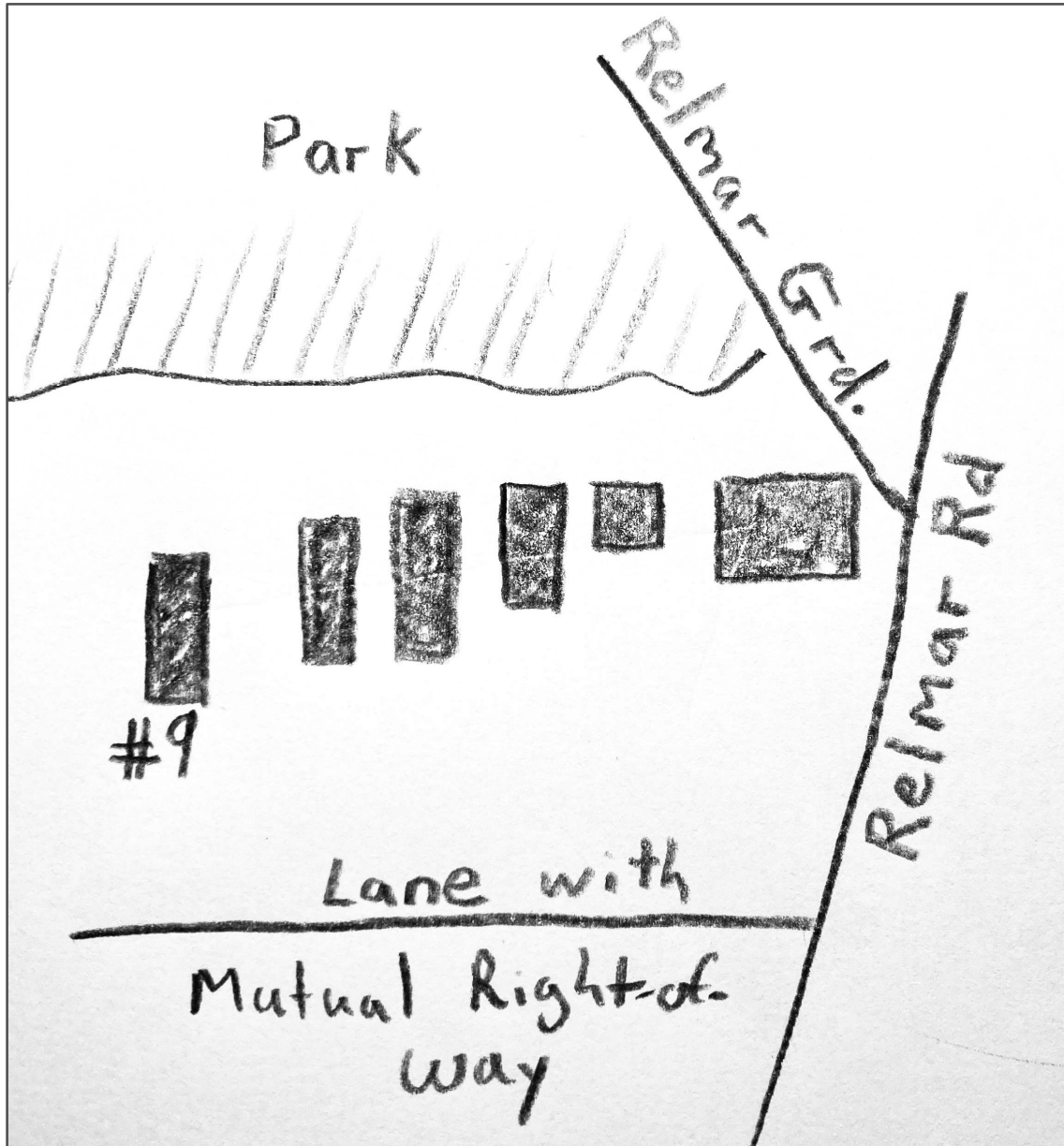
All the houses on Relmar Gardens are accessed via a right-of-way that goes east to west all the way up to Relmar Garden. So technically speaking, there is no way to do any landscaping because that is the access to all the garages on the street so that every property on Relmar Garden has a mutual right-of-way on each other's property.
(Applicant, Relmar Gardens, Lines 42–50)

The deficiency was in the technical, and mechanical implementation of the by-law that comes about because of an abnormal right-of-way condition and not because of deficient landscaping. Only because of a legal restriction—which existed supposedly beyond the control of the applicant and the domain of land-use planning—this space did not satisfy the Zoning By-Law’s definition of landscaped open space such that “there is no way to do any landscaping.” The effort to conform to the zoning regulation was being foiled by a legal restriction that was outside the Zoning By-Law. Furthermore, as the applicant noted, the restriction was a shared problem for neighbouring Reamer Garden properties, which meant that the problem was not tied to the development site, but the conditions common to the site’s surroundings. This point was developed further as the applicant presented a counterweighing consideration: “But the whole backyard is basically interlock [brick]. And that's the only amenity space. So, the beauty of this property is the front of it fronts onto the park” (Applicant, 7 Relmar Gardens, Lines 116–118)

In other words, the backyard of the property functioned like the front yard and vice versa. Parking was at the rear; amenity space was at the front. Moreover, the house did not face the street but instead looked onto a small park that provided a semi-private open space (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Relmar Gardens and Surroundings



Sketch by Author.

The Relmer Gardens case in this way demonstrates how the fixing-the-problem device is about the administration of the Zoning By-Law as representing a physical situation, such as a typical residential property, in particular terms of formulating features of a lot or a building site as *grammatical* elements of an urban-design policy. The administration of zoning represented the Relmer Gardens property as having a deficient rear yard based on a technical assessment of the property, but the minor variance reconceived the unusual situation of the backyard as the de facto front yard. The Committee of Adjustment process was then an intervention that re-presented typical land-use patterns, serving as a corrective lens to resolve distortions of the administrative vision. The language then assumes a sort of duplicity. What is “technical,” and what is “substantial”? What appears to be a violation arising from the administration of the by-law, and what is, in fact, a substantive violation of the by-law’s intent?

Fixing-The-Problem Device: Case 2

A second example of the fixing-the-problem device introduces a second aspect of the minor-variance grammar that tells us about the vulnerability of the pragmatic theory at work during the hearing. At the O’Connor Drive hearing, the applicant seemed to confront the challenge of addressing two distinct understandings of regulation, de facto and de jure compliance:

We comply with the rear yard. But the way it has been measured, it's been measured to the walk-out that we have at the rear. So, for that reason, the setback at the rear has been taken to the steps and not to the rear wall of the dwelling. (Applicant, O’Connor Drive, Lines 69–72)

The applicant claimed to “comply with the rear yard” setback while recognizing that a rear-yard setback variance was nevertheless required because of “the way [it was] measured.” Notable is that no explanation was offered as to why the rear yard had been measured to the steps. It is only

implied that this method was not germane to the Committee’s assessment. And, during the hearing, the Committee members did not challenge this. To put this another way, the applicant asked the Committee to disregard the City’s administrative measuring process in suggesting that there was a more truthful way of determining the relevant rear-yard setback. It is a way of presenting the zoning rules as having two realities, one that comes out of the administrative mechanics of reviewing building plans and a second rooted in supposedly common-sense understandings of how a construction project ought to fit a development site.

A third example, drawn from the same hearing, presents the related challenge of framing the variances as fixing the problem. The following two statements made by the Chair talk about anomalies and technical variances as the other two examples did, but here these were treated as being problematic: “Primarily because you are looking to houses on smaller lots and, also, because the anomaly that it’s a corner property and that always triggers more variances.” (Committee Chair, O’Connor Drive, Lines 344–346).

While recognizing the possibility of site anomalies and the technicality of some variances, the Chair highlighted how these exist in concert with the applicant’s desire for a specific development proposal (“looking to houses on smaller lots”). The Chair was struggling with the question of whether the applicant was merely asking the Committee for help in addressing an abnormal condition (to allow a normal project despite abnormal conditions) or if the applicant was exacerbating problems they face by their plans to reconfigure the lots. At the centre of the Chair’s statement is a question of responsibility or accountability. What was the primary cause of the variances? Were they due to the “anomaly” of a corner lot, which, it was implied, the zoning regulation did not adequately consider, or were the variances due to the applicant’s proposal? The

central issue is not whether it is one or the other. Rather, it is the ambiguity embedded in the fixing-the-problem device that causes the problem in the first place. If the cause of the problem is external and not attributable to the applicant, if the Committee recognizes the problem arising from outside the Zoning By-Law (such as an odd streetscape), then the problem can be remedied at the Committee's discretion. In other words, when the problem was an internal fault of the City of Toronto, the supposedly technical nature of the variance is excusable. It became an internal matter to be reconciled by the City's Committee members.

The relationship between a supposedly technical problem and the question of fault is like a driver telling the mechanic, "My car broke down," while confessing he had forgotten to have the oil changed for some time. In this situation, the mechanic needs to know the manufacturer's recommended schedule for oil changes and the date of the last oil change before determining whether the problem could be something that falls under a warranty and could be fixed in the garage or if the driver's negligence in attending to the car's requirements makes the breakdown a matter beyond the responsibility of the manufacturer or the mechanic. Culpability seeps into the talk of fixing a problem. This is more apparent in a second passage from the same hearing when the Chair deliberated further on the technical and intentional character of minor variances:

You mention these corner lots situations [where] sometimes the variances get very wonky [as] they are defined. So, obviously, it's a lot of variances. Some of them might be technical. But like I said, here they're asking to create a lot as opposed to doing it with an existing lot. So, what you are saying, parking again would be an issue. You'd have a curb cut on Airley, which is not the norm. (Committee Chair, O'Connor Drive, Lines 202–207)

The Chair talked about a relationship between an abnormality of corner lots and the abnormality of the applicant's proposal, thereby recognizing that, although "the variances get very

wonky,” for corner lots, the applicant exacerbates the problem by making new lots as “opposed to doing it with an existing lot.” Moreover, the applicant was proposing to cut the curb to allow a new driveway on Airley Crescent, “which [was] not the norm.” Now the question of culpability merged with a process of identifying norms. Of course, norms are not documented in formal policy but are presented as originating in consensus or the known in common, or the norm stands for conditions of trustworthiness (Watson, 2018) through which public officials make decisions. What is notable in this case is that the assertion about norms was presented not as an isolated or expert opinion of the Chair or Committee members but as something that was being actively verified through the discussion. The norm seems to be a process of accountability that builds trust in that it provides syntax and substance to overcome the gap between the expert framework of the urban administration and the “everyday profane affairs” (Weber, 1947, p. 333) of lived urban experience. The conceptual work being done here, then, is an assemblage of norms as the substructure of trustworthiness so that the making of the situation, as an imagined common space, can be addressed as decision-making.

If we look at the passage again, we see the formulation of accountability. The Chair developed a way of talking about accountability by recapping what had been discussed during the hearing. I underline the relevant parts of the passage, after which I consider how these elements fit together.

You mention these corner lot situations, sometimes the variances get very wonky [as] they are defined. So, obviously, it's a lot of variances. Some of them might be technical. But like I said, here they're asking to create a lot as opposed to doing it with an existing lot. So, what you are saying, parking again would be an issue. You'd have a curb cut on Airley, which is not the norm. (Committee Chair, O'Connor Drive, Lines 202–207, underline added)

The opening phrase, “you mention,” presents the statement as something that builds on an ongoing conversation. The next sentence begins with “so, obviously,” which makes the following reasoning something sharable (obvious) with everyone, accountable and understandable without any advantage. In the third sentence, there is a shift in tone when the Chair says, “But like I said.” This may seem to anticipate a statement that is to be contrary to what had been stated in the second sentence. This could mean that the Chair own’s opinion is being contrasted with something obvious to everyone. In that case, it would represent the interjection of specialized knowledge shared by others. However, the second part of the sentence implies something different because “But like I said” is followed by “here they’re asking,” which showed that the thing which the Chair was referring to was present with him and his audience; that is, the applicant making a request. He cited himself to authorize the point in describing a situation “here.” What remains unclear is just what “here” means—does it refer to the meeting or the development site, or does it conflate the two? I suggest the main function of “here” is not to identify a specific place alone but rather to cast the hearing as a situated proposition. In other words, the Chair was suggesting that the variances should be understood in a specific context, namely, the situation for which the applicant was seeking the Committee’s approval. It means that, in a different situation, a similar request could have a different meaning. “Here” isolates the Chair’s statement. It refers to the situation of the hearing. The indexable hearing situation is defined by the instance of asking for variances. That is why the Chair’s interjection, “But like I said”, was not adding anything new to the discussion. Rather, it was a device to emphasize relationships between elements of the situation, or a sense of proximity that constituted the essential grounds of the problem. In effect, the Chair was

reinterpreting the conversation to plot the elements of the situation and the relationships between them so that they could be treated as a thing, as a ‘here.’

We can think of this as being like a tour bus passing by the famous landmarks of a city. An effective tour guide identifies landmarks in relationship to each other rather than what they are on their own: “Here is the Empire State Building. There is Wall Street. Here is Times Square.” Pointing to the series of landmarks creates meaningful relationships between the audience and the cityscape. Not only are the landmarks identified, but an experience of place (the New York City experience) comes to be realized in common as a real ‘thing’. Being in place is realized, in other words, by demarcating the indexical whole of the situation.

The last two sentences of the passage merit some further attention. At first glance, they seem incongruent with the rest of the statement. The matter of parking was introduced, which seems unrelated to corner variances and building on undersized lots. Also, the Chair moved from recounting what he had said about the neighbours’ statement to directly addressing the neighbours (“what you are saying”). That statement was spelled out in the last sentence, which ended by identifying a tangible result. The phrase “You’d have” caps off the passage by revealing the lasting consequence of the minor-variance proposal: being left with parking that “is not the norm”.

In summary, the Chair's statement reconstructed diverse arguments, options, and matters presented during the hearing. By working out this reconstruction, the Chair generated a sort of code for the minor variance:

Corner variances = Abnormal but treatable

Undersized lots = Abnormal but treatable

Corner variances + Undersized lots = Parking that is abnormal and untreatable

The work the Chair was doing then was both modelling the talk of the proposal and modelling the physical elements of the development proposal itself to make apparent to all the grounds for determining if the variance from the Zoning By-Law was minor. The Chair thereby engaged the audience by assessing a breach of norms while working to place the assessment in a context of communicability. The re-presentation of debate is a demonstration of determining a breach of norms, a breach that should be understood by all present.

Summary

This chapter examined Committee of Adjustment hearings as occasions to witness what happens to the talk of city administration when formal rules are breached. The minor variance is a proxy for a breach in the gloss of order represented in zoning bylaws. In confronting the question of what a minor variance is, participants in the hearings also reveal the question of urban order in its raw state. In other words, as they debate whether a zoning infraction is a legitimate minor variance, we see certain crises as the apparent conventions of administrative practices are superseded by direct experience within an order-making event. Participants are forced to define the situation in which they are engaged, that is, to define the matter or central ‘thing’ of the hearing and by extension the ‘thing’ of city planning. Their problem is to make out what they are to administer and to do this work alongside others.

This work is evident in the way of talking, or grammar, that emerges from the circumstances of the hearing. At the beginning of the hearing, as noted above, participants apply certain rhetorical devices to state their options but, once the hearing unfolds, the circumstances undermine the meaningfulness of these devices. The speakers become disoriented; exchanges become messy. However, the talk then tends to be reconstituted in what might be called

endogenous grammar. It is a particular way of talking (and thinking) that is embedded in the specifics of the hearing. We see this in how speakers begin to draw on experience to address the emerging situation, as they address the ‘what are we doing here?’ question. In this way, the hearing participants haphazardly come to be oriented to the thing, or matter, to address. That thing is in one sense the Committee hearing as an event, but also it is the way this decision-making event resonates conceptually with the city beyond the hearing room, what Garfinkel (1967) called “the normative orders of interaction outside” (p. 107). In short, the process in its many variations represents the collective act of making a city for administration.

In the next chapter, I begin to explore how what is external to administration is drawn into the discourse of the hearing. I look at parts of hearings during which the lived experience of the city starts to inform in situ notions of order-making that emerge through the Committee hearing event. Through this discussion, I begin to develop an argument that is parsed in later chapters, that the process of urban administration is ultimately a process of urban culture, and therefore a greater understanding of urban transformation requires urban administration to be seen in terms of the diversity, variability, and nuance of cultural life in cities.

Chapter 5: From Memory to Accountability

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I considered how participants in the Committee of Adjustment hearings initiate their engagement with urban administration. I suggested that rhetorical devices they introduce to the hearing are undercut once the hearing commences. As participants become immersed in the experience of the hearing, devices are superseded by an endogenous way of talking about issues and problems, and so particular roles and orientations arise that respond to the hearing as a distinct event. While the resultant hearing-specific grammar furthers the depth of engagement, it also causes a crisis of sorts that leads to bafflement and messiness. The grammatical character of the hearing diverges from what participants expected and even what could be deemed standardized or typical, and the hearing becomes strange and disorientating. No longer are participants merely informants in a stable decision-making process; rather, they have become co-creators, or makers, of the hearing event. They are forced to combine a pragmatic engagement with the Committee of Adjustment with self-reflective theorizing *of* administration. That is to say, once they engage in administration, they are compelled to think administratively, theorizing the situation of doing administration. At this point, we see participants fall back on their experience, on their own stock of knowledge of the city. Their vernacular understanding of the city is then used to redefine the hearing; it transforms from an external encounter to a collectively accountable situation. As they draw it into this work, their experience is converted into a form of authorization of common accountability. Their speech founded on the ethos of the city constitutes the basis of authority so that their lifeworlds merge with the logic of urban administration. Memory becomes accountability and collective memory ministers to the city. This chapter looks at how this happens.

As the endogenous grammar of the hearing is established, participants start to reconstruct a sense of what they are addressing. They begin to define the situation. I consider this process in two steps. First, I ask how lifeworld experience is integrated with the hearing grammar in the effort to conceptualize a meaningful situation and, second, how this meaning-making situation applies to the Committee's administrative decision-making. The first half of this chapter, therefore, focuses on the first stage, as participants combine experience and hearing grammar to define the situation. In the second stage, the resulting conditions of the hearing are brought back to standardized administrative decision-making. This point is marked by Committee members as they conclude the hearing with a motion to vote on the proposed variances. In sum, this chapter begins to trace a hermeneutical cycle of administration whereby the conceptual resources are drawn from the lifeworld into the hearing and becomes the resource for accountable discussion, discussion redefines the hearing as a meaningful problem-solving situation, and finally, the specificity of the hearing is applied to the general task of administrating to the city. What this process represents overall is a type of cultural infrastructure of urban administration, the application of which I consider in subsequent chapters.

Applying Experience

As we saw, the grammar of Committee of Adjustment hearings cultivated in situ ways of identifying and talking about core problems of the hearing (i.e., what is a variance?). As this happened, rhetorical devices that participants initially brought to the hearing for engaging administration were superseded by a problem-solving discourse endogenous to the hearing process. In other words, as the problems or issues of the hearing were made present, there developed a commensurate way of speaking to such issues located in the experience of the hearing.

Consequently, the task of the participant changed. No longer were they simply informants contributing to a pre-existing decision-making process. Nor were they merely individuals engaged in the politics of local decision-making. Instead, their speaking position was oriented to the idiosyncratic conditions of the hearing as it unfolded and, within that orientation, they came to define a situation of problem-solving. The hearing itself provided the grounds, or an ethos, that authorized the reflective theorizing of their speech. The conditions they ended up navigating were produced by themselves as participants working with others (though not always cordially) to develop a localized work process of accountability, a process that was distinctive, circumstantial, and iterative within the interpersonal communicative actions of the hearing room. At the same time, what was most remarkable was how such a creative process of talk remained committed to structures of administration and the city outside the committee room. The idiosyncratic discussion curiously allowed the hearing participants to address the generalized concept of the city as an objectified social order. It was the order of the city that the hearing ultimately came to address both immediately and externally. In other words, what was so remarkable about a Committee of Adjustment hearing is how the situation of the hearing was defined by reflexive talk of experience that is also a process of conceptualizing the city as a site of order-making. As the hearing participants became absorbed in defining their situation, they accordingly worked toward fabricating a common orientation to elements of the urban landscape—including streets, neighbourhoods, or individual properties—that stands for general urban order. That stuff that is outside the hearing, in a sense, was reconstructed, albeit imperfectly, *inside* the hearing as a way of conceptualizing the practise of city making.

In the discussion below, I examine the conceptual work of the organization (Smith, 1987) of order-making by appropriating biographical and historical experience as resources for contextualizing administrative action. Examples from Committee hearings show participants working toward theorizing experience to form their unique in situ way of conceptualizing administration. This does not mean memories and outlooks are mere ‘inputs,’ like materials for a manufacturing process or witness testimony at a trial, which serves to substantiate facts. Nor does it mean that narratives of personal experience direct the course of the hearing. Rather, the use of memory and experience reveals how urban administration proves to be very much dependent on mnemonic processes that animate the cultural infrastructure of urban life in general.

Integrating Experience

We can see the layers of order-making by looking closely at a single hearing. In this case, a homeowner wished to enclose the front porch of his house. He proceeded to do this without first obtaining a building permit from the City’s building department. As reported during the hearing, when building inspectors learned about the work, the owner was issued a stop-work order and was told to apply for the appropriate permit. When he did, the zoning inspectors at the City’s building department found that enclosing the porch would make the house longer and closer to the front lot line than permitted by the City’s Zoning By-Law. That meant that the building permit could not be issued until the Committee of Adjustment approved the necessary variances. We turn now to examine passages from this case.

The first passage considered is between the applicant’s neighbour (labelled as Christos) and the Committee Chair. It shows how memories are introduced to the discourse of public decision-making. Here, the neighbour did this in attempting to link the merits of the porch-

enclosure project to a moral judgment of the applicant's character. The Chair blocked this attempt and then opined about what deserved the Committee's attention and what matters were extraneous or inappropriate. The neighbour then heeded the Chair's admonishment. He apologized and finished with a brief comment about the proposed variances.

CHRISTOS: I repeat again it was is approved before what then is approved now. Secondly, he is not using it, ok, just for smoking. I know the character of the person.

CHAIR: We don't talk about the characters of people. We plan for the property.

CHRISTOS: I'm very sorry. I'm very sorry. So, the whole idea really here in this instance is it will increase all the variances according to the zoning bylaws.

(Neighbour 1 "Christos" and Chair, Margueretta Street, Lines 151–155)

In the first sentence, Christos implied a narrative that discredited the applicant: a disregard for building regulations and misuse of the porch "just for a smoke." The implied narrative served as the neighbour's assertion that he could expose to the Committee the duplicity of the applicant ("I know the character of the person"). Specifically, he suggested that his insight about the applicant based on his own experience might be of interest to the Committee's mandate. However, the Chair responded using the logic of liberal jurisprudence. In legal terms, the comment about smoking was *ultra vires*, beyond the proper jurisdiction of the Committee. According to the Chair, the owner's smoking habit was about the *applicant* and not the merits of the *application*. Accordingly, talking about smoking represented an affront to a natural-justice notion of a fair, impartial hearing and so it was something that ought to be dismissed. This is what the Committee Chair made clear when he stated, "We don't talk about characters of people. We plan for the property" (Chair, Margueretta Street, Line 153). Complaints about smoking, accordingly, seemed on the surface to reveal ignorance about due administrative process. And so the complaints were not only insulting to the

applicant, but they also offended the legitimacy of the Committee of Adjustment as a legally constituted deliberative body. This is perhaps why the Chair was adamant first to assert the principle of “We plan for property, not people.” However, the matter was not settled.

In the second passage, a second neighbour labelled as Danny also complained about the unpermitted construction and the applicant’s smoking habit. However, the course of his exchange was markedly different. Noting that the porch-enclosure work had started without a permit, Danny asked that the variances be denied because approval would effectively condone illegality. The Chair interjected to dismiss this point. However, Danny persisted. He shifted the tone of his argument by offering a first-person account of his involvement in the matter. As Danny elaborated, the Chair took interest in engaging with him:

DANNY: Yes. So, my question was that when he was building that veranda it was all open veranda and he is doing it on the weekend.

CHAIR: Hum.

DANNY: And he was about to close it. I call the 311 [Toronto’s service line].

CHAIR: Hum.

DANNY: So...

CHAIR: That's why we're here.

DANNY: He did it illegally, it's not legal. And he thought he was getting away with it unless when I did the move on the call on 311.

CHAIR: Right.

DANNY: He started with illegal ways.

CHAIR: But aside from the fact that he started doing it without having the permission to do it...

DANNY: But he knew.

CHAIR: What is your objection?

DANNY: Ya.

CHAIR: Tell the committee what your objection is to it.

DANNY: My objection is that he smokes two packs of cigarettes a day.

CHAIR: Ah-huh
DANNY: And I'm afraid it could burn the neighbourhood around the house. So,
it's not a greenhouse.
CHAIR: In the summertime, he doesn't go outside, he stays in the...
DANNY: He loves to smoke in the veranda.
(Neighbour 2 "Danny" and Chair, Margueretta Street, Lines 151–155)

In the first passage, Christos complained about the neighbour's smoking habit and the Chair adamantly censured him. In the second, Danny made a similar statement. Instead of dropping the issue when the Chair showed indifference, he attempted to clarify the variances as a moral problem. Not only did the applicant fail to get a permit before building, but according to Danny, "he knew" that the project was illegal. The Chair still did not understand ("So what is your objection?") so Danny expanded his point by making a provocative claim about the perceived risk the applicant represented to public order. He argued the applicant's smoking was a fire hazard that put the neighbourhood at risk. By embellishing the matter, the neighbour stirred the Chair's interest. The Chair engaged in a debate, first with a counterpoint speculating that "in the summertime, he [the owner] doesn't go outside," which implied that a fire hazard was unlikely because only during the dry summer months could drifting cigarette ash ignite a house fire. Danny jumped on this as confirmation of his point, interjecting to affirm his first-hand knowledge of the applicant's character ("He loves to smoke on the veranda"). Within a few sentences, Danny, and the Chair shifted from normatively correct ways of addressing "property, not people" toward an ostensibly tangential question about fire hazards, a matter which they both seemed ill-qualified to resolve. They ended in a haphazard debate about the potential risk of smoking causing a house fire and how that risk was related to the character of the applicant. How this dispute continued to have some bearing on the zoning variance was not readily apparent.

In the first passage, the Chair closed down the debate about smoking when he rebutted Christos by citing legalistic principles. However, in the second passage, the Chair started to acknowledge the matter by actively disagreeing with Danny. Looking at these two exchanges together, we see the Committee becoming entangled with rhetorical dynamics that developed as the hearing unfolds. That is to say, the first tier of legalistic principle—formulated as “we plan for property not people”—is bypassed by another layer of rhetorical engagement. The exchange between the Chair and Christos instilled a paralegal framework within the discussion that drew the discourse toward talk of experience. The new framework of experience tested the speakers’ capacity to locate themselves within the city as agents of that community. In this way, the debate about smoking served as a proxy for debating the management of shared spaces. That is to say, by way of the smoking issue, the hearing was not about zoning per se but instead an underlying problem of the boundary between private and public space, a problem which is central to the question of administrating cities.

Accordingly, it can be argued that smoking serves as a way of talking through the essential problem that zoning variances expose. The boundary problem was evoked by the proposed front-porch enclosure, and smoking provided readily understandable symbolic resources to address the question of boundaries as a public policy and as a city-building matter. Since smoking drifts across boundaries, diffusing fumes and ash into a common space, smoking is a manifestation that participants confront when conceptualizing the delineation of public and private space in terms of public policy. Likewise, smoking is a personal habit that disperses into public space, and this makes it an ambiguous and unpredictable matter that demands some sort of resolution. Smoking furthermore assumes a certain symbolic resonance with the front-porch project because both

smoking and porches extend the domestic domain of the house out to public space (Habracken, 2000). Moreover, porches place homeowners' eyes on the street' (Jacobs, 1961) so that common space is subject to a homeowner's gaze. Enclosing the porch, as the applicant proposed, may thus be seen to be like smoking on the porch in that both actions unsettle established boundaries.

The mention of smoking accordingly introduces a problematic line of thought about the front porch that reveals anxieties about establishing a sense of order in public space. What began as an evaluation of zoning variances was elevated to be a matter of common concern about common interactions. But it is clear too that as the porch became a public matter, participants started working through a whole abstract and imaginative exercise, which might initially seem superfluous. The participants, including the Committee members, collectively confronted a disturbing formulation: His porch project would upset the balance between public and private space, which was already at risk by the applicant smoking on the porch. The porch was a semi-public space so that, just as the use of the porch becomes a matter of common concern, 'the public' was entitled to enter the private domain of judging the applicant's integrity. Smoking on the porch in full view of the neighbours degraded the definition of public policy as it did the Committee's credo of legal authority: "We don't talk about the characters of people. We plan for property" (Chair Margareta Street, Lines 153). The discourse during the hearing can in this way be treated as the work of identifying what is an appropriate discussion of the city. This moreover suggests that the passages about smoking demonstrate a process of developing accountable standards of correct speaking as formed and presented within the community. It shows that participants also then confront these standards as issues or problems. The task then is to consider participants' relationship to such emerging standards.

The two passages about smoking and the front porch illustrate ways that informal experience is drawn into a formal administrative process. They show how what might at first seem extraneous to adjudicating a minor variance becomes an issue that facilitates the definition of such a situation. Biography and self-reflection established an understanding of change in their neighbourhood and, by extension, order and change in their city. Order-making forms the issue that participants end up addressing. It becomes the means of furnishing an agenda for enacting their engagement. Analyzing talk of the smoking issue, therefore, demonstrates the depth of reasoning and meaning-making participants practise as the hearing proceeds to the point that the hearing becomes saturated with the history and quotidian culture of urban life that nourish a sense of collective self-reflection. As narratives of experience are brought to bear on the administrative functions of zoning-variance administration, the engagement with administration solidifies as an accountable phenomenon, as a social fact. This points to the importance of the administration of theorizing heritage as a form of city-building or in that the messiness of the city can be best understood as a type of cultural infrastructure. This brings us to the final question of this chapter. What happens once lived experience furnishes the situational definition of the Committee hearing and the process of administrative procedure is reasserted?

Production of Symbolic Relations

So far, I have traced the interactive process of integrating experience with the unfolding deliberative logic of the hearing. This messy process shows that the committee hearing is not about zoning per se but instead about underlying problems of administration and that participation in the hearing manifests as the iterative synthesis of a plurality of experiences and forms of order-making. One way to clarify what a messy process means is to consider closely the interplay of symbolic

forms that operate between normative poles of private interest and the public good. From this perspective, it might be argued that the smoking issue furnishes a set of symbols that allow participants to talk through an essential problem of city building that the zoning variances expose. Namely, the proposed front-porch enclosure evokes the problem of defining boundaries, and smoking offers the symbolic resources to address this problem in terms of city making. Seen in this way, smoking stands for a transgression of boundaries. It drifts freely across property lines, it diffuses fumes from the mouth into the lungs of others, and it is both legal and taboo. Smoking moreover assumes a certain symbolic resonance with the professional canon of city planning, for the front porch extends the domestic domain of the house out to the public space of the city (Habraken, 2000). Porches put the homeowners' 'eyes on the street', to use Jane Jacobs's (1961) well-used phrase so that the common space is subject to a homeowner's gaze.

Smoking is the manifestation of the order and messiness that participants confront when conceptualizing lived experience in terms of public policy. The centrality of the smoking habit in the zoning-variance deliberation both clarified what was ambiguous and unpredictable in training attention on the details of a single project while relying on the Zoning By-Law as the model of generalizable order. The predicament demanded some sort of resolution, but the procession of symbols—the house, street frontage, wafting smoke, a fire hazard—produced little more than irresolute ambiguity. The mention of smoking accordingly introduced a problematic (and provocative) line of thought about the front porch that revealed anxieties about establishing a sense of order in public space. What began as an evaluation of zoning variances was elevated to be a matter of common concern about common interactions. But it is clear too that as the porch became a public matter, participants started working through a whole abstract and imaginative exercise,

which might initially have seemed superfluous. The participants, including the Committee members, collectively confronted a disturbing formulation: *His porch project upset the balance between public and private space which was already at risk by the applicant smoking on the porch.* The porch was a semi-public space, so just as the use of the porch became a matter of common concern, ‘the public’ was entitled to enter the private domain of judging the applicant’s integrity. Smoking on the porch in full view of the neighbours degraded the definition of public policy as it did the Committee’s credo of legal authority: “We don’t talk about the characters of people. We plan for property” (Chair, Margaretta Street, Line 153).

The play of symbols indeed brings forth and clarifies what is problematic in the premise of the zoning variance. Yet the economy of symbols still fails to produce the new relationship among the plurality of experiences in relation to the commonality of the project that the hearing embodies, and which the actors are working to administer. The symbolic interaction is a register of the problem-solving situation, not the situation itself. The interaction gathers various experiences within a certain implied horizon of understanding, so that the incidental and profound, the legalistic, and the biographical interact and overlap—even entangle. The messy nearness of converging experiences and formulations thereby renders the plurality of experience an aesthetic, a condition that, if not directly addressable, is nonetheless a mode of address that makes a committee hearing an immersive occasion, as happening in and through the city.

Restructuring Experience: The Motion to Vote

For the duration of this chapter, I change focus to consider how, once the hearing situation is shaped through the talk, experience is applied to an actionable process of administration. To do

that, I concentrate on what took place at the final stages of the hearing as Committee members moved to vote to either approve, refuse, or defer the minor-variance application.

The motion to vote is revealing as it represents a moment when the Committee of Adjustment hearing turns from discussion to action, from public preparation to administrative decision-making. The motion to vote constitutes a type of hermeneutic exercise involving listening, sorting, judgment, action, and resolution. Additionally, the motion to vote is when the Committee asserts a relationship between a nonconforming building project and the City's zoning law. That means that, through the vote, the Committee authorizes a particular way of applying the law in that it supplies authority from outside norms of representative legislation. That which is normally encoded as a bylaw is instead encoded through an administrative-tribunal process by way of administrative-judicial authority. At the same time, the motion to vote on the variance marks a departure from conventional administrative practices, for it reinstates administrative competence to a nonconforming situation. The decision represents a movement away from the generalizable, administrative reading of the law to the discretionary reinterpretation of the law considering the circumstances of a single case. At the same time as it is an assertion of administrative power, the motion to vote is also very much incompatible with administrative conventions, such as maintaining neutrality, upholding rule-bound practices, and disregarding particularities of specific cases in favour of generalized processes. It is at the point of voting that the Committee passes through the zone of ad hoc decision-making to arrive at a final and binding declaration.

If the Committee of Adjustment hearing is conceived of as a two-step process with the first step being the hearing and the second the decision-making vote, then the transition between these phases was blurred in practice. While the motion to move to a vote signalled a basic shift in the

Committee's procedural modes, there was little acknowledgement of this before the actual vote. For example, as the attention of the Committee shifted from disputants to fellow Committee members, the Chair did not usually identify this. We do not hear something like "We need time to confer with each other" or a formal call for an in-camera meeting even as members started to engage in impromptu in-camera discussion before the vote. The interesting thing is that these conferences were obvious. They happened without the Committee leaving the hearing room yet, as a taboo, they were not acknowledged.

Another break is how Committee members changed roles. As they voted, they reinstated their job as expert adjudicators. They acted by way of their professional obligation to the City as a legal-administrative entity. When each member raised their hand, they did so as an expression of judgment that was oriented to their service to the City of Toronto. They subordinated themselves to the logic of urban planning policy and administration. The motion to vote therefore reasserted the division between the everyday experience of the city and the formal logic of administration. The formality of administration apparent at the start of the hearing, which faded as the hearing proceeded, was revived with the Committee vote.

The revival of formal administration comes through in detail in the language Committee members used leading up to the vote. The grammar of the hearing was replaced by a far more legalistic syntax. Instead of addressing the audience, the Committee members addressed each other; and they retreated from the narratives of storytelling and personal experience. When they talked about a motion to vote, they used formulaic expressions such as "ready for a motion," "concerns are addressed," or "subject to conditions" that marked a return to the stiffness of administrative practice. For example:

MEMBER: Committee members, any questions for Mr Marco or the neighbours?
Or are we ready for a motion?

(Chair, O'Connor Drive, Lines 354–355);

CHAIR: So the concerns are addressed. Committee members, any questions for
the applicant or the neighbours, or are we ready for a motion?

(Chair, Parkview Hill, Lines 272–274);

MEMBER: I would like to make those two conditions, the motion subject to those
conditions.

(Committee Member, Glenayre Road, Lines 509–510).

Even the word “motion” itself implies a shift in direction. As we see in the first two excerpts above, the motion was considered something that came at the end of the hearing debate: either the debate continued, or else a motion to vote could be introduced. This also imparts a certain naturalistic rationale for the transition from one phase to another. Once the debate was exhausted, the Committee was said to be “ready” to move to a vote. In the first example above, the Chair made it clear that questioning the applicant and the neighbours stood in the way of the vote. Once the questioning ends, the Committee would be free to resolve the matter. In the second example, the Chair says that “concerns” have been addressed, so it is appropriate to “move” to a vote. In the third, the Committee member’s statement suggested that the motion to vote could be directed within certain constraints in that it was “subject to ... conditions.”

Considering this, it is worth asking how the discourse during the hearing, which gravitates around experience, becomes aligned with the finality and formality reintroduced by the motion to vote. To do that, I first looked at a short speech a Committee member gave at the end of the hearing about the smoker’s front porch to introduce a motion to vote. I then discuss a second passage from

the end of another hearing. What these passages show is the process of synthesizing the talk of everyday experience with the function of administration. As the Committee member asserted as they prepared to vote, the urban lifeworld is folded into and subsumed within administrative orientation.

This synthesis is clear in the speech introducing the motion to vote to conclude the hearing on the front porch. What is particularly notable here is how the member presented smoking as integral to the formal deliberative process. Earlier in the hearing, the Committee Chair had acknowledged the smoking issue but rejected it as a pertinent consideration. Yet, at the close of the hearing when the Committee members were about to fulfill their formal obligations as adjudicators, the member endorsed the view that smoking is a legitimate consideration:

MEMBER: I want to move to approve the application. While it's true that we have lots of people who come here that started working before approval so that Mr. Davidson is not the first one and he's stopped, and he's brought his application and as he said, he's been waiting since August. And, I think it's laudable that instead of smoking in the house he wants to build his porch so he can smoke out there. At his age, there is probably nothing that he can do about his addiction to tobacco so and with respect to burning, burning the house down he can do it either inside the house or outside the house. The fact is that it is not going to stop smoking too. I move that the application be approved.

(Committee Member, Margueretta Street, Lines 276 – 284)

Contrary to the Chair's earlier admonishment, the member asserted that the zoning variances were indeed related to smoking. The member's mention of the earlier discussions of smoking made those discussions part of his deliberation, and he further speculated about the applicant, his age, and his capacity to change his behaviour. We hear the formulation that long-established behaviour was

unchangeable, and so the smoking habit was a fact beyond the Committee's control. Moreover, instead of dismissing the talk of the smoking matter as *ultra vires* as the Chair had done, the Committee member recognized smoking as a fact that the Committee confronted in adjudicating the variances. This demonstrates how the external experience forms a way of mutual accountability in defining the hearing as a situation for common administrative action.

The statement also developed a theme of limitations. The member fatalistically noted unlawful construction projects are "widespread." He thinks nicotine addiction is largely "irreversible." The ability of the applicant to change his behaviour is limited due to the onset of "age." The possibility of a house fire exists "no matter" where the owner smokes. Yet, the fatalism was not merely an expression of a cynical attitude. There was something more productive occurring.

The Committee member began by noting that the process of seeking zoning variances after construction started is not unusual ("Lots of people who come here that started working before approval"). The applicant's actions were then connected to the context of the Committee hearing ("he's stopped, and he's brought his application and as he said, he's been waiting since August"). The message was that the transgression had happened in the past and that it had been absolved as the Committee was presently dealing with a legitimate application. Although the project was illegal in a strict sense, that fact did not discredit the minor-variance application going forward. The Committee of Adjustment, the Committee member was saying, was versed in legal ambiguities and could easily tolerate good-faith transgressions. Ultimately, as the Committee member noted, the applicant had submitted to the authority of the City and doing that had brought his project within the common process of urban administration. In this sense, while the substance of the

passage is about the urban experience—one that lies outside the legal, administrative order—the purpose is to reinstate that experience within administrative conduct. The lived experience of the applicant, of confronting the illegal project on the ground and in their routine context, was shown to be acceptable to the policy world of urban administration.

The passage confronts the notion of limits in a second way. In making the argument, the Committee member categorized issues presented during the hearing: some facts were obsolete (i.e., the unauthorized construction) while others were pertinent (the applicant had come before the Committee). In some sense, the passage can be understood didactically, as a lesson about how problems can be resolved and how transgressions may be exonerated. The Committee's mandate is thus defined by approaching the limitations of governability, between what can be administered and what is beyond administration, what is a genuine problem and what is mere griping. The appeal is for others to see the limits of a decision embedded (somewhat obliquely) in the situation of the hearing grounded in urban everyday experience. The member's statement, therefore, anchored the judgment of the voting member's decision in situ so that the vote became inseparable from the localized, circumstantial, conditions of the urban community. The decision was limited in that it was embedded within the culture of the city.

In its entirety, the passage is a pronouncement on the limits of the Committee's power and a corresponding definition of the situation in which the Committee and hearing participants find themselves. It shows the work of identifying, explicating, and authorizing the Committee's decision-making situation as, ultimately, a cultural project. The pronouncement serves to move the talk of lived experience toward the limits of making so that experience is fully drawn out as an

administrative practice. And, with that, comes an order of encoding urban culture as an administrative action.

The following examples further demonstrate this. Here, a Committee member has introduced a motion to vote on a severance that was tied to a set of zoning variances:

MEMBER: I move that the application for severance, the application for consent to sever the property into two undersized residential lots, be refused. I think that particularly the twenty-two-foot lot is out of keeping with the area even if the average is thirty. This is still twenty-five percent or so smaller in terms of width. And there's lots there like Mrs. Pappas' across the road that is forty-one feet, so I would say that this is out of keeping with the character of the area.

(Committee Member, O'Connor Avenue, Lines 276–284)

On the surface, the statement seems to dwell entirely on quantitative considerations, namely, the width of the lots on the street compared to the lots being proposed. In that way, for the most part, the member addressed something seemingly objective, quantifiable, and accountable. Discovering a lot is “twenty-five percent or so smaller” than the norm did not require public debate. In this sense, the hearing process might appear to have been superfluous. However, the final sentence of the statement counters this implication. It demonstrates that the process of administrative adjudication is committed to the rhetorical dynamics of the hearing. Even this ostensibly quantifiable analysis remains committed to the hearing event.

We see this unfold in the last sentence of the statement, which has two parts. The first part links the quantitative assessment to something specific, or personal: “There's lots there like Mrs. Pappas' across the road that is forty-one feet.” This recasts the forty-foot-wide lot as a Pappas-type lot. The suggestion then was that the neighbourhood was organized according to a local lot type, or that local knowledge was needed to appreciate the pattern. This also implied that what Pappas

had said during the hearing was recognized in connection with the quantitative lot-width analysis. Like the smoking issue and the debate about fire hazards discussed earlier, the grammar of the hearing was not abandoned.

By making this connection between qualitative analysis and the hearing's endogenous grammar, the Committee member created a cultural meaning for the 'forty-one foot lot.' The analysis thereby was embedded in the hearing and the narrative course that the hearing event produces. The comment connected to the lived experiences of the hearing participants and the shared experience of everyone who had witnessed the discussion of that experience. It indicated the Committee's decision was not a foregone conclusion or merely a technical calculation. Decision-making was instead shown in the member's motion to arise from an embedded understanding of a unique, shared, accountable and productive hearing experience.

Of course, it could be argued that the member's statement was merely a patronizing gesture or a superficial acknowledgement of public participation. However, this conclusion seems less tenable when considering the second and concluding part of the sentence: "so I would say that this is out of keeping with the character of the area." In this, character—not lot width—was recognized as the primary standard to judge the zoning variance. The quantitative assessment of lot widths was instead rendered as a subordinate instrument to assess neighbourhood character. In the way the member set up the statement, the numerical standard was levered by the reference to Pappas' testimony to affirm the localized way of talking about the character of the neighbourhood. The tension of arriving at an administrative conclusion, one that is plausibly grounded in impartiality while also tied to locally validated information, was accordingly tied back to the circumstantial conditions of the hearing. In this way, the rationale for the motion to bring the matter to a vote

operated concurrently on two distinct levels: The seemingly neutral (the timelessness of the lot-width analysis) and the contingent (the commonality of bearing witness to the Pappas' experience). Even if the Committee member's statement was largely about lot widths, it nevertheless came by way of the account of personal experience in the city so that it established the merging of a numeric and observational analysis within a single sentence. The member's motion in this way formulated the situation: it says what is going on and how the scene works within the wider context of the city.

Summary

This section has considered ways that speeches introducing motions to vote exemplify the dual structure of urban administration. The speeches show testimony weaving together everyday urban experience with the procedural logic of administration, effectively bringing lifeworld experience in alignment with the Committee of Adjustment's authority. The Committee hearing was not about the applicant's smoking habit or the fact that Pappas' property was a certain width. Nor were these decisive factors in the decision itself. Rather, these seemingly extraneous elements provided material to generate situation-defining particularities through which the Committee's decision was made. The Committee's decision to approve or reject the application happened *within* a synthetic understanding of smoking but not *because* of the smoking habit. The analysis of lot widths was *by way of understanding* Pappas within the context of the neighbourhood but not *because* of it. The informality of the hearing did not lead to the decision; it defined a situation *through* which the Committee process took part in the generative culture of urban life.

The work of forging a connection between the routine lifeworld of the City and the process of administration is the central challenge that participants face at the Committee of Adjustment. As they develop a way of talking about this challenge, they draw resources of memory and

experience into the discussion. The result is a messy concoction of formal and informal discourse. By looking closely at this process, we see the hearing mutating into something other than a two-sided engagement between members of the public and agents of the City. Instead, participants also confronted a third component of engagement, that is, the phenomenological development of the hearing. By *making* something of the hearing, they generated an event. That event put a demand on their understanding of their lifeworld in the city both within the hearing room and beyond. It demanded the conception of city experience be meaningfully accountable to the hearing situation and vice versa. In other words, the hearing event became yet another city-life incident that is both comparable to experience and—perhaps more importantly—representative or typical of a sense of urban order.

These broad ethnomethods of conceiving order are therefore born of the work of making, the experience of what is made and of the collective formulation of experience (collective memory) that precedes that making. That means that the hearing emerges as a site of cultural infrastructure, as a place where meaning-making, memory, and collective accountability are synthesized and self-reflectively confronted as a collective problem. This is not to say that the results of the hearing are equitable or fair, or that each participant is granted due consideration. What this messy meaning-making process shows is that the hearing both supersedes and reaffirms the administrative process. In defining the situation of the hearing, participants engage in a sort of fabrication of urban culture, setting the stage for a culture that takes the form of accountable decision-making and is finally distilled as an administrative outcome represented by the Committee's decision. The way that seemingly trivial troubles, conflicts, and statements shape the hearing discourse in this way elevates the otherwise routine administrative task of assessing zoning variances into a cultural

process. This produces localized methods of channelling the productivity of theorizing lifeworld's experience into administrative decision-making. As a result, the application of administrative authority, such as granting relief from zoning-bylaw standards, is authenticated by the observability of the situation that it addresses. The problem of defining the hearing is realized as an experience, and with that experience arises the conception of possibilities and limitations of that engagement. In the second part of the chapter, we saw how motions to move to a vote exemplified this conceptualization. The examples show the synthesis of 'vernacular' experience with formal rules, tactics with strategy, the lifeworld of the city and the policy world of urban administration. In these passages, the limits of what participants and committee members conceptualize are brought forward. It is the encounter with such limits that allows the work of making to proceed. The hearing, in other words, defines the situation that generates that 'thing' that participants come to address, the city that they administer.

PART III: Applications

Chapter 6: Gentrification and the Situation of Urban Transformation

Introduction

I begin this chapter by restating the questions posed in the first: How do people in cities experience change? How do they conceptualize a sense of order for acting in the face of endemic transformation? How do they imagine their lifeworld, their sense of dwelling, and even their phenomenological sense of being present in the city? How does the urban lifeworld engage the world of urban administration?

This chapter confronts these questions by building on the analysis of Committee hearings. However, instead of treating urban administration in occasions where it is explicitly recognized as such in law and practice, here I begin thinking of an orientation to the city defined by administering to it. The focus remains on the ways people in cities conceptualize specific situations for administering the city and on how such action involves the relationship between the lifeworld and administration, but now the scope extends out of the committee room and expands from the scale of a single lot to the neighbourhood.

In this chapter, I consider the transformation in older neighbourhoods of central Toronto undergoing various degrees of gentrification. In these neighbourhoods, much of the ‘first-generation’ housing stock, built before the 1950s, is being renovated or replaced by larger and much more upmarket projects. This change is often stark, as shown in Figure 3 (below). The style, scale, and relationship to the street of the new homes often create an aesthetically violent rupture. In other cases, the transformation is less apparent but no less radical. The exterior of an older house might be largely preserved while the interior is ‘gutted’ and rebuilt. New windows or a trendy front door might be the only hints of the drastic transformation within.

Figure 3

A First-Generation House Between Replacement Houses in the Bedford Park Neighbourhood



Note. Photo by author.

Moreover, visible architectural changes represent decades-long social and economic trends: a greater concentration of wealth and a persistent population decline. These neighbourhoods are places that exemplify a particular—and arguably untenable—relationship to the broader community. In a city where many find even basic shelter grossly unaffordable, many houses in these neighbourhoods are underutilized assets with more bedrooms than occupants (Hulchanski, 2006; Toronto City Planning, 2021).³⁶

³⁶ A recent report by the City of Toronto planning department found over-housing was a key concern, noting that “in 2016, almost 135,000 Toronto households were underhoused (living in dwellings with an insufficient number of bedrooms), while there were more than three times as many households who were overhoused” (Toronto City Planning, 2021, n.p.)

While it is difficult to pinpoint the cause of Toronto's mid-town transformation, it is clear these neighbourhoods are highly sought after. They have top-rated schools, well-maintained amenities, proximity to main highways and the downtown core, and a degree of charm. A walk along some of these streets shows a seemingly frantic scene of rebuilding, renovations, and resale.

At the same time, this demand remains channelled by restrictive planning policies, zoning bylaws, and homeowner politics, which exclude any form of housing except the dominant typology of detached and semi-detached homes (Kramer, 2019). These codes favour property owners with the greatest access to credit and cash to finance custom home-building and renovation projects for their use or as a one-off speculative venture. The rapid inflation of property values, in turn, seems to perpetuate an economic logic whereby rising property values effectively pay for the rebuilding process. As a result, luxurious mini-mansions continue to replace the remaining handful of mid-century bungalows and split-levels.

While the economics of transformation is important, here I wish to look at gentrification through a different lens. I want to think of it as exemplifying an engagement of personal experience with the city and as a means of encapsulating how domestic space intersects with the conceptualization of urban order. By viewing gentrification in this way, the analysis I develop traces the link between everyday experience and the normative order of the city. In other words, I'm interested in the connection between building or rebuilding private homes and the sense of 'making a home' in the city. It is this aspect of neighbourhood gentrification whereby property owners seemingly move toward engaging the city as a collective building project, as something that is made and remade. I am certainly not arguing that the process is fair or justified, as many suffer the consequences of gentrification, directly and indirectly, both in the short and long term.

The point is that the conceptual movement embedded in gentrification contends with the task of aligning what is specific to what is general, that is, what is of the lifeworld and what is administered.

Agents of gentrification, including homeowners, do-it-yourself renovators, and small design-build speculators, are obliged to administer to the broader city. Their engagement with the city in this way occurs through the specifics of the house and of dwelling in the city, that is, the lifeworld is carried out into the broader ‘thing’ of the city. Conversely, it means that within the spaces of the domestic lifeworld, they also confront (or are even haunted by) the city as a form of order and accountability. Accordingly, in this chapter, I start to apply what was found in the analysis of the Committee of Adjustment hearings to a wider and more informal theatre of urban administration. In the openness of residential real estate, amid the dynamics of urban transformation, a process of defining the situation of attending to the city is uncovered.

In this discussion, I use the word “gentrification” in a somewhat unconventional way. Gentrification commonly refers to the displacement of established neighbourhood communities by wealthier newcomers. The displacement typically alters the composition of a neighbourhood in terms of class, ethnicity, race, and consequent shifts in political power. The study of gentrification is in this respect the study of ways that urban change adversely affects communities by imposing financial stress (i.e., increases in rent, the cost of owning property, rising market value-based tax assessments), furthering historical patterns of segregation and colonialism, and enforcing social and economic injustice (Caulfield, 1994; Horgan, 2018; Lees, 2011; Parish, 2020; Slater, 2004; Walks & Maaranen, 2008). The perspective I offer, however, focuses more on the causes of gentrification rather than its harmful effects. In this chapter, I concentrate on agents of gentrification and how they come to see the city as a desirable place to dwell, and how that desire

for dwelling constitutes a way of engaging the city. Accordingly, I consider home ownership as a particular manifestation of gentrification, and gentrification is one of many ways that change occurs in cities.

Home-ownership gentrification is informative in a discussion of how lifeworld intercedes with urban administration because it exhibits subtle ways by which everyday experience is drawn together with the context of city building. Noting this engagement occurring in home-ownership gentrification³⁷ helps explicate practical ways in which commonplace urban experience grounds the practice of urban administration outside the corridors of city hall. Homeowner gentrification illuminates ‘from the bottom up’ the relationship between urban lifeworld and urban administration. In this respect, it also serves as a counterpoint for what will be discussed in the next chapter; the converse ‘top-down’ orientation of smart cities, whereby the formal systems of administration contend with the informalities of city life.

The gentrifiers’ methods are not necessarily justified or superior to other approaches. Admittedly, though, aspects of the process might seem innocuous. For example, a family renovating a long-neglected house or an entrepreneur launching a charming storefront business might seem wholesome or a part of a thriving community. Still, even such achievements in aggregate can cause significant harm. The allure of a delightful urban landscape comes with a price as owners and tenants of ‘ungentrified’ buildings are bought out and priced out by the forces of

³⁷ I use the term *homeowner gentrification* to specify a particular aspect of gentrification and to recognize that gentrification manifests in several other different ways of city transformation, including changes in commercial real estate, large-scale patterns of urban development, or spatial patterns of wealth, class, race, and ethnicity (Caulfield, 1994; Harris & Rose, 2020; Horgan, 2018; Parish, 2020; Slater, 2004; Walks & Maaranen, 2008).

external financial capital investment (August & Walks, 2018; Smith, 1996). Similarly, a careful home renovation removes affordable-rental-unit housing, as does happen in the case I discuss at the end of the chapter. Such displacement requires careful study. I do not purport to do justice to this aspect of gentrification in the scope of this chapter. What I hope to contribute is some insight into the cultural and conceptual subtleties that facilitate these disruptions so we can see them as more than a matter of individual whim or economic logic.

The goal of looking at gentrification here is not to justify it, but to use it to illuminate ways the lifeworld born of the urban experience is conceptualized and applied to making sense of the city. I do that through the lens of home ownership and the related middle-class forces of personal lifestyle and taste. My interest is in individual actions (both financial and aesthetic) insofar as these serve to engage and formulate broad patterns of urban community building, whether such actions are justified or not. Accordingly, as I talk about gentrification, I aim to unpack and explicate the messy interactions between the lifeworld and administration by talking about widely recognizable urban topics and problems. In other words, this chapter shows how the definition of the situation of city administration applies to gentrification as a well-known urban issue.

The chapter is organized as follows. The first section considers how gentrification is defined and characterized in scholarly literature. I look at the origins of the term, provide a brief survey of current usage, and show that the term gentrification is saddled with a certain ambiguity. Next, I develop the analysis by examining representations of gentrification. I look first at the Sale of the Week feature regularly published in the urban lifestyle magazine, *Toronto Life*. The Sale of the Week features depict paradigms of gentrified living, as depicted in images of stylish living spaces and as articulated in the accompanying text. Yet these also concretely exemplify the

ambiguity embedded in the concept and usage of ‘gentrification.’ Building from the Sale of the Week profiles, I next consider even more specific and concrete depictions of gentrification as I discuss a long-form essay, also published in *Toronto Life*, recounting the experience of purchasing and renovating a vintage house in one of Toronto’s older neighbourhoods. The essay, by the Toronto writer Catherine Jheon, is noteworthy as a comprehensive first-person account of ‘doing’ gentrification that demonstrates the intertwined tension between the personal desire to dwell in the city with refinement and the circumstantial conditions that city dwellers encounter when pursuing that goal.

Gentrification

The British sociologist Ruth Glass is widely credited with coining the term “gentrification” in 1964 in the introduction to *London: Aspects of Change* (Johnson-Schlee, 2019). The term has since appeared widely in scholarly research, political discourse, and news media so that in some respects it seems to defy any single definition. Yet, despite its extensive use, in his widely cited work, Neil Smith (1996) organized the study of gentrification as either being the study of ‘consumption’ or ‘production.’ The duality is likewise reflected in how Hackworth and Rekers (2005) helpfully suggested that the term is defined by two different schools of thought, or ‘teams’: “[The] ‘culture team’ saw gentrification as a spatial expression of a critical class politics ... built on the notion of consumer dominance, if not absolute sovereignty... [while the] ‘economics team,’ conversely, focuses on the production side of gentrification” (p. 213). From the cultural or consumption side, gentrification is addressed through tangible elements of city life, such as consumer patterns (Walks & Maaranen, 2008), urban subcultures (Caulfield, 1994), class interaction and conflict (Slater, 2004), colonialism and post-colonialism (Lees, 2011; Parish, 2019), and architectural heritage

(DeCesari & Dimova, 2019). From this vantage point, a tangible scene of gentrification might be a coffee shop replacing a rough-and-tumble pub, a new condominium replacing a dilapidated commercial building, or a tired-looking home facelifted to look modern and hip. The material transformations, of course, are read as superficial signs of deeper change to social relations, changes that are antagonistic to some and amenable to others: The sports-bar regular will avoid the new coffee shop filled with hipsters, content creators, and anxious graduate students; the mom-and-pop convenience store, leasing space in a dilapidated building, will not afford a storefront unit at the foot of a new condominium tower; and long-time homeowners might like the bump in property values following a renovation down the street but will feel awkward with their new upwardly mobile neighbours.

The other approach to gentrification seeks to identify the underlying structure of what is immediately observable, the forces of political economy that shape the everyday social and cultural context of the city. This approach to gentrification studies includes analysis of market mechanisms such as the geographic distribution of urban development (Harris & Rose, 2020), rent gaps (Smith, 1993), patterns of reinvestment (Schlichtman, Batch, & Lamont Hill, 2017), and the relationship of corporate finance to housing stock (August & Walks, 2018).

A useful illustration of the political-economy approach to gentrification is a paper by August and Walks (2018) on rental apartment buildings in Hamilton, Ontario. The objective of this work, as the authors wrote, “was to shed light on how the differential strategies of financialized landlords facilitate displacement and gentrification in the inner city, while intensifying hardship for tenants as well as concentrating lower-income tenants in the post-war suburbs” (p. 125). This led to an analysis of real-estate finance, corporate ownership structures, and wealth distribution.

Underlying this program, though, were certain assumptions about gentrification emerging from inner power structures of commercial institutions rather than external, everyday lived experience—from the boardroom, not on the street. August and Walks (2018) emphasized specific financial mechanisms of commercial business operations: rates of return on various real-estate investment funds, the merits of investment-trust structures, corporate tax codes, macroeconomic policy, urban demographics, and local planning laws. The aim was to systematically document concealed commercial-institutionalized processes that ultimately alter the landscape of apartment neighbourhoods and expose the underlying financial logic that perpetuates gentrification processes on a mass scale.

The interlocking of the concept of gentrification with an analytical financial investigation is exemplified in a table included in the article (see Table 4). The table is a product of a sophisticated method for abstractly quantifying gentrification in a way that allows for comparisons between different commercial-real-estate firms. For instance, it shows that 35% of the buildings controlled by Timbercreek investment funds are in “gentrifying tracks” compared to 30% of Realstar’s holdings (p. 130).

Figure 4

Image of Table showing Apartment Building Acquisition data from August & Walks (2018)

Note August and Walks (2018, p. 130)

Table 2
Urban Locations of Building Acquisitions, Pre- and Post-GFC.
Source: Compiled and calculated by the authors. Inner Area and Post-War Suburbs are defined in relation to the contiguous pre-1946 development boundary in Fig. 1.

Firm	Inner Area # (%)	Post-War Suburbs # (%)	Chi-Square Sig.	# (%) in Gentrifying Tracts ²	Pre-1946 Buildings # (%)	Mean Year built ³
1997–2009 (129 buildings)						
<i>Inner City Focused</i>						
GWL(CREIF)	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	**	1 (7%)	0	1967
InterRent	16 (88%)	2 (11%)	**	4 (36%)	10 (91%)	1906
ResREIT	21 (72%)	8 (28%)	**	4 (18%)	4 (14%)	1961
Realstar	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	*	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	1970
Morguard Corporation	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	(s)	1 (25%)	0	1987
<i>Mixed/Suburban Focused</i>						
BCIMC	6 (50%)	6 (50%)		2 (17%)	1 (8%)	1967
CAPREIT ¹	1 (4%)	22 (96%)	***	0	0	1965
Goldlist	1 (11%)	8 (89%)	*	0	0	1959
<i>Sub-Total 1997–2009</i>	<i>76 (59%)</i>	<i>53 (41%)</i>		<i>18 (14%)</i>	<i>17 (13%)</i>	
2009–2015 (228 buildings)						
<i>Inner City Focused</i>						
Akelius	33 (89%)	4 (11%)	***	15 (41%)	12 (32%)	1948
Timbercreek	18 (78%)	5 (22%)	**	8 (35%)	5 (22%)	1955
InterRent	0	1 (100%)	(s)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	NA
Morguard Corporation	1 (100%)	0	(s)	1 (100%)	0	1984
<i>Suburban Focused</i>						
Starlight	29 (31%)	63 (69%)	***	8 (9%)	12 (13%)	1956
TransGlobe REIT	3 (25%)	9 (75%)		3 (25%)	0	1962
Q Residential	4 (21%)	15 (79%)	*	2 (11%)	1 (5%)	1968
True North REIT	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	(s)	0	0	1961
Morguard REIT (G)	0	6 (100%)	*	0	0	1970
CAPREIT	0	16 (100%)	***	0	0	1963
Centurion Apt REIT	0	16 (100%)	***	0	0	1963
<i>Sub-Total 2009–2015</i>	<i>89 (39%)</i>	<i>139 (61%)</i>		<i>39 (17%)</i>	<i>31 (14%)</i>	
TOTAL (357 buildings)	165 (46%)	192 (54%)		57 (16%)	48 (13%)	1959

Notes: (1) CAPREIT listings before 2009 do not include the buildings it purchased from ResREIT in 2004, which are listed separately. (G) Morguard REIT largely consists of properties that had been in the Goldlist portfolio. While GWL/CREIF, RealStar and BCIMC have continued operating their buildings in the post-2009 era, Goldlist was merged with the Morguard companies, and ResREIT was purchased by CAPREIT. (2) Gentrifying neighbourhoods are those identified in Walks and Maaranen (2008a,b) and in updated form in Walks (2014a,b) as either gentrified, gentrifying/incomplete gentrification, or potential future gentrification, by 2006 (the definition/identification of gentrification does not change between periods). (3) Mean year built is calculated only for the 89% of buildings for which the building year-built date was reported. Chi Square Significance of the city-suburban spatial distribution = ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05. (s) Cell counts are too small to calculate Chi Square significance.

August and Walks in this way mapped the course of gentrification as a process that begins with a supply of capital investment and ends in the production of gentrified neighbourhoods. While the tables documented this relationship, August and Walks (2018) were not interested in the details of the process but rather in the underlying logic binding the cause (financial expediency) of gentrification to the effects (hardship for apartment residents). In tracking these steps, they moved from quantitative analysis of financial capital investment toward a discussion of the rationale that directs the real estate investment firms. Yet in this process, they pass by an essential pivot point with little mention. The pivot point links financial capital to low-cost housing and it is what might be called the business case or investment model. This is mentioned when August and Walks quote Ugo Bizarri, the chief investment officer of Timbercreek Assets.³⁸ Bizarri (2018) disclosed his sense of how capital investment and urbanism are connected when he compared his firm's investment strategy to a carwash:

On the front end, you put a multi-res asset that, in our view, has not been operated to its full potential, and about two and a half years later it comes out the other end looking squeaky clean and ready for an institutional buyer to acquire it. (p. 132)

Besides the brash tone of the statement, what is notable is the way that Bizarri imagined the transformation of the city—in this case, apartment buildings—occurring through the inner workings of high-value financial transactions, a process of financialization (August & Walks, 2018). The product Timbercreek claimed to produce is a part of the city repackaged as a

³⁸ Timbercreek's real-estate arm, Timbercreek Equities Corp., was renamed Hazelview Investments in 2020.

standardized, tradable commodity “ready for an institutional buyer.” This is how Walks and August (2018) deciphered Timbercreek’s strategy:

In selecting sites, the company explicitly targets buildings in areas that are gentrifying or subject to future gentrification pressures.... By systematically renovating units and charging higher rents to new tenants, Timbercreek forcibly gentrifies its own buildings, contributing to the displacement of lower-income tenants and to intensified patterns of gentrification in the areas targeted for its acquisitions. (p. 132)

In this sense, Walks and August considered how Timbercreek’s business model affected the lived experience of Timbercreek’s tenants. The preparation for institutional purchase was the same as the gentrification process, but what Walks and August exposed were the tangible effects. The asset-marketing program was realized on the ground in hardship and instability. Moreover, the process perpetuated “the patterns of gentrification” in neighbourhoods throughout the City of Hamilton.

Walks and August’s work (2018) more generally exemplified, first, a technique of uncovering gentrification. As a technique, it might seem applicable to other sites, even universally. However, as intriguing as that prospect is, the method also turns away from the model-building project and returns to what is particular or even local about gentrification. By refining the analysis of gentrification as a research topic, its ambiguity and messiness become obscured. The imaginative, situation-specific idea of administrating the city (whether it is justified or not) remains at the centre point of the argument. For Timbercreek, the city building is treated as a business model. Amid complex structures of financialization certain ideas about how to relate to the city, how it changes and grows, and whether administrating is a business model, a lifestyle or an urban theory, that idea, as specific or ambiguous as it is, remains indispensable.

Gentrification is a concept that has meaning within a context (Johnson-Schlee, 2019), for it has epistemic value in that it connects common-sense usage to an analytical perspective:

Gentrification is descriptively useful, not least because it is often colloquially understood; however, under close attention, the value of the term slips away as it fails to accommodate more complex social relationships than gentrifier/gentrified. (p. 99)

This point is also apparent from the earliest use of the term. According to Johnson-Schlee (2019), when Glass first applied the term to describe the converging cultural, class, and economic dynamics in post-war London, she was not only talking about newfound wealth displacing and disrupting communities. Rather, she was interested in how Londoners were developing a way of life that loosely mimicked that of their wealthier counterparts. It was an effort to move beyond established characteristics of urban culture, but in a way that remained tied to a locality. In this sense, the term was originally replete with irony and nuance, for it was not the work of the ‘gentry’ class. The aspirational aspects of gentrification caused tangible economic hardship because of the associated displacement and disruptions of social ties. Still, its ambiguity remains central to a full understanding of the phenomena. As Johnson-Schlee (2019) explained,

when Ruth Glass uses the term ‘gentrification’ she is not attempting to produce a cast-iron definition of a sociological phenomenon, but instead to deploy a colloquial-joke term to characterise one of the many ‘aspects of change’ in the London she describes. (p. 102)

If we keep this nuanced understanding of gentrification in mind, we can see that applying the concept rigidly risks shortchanging its meaning. The challenge of using gentrification in scholarship is then a matter of drawing from the fullness of the idea without imposing rigid epistemic boundaries.

This is not to say that analysis of gentrification cannot effectively challenge commonplace assumptions of city building, such as social progress, the veneration of modernization, or even the social Darwinism that equates dominance in the city with virtue. However, the nuance of gentrification remains in the ways city dwellers come to terms with a changing urban environment and in the ways that they initiate such change. Specifically, gentrification, as it is fully understood, includes the imaginative, vernacular outlook of city dwellers as they too ask how cities change. It involves a type of self-reflective theorizing of change and the application of local experience to order-making.

What then does it mean to treat gentrification in terms of the ambiguities of urban culture and the vernacular urban theory? An illustrative approach is found in two papers by geographers David Ley and Sin Yih Tao (2014, 2020) on the gentrification of neighbourhoods in Hong Kong. In this work, Ley and Tao came to understand the concept of gentrification by identifying three boundaries of the term:

First, in the context of developmental states, gentrification was a process in which the state was heavily implicated.

Second, the roles of preservation and renovation, with or without sweat equity, were limited and primarily confined to tourist districts, while new-build apartment buildings were the normal face of gentrification.

Third, and most surprising, the term did not necessarily evoke the negativity invariably assigned to it in the Western literature. (Ley and Tao, 2020, p. 167)

These observations are notable for a couple of reasons. A cross-cultural analysis, first, must ask about the implied cultural universality of the gentrification concept but, in doing so, it confronts embedded cultural conditions enmeshed in economic structures. Ley and Tao (2020) compared the culture of homeowner (or flat-owner) renovations, noting their relative absence in Hong Kong

compared to North America, where they are considered a common trait of gentrification.³⁹ They went on to point out that, unlike North American renovation culture, Hong Kong-style gentrification involved large-scale urban-renewal projects shaped by public-private partnerships. This mode of gentrification shows as Ley and Tao argued, that at its core gentrification, generally, including in Hong Kong, concerns the relationship between everyday urban culture, urban administration, and transformation. Whether it is the state or individuals who initiate gentrification, the practice is an exercise in conceptualizing the city in terms of transformation and then acting on that vision. As much as an economic or administrative system might steer transformation, it is a process that is inextricable from theorizing the city, and such theorizing is indivisible from the cultural context of those who engage in it.

Another way of looking at the connection between urban transformation, theorizing and culture is to consider whether the concept of gentrification applies universally to cities. What if talk of gentrification is largely absent? What gentrification is not recognized widely as a major force? What if dramatic urban development and displacement of modestly capitalized businesses and lower-income households are evident without the hallmarks of North American or British cases? Ley and Tao (2020) addressed this problem directly in a way that partly resolves the issue while still leading to new questions:

We now faced a question. Was the failure to specify gentrification in Hong Kong the result of ontology, that the phenomenon—gentrification—did not exist, or was it a

³⁹ While the fact that Ley and Tao make this observation is significant, I do not wholly concur with what it implies. In my own research as a graduate student at University of Hong Kong, do-it-yourself home improvements were hardly uncommon. This view is supported by the excellent study of interior spaces in Hong Kong by Nuala Rooney, *At Home with Density* (2003). Upgrading is not often evident on the exterior, so that even a tired-looking, ‘ungentrified’ façade can hide owner-occupant-gentrified units inside.

product of epistemology, of local systems of knowledge that had not identified the role of a nonetheless prevalent urban process? While the urban literature and the newspapers we consulted scarcely referenced gentrification—the term was mentioned on average only once a year in the papers—they nonetheless spoke repeatedly about redevelopment, a term that occurred in the South China Morning Post every other day, over 4,700 times in the 26-year period examined. We assembled media stories that mentioned both redevelopment and eviction (and its variants), terms that might be expected to indicate the presence of gentrification. In the heavily urbanized districts of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, such events were identified. After empirical examination, we concluded that class displacement was indeed occurring in the housing market, and that the change process could be interpreted usefully by the concept of gentrification, albeit gentrification with East Asian characteristics. (p. 169)

Ley and Tao chose not to abandon gentrification. Instead, they sought to resolve the problem of applying gentrification even when evidence suggested that the concept was not widely used in Hong Kong. Their solution was to propose a variant of the idea of gentrification that captured the particular way that people in Hong Kong conceptualize urban transformation. It is what they dubbed gentrification with “East Asian characteristics” (Ley & Tao, 2020, p.168), which involves recognizing the nuance and historicism of the concept. As they explained,

a weakness among our critics is some carelessness and over-simplification in their representations of our argument; the opposite of the complexity and nuance they claim for their own understanding of Hong Kong. Categories are frozen and simplified to the point of misrepresentation. Gentrification is limited to its classic form of the 1970s—1980s, when new-build gentrification, often state-led, was not part of the terminology because it was not part of the historical geography. However, in this century, new-build and state-led idioms have become a standard in Anglo-America and here they converge with the gentrification characteristics of East Asia. However, our critics deny such evolutionary complexity in the story of gentrification in Anglo-America, and in limiting the phenomenon to its early classic form, they force an erroneous distinction between Anglo-America and East Asia. Nor is there any acknowledgement of, let alone

engagement with, much of the nuanced empirical work that led to our tentative conclusion—there is a question mark in the paper’s title. One author shrinks our empirical base to a single newspaper analysis while completely overlooking the second newspaper we examined, the interviews with local housing experts, and our review of Hong Kong’s housing and development literature. (p.168)

The struggle Lay and Tao discussed shows how a framework for talking about urban change is enmeshed in the contextual ways of conceptualizing urban community. Gentrification is a distinct concept but it is not a wholly abstract idea that is a detached form of the messiness of urban life because it is only rendered meaningful when it is considered in the context of the urban community. In this sense, the term makes is tied to the particularities of urban experience even if it retains a latent meaning that extends beyond such experience. When applied to a specific city, neighbourhood, or site, the process of gentrification, therefore, draws on the resources of the lifeworld, such as memory, history, dwelling, day-to-day homemaking, and private life to form a concept of the city. It takes the details of lifeworld to engage in the order-making project of the urban culture. Therefore, the crux of gentrification is not a binary question of whether or not a city experiences a process called gentrification. Ultimately, it is not enough to think of a standard mode of gentrification or even variations on that standard such as gentrification with East Asian characteristics.⁴⁰ What is evident in Lay and Tao’s papers on Hong Kong is how the fit between a culture of order-making and gentrification involves articulating ambiguity, dynamics, and

⁴⁰ For instance, the redevelopment of Hong Kong’s older neighborhoods such as You Ma Tei and Shek Kip Mei parallels the state-sponsored housing-renewal projects in Toronto such as Alexandra Park and Regent Park, where apartment blocks had been originally built to accommodate the migration following the Second World War. So too are there similarities between the ongoing processes of ‘cleaning up’ streets: removing hawker stalls and independent vendors from Hong Kong streets echoes initiatives to carry out public-space improvements along Toronto’s many business-improvement areas.

messiness. That is to say, the concept of gentrification itself is an idea that remains city-like to the extent that it mimics the open-ended actions of city dwellers; affords a type of engagement immersed in both the physical and conceptual landscapes of the urban lifeworld. Gentrification, in the end, represents a desire to move toward a model, or an order. It is a desire to transcend urban life yet in a way that re-embeds that desire in the city as a problem-defining site. Without keeping this in mind, the term is at risk of being treated as a wholly abstract model, or even simply a research tool that applies to any cultural context. Without the almost ironic ambiguity that was first inferred by Ruth Glass, much of the nuance of gentrification is lost. Without the grounding in practical experience, it becomes merely a description of a system.⁴¹ Retaining the ambiguity of urban practices means treating gentrification as a mode of engagement with urban culture and the particularity of lifeworld experiences that make that culture meaningful.

In sum, the usefulness of gentrification as an analytical trope is realized fully only when it is treated alongside the ambiguous way by which urban culture attends to the city, that is, in the messy process of cultural experience making sense of the city as a form of order. Analysing that messy zone will be the focus of the following sections, in which I discuss two representations of gentrification in Toronto. The first is a set of magazine profiles featuring homes for sale in popular mid-town neighbourhoods. The second is a first-person account of converting a rooming house to a stylish family home written by a Toronto property owner.

Representing gentrification

⁴¹ What I have in mind are typological questions (Is this a gentrified neighbourhood?), teleological analysis that implies gentrification has agency (Is gentrification changing the neighbourhood?), or analysis based on system theories (What is the set of factors or networks that cause gentrification?).

The magazine *Toronto Life* represents a valuable documentary resource for considering gentrification. Its publishers present the magazine as a comprehensive guide for living in the city.

The magazine's mission statement, found on its website, declares that

Toronto Life is the destination for people who care about Toronto, the country's most vibrant city, and want to get the most out of it. We provide insight into the personalities and events that shape the landscape, and help readers make smart choices about everything from restaurants and shopping to real estate and culture. Through in-depth reporting, intelligent analysis and quality writing, Toronto Life offers an exciting, essential and entertaining guide to life in Toronto. (*Toronto Life*, 2020a; n.p. underlining added).

The phrases in the mission statement underlined provide three ways the publisher seeks to fulfill the magazine's mission. Each point relates to the desire for an urban lifestyle, but they are also about ways of administering the city.

The first was the motivation for administering the city. It outlined the magazine's anticipated readership: people who both "care" for the city and who "want to get the most out of it." This recognizes the importance of a commitment to the city as a whole. The declaration claimed an audience who thinks or feels something about "Toronto" as an object of attention. The administrative orientation in this way is treated as a generalized way of encountering the city. It is about engaging 'the city' and not a certain activity or pursuit, such as participating in a music scene, enjoying local cuisine, or appreciating the city's architecture. Nor is it focused on specific actions such as personal growth, career ambitions, or political action. Tangible manifestations of city life were instead framed within a more general notion of the "vibrant city." The ideal reader's administration of the whole city was designated as "caring" rather than as some other engagement, such as curating, exploiting, or changing the community. Caring for the 'thing' that is Toronto

meant that the readership related to the city in a way that extended beyond a transactional relationship or a goal-oriented calculation.

The second point defined caring. Care has been bound to the desire to ‘get the most out of’ the city. It means helping the reader identify and exploit to the furthest extent possible what the city “has to offer.” To get the “most out” is to ‘care’ for maximizing the consumption of what is limited or even scarce. The mission statement, therefore, marked out a dualistic relationship with the city: cultivating and improving the city while at the same time engaging in techniques of exploitation and consumer dominance (Hackworth & Reckers, 2005)

The third was about methods of attending to the city. The statement noted that readers were those who took action within the city, who made “smart choices” as they engaged in a myriad of urban experiences, “everything from restaurants and shopping to real estate and culture” (*Toronto Life*, 2020a, n.p.). Acting in the city and seeking a good life requires both the capacity to cultivate relationships with others and the skills to ‘trade’ within this relationship.⁴² While the statement recognized the reader’s agency within the city (as an agent who “want[s] to get the most out of” the city), it also implied certain contextual limitations to that power due to “the personalities and events that shape the landscape.” The implication in this statement, I suggest, is that urban living might be conducted in any number of ways, but the ideal *Toronto Life* reader was forced to differentiate between the prosaic means of living in the city and enlightened and *careful* actions that resulted from “smart” choices. For instance, it was not about finding a restaurant in the city

⁴² It evokes two modes of engaging the city that identified in sociology: The familial (*Gemainschaft*) meaning and transactional relationships (*Gesellschaft*) which, as Bonner (1997) notes, are both tightly entwined with the experiences of ‘making’ a home in a community.

but experiencing extraordinary dining allowed one to engage the full productive capacity of the city as a system for self-realization. This urban connoisseurship requires certain insight and aptitude, methods that *Toronto Life* promised to share. By reading the magazine the reader could avoid wasting effort on merely surviving in the city. They might instead hope to achieve a good life. In short, the magazine provided advice on how to administer the city from parallel orientations of care and extraction to harmonize the lifeworld with the communal project of the city. How would *Toronto Life* deliver these lessons? I now look to the magazine's regular "Sale of the Week" feature for clues.

Each "Sale of the Week" showcases a stylish home that has come to market in one of Toronto's older, pre-war neighbourhoods. The profiles analyzed for this chapter were retrieved from the *Toronto Life* website in September 2020 but had been published at earlier dates. Each profile includes photographs showing the interior and exterior of the property along with accompanying text. Each begins with a listing of the essential information: address, neighbourhood, real-estate agent, and price. Text and a series of captioned photographs follow. At the end are statistics about the sale price and annual property taxes. Each profile is organized under sub-headings such as "The History," "The Tour," and "The Sale."

"Sale of the Week" is instructive because it models how a gentrified lifestyle materializes in urban real-estate markets, as architecture, and in interior-design practices. It displays an engagement of private 'lifestyle' with the conceptualization of the city or the subjective view of experience and the objectified outlook of analysis. The feature taps into a sense of aspiration like an advertisement or fashion spread while also vaguely maintaining the style of a consumer-protection report. For instance, the detached reporting style is evident in the way that subtitles

include the delimiter ‘the’ to imply that information about each house is organized methodically. The tone of the writing also cartoonishly mimics that of a detached expert or anthropologist, who speaks by reference to models, structures, and classification schemes. The implication is that the process of looking for a home likewise follows a certain analytical attitude. Yet, at the same time, the language is also somewhat ridiculous, for it is wholly vested in the emotive appeal of the home. The superficial style of methodical analysis playfully masks the pleasure of searching for the dream home. Beyond the ‘facts’ is the story behind the décor, the unique foyer space, a cleverly designed kitchen, or a spacious backyard. The house is presented within a framework of rational consumer choice while also appealing to the desire for acquisition. A close look at three of these provides illustrates this bifurcated orientation. Yet underpinning this relationship is the sense of engaging in the city in a way that both expresses the yearning for the city as a consumable resource and sublimates egotism to a commitment to the city as an order. In other words, the profiles provide examples of a mode of attention to the city that is essentially a form of administration.

Profile 1: 46 Cowan Avenue

“Sale of the Week” for 46 Cowan Avenue was published in *Toronto Life* on February 28, 2018. The site was identified as “a red-brick home split into two units” in the Parkdale neighbourhood. The price was \$1.49 million.

The nine photographs accompanying the profile show clean, well-decorated rooms with white walls fitted out with an eclectic mix of modern and antique furniture. The images show the trendy accoutrements of an active lifestyle: mountain bikes, a retro-style turntable and stereo amplifier set-up, and stacked coffee table books. However, there are hints that the spaces have not been kept up to date despite the superficial attractiveness of the brightly lit images. A close look

reveals an obsolete baseboard heating system, remains of tired-looking carpeting, and the broken and misaligned drawers of the bathroom vanity. Under the subtitle “History” is some background about the house that might account for its frayed edges and its potential for renewal: “The selling agents think the home was converted into a duplex at some point in the 1980s. It still has original flooring, baseboards, and mouldings. The house is split into two units” (*Toronto Life*, 2018) The narrative is about originality, how the building was originally a single house before being “split” (presumably as rental apartments). Despite the superficial signs of neglect, though, is a fine home with “original flooring, baseboards, and mouldings” waiting to be discovered and revived.

Under the next heading “Big Selling Point,” the report presents the case that the property offers unique and untapped potential:

Some duplexes force their inhabitants to share amenities, but this place has plenty to go around. There are four parking spaces, and both units have washers and dryers. Plus, the home is on a 150-foot-deep lot, meaning there’s backyard space for everybody.
(*Toronto Life*, 2018a).

At this point, the tone shifts. The language becomes more formal and technical: the house is called a duplex, people are referred to as “inhabitants,” and the features of the house are now “amenities.” The house is presented as a collection of exchangeable resources. The site is likewise evaluated using qualitative criteria, such as “a 150-foot-deep lot” with “four parking spaces.” 46 Cowan Avenue in this way is presented as both a cultural and economic good. The cultural value of the site becomes interlinked with a quantitative assessment, and, in turn, the assessment of the house becomes meaningful as it relates to the city. The visionary idea for the house and the practical program of home ownership unfolds at the same pace. This unfolding becomes apparent in the final section, which warns the reader of the struggle involved in unearthing the property’s

potential. The reader is advised, under the heading ‘Possible deal breaker’, that “the bathrooms in each unit are a little behind the times. If the buyers are looking for modern, spa-type facilities they’ll have to renovate” (*Toronto Life*, 2018a)

This brief statement envisages the potential buyer taking control of the site and confronting the problem of managing the property in a ‘smart’ way that attains its full value. The imperative of the ‘renovation’ is then not just to complete a particular project to improve living conditions. It is an engagement with the city in a conceptual sense too. The motive to renovate, to have “modern ” bathrooms, is a way of engaging collective standards of comfort and fashion.⁴³ Replacing the bathrooms is a quintessentially private matter that is motivated by a sense of what maintains or exceeds the common standards of amenity and refinement. The home-ownership project extends therefore both inward to the originality of the building as a specific object of value and the outward affiliation to the community-established conventions of a “modern ” dwelling.

Profile 2: 82 Campbell Avenue

This “Sale of the Week,” published on May 29, 2020, features a two-storey, semi-detached house. Like the one for Cowan Avenue, the 82 Campbell Avenue profile engages the confluence of lifeworld and community. However, the backstory of the house on Campbell Avenue is much more developed. The story is embedded in the headline introducing the profile: “Sale of the Week: \$1.4 million for a Junction Triangle semi that a schoolteacher renovated himself” (*Toronto Life*,

⁴³ Bushman’s *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, and Cities* (1993) provides a fascinating account of how domestic interior design has long been influenced by the notion of cultural progress that is deeply embedded in North American culture.

2020b). The profile asserts a narrative that is nearly a stereotype of do-it-yourself gentrification.

Under the subheading “The History,” the narrative is fleshed out in detail:

This house was built in 1910. More than a century later, in 2015, a Toronto District School Board supply teacher bought the place for \$635,000. The teacher, who is also a trained carpenter, then spent the next five years renovating the place with the help of friends and family. His vision for the design included elements from disparate eras. That’s why the place has a modern minimalist interior, along with old-fashioned features like leaded glass and an imitation transom window. The seller originally planned to live in the house upon completing the reno but has since decided to move elsewhere. (*Toronto Life*, 2020b)

What is notable are references to rootedness and commitment: The century-old age of the building, the Christ-like identity of the seller as a teacher-carpenter, his multi-year commitment to renovating the house, and his ‘original’ plan to live there. Besides this engagement with of symbolic economy of place (Zukin, 1995), there is also an explicit message here about the value of the house as a financial asset. The article’s author notes that the house was bought five years ago for \$635,000 and sold for \$1,427,000, producing⁴⁴ a gross annual return on investment of about 25%, a highly profitable venture even considering capital expenses of the renovation and carrying costs for holding and maintaining the property.⁴⁵ In this sense, a narrative backstory neatly complements a story of financial aptitude. The house is presented conceptually as a stage for

⁴⁴ Calculation: Annual change: (Sale price – Purchase price)/Years = \$158,400. Annual return on investment (ROI): Annual change/Purchase price = 25%.

⁴⁵ This is based on my own calculated estimate of basic carrying costs: Property taxes are listed as approximately \$3,467 or 2% of ROI. Five-Year term mortgage rates were at approximately 5.5% from 2015 onward. A 5-year mortgage with a 25% down payment would have generated about \$1,400 annual interest costs or 0.8% of annual investment return. If the house had been the seller’s primary residence, as the article claims, the investment return also would have been sheltered from tax on the capital gain. This means **substantial value had been left** to purchase the fixtures, materials, and skilled labour needed for the project. (Bank of Canada, 2020; *Toronto Life*, 2020b).

artfully realizing urban life and as a proven mechanism for successful investment in the city. The house represents an order in the harmony of cultural and economic engagement with the city.

The commercial and cultural techniques combine to appeal to the disparate tastes of prospective buyers. It is an aesthetic commoditization articulated in the caption below the image of the dining room: the “seller included his banjo in the staging photos as an aesthetic flourish” (*Toronto Life*, 2020b). Likewise, a text accompanying a wide-angle image of the living room–kitchen area blends storytelling, style, and pecuniary appeal:

The seller turned the existing beam between the dining room and kitchen into a faux transom window. Before air conditioning, windows were inserted above doorways to provide light and ventilation. Here, it serves both as a design element and an homage to the home’s Edwardian history. (*Toronto Life*, 2020b).

The 82 Campbell Avenue profile demonstrates some of the mnemonic devices used to sell a property. The banjo, the faux-transom window, and the owner’s history are tokens of a single package. It is not a house; it is a story. And even if the props are cleared out before the keys change hands, the narrative essence of staging attaches prospective buyers’ lifeworld to the property. It helps the buyer see themselves living there and creating a way of life in the space (Avitts, 2010).

The assignment of symbolic cultural resources to a tangible financial transaction is in this way validated to the extent that the transaction adheres to a generalizable sensibility of living in the city, of correctly caring for the city while ‘getting the most from it.’ The white lies of house staging in this way tell us something important about the construction of a common urban imaginary of gentrification.

Profile 3: 46 Victoria Avenue

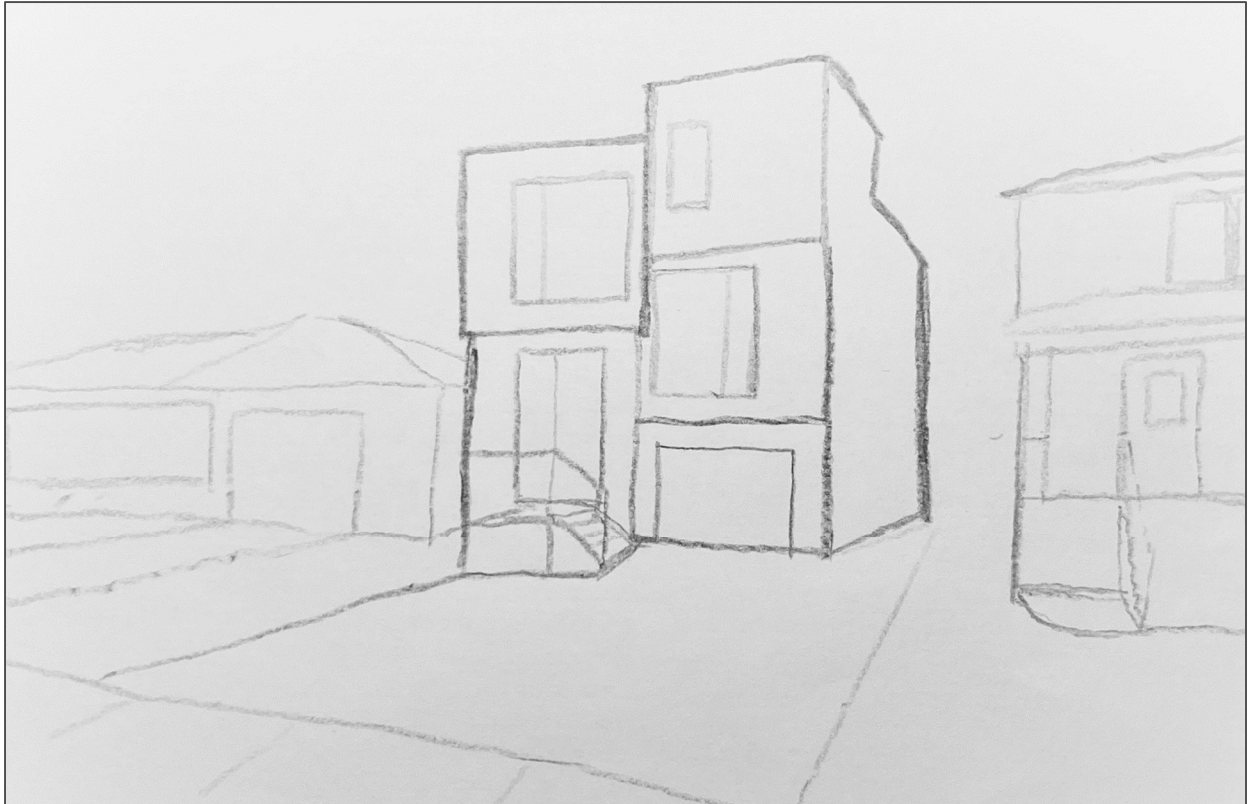
The third profile brings to light interweaving notions of material, cultural identities, civic order, and habitus. It shows how an idea of detachment is developed alongside a sense of engagement with the city.

Located close to Toronto's historic Greektown, 46 Virginia Avenue is a modernist two-storey detached home built in 2016. It is on a street that has seen a churn of consistent rebuilding since the 1970s, resulting in a hodgepodge of post-war bungalows, suburban-style rebuilds, and more recently constructed modern homes.

The unapologetically modern style of 46 Virginia Avenue (see Figure 5) is a clear aesthetic statement. The house has a flat roof and block-like massing. It is finished in pale-cream-coloured brick and with matching cladding that frames the main front window. The entrance is read as a large orange-tan rectangle. The design is a contrast to the more traditionally designed homes next door: a simple red-brick two-storey with a raised porch across the front and a brown brick suburban-style bungalow with a built-in garage and recessed entranceway. Forty-six Virginia Avenue stands out. Yet, in doing so, it also conforms as it contributes to the eclectic architectural character of the street.

Figure 5

The form and style of 46 Virginia Avenue



Sketch by author

The exterior architectural style resonates with other aspects of the house. The owners who built number 46, we are told, sought to create a unique space set apart from the surrounding city: “a two-bedroom, one-bathroom bungalow used to stand on the lot, but the sellers tore that down and built this zen-like sanctuary” (*Toronto Life*, 2019a, n.p.). The engagement with the property, and by extension the street, neighbourhood, and city, follows two directions, one reinforcing a connection to the city and a second that subverts this relationship.

What is relevant here is that the duality of conformity and distinction underscores a force of gentrification: the desire to rise above the messy tumult of the city while still yearning to attend to it. It is an attitude toward the city that can be understood as a form of administration.

Gentrification, in other words, is a set of aesthetic and financial tactics for committing to the city as a project meriting attention while not forgoing the detachment that allows the city to remain a ‘thing.’ As the 46 Virginia Avenue profile shows, this administrative positioning is animated by symbolic and historic resources that are applied in forming a space for ‘administrative’ attention. Constructing the “zen-like sanctuary” on a city street does not occur in a vacuum of memory and identity. The converging cultural forces at 46 Virginia Avenue are conveyed using exoticized, orientalist trope that appears throughout the “Sale of the Week” profile: the headline calls attention to a “home with Japanese minimalist energy” (*Toronto Life*, 2019a, n.p.), the “bookshelf in the living room is meant to replicate a Japanese screen” (*Toronto Life*, 2019a, n.p.), and even the basement is said to exude “Japanese minimalist energy” (*Toronto Life*, 2019a, n.p.). The home is presented as a type of sanctuary or an escape, but also it is a reassertion of a localness despite the reference to an ‘exotic’ style. In other words, the trope is narrowly instrumentalized to secure comfortable living spaces, a “sanctuary” that makes living in the city fulfilling. The thematic design, which is consistent from the minimalist exterior to the bookshelves, converts mnemonics of cultural identity into a form of order and place which enables an engagement with the city.

The promise of peace and cultivation inside the home allows the owner to fully engage the urban world beyond. It is the theme of transcendence of materiality and memory, where the space centers on a sunken garden featuring white stone ground cover and a solitary tree at the centre. The interior is an assemblage of uncluttered walls painted paper-white, and rough-hewn banisters and bookshelves that produces an aesthetic of tranquil simplicity. But this theme is considered in the context of the street and the city in general: we can see that the peacefulness achieved inside the home is a statement about its relationship to the outside scene.

Staging as Administration

The staging of the house relates to the city in that it promises a way of mastering life in the city, a way of transcending the messiness of the urban community. The house is a protective medium that allows its future owners to feel disengaged but also (paradoxically) allows a detachment needed to participate in the urban community. At one level, the staging is unremarkable. It simply involves decorating a house before it is presented to prospective buyers, a practice widely used in the North American residential real-estate business (Avitts, 2010). As architectural historian Ellen Avitts (2010) noted, this means in a practical sense that the house appears ready for the new occupant: furniture and props are arranged to create a sense of comfort, walls are painted in gentle, neutral colours, and the clutter of daily life is purged.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the banality of staging conceals something far more intriguing. At a deeper level, the staged houses illustrated by the “Sale of the Week” profiles also cultivate an orientation to urban living. They play on a desire that comes from a void or order from being *in* the city while also remaining *detached* from it. That ambiguity draws the prospective buyer toward an urban home-making project as they navigate between dual notions of the house: as a package of economic commodities or assets and as a consumable singularity (Vercel, 2021).

⁴⁶ The ephemeral setting of the home for sale is perhaps comparable to a white lie. Both are so trivial that there is no urgency to call attention to the deceit. While a white lie undermines trust by trivializing the truth and what is known in common, it also affirms the speaker’s commitment to managing a common relationship. The management of symbolic relations is picked up in the way Ellen Avitts (2010) draws on Baudrillard in her study of staging to see staged homes as “virtual models that connote acceptance of a perceived ideal based on ideal signs” (p. 77).

The staged home specifies the conceptual framework of urban lifestyle that *Toronto Life* promises to advance: to help people “who care about Toronto” and “want to get the most out of it” to “make smart choices” (*Toronto Life*, n.d.). In this way, “Sale of the Week” documents reveal methods of converting cultural resources of memory and identity drawn from the everyday lifeworld to define grounds for administrating the city. It is by melding cultural, symbolic, and mnemonic tactics with the rationality of financial self-interest that the force of gentrification is realized. And in that realization, we see the physical and conceptual situation defined as the administration of the urban community.

Gentrification in the First-Person

The three profiles above show that gentrification entails an effort to represent an ideal of urban life. Staged houses are treated as proxies for attending to the city and for realizing a fulfilling urban life. Here we saw ways that staging draws on the resources of memory and identity to compose a model of living space, a platform or situation for making sense of the messiness endemic in the urban community.

Still, the house-as-a-stage model is incomplete. The presentation of the house as a model of good living exposes discordance within the concept of gentrification. We see conflicting messages: one is the allure of urban connoisseurship and aspirations of status; the other is the influence of rational decision-making and the obligations to practical household planning. Of course, to recognize the tension is to empathize with sellers or buyers who are fortunate enough to acquire these attractive houses. Moreover, focusing on these cases distracts from the crises in housing affordability that affect so many in Toronto and other cities. Whether a rock garden is an authentic zen design if the owner actually played banjo, or if the wood trim is solid or a laminate

might seem trivial compared to rising real-estate values that threaten to price out all but the wealthiest. Yet, as trivial as these details may seem, they to a significant extent disclose something about the logic of gentrification that might explain the dynamics of house pricing. These details are about the symbolic and cultural economy of home ownership, and so they merit some attention. Specifically, the ambiguities, doubts, and incompleteness that these ‘features’ of home staging show that gentrification exemplifies a process of making sense of living in the city. The *Toronto Life* profiles reveal gentrification is a desire for order-making and a desire that moves personal experience to engage the city in general. Gentrification, accordingly, represents one way of making a ‘life’ in the city and, by doing so, engaging the task of order-making by administrating the city. It is more specifically about *making* a situation contend with physical, financial, symbolic, psychological, and historical courses of action.

To consider this in more detail, I next turn to a first-person account of gentrification written by Catherine Jheon (2017) and published by *Toronto Life* on May 29, 2017, under the heading “We bought a crack house.” Catherine’s (2017) article records her experience of initiating a typical gentrification project, of purchasing a century-old home with her partner Julian and converting it from a rooming house to a stylish single-family home.

The article offers dramatic appeal, as it plays up the folly, conflict, and triumph of the project. In some respects, it follows a familiar trope⁴⁷ of a naive couple realizing that their search

⁴⁷ This theme appears in various ways in films such as *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *The Money Pit* (1986), and the British household drama, *Mother* (2003). Anthony Vidler’s *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992) illustrated the “unhomely” house using a wide range of interconnected concepts found in sources such as Poe’s *Fall of the House of Usher*, the brothers Grimm, Burke, and Freud. The concept is also treated thoroughly in Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994), in which he situated ‘unhomely’ in an exploration of post-modern, intercultural social orders and the intricate layers of post-colonialism.

for a dream home has led them to a place of “unhomely” strangeness (Vidler, 1992). Yet Catherine’s account also exemplifies gentrification and how that process involves some type of engagement of the urban lifeworld with the situation of city living. By acquiring and renovating the home, Catherine and her husband Julian demonstrate a particular facet of gentrification that I hope to clarify. Catherine’s article shows the formation of a relationship with the city, one that collapses the boundaries of lived experience into the broader arena of the urban community, thereby making the city the situation for their actions. The article in this way is an account of both instigating changes through the renovation project and of making sense of such transformation as it unfolds in unpredictable ways as the renovation occurs within the neighbourhood and the city.

To do this, I first refer to several passages from the article to show the structure and nuances of the narrative. I then discuss how the account sets the stage for a broader analysis of urban order-making, which is addressed in the subsequent chapters.

Catherine begins the essay by talking about how the project had started as an interruption of her daily routine. Although she and Julian were actively looking for a new home, the decision to purchase was abrupt:

I was at work when my husband, Julian, called, sounding breathless. “I just saw a house,” he blurted, “and I think we should put in an offer. Today....” We needed to move fast, Julian said, before they put it on the market. (Jheon, 2017, n.p.)

In this dramatic moment, the couple submits to the whims of the real-estate market. Because the house is a private sale and had yet to be advertised widely, they rush the decision to bid on the property. Their sense of urgency is compounded by their mounting dissatisfaction with their current house, which they had also hastily purchased. As Catherine (2017) explains,

That house had been a flip job, hastily renovated by the previous owner, and we had bought impulsively, anxious to upsize from our 900-square-foot condo. We soon discovered that it had a slew of issues, the main one being the rats that congregated in our crawl space, scratching and scurrying at all hours and providing fresh fodder for our nightmares. We wanted out. (n.p.)

In the face of this pressure, however, Catherine is still able to reassert some command of the situation as she “punches the address into Google Street View” to inspect the site from her office computer. Julian also reported he could access the building, which, Catherine adds, was “no small feat since it was full of tenants” (n.p.). They submit an offer, it is accepted, and the house is theirs.

In the early stage of the narrative, the account articulates two levels of engagement with the site, each of which is characteristic of gentrification. One is the anxiety of encountering change, and the other is the assertion of control. Both levels are unstable, and the distinction between one and the other is at times uncertain. As actors in the real-estate market, Catherine and Julian are primary agents of gentrification, while concurrently this role forces them into a broader social and physical situation that is beyond their control. We see this duality of assertiveness and vulnerability come to a head when they conduct a detailed home inspection after the sale closes.

This inspection starts as a well-planned operation, in which their personal life seems to easily accord with the home-buying process. The new homeowners bring a team of professional consultants Catherine describes as friends and the couple’s son joins them as does the daughter of the designer-friend. Yet as it unfolds the initial scene of pleasant adventure quickly degenerates. Their confidence is replaced by dread as the couple faces the reality that the house they own is repulsive and strange. The conditions they encounter inside reflect the degradation brought about by the same housing system that Catherine and her husband seek to master as homeowner-

renovators. The orderliness personified in their relationships is upset by the unforeseen dynamics and conditions of the site visit.

In the excitement about buying the home, they confront the flip-side of Toronto's booming real estate values, that is, exploitative conditions of affordable rental housing:

As we approached the house, it became obvious that it had been badly neglected.... We stepped gingerly through to the kitchen, careful not to touch anything. The sink was full of dirty dishes and the brown linoleum floor looked like it hadn't been swept in years. (Jheon, 2017, n.p.)

As the couple moves further in, their feeling of entitlement, as middle-class home buyers, is undermined. Their type of civility and good-naturedness become ineffectual to the point where the discord between manners and reality is darkly comic:

Julian, seeing the panic in my eyes, began to expound on the virtues of the handsome stove in the corner— "And look at the high ceilings!" he said. That's when I noticed him: at the far end of the room, a man, lying on his back on a stained mattress, his face covered by a grungy sleeping bag. He had a tourniquet around his arm and a syringe was lying by his side. I shushed Julian and stabbed a finger in the man's direction. Silence. What do you do with a dead body? After a few seconds, our contractor friend bravely walked over and gently nudged him. The man groaned and rolled over. We quietly tiptoed upstairs. (Jheon, 2017, n.p.)

Their callus discomfort becomes outright panic soon after when they realize they cannot maintain a separation between their son and the tenants.

The bathtub was filled with a mysterious black liquid, the sight of which caused our son to start bawling. Julian and I reassured him that we would clean everything up and that he wouldn't have to bathe in it. Eventually he calmed down. Then, as we made our way to the attic, we noticed a sweet burnt-plastic odour in the air. At the top of the stairs, we saw two people sitting cross-legged on a mattress. "Hi, we're the new owners," Julian

said, cheerfully. My designer friend leaned in. “They are smoking crack,” she whispered. I pulled my son close and shouted at Julian: “Get us out of here!” (n.p.)

Two economic classes of people, the middle-class homebuyers buoyed by the frothy housing market and the marginalized tenants who are drowning in it, intermingle, creating an uncanny reversal of positions. The owner-couple walks into the room and stands startled and confused; the tenants are settled cross-legged on the floor, comfortably occupying this domestic space. The smoke from the burning crack wafts freely through the house just as the couple drifts from room to room. The financial and legal authority of ownership claimed by the couple confronts the stark, symbolic upheaval of homeliness created by a common financial system. Between Humphries’ glib greeting, “Hi, we’re the new owners,” and Catherine’s panicked plea, “Get us out of here,” gentrification is affixed to the engagement of a “dwelling as ethos” (Li, 2016) that provides concrete social conditions.⁴⁸

However, Catherine and Julian are not deterred. The couple moves ahead with their plans. They leverage their real estate holdings and bank credit to pull together a down payment. The deal quickly closes, and the transformation begins.

Instead of being overwhelmed by the challenges of renovating an old home, they develop a new way of looking at the project and then charge forward. Catherine overcomes her disgust by asserting a renewed commitment to the project. She is no longer merely searching for better

⁴⁸ Shuwen Li’s PhD dissertation, *Ethos as Dwelling: The Construction of Corporate Ethos in an IPO*, is a rare example of thinking through the practical convergence of ethos, urban dwelling (homeliness), and technology in a global cross-cultural perspective. Focusing on the international IPO for the Chinese internet marketing platform, Alibaba, Li traced how the firm’s charismatic founder, Jack Ma, build trust with Wall Street investors by cultivating an ethos based on the persona as a long-term resident, or a ‘local’, of the city of Hangzhou as well as related symbols such as his ordinary apartment flat.

housing. Instead, the renovation becomes a matter of overcoming fear, vanquishing wretchedness (as the couple sees it), and restoring what has been lost. Instead of the house saving them, they end up ‘saving’ the house. The narrative pivots to become a story of sacrifice and triumph.

Our friends were undaunted, too. I realized they were right. Beneath the grime, dust, junk and assorted drug paraphernalia was a potentially stunning home. We bought a crack house, we joked, but it was *our* crack house. We would restore the grande dame to its former glory. (n.p.)

From that point, the account demonstrates the assertion of financial power over the existing occupants of the house and the assertion of the couple’s desire to change the neighbourhood. We see this unfold in the second part of the essay as the renovation commences.

As they recommit to the house and the renovation starts, the couple is drawn into a set of circumstantial conditions, opportunities, and limits. For instance, Julian impulsively hires a stranger as the project’s general contractor. The day after he is hired, this newly hired contractor borrows an excavator “from a guy doing a reno up the street” and begins digging out the basement while hastily demolishing the front porch in the process. The renovation continues in a similar ad-lib manner. Catherine describes how the project is then carried out by “a rotating cast of labourers ... [that the contractor] hired from the coffee shop down the street” (n.p.). Accordingly, the project unfolds in a grey area between formalized procedures and interpersonal relationships and happenstance. For example, they discover they have little legal recourse to evict the tenants, so they arrange an informal cash pay-off that takes place one evening behind the Parkdale Library (Jheon, 2017). They also discover the project violates zoning regulations, so they pursue a zoning variance from the City’s Committee of Adjustment. They find the house had been unduly neglected between the signing of the purchase agreement and the possession date, so they sue the former

owners. When the couple runs out of money their bank rejects their credit application, but their mortgage broker loans them his own money as a private agreement. The balance of the needed money comes unexpectedly from Julian's wealthy godfather after the couple has dinner with him (Jheon, 2017).

The entire process is messy, for it proceeds through a mix of personal, local, and serendipitous occasions that unfold in tandem with the construction work. The procession of steps toward completing the project—finding, acquiring, funding, and renovating the house—forces Catherine and Julian to commit to circumstantial conditions, conditions they make for themselves as they institute changes to the site. At the same time, their experience is not merely individualized and unique. Serendipity extends the home renovation project to a wider project, a project of city building because the messiness of the renovation binds the couple to the vicissitudes of neighbourhood community, real-estate and financial markets, legal structures and city-planning regulations.

On the surface, Catherine's is a dramatic story of a naive couple seduced by a charming old house, only to be overcome the financial stress and anguish, but eventually, make it their dream home. It is the narrative encapsulated in the photograph at the start of the article showing the couple with their children posing triumphantly in their new home. The backdrop is a tastefully outfitted domestic space featuring a balance of antique and modern furniture, high ceilings, and vintage moulding adorning pastel-coloured walls. The image is illuminated by sunlight flooding through a large stained-glass window. The parents protectively flank the kids: Catherine sitting matronly on what seems to be a piano bench and Humphries standing upright in a gunslinger pose, confidently looking over his family. It is a classic image of homeowner pride.

Still, I suggest that the narrative offers something more. The lure of home ownership also engages the burden and anxieties that come with associating with a building that is located amidst a thriving city. Embedded in standard tropes of personal achievement is an account that allows us to analyze the concept of gentrification as the engagement of lived experience within the city. It shows that the capacity to change the city, which Catherine's renovation project represents, occurs through the messiness of the urban conditions that combine a personal desire to dwell (make a home) in the city with procedures and forms of city life—home financing, zoning, and neighbourhood dynamics—that force a reconciliation between the realms of personal experience and urban administrative policy. That overlap is inevitable and irremediable. It is created and then remains as a 'given' situation for acting in the city. The act of gentrification drives toward extinguishing unpredictability with control but in doing so reinstates the paradoxical concurrence of irresolution and commitment embedded in city making. Tellingly, in the closing paragraph of her account, Catherine acknowledges this ambiguity. It is what the reader is ultimately left to consider:

Today, we get stopped all the time by people from the neighbourhood who want to talk about our house—the mayhem that went on here has become Parkdale lore—and people love listening, wide-eyed about what we've been through. We love the house and it feels like home, though we still get reminders of its past life. Just the other day a ragged-looking guy knocked on the door asking if there were rooms available. Not at the moment, I said, though if the market tanks, I suppose that's always an option.
(Jheon, 2017)

Summary

This chapter showed gentrification is the lifeworld engaging in an urban community. In the literature on gentrification, the distinction between cultural and political-economy- perspectives

demonstrates a discordance in the analysis of cities. Yet, as Ley and Tao's (2020) study of Hong Kong shows, the idea of gentrification is embedded in an imaginary order of city building. It represents a mode of engaging a changing urban landscape and making sense of such change. This connection between gentrification and engagement is made clear in the profiles in *Toronto Life* of houses for sale. These profiles document gentrification's way of curation and distribution of engagement. Moreover, they show that engagement is tied to cultural discourse-centred memory and biography that allow for meaningful ways to dwell in the city that operate alongside the practical imperatives of the urban real-estate market. Yet, as noted, within these profiles there remains an intractable ambiguity: a desire for an individuated and meaningful dwelling-place encounters the collective externalities of the city project. In the profiles of the houses, the language of cultural meaning, including the talk of history, authenticity, and self-fulfillment, is simultaneously the expression of authentic self-reflective meaning-making and the superficial rhetoric of marketing and promotion. In this sense, the language of gentrification is imbued with a sense of care and connoisseurship just as much as it commits to the physical, legalistic, and cultural limits of urban property. The 'dream' home is not a personal utopia or an inaccessible cloister. The gentrified city house is to bring happiness and satisfaction within an urban community and, in this way, the house serves as a platform for both engaging the city for what it is and for making the city what it could be.

It is this vacillation between self-reflection, engagement and urban change that is exemplified in Catherine's home renovation project. Her project makes clear that the desire to make a home in the city also informs the interpretation of broader city-building circumstances. In other words, the experience of creating a dream home produces the conceptual material for making

sense of the neighbourhood and, more broadly, for conceiving a sense of order in the city. This process of gentrifying ultimately extends beyond the objective of dwelling in the city (or settling down) toward the larger and much more ambiguous project of engaging in the administration of city making.

What does this tell us about gentrification? Fundamentally gentrification stands for a reformulation of making (or remaking) an urban neighbourhood, as a practice of being in the city through dwelling and by reflexively engaging the interminable relationship that melds specifics of urban lifeworld with the generalizability of urban administrative policy. In this process, the stock of urban cultural life, including myriad historiographical, architectural, and symbolic resources, is drawn and applied to theorize a generalizable idea of city order. It is that order that in turn becomes something to address or administer. It is the definition of the situation through which urban lifeworld proceeds, the social fact of urban order-making through which the actor addresses the unfamiliar newness of urban transformation. While this chapter has started to track this process by documenting the formulation of urban lifeworld encountering neighbourhood gentrification, the next chapter considers the definition of the situation and order-making in a very different type of project, the project of applying new technology to urban administration under the rubric of the smart city.

Chapter 7: Confronting the Lifeworld in the Smart City

Smart-City Dreams

In 2017, Sidewalk Labs, a Google affiliate, announced plans to develop a new neighbourhood on Toronto's waterfront to be known as Quayside. Its promoters promised to combine Silicon Valley technology with the best in community-based urban planning. The vision initially was bold. Not only would an underused part of downtown Toronto be redeveloped, but it would also serve as a proving ground for advancements in city building. At the official announcement, Canada's prime minister declared Quayside would help "build smarter, greener, more inclusive cities which we hope to see scaled across Toronto's eastern waterfront and eventually in other parts of Canada and around the world" (Rider, 2017). The project's press material was just as grandiose, asserting that "Sidewalk's mission is not to create a city of the future at all. It is to create the future of cities" (Sidewalk Labs, 2017, n.p.).

The Quayside project was to make Toronto a leader in smart-city development, putting it in line with South Korea's Songdo new town and New York City's Hudson Yards district. To make it happen, the City of Toronto, with the support of the provincial and national governments, would give one of the most powerful technology companies in the world the freedom to design an entirely new urban neighbourhood. It was a bold, exciting vision, but a vision that could not be realized.

Once the project moved forward, the promises started to seem increasingly hollow. The cheery talk of using technology to build a city that would automatically respond to the community sparked serious concerns about surveillance, privatization, and the loss of local autonomy (Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 2019; Goldman, 2020). At the end of 2018, the Ontario auditor general validated these doubts with a report on the partnership that Sidewalk had

established with Toronto's waterfront authority, finding instances of preferential treatment and a lack of oversight (O'Kane, 2018). Suspicion about the Sidewalk project paralleled growing misgivings about the influence of large technology companies on civil society. It was a sentiment captured in an editorial that the *Toronto Star* published in August of 2018, by Bianca Wylie, a leading Sidewalk Labs critic, and David Murakami Wood, the Canada Research Chair in Surveillance Studies at Queen's University:

To think about Sidewalk Labs, we must consider Google and its business model. Google provides a lot of useful services, from search to business collaboration tools, and mostly for "free." But when things are given away for free, we have to ask what is the real price and who is paying. Like Amazon and Facebook, which are both also developing new urban neighbourhoods, the price of Google's products is paid for in data. (Wood & Wylie, 2018, n.p.)

As the COVID pandemic took hold in Toronto in the spring of 2020, Sidewalk abandoned the project. After years of public consultation and the production of many smartly packaged planning documents and stunning visual renderings, this vision of Toronto's urban future, once so brilliant, abruptly faded. In the aftermath, Shoshanna Saxe of the University of Toronto explained to *The New York Times*:

The idea of building a city from the internet up always seemed like a bad one.... A lot of the problems we're facing in cities are hard and entrenched and difficult to deal with. We should be very skeptical of anything that sells us an easy, cheap solution using a newfangled technology gadget. (Austen & Wakabayashi, 2020)

In the end, it was not just a problem of 'dealing' with cities, as many large companies, including land-development firms, have worked closely with the City of Toronto and upper-tier jurisdictions. Rather, what spoiled Sidewalk's ambition was the problem of urban administration. Under the guise of technology, Sidewalk Labs was proposing, perhaps unknowingly, a regime of

administration. Once that administration-building aspect of the project progressed, Sidewalk discovered the complexity of the relationship between the ‘personal’ and the ‘public’ that sits at the foundations of administrative authority. It was the messy rationality that persisted despite (or even more so because of) the systems it proposed. It was, in the end, an engagement with the order of the city.

In this chapter, I aim to address smart cities as a matter of urban administration. The chapter builds on themes introduced in previous sections on gentrification and the Committee of Adjustment, including the matter of engaging messiness, the definition of the situation of administrating, and the role of memory and everyday experience in such engagement. Here I look at what happens as the smart-city program runs up against the forms of social order found in everyday urban life. Therefore, instead of asking how smart-city technologies might disrupt norms and practices of urban administration, I highlight ways that the city imposes messiness and the consequential task of order-making in the context of emerging technology. I am particularly concerned about how technical forms of urban administration, engineered as smart-city tools, are explicitly and implicitly committed to the lifeworld of city dwellers. The discussion accordingly pays attention to mundane conditions that structure the administration implied in idealized versions of urban administrative technology. In this way, it brings together ideas sketched out in earlier chapters regarding the co-dependence of urban administration and urban cultural infrastructure in the formation of a meaningful situation for engaging with the city as a collective project.

Smart Administration

Urban administration has become increasingly closely linked with communication technology. As many have noted, this relationship seems to push urban administration out of the

concrete places and observable culture of everyday experience (Ashton et al., 2017; Halegoua, 2019; Luque-Ayala, & Marvin, 2020; Mattern, 2017, 2021; McIlwain, 2020; Mitchell, 1995; Townsend, 2013). According to this view, as it becomes digitized, ‘the city’ no longer takes place in city halls and municipal offices. It is no longer documented in paperwork or audible in community hearings. Administrative processes now seem irreversibly detached from routine experience and a common sense of place (Ashton et al., 2017; Townsend, 2013; Tufekci, 2014). Moreover, with the disappearance of tangible signifiers of administration, the nature of engagement seems poised to become ever more elusive as the processes, agents, and devices of urban administration become ephemeral and distant. This trend only become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face office work was quickly abandoned (Mattern, 2021), and systems of urban administration rapidly accelerated the move to ‘cloud’ computer servers located far from the communities they serve.

Admittedly, it is easy to see smart-city administration as an existential threat to the administration of the city. It is tempting to be convinced of Orwellian visions of technocratic authority empowered by centralized surveillance breaking the bonds of community and the heritage of cities being suppressed, commodified and manipulated. However, when we look closely at the literature on smart cities, it is clear that another dynamic is unfolding. The smart-city project might not undercut a common-sense cultural memory and sense of place in cities, but rather it could very much put new demands on imagination and memory. With the loss of tangible elements of administration, there is a commensurate need for some sort of fiction of the city as a unit of administration. Accordingly, it is foreseeable that an urban imagination might bloom in the voids created as administrative processes withdraw from the day-to-day reality of urban experience.

The practical and geographically grounded limits of typical modern administrative structures that have long-defined city administration might be radically reimagined. This reimagination could foreseeability lead to instability and risk, especially for those people who are most vulnerable to shifts in administrative policy. Yet, at the same time, such rethinking might be a reason for optimism, for new ways of envisaging administration might better address the current and emerging conditions of cities. In the following chapter, I follow this supposition further, but here I wish to first focus on how smart-city phenomena draw on an understanding of urban administration to create a context for action. In doing so, I suggest that even as it becomes entangled in communication technology, it is a mistake to think of urban administration as technology. If anything, talk of a smart city shows the opposite, that the *technology* of the smart city represents the extension of urban administration and a commensurate expansion of urban culture.

The Idea of the Smart City

I have discussed how everyday experiences shadow urban administration. Here, I want to consider that this everydayness is presented in a digital context, as the tangible daily bustle of the day's rush hour melds with the tap-card payment system in the subway station, in ways monthly utility bills are paid by e-transfer, or as a library-book reserve is updated by text. The mundane and practical character of engagements with the technology of urban administration is as integral in making sense of novel communication, data management, and sensing technology as the code and algorithms imprinted in these systems.

In this sense, the profound power of the smart city lies in the way it is immersed in the silent routines of urban life. The smart city is the dumb city. The engagement of routine life and

policy through which ‘traditional’ urban administration occurs is accordingly subtly reassigned to ‘new’ smart-city administration. It is this transformation that allows us to think carefully not only about the smart city in broad terms of technology as a way of thinking and acting but also about the smart city within the foundational relationship of the lifeworld of urban experience and administrative policy, that is, a relationship established by order-making.

Currently, there is no scarcity of literature extolling, critiquing, or even ridiculing the notion of the smart city. In the last two decades, a proliferation of smart-city initiatives has provoked spirited discussions among scholars and commentators (Cocchia, 2014; Coletta & Kitchin, 2017; Kitchin, 2015; Mattern, 2015; Ruppert et al., 2017; Song et al., 2017; Townsend, 2013). In 2014, a systematic survey of Google Scholar found 987 scholarly papers with titles that included the terms “smart city/cities” or “digital city/cities”, the earliest of which was published in 1993 (Cocchia, 2014). Smart-city research seems to have only accelerated in recent years. My own perfunctory Google Scholar⁴⁹ search returned about 16,500 titles. Yet, if such an abundance of commentary shows a great interest in the application of technology to cities, it also belies a persistent problem. The term ‘smart city,’ as many have noted, is notoriously vague. It has no universal definition,⁵⁰ as it is applied to a seemingly endless set of topics (Apprich, 2017; Cocchia,

⁴⁹ I used the search command “allintitle: “Digital Cities” OR “Smart Cities” OR “Digital City” OR “Smart City” on September 8, 2020.

⁵⁰ For a recent and well-crafted narrative account of smart-city literature, see Apprich (2017)'s article, “Babylonian Dreams: From Info-Cities to Smart Cities to Experimental Collectivism.” Cocchia (2014) provided a comprehensive literature survey of the topic. Mattern’s (2017) thoughtful book is an excellent example of the ongoing work of reframing the smart-cities program in a boarder context of urban studies.

2014; Halegoua, 2019; Luque-Ayala & Marvin, 2020; Zanella, et al., 2014). Still, amidst these nebulous discussions is a common question: How will changing technology transform cities?

Framing the smart-city discourse in this way is informative but limited. While it does highlight the effect of adding new forms of technology to the city and the superficial ways in which city life changes as a result, it leaves little room to consider the ways an urban community synthesizes, amalgamates, or subsumes technology. How does the urban community ‘feed’ off of technology as a form of social order, even of technology as a cultural phenomenon? In other words, what can we learn by considering new technology within the dynamics of urban culture? To recognize ‘the city’ as the dominant force for smart cities means thinking about ways social and cultural order shape urban administration even when city administration appears to be only one example among many of computerization. Instead of asking how technology changes cities, we might then ask instead how cities will change technology.

Technology of Administration

Technology in the city is conventionally treated as a cause of disruption. It is seen as an attack on an entrenched and passive field of administration. In more stereotyped accounts of smart cities, computer technology is the revolution poised to upend local bureaucracy. Others see it as the opposite, equating smart-city programs with entrenched corporate power and urban administration as the foundation of oppositional authority. Accordingly, both optimistic and critical assessments of smart cities accept ‘technology’ as the primary, active agent in the alteration of city affairs.

An illustration of this comes from a prominent smart-city critic, who has envisaged a trade-off between the spontaneous qualities of city life and the systematic structure of information

technology. Speaking to a Canadian House of Commons committee, Shoshana Zuboff issued this blunt warning:

[T]he real apple here, the real prize, is the smart city itself. This is where surveillance capitalism wants to prove that it can substitute computational rule, which is, after all, a form of absolutist tyranny, for the messiness and beauty of municipal governance and democratic contest. (House of Commons, 2019, p. 38)

On the surface, what is remarkable about this statement is how it immediately draws attention to the danger of commercial interests undermining public interests. Yet underpinning this warning is a particular characterization of administration as the messiness and beauty of municipal governance. This suggests that the smart-city program, even if motivated by corporate profit-seeking, engages something fundamental about the administration of cities. Zuboff's characterization suggests that urban administration represents a particular form and style that is related to urban life. The messiness of the city is the messiness of publicly minded administration. In this sense, addressing smart-city administration is a matter of understanding the premise of this problem, that is, that the smart-city program relies on an idea of urban administration. Accordingly, to fully appreciate the perils and promises of new, smart-city technology, it is vital to understand what city administration is in the first place. Zuboff's statement accordingly calls for careful consideration of the city as a community or as a form of social order.

Yet this is not a simple undertaking. First, we can not merely extract an idea of the city from smart-city discourse. This is because our understanding of the city is already enmeshed with concepts of technology. In other words, there is no modern way of thinking about city organization without a deep-seated commitment to technology. Secondly, smart-city systems are from the start embedded in specific ideas of urban social order. They are planned and designed with an

orientation to the city, even if such an outlook might seem distorted, simplified, or blind. The “computational rule” of the smart city that Zuboff warned of is never wholly independent of the “messiness” of urban governance since smart-city technology asserts its logic only within modes of urbanization. As I aim to explain below, notions of the smart city incorporate latent concepts of urban social order that emerge from the apparent messiness of urban culture. That means new systems of urban administration using information technology are built on certain assumptions about urban social order, even when the question of order is not mentioned. Moreover, we are talking about ‘smart’ systems applied to city operations and, in this sense, this technology is ultimately a mode of urban administration. Whether these ‘tools’ are effective or justifiable is certainly debatable. But what is significant either way is the underlying commitment that the smart-city program makes to the everyday context of urban life. It is an orientation toward making sense of the city.

I suggest this orientation is evident in at least three ways. First, the smart-city program is inexorably enmeshed in the city as a physical landscape. Second, the rationale achievement of efficiency central to smart-city discourse represents a program of addressing social order. Third, the smart-city program orbits around an ideal of technology as a panacea, of solving problems of the city, or even solving the problem of the city. In this sense, technology affirms its orientation to urban order at a fundamental level, by providing a mode of complete action. In these three commitments—to the urban landscape, efficiency, and problem-solving—the technology of smart-city administration leads back to the foundations of order-making in cities. It does not so much supplant the “messiness and beauty” of urban administration as it establishes itself within this context.

Urban Objects

At a superficial level, the ‘smart’ in ‘smart-city’ refers to the addition of information communication technology to urban landscapes (van Steen & Leiba, 2019). Accordingly, talk of smart cities occurs within a broader discussion about controlling physical spaces and objects using networked communication technology, or what is generally called the *internet of things*, a

communication paradigm that envisions a near future, in which the objects of everyday life will be equipped with microcontrollers, transceivers for digital communication, and suitable protocol stacks that will make them able to communicate with one another and with the users, becoming an integral part of the Internet. (Zanella et al., 2014, p. 22)

In the city, the IoT is to colonialize any number of urban ‘objects’ to produce self-driving cars, automated security monitoring, seamless financial transactions, and universal tracking of human bodies and commercial goods (Shelton et al., 2014; Song et al., 2017; Turow, 2017). A city in this manner becomes smart when a computerized system of administration is integrated with urban objects that operate in the city space as the object themselves automatically collect, transmit, and process digital signals emerging from the city’s space. Accordingly,

the “smart city” is promoted as the primary site of the materialisation of ubiquitous computing and the Internet of Things: the integration of computational systems with architectural design is supposed to turn inefficient urban settings into smart cities that manifest as the penultimate value-extraction machines. (Sprenger, 2017, p. 1)

As a concentration of the IoT, the smart city amounts to a deep-seated synthesis of computational power and urban space. The public realm of cities and of people who engage that realm, accordingly, represent media for collecting and processing data. This means that the functionality of the technology at once is framed within the actions of everyday city life. For instance, until recently computerized data networks collected data at specific points or through discrete actions

Such as when withdrawing money from a bank machine or when scanning a transit pass at the gate of a subway station. As the ‘internet things’ populate urban space, this specificity of location is replaced by total engagement (Luque-Ayala & Marvin, 2020). Engagement is routine and ubiquitous so the distinction between actions and recorded actions is wholly destabilized. It is no longer easy to discern what is surveilled or what is surveillance because the public life of the city is constituted in the confluence of the two. Whereas in the past, for example, we could imagine a security camera capturing people having a conversation on a street corner, in the smart city the conversation is made meaningful in that it is recorded. Interaction no longer occurs before the surveillance because data-collection technology becomes the medium of engaging in the city as a collective project.

Of course, tracking urban life is not new (Mattern, 2017). The development of modern urban administration has long relied on documenting the city and encoding it within administrative programs. We see this in archives of tax rolls, population statistics, property titles, public-health monitoring, police records, and fire insurance maps. But, typically, recording, curation, and transmission of data for urban administration have occurred in discrete locations such as city halls, police stations, or land registries. The ‘data’ for the most part were held back from the street, often in labyrinths of inaccessible paper records and files. Even if record-keeping was commonplace, its tangible nature made information inaccessible to all but a few. Yet, even if the data were not easy to access, the mechanisms of managing information systems were explicit, actual, and sometimes ostentatious. At the end of the 19th century, for example, the power of urban-administrative information systems was represented by magnificent municipal-city-hall buildings that served as

fortresses of civic power.⁵¹ Yet even until very recently, municipal services generally took place using face-to-face exchanges, in buildings designed to house staff and by using paper-based record-keeping systems (Gitelman, 2014). Urban administration remained manifested physically and metaphorically in the image of city hall. The work of urban administration thus involved observable actions: going to city hall to pick up a building permit, leaving a cheque in a drop box to pay municipal taxes, or approaching a service desk to get a wedding licence or to apply for a minor variance. These engagements with the administrative order unfolded in certain spaces, at service desks and in meeting rooms. The paper records necessitated certain ways of treating information and organizing work (Gitelman, 2014) so that urban administration embodied a distinctive physical and imaginative space, that is, that place called ‘city hall.’

In the smart city, the identity of the city hall is unclear. The apparatus of administration blends into everyday city spaces since smart-city technology allows the work of record-making, organization, and distribution to be indistinguishable from the city itself. Urban administration is blended with urban life;⁵² the image of city hall as the icon of civic order has faded. And so the imaginative experience of the city seems less able to situate the city as a ‘thing.’ Instead, administration becomes the subjective experience within the ubiquitous presence of urban order.

⁵¹ An example in Toronto is the ornate Land Registry Building (now demolished) and Toronto Old City Hall (1899). Similar administrative structures were built in other North American cities at the same time. Perhaps the grandest example is the 40-storey Manhattan Municipal Building (1914).

⁵² It is worth here to keep in mind Simmel’s (1995) way of connecting the synchronicity of modern city life with the fundamental questions of identity and selfhood: “Punctuality, calculability and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life, are not only most intimately connected with its capitalist and intellectualistic character but also colour and context of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to dominate the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in general, schematically precise form” (p. 13).

In the smart city, the physical form of an urban landscape is rendered as a flow of information. For instance, a car connected to a global positioning system is present in the city, but it also defines the city as it collects, processes, and transmits geolocational information. The car is a data-collecting interface, as it is simultaneously a constitutive element of the city as a data-generating field. As it crosses the city, it helps compose a ‘picture’ of traffic conditions and patterns of movement (Coletta & Kitchin, 2017; Fisher, 2020). Routine functions of the city are likewise reproduced as a digital copy so that the city comes to be present together with an image of itself. This digital twin is not just a post facto representation, like a picture, model, or map. Instead, it designates the city’s essential form. It assumes the place of the ‘real’ city, which occurs below the image and ephemera of city life. This essential form is an event, or dynamic phenomenon, rather than the form of a static object.

The emulation of the city in this form presents a tricky ontological question. Michael Batty (2018), a senior scholar of urban computer modelling at the University College of London’s Bartlett School of Architecture, explained it this way. A digital twin is,

a mirror image of a physical process that is articulated alongside the process in question, usually matching exactly the operation of the physical process which takes place in real time.... Since its inception, however, the concept has broadened and loosened somewhat in that it is now being applied, or rather used, to characterize a variety of digital simulation models that run alongside real-time processes that pertain to social and economic systems as well as physical systems. In this sense, an immediate question is to define the differences between a real system and any computer model of that system, and in this context, it is worth noting the conundrums that this raises with respect to the arguments about what constitutes a digital twin with respect to a city. (p. 817)

Batty's comment immediately defines a problem of simulation that has unsettled thinking about communication technology and spatial planning for some time. It is unsettling because the matter is not so much about the fidelity of the double nor is it primarily a problem of data monopolization, the manipulation of data-collection systems, or the threat of surveillance. While these issues are significant, what is key is that simulation essentially reconstitutes the experience of the city in the first place. To use the words of Baudrillard (2006), the power of replication creates a hyperreal city so that it "is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle" (p. 461).

The delineation between the principal firstness of the city and the derivative nature of a data double is blurred, so the double consequently upends the presupposed conventional reality of urban experience. In the context of smart cities and the digital twins that smart cities produce, the problem of simulation becomes deeply entrenched in mundane "things" that now collect data, so that simulation is embedded in our routine conceptualization of the city, of conceiving the city as a thing itself. The imaginary of urban administration, of city order, ends up located in a porous middle ground between one instance of the city and the other.⁵³

This is different from a similar notion of the city as being rendered as a set of symbols or text. Unlike the 'symbolic city,' the smart-city data-twin does not transcend the concrete, operational rhythms of the city. It does not purport a deeper meaning to the city. The smart-city hyperreality (Baudrillard, 2006) instead takes place in an entirely commonplace way. The data

⁵³ "The impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of staging illusion. Illusion is no longer possible because the real is no longer possible. It is the whole *political* problem of parody, of hypersimulation or offensive simulation, that is posed here". (Baudrillard, 2006, p.466)>

double appears when using Google Maps to navigate rush-hour traffic, activating a home security system, or tapping a cell phone to pay for a coffee. Smart-city technology melds with unremarkably familiar urban circumstances, and therefore it too becomes unremarkable. The emersion of information and communication technology in cityscapes and the creation of ‘digital twins’ are due to a certain rationale inherent in administration.

Smart Efficiency

If we can say that the fusion of computational power and urban landscapes addresses the ‘what’ of the smart city, the notion of achieving efficiency furnishes the ‘why.’ The promise of efficiency supplies the primary justification for adding communication technology to urban landscapes. It is why we find smart cities being characterized by the addition of value-added services (Zanella et al., 2014), the acceleration of capital investment (Caragliu et al., 2011), the realization of speed and flexibility (Glasmeir & Christopherson, 2015), or improved “efficiency through real-time control systems.” (Goodspeed, 2015, p. 79).

With these promises comes an attack on constraints, customs, and historical legacies that have seemingly sapped the city of its potential. The usual suspects are well-known: petty local politics, calcified management systems, and bloated staffing. Unencumbered by these limits, the smart city is seen as deftly adjusting to the economic imperatives of supply and demand and responding to unforeseen emergencies all the while accommodating social change. This perspective treats the city as a passive, underutilized place. It suggests the city awaits a better future. The city is thereby in need of computer technology to unlock its full potential. Yet this still leads to these questions: What is that potential that needs unlocking? To what does the technology apply?

Underpinning the efficiency imperative that is so central to the smart-city program is a set of ethical demands. Once data and computer-programming language automate urban policy-making, the policy becomes synonymous with an ethos of rational information management. This optimization then serves as the epitome of good policy-making (Powell, 2021). A report on smart cities recently issued by McKinsey & Co (2018), a leading global consulting firm, articulates this plainly. The report connected (somewhat dubiously) the statistical logic of data-collection technology to a notion of good public-policy making by referring to the classical liberal market theory of Adam Smith. It suggested, mimicking Smith, that smart cities aggregate the actions of individuals by collecting data to support a commonwealth of community, a process comparable to the “invisible hand” of the free market:

Centuries ago, Adam Smith observed that the actions of many self-interested parties combine to create larger benefits to society. Today a similar kind of “invisible hand” is at work in smart cities. When a company sees a revenue-producing opportunity to offer mobility services, residents in underserved neighborhoods suddenly have new ways to get to work. When a resident looks at real-time traffic data and decides to set out at a less busy time, she avoids adding another car to the road that would worsen congestion for everyone. Millions of individual decisions and actions add up, making the city as a whole more productive and responsive. But just as governments sometimes need to address the externalities caused by Adam Smith’s invisible hand, municipal leaders must choreograph the activity in a smart city, responding to unintended consequences and ensuring that everyone benefits. (p. 21)

Applying the conventional invisible-hand metaphor to the novel situation presented by smart-city technology makes the vision seem far less unyielding. The well-known metaphor articulates a notion of good order. The digital hand resolves wasteful conflict. It connects actions in city life (the individual driving a car) to an overarching aim (making the city more productive).

With that, motives, choices, or interests are interconnected, so that various parties each contribute to the city as a collective project, even if interests do not align. The supposed disruption of technology in this way is a ruse. The smart city, according to McKinsey & Co., serves only to reaffirm stability. And so, the efficiency of synchronous action is the justification for technology serving *the city as a whole*.

Yet, while McKinsey & Co. promises normality, its assertions inadvertently reveal a disruptive dynamic that is not essentially about technology. What underpins the smart-city program is the supposedly commanding authority of this invisible *digital* hand. But this hand reaches deep into the domain of everyday experience. It brushes against the internal ties that bind prosaic experience to public authority. Within the apparent harmony of actions depicted in the passage are the particularities that generate and specify interests, desires, and motivations. The scenario claims an ethical position and an ethos of place even though it is meant to be hypothetical. This is because what is depicted becomes meaningful only in situated phrases such as “revenue-producing opportunity,” “getting to work,” or “underserviced neighbourhood.” With these aspects of the lifeworld, the invisible digital hand represents more than a place-less schematic for a data-management system; it becomes a form of urban administration, for it emerges from the dynamic problem-solving conditions of city life. In this sense, the normalization of the smart city is manifested as some sort of occurrence or occasion that works through the situation of the city.

The model of smart-city efficiency in this way assumes the role of urban administration, and by confronting forces of memory and experience, the cultural infrastructure is part and parcel of the urban administrative regime. The key issue is not that foreign and novel “crowd-like institutional arrangements” are brought into the administration but rather that crowd-like forces of

administration are imposed on data-management systems. In other words, whereas Smith's idea of the invisible hand is limited to the field of market price signals, McKinsey & Co's digital hand responds to a limitless range of data produced by city life in any number of contexts. In both cases, signals supply the information for decision-making activities as the individual agency is brought into a relationship with the whole of a community. But, in contrast to Smith's market with its singular orientation to self-interest, the smart city rests on decision-making rooted in the multiplicity of everyday life. Even when compared to models of economics, the smart city retains an identity in the cultural milieu of the city.

Panacea

A third and final perspective to consider is the way the term 'smart city' has come to imply a sort of panacea. We have seen this earlier, in the discussion of Sidewalk Labs, which claimed that its mission was "to create the future of cities" (Sidewalk Labs, 2017, n.p.). Repeatedly, the smart city is treated in scholarly and popular discussions as representing an open-ended urban future so it comes to represent a semantic placeholder in an open-ended discussion of change. What is most significant, though, is that this placeholder waives a commensurate commitment to name what is substantial about change-making. An example of this rhetoric is this declaration by Caragliu et al. (2011):

We believe a city to be smart when investments in human and social capital and traditional (transport) and modern (ICT) communication infrastructure fuel sustainable economic growth and a high quality of life, with a wise management of natural resources, through participatory governance. (p. 70)

A similar phrase appears in Zanella et al. (2014):

Although there is not yet a formal and widely accepted definition of "Smart City," the final aim is to make a better use of the public resources, increasing the quality of the

services offered to the citizens, while reducing the operational costs of the public administrations. (p. 70)

The adjective 'smart' in this way signifies any number of policy goals such as environmental sustainability, modernization, or economic and scientific mastery, so effectively 'smart' takes the place of 'good,' 'improved,' or 'modern.' Smart cities are to axiomatically produce positive results, but these results can be known only through conjecture. The smart city cannot articulate improvement itself because a notion of improvement cannot be extricated from the drive toward technological innovation.

It is not only that the smart city are a classic cases of a solution in need of a problem. The way of addressing problems implied by the smart-city program is undermined by the openness of the approach. The talk of the smart city effectively casts the city as something unrealized, and so the technology stands on conceptual grounds that are presumptive and inherently enigmatic. The talk of smart cities projects technological change onto a vision of the future, a future city detached from personal experience. By inhabiting a discourse about the future of the city and by envisaging a range of alternative futures for consideration, the smart city in one way turns away from aspects of routine and practical experience that are central to urban administration. However, smart-city talk can only partly reformulate the city as a possibility. This is in the end what binds such talk to the experience of the city even as such talk seems to retreat from a commitment to the past. Because the smart city is essentially a matter of city administration, without the substance of administration, the smart city cannot move toward attending to the community.

Analysis

In the smart city, urban experience is monitored, digitized, tested, and recorded, yet this does not alone define the situation for doing urban administration. Instead, the critical step is the theorization within the talk of new, smart cities. It is theorizing that comes to form common (though continuously contested) grounds for approaching administrative action. It is at this juncture that theorizing draws abstract and mnemonic material of experience into a practice of city building so that even the most technologically sophisticated modes of urban administration become practical and substantive.

The promise of smart-city administration, therefore, is at the end, not merely automation, efficiency, and progress. It is not the promise of a just society nor is it the harbinger of a despotic regime. Because the smart city is essentially a restatement of administration, it is inescapably a suite of technology that is subsumed by everyday experience. Consequently, it must operate within the scope of the vernacular of urban theorizing. The interactions with data collection, sophisticated tracking systems, and other technology that emerge from the vision of the smart city are embedded in the urban environment, so these systems become sites of routine city life, as components of deceptively unproblematic situations. Just as experience provides resources for administrative work, it is reasonable to consider a similar relationship will continue as urban administration becomes smart. With that, we ought to no longer treat the messiness of the city as an alternative counterpoint to the pragmatics of administration. Ultimately, technology can not be extricated from this imaginary. As George Grant (1986) observed decades ago, the word ‘technology’ itself encapsulates a cultural program:

In fact, the coining of the word ‘technology’ captures the novelty of that co-penetration of *knowing and making* [emphasis added]. It also implies that we have brought the

sciences and the arts into a new unity in our will to be masters of the earth and beyond.
(Grant, 1986, p. 12)

Smart administrative technology and the culture of city life, therefore, are bound together by shifting horizons of memory and experience. Accordingly, to fully appreciate the promises and pitfalls of the smart-city program, we need to take stock of the engagement in cities as conditions for order-making situations. Only by recognizing the culture of urban administration developing within the technology can we hope to

give the city its place by situating it in relation to those who address it, that is, to the intimate structure of affinities that bind them to each other by virtue of the object, and bind them to the object by virtue of their coexistence (Blum, 2003, p. 49).

The lived experience of the city, the individual's whole immersion in the situation of the city, is where the theoretical structure of the city resides. The 'smartness' of the city accordingly is enacted as a continual cycle of problem-defining and problem-solving that is contingent on urbanism as a way of living. City life, in its enigmatic, messy, low-tech flow is where the program of smart-city technology is deployed. It is this conceptual territory that the smart city is designed to fix, liberate, colonize, disrupt, or exploit. But moreover, the city is primarily the situation in which smart city technology is defined and experienced.

The primary yet often unacknowledged claim of smart-city technology is, accordingly, not that certain technology is powerful. Rather, smart-city advocates claims assert that communication technology is meaningful; that is to say, the smart-city project involves the work of joining the smartness of communication technology to the smartness of urban life. It is a way of declaring, in other words, that new technology can well attend to the self-reflective modes of generating, defining, and solving problems that people in cities routinely utilize in addressing administrative

tasks. It is a statement about technology serving to realize forms of order-making that the urban community perpetually creates and rebuilds, but always in an incomplete way. To comprehend the smart-cities program then is to drill into the conceptual grounds on which it is being assembled and to assay an urban order generated by the confluence of urban lifeworld and urban administration. That means asking some back questions: What makes the city smart? What is the situation in cities for addressing problems, working out decisions, and confronting changes? These are not questions about the unchanging principles of urban order or a changeless code, whether it is cultural or computerized. Rather, they are about situations that are defined continually through the fluid specificity of urban life. The matter of smart cities is something that unfolds in the vernacular, ad hoc process of urban theorizing, that process of defining the situation of administration.

This implies the smart city is not only a system of decision-making. It also comes about in a situation that establishes the limits of the city, limits that arise in the messy way that participants work through a sense of what is 'going on' in the city, in the hearing room, at home, on the streets, or on their cellphone. Urban administration is enacted in the generative process of city experience because it is an act of defining and redefining the situation of ongoing intangible cultural production. Still, in considering this, how can urban administration be understood in the face of the promises of technology? How can it be understood within the rhetoric and discourses that gather around the idea of the smart city?

We see that urban administration both engages and exceeds our understanding of technology as the confluence of making and knowing (Grant, 1986). Administration obliges city dwellers to move beyond techniques for optimizing city life (Powell, 2021) and moves them to

where technique presumes the form of the city as order-making. Therefore, participants seeking a method of addressing the city ‘technologically’ ultimately find themselves talking past methods of knowledge utilization. Instead, they end up “speak[ing] about the common and immediate as a thing that is external to them” and what is “immediate and present (and common) when they are oriented to as external things” (Blum, 1974, p. 196). This upper register of engagement with the administration of cities is not only conceptual. It is a condition necessary for practical action, as it serves to define the situation of enacting a collective project. As such, it sanctions administrative actions as the orientation to city form, that is, the city as something made.

The central problem of defining the situation of administrative decision-making, in short, is the problem of making the city a thing. In this sense, the movement is oriented ‘upward’ toward the generalized principle rather than ‘downward’ toward the derivative representation of forms (Plato, 1974). The mode of addressing the city in administration compels participants toward the unity and finality of the city, though such a mode does not mean participation itself is unified or final.

Approaching the unity of the city as a finality puts urban the administration at an impasse. The techniques of city making are therefore animated by a desire to speak theoretically, externally, and collectively of what is present instead of what is to be enacted. To administer to the city in this way is to “speak in a way that preserves the concreteness of this experience because only such a

speech will re-produce the very experience on which it is founded” (Blum, 1974, page 196).⁵⁴ Participants in various practices of public administration, as we have seen in the cases discussed throughout this dissertation, conceptualize the city as a thing and address that conceptualized thing through which they enact the city-making project. But because the orientation is not merely the implication of actions *from* the city as a given but *toward* the city as a problem, these participants are engaging in an upward move to form, that is, to the ‘correctness’ of experience. And with that, they engage the diversity, difference, and distinctions of lived experiences as these are drawn together.⁵⁵

In sum, we see that the smart city reestablishes a commitment to the lifeworld of city dwellers. The pretense of smart cities improving urban life means that the discussion is about conceptualizing large and complex communities. Seemingly technical assumptions of smart-city programs in this way lead directly to the matters of collective memory and the cultural experience and to the routines and the cultivation of lifeworld that sustain cultural memory (Halbwachs, 1992). Therefore, as a relationship to the urban landscape, as a reformulation of order and as a catalyst of change, the talk of smart cities reveals the irremovable cultural subtext of the urban administrative policy enunciated as a form of cultural infrastructure.

⁵⁴ “The anesthetization of firstness leads to this: that what is present to a man is present to his eyes and ears, to his body, a man’s body coordinates a time and place and what is most immediate to him is the time and place where he is (where he exists)... The firstness of society also consists in the fact that of all the immediate appearances which are present to a man, it is the one external presence which he shares with all man.... The experience of the first is the experience of what is most common and immediate, of what is most concrete.” (Blum, 1974, p. 196).

⁵⁵ We can imagine lived experiences as shapes in a single-point-perspective drawing converging at a single, unrepresented point outside the frame. Such objects could be distinct if drawn away from the convergence point. But if the images were moved toward that point, the shapes would converge. The integrity of their images would become more ambiguous and prone to doubt and confusion. We might envisage, by analogy, a similar messiness in administration as distinctive experiences is committed to a framework of administrative decision-making.

Chapter 8: Theorizing Urban Administration

Urban Theorizing

In her pioneering study of global urbanization, sociologist Rose Hum Lee (1955) defined cities as “population aggregates which are large, heterogeneous and densely settled within a limited land area,” that engender “a unique way of life, characterized by the term urbanism” (p. 7). What Hum Lee suggested is that underlying the administrative structure of the urban population are forces of intangible order-making; an urban culture—imbued by elements of trust, routine, identity, memory, cohesion, and life—that arise from interpersonal relationships and daily interaction (Jacobs, 1961; Lofland, 1973; Simmel, 1995). These interactions occur alongside the city’s “bureaucratic apparatus” (Mattern, 2017, para. 18) so that various ways of engaging city life sustain a particular double presence, as both experience and policy. The fusion of urban lifeworld and the structure of urban administrative policy provides the scene for a constitutive order, an *ordo civitatis* (Habermas, 2007) that provides city dwellers ways of engaging the whole of the urban community, or the city as a whole. That situation of engagement imbues actions of city life, including collective initiatives, public and private decision-making, purposeful plans and ad hoc schemes, and a movement toward community so that the commonality of the city is desired as a shared, though contested, project. And so, administration exists within a relationship to experience because experience remains a source of ongoing questioning about what the community is and what it is to be in the final analysis. It is this ongoing project of order-making which permeates what I have been considering in the previous chapters about various contexts of administrating the city. At Committee of Adjustment hearings, a site-specific grammar allowed participants to define the grounds of decision-making drawing on memory and personal experience. The staged houses

and Catherine Jheon's essay on home renovations in *Toronto Life* showed how private life is tied to the intricate work of attending to the city as a project. In the literature on smart cities, an essential administrative relationship to the everyday experience of the city was found underpinning talk of the internet of things, efficiency through technology, and the future of cities. In these cases, the notion of administration has shown to be deeply connected to a sense of what the city is as a situation of order-making that draws on the lifeworld to establish a common project or form of community.

This chapter shifts gears. It moves away from ways administration relates to everyday urban culture to consider theorizing administration. Here, I consider administration itself and explore how administration constitutes an engagement with the world. I aim to explicate, at least tentatively, what it is to administer, and in by administrating define the situation of order-making.

A key point of departure for this discussion⁵⁶ is Weber's well-known examination of administration (Tribe, 2019; Graeber, 2015). As Keith Tribe notes in the introduction to his recent translation of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Weber understood administration in terms of both its capacity to establish order within organizations, and as a relationship to order-making that is

⁵⁶ It is worthwhile noting the background and influence of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. The work was published posthumously in 1922. Following the appearance of Henderson and Parsons's partial translation under the title, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Weber, 1947), the work helped establish administration in North America as a subject of sociological analysis and a topic that had bearing on a broader analysis of community. By the 1950s, Weber was widely acclaimed as a "founder" of American sociology (Scaff, 2011). His influence is seen in Du Bois (Morris, 2015), Lewis Wirth (Bonner, 1997), and Parsons (Heritage, 1984), among others. However, historically and globally, several traditions of administrative theory could be compared to Weber's understanding. An example is the importance that administrative theory found in Chinese intellectual and political thought (Fung, 1946/1976; Ho, 1962; Mote, 1999) and theories of lay and holy corporations in German scholarly tradition (Gierke, 1958).

external. While Weber's understanding of the internal logic of bureaucracy has been discussed widely (Bartels, 2015; Graeber, 2015), Tribe (2019) noted that Weber's understanding of administration's relationships to "social orders" broadly was equally significant:

Indeed, it could be suggested that Weber's sociology presents an analysis of society and modernity directed to the management of social situations and processes, that is, the elements of a managerial theory of society that has been obscured by its association with the (certainly related) Weberian "theory" of bureaucracy. Here again, the focus has always been on the structure and not the process—the ongoing dynamics of managing social orders, that all social action is oriented to social organisations that provide them with opportunities that shape the way individuals lead their lives. (pp. 68–69)

This presents a comprehensive understanding of administration that extends beyond the conventional boundaries of organizational theory. Weber thought the administration of community is not merely an adjunct to political and legal authority. Administrative capacity, or the underlying theory of administration, instead represents a basic engagement with order-making realised in ways that are distinct from the rationale of political authority. In other words, what Weber understood is that administrative authority confers specific skills and expertise that not only can enact the will of the state but to form a particular relationship with the community at large (Weber, 1947). The ability to organize and perpetuate organization is, for Weber a key starting point of the administration's relationship with the community.

In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber identified two types of administrative capacities (Weber, 1947). First is the capacity of administrators to operate in the organizations using "technical knowledge" (Weber, 1947, p. 339). The skill allows administrative institutions to intervene substantially (though not always necessarily fairly or efficiently) in key fields of community life, including financial markets, communication services, and transportation

networks (Weber, 1947; Graeber, 2015). This is particularly evident in how administration dominates institutional components of the community, such as policing, education, or social-security programs. The technical skills that the agents of administration develop mean that the specifics of city operations that are meaningful in everyday experience are the purview of urban administration. Administration in this way embodies both legalistic and functional facets of governmental authority. More importantly, the practical ability to operate large organizations means that administration is the primary medium for public engagement and therefore, the practical representation of the city. As impenetrable and officious as it may be, technical competence allows administrative institutions to be a central force in the constitution of a community.

The second competency that Weber identifies is perhaps less widely acknowledged, yet it is nevertheless as important as technical competence. This second power is the ability to collect, manage, and use the information that complex systems generate. Not only are administrators in can establish and maintain complex organizational systems, but they are also able to ‘learn’ from the systems and that allows them to develop generalizations about the notion of the order. It is a capacity that reproduces order-making as a generalization, as a form, or as a model, of social order. What Weber (1947) calls the “store of documentary material” (Weber, 1947, p.339) enables those with administrative responsibilities to acquire a “striving” oriented by a certain form of abstract rationality. As he explains,

bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational. This consists on one hand in technical knowledge which, by itself, is sufficient to ensure it a position of extraordinary power. But in addition to this, bureaucratic organizations, or the holders of power who make use of them, have a tendency to increase their power still

further by the knowledge growing out of experience in the service. For they acquire through the conduct of office a special knowledge of facts and have available a store of documentary material peculiar to themselves.... It stands in relation to technical knowledge in somewhat the same position as commercial secrets do to technical training. It is a product of the striving for power. (p. 339)

Weber highlighted an important aspect of urban administration. His statement indicates a need to think of the bonds between the order-making capacities of administrative organizations and the structures of social order.

Weber and the City

To understand how Weber's analysis of bureaucracy applies specifically to urban administration, we turn to his monograph, *The City* (1958). Like *Economy and Society*, *The City* was initially part of the *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* project but was ultimately removed and published separately (Mommsen, 2000). In 1958, Don Martindale and Gertrude Neuwirth published an English translation.⁵⁷ While *The City* certainly did not garner the influence and status of Henderson and Parsons's rendering of *Economy and Society*, it has nevertheless remained useful because it indicates ways in which Weber's general analysis of administration applies to his understanding of urban life. In particular, it shows he contemplated the relationship between the

⁵⁷ The origin of *The City* is intriguing yet illusive. Mommsen (2000) said that it is oldest component of *Economy and Society* and that it initially "held the central position" (p. 382) in Weber's thinking from around 1911, yet it was nevertheless later discarded as part of that project only to be expanded and published in 1913 as "The City" in the German journal *Der Logos*. As Bonner (1997) noted, Lewis Wirth, considered the founder of the Chicago School, recognized in Weber's *The City* a foundational theory of urbanism. However, even with the publication of Martindale and Neuwirth's translation, there seems to have been little interest this work within English scholarship. For instance, Tribe (2019) hardly mentioned *The City* in his recent translation of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, despite going into detail about the circuitous process of bringing Weber's magnum opus to print. As a side note on a Canadian connection, Gertrude Neuwirth (1927–2006) was a leading member of Carleton University's Sociology department in the 1970s.

administration of cities and urban life as he confronts a simple yet elusive question: What constitutes a city?

Weber answered the question of what constitutes *The City* in a particular way. He dwelled on the tasks of identifying what urban communities that are genuine cities and which are merely dense concentrations of population. This categorization in places now seems overly abstract and even teleological. A conspicuous example is a distinction he maintains in the following passage: “Foremost among the reasons for the peculiar freedom of urbanites in the Mediterranean city in contrast to the Asiatic is the absence of magical and animistic caste and sib [relative or ancestor] constraints” (Weber, 1958, p. 97). The ridged orientalist tenor (Said, 1994) of the passage detracts from its value. However, Weber's (1958) approach did nevertheless have merit. He asked about the city as a category by considering broad ways historical, cultural and familial relationships engage community organization.⁵⁸ The question of what constitutes a city in this way serves as a tool for excavating a concealed meaning of administration as it relates to urban social order. As Martindale (1958) explains in the introduction to his translation, by asking what constitutes a city, Weber came to identify a type of depersonalization that arises historically in populous and diverse communities with the effect that such communities become, writes Martindale, “a total systematic unit of inter-human life, defined by an ‘order of institutions’” (1958, p. 54). This means that the fully constituted

⁵⁸ Weber’s thinking stands in contrast to what had been postulated a generation earlier by a teacher of Emile Durkheim, Fustel de Coulanges, in his influential essay, *La Cite Antique* (1864/1955). He suggested that the ancient city was developed around a sense of familiarity and of religious imagination. As the city grew, household gods migrated from the household to public institutions, and the idea of the household and the gods’ fundamental role of ‘dwelling’ within the home remained embedded even in the complex municipal institutions of large city-states.

city allows a civic order to thrive and stand as an order-making situation that arises from the everyday lifeworld while also transcending the positionality of lived experience.

According to Weber, the bonds of familial tradition are not dissolved as much as they are folded into a new type of affiliation, or what Habermas called an *ordo civitatis* (2007). In the true city, accordingly, the civic order is no longer an external force (as is the case for Weber's "Asiatic" administrative centres). It is also not an experience or an enunciation. It is depersonalized because it is realized by addressing the city as an impersonal project, as a 'thing' that extends beyond the lifeworld. It is rooted in the innumerable reflexive, common and endogenous actions of city dwellers while constituting a unity that stands outside this action. Cities thus fully become a type of administered social order founded on municipal institutions, local history, and a significant degree of autonomy. This means that, for Weber (1958), what determines the completeness of a city is, in the end, the nature of its institutions and how its institutions engage the culture of the urban community. In his words, true cities are characterized by "the possession by the urbanites of a special substantive or trial law or courts autonomously nominated by them" (p. 81). The practice of law (representing administrative competency) is thus underwritten by a common urban experience. Alternatively, an urban settlement might be populous and sophisticated, but it will not be a city if its organization remained estranged from the order-making capacity of its local community because it will not have the necessary capacity to administer itself. The administrative authority will remain lodged either in an outside power (such as a conquering regime or a princely authority) or by the crude forces of "animistic caste and sib constraints" (p. 97). To put it simply, if an urban community can not draw from everyday experience to form a social order to administer, then it is for Weber, not a real city.

Weber offered an approach to analyzing the category of ‘the city’ as a distinct social-administrative phenomenon. In *The City* he drew from an impressive range of examples drawn from political and legal history, returning, again and again, to explain how cities throughout time fostered and maintained endogenous administrative capacities. However, in the many cases he uses to pursue his argument, he provides only a scattering of instances where details of this model are shown. He illustrates the anatomy of the city—its muscle tissue and skeletal system—but he does not go as far as showing how the body works in action. If the city, as Weber (1958) claims, is an ongoing order-making situation, it remains to be seen how this order-making is observable. How do people in cities recognize and engage in urban order? What does it look like ‘on the street’? How do people in cities define the situation of the city?

Weber and Jacobs

To better grasp what Weber proposes about order-making in cities, I turn to Jane Jacobs’ classic analysis of urban planning, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961).

Jacobs published *Death and Life* in 1961, just as American cities were springing back after decades of stagnancy due to the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the post-war recession. *Death and Life* was written to admonish the growing cadre of city-building professionals including urban planning, architecture, and engineers. It responded to an exuberance about city building and confidence in U.S. technological innovation and industrial power. It was written years before the urban uprisings of 1968 and white-flight suburbanization. Even though the book became renowned during the far more sobering context of the 1960s and ‘70s, it was certainly written for the self-assured America of the 1950s.

Jacobs was certain the generation of post-war city building had become increasingly susceptible to the fallacy that any problems could be solved by technical methods and that, as a result, urban planning had lost touch with the generative power of city life. That said, Jacobs was not opposed to technology in principle. She acknowledged that technocratic approaches to city building should be credited for certain progress in rebuilding cities. However, from what she could see in the late 1950s, these approaches were rapidly becoming calcified as dogma. In *Death and Life*, Jacobs did not argue against techniques, or even systematic thinking itself, but rather, her criticism was about the elevation of such analytical methods beyond experience:

As in the pseudoscience of bloodletting, just so in the pseudoscience of city rebuilding and planning, years of learning and a plethora of subtle and complicated dogma have arisen on a foundation of nonsense. The tools of technique have steadily been predicated. Naturally, in time forceful and able men, admired administrators, having swallowed the initial fallacies and having been provisioned with tools and with public confidence, go on logically to the greatest destructive exercises, which prudence or mercy might have forbade. (p. 13)

Emerging from this critique, was an alternative Jacobs offered that reinstated an ethos for city administration grounded in urban culture. Jacobs sketched, in other words, what administration is when it is re-situated amidst the flow of the urban lifeworld. She asserted that certain principles of city planning must be rooted in mundane patterns of social interaction, that cities should be planned from the bottom up, and that expertise should be cultivated by observing cities first-hand. By appreciating the kaleidoscopic complexities of the urban lifeworld, administrative policy could be brought into alignment with urban culture.

In some respects, Jacob's *The Death and Life* reads as an indirect criticism of Weber in that it challenges the status of administration driven by rationality and professionalization, the traits of

administrative systems that Weber so clearly venerated. Yet, at a more fundamental level, Jacobs with Weber's basic commitment to the city as an endogenous form of social order. Both see a particular form of social order arising from city life. Both embrace the notion that cities are produced by esoteric forces. Both remain preoccupied with the problem of understanding urban administration in relation to the culture of urban life. It is on this common basis that Jacobs develops her most ground-breaking analysis, effectively applying the idea of order-making she shares with Weber to an innovative reading of urban landscapes. Whereas Weber drew from legal history to document order-making in cities, Jacobs looks at city streets to find order-making occurring in the routine actions of neighbourhood communities, that is, in the vernacular of contemporary urban life.

Throughout *The Death and Life*, Jacobs demystifies order-making. She says it is readily observable in everyday practices and it is this promise that makes the book so engaging for it proposes an entirely renewed way of looking at city administration. This is no clearer than in the well-known discussion of the "ballet of the good city sidewalk" (p. 50). Jacobs describes the melee of activity that occurs on a typical neighbourhood sidewalk to explain something essential about the city, that is, how a scene of apparent disorder reveals an underpinning way of fostering a collective order from urban experience. The importance of a notion of order-making is stated explicitly as she introduces the scene:

Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, beginning with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance—not to a simple-minded precision dance with

everyone kinking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off *en masse*, but an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations. (p. 50)

The central idea presented here is that the interweaving of movement and interaction is both complex and commonplace. The dance is dynamic as it engenders a firmness to interaction so that the movement of a crowd shows how order arises from within the community. Accordingly, the endogenous order-making Weber (1947) sees in the institutional history of cities Jacobs finds in concrete and routine actions of city life. Thus, the urban manner of order-making that is vital to urban administration becomes readily observable.

That said, it is easy to misrepresent Jacobs' remedy. The vivid analogy might seem to suggest that urban order-making is 'natural' and that the way that people engage the city manifests in Kropotkin-like mutual support, or that Jacobs had sought to extract transferable patterns from the ballet that can be applied to city planning problems elsewhere.

While she certainly embraced the notion of interrelatedness, Jacobs did not in fact claim that interaction in cities is ecological, or even analogous to ecology. Understanding the city as one

would a natural habitat⁵⁹ overlooks much of what is innovative in her analysis, and this is what Jacobs (1961) directly countered in stating,

Because the life sciences and cities happen to pose the same kinds of problems does not mean they are the same problems. The organizations of living protoplasm and the organizations of living people and enterprise cannot go under the same microscope.
(p. 439)

Instead, what Jacobs found is that cities cultivate interaction through common experiences of the lifeworld, and it is this engagement in the lifeworld that animates the order-making of the city. This means that order-making is not the same as mechanistic interactions or transactional relationships. Of course, interpersonal interactions shape life in cities, but that is not ultimately what Jacobs addresses or what Weber sought to clarify. Both Jacobs and Web were not looking at individuals or groups as subsets of a population, for their interest was in the ways city dwellers approach what is common among them, that is, the city as it becomes a thing which they understand from experience and to which together they administer as something external.

The method Jacobs (1961) used to diagnose the problem is inductive, but so was her prescription. She claimed that a superior understanding of the city arises from “reasoning from

⁵⁹ This parallel of city life and ecological systems appears in many contexts. The Chicago School conflated urban development and nature in suggesting essential forces of human society resurface in patterns of urban development (Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925). Also, worth noting is how this connects to the phenomenological analysis of dwelling and earth/soil in Heidegger and preceding German theorists. For example, Park (1925) introduced *the City* by quoting Spengler’s *Decline of the West*: “The city also, like the peasants’ hut, has its roots in the soil” (Park, 1925, p.1). This ‘dirt/soil/ground’ imagery is again revived in contemporary urban theory. Jameson (2006), for instance, referred to Warhol’s ironic twist on the peasant-shoe image in *Diamond Dust Shoes* to theorize the “emergence of a new kind of flatness, a depthlessness” (p. 489) of post-modern Los Angeles. The earth-in-the-city theme has reappeared differently in more recent analysis of urban space in relation to ideas of geophilosophy and geo-media (see Parika, 2015; Mattern, 2017).

particulars to the general, rather than the reverse” (p. 440). Urban planning and administration accordingly become understandable only by starting with the experience of being part of a community and observing everyday routine engaging the whole of the city. The issue Jacobs then presented is this: If mundane urban experience informs administration, in what way does this happen? What is that generative relationship that occurs in the lived experience of the city that culminates in some sense of generalizable order?

At this point, we return to a discussion that mirrors the talk about the messiness of the Committee of Adjustment, the open-ended nature of engaging the gentrifying neighbourhood, and the smart city. It is also the uncertainty that Peter McHugh’s (1968) lab experiment I discussed in Chapter 2 sought to clarify: the relationship between the lifeworld and the structure of administration. Here, in the messy, zone of self-awareness, urban lifeworld draws into question the context in which the lifeworld takes place and that summons a self-engendered conception of attending to something common, to the administration of the community. The groundlessness of the relationship demands a type of vernacular theorizing of order for administering the city. Therefore, the encounter with defined limits appeals to a commonality. The specificity of thinking *at the limit* and *of the limit* of the lifeworld establishes an ethos of attending to, or of speaking of, the ‘thing’ or ‘matter’ of the city.⁶⁰ In other words, from the threshold of everyday urban experience comes the production of the city as a common project (that is, the city or city hall).

⁶⁰ There is perhaps an important connection that should be explored between McHugh’s (1968) treatment of definition of situations and Michael J. Hyde’s (2004) interest in *ethos*, which sought to recover an aspect of the Aristotelian tradition rhetoric. For both McHugh and Hyde, capacity to act through language originates within a sense of familiarity and place.

What is interesting therefore is not only the problem of connecting the culture of the city and its administrative structure but how such confrontation entails an account of the city. The city is defined by the vernacular of endogenous analysis that comes about in the particularity of that occasion of theorizing the situation as a form of common experience.

Administration as Making

What are the practical methods for conceptualizing the presence of administration by way of everyday urban experience? How can we characterize this process? I suggest one response is to consider the problem of theorizing administration as equivalent to creating something. To define the situation as something present, as a social fact, or as an issue is to engage in a form of making.⁶¹ Participants encounter the work of making the city a social fact by theorizing the city as they would theorize *making* something present amid the cultural life of their community. The form of the city thereby is encountered like they encounter everyday experience. This vernacular theorizing in turn ‘projects’ the city as a form of the lived experience of the city. Yet, even as the form of the city remains anchored in lived experience, the *making* of the city by *theory* means that the city-as-form is ultimately subject to defining limits inherent in making a thing. It is what grounds administration and saves decision-making from nihilism (Blum, 2003).

⁶¹ I am using ‘social fact’ in a way that is loosely based on Durkheim’s (1895/2013) term to capture the aspect of confrontation and ‘thingly-ness’ implied in the definition included in *The Rules of Sociological Method*: “A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or which is general over the whole of a given society while having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations” (p. 82).

This idea of practical order of city form is what Hannah Arendt finds in her exegesis of Plato's *Republic*. In *The Human Condition* (1998), Arendt explains that the *polis* is theorized as an act of making a thing, or as city making:

Plato knew quite well that his favorite analogies taken from household life would demand a quasi-divine quality in the ruler of the men to distinguish him as sharply from his subjects as the slaves are distinguished from the master or the sheep from the shepherd. The construction of the public space in the image of a fabricated object, on the contrary, carried with it only the implication of ordinary mastership, experience in the art of politics as in all other arts, where the compelling factor lies not in the person of the artist or craftsman but in the impersonal object of his art or craft. (p. 227)

Arendt finds Plato establishing thing-making as a basis of order-making. At the core of city building is a form of order realized in “[substituting] making for action to bestow upon the realm of human affairs the solidity inherent in the work and fabrication,” and it is this aspect of making which “touches the very centre of his philosophy, the doctrine of ‘ideas’” (p. 225). Plato's sense of the city/*polis* as a made thing endows it with qualities that are knowable and limited like the “ordinary” craftsmanship of making. The argument is radical, for it rebuts an alternative notion of the *polis* as an order brought about through the mastery of the ruler, as something that is over the ruled, or a mastery that inevitably takes on a “quasi-divine quality,” (p. 227). As Arendt notes, it may seem that Plato favours absolute authority in the figure of the philosopher-king,⁶² but the governance Plato addresses here is not arbitrary and authoritarian. Plato is not talking about singularity and personality as the epitome of political power—a condition treated elsewhere in the *Republic* as tyranny. The philosopher-king does not rule the state as an entirely knowable and

⁶²The most notable interpretation is perhaps Popper's (1966) critique of the *Republic* found in his *Open Society*.

manageable entity.⁶³ The state, instead, remains unknowable, or beyond the knowledge of the leader, and therefore the ‘thing’ of community remains in a sense outside or exceeding the king’s control. Plato’s notion of a city as a made thing places rulership soundly within the scope of the day-to-day, making it, according to Arendt, “like all other arts” (p. 227). It is ruled not by a ‘personal’ technique but by an ‘impersonal’ craft that is bound by inherent limits (Arendt, 1998; Habermas, 2007). Plato, in this way, sets out a model of the city that at once arises *from* the community and is directed *to* the community. Accordingly, from making the city comes the object of making, that is, the existence of the city because the making of the city exposes the nature of urban political order. It provides clarity that is urgently needed in the face of the current challenges that cities now face. Seeing urban administration as order-making, first, upends a common-sense assumption that the city, as a political entity is a given. Secondly, it confronts stereotypes of urban administration as being detached from routine life in cities by reasserting how the city is an ongoing project. The notion of making, finally, sheds light on what may be called the cultural dynamics of administration. In making the city, we see elements of memory, identity, and narrative being drawn into the project.

This approach changes how we look at urban administration. It puts aside conventional

⁶³ Arendt’s (1958) interpretation tells us of Plato’s seminal achievement of conceptualizing the *polis* as a made-thing. At the same time, it alerts us to the possible ramifications of this approach. “Within this frame of reference,” she wrote, “the emergence of a utopian political system ... construed in accordance with a model by somebody who has mastered the techniques of human affairs becomes almost a matter of course” (p. 227). In other words, if the city is a made thing, there is a risk of it being misconstrued as an objectified icon of power detached from common purpose, or an external good end, or what Weil (1986) called the “great beast” of political idolatry. This seems to also resonate with Popper’s (1966) famous criticism of the *Republic* and is what we might consider now as the commodification of the public sphere.

interests in management strategies and problem-solving. Urban administration is instead reconsidered in a broader, more essential, discussion about making. Accordingly, we can think through what the act of making involves, what occurs in the situation and process of making, and how participation in this activity generates definitions and limits. If we consider how Plato equates the polis with a made thing, as Arendt suggests, we become oriented to the conditions for city making. As I aim to show once urban administration is understood in terms of making, we can further explore how administration relates to the open, indeterminable multiplicity of community. The situation of making the city then shifts from being a taken-for-granted condition to a “problem-solving situation where the very problem to be solved is the continuous clarification of the situation, that is, of the object as a course of action” (Blum, 2003, p. 53).

Theorizing Making

We now return to where this chapter began, namely, the void between community and administration, to consider how that void is a matter of engaging in the work of making a thing. We can now talk about participation in administration as a matter of being present at the making of a thing and how that act of making engenders a familiar space of tangible everyday experience, not only a theoretical process of development or becoming (Koutsoupos, 2007). To make a thing is, instead, to enact engagement through the experience of time and memory, and for this reason, the order of making is inextricable from what is profoundly routine and ordinary.

In some ways, this resembles what Forester (1999) and Sandercock (2003) recognize in how stories shape the practice of urban planning. “We can think about planning as performed story,” writes Sandercock (2003) because the story is the synthesis of experience and memory presented through the active work of urban planning. However, using storytelling to frame the analysis of

engagement also reveals certain inherent limitations. Storytelling, first, implies a performative expression of city making that occurs along with the substance of a debate.⁶⁴ However, as Sandercock (2003) says, not only is storytelling a rhetorical tool for achieving a defined objective or interest, but it also produces the raw material for theorizing the common, open-ended situation of city making. It serves to set up the orientation of policy discourse.

Yet here, there is potential to further clarify just what storytelling entails. The collective work of making the city arises from the syntheses which storytelling provides, but it is also connected to a sense of immediacy. It is this directness of administrative engagement that is perhaps not fully captured by storytelling. Rather, the power of storytelling is an encounter with being present with something being made and remade, told and retold. It is this attention to the art of making that is captured in a deceptively plain statement at the start of Heidegger's (1950/1993) essay "The Origin of the Work of Art":

Works of art are familiar to everyone. Architectural and sculptural works can be seen installed in public places, in churches, and in dwellings. Artworks of the most diverse periods and peoples are housed in collections and exhibitions. If we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are things. The picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat.
(p. 145)

Accordingly, the familiar presence implies not merely an extension and specificity in space or within a temporal period. The productivity of making instead ensures that "works are as naturally present as are things." The relationship to the 'art' of the story or of the city reconstitutes what is

⁶⁴ An interesting discussion about the need to situate interpretive policy analysis in relation to the object (i.e., thing) of policy is found at the beginning of Behagel et al. (2017).

external (“diverse periods and peoples”) as something current, present, and tangible. The “naturally present” things are both here and now, but they also exist as the inverse, as the external, historical, and undetermined. Making is in this sense the act of ascending through an enduring and specific condition, or what can be called *dwelling*, but not being trapped within it. For Heidegger (1993), it is a sense of endurance that surrounds action that is central to the encounter. He notes this point elsewhere, asserting that “only if we are capable of dwelling, only then we can build” (p. 361).

We can push this one step further. A sort of dwelling occurs not only when making tangible things but in the theorizing that originates from drawing together a social setting oriented toward making something new. In other words, dwelling forms conditions for making, a commonplace of interpersonal discourse that conditions the group to the act of making a thing. It is the existence of *beginning* itself as a commonality (Blum, 1974). Engaging urban administration likewise sets about its tasks through the dwelling-place that enacts the common work of making the city, just as dwelling precedes the conceptual project of making a singular object. The aspects of the beginning, collecting, or enduring embedded in the act of dwelling, therefore, are circumstances for reformulating the indeterminability and diversity of city experience as a collective project oriented to urban order.

By considering storytelling in terms of dwelling, we see that the condition for making things is posited as being profoundly ordinary. In this way, the notion of dwelling can likewise be understood as order-making by way of making a situation *ordinary*, or what Arendt (1958) called “ordinary mastership” (p. 227).

What then is the connection between ‘orderly’ and ‘ordinary’?⁶⁵ Making a thing ordinary is order-making in that it is an intimate and creative encounter with some sort of change that extends from the past through to the present and into the future. Instead of speaking of city making as a special technique or as a vision, the dwelling-place practice is found amid the vernacular talk of an urban community. What is ordinary, historical, and situated engages the phenomenon of making a thing, or as the in-between encounter (Bartels, 2013) where community-life experience is reformulated as attending to the community as administration. Considering the city as a made thing in this way exposes a substratum of theorization about the duration or limit necessary for community members–participants when they engage in urban planning.

Inside the Situation of Making

What is it to examine this oriented dwelling place of making? What occurs in formulating the ordinary dwelling situation of making a thing?

One approach is to consider methods of making as they occur within practical conditions and in the particularities of a project. Ethnomethodology describes making as an ongoing formulation of methods established by mutual accountability.⁶⁶ How this appears in the practice of administration is demonstrated in Garfinkel’s study of a medical clinic that documented ways in

⁶⁵There seems to be a notable etymological connection between ‘order’ and ‘ordinary.’ According to Partridge (1966), the Latin origins of both words is *ordo*, meaning ‘the order of the threads in the woof,’ or *ordiri*, ‘to weave.’ This hints at a relationship between not only ‘orderliness’ (structured, planned) and ‘ordinary’ (closeness, mundane) but also a link between the making of a thing and narrative. We can think of ‘weaving a tale’ or even perhaps ‘a web of deception.’

⁶⁶ In Garfinkel’s (1967) words, “I use the term ‘ethnomethodology’ to refer to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life” (p. 11)

which staff developed ad hoc methods in managing cases. On the surface, the study showed staff used various informal shortcuts, hacks, and modifications to reconcile formal standards of documentation and case management with the practical limitations of their day-to-day work (Garfinkel, 1967). Underlying these workarounds was a situation-specific method of understanding and acting that developed in tandem with formal rules and procedures. The reality of the work in a sense emerged from the workflow of individual members of the clinic as they worked within the community of the clinic. It was this local ethos of work that resembles what Lipsky (1971) observed with police officers and front-line administrators

A central insight that ethnomethodology offers is that order is situational. Order arises from the specificity of actions, and as such specificity becomes accountable, or meaningful, as a form of order-making, the situation of the action is realized. However, Ethnomethodology is decidedly agnostic about how participants theorize the generalizability of order-making. It describes the process, yet stops when it arrives at the self-reflective aspects of order-making. This is because, as Blum and McHugh point out, ethnomethodology asserts that “we can say about our affairs is identical with the ways we do them” (1984, 75). Doing and accounting are indistinguishable.

The problem with this stance, however, is that ethnomethodology comes up short in observing the full depth of action. The self-reflective theorizing of actors inevitably exceeds accounts for their actions because their actions are oriented to order-making, and order-making goes in turn beyond accountability. At the centre of action is order-making which provides what is essential to action. It means, as Blum and McHugh (1984) have written,

the concern with the “reflexive” character of practical action that distinguishes ethnomethodology as a theoretical project—as a program in self-reflection—that is not a concern *essentially* that differentiates the theorist from the member; this difference is

technical, since the member, too, has an opportunity to engage in self-reflection, though as a matter of fact he does not in particular cases take up that challenge. (p. 82)

The engagement of action with orderliness involves a second concern that is parallel to the question of self-reflection but is different from accountability. The reason is the process of order-making via self-reflection confronts the limit of making. Ultimately making moves to an end or a form and that form is unaccountable. Order-making, like any other type of making, accordingly involves the externality of the action, that is the permeance of form because it moves, in the process of making, toward becoming a thing, be it a chair or a city. Order-making, therefore, supplies the desire to move toward the end of action, and to move from ordinary experience to engage in what is *extraordinary* about theorizing. Therefore, the program of self-reflection embedded in process of moving from particularities of routine to the accountability of order is broken open by limits disclosed by making.

This is not to say that the participants doing administrative tasks are aware of engaging in a self-reflexive project of theorizing their own order-making. Nor does theorizing develop directly from the specificity, or ethnomethods that form out of administrative roles and capacities. Rather, the movement of making toward theorizing is a prior condition, preceding what is entrenched in practice. This is what McHugh (1993) identified as “the whole of making” (1993), that is, what precedes making a thing (the conditions of making) and what persists thereafter (beyond the possibility of making) as well as the act itself of making. The ordinary situation of making becomes a relationship to a horizon or limit, that is approached as a suspended realm (McHugh, 1993). It is this realm of the limit that assembles in situ resources of accountability and is anchored by the ethos of narrative. McHugh (1993) here follows the classical tradition, which recognized making as having some form of relationship to absolutes, such as to the absolutes of form and the good. In

this light, order-making can be seen as possessing the unaccountable limit that mediates the ephemerality of production and the finitude of a thing. As he explained somewhat obliquely,

the made production begins to recede into the limit to become, not absent itself, but absorbed within that which is neither present or absent ... suspended in the production, suspended in all making, as the finitude of making's own possibility and impossibility together. (p. 46)

What is notable about McHugh's (1993) insight is that it does not simply abandon what is familiar or the everyday dwelling-place of making and cross over to metaphysical speculation. When encountering the limit of 'made production', he turns back, returning to the familiarity of the lifeworld, to ask about 'our' relation to this sublime horizon.

He does this by questioning the limit in terms of social relationships that are ordinary and familiar: "know the limit, but not as a friend, nor as an enemy, certainly not as a witness but as what?" (p. 47). We look at the limit as it passes, as we might glance at a stranger on a sidewalk at night. The limit disturbs the ordinariness we take for granted, but it also reinstates the basic force of commonality of orderliness. As Lofland pointed out, the "locus of the city as a world of strangers resides in the city's public spaces" (1973, p. x). The same could be said about making.

This final point merits some further consideration. In accepting McHugh's analysis, it seems we are left to consider city making as the collective work of orienting to the limits of making. The orientation affirms dwelling but undermines it just the same. The limits to familiarity and historical narrative immediately bump up against the reality of outside experience and memory.

It is not enough to talk about limits as the local, traditional, and familiar ways of doing things. How will the vernacular theory-work of city making know the limits of making? What happens when there are overlapping realms of dwelling places? How will the storytelling

techniques of theorizing the city be engaged when they arise from substantially different experiences and urban imaginaries?

The Limits of Making

The discussion can be summarized in this way. Urban administration as a form of city making supplies a fabricated, substantial project that is the accountable ‘thing’ of the community. It is fabricated and lasting. It is monumental yet, also in a sense, ephemeral. It is generated within everyday contingencies yet extends beyond. The made thing is the ‘heritage’ to which the community attends like art hung in front of a group of spectators (Heidegger, 1993). This art of the city generated from lifeworld experience likewise makes an appearance in the lifeworld too as something self-reflectively transcending the ephemerality of daily routine. This is the double presence of administration. That leaves us to think about what that double presence means. How should we make sense of it?

Simmel (1991) addresses this in one of the more vivid passages in *The Metropolis and Mental Life*. He discusses the ‘what’ of urban order in terms of a personality who encounters the made thing of collectivity within the minutia of ordinary urban culture. He asks how the refinement of everyday urban life produces a monumental double presence. To do this, he writes of the duality of cultivation and structure in a professional dinner guest, the occupation of quatorzième, which he identifies as being the epitome of professional specialization:

Cities are above all the seat of the most advanced economic division of labour. They produce such extreme phenomena as the lucrative vocation of the quatorzième in Paris. These are persons who may be recognized by shields on their houses and who hold themselves ready at the dinner hour in appropriate costumes so they can be called upon on short notice in case thirteen persons find themselves at the table. Exactly in the

measure of its extension, the city offers to an increasing degree the determining conditions for the division of labour. (p. 17)

As he explains, the business of the quatorzième is to attend a client's dinner party so that the table has a full complement of guests (i.e., the fourteenth at the table). Their job is to ensure that the gathering feels natural, complete, and pleasing.⁶⁷ While they come on short notice and without prior acquaintance, they dress and behave in ways that complete an intimate circle of confidants. They are strangers who could very well be a friend. In this way, the quatorzième helps associate the particular with the general, the intimacy of dwelling with the anonymity of the cosmopolitan, the personal to the social, and the cuisine to the community. The persona, somewhat Christ-like, is paradoxically both ephemeral and lasting in that the aspect of wholeness he represents marks a deficiency, even a fate. This friendly paradox is what the poet S. L. Wisenberg (2005) pointedly captures in *The Quatorzième*, which begins with these lines:

The quatorzième enters late. The others have been
waiting. And are grateful:
So pleased to see you, my dear, to round us out, you look
so hale and hearty, just like the one who could not
join us tonight, I swear I did not hear him cough at all
when I saw him last. Shall we begin? With apéritifs,
[...]

⁶⁷ Simmel's use of the quatorzième and its relation to cultural history merits further research that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The 19th century cultural historian, John Cordy Jeaffreson, wrote about this in the *A Book about the table* (1875). He noted that finding a fourteenth guest on short notice was a common practice when one of fourteen invited guests could not attend and the host wished to avoid an unlucky thirteen. However, the professionalization of this role in Paris society, Jeaffreson added, was "the purely fictitious creation of the humorists" (p. 306). However, it idea of the professional quatorzième was realistically enough depicted in literature that this seemingly emblematic Parisian figure was believed to be real (Jeaffreson, 1875). Perhaps Jeaffreson was correct, and Simmel made use of what was in fact an powerful urban myth.

a perfect Pont L'Eveque, a nice Burgundy, derision
of the priesthood, a delicate chèvre, talk of the Balkans,
[...]
In the flickering light, he does not mention
how frequently he is called of late, how many
guests who have supped at tables such as these
are gone. He lets his companions drink deeply of him,
pretends that he could save them

The quatorzième personifies the intersection of professional capacity and personal experience. The figure stands for both absence and fullness, utility and decadence, and ultimately life and death—the paradoxical wholeness of the community.⁶⁸ When they are greeted, they are judged in comparison to the “one who could not join us” (Wisenberg, 2005, Line 5), and yet, in his presence, the memory of the absent friend stays shrouded. Moreover, the whole matter of absence is tacitly avoided. The quatorzième will not talk about “how frequently he is called of late [and] how many guests who have supped at tables such as these are gone.” (Lines 17–20). As he completes the gathering, he completes the erasure of loss. When the absence is substituted by the stranger, the dinner party event is happily ‘rounded’ out with the proper number according to form and convention. The quatorzième being present means death no longer disturbs the perverse normalcy of the occasion. Loss due to illness, violence, abduction—sickness unto death—is at hand but unacknowledged. The past is lost, or at least, obscured, in the polite talk of the present and the area of normalcy.

⁶⁸ The quatorzième is perhaps eerily comprehensible now with current conditions of the pandemic, the relationship of dining, sociability, and death.

And what is that normalcy? Is it a gathering, a group seated at the table, the courses of dishes, drink, and conversation? Is it the pleasure of engaging in something new, or the feeling of safety in being sheltered from what is strange and threatening? Moreover, might it be a synthesis of the lifeworld and the realm of policy and public affairs?

At the table, the dishes are consumed as are public issues (derision of the priesthood or war in Europe) so that the good of the world is ingested by the body and the body politic. The guests engage the quatorzième and “[drank] deeply of him” to seek a way to administer the world outside. They self-reflectively commiserate an order of the city, and as they find in this ethos of conducting a dinner party, they pretend the stranger at their table is a friend, but also a prophet, and the normalcy he holds out might save them. The gathering is just another supper with friends but also the last supper. The group seeks to make something of their situation only to come face to face with the elusive limits of their production.

Wisenberg’s poem subtly evokes a framework of narrative within Simmel’s notion of the quatorzième. Thereby, it connects the notion of the city’s division of labour with the intimacy of urban life and experience, at the inflection point where order-making approaches finitude (McHugh, 1993). The completion of the broken circle of friends is a representation of good social order. It stands equally for refinement that comes to fruition in the city, the synchronicity of Simmel’s metropolis, the precision promised by the smart city, or the refinement of the gentrified home. But like Plato’s ‘City of Pigs,’ specialization alone fails to constitute a form of the city. It approaches the limit but is not the limit of making. The complete assignment of roles, operations, and functions is the icon of administration, but it is also that which exposes incompleteness. Within the normality is the messy variation of productivity that manifests what is otherwise in the striving

for community. The messiness challenges the ethos offered by order as making confronts the limit of making. The dinner party encapsulates a vulnerability of normative collective order that exposes both the possibilities and limits of making, the elsewhere-ness and otherness of community.

The quatorzième and order-making

In Simmel (1991) and Wisenberg (2005), the movement toward order-making confronts a duality of strangeness and familiarity personified by the quatorzième. This confrontation is with the specialization of the city, with what is fundamentally incomplete, the condition of uncertainty—a messiness. Yet it is an incompleteness that also attracts questioning and engagement.

Returning to McHugh's (1993) essay, *Making, fragmentation, and the end of endurance*, we find that he also refers to a figure resembling the quatorzième. For McHugh, the “whole of making” (p. 47) draws attention to a strangeness that is found (or is seated) at the end of making where we confront its limit. McHugh accordingly invites us to question the quatorzième, to “drink deeply of him.” He asks us to consider who is the *quatorzième*. In a sense, here we are asking about the situation of the city order as it is present amidst the ethos of ‘home’ that is so dominant in the lifeworld. What is the limit of order-making when it leaves and goes back to the street? What relationship do we have to the limit of making when it is imminent, when it is next to friends and family, seated next to us, eating and laughing? Is the limit of making nothing other than the limits of the dwelling itself? Or has it something to do with the uncanny oddness of dwelling?

Paradoxically, the uncertainty surrounding the limit of making affords certainty. The mystery reveals itself in demarcating a threshold of dwelling as the externality of a whole, that is,

of the making unto a form, or fate, that exists outside agency and subjectivity. McHugh (1993) explained:

Is the limit a fate? Yes, the limit is a fate and a fate that is not friendly, not enemy-ly, not indifferent, not rational, and not human. It is a requirement, which does not come and go, that what we make must come and go, a requirement of what must be, what cannot be, what powers are ours, and what powers are not. (p. 47)

The limit then is to be understood as fate. It is the fate that comes with the commitment of making that resolves as an ‘achievement.’ As McHugh states, this orientation of fate is not merely a turn from expediency to principle or the subjectification of freedom or dignity. It is instead a commitment to what order-making delivers, that is, the form of what it produces:

This is a requirement of finitude. But it is not a punishment laid down, but rather, a life offered, because it gives the possibility and motive to do things, to do definite things in the world that are the productions which exemplify making as a matter of achievement rather than behest. (p. 47)

If the fateful achievement of making is not imposed externally, then we should also not make the mistake of thinking it is coming from within as self-realization. The fate of making instead provides an uncanny relationship to subjectivity because it projects what is inside outward as a motive “to do definite things in the world” (McHugh, 1993, p. 47). Fate renders the interior—biography, lived experience, domestic life, or lifeworld—as a heritage. It becomes a monumental thing to address. But unlike the conventional sense of monument, this heritage *from* within removes the specificity of time and places the “definite thing” within a collective situation of action. It is the site where administration and attendance to the urban community become present. Therefore, the limit of making can be understood as representing an entry to the monumentality of “thingness” for which the collectiveness of the city stands. Making thus becomes the present

monumentality of making a thing, the thing encountered and to which city dwellers address the question of defining the situation of the city. It is what Arendt saw in the *Republic* as the “public space in the image of a fabricated object” that rests within an order. It is the thing that is “not in the person of the artist or craftsman but the impersonal object of his art or craft” (p. 227). For the city dwellers ‘crafting’ the city, the thing they engage in is the situation they define.

We have come to a point where we can summarize. Imbued in the limits of order-making are attributes of endurance through which the heritage of taken-for-granted everydayness of the city actualizes administration. Order-making in urban administration, in other words, involves an essentially productive program of theorizing the city that extends from lifeworld experience to what is enduring, as a heritage or limit, beyond experience. In this, there is a striving toward a form or end of the city onto which it is made, remade, and realized by such making. The act of making, at its limit, therefore, elevates experience beyond the lifeworld to attend to the community.

A final point might be added. The city as a subjective experience of administration is condensed as a heritage that is pushed into the present as an objective thing. Thus, urban administration may be understood as a cyclical process that is comparable to the hermeneutical analysis applied to art or text (Yanow, 2007). Just as in vernacular architecture (Vellinga, 2006), the city in this way becomes a social fact when the past is made present by an iterative process of accountability, exegesis, and memory. The interpretation of the city accordingly is found within a cycle of reinterpretation that engulfs aspects of administrative action, such as technique and expediency. Immersed in a reinterpretation of experience, urban administration is comparable with what Hans Gadamer (2004) recognized as the transformation of the interpretation into “ideality” which he explains by discussing what happens to players engaged in a game:

We have seen that play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him. This is all the more the case where the game is itself 'intended' as such a reality—for instance, the play which appears as presentation for an audience....

The players play their roles as in any game, and thus the play is represented, but the play itself is the whole, comprising players and spectators. In fact, it is experienced properly by, and presents itself (as it is 'meant') to, one who is not acting in the play but watching it. In him the game is raised, as it were, to its ideality....

Only through this change does play achieve ideality, so that it can be intended and understood as play. Only now does it emerge as detached from the representing activity of the players and consist in the pure appearance (*Erscheinung*) of what they are playing. As such, the play—even the unforeseen elements of improvisation—is in principle repeatable and hence permanent. It has the character of a work, of an *ergon* and not only of *energeia*. (p. 110).

Memory, reflection, and storytelling grounded in experience accordingly animate an outward project of city making by establishing the immersive situation. In other words, the determinability of the 'game rules' of technique is superseded by a defined situation of administrative action nurtured by the 'play' of memory and culture. Urban administration occurs in the sense that the city is read and reread, presented, and represented, within the everyday experience of the city. It is a vernacular hermeneutic practice that establishes and re-establishes the city as an ethos of productive action. The subjective aspects of administration are then not merely about personal advantage, neighbourliness, or the even representation of values or rationality. It is also a problem-solving mechanism or method. For administration to be realized in the indomitable dynamics of the city means it is ultimately grounded in recurrent yet profoundly creative readings of urban order-making.

Summary and Next Steps

The understanding of the city arising from routine experience produces a sense of order that situates administrative action. As we have seen, there is no way to attend to the city by dismissing personal experience because the experience provides the resources that make the thing that urban administration addresses. The engagement of lifeworld and administration thus requires participants to not only actively engage in administrative procedures but also to theorize experience within the project of making the city a common ‘thing.’ Moreover, the role of experience in administration means actions do not produce corresponding accountability because actions move toward order-making. The administration of cities is therefore inexorably productive and meaningful, yet because it is, the administration of the city is also always inherently ambiguous, for it occurs in a cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation. The theorizing of order-making at the centre of administration can accordingly be understood as the task of approaching ambiguity as one would approach the ordinary task of making something. This allows us to recognize engagement ultimately as a common, ongoing, and limited, phenomenon that is the “organizational work of producing a local orderliness” (Lieberman, 2013, p. 192). With this, we begin grasping the essential importance of *orderliness as a situation* as a way toward freeing administration from taken-for-granted rationality. Instead of demarcating administration as a technical process for solving problems, centring on the nexus of locality and order positions us to think about a far more comprehensive account of city making. It allows a clear view of ways in which the creative, familiar dwelling-place of the urban lifeworld animates the situated ethos of city administration for a definition of the situation that arises in the impasse of engaging limits of making. On that point, I want to again return to McHugh (1993) for, as he noted, making is not only generative in

that it makes the situation knowable and therefore malleable in the sense of Grant's (1986) notion of technology. It also engenders the unknown realm of the limit. In that way, it demarcates the point where making comes to contact with what is beyond making, that is, as making engages form. The limit comes from action and experience, but it also requires a situational definiteness oriented to the endurance of form that is outside experience. In this way, the whole of making is an obligation to the *ultra*-ethnological otherness, like the stranger present in the intimate circle of experience. This is the limit that haunts the lifeworld. Engagement with urban administration is this participant-theorizing of experience in what is encountered in the city while confronting what is beyond.

Chapter 9: Speculation and Implications

Movement

Do we know our city? How do we recognize it? What are its limits? What are we to make of it? As urban administration becomes increasingly automated through digital technology and integrated with shifting frames of history through globalization and post-colonial struggle, public engagement will doubtlessly face uncanny familiarity in the strangeness of urban transformation.

In the preceding chapters, I have argued for a more nuanced understanding of urban transformation by considering how the prosaic experience of urban life engages the administration of cities in the broadest sense. I have suggested that those who make their lives in cities conceptualize and enact urban administration by using experience to theorize the city as a collective project. In this way, the conceptualized city becomes a situation for decision-making, the contestation of ideas, the assertion of will and the expression of desire. This act of conceptualizing, moreover, effectively becomes a task of *making* the city, for it imposes both constraints and opportunities inherent in ordinary craftsmanship. This way of making the city permits urban culture rooted in everyday experience to be reformulated as a form of generalized order. With that, the city becomes meaningful to the extent that a relationship of some type exists between everyday experience and ongoing systems of administration. Therefore, city administration ultimately represents an intricate cultural practice.

Acknowledging cultural underpinnings allows cities to go beyond standard frames of urban problem-solving. It is the way to engage the interconnected roots of urban society exposed by the recent wash of crises and transformation. That is to say, the radical changes that urban communities

face merit a concomitantly radical analysis of the cultural infrastructure that underpins urban administration.

I have made the case for a thorough reassessment of urban administration and demonstrated approaches to how that analysis might be further developed. I have suggested that the sense of order underpinning the administration of the city could be examined through various cultural experiences that animate decision-making, specifically, occasions that explicitly exhibit a fusion of intangible cultural experience and formal city building. I considered a specific context, the committee-of-adjustment hearing, where participants moved beyond their rhetorical devices of engagement to draw on personal experience to conceptualize structures of administration. In discussions of gentrification, I considered the city conceptualized as something that is to be utilized and engaged, through self-expression, consumption, or personal lifestyle. We saw how the gentrified house becomes oriented outward from the domestic, private realm, as it furnishes a suite of meanings, memories, and values for engaging the city. Similarly, gentrification was shown to reveal and encode other links between private and public domains, such as ways in which biographical narratives are projected into the residential real estate market in the staging of homes for sale in *Toronto Life's* "Sale of the Week" feature and Catherine Jheon's essay on her family's renovation project. The confluence of domestic space, social status, and aesthetics in these cases converge with the structure of the neighbourhood and of the city as a way of administering the city as a form of order. Next, in an analysis of smart cities, I noted how urban culture confronts new technology just as it confronts lifestyle. What might appear as the mastery of the city through information technology is revealed to be subordinate to the messiness of urban life. The capacity of smart-city systems implies an engagement with urban cultural practices, an engagement that is

present yet rarely stated explicitly in the talk of smart cities. Finally, the idea of administration was presented within a theoretical context. Here we saw order-making as the central tenant of administration manifest in the transformation of the city so that, in confronting shifting conditions, it reinstates grounds for deliberative action as the relationship to the limits of making and the externality implied by such limits.

Cultural Administration: A Template

I conclude by proposing ways this analysis might be applied to city administration in general. These are only rough strokes that might inspire further discussion and study or be developed in far more detail as a guidebook or publication.

Three Strategies to Rebuild the Cultural Infrastructure of Urban Administration

- **Experiential Thinking.** The meaning of order may need to be recast as an explicit project. Whereas it might currently seem sufficient to conflate order with authority or power, there is an opportunity to examine such deep-seated assumptions by drawing on lifeworld experience. Conversely, presumptions about the *disorderly* conduct of administration can be examined as a way of drawing out a sense of experiential order-making. In practice, these methods might include a more forthright use of storytelling, symbols, rituals, and ceremony (Francis, 1994). Even as administration becomes more integrated with computerized technology, the seemingly non-technical aspects of order-making might become far more explicit and creative.
- **Redirect Discourse.** The fiction of depersonalized decision-making, based on supposedly objective procedures, will likely be challenged to a greater degree. The procedures for doing administration could no longer be easily separated from the personal identity and outlook of all people involved. To contribute effectively to an order-making project, officials may come

under increasing pressure to disclose their conceptualization of the process. They will become more self-reflective about the production of a culture of administration. We have started to see this in ways that experts and offices use social media, creating twin personas as experts in a modern or bureaucratic sense and as charismatic personalities. This will also create new tensions between elected politicians and civil servants as the line between public leadership and backroom civil service dissolves.

- **Rebuild Narrative Structures.** Profound changes in urban administration, propelled by technology, globalization, and other forces, will lead to a greater awareness of administration as a historic process. The capacity to marginalize historical tensions and injustices with talk of modernization, progress, or innovation will likely become less creditable. Talk of modernization and technological advancement may be substituted by a genuine interest in recollection and reconciliation. This means that the historical narrative of cities will become a central point of debate. For instance, the question of zoning policy will be treated more often as a confrontation within a broader narrative of settlement and colonialization. The increase in self-awareness of administration as a culture will lead to greater variations in policy and procedures. Whereas urban administration has traditionally moved toward standardized or best practices, there is a possibility of a reversal. This would in some cases free some cities to devise novel ways of becoming more just and efficient. Yet it might lead to fracturing. The reversal of standardization has the potential of improving inclusivity and equality, as rules can be developed with greater respect to values and requirements. The procedures of administration will become far more immersed in the cultural and social context. While this is not a new

approach to social-justice initiatives and foresighted organizations, we see it now discussed in a wider context as social responsibility and as values-based policy.

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