MENDING AND TRANSFORMING THE TORN SOCIAL FABRIC: LUMPEN SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN SETTLER URBAN SPACE AS RELATIONAL PRAXIS ART

LIZA KIM JACKSON

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ABSTRACT

With this dissertation I look at the unique and indispensable political position of low-income peoples that I assert is not effectively represented via left progressive and working class struggles, academic theory or contemporary art, all of which tend to reproduce disempowering, classist and/or charity model political, economic and social relations. I critically develop the term 'lumpen' in a new direction by applying intersectionality theory to address more specifically the identity and political economics of those racialized, Indigenous, gendered, disabled and Other who are outside the wage relation and/or on social assistance – those whose economies are alternate to capitalism in that they are based in forms of criminality, non-European cultural forms, social reproduction and/or redistribution. The lumpen are comprised of those whose lives are considered expendable within the historical era of colonial-capitalism. A new theory of the lumpen reframes the conceptions of socio-political transformation generated by left/progressive, academia and contemporary arts discourses. I further argue, that indeed, it is this lumpen social strata who are the targets of gentrification (as opposed to the working-class), and that, as the constitutive outside to colonial-capitalism, gentrification is in fact an ongoing form of actual (not metaphorical) colonization which reproduces the settler city as a bulwark against Indigenous sovereignty as well as the marketization of relations at the neighbourhood scale. In thinking about low-income/lumpen political subjectivity I notice that left/progressive struggles, academia and contemporary arts are not accessible social spaces. I thus proceed with the development of a unique methodology, which I call relational praxis art that is geared towards working with low-income/lumpen community in a way that recognizes and supports their political subjecthood and resistance practices. I have developed this method in the context of the low-income/lumpen community in a gentrifying Toronto neighbourhood working with a group called the Friends of Watkinson Park, which came together to protect low-income/lumpen access to a park at the centre of their community. As a community building project that critically engages with issues of gentrification, ongoing colonization (practicing decolonial stewardship) and climate change. Relational praxis art proposes that political subjecthood and activism are necessarily based on a redistributive material (social reproduction) engagement and thus much of the work that is done in community is daily life support and crisis response as a ground for activism.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all my great teachers who have held me accountable: The Friends of Watkinson Park, Monday Art Group, Wren Jackson, Cole Jackson, Riley D. Wilson, Marlene Rita Bluebird, Minutet Nima, Angela Browning, Joseph Szabo, Lisa Lavoie, nancy viva davis halifax, Rebecca Garrett, Abby Jackson, Joce Two-Crows Tremblay and so many more.

I also acknowledge the Indigenous community members, activists, scholars and writers who have influenced this writing and who endure the brutal colonization of these Lands and attempted genocide of their people. I acknowledge that I benefit from the profound consciousness they carry that I believe is the path to a future of liberation from the unnecessary violences of colonial-capitalism.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii
DEDICATION iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS v
FIGURES vii

Chapter One: Introduction 1
- This writing 7
- Defining some terms 16

Chapter Two: Complications of Colonialism for Gentrification Theory and Marxist Geography 43
- Introduction 43
- Colonization and Gentrification: The Settler City Context 47
- Unsettling Gentrification Theory 55
- Urban Marxism and Colonialism 66
- Reapproaches to the Decolonization of Gentrification Theory 73
- The Bourgeois Settler Subject and its Other 80
- Conclusion 86

Chapter Three: "The Changes That Are Happening Are Not For Us Poor People": Towards a Redefinition of the Lumpen 88
- Introduction 88
- Lumpen: Marx's name for the Other 95
- The lumpen as an intersectional category: tropes of the monstrous Other 108
- Conclusion 118

Chapter Four: A Permanent Feature of Capitalism: Towards a Lumpen Political Economy 122
- Introduction 122
- Primitive accumulation 125
- Beyond the wage relation (violence and docility) 132
- Notes towards a lumpen politics: heterogeneity and crip politics 157
- Conclusion 168

Chapter Five: Relational Praxis Art: towards a political art that cannot be appropriated 171
- Introduction 171
- Bourgeois Art 175
- Contesting Bourgeois Art 191
- Economics as Culture 195
- Social Practice 202
- Relational Praxis Art 210
- Conclusion 239

Chapter Six: The Friends of Watkinson Park: "We need a space where we can relax and enjoy nature" 244
- Introduction 244

Material relations: do whatever the community needs 261
Since the Park Renovation: Laying the Ground for Community-Building 282
FoWP's activist art resisting gentrification 301
Conclusion 333

Chapter Seven: CONCLUSION 341

BIBLIOGRAPHY 345
APPENDIX A: City Park Design 372
APPENDIX B: Correspondence between city and Friends of Watkinson Park 375
APPENDIX C: Friends of Watkinson Park – Basis of Unity 377
APPENDIX D: Friends of Watkinson Park Statement for Sleepover Protest 378

FIGURES
(All photographs by Liza Kim Jackson)

Figure 1: Friends of Watkinson Park banner (2016) ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Figure 2: The Duke Condo and the Peacock Hotel (low barrier lumpen/low-income housing for the FoWP community) after it partially collapsed due to lack of maintenance and then caught on fire (2018) 83
Figure 3: Marlene Bluebird Stickings, Self-Portrait Collage (2015) 110
Figure 4: Anti-gentrification poster project #1, *End the War on the Poor*, Monday Art Group (2016) 139
Figure 5: Friends of Watkinson Park collaborative installation, *Butterfly* (2018) 192
Figure 6: Before the renovation of Watkinson park (2015) 250
Figure 7: Friends of Watkinson Park participatory design process (2015) 268
Figure 8: Friends of Watkinson Park, design proposal poster (details) (2015) 273
Figure 9: Friends of Watkinson Park participatory design process (2015) 291
Figure 10:Friends of Watkinson Park T-Shirts (2016) 299
Figure 11: Friends of Watkinson Park, *Community Feast* (2015) 307
Figure 12: Friends of Watkinson Park *Community Feast* (2018) 308
Figure 13: Friends of Watkinson Park, Re-Indigenization of Watkinson Park, Tobacco Tie, Sweet Grass braids, drying Ojibwe Tobacco (2015-2020) 312
Figure 14: Friends of Watkinson Park, planting the native plant/pollinator garden (2017) 313
Figure 15: Friends of Watkinson Park, sleepover protest, August 26-27 (2017) 317
Figure 16: Anti-gentrification poster project #2, Abby Jackson and Friends of Watkinson Park (2016) 320
Figure 17: Friends of Watkinson Park, Anti-gentrification poster project #3 (2019) 320
Figure 18: Friends of Watkinson Park, anti pollution poster intervention (2016) 322
Figure 19: Friends of Watkinson Park, hand painted placard campaign against oppression (2017) 323
Figure 20: Friends of Watkinson Park (Abby Jackson, Marlene Bluebird Stickings, Kim Jackson), *Your Profit, Our Trauma*, guerilla screening, Junction Solstice Festival (2016) 324
Figure 21: video still, *Demolished*, collaboration with Marlene Bluebird Stickings 2015. 325
Figure 22: We Want You To Listen guerrilla screening Nuit Blanche (2017) 326
Figure 23: Friends of Watkinson Park, Nuit Blanche installation, *Housing Not Profit – Stop Global Warming* (2017) 328
Figure 24: Friends of Watkinson Park, Halloween effigy installation (2017) 329
Figure 25: Friends of Watkinson Park, Halloween effigy installation (2018) 330
Figure 26: Friends of Watkinson Park memorial, *George* and *For Caroline* (2018) 332
Figure 27: Water Is Life by Marlene Bluebird Stickings (1960 -2020) 2018 344

Introduction

> "It is what is despised and forgotten that is the bearer of hope, not the socially sanctioned" (Lather 1995, 51).

This work is about poor bodies.[1] Those who are intersectionally racialized, Indigenized, Black, disabled, gendered, queer and non-human who haunt the settler capitalist city. This work is about how poor bodies remind us of the gross ethical failures of society and thus they are stigmatized, institutionalized, silenced and slated for faster or slower death in the dustbins of history. This work is about how to engage with the unique and necessary political capacities of poor peoples: how those of us artists/activists/academics with relative privileges might deepen our radical practices by working across difference *with* marginalized communities, both human and other-than-human.

In 2008, I moved to the Junction, a west Toronto neighbourhood where I had helped my sister open one of the first coffee shops in the area that sold organic coffee. Even though my sister opened her shop with $8000 borrowed piecemeal from friends and relatives, we were the harbingers of gentrification. Next door to the coffee shop was a women's shelter and just down the street social housing. The surrounding area was a mix of rooming houses and low-barrier private rentals. Our first regular customers were both poor community members and working/middle/upper class people eager for gentrification. Working behind the counter, we had a glimpse into the nascent social conflict that gentrification exacerbates. Over ten years later, the

[1] I use a number of troublesome terms: poor, low-income, marginalized, vulnerablized, problematic, non-disciplined, abjected, transgressive, Othered, non-compliant etc. I understand these as terms of structural social

neighbourhood is in advanced stages of gentrification. Condominium development is gaining ground and transforming what was a low-income accessible neighbourhood into a shrinking island of low-income community.

Since 2008, I have developed deep relationships and come to work closely with low-income community members. Together we have organized community feasts, done public installation art and sustained two weekly art groups: the Monday Art Group (MAG) at the women's shelter and A la c'Art at the Mainstay Housing apartment building across the street. In 2015 we found out that there were plans at the city to renovate the small park that sits in the heart of the low-income community. Because the park was seen as 'sketchy' by the middle/upper class neighbourhood members, and the city made no efforts to consult with the low-income primary users of the park in its renovation plans, we became concerned that the park renovation would be a tool of gentrification. We decided to organize to protect the low-income inhabitation of the park and to contest the gentrification that targets low-income people for exclusion. The Friends of Watkinson Park (FoWP) was formed as a low-income led group working to build community. The work that I have been engaged in with this low-income community through the above mentioned diverse projects, which have culminated in the birth of FoWP, is the basis for the following work and its representation in the writing here.



Figure 1: Friends of Watkinson Park banner (2016)

In working with this community, I have vigorously rejected the violence of the charity, saviour, service model (Chapman and Withers 2019; Lyon-Callo 2008; Rev and Geist 2017) that is imposed on work across class with low-income people by the welfare state society, but also, problematically, in the non-profit sector and within some aspects of the left-progressive milieu. Instead, the work here develops an understanding of low-income people (comprised of intersectionally oppressed bodies) as critically knowledgeable political and cultural agents who do important labour to sustain their own communities, resist gentrification and engage in urgent historical issues of our time within a colonial/capitalist context. In order to support the agential subjectivity of low-income people, I have taken my cues from them in how to build community towards engaging in resistance. To this end, I have articulated a methodology and a method, which I have called relational praxis art.

I recognize that this work draws on resistance practices that I have experienced, witnessed, and read about, which have existed since the historical period of colonial-capitalism has posed particular challenges to those enduring the worst of its violent relational structures impacting human and non-human animals, and the Land.[2] Indeed, surviving within colonial-capitalism is contingent on such practices of endurance, resistance and knowledge by poor Indigenous, Black and people of color, 2slgbtqqia+, those with disabilities and many Others. I am referring to grassroots strategies that deal with the everyday practical life challenges and the political struggles that arise from them, that are primarily led by people in community under attack, but remain largely invisible to (or subjects of), the established left activist/artist/academic milieu (Bayat 2000).

Being located within a settler colonial state, and being of white settler ancestry, I foreground Indigenous survival and resistance struggles as an ethical urgency and an indispensable source of knowledge, practice and leadership (Coulthard, 2010; Hall, 2017; Simpson et al. 2012; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Alfred and Corntassel, 2005) which, those of us who are non-Indigenous to these Lands, need to organize ourselves in relation to. Indigenous philosophy holds a history of relationally ethical practice integral to these Lands of Turtle Island as well as insight into the devastating wrongs of western culture: wrongs that have led to an ecological planetary crisis which Indigenous peoples are at the forefront of resisting. Responding to Indigenous perspectives and practices means acknowledging the centrality of Land as the basis for cultural survival: both connecting to Land as a relational ethic, and

[2] Tuck and McKenzie (2015) along with other theorists capitalize the L in Land to signify Land as a complexity which includes all the beings and processes by which Land is constituted as well as multiple levels of relationality: memory, emotion, intelligence, ethics, spirituality, intimacy, kinship, intergenerationality. Land is a mother and a teacher.

recognizing the historical necessity of returning traditional territories to the governance of Indigenous nations.

The purpose of the present work represented is to propose a theory and practice that will contribute to resisting the colonial/capitalist system towards a different future oriented towards liberation from oppression. The private property/profit system at the root of colonial-capitalism dispossesses the vast majority of human (and non-human animals) of the world creating the conditions of poverty that FoWP members are subject to. The relational web that connects humans, the Land and non-human entities in life is torn, bodies are held captive and hierarchized under normative disciplines of exploitation, extraction and institutionalization. As dispossessed humans, we are forced to either to collude with the colonial/capitalist system, or survive abandonment at the margins, in states of faster or slower death.

What I am proposing is a response adequate to the current moment. In forming communities of persistence, we reach for a praxis of exit, trying to prefigure a futurity of ethically founded relations that recognizes human responsibility to life as an interdependent and reciprocal web: a praxis of repair, of mending or stitching the social fabric.[3] A praxis that generates the knowledge and capacity to take steps in a radically different direction towards building and sustaining community grounded in a paradigm shift that marks an engagement with Indigenous thought and practice as the key to a socially and ecologically sustainable futurity: a shift that affirms relational connectivity and a redistributive ethos in sustaining Life in all its forms (Coulthard 2010; Simpson 2011, 2017).

This dissertation has three main arguments. One, I am arguing that low-income peoples have a unique and indispensible political positionality that is not effectively represented via left

[3] I have been in conversations with collaborators Rebecca Garrett and nancy viva davis halifax where understandings of our work as repairing the torn social fabric has been generated.

progressive and working class struggles, academic theory or contemporary art, all of which tend to reproduce disempowering, classist and/or charity model political, economic and social relations. I critically develop the term 'lumpen' in a new direction by applying intersectionality theory to address more specifically the identity and political economics of those racialized, indigenized, disabled and Other who are outside the wage relation and/or on social assistance – those whose economies as alternate to capitalism in that they are based in forms of criminality, social reproduction and/or redistribution. The lumpen are comprised of those who are most impacted, those whose lives are considered expendable within the historical era of colonial-capitalism. The development of a new theory of the lumpen (who are the worlds majority) reframes the conceptions of socio-political transformation generated by left/progressive, academia and contemporary arts discourses. Two, I argue, that indeed, it is this lumpen social strata who are the targets of gentrification (as opposed to the working-class), and that, as the constitutive outside to colonial-capitalism, gentrification is in fact an ongoing form of actual (not metaphorical) colonization which reproduces the settler city as a bulwark against Indigenous sovereignty as well as the marketization of relations at the neighbourhood scale. And three, I argue that left/progressive struggles, academia and contemporary arts are not accessible to low-income/lumpen community, and thus, I proceed with the development of a unique methodology which I call relational praxis art that is geared towards working with low-income/lumpen community in a way that recognizes and supports their political subjecthood and resistance practices. I have developed this method in the context of the neighbourhood where I have lived and worked for the past ten years, with lumpen/low-income folx who live at a shelter, social housing and in low barrier rental housing. The main project, called the Friends of Watkinson Park, has been to intervene on the renovation and gentrification of a local park space

(which is the heart of the low-income/lumpen community) by doing a ground up community design process that was presented to the city and local neighbourhood. This intervention created the space for FoWP to further the activation of the park as a space of critical engagement around issues of gentrification, ongoing colonization (practicing decolonial stewardship) and climate change. Relational praxis art proposes that political subjecthood and activism are necessarily based on a redistributive material (social reproduction) engagement and thus much of the work that is done in community is daily life support and crisis response as a ground for activism.

This writing

Somewhat following Lather and Smithies (1997) in their polyvocal text *Troubling the Angels*, my original intention for this dissertation was for each community member to have their own chapter in the final work rather than contextualizing their work within a text that I author. I wanted to avoid the symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1993) of representing Others in a way that doesn't acknowledge the underlying power dynamics of privilege at play by asking community members to develop their own self-representations within the research. I didn't want to abstract and consume their knowledge - to analyze or translate it, rather, I support and relate to their knowledge as equal to any other knowledge form. I also wanted to make an aesthetic break in the text from academic theory to different voices specific to the community so that I could experience what this juxtaposition might do. While the idea of co-authoring a dissertation looked good on paper, and community members were generally enthusiastic about it, the reality of taking time away from daily life struggles and the work of holding Watkinson Park as an accessible place for low-income folx, just wasn't possible. While I had hoped to spend more time working one-on-one with people to author their chapters, just sustaining our collective work as the FoWP and tending to the everyday survival needs of individuals was much more

urgent than working on dissertation chapters.[4] Asking community members to work in such a highly symbolic way to produce a text that would circulate pretty much only within academia, seemed the height of irresponsibility, and thus, to be a privileged preoccupation on my part. I realized that having their own chapters in the dissertation would not immediately contribute to their agency (as my responding to their needs/desires in everyday community life would) and that having community members work on individual chapters was quite possibly something they perceived as being for me. Time, emotional, psychic and material resources are stretched very thin in community. Under duress, there is so much that doesn't get done, or that doesn't get represented but remains in action only, so much work that flails as we stretch our capacities as individuals and community. At the same time, there is so much daily social practice knowledge that cannot be captured, articulated, or ethically represented (Lancione 2018). Praxis can have a surface knowable and a not yet knowable substratum, which must at the same time be addressed through social relations without being represented. These are the conditions of our knowledge production.

It has turned out that, for the most part, I have experienced the writing of this dissertation as in competition with the work in community that is truly where the meaning is produced. Indeed, the agential voices of community members were expressed within the context of the anti-gentrification and community building work of FoWP. As a result, community members are mostly represented here in images and descriptions of the art/activist/community building work that we have accomplished as a community. I also refer to knowledge that I have gained through our dialogic process and walking alongside community members in daily life as personal communications. In this, I have tried to avoid the full weight of symbolic violence by being

[4] Nevertheless I remain committed to writing and publishing with community members as a way to intervene into academic/arts and activist discourses.

reflexive - but the power dynamic stands. I have also included the real names of community members as per their wishes (as affirmed by ethics forms as well as verbal agreement) to own their knowledge. I could have done better at giving space to individual voices and I can't stress enough how much this work is informed, inspired, textured and nuanced by my relations with community members and the knowledge that they have shared with me.

What follows then is, perhaps ironically, a fairly standard academic dissertation. Perhaps this represents one of its failures. In any case, this writing is intended to be a series of publication ready texts and thus each chapter is meant to be a work of theorization that can stand on its own. The first chapter, *The Problem of Settler Colonialism for Marxist Geography and Gentrification Theory*,[5] is based on my own participant observer position within the Junction neighbourhood and my work with the low-income/lumpen community there. This article outlines the geographical context in which the FoWP is formed and is the basis of its political activism. In this article, I also bring into discussion the marxist geography (including those of ongoing so-called primitive accumulation), gentrification, and settler city literatures. From these lived and textual engagements, I look at gentrification (with the Junction as an example) as a form of ongoing primitive accumulation and thus, actual (not metaphorical) colonization within the settler city context. This article brings to light that low-income folx[6] are the main target for removal (as opposed to the working class usually understood as the target for gentrification). Linking low-income/Indigenous peoples spatial oppression within the gentrification landscape reorients discussions of gentrification from its rent-gap mechanics to its much more urgent

[5] Published in the *Journal of Law and Social Policy*.
[6] I use folx as an expression of inclusion of non-normative peoples: those of multiple gender expressions and sexualities, women, non-binary, Two-Spirit, trans people as well as disabled and lumpen peoples.

political and historical root in the privatization and commodification of property, i.e., colonial/capitalist relations to Land.

In the second chapter, *The changes that are happening are not for us poor people: towards a redefinition of the Lumpen*, I look deeper into the political subjectivity of the low-income FoWP community as the targets of gentrification. This chapter is based on a critical review of the marxist literature on the lumpen proletariat to which I bring intersectional analysis as a way to think about the diverse bodies that make up the lumpenproletariat as a social stratum. I question the adequacy of the term 'low-income' in developing a political subjectivity for the people of the FoWP community, the most denigrated and marginalized who are the targets of gentrification. In looking for a more politically robust term, the second chapter is comprised of a two-part article that digs into a re-theorization of the marxist thinking on the lumpen. The first part reviews and expands upon the existing theory and lays the ground for an intersectional understanding of the lumpen as comprised of the constitutive outside (Agamben 1998; Povinelli 2011; Razack 2015)[7] to colonial-capitalism, those racialized, Indigenized, gendered, queered and disabled folx who are shut out of, and/or eschew the wage labour relation. What is especially relevant, and at the same time can only be problematically theorized within a marxist frame, is the consideration of sectors of the Indigenous population as enmeshed/intertwined with the lumpen.

[7] Agamben (1998, 12) discusses how the political system of western society functions to protect the well being of the "men" of the city and how such protection is dependant on the consigning of non-conforming bodies to "bare life" (those who are only biologically living but not living well and are thus, wasted lives) those who are necessarily excluded and subject to violence. Such exclusion and violence happens within the law as well as through suspension of the law and thus includes both slower and faster acts of violence and death. Povinelli (2011) talks about the constitutional outside by drawing on Ursula LeGuin's story *The One's Who Walk Away From Omelas* in which the society's happiness is dependent on the keeping of a child in a broom closet suffering abject conditions of neglect that mark her body. In Povinelli's account, the violence of the child in the broom closet is mundane, however, she goes on to discuss the dispersal of life and death in late liberalism as integral to the maintenance of the system itself. Sherene Razack (2015, 166) discusses the Indigenous and Black body as "outside the human" and thus not capable of being murdered.

The third article, *A permanent feature of capitalism: towards a lumpen political economy*, I dig deeper into the challenges to classical marxist political economics by the feminist literature on social reproduction theory, decolonial and Indigenous theory. In this chapter, I propose that, counter to marxist denigration and refusal of class status, the lumpen do have a historical dialectic, a consciousness and thus a political economic role that is distinct from the working-class. Indeed, In proposing the centrality of a lumpen political economy and thus dialectic, I encourage a shift in focus from struggles over ownership of the means of production (which re-inscribes the wage labour relation as the normative), to the historical question of alienated relation to Land via primitive accumulation and private property. Such a shift in focus to Land necessarily reorients the discussion to historical and ongoing colonization, highlighting Indigenous philosophies of interdependence, relationality and respect, which then creates openings to respond to the urgent condition of mother earth.

I then move, in the fourth and fifth chapters (meant to comprise a short book), into developing an arts-based method of working with lumpen community as exemplified by the FoWP. The fourth chapter *Relational Praxis Art*, engages with the community arts (by all its various names), praxis, disability, anti-capitalist and decolonial literatures to propose a new methodology. This chapter proposes that contemporary arts as a bourgeois form of representation, which I propose is structurally *incapable* of enacting politics. I then theorize an art form that intends to work outside bourgeois representational regimes and is thus resistant to appropriation by colonial/capitalist agendas. This art form, which I tentatively call relational praxis arts involves working in lumpen community (the most marginalized in the geographical context in which I work) in a way that recognizes and supports their agency and critical lived experience and knowledge. What I propose is that a shift is required away from the standard

charity model of working on *behalf* of lumpen communities and peoples. This work is grounded in the recognition that our relational networks take shape through power hierarchies which, are maintained by the mal-distribution of material resources and cultural capital. Relational praxis art seeks to work uneven relational tensions towards an ethical, materially based redistributive praxis which, centers and makes possible a lumpen intervention into larger political discourses and movements.

The fifth and final chapter, *The Friends of Watkinson Park:"We need a space where we can relax and enjoy nature,"* presents the method of relational praxis art and its outcomes and comprises the empirical ground of the work. This chapter presents my relational praxis artwork with the lumpen/low-income led community group, Friends of Watkinson Park. As mentioned, FoWP's work is to support low-income access to Watkinson Park, the heart of the community and their only access to green space. As a member of the community with relative privileges and as the beneficiary of this academic work, I consider it part of my relational praxis art to engage with the everyday material exchanges on terms expressed by the community and its members. Such material exchanges make up the social fabric or relational web and are vital to our connectivity as a community and members having a sense of agency in the work. Out of this redistributive foundation arises our many projects and political interventions: from redesigning Watkinson park, to stewarding a native plant garden, hosting a sleepover protest against gentrification, climate change and colonization, doing seasonal community feasts, to anti-gentrification poster projects and even a gig at Nuit Blanche and much more.

This writing arises out of my experiences doing political work from the perspective of my own lived experience with poor people in and around various activist, arts and left academic communities in different cities at different times over the past thirty or more years. As a white-

settler-cis-gendered-crip-queer-low-income body, I take up nancy viva davis halifax's suggestion of working alongside (2009-2020 pc.) those with whom I share community across intersectional differences. I refer throughout this writing to artists/academic/activists as the three overlapping positionalities that I inhabit and thus who are the main intended audience for this writing. While I have long experience of poverty including engaging in lumpen survival strategies, I also recognize myself as carrying substantial cultural capital due to my parents' bourgeois upbringing as well as my artist/academic work at this time of my life. Thus, in relating to lumpen/low-income community members from the activist/artist/academic positionality is to relate across class and all the attendant intersectional differences that class is marked by. Throughout my time doing this work, I have observed and experienced the deeply problematic relationship between people experiencing oppression and those of us who have forms of privilege within the work that brings the possibility to some form of career advancement, professionalization or even just for résumé lines that aide in acquiring paid labour, while community members have very little to no such possibility (hooks 2000). Such divergent economic relational tensions raise important questions as to the liberationist claims of radical work (hooks 2000).

When considering my own locational complexity within this writing of an academic text, it becomes clear that I work in, through and across two dominant spatial modes: the abstracting and extensive space of the university in contrast to the located place-based work of the community. The university is a powerful hegemonic knowledge structure that seeks to generalize, universalize and spatialize, to make new knowledge about the world, to define, map, enclose and produce modes of existence (Haiven and Khasnabish 2015), while the local lumpen/Indigenous community knowledge is considered to not exist at all. The relationship

between academia and those who are studied is fraught to the point that communities have a deep suspicion of, and alienation from academics (Kovach in Brown and Strega 2005). In considering these uneven power dynamics, I take up and elaborate on a praxis that takes seriously the challenges of working across difference and that valorizes and seeks to grow the agency, knowledge and material relations of community members.

In rethinking the artist/activist/academic relationship to low-income/lumpen community, I take great interest in Mead's (2015) prison activist praxis. Ed Mead, former member of the armed revolutionary group the George Jackson Brigade, describes growing up in a life of dire poverty, illicit substance use and petty crime in his book *Lumpen*. Mead's experience leads him to multiple rounds of prison where he becomes politicized as a jail lawyer, prison activist and revolutionary. Mead (2015) takes up the lumpen identity as representing the factual conditions of his life even though the lumpen are a roundly denigrated social strata within society. In prison, Mead (2015) develops the consciousness that political work should always start with addressing the issues of the most vulnerable people in the community. In prison, this meant organizing among gay prisoners to protect those who are the victims of rape - a very dangerous project. His work included exploring his own femininity and intimacy with his fellow prisoners and eventually becoming what he called a "political fag." Mead takes on the gay identity partially as a way to experience what those who are most vulnerablized in the prison experience, to walk alongside, to become one of the oppressed as it were. In the work presented here, I am in accord with the ethical direction of Mead (2015) who found himself within the geographical context of prison where he tries to work out his relationship to the most oppressed in his environment, gay prisoners, with whom he works in materially significant way (protection from rape) towards a left liberatory struggle.

Similarly to Mead, I have oriented myself to those most vulnerablized in the immediate geographical context of the gentrifying neighbourhood of the Junction.[8] This community under siege consists of residents of two social housing apartment buildings geared towards 'mental health consumer/survivors'; a single room occupancy hotel mostly inhabited by those with addictions and/or mental health difference many of who are elders; and a women's shelter. Aside from this core community, there is also a maximum-security halfway house and multiple other group homes for people who use criminalized substances and those with intellectual difference in the area, as well as a shrinking supply of low barrier private rental housing. This is a community whose disability, while arising out of complex and diverse histories and embodiments, is reproduced in the present space of the neighbourhood through experiences with the stigmatizing, marginalizing and immiserating social force of gentrification. Again, in accord with Meads (2015) ethic, the work must have a material basis. For the low income/lumpen Junction community that means developing a socially engaged intervention to protect their access to a neighbouring public park as a basis for community building in resistance to gentrification. Such a socially engaged intervention is meant to model a method, relational praxis art, for realizing what I propose is the role of the lumpen in a historically specific, transformative and liberatory politics.

[8] I understand the local according to Massey (2005) where the global flows through the local, and thus, a local orientation can result in the address to global sites of vulnerablization. This occurs especially when FoWP community members have embodied connections to global sites. While we do not have the capacity or the resources to reach across space in a substantial way to engage materially with global sites of struggle, these do enter into our critical consciousness.

Defining some terms

> In this writing, I utilize, in a particular way, a number of key terms that require discussion. These terms are important to a reconceptualization of the struggle: the historical context, the bodies and subject positions involved, a method for political action, and understandings of liberation.

− *Lumpen/low-income*

While the term low-income is favoured by community members, in order to shift from a liberal (and yet violent) developmentalist and charity approach to poverty (Chapman and Withers 2019), I take up and necessarily reconfigure the marxist term lumpen. Currently, marxist theory has not moved much beyond Marx and Engels (1988) denial that the lumpen have any historical significance or political subjectivity. Marx and Engels (1988) considered the lumpen to be a no longer relevant cultural form (i.e., not modern and/or Indigenous), to be insignificant receivers of charity due to their non-participation in the paid labour relation (they are excluded from the labour market and/or their labour is not valorized). Not questioning this thinking reproduces relations of violence within the left context. Despite these failures, at least the lumpen category arises in the context of a political economic approach, which, I contend, does provide the tools for a rethinking of this social strata as politically and economically agential. As such, the identity of lumpen *has* been taken up and politicized by organizations that represent communities under siege such as the Black Panthers (Sakai 2017), Franz Fanon in the context of the independence struggles in north Africa (Worsley 1972), Mao in reference to the Chinese Revolution (Sakai 2017) and more recently in reference to Jamaica and the Zeeks uprisings of urban poor (Price 2004). Indeed, Malcolm X (1999) came from lumpen roots. The lumpen currently exist as a social strata (not a class), but through its re-theorization, a lumpen consciousness, and thus agency, can be supported and I believe extended beyond the notion that the lumpen are cleansed as people through revolutionary struggle.

In all of these instances, the lumpen represents the constitutive outside to colonial-capitalism: an intersectional category that is comprised of those who are the most excluded from colonial/capitalist cis-hetero normative ablist white supremacist society. The lumpen are those whose liberation, in fact, we should be greatly concerned with especially because uneven development, neoliberal precaritization, war, ongoing primitive accumulation, environmental devastation and resulting mass migrations, trauma and debility (Puar 2017) (i.e., the regular functioning of capitalism) has meant that the lumpen make up the global majority (Foster et al. 2011; Davis 2006).[9] In reviewing the marxist literature, it is apparent that Indigenous peoples are included in how the lumpen is defined (Bussard 1987; Stallybrass 1990) as those who are resistant to assimilation to Eurocentric modernization. While I work with this inclusion of Indigeneity within the lumpen, I also understand this as problematic. Indigenous thinkers generally foreground their Indigeneity as their primary subjectivity. Some consider the traumatized Indigenous person to be a pernicious stereotype (Tuck 2009) while others reject the term disability in reference to the Indigenous body as eluding a structural analysis of colonial violence (Razack 2011). At the same time, Indigenous culture/economics are historically non-capitalist and are thus subject to forced transitions to capitalism and ongoing genocide, which is a culturally and historically specific form of trauma. This is a complexity of intersectional identities when trying to foreground one over the other. In my own uptake of the term lumpen, I am referring, not to Indigenous peoples in general, but to those who have not assimilated into

[9] Agencies such as the UN, the World Bank (Nilsen 2018) and the Brookings Institute (Kharas and Hamel 2018) estimate the world's poor according to the international poverty line of $1.90 per day. According to this measure, the extreme poverty rate has dropped to 10% globally. But this measure is seen by critical thinkers as too low to adequately capture global poverty rates. Furthermore, these calculations are made according to statistics that don't account for lack of distribution, racialization and gendering, and extreme worker precarity in developing countries that have a middle-class standard of living. For instance, countries such as South Africa, China and India have national poverty statistics that are substantially higher than what World Bank statistics indicate.

the wage labour system of colonial-capitalism, those who have either been cast out due to embodied differences (i.e., trauma related disability as a result of colonial oppression), and or those who have, to greater or lesser degrees, rejected European modernism and persisted with non-capitalist, whether that be criminalized or more traditional, economic forms of livelihood (Kuokkanen 2011).

Recognizing the complexities and problematics of the term lumpen, I take it up without suggesting its recuperation. For this writing I toggle between low-income, lumpen and Indigenous, or I connect them by dash in order to respect community's self-reference while at the same time working the tensions between different understandings.

− *Coloniality*

In this work, I consider how my own historical trajectory intersects with the complex spatial dialectic I see unfolding in the Junction. First, I acknowledge the Indigenous Lands where this writing takes place: the unceded traditional territories of the Wendat and Haudenosaunee (Onkwehonwe) peoples. These Lands are also traditional to the Great Lakes Métis and are under a treaty agreement with the Mississauga of the Credit River and are the gathering place of numerous Indigenous nations. With this Land acknowledgement, I identify myself as a white settler with Scottish and English heritage, a member of a society bound by treaties, and an uninvited guest on Indigenous territory who benefits from ongoing colonization.

The deep and continuing history of Indigenous inhabitation in the Junction has been writ over as a palimpsest by the violence of colonialism and Land theft. The shift in modes of production from Indigenous to capitalist is manifested in the Landscape. The establishment of private property through the concession system and the modernizing subdivision grid of the city reflects and reproduces the work-a-day life and time disciplines of alienated labour within the

capitalist profit system. The tension between those who historically laboured in the dangerous industries (the stockyards and railway characterizing the neighbourhood) and those who profit either as owners of labour or as those selling commodities haunt the edges of the historical record and played out in how the space was divvied up (not to mention those historically erased bodies who could/would not sell their labour). The architecture and spatial arrangement of the Junction reflects a social history where prior to transportation development the different classes lived in proximity: the grand mansions of the industrialists, bankers and politicians were built just a few blocks away from very humble workers row housing. With the building of mass transport infrastructure, the upper classes could more effectively segregate themselves away from the unsightly poor, Indigenous, of colour, disabled and working classes.

The neighbourhood is understood as produced through layered and conflictual histories of Indigenous, bourgeois-settler and working-class peoples playing out in present where Othered histories are marginalized and erased by the hegemonic white-settler-cis-heteropatriarchal lens that persists. Today, in the Junction, different organizations and booster groups form in order to claim the neighbourhood space for their settler-bourgeois interests: the Business Improvement Area, artist organizations, residents associations, historical societies, parent led park groups etc. Within place that is made up of "many different stories" (Donna Deyhle quoted in Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 117), these groups perform a socio-spatial practice that circumscribes community membership. Since access to public space and the public sphere is the basis for performing the political (Massey 2005; Lefebvre 2003; Merrifield 2002; Springer 2010), that privileged groups gain public representation while those Indigenous and marginalized social strata remain hidden and stigmatized at the margins, constitutes the neighbourhood as a key site of decolonial struggle.

Witnessing and being, to whatever degree, part of the unfolding processes of gentrification has alerted me to my own highly material role in how power hierarchies play out in settler urban space.

− *Colonial-capitalism: violence*

While a white dominated Marxism (Sakai 1989) has focused on the class struggle as the main contradiction, Indigenous peoples and scholars have focused on colonization. Indeed, the troubled and overlapping relationship between theorizations of capitalism and colonialism is one of the tangled webs that permeates this work. A very useful marxist contribution to colonial theory is the proposition that primitive accumulation is not only a historical event but, ongoing within, and constitutive of capitalism (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; De Angelis 2004; Harvey 2004; Ince 2018; Federici 2004; Luxemberg 2004; Lenin 2008). I refer to capitalism and colonialism as inextricably joined within what I understand as the twinned power formations that organize our relational structures: colonial-capitalism or capitalist-colonialism. To speak about one without the other is to miss the whole picture that capitalism arose through, and continues to be dependent upon, what Marx (1990) referred to as "so-called primitive accumulation": slavery, exploitation, Land theft and genocide in non-Western worlds.

One of the main contributions to capitalist theory that arises out of colonial thought is the proposition that violence (extra economic force) as constitutive of colonialism is the means by which capitalism has become and maintains its position as the dominant world economic order (Coulthard 2014; Lawrence 2002; Fanon 2004; Ince 2016; Blaney and Inayatullah 2010). Liberal bourgeois settler ideology tells us that violence is considered an "anomaly to capitalism's liberal essence" where capitalism is seen "as the promise of liberation from such violence" with "more and better capitalism" (Ince 2016, 4, 9). However, colonial theory tells us

that, in fact, capitalism is instituted through naked violence (genocide and Land theft) and maintained in an ongoing way through violent disciplinary institutions (ongoing genocide, Land theft, toxification, exploitation, immiseration and institutionalization).

Marx (1990, 342) characterized capitalism as "vampiric," as a necro-economics in the sense that it is dependent on relations of exploitation and immiseration where the energies of the labouring body are used up by over work and thus life is shortened. Bodies are made vulnerable to capitalist crisis as we are separated from our own powers, culturally specific economic forms, means of production, the Land and other metabolic engagements. Rather we are classed under the system of commodity production/consumption and surplus value extraction, as working or expendable (McIntyre and Nast 2011; Razack 2015; Bauman 2004), capitalist value producing or 'non-productive.' Bodies are sacrificed by their lack of assimilation (or refusal) (Blaney and Inayatullah 2012; Denning 2010; Ince 2016; Montag 2005) into the commodified labour system and by the fact that capitalism cannot fulfill its false promise of full employment and its profit purpose at the same time. Despite the impossibility of producing universal employment, one must earn one's right to exist. Succeeding within colonial-capitalist society is to bear constant pressure towards hyper-individualist survivalism: a turning away from mutual dependence and connectivity (which Indigenous economic/culture prioritizes) while being positioned as spectators who resort to pity, fear and/or bigoted judgment of those Others who the system cannot support. Violence is instilled within the colonial-capitalist relational network and thus capitalist-colonialism produces trauma.

Furthermore, the relational violence of colonial-capitalism is directed at the Land, leading us towards systemic ecological devastation and mass extinction. At this point of broad scale environmental destruction, Indigenous thought has consistently been a source of critique

of the capitalist instrumentalized and de-sacralized relationship to Land, to non-human nature, living (plant and non-human animal) and mineral. Indigenous philosophical and practical non-capitalist relations to Land form a basis for continuance, resurgence and critique, for the opening of possibility of a new sustainable direction for Life as a whole that includes a decentering of the human in the cosmos (Tuck and McKenzie 2015; Simpson 2011; Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).

Bringing colonialism and capitalism together is meant to respond to the historical context of the settler Canadian state, hold settler scholars to the task of decolonization and open up the discussion around economy beyond the labour-capital relation and its productivist technological paradigm.

– *Indigenous knowledge*

Taking up a colonial-capitalist analysis means that it is incumbent on me to take up the knowledge that is of this Land. No doubt, my growing up in Vancouver and having been exposed to the historical, activist and ethical critiques by the Indigenous peoples there, as well as those in the various movements for Indigenous liberation elsewhere, has had a deep influenced on my thinking. However, how to take up Indigenous thought in a non-appropriative way that doesn't "reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" is a significant problematic that cannot really be overcome (Tuck and Yang 2012, 1). As Simpson (2004, 375)[10] points out, Indigenous thought is for Indigenous resurgence, and not for settlers (particularly white settlers such as myself) to create an aura of political correctness for ourselves

[10] I acknowledge that Leanne Simpson does not write for settlers, she writes for Indigenous people to reclaim resurgent practices alongside other POC communities of struggle. In discussing Marx, it behoves me to look at the origins of relational thinking on *this* Land, however, I do not intend to contribute to the entitlement of settlers, particularly white settlers, to appropriate Indigenous thought in place of building actual relationships with Indigenous communities in working towards settler responsibility for reconciliation, which is part of the historically contingent work of relational praxis art.

while excusing ourselves from the actual work of decolonization. I do not intend to contribute to the entitlement of settlers, particularly white settlers, to appropriate Indigenous thought in place of building actual relationships with Indigenous communities in working towards settler responsibility for decolonization. Even when settlers perform deeply rooted allyship, we always have the choice to retreat from the struggle into relative privilege, privilege that is often enhanced through our participation in Indigenous struggles. I am cognizant that I am not working under the direct supervision of a supervisor who is Indigenous, or by those Indigenous people in positions of Knowledge-Keeper and/or Elder that I work alongside. However, through my work with Indigenous community members, through Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society, the Re-Sistering Garden project, as well as with Friends of Watkinson Park, I am in close conversation and daily life negotiation of the work of decolonization. I don't presume to be able to do this work adequately, respectfully or in a politically correct manner within my current methodology. However, in discussing Marx as I do in this text, it behoves me to look at the *origins* of relational thinking on *this* Land. I do include Indigenous thought in this text as an absolute necessity and responsibility in engaging with the historical and ethical problems of this time and place: the settler colonial historical and geographical context. Indeed, as a subjugated thought, Indigenous philosophy (which is most often a praxis) stands in critical relation to western philosophy (which is most often abstract). Because western and Indigenous knowledge forms are radically different, moving between them can bring awkwardness to the text. This awkwardness, I think, belies the current historical condition of ongoing coloniality that permeates settler-Indigenous relations and the great chasm between settler and Indigenous futures.

I understand Indigenous knowledge as critical to liberation struggles, in part because the liberation of Indigenous peoples is key to all our liberation on Turtle Island and in the world. But also because, after 30 years in and around Indigenous struggles, I have learnt deeply about how a relationally honorific, ecologically and socially integral society might look, a society where value can be understood, produced and distributed in a way that is radically different from the vampiric plutocratic form of capitalist-colonialism in which we live, a society that recognizes and respects the spirit in all beings and entities and the gifts that all entities carry into the world (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).

− *Bourgeois-settler*

Another linked term that I use throughout this writing that needs explaining is bourgeois-settler or settler-bourgeois who I consider to be the ascendant subject of colonial-capitalism. I hinge capitalism and colonialism as systems and structures of power within which identities are organized. Coulthard (2014) draws on Fanon (1967, 2004) in looking at the semi-autonomous but also inter-subjective colonial relation (between Indigenous and settler) as a gaze or a symbolic order and as an economic or material relation. Since the bourgeoisie claims a right to property, settlerism is innate to the bourgeois subject. Private property is the ultimate privilege to be achieved through adherence to capitalist-colonial modernity, to the bourgeois wage labour relation and its industrial extractivist paradigm.

While I am not advocating for the abandonment of the usual debates around how class is theorized, the bourgeois-settler identity does imply a different perspective. Marx (1990) characterized the bourgeoisie as the owners of the means of production. Marx (1990) also notes that the bourgeois have a tendency to corruption and absolutism. From the beginning of capitalist-colonialism, some within the emergent bourgeoisie have managed to maintain

aristocratic forms of autocratic power (for instance in the use of the guillotine that gave birth to bourgeois power) that elevated the relatively few within their ranks. I view those upper echelons of the old bourgeoisie as having morphed into the current financial class that carries within its old forms of corrupt, oligarchic and megalomaniacal power. I call this the plutocratic class - those who are strictly concerned with non-democratic control of political and economic institutions and structures in order to flow monetary resources in their own direction despite massive harms to peoples and the earth (Harvey 2004). This uneven class relationship within the bourgeoisie between the plutocrats and those whose powers are based in property ownership is then hidden behind their general liberal democratic ideology of equal rights.

The bourgeoisie then, in my remapping of class, represents those who aspire to perform the material relations defined by bourgeois liberal ideology. That is, those who are engaged in the capitalist labour relation, private property, and the upholding of nominal liberal democratic and legal institutions. Within the bourgeois paradigm, the middle-class is upheld as an aspirational figure for the working class. While Marx (1988) theorized the working class-bourgeois relationship as the main contradiction that should form the dialectical momentum for history to move towards socialism, I consider the working class to be within the constellation of bourgeois relations historically, materially and ideologically. History has shown that many times the workers are actually wedded to the owners of the means of production in a struggle for mutual benefit as opposed to the worker overthrowing the bosses (Harvey 2004). Indeed, the ownership of the means of production in this current historical period of financialization, is somewhat distributed through the stock market. As Braverman (1998) points out workers move into positions of management over time, as well, unions and pension funds invest in corporate stocks and bonds (many of which are tied up in colonial extractivist economics) ostensibly

binding the classes together with a mutual interest in the profit system. I bring settler and bourgeois together, not to replace working class, but to root our struggles in the real bind that we are in within colonial-capitalism: not as exploited within the labour relation but as separated from the Land and thus our real liberation.

Thus, instead of talking about the bourgeoisie proper as the owners of the means of production, I talk about the bourgeois minded, bourgeois values, the bourgeois classes, or bourgeois society, which I consider to include the middle and working classes who reproduce the bourgeois-settler paradigm regardless of relations to the means of production, race, ability, gender, sexuality or Land. For me, this amalgamation of the owners of the means of production with a working-middle class is defined by their ideological uptake of liberal democracy, and their claims to be the ultimate moral or ethical upholder of democratic values, the figure or subject of the colonial-capitalist system (Dirlik 1987).

Capitalist-colonialism is the economic system of the settler-bourgeois, which represents a complex and exalted identity based on the privileges gained through ablism, cis-heteronormativity, toxic masculinity and whiteness. The power of the bourgeois-settler is founded on the Othering of diverse embodiments as raw materials for exploitation or death: the culture and power structures of racism (including anti-Indigenous and Black), sexism, classism, heterosexism, ablism and other forms of difference in order to compete for economic advantage, exploit Land and resources, and participate in ongoing genocide.

At the same time, the bourgeois-settler subjectivity does not always have to be performed by a white, settler-bourgeois, cis-male body (although statistically, it mostly is). This structure of privilege also conducts the performance of its Others; the settler-bourgeois is a hegemonic subject position that we are all expected to perform. By performing bourgeois-

settlerism we conform to the power structure and thus (we are told) we can secure our own livelihood by advancing within it. The mass of people is invited to sublimate their oppressions into consumer fetishism and by claiming, and attaching moral values to basic entitlements to education, jobs, property and retirement security. Identities based in class, gender, sexuality, race, ability are understood as fluxing between actual embodied experience of power hierarchy and conforming performance (but not forever reified in one or the other). While there may be tensions and slippages between embodiment and the uptake of settler-bourgeois subject position, I do consider the differences in actual material privileges between the various positionalities within the bourgeois-minded classes ethically important. None of these embodiment/identity dialectics can be absolutely defined but play out in a baffling, fluxing, intersectional and hierarchizing complex, through space, time, social and natural environments, economic contexts, progression over a lifetime, personal growth etc. While I understand that the mass of people are coerced into performing capitalist-colonialism, I also think it is important to problematize and theorize the ideological uptake and defense of a system of violence by anyone in any position, indeed this is a core reality with which, relational praxis arts deals.[11] Such a broadened understanding of class makes sense from the perspective of the marginalized, the constitutive outside of colonial-capitalism who face exclusion by class society itself.

− *Ecos/cultural economics*

Another terminology clarification entails an unpacking of the term economics. This work is grounded in an alternate understanding of economics from the western idea of the balanced budget, statistics, numbers on a spreadsheet and most importantly of free enterprise and profit. Going back to the Greek etymology of the term ‘economics’, ecos (oikos in the Greek) means

[11] The social and interpersonal impact of those intersectionally oppressed people who take up hierarchical power is often referred to as lateral violence.

home, dwelling space or village, and nomos means distribution, management, care or stewardship of the home (Federici 2019). I take oikos, or home, to be the environment in which we live, the relational structure inclusive of the non-human animal, chemical and organic worlds. I take nomos, care or stewardship, to be the relational ethics that guide practices by which we reproduce and sustain our existence as community within the environmental contexts. Marx (1990) tells us that economics is simply the relational structure of how life is reproduced: the production, exchange and consumption processes through which the material basis of life is created and distributed in society. Marx (1990) critiques the capitalist economic system, or mode of production, as just one form of economics, but one that has become hegemonic over all other economic forms such that it has become the very definition of economics itself. As capitalism cannot tolerate any other form of economics, it takes on the definition of economics to the exclusion of any other form, or even debate.

While Marx (1990) brings a relational understanding to economics, relationality has been core to Indigenous knowledge (Battiste and Henderson 2009; Coulthard 2014; Hall 2015; Simpson 2011). Relational understanding is the knowledge of Indigenous peoples of this Land and is in opposition to Western modes of thought that facilitate exploitation and extractivism. Indigenous knowledge works alongside Marx at the same time as offering a critical position to Marx's Eurocentric modernism that is androcentric, ablist and fetishizing of technology (Bedford 1994; Churchill 1993). Indigenous philosophy describes an economics based on honouring and reciprocity among human, non-human animal, plant, mineral, insect and spirit entities etc. Tuck and McKenzie's (2015) understanding of Land includes these environmental relational reciprocities, where all entities are considered relatives. For Simpson (2011), community is organized around the generation and sustaining of life (not profit). The challenge,

as I understand it, is to resist the construction of hierarchization and exploitation, and work towards egalitarian, metabolic, regeneratively reciprocal relationalities (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).

Economics is understood in Indigenous thought as well as by some marxists as a fully cultural system (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Bourdieu 1993; Dirlik 1987; Gibson-Graham 1996; Hall 2015; Kuokkanen 2011; Simpson 2011). I use all the terms relational, economic, culture, material to signify dimensions of the same phenomenon - what Marx (1990) has defined as the labour theory of value: that humans exist in metabolic relation to all the diverse entities of the world and where the mixing of human corporeal energies with those in the environment produces use values that sustain life. These life-sustaining activities can only be reproduced through cultural practices that are meaning laden. A society reproduces life through embodied engagement with material reality, which is facilitated by cultural knowledge, stories, values, norms, forms, and ideological messaging. The cultural system is where the reasoning, justifications, feelings, desires and meanings that breathe life into the economic system (Eagleton 1990; Haiven 2018) are cultivated in order to bring members into the understood practices of reproduction and to create tradition (understood as ever changing). Culture is also the framework within which disruptions occur when the economic system breaks down or contradictions become too heightened (Dirlik 1987; Eagleton 1990).

When I use the term economics, it is in this manner, not in the hegemonic sense where the term economics is used as a threat, as an instrument of abstraction, oppression, violation and genocide. In order to live in capitalism, to succeed in our individualized lives, we replicate the relational discordances of colonial-capitalism and thus it can thus be seen as a relational disease. Understanding economics as fully cultural helps us see that in the bourgeois system, where

economics is abstracted as numbers on a spreadsheet, culture has, as a result, become highly symbolized as commodity and divorced from the everyday material level of the sustaining and generation of life. Under the bourgeois-settler system of numerical economics, culture is voided of its radical potential (Dirlik 1987). A recognition of the inextricability of culture and economics constitutes a defetishized understanding where material relationality is always understood as present in the symbolic. Taking up a cultural/economic understanding makes it possible for art to be political and for communities to engage in cultural work as resistance.

− *Space/gentrification*

This dissertation also proposes an understanding of gentrification to be a form of ongoing colonization, an expression of capitalist/colonial relations in the built environment. Certain marxist theories are taken up in order to understand how the forces of capitalism have shaped space, not only as a productive force in the built environment, but a set of relationalities by which environments are produced and in turn reproduce capitalist relationalities (Lefebvre 2007; Smith 2008). Rejecting the use of the term 'colonization' as metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012) for gentrification, and asserting the twin logics of colonial-capitalism, my proposal is that gentrification does, in fact, promote and reproduce settler colonial material relations, values and culture through urban capitalist processes. Besides the obvious driver of gentrification being the private property market, the other major way that gentrification reproduces colonial relations is through ongoing (so-called) primitive accumulation where non-capitalist, or marginal social spaces are brought in line with market priorities.

The Junction is offered as an historical example of how capitalism and colonialism are intertwined processes. The Junction promotes itself as a historical neighbourhood valorizing its colonial history and fiercely defending its residual architectural examples against the

modernizing aesthetics of condo development - while embracing the development itself: the forces of capitalism intertwine with the history of colonialism where romanticism is tempered by the pragmatics of profitability. The colonial understanding of the Junction neighbourhood is hegemonic as is the reproduction of capitalist relationalities. Indigenous histories and current relations to Land are erased and suppressed through racist ideologies and civic practices.

In the face of hegemonic attitudes that laud neighbourhood upward mobility, I contend that only a decolonized approach can provide both an adequate understanding of the profound violence against community that is gentrification as well as the everydayness of how the colonization of Indigenous peoples is enacted on the urban or neighbourhood scale. A decolonized understanding of gentrification also contributes to a way forward in the resolution of the historical wrongs, of the dialectic of colonialism and capitalism within the settler city context, and provide the basis of engagement with Other economic forms that contest colonial-capitalism. For the Friends of Watkinson Park, the colonial context demands reflexive work. Thus, the community work must counteract the colonial relationalities we are expected to perform as members of the Junction neighbourhood. We cannot fully unsettle bourgeois normativity and claims to space without acknowledging the colonial moment that haunts the present: the forcible seizure of Lands, the attempted eradication of Indigenous peoples and ways of life, and their replacement with a euro-centric conception of society.

I also question gentrification theory in terms of who are its targets. The incoming bourgeois class is most often described as coming into conflict with the working class incumbents. Rather, I shift the focus from the working class to the lumpen, the unemployed and unemployable who are able to establish community in lower rent working class neighbouroods as the real targets of gentrification. However, the relationship of lumpen people to gentrification

is less directly discussed. While those low-income/lumpen renters are often seen as undesirable, as holding back the progress of the neighbourhood -- indeed they are the ones who signify an affordable housing market in the first place. Renters, particularly low-income renters, become disposable in a gentrifying neighbourhood where social changes are driven by property markets, where buyers are moving into their homes, looking for increased rental income and wanting to raise their property values. Low-income renters shift from being an economic advantage for their role in having suppressed property values, for creating the rent gap (Smith 1996) that makes them a good deal, to being an economic liability for the suppressing property values and jeopardizing potential profits.

The social dynamics of gentrification unfold across difference (Bell and Binnie 2004; Massey 2005; Merrifield 2002; Tuck and McKenzie 2015). Space is shared by homeowners, renters, parolees, by group home and shelter residents, by those who live rough. Space is shared by shoppers, community boosters, by members of local agencies such as resident associations or historical societies, by receivers of, or donators to local charity efforts. Space is shared by survivors, by sex trade workers and those who lobby to have sex trade workers pushed out, by people with difference who strive to fit in to normative standards of being, by people who are keeping up and by people who have given up trying, or never tried, who reject from the outside any status quo conformity to capitalist and/or colonial discipline. Diverse neighbourhood members pass by each other in the street daily, each playing out our material survival in relation to each other: we share space without sharing community. As a community member once told me: “I look at that picture [one that we co-created] on the door everyday before I go out to remind myself not to speak to the voices I hear in my head, in public. As long as I don’t talk to them when I’m out, I will be ok.”

Gentrifiers are primarily present in neighbourhoods based on the availability of property and their ability to afford it. Gentrifiers choose neighbourhoods as an expression of bourgeois subjecthood: we are told that we have control over our lives, self-expression and social power because we make the right choices. We are told to choose better friends, friends who will advance our material interests, to choose a career, to choose a proper school for our children (Bell and Binnie 2004). We never choose poverty, we never choose for our friends and family members to fall between the cracks, we don't choose to be "the queer unwanted" (Bell and Binnie 2004: 1810), we don't choose to be economically exploited, we don't choose to be disabled, discriminated against by police or genocided.

While gentrifiers are exercising their choices, folx at the shelter, or in Mainstay Housing, are literally put in the neighbourhood by the contingent forces of the Toronto housing crisis, and are just as easily and suddenly yanked out of the neighbourhood for arbitrary reasons. Folx are moved from shelter to shelter, often booted out for no reason, or a minor infraction such as having food in one's room. Many folx, experiencing the forced idleness of life on (so-called) social support, are again forced out into public space: without access to expensive public transit, shelter and Mainstay residents walk the streets of the Junction -- while others climb in their cars and leave to the university or a downtown job, returning home to participate in the neighbourhood primarily by shopping at the local stores, eating at local restaurants, meeting for play dates in the park and mingling with similarly classed neighbours at social gatherings. Choice in where to live, to take space, and make place, here on this Land and not on that Land, is an expression of bourgeois-settler privilege (Tuck and McKenzie 2015).

Typically, those liberal gentrifiers who enjoy the diverse flavours of a gentrifying neighbourhood will be ideologically against the macro oppressions while reproducing them

locally. I have come to see this as a horizontal form of class segregation, where bodies share the same space but don't interact. The spatial hierarchization of bodies connects us according to how hegemonic power structures our lives, but we don't reach across difference to form community. While some are entitled and reproduce (wittingly or unwittingly) neoliberal civic spaces, Others strive to place-make where possible, in accessible coffee-shops, convenience and dollar stores, alleyways, forgotten corners, vacant lots, railway tracks and of course, Watkinson Park. The fact that sharing space does not accord everyone a sense of belonging brings attention to how dis-belonging is actively produced (Bell and Binnie 2004). Tuck and McKenzie (2015, 37) take up McKittrick's (2006) analysis which "does not allow for categories of body/identity/place to be regarded as separate" but that points out "how geographies are socially and differentially produced," and "how subjugation is a spatial act."

While the neighbourhood provides a particular opportunity for confronting how capitalist-colonialism is lived daily, it is not generally recognized as a site of protest or resistance. Massey (2005, 107) asks "what if" space "presents us with a heterogeneity of practices and processes? Then it will be not be an already interconnected whole but an ongoing product of interconnections. Then it will be always unfinished and open." This heterogeneous and unfinished nature of space means there are always openings for a liberatory practice. Thus, the street is an important space, a space of encounter with difference, a site weighed down by ethical failure where particular kinds of extremely important political problems arise that are not necessarily dealt with in other kinds of overtly politically constructed (i.e., activist) spaces (Springer 2011).

− *Relational praxis art*

Having engaged with number of methodological approaches (autoethnography, interviews and community arts methods), I have come to develop my own approach which I call relational praxis art. Picking up feminists and decolonial methodologies, the primary concerns that inform the relational praxis art method are: orienting the work to the most vulnerablized within the geographically understood community; the enhancement of agency of community members and the leveling of community relations within the hierarchical power structure; dealing with the historical context of colonial-capitalism; lumpen place making understood as a network of relationalities among all entities; how and for who knowledge is produced; and most importantly, engaging in exchange relations that address the material needs and desires of community and its members as the basis of the work. I understand community as being everyone who is present in a given geographical location, including those non-human environmental entities. Community is a challenge to how belonging can be enacted. The core practice of this work is simply to be in community in a present and embodied way, to be present for what becomes necessary and what can unfold in any given moment towards the sustaining and regeneration of life. Relational praxis art involves the recognition of community members' critical and indispensable lived experience and acquired knowledge, and the development of their subalternized political and expressive agency (Freire 2005). Drawing on feminist standpoint theory (Collins 2000; Harstock 2006; Harding 2012), I see each person, indeed each entity in life, as occupying different points in space and time, as having different forms with different sensual faculties and imaginations. Thus, each has a perspective, a partial perspective, a form of knowledge and agency unto themselves (Barad 2003), which is integral to a more comprehensive perspective on the whole (Haraway 1988). In Indigenous settings, I have heard this spoken about as the gifts that each individual or entity carries with them into the world,

where elevating each of our gifts contributes to Life (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020). That each entity exists in connection, in interdependence, to every other entity in a relational web, network or fabric brings ethical considerations to the fore. As we tend to maintaining our connectivity materially, creatively, thoughtfully, dialogically, we are making the world. The absence of lumpen/low-income/Indigenous knowledge within larger liberation discourses means that these discourses have an inadequate grasp on the world and thus their own project.

Being in relation brings up disconnection as much as it does connectivities. The common critique that community art or community-based work tries to create a false, celebratory consensus (Mouffe 2007; Bishop 2006) does not apply to relational praxis art work with Lumpen community. The low-income community in the Junction is not a community by choice, but by social circumstances and geography. Under multiple forms of oppression, conflict is the stuff of life, failure is the air we breathe, and our ability to prove much is wavering. Given the rawness of peoples' intersectional experiences, the multiple stigmatization and institutional violence that people endure daily in the face of very present survival needs, it is pretty hard for community members to be in accord in a sustained enough way to form a voice that can then be projected into space. And we lose people, we lose their voices and their knowledge because their lives are threatened and basic needs are not fulfilled. People die. Our social fabric is threadbare in spots and full of holes. We don't have the resources to keep community members connected. For instance, crises mount in peoples' lives, they are forced to go to the hospital to have their medications adjusted, and then they sleep all day. We lose people to the church, to the divisive and alienating impacts of lumpen survival in community, to substance use and to the triggering that happens around issues of being in community. Harm reduction in this community means so much more than condoms and needle exchange. In the performance of the work, the

intersubjectivity with those in community with whom I work, and in the theorizing that I do here, there is conflict. When working in un-chosen community (with the people who are forced to be there due to marginalization) with the approach that everyone belongs, you must figure out how to survive and work together, and how to politicize and project our voice.

Material relationalities are stronger than ideological or ethical points of view. In order for this work to be resistant it needs work across the specific embodied differences in how class, race, gender, ability, sexuality - and intersections thereof - play out in the social web to create a material basis for community cohesion. This means collectively addressing the everyday material needs of community members as best as we can with the limited resources that we have. Indeed, finding consensus is a gift to the FoWP community. Finding consensus might be possible if we could actually meet each others' needs more effectively. Regardless of consensus and conflict, when we do come together it is meaningful. Often that meaningfulness is small, and sometimes we pull off something big despite ourselves.

In developing this method, I focused on the theory of praxis as having the potential to really open up questions about working towards liberation across difference between the complex identity of lumpen folx and those of us with relative privileges. However, in my reading, I find that the term praxis is not rigorously theorized. Praxis queries the relationship between materially grounded everyday life and theory. However, focus is generally placed on how everyday life is represented in theory rather than understanding that it is the relationships of everyday, material survival out of which knowledge is produced that is the liberatory potential of praxis. Praxis is not theory about, it is theory that arises from engagements with the messy, specific, cross difference community. As the slogan taken up by disability activists goes: nothing for us, about us, without us. In order to work towards a reality-based view of colonial-capitalism

and thus figure out how resistance might proceed, people positioned in relatively privileged class relations need to take up the indispensability of materially grounded work at the margins with the constitutive outside. In taking up a theory of praxis, it is necessary to think about how lumpen knowledge forms can be put into focus and built upon in theorizations of capitalist-colonialism and resistance.

My contention is that it is not politically viable to connect with community members through symbolic modes or methods aimed at 'changing peoples' minds,' i.e., appealing to people's ethical consciousness through analysis, education and art or engaging political power through demonstrations which are symbolic of an ideological position. Theory is by nature ideological, analytic and symbolic and does not necessarily consider material relations as a key component of resistance. The struggle must be more than ideological: it must take up the cultural economic relations in community and across difference that are the real substance of social change. If such community grounded work with lumpen/low-income folx is not supported in an adequate way then charity, social work agencies and churches pick up the slack, installing cynicism among community members along with the services and goods that they provide.

The knowledge produced through relational praxis art is not scientific, truth is not strived for, data is not extracted from bodies, substances, or nature. Rather, knowledge is recognized as attached to specifically emplaced bodies as ethical and political and arising within dialogue among agents. Knowledge is explored as a material relationality, an ecology, a cultural economy. The research questions the material basis or political economy of the relationalities between resistance practices (academic/artistic/activist) and the lumpen, who may (or may not) be the subjects and objects of leftist thought, but who are generally not constructed, or configured materially, as agents within it (Boilevin et al. 2019). Such political economic

understandings should help develop specific methods and tactics that will not fall into replaying bourgeois-settler relations, but will actually identify, challenge, upset and resist issues of hierarchical power. The project is to build community with the constitutive outside as a basis for liberatory struggles that contribute to a broad move towards a radically inclusive and ecological future.

Working materially within marginalized community is not a new form of struggle. It is not a new idea. I am picking up threads that have always existed in community-based political struggles. This is an ethic that was understood by the Black Panther Party and its Breakfast Program (Heynen 2009); it is a feminist ethic, a social reproduction economy, and one that is core to many Indigenous struggles to decolonize (Coulthard 2014). All communities on the ground who are under attack through capitalist/colonial relationalities develop community-based, material cultures of everyday survival. These, I contend, are the basis of the political. But these should not be fetishized by artists/academic/activists and their abstract symbolic representational strategies, they should be engaged with and supported in real material ways that recognize relational power dynamics.

The challenges that arise from political engagements based in everyday survival are quite different than artistic, academic or activist challenges. How to deal with the impacts of poverty, of generational trauma, of colonial brutality, addiction and psychological differences? How to recognize, mobilize, support and engage with the incredible knowledge and creativity that comes through individual lives? How to think about a new ethic and aesthetic that is located in community and works across difference? How to develop reflexivity as to one's privileges/oppressions, to understand each and everyone of our culpability in relational toxicity? How to overcome despotism that we are inured to under capitalist-colonialism and learn to do

bottom up democratic processes? Not only must we be working across class with all the implied intersectional differences, but we must be working from where people are at: working from the existing specific qualitative nature of the community's relational fabric towards more socially and ecologically intact or healed relationalities. This is a rejection of the top down imposition of ideological positions, analysis and language in favour of materially embodied and emplaced dialogic knowledge exchange and economic relations of redistribution (hooks 2000).

Struggles for freedom from oppression are based on the understanding that hierarchies of power are socially constructed and not absolute or universal, thus the possibilities for balanced relational redistribution are ignited: a freedom from social constructions of power that oppress, exploit and immiserate, a freedom to work out a different relational ethic, a new repaired web and thus a transformed future. Relational praxis art tends to these material relationalities that make up cultural economic system, exercises an ethical approach, and seeks to decolonize by acknowledging Indigenous philosophy and practice that shows how to be in a relational web of reciprocity (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017- 2020) that reinforces life through recognizing value in all entities.

− *Liberation*

This work is preoccupied with liberation from oppressions. What freedom is, is not considered. I think about social cohesion and relationality within an Indigenous understanding of responsibility, not freedom. I understand freedom in the negative, as freedom from oppression. For me, oppression means the denial of resources for life and agency to act, to contribute one's gifts to the social. I also find my own understanding of freedom, not as an a priori or universally understood thing, but produced in the moment out of the basic fact of life that there is no measure of value that can distinguish or elevate one entity over another, as mirrored in

Indigenous thought. Each entity strives towards its own unique being in relational to all other entities within the web of existence. To me, the striving beyond hierarchies of value within relational networks is a liberatory practice.

My main argument is that the level of struggle of the everyday grassroots disenfranchised, those lumpen/low-income/marginalized bodies need to be elevated, indeed centered in the movement. More acknowledgement and accessibility need to be built in to the movement for radical transformation so that those who suffer the worst of capitalism and colonialism have their agency uplifted. Indeed, my proposal is that working on relationships across difference (as capitalism organizes us against each other) is the radical work to be done. I see accessibility as a radical proposal that asks what it takes for everyone's value and participation in the social whole to be realized. Working on a movement that creates accessibility is to work contra colonial-capitalism which is built on exclusions, exploitations, immiseration and death. I maintain that a key difference to be worked on is that of poverty. While supporting those who have been excluded from class advancement in their achievement of economic stability is important, we cannot do so at the expense of those who are continuing to be pushed out, i.e., the lumpen/low-income social strata. We need to work on building the social fabric in a way that mitigates those most egregiously impacted. This rebuilding cannot be done symbolically. The very essence of being pushed out of the economic web is to be immiserated, to be denied the basis of life, thus, the political gesture must be to address material needs: food, clothing, shelter, safety, knowledge, expression, agency.

I hope that the relational praxis art method proposed, or the arguments for it, bring about further discussion on how we do liberation movements at this critical juncture of persistent widespread relational violence and environmental death.

1. Complications of Colonialism for Gentrification Theory and Marxist Geography

The following article lays the geographical and theoretical context of gentrification, which, I contend, targets, not the working class, but low-income/lumpen and Indigenous community such as the Friends of Watkinson Park, which formed in resistance to the negative impacts of gentrification. A decolonial retheorization of gentrification supports a further examination of the integral role of private property in colonial-capitalist oppression (as opposed to working class struggles over redistribution of profits) and, I argue in subsequent chapters, in the production of the lumpenproletariate as a social strata and in the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples.

Introduction

Gentrification is often described metaphorically as a form of 'colonization,' however, in this paper I argue that gentrification comprises one strategy in the continued historical colonization of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian context, and more specifically in the settler city of Toronto. I propose that the colonial relationalities, both symbolic and material that give rise to the settler city, persist as a discipline on poor and Indigenous bodies (as exemplified by the FoWP community), spaces and Lands, through the capitalist way of life. Colonial relationalities are again heightened through gentrifications role in Toronto's strivings for global city status in a neo-imperialist global economy. Gentrification is based on moral investments in the capitalist ideology of private property and monetary investments in shifting of property values. Investment in private property is fraught with the ethical contractions of Land theft, exploitation, ongoing original accumulation, and displacement, which form the basis of homelessness and Indigenous marginalization in the city. However, gentrification theory and Marxist geography do not fully or consistently account for the implications of colonial history in the current understanding of gentrification. Neil Smith (2008) for instance, relegates Indigenous history and epistemologies to an irrelevant past failing to unsettle or decolonize the notion of gentrification. Other Marxist theorists, who have attempted to connect issues of gentrification

and colonization offer a way forward to a decolonized understanding, however, more engaged dialogue with Indigenous scholars and communities are necessary to continue this discussion in a more liberatory direction.

Gentrification is often described metaphorically as a form of "colonization," where the spatial practices of urban redevelopment by city planners, developers, opportunists, and home-buying classes displace the poor, the working class, and renters from their neighbourhoods. However, I argue that in Canada gentrification is more urgently a manifestation of the continued historical colonization of Indigenous peoples. I contend that the colonial relationalities (both symbolic and material) that give rise to the settler city persist through the capitalist mode of production, which is reproduced by bodies who share space across social difference, through a dialectic of gentrification. How gentrification intersects with the historical colonization of Indigenous peoples appears to be under-theorized in the gentrification literature. This paper is an attempt to identify the gaps in gentrification and urban Marxist literature towards a decolonial understanding of gentrification. Building on Nicholas Blomley (2004), this paper considers private property as a key nexus in the complex intersections of colonialism and capitalism as they unfold in settler urban space through gentrification.

The discussion offered here has been inspired by my life, work, and research with the low-income community in the Junction, a neighbourhood in West Toronto, over ten critical years of gentrification. In this work, I consider how my own historical trajectory intersects with the complex spatial dialectic I see unfolding in the Junction. First, I acknowledge the Indigenous Lands where this writing takes place: the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and on Lands under a treaty agreement with the Mississauga of the New Credit. With this Land acknowledgement, I identify myself as a white settler with Scottish, Irish,

and English heritage, a member of a society bound by treaties, and an uninvited guest on Indigenous territory. At the same time, my own history of life-long chronic transience unfolds as a series of low-rent neighbourhoods fallen like dominos to bourgeoisification in my wake. The Junction is the first neighbourhood that I have lived in during an actual gentrification process. Witnessing and being, to whatever degree, part of the unfolding processes of gentrification alerted me to my own highly material role in how power hierarchies play out in urban space. My positionality as a settler, an artist, and as an academic brings with it a responsibility to actively resist the gentrification and colonization of which I am an unwilling agent and beneficiary.

In first researching the Junction, I quickly encountered a set of definitional historical narratives that described the economic development of the neighbourhood but did not acknowledge the colonial nature of that history. I thus begin the first section by proposing that the broad historical frame of settler colonialism is key to any discussion of the production of urban space in Canada (Turtle Island to Onkwehonwe peoples). I then move, more specifically, to the role of the settler city in maintaining the hegemony of colonial relationalities, a starting place that leads us towards the understanding of gentrification as ongoing colonization. Taking up Blomley's (2004) notion of the unsettled condition of the settler city, I point to a few among the many, many examples of the re-indigenization of urban space. I then offer a discussion of the Junction as an example of how colonization is imbricated with gentrification. In the second section, I give a brief outline of gentrification theory where colonialism is treated as a non-issue in the dominant debates as to whether gentrification represents a move towards a liberatory diversity or greater class conflict.

I then continue with a more critical engagement with Marxist gentrification theory. Along with many Marxist theorists, I see capitalism and colonization as being inextricably

intertwined (Ince 2018; Lenin 2008; Marx 1990), and thus, I see Marxist geography as offering one set of important theoretical tools not available in non-Marxist gentrification theory. However, Marxist geography must be engaged with critically by Marxist and non-Marxist theorists in order for it to contribute to an understanding of gentrification as ongoing settler colonization. I then look at two theorists of urban development and gentrification, Nicholas Blomley (2004) and Matt Hern (2016) who do engage with colonization, and particularly private property as a key factor. While gentrification theory often looks at the who's and why's of gentrification, it does not analyze the involvement of the settler subject. Thus, in the final section I draw on different theoretical tools to look at the subject position of gentrification (what I call the bourgeois-settler subject) and the constitution of its Other, those marginalized and subject to coloniality within the gentrification Landscape. I have also included throughout an engagement with Indigenous work on space and place, particularly that of Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie (2015).

In the face of hegemonic attitudes that naturalize property ownership and laud neighbourhood upward mobility, only a decolonized approach can provide both an adequate understanding of the profound violence against community that is gentrification, and the everyday reproduction of the colonization of Indigenous peoples at the neighbourhood scale. A decolonized understanding of gentrification contributes to: the intensification of the historical dialectic of colonialism and capitalism within the settler city; a way towards addressing the persistent historical wrongs and ethical failures of settler colonialism; and a basis of engagement with Other and Indigenous productions of space that contest colonial capitalism. Facing ecological, economic, and social devastation wrought by a colonial capitalism dependent on violence, bigotry, and alienation to maintain a brutal hierarchization of bodies, species, and

Land for the profit of a few, it behoves settler society to examine closely how such systems are reproduced, and as Glen Coulthard (2014) suggests, to pay particular attention to critiques of colonialism that arise out of the specific perspectives and knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

Colonization and Gentrification: The Settler City Context

It is necessary to fully acknowledge that in Canada Colonization in Canada has taken a lasting settler form: there is no clearly demarcated postcolonial moment where the Land was returned to the political determination of Indigenous nations. Settler Canadian society perpetuates a myth of "discovery" and makes claims to a permanent new home as it continues to claim legal authority over Indigenous nations, enforce a fraught reserve structure, neglect the well-being of Indigenous communities, perpetuate violence, exploit resources on disputed Lands, and contest Indigenous Land claims and demands for sovereignty (Edmonds 2010b; Manual and Derrickson 2017; Tuck and McKenzie 2015; Lannon and McLaren 2018). The tensions and divisions created by struggles over history and the ethical implications of genocide and occupation in the settler political and public spheres persist within the reproduction of urban space. This is evidenced by the fact that Indigenous inhabitation of the urban Landscape has been among the most denigrated, marginalized, and subject to violence and erasure: Indigenous peoples have historically been seen by settler society to not belong in the modern city (Blomley 2004; Coulthard 2014; Edmonds 2010b; Freeman 2010; Razack 2000; Tomiak in Bourke et al. 2011). High levels of police violence against Indigenous people, high policing and incarceration rates, homelessness, impoverishment, and violence against Indigenous women and Two-Spirit folx all speak to the colonial role of the settler city of Toronto.

Historically, settler city spaces such as Toronto have a key role in the identity formation of whiteness—a power structure that regulates racial, class, gender, sexual, and ablist social

hierarchies and relations to Land—through dispossession, private property and speculation, segregation, and displacement (Blomley 2004; Edmonds 2010b). This production of whiteness pushes against the reality of the frontier space as one of multiple differences, a "transcultural site" marked by continuous migration from more distant global colonial and postcolonial regions layered over the specific condition of colonialism on occupied and contested Indigenous Land (King 1990). Anthony King (1985, 15) describes the colonial city as an "instrument of colonization" in its functions of concentrating and acting as a hub for governing and regulating historically produced difference, and maintaining white supremacist power structures in and through urban space. Toronto is just one such node of colonial domination: the Land that comprises the city of Toronto was acquired by the British in a corrupt Land deal called the Toronto Purchase (negotiated in 1787 and re-signed in 1805)[12] for which compensation was only settled with the Mississauga of the New Credit in 2010 (Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation n.d.). The Six Haudenosaunee peoples and the Huron-Wendat never signed over rights to their Lands and thus it also has unceded status. Both continue to inhabit and have significant cultural and historical sites in the city, among the many of the other Indigenous Nations that call Tkoronto home.

Being a settler city means that Toronto has, by definition, a global dimension. As a product of settler colonization and subsequent global migration patterns, Toronto is a city that has developed through the dynamics of imperial power formations, including the patterning of the urban form after cities in the European metropole (King 1985). Once operating in service to the European metropole, and then as an economic centre in its own right, Toronto currently

strives for a dominant position as a global city.[13] Toronto's development as a global city is linked to its status as a centre for the global resource extraction industry (Block 2013), which exploits Indigenous Lands within Canada and abroad, especially in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In the worldwide stratification of cities, neoliberal governance strategies are seen to bring competitive edge. Roger Keil (2002, 579) points out that "urban neoliberalism can be read as a specific intersection of global—in the sense of both general and worldwide—shifts in the structure of capitalist economies and states with the everyday life of people in cities." Neil Smith (1996) makes a further connection between fiscal crisis and efforts at becoming a global city where gentrification, understood as reinvestment in the built environment, is seen to provide a spatial fix to such crisis. Culturally, Toronto has increasingly become a playground for the industrialists, scientists, and service providers to industry (Block 2013; Sassen 2001), a global citizenry who drive gentrification from personal, private, and professional directions.

Capitalist ideology and relations have become the dominant logic that either infuses or makes expendable all other bases of sociality in the urban setting (Smith 2008; Harvey 2006a). As Blomley (2004, xviii) writes, in settler cities "the development of the 'global' scale of capitalism confronts... a very specific local politics deeply marked by the historical legacy of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples." Blomley (2004, xviii) further suggests that cities that strive for global status bring an "intensifying displacement," where "[t]he 'enclosure' of the urban commons has also been a site for conflict." Blomley (2004) connects the current reach for global city status with the original moment of colonial dispossession, when Lands and resources were seized from Indigenous peoples through war, epidemics, betrayal, and force. Dispossession and displacement are logics that drive both colonialism and gentrification. The present-day

[13] A global city is a centre of banking, culture, economic boom, a city that espouses the growth model of urban development and that is driven by internationally competitive economic activity (Lees et al. 2008; Sassen 2001).

Canadian settler city and its gentrification program can be read as the articulation between its colonial past and its present neo-imperialist project, both within its own territory and globally.

At the same time, as Indigenous people are leaving often extremely difficult lives on reserve and entering cities, they contribute to a persistent and critical re-indigenizing production of urban space. Beyond the fact of longstanding Indigenous inhabitation and the organizations and local practices that have arisen to support their communities, urban spaces are also transformed through political struggles to address dynamics of colonization. For instance, the First Story (2013) project has developed an online resource for gathering and disseminating the Indigenous history of Toronto. First Story has also held many events, such as the Great Indian Bus Tour (of significant Indigenous sites) and the Talking Treaties series, which generates awareness of the treaty relations (and betrayals) that mark the history and Lands of Tkoronto. Another example is the arts based project by Hayden King and Susan Blight (2013-2020) called Ogimaa Mikana: Reclaiming Renaming that replaces “alien” anglophile street signs in Toronto with Anishnawbe names. In 2016, King and Blight initiated a billboard project across Anishinaabeg territory to contest the colonial strategy of the erasure of Indigenous Landscapes and to revitalize Indigenous politics, language, culture, and knowledge.

King and Blight's (2013-2020) project is exemplary of an important dimension of Indigenous struggles, which is that they often extend out, theoretically and practically, from the urban environment to connect with broader Indigenous territories, Landscapes, and ecologies, thereby disrupting a false sense of urban/rural and human/nature divides (Tuck and McKenzie 2015; Blomley 2004; Stanger-Ross 2008). This struggle was also demonstrated by the Idle No More round dances, which addressed, among many issues, the proposed limits on environmental protection for waterways through Bill C-45. The sites where round dances took place, such as

Nathan Philips Square, were transformed from urban spaces of settler political power and consumerism into spaces of a larger geography of anti-colonial resistance (Tuck and McKenzie 2015). Such actions upset the enactment of municipal colonialism and the power dynamic of exploitation by the urban of the rural that is embedded in rural-urban divide, while reminding the public of the interconnectedness of Landscapes and peoples across space (Blomley 2004; Stanger-Ross 2008). More specific to the Junction neighbourhood is the successful 2011 community-based struggle, led by the Taiaiako'n Historic Preservation Society under the jurisdiction of the Six Nations, to protect the ancient Iroquoian burial site in High Park, Snake Mound, from destruction by its use as a bicycle motocross course (L. Jackson 2011). Another very interesting example of the re-indigenization of space from outside Toronto is the recent bequeathing of a multi-million dollar Manhattan family home by Jean-Louis Goldwater Bourgeois to the local Lenape Tribe to be used as a prayer center (Kilgannon 2017). This gesture constitutes an important giving back of Land from settler control and a practical acknowledgement of Indigenous Land sovereignty.

− *Gentrification and Colonization in the Junction*

The Junction neighbourhood provides a localized example of how gentrification is imbricated, in both symbolic and material ways, with colonization. The Junction's gentrification story is typical. As a neighbourhood with a once-flourishing industrial base, the Junction experienced economic collapse as a consequence of the 1960s deindustrialization that swept North American cities. The Junction became known as a "sketchy" neighbourhood. The main artery, Dundas Street West, became destitute: businesses closed; buildings fell into disrepair; and the employment base of the neighbourhood eroded. In between empty storefronts, second-hand stores, porn outlets, and donut shops took root. During this period of "decline" in the Junction,

there was little middle-class resistance to the establishment of social service institutions, including the Evangeline women's shelter, Mainstay Housing for mental health consumers/survivors; the Keele Street Halfway House, many halfway houses for disabled adults, and the Lucy McCormick High School for disabled youth (Gleeson 1999; Kern 2013). The Junction came to be characterized by massage parlours, criminalized sex work, drug culture, and informal, high risk, and appropriation economies (Kern, 2013). Other modes of informal economic life included hunting, fishing and gathering, bartering, recycling, caring, and sharing. Former and residual industrial activity in the Junction also made it one of Toronto's most toxic neighbourhoods (Kern 2013). One business owner (Brown 2009, n.p.) commented: "At a certain point in time, people thought the Junction was too shitty to even wreck; it wasn't even worth demolishing." Pre-gentrification neighbourhoods are part of what Neil Smith (1996, 189) describes as uneven development:

> [w]hatever the dysfunctional social consequences provoked or exacerbated by disinvestment—deteriorating housing conditions, increased hazards to residents' health, community destruction, the ghettoization of crime, loss of housing stock, increased homelessness—disinvestment is also economically functional within the housing market and can be conceived as an integral dimension of the uneven development of urban place.

Marginalized economic relations, called "dysfunctional social consequences" by Smith, are, however, fully cultural and vital forms of survival for low-income, marginalized, migrant and urban Indigenous communities. And yet, the functionality of these marginalized economic relations for capitalism is dependent on their denigration within the settler-bourgeois paradigm. The perceived decay, dysfunction, and economic failure associated with these communities spawn the perceived necessity for redevelopment. As Smith (1996, 81) writes, "the steady devalorization of capital creates the possibility of its opposites, namely longer-term possibilities for a new phase of valorization through investment." Viewing a neighbourhood as a wasteland

uninhabited by anything or anyone useful, waiting there for the taking, resonates as a new form of *terra nullius* (Tomiak in Bourke et al. 2011). Whereas the Junction was once a neighbourhood where Indigenous and low-income people could live, in the period of gentrification they remain as either targets of policing and removal, or as people institutionalized in the remaining social housing, shelters, and halfway houses.

When I moved to the Junction in 2006, some parties' desire for gentrification was at a fever pitch, but little had been realized. After years of work on the part of local boosters (such as the Junction Business Improvement Area, the West Toronto Junction Historical Society, and the Junction Arts Festival organizers) to promote the neighbourhood, gentrification has finally entered the condominium development phase, and even the parts of the neighbourhood least likely to gentrify (areas without historic architecture) are now being redeveloped. The successful gentrification in the Junction provides a platform from which gentrifiers are now crossing the tracks and spreading north into new working-class and low-income areas. This narrative of gentrification, while typical, neglects to consider Indigenous histories of inhabitation, reiterating the conception that conquest is complete and in the past. Fetishistic constructions of history play an important role in gentrification (Lees et al. 2008). The Junction is known for its historic housing, and commercial and industrial architecture dating back to when the neighbourhood was an independent town competing with the newly developing city of Toronto. The romantic appeal of nineteenth-century architecture generates historical narratives that normalize colonialism as part of the branding in local neighbourhood boosters' place-making strategy With municipal subsidy, historic buildings in the Junction have been sandblasted, and old-timey light fixtures and benches installed (Toronto Real Estate Board). The Junction is promoted as a former frontier town with stories of white men wheeling and dealing to build industry, infrastructure, a

political establishment, and a booming Land market (Fancher 2004; Fancher and Miles 1999). Missing from the popular narrative is the fact that the Junction is also situated in the middle of known Indigenous historical sites including a set of criss-crossing ancient trails, a Seneca-Mohawk village site named Taiaiako'n, a large Black Oak Savannah which is the result of Indigenous horticultural practices, and ancient Iroquoian burial mounds (Bobiwash 1997; Johnson 2013; Nagam 2009).

Also erased from the popular historical narrative and the dominant culture of everyday neighbourhood life are Indigenous social and philosophical epistemologies and the historical knowledge of colonization, which are embedded in the Land and built environment, and are active in the contemporary urban Indigenous community of Tkoronto, including in the Junction. Indigenous peoples have continuously inhabited the Junction area. Prior to gentrification, the Indigenous population in Junction was above the city average. Since gentrification, Indigenous inhabitation of the Junction has declined.[14] Instead of grappling with what Nicholas Blomley (2004) understands as an issue of further displacement (on top of dispossession) caused by gentrification, this Indigenous history is fetishized by local organizations and real estate companies, who reference the foundation of the Junction as being where "two Indian trails crossed."[15] Many local street names such as Indian Grove, Indian Crescent, Indian Valley Crescent, and Indian Trail refer to the historic Indigenous geography of the area, and point to the common colonial practice of appropriating Indigenous landscapes (Blomley 2004; Edmonds 2010) by laying railway lines and streets over Indigenous trails. Today, the railway, which gives the Junction its name, has become the symbol of its brand mobilized throughout the

[14] A study of City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles (2001 and 2006) demonstrates this decline. The 2011 census did not include statistics on Aboriginal inhabitation of the city, and this when the City of Toronto recognizes that Aboriginal relocation to the city is increasing (City of Toronto, Indigenous Peoples).

neighbourhood in business and organizational names and logos, local murals, plaques, and in the historical narrative that extols the glory days of the Junction and its industry-driven economic development. The troubling symbolism of the train, however, is ignored: the war against Indigenous peoples, the opening of Lands to privatization, commodification and market speculation, and brutal indentured migrant labour (Edmonds 2010). More recently the railway in the Junction has been targeted by neighbourhood members for the transport of highly explosive crude oil, radioactive materials, and other toxic substances,[16] largely linked to the industrialization and polluting of Indigenous Lands and communities across the North American continent.

The relationship between colonization and gentrification in the Junction unfolds as a tension between the erasure of Indigenous history and life in the historical discourse through which the neighbourhood identifies, and the daily reproduction of the capitalist mode of production (continually re-valorized through these historical narratives) against the marginalized and diverse economic lives of low-income and Indigenous peoples who are negatively impacted by gentrification.

Unsettling Gentrification Theory

As stated previously, there is a large gap in gentrification theory when it comes to addressing how ongoing colonization persists in the gentrification landscapes of the settler city. In this section I work through specific theorists in an attempt to get closer to a decolonized understanding of gentrification theory. I start with a review the broad strokes of accepted gentrification theory and then move towards the Marxist theory, which I feel has the most

[16] Given the transport of toxic and explosive tar sands bitumen on tracks running through the Junction, a clean train movement has arisen in the neighbourhood, but this does little to de-fetishize or decolonize the image of the train.

potential for developing in decolonizing directions. In order to engage with Marxist geography, the issue of stagism and other theoretical weaknesses, which have plagued gentrification discourse where Indigenous peoples are concerned, must be addressed. In this discussion of stagism, I address the limits in the works of Neil Smith (2008, 1996) specifically because of his significant stature in the field of Marxist geography and beyond, as well as the work of those theorists who have engaged with the writings of Lefebvre and Fanon. I then discuss those recent theorists, Blomley (2004) and Hern (2016), who directly address colonization, and more specifically relations to property, as central to their theorization. The work of Blomley (2004) and Hern (2016) form an important basis for opening the discussion of decolonizing space in the settler city and the relationship between gentrification and colonization.

− *Social Mixing or Class Conflict*

Mainstream gentrification theory proposes a reading of gentrification as an emancipatory movement of people who reject a cookie cutter, mass-produced suburban existence in favour of a reclaimed boutique life of creativity, tolerance, and social mixing in funky, lived-in urban centres (Lees et al. 2008). The social diversity that gentrification is seen to provide is viewed as a social good, as a positive urban development based on the idea of the city as a space that integrates flourishing difference. Much of the gentrification debate prioritizes analyzing the forces (government, real estate, developers, and other social sectors) at play. Richard Florida (2003, 8) for instance credits the creative class, which he understands as educated people who are involved in work that "creates new meaningful forms" (scientists, engineers, university professors, artists of all disciplines the intelligentsia, media, etc.), as being the drivers of urban development and financial growth. Quite rightly, gentrification theory also takes up the concern

as to whether and how revitalization comes at the expense of incumbent working and lower-class inhabitants, and if social mixing actually occurs in gentrified neighbourhoods. Theorists understanding gentrification as spatialized class conflict (Blomley 2004; Lees et al. 2008; Slater 2004; Smith 1996) have analyzed the roles of identity groups including people of colour, women, gay folx, and artists. For instance, analyses of anti-Black racism have deepened our understanding of the ways that spatial development is specifically and historically a tool of corrupt white privilege, including the oppressive practices of segregation, redlining, predatory lending, slum clearance, blockbusting, urban renewal, environmental racism, labour exploitation in urban construction, housing discrimination, policing of space, white violence, stigmatization, disinvestment, and exclusionary gentrification (Lipsitz 2011; Sakai 1983). While gentrification is often seen as engendering spaces of difference, it ultimately depends on settler-bourgeois whiteness as a normative base for property valuation (Lipsitz 2011).

Feminist geographers have looked at how the city centre can provide a space safe from the nuclear-family oppressions of suburban life. In the city, women can find resources and access community outside the family, and thus have the possibility of liberation from heteropatriarchal life (Wilson 1991). Others have discussed how women's experience of gentrification is contradictory: women can be situated as indirect promoters of gentrification through their immaterial community building labour, while at the same time creating the conditions for their own displacement as an economically vulnerable group (Kern 2013).

Urban centres are also seen by gay folx to be relative sanctuaries from homophobic society where queer geographies allow for self-expression, safety from violence, mutual support, and a concentration of resources for community endurance and struggle. At the same time, Queer urban theorists have also looked at how homonormativity works in line with

Richard Florida's (2003) creative city agenda, and its reach for global city status, to appropriate and commodify gay spaces. Homonormative culture, exemplified by Gay Pride, tourism, and bounded gay village spaces, replicates white supremacist spatial production and drives working-class and racialized gay sexual/gender non-conforming subcultures underground (Bell and Binnie 2004). Homonormativity also works through gentrification: affluent gay people, as carriers of cultural capital (Bell and Binnie 2004, 1811), become "pioneers" who arrive in depressed neighbourhoods to transform and cleanse them in a manner that accommodates middle-class straight people's tastes and desires, including shuttering marginal sex work and cultures (Lees et al. 2008).

Artists are also integral actors according to the "bohemian index" in Florida's (2003, 10) creative city paradigm. Artists seek out marginal neighbourhoods because of affordability, for the inspiration found in a gritty environment, and for room to establish their artistic identities (Bain 2003). As a result, individual artists play a well-known important and conflicting role as the shock troops of gentrification (Bain 2003; Florida 2003; Ley 2003; McLean 2010). On another scale, arts institutions and large-scale arts festivals, such as Nuit Blanche and Luminato, while exploiting free and cheap artist labour, are seen by civic politicians to contribute to Toronto's image as a world-class arts destination (McLean 2010) and a competitive global city. Branding the city as an arts centre supports tourism and attracts the international bourgeois class to take up residence and invest in business and property (Florida 2003). At the same time, artists are the poorest of all professional classes (Ley 2003; McLean 2010) and are extremely vulnerable to displacement due to the gentrification that their presence and self-interest promotes. Marginalized identity groups and artists might add flavour, desired diversity, and a liberatory air to the gentrifying neighbourhood, but as gentrification progresses to condominium

development, their economic vulnerability may ultimately contribute to their displacement (McLean 2010).

All of these theories problematize the intersectional, privileging or de/privileging dimensions and complexities of a classist production of space that seeks an idealized diverse city where difference is domesticated and made safe for middle-class consumption and profit (Bell and Binnie 2004). As Blomley (2004) notes, viewing gentrification as a social problem that exists within an accepted private property paradigm suggests that it is merely a planning problem that can be solved by mixed income developments and affordable housing. Such approaches to gentrification do not resolve the more profound ethical and practical issues of classism and colonialism maintained over time through the institution of private property. With few exceptions, current gentrification theory addresses neither the factual historical basis of the colonial city nor the urban Indigenous experience. The lack of inclusion of Indigenous perspectives on urban issues in gentrification theory not only curtails its liberatory potential, but also makes gentrification theory complicit in re-enacting the colonial production of space. Adding a settler colonial frame to the discussion on gentrification will deepen the critique, and at the same time open up the possibility for more radical, relevant, and ethical forms of production of urban space which are resistant in the present and liberatory in the future.

− *Ongoing Primitive Accumulation*

Contrary to the above gentrification theories, Marxist thought provides a useful starting point for understanding the role of the privatization of property in connecting colonization and gentrification. To begin, Marx's (1990, 876) theory of primitive accumulation, or what many have come to call original accumulation, refers to the enclosure of the commons, the conquest of Land, dispossession, and the and extraction of resources at “at the fringe of capitalism’s reach.”

Marx (1990, 874) describes how "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short force, played the greatest part" in transforming Land into private property. Forced off the Land and separated from access to resources, people are continually pushed into the labour market to survive. Thus, the transformation of Land into private property and the creation of a Landless class is ultimately the cause of poverty, scarcity, homelessness, and immiseration, which become endemic to the economic condition under capitalism and throughout imperial and neo-imperial geographies. For David Harvey (2006a), original accumulation on the global scale, constitutes a moving testimony to the depredations wrought in the name of human progress by a rapacious capitalism. It also captures the immense complexity and richness of human interaction as diverse peoples of the world with equally diverse histories, cultures and modes of production are forged into an awkward and oppressive unity under the banner of the capitalist law of value.

Indeed, the process of enclosure is how the capitalist/colonial city comes to be, with the urban form itself being a hallmark of the capitalist system (Hodkinson 2012). Anthony King (1990, 9) notes that "[t]he new cities, and the new 'norms and forms' introduced from the metropole to the colony did not simply provide 'models on which the colonies were built... they were also the 'norms and forms' of one mode of production (industrial capitalism) being transplanted into the territory of another mode of production." In the Canadian context, diverse forms of Indigenous inhabitation and relations to Land, described by Coulthard (2014) as being based in a relational ethics of obligatory reciprocity among species and places which all hold agency and spirit, are reterritorialized to conform to the demands of capitalist alienation, privatization, and commodification of property.

Theorist of the commons Massimo De Angelis (2004; see also Coulthard 2014; Ince 2016) proposes that original accumulation is not a discrete historical moment, but a continual

process of enclosure of various forms of commons by the marketization of relations and space, which is constitutive of a capitalist logic. Ongoing original accumulation takes place across global and local scales, from the uneven landscape of a globalized capitalist world system (as with corporate extraction of resources on Indigenous Lands) to the privatization of urban space and daily class and colonial struggles in the gentrifying settler city context. De Angelis (2004, 64) explains that this is the process by which "human activity is channeled into forms that are compatible with the priority of capital's accumulation." It is through the legal, cultural, and institutional mechanics of capitalist property relations and marketization that enclosure of non-market relations unfolds.

As Neil Smith (1996) notes, the competitive dynamics of capitalism produces uneven development in urban Land markets and the rent gap where neighbourhoods that are in decline, and therefore offer cheap real estate, are measured by speculators against the potential profits that could be made once developed. The rent gap spurs reinvestment and thereby drives gentrification. Gentrification is a process that takes advantage of inherently unstable and constantly fluctuating Land markets across urban spaces where the neighbourhood as a whole is seen as a basis of economic competition within the context of the city. Additionally, the local unfolding of gentrification has taken on an international dimension with the increasing significance of tourism and investment in property, business, and infrastructure by the transnational capitalist and creative classes (Kipfer and Keil 2002). This competitive activity continually dominates the space and socio-economic relationalities that exist and unfold in the geography of the neighbourhood.

While De Angelis (2004) does not refer to gentrification, his theory of ongoing primitive accumulation perfectly describes the logic of gentrification, where enclosure of urban spaces

and practices includes: the conversion of churches (as community spaces) into condominiums, urban design strategies to discourage loitering or street sleeping (such as homeless-proof benches) and other physical barriers to street living, shaming and excluding poor people and their cultures, and legal strategies to criminalize public homeless/low-income culture and economics (such as panhandling, smoking and squeegee work)[17] (McLennan in Bourke et al. 2011; Walby and Lippert 2011). One can understand enclosure as an act of separation of peoples from their survival networks enforced through the use of extra-economic force (surveillance, policing, and military), economic coercion (austerity), legal regulation of public space through civic by-laws, and inaccessibility of housing and the necessities for life. De Angelis (2004, 67) points out that "what capital (...) does is that it attempts to create life-worlds in its own image or to colonize existing ones, to put them to work for its priorities and drives. And it has done this since the beginning of its history to different degrees, and, at any given historical moment, different life-worlds are subject to different degrees of colonisation." However, the privatization of space and relationalities cannot fully dominate; rather, it is a process of struggle as illustrated by the Indigenization of space projects mentioned above alongside the many anti-gentrification struggles taking place. Thus, De Angelis (2004, 60) characterizes capitalism not as a "totalised system, but as a force with totalising drives."

De Angelis (2004) does not address issues of historical colonization, however, there are many forms of ongoing enclosure in the urban setting by settler society, which are of particular relevance to Indigenous peoples. Aside from the main issue of the stolen Land itself and acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty, these forms of ongoing enclosure include the refusal to acknowledge the full and unlimited importance of Indigenous history, knowledge,

[17] Such as with Ontario's Safe Streets Act.

culture and politics, the refusal to recognize historical and sacred Indigenous sites, the decimation of Indigenous ecologies, the regulation of urban hunting, fishing, and other food production practices by settler laws, the criminalization of Indigenous inhabitation of public spaces and civilian and police violence and incarceration of Indigenous bodies.[18] Therefore, there are significant gaps in the Marxist narrative that can only be resolved by adopting a decolonial frame.

− *The Problem of Stagism*

Another significant barrier to the contribution of Marxist thought to discussions on gentrification and colonization is its lack of engagement with Indigenous thought. The origin of Marxist thought in the classical political economy that celebrated capitalism means it is tightly imbricated with modernist positions that become problematic when considering issues of liberation within colonial contexts.[19] It has been all too common in political-economic discussion to dismiss and foreclose on those who raise Indigenous knowledge as unwisely harkening back to a romantic or imagined past where it is supposed that identity and place were one, and Indigenous societies were spiritual, just, and ecological (Tuck and McKenzie 2015).

One of the theoretical barriers to decolonizing Marxist and gentrification theory is stagism, the theory of human evolution through stages of development towards greater civilization and enlightenment. Within the dominant strain of European thought, Indigenous cultures are wrongly believed to have failed to progress, and thus represent undeveloped societies frozen in the past. In line with such thinking, Marx (1990, 285–286) proposed a

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[18] Coulthard (2014) writes extensively on rejecting the politics of recognition as a reinstatement of settler power to recognize. He argues for the self-determined assertion of sovereignty through other means of Indigenous resistance and resurgence such as access to urban Lands, particularly parks, without interference from settlers, their laws and organizations.

[19] For instance, Coulthard (2014) critiques the use of the concept of "the commons" as a settler claim to Lands without accounting for the fact of Indigenous Land sovereignty.

temporal sketch of humanity, which thought of non-industrialized, communal cultures as belonging to a "primitive" stage prior to the industrial capitalist mode of production, which in contrast was viewed as advanced, modern, and technological. While stagism in Marxist thought has been much critiqued (Bedford 1994; Black Elk in Churchill 1983), it persists through the common and uncritical use of terms such as "primitive," "pre- modern," and "pre-capitalist" to describe Indigenous cultural-economic life. To refer to "pre- capitalist" forms is problematic because Indigenous culture persists within, around, and against capitalism and are, therefore, coeval with modernity. Indeed, modernity itself does not exist without colonialism and its Other (Mignolo 2009). Making Indigenous modernity theoretically invisible reproduces colonialism. Many Marxists face a difficulty in approaching Indigenous knowledge, which developed independently from the Western philosophical paradigm. The hoped-for transformation of capitalism into socialism indicates a cultural worldview based in a Eurocentric modernity that differs from, and is not necessarily inclusive of, non-European, i.e., Indigenous worldviews (Coulthard 2014; Tuck and McKenzie 2015).

Doreen Massey (2005) is one Marxist geographer who rejects stagism with her theory of space produced through the simultaneous, coeval trajectories of stories (human and non-human) that take place in historically specific geographies of power. The implication of these intersecting trajectories is that space provides the opportunity for a radical heterogeneity, a confrontation with the Other, a co-mingling of stories out of which space is produced and which opens up new political possibilities (as opposed to the superficial diversity of mainstream gentrification theory). Massey's (2005) call for a decentering of Europe touches on a demand from Indigenous scholars, and her discussion of space provides many openings. However, like many Marxist geographers, Massey (2005, 30) remains highly suspicious of "local,"

"parochial," and "nationalist" defenses of place, and her theoretical work in many ways reinforces European cultural hegemony. For instance, I question how Massey's defense of space as perpetual flow, and her rejection of any idea of a timeless connection to place, reflect on Indigenous creation stories (Tuck and McKenzie 2015) or the longstanding rejection by many Indigenous scholars and peoples of the Bering Strait Land bridge migration theory. Western theories of nationalism or sovereignty, territory, Land, property, and space cannot be automatically applied to Indigenous realities or politics. Furthermore, if the production of space can be described with the dialogical metaphor of intersecting trajectories of stories, then shouldn't theoretical space also be enacted dialogically? According to Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie (2015), the Land-based self-understanding of Indigenous peoples in relationship to space challenges Marxist, new materialist, and geographic thinking.[20] The critical place inquiry proposed by Tuck and McKenzie (2015) asserts that a decolonizing spatial theory cannot be developed outside of a discussion with Indigenous scholars, leaders and peoples at its centre. The stakes, if such a discussion does not take place, are high. In Marxist theory, economic forms that have persisted alongside capitalism are generally not articulated as cultural or historical specificities, but as abstract empty spaces, or spaces of the past, while capitalist space is well defined and articulated. An undefined space cannot be conceived as a resistant space, so not engaging across knowledge paradigms undermines the relevancy of Marxist thought to decolonization. Many critiques of bourgeois modernism by Marxist urbanists, however, are not

[20] Tuck and McKenzie (2015, 51), in describing Indigenous understandings of place, move beyond the limited concern for the social, the human, to include "Land itself and its nonhuman inhabitants and characteristics as they determine and manifest place." This understanding of place is one of non-privileged, non-hierarchical "familiar" relationalities among species and material elements that occur across dimensions of being from emotional, personal, and spiritual to that of knowledge production, and which are also described as sacred. In making a few points about Indigenous conceptions of Land, it still seems necessary to point out that these do not comprise a reductive, static cultural state, but exist within dynamic epistemological practices which are transforming and exchanging over time.

necessarily meant to abolish the bourgeois cultural system that gave birth to capitalism and colonialism, but are meant to "heal the wounds of modernity through a fuller and deeper modernity" (Merrifield 2002, 162). I interpret this to mean a project of working towards socialist control over productivity and nature (Smith 2008) without consideration of capitalism's colonial history or engagement with Indigenous theorists, leaders and peoples as a vital beginning place, rather than an afterthought. The neglect of the importance of colonial history and Indigenous thought is exemplified by Neil Smith (1996, 2008), one of the most important Marxist theorists of gentrification.

Urban Marxism and Colonialism

Despite writing from the old colonial metropole and researching in settler colonial urban sites, Smith's work does not account for the violent history of colonialism. Smith's (2008) primary concern with colonization is its role in the purported universalization of the wage labour relation and the commodification of space. Glen Coulthard (2014), on the other hand, points out that Indigenous peoples are not primarily integrated into the capitalist mode of production as labourers, but are seen instead as obstructing the acquisition of Land and resources. Outside of the wage labour relation, Smith (2008,115) views the persistence of non-capitalist economic forms as "fossilizations of pre- capitalist relations of production."[21] In his discussion of imperialism and uneven development, Smith (2008, 129) emphasizes the issue of "pre-capitalist" cultures by recalling Rosa Luxemburg's casting of Indigenous economies as "a legacy from the past which is inexorably destroyed with the forward march of capital," in other words, "a temporary matter of the articulation of modes of production."

[21] Smith (2010) espouses the idea that the working-class have the most revolutionary potential, and therefore the universalization of the wage labour system creates the conditions for the desired socialist revolution.

In *Uneven Development*, Smith (2008) relies on stagist theory to describe historical transformations of the conceptualization of space. In considering the relation between space and nature, Smith (2008) uses the term "primitive" liberally to refer to the Indigenous experience of "place," set in opposition to abstracted Western conceptions of "space." As evidence of primitive, un-developed notions of space, Smith (2008, 96) (quoting Robert Sack) describes Indigenous peoples as having a unified or undifferentiated relation to nature, and, lacking private commodified property, owning territory as a social group rather than as individuals. As further proof that Indigenous societies experience place and not space, Smith (2008, 96) quotes Ernst Cassirer's example of "natives" who can easily find their way through a landscape, but are unable to draw a map of it. With this wholly inadequate summation of Indigenous relationships to space, Smith (2008, 97) states that the Western conception of space coincides with a "milestone in human history—the origins of philosophy, of conceptual thought which is no longer the direct efflux of practical human activity." Blomley (2003), taking a more critical bent, notes that the development of cadastral mapping as a technique of bourgeois hegemonic, disembodied, scientific conceptualization of space is key to the ideology and technology by which colonial Land theft and private property is materialized. Indeed, the violence against Indigenous peoples that has resulted from the bourgeois relation to space seems to be a non-issue for Smith (2008). The stagist narrative is a given; Smith (2008) moves us theoretically from a pre-capitalist state of the unity of nature and human society, to the bourgeois misconception of a dualistic separation of nature and society, through to his idea of the production of nature where humans, while seen to be a part of nature from the start, have developed the powers to produce their own means of subsistence, and thus have now become the centre of nature. The development of advanced Western dualistic thinking that serves

capitalism and the human ascendancy within nature it produces, is also seen as the ground for capitalism's own overcoming, an achievement which ultimately brings about a social control of history. While this is clearly anthropocentric, Smith (2008, 91) pre-empts such a critique as "nostalgic."

Smith does not discuss the violent dispossession through military, cultural, trade, and biological war, or the decimation of Indigenous ecologies that was required to achieve and reproduce capitalism in the settler context. The ethical underdevelopment of the European philosophical tradition is written over with a modernist (in its limited European sense) celebration of philosophical advancement. Smith's (2008) analysis of space leaves out any cross-cultural, and therefore possibly decolonizing, discussion.

By relegating Indigenous history and epistemologies to a so-called pre-capitalist past, Smith fails to radically unsettle the notion of private property, a foundational bourgeois production of space, making his analysis of gentrification incomplete. For instance, Smith (1996) examines economic processes of gentrification such as the rent gap from within a capitalist paradigm of private property, a move that solidifies the private property system rather than unsettles it. Smith's (1996, 186) theoretical situatedness within the private property paradigm is reflected in his discussion of gentrification as a frontier where:

> a highly resonant imagery [is] bound up with economic progress and historical destiny, rugged individualism and the romance of danger, national optimism, race and class superiority. But it also comes from the geographical specificity of the frontier. The frontier of the American West was a real place; you could go there and virtually see the line, as Frederick Jackson Turner put it, between "savagery and civilization." The geography of the frontier was cast and created as a container of all these accumulated meanings; the sharpness of the geographical frontier was an excellent conveyance for the social differences between "us" and "them," the historical difference between past and future, the economic difference between existing market and profitable opportunity.

Missing from this description is any understanding of the specific situation of Indigenous peoples, who seem again to be located vaguely in the past (relative to the future of civilizing opportunity). For Smith (1996), the line between "us" and "them" is not determined by conflicting cultural systems or historically specific modes of production, it is between an existing marginal market and future profitable opportunity of more organized capital within a landscape already dominated by Europe. Smith (1996, 186) evokes the frontier to draw parallels with gentrification as a place that "transmits the distilled optimism of a new city ... where the future will be made" by those who invest in and transform so-called savage spaces. Smith (2008, 186) writes that the disinvested neighbourhood is, made available as a frontier by the existence of "a very sharp economic line in the Landscape. Behind the line, civilization and profit making are taking their toll; in front of the line, savagery, promise and opportunity still stalk the Landscape." This "frontier of profitability," invested with such a wealth of cultural expectation, is a viscerally real place inscribed in the urban Landscape of gentrified neighbourhoods (Smith 1996, 186).

Smith (1996, 7) points out that low-income, working-class, and homeless peoples are targeted by gentrifiers, media, and politicians as "savages," and their spaces called "Indian country." Smith (1996, 14) then analyzes the frontier as a myth that denotes a "style as much as a real place." Nowhere in Smith's (1996) description of the historical or the modern-day frontier of the gentrifying neighbourhood is the Indigenous body found as a factual entity or a critical source. Smith (1996) deploys the "frontier" image to understand the shifting property values that occur block by block, as a line in space between areas of disinvestment marginalizing working-class and poor folx (hyperbolized as savages) and areas of reinvestment benefitting the incoming middle- and upper-class people who are buying up properties. This frontier is

deployed as an illustration of his rent gap theory, which becomes comprehensible as lines on a map—a map of space totally configured as commodified property. When Smith (1996, 204) suggests that the economic profits of gentrifiers are maximized within the borders of disinvested neighbourhoods with "little risk of... being scalped," it becomes clear that Indigenous bodies are entirely outside this narrative, only appearing spectrally to signify the sensationalistic Other as a metaphor for economic danger. Without getting too deep into a complex history, Indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence (2002) reminds us that bounty scalping of Indigenous people was introduced by British colonizers as part of a genocidal removal campaign. This colonial scenario cannot be transposed adequately, either as metaphor or material equivalent, onto the class struggle of modern-day gentrification in the manner that Smith (1996) attempts. Rather, Smith (1996) adheres to the rhetoric and mechanisms of private property, without stepping outside to see private property from a wholly different vantage point, and understanding it as arising out of a radical transformation in modes of production: this is the significant meaning of the frontier in any discussion of gentrification. Therefore, to see a differential between two forms of private property, one highly valorized (invested) and one with a depressed valorization (divested or not yet priced), (Smith 1996) is a limited understanding of the historical reference of the frontier, and thus of gentrification itself. Indeed, one might surmise that Smith's project of a revolutionary leap from private property to socialist control of Land would be interrupted by Indigenous sovereignty. Rather, for Tuck and McKenzie (2015) the potential radical moment would come from reconnecting the debate on space to the history and philosophy of Indigenous relations to Land that were suppressed through colonization and privatization of property.

While attempting to materialize the notion of the frontier, Smith (1996) maintains the use of the term colonization as a metaphor in regards to actual Indigenous history. Smith (1996)

unfolds his arguments about gentrification at length, including discussion of the role of migrant populations, never mentioning the Indigenous presence in the cityscape. Surprisingly, Smith's (1996, 225), writing about "retaking the urban frontier," ends his seminal book *The New Urban Frontier* with a first mention of Indigenous history, drawing a parallel between the "symbolic extermination and erasure" of homeless people in the revanchist city and Custer's declaration that the genocide of the Sioux was a necessary step in settler Land acquisition as evidence of the true nature of the frontier. Rather than pausing to reflect of the ongoing significance of this historical moment, Smith (1996) passes up the opportunity to analyze the links between gentrification and colonization, claiming that the settlers were squatters who fought for welfare and democratic Land rights— forerunners to those being pushed out of cities by today's revanchist politics. Indigenous dispossession is ignored, while the dispossession of white working-class or homeless settlers is condemned. Those settlers who participated in the theft of Indigenous Lands are retroactively deemed victims, their victimization continuing with gentrification.

− *Urban Marxism and Neo-Colonialism*

Kanishka Goonewardena and Stefan Kipfer (2013) have worked more explicitly to integrate a materially-based colonial critique into Marxist urban theory, drawing on a reading of Henri Lefebvre, but expanding his limited understanding of colonialism. However, it is difficult to grasp the issue of settler colonization in Canada through their theorization. Goonewardena and Kipfer (2013, 87) contend that in earlier writings, Lefebvre failed to move his conception of the colonial beyond the metaphorical, "with only the barest of nods to the specificity of colonial social relations." Rather, Lefebvre introduces an understanding of colonization that moves past historical specificity in the "era of European territorial expansion" (Goonewardena and Kipfer

2013, 95) to recognize "colonization as a 'new' form of alienation" that captures "the domination of everyday life by capital and state in the imperial metropole" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2010, 87). Goonewardena and Kipfer (2013) point out that Lefebvre later develops the material dimension of his conceptualization, recognizing that colonization forms a logic of the capitalist production of space. The authors write that "Lefebvre establishes a connection between various socio-spatial 'peripheries'—underdeveloped countries, displaced peasants, slum dwellers, immigrant workers, inhabitants of suburbs, women, youth, homosexuals, drug addicts—that nourish revolt" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2013, 97).

Importantly, the authors note that Lefebvre's understanding addresses the situation of internal colonies, where the centre-periphery relation can be telescoped from relations between nations across extensive territory and history to segregated areas within imperial cities (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2013). Lefebvre's later articulation provides an important material basis to the use of the term colonization in gentrification theory where gentrification is understood as the neo-colonial dominance over, and white production of space against, those globally marginalized and often forced into displacement and transience within capitalism. To deepen the relevance of Lefebvre's articulation of colonialism, Kipfer and Jason Petrunia (2009) bring Frantz Fanon into the discussion. For the authors, a reading of Fanon means that "racism be understood as the 'most visible,' 'most everyday' modality of the systematized hierarchisation" that is colonization (Kipfer and Petrunia 2009, 112-113). Fanon's theory is applied by these Marxist urban geographers to the conditions of migrant communities as victims of gentrification in the metropole, which they understand to be "neo-colonial aspects of post-colonial situations" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2013, 89).

These theorizations of the relationship between capitalism and colonization are important for developing a nuanced understanding of the production of urban space and of gentrification. However, in the Canadian context, the intricacies of post/neo-colonial theory obscure ongoing colonization. While European metropoles are transformed by and enact colonial relationalities with diaspora communities from former colonies, Canada has never decolonized, and therefore the colonial relations of occupation are a direct continuum with and form the basis for extenuating settler colonial relationalities. Migrants (dispossessed from their own Lands) arriving, either by will or by force, in Canada are situated within this ongoing colonization differently than European settlers, but are nonetheless positioned within hegemonic settlerism by many Indigenous and allied scholars (Lawrence and Dua 2005; Clarke 2016).

Reapproaches to the Decolonization of Gentrification Theory

Nicholas Blomley (2004) and Matt Hern (2016) have recently made contributions to discussions that foreground private property as a major problematic that links gentrification and colonization. As a legal scholar, Blomley (2004) writes extensively about the conflicts that arise through colonial property relations in the settler city context and lays the basis for an understanding of the relationship between ongoing colonization and gentrification. Blomley (2004, 149) comments that "[e]ven though native people are undeniably caught up in gentrification, this has all too often been ignored." Blomley (2004, xv) begins by observing that Land is a substrate over which European regimes of property are laid. Blomley (2004) draws on the early theorist of private property, John Locke, who despite encountering a North American Landscape that in all parts was characterized by non-acquisitive Indigenous economic life in the form of hunting and gathering, mobile agriculture, decentralized authority structures (Tully 1993), and Land-based spiritual practices, was oblivious to the intricate interspecies, biological

and chemical-relational web that makes up the ecology and economy of Indigenous life. Instead, Locke (1988) put forward a notion of the Land as a *terra nullius*, as empty, valueless in itself, and belonging to no one. Locke (1988) theorized that it wasn't until a person mixed their labour with the Land, thereby making that Land productive, that the individual could take possession of it. Locke (1980, 23-28) deemed Indigenous people to be in a "state of nature," meaning that their economic system did not "improve" or maximize the economic potential for extraction, production, and subsequent exchange of commodities. Therefore, their mixing of labour with the Land did not result in property ownership. To not follow the European industrial form of working the Land was, according to Locke (1988), to leave the Land to waste, and as long as Land could be considered wasted, vacant, and undeveloped, there would be no dispute over Europeans taking possession of it (Blomley 2004). Locke's (1988) labour theory of private property forced the European paradigm of capitalist property relations onto Indigenous economic life and Land. Blomley (2004) understands Locke's theoretically convenient move as a primary violence and ethical contradiction that drives urban contestation over space.

Blomley (2004, 86) makes the connection between Locke's narrative of property and gentrification in the contemporary settler city, writing that "[i]f gentrification entails progress, it follows that urban space that has not been 'improved' is somehow non-progressive." Neighbourhoods are treated as a new *terra nullius*—wasted Lands ripe for the taking. Furthermore, Blomley (2004, 90) notes that Locke's theory of *terra nullius* and waste distils down to the level of embodiment:

> the poor are themselves imagined as causal agents of decline—a decayed built Landscape and damaged bodies are locked together. The visual decay of the Landscape—the boarded-up buildings, the disorder of the street, the pervasiveness of 'lowest and worst use'—are both cause and effect of the feral population of the 'dazed, drugged, and drunk.' Ipso facto, the removal of this population is a pre-condition for neighborhood improvement.

The entitled figure of property possession is what John Locke (1988, 291) called, in very ablist terms, the "rational" and "industrious" body ordained by God, according to Tully's discussion of Locke (1993, 125), those who have the "art, science, skill" and "faculty" to turn waste into productivity, into surplus, which can then be brought to market where profit can be derived.

While Locke (1988) argues for the privatization and improvement of property by the individual, he also specifies that there should be enough Land left over for common usage (perhaps not realizing that settler society would eventually develop a desire for all of the seemingly vast Lands of North America and beyond). For Blomley (2004), the legal idea of common possession is an antidote to the Lockean notion of *terra nullius* that underpins liberal bourgeois individualist claims to Land. Blomley (2004) states that the idea of common Land (distinct from state-owned Land) recognized in Anglo-American law provides an opening to envision a counter-narrative towards both more just property relations and the starting point for property-based political struggles. Speaking of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Blomley (2004, 96) comments that the neighbourhood itself is imagined as in some ways 'owned' by area residents. In part, this relates to the argument that the neighbourhood has been intensely used and physically produced through local struggle and collective agency, thus vesting a claim to this space in its low-income residents. Moreover, the physical Landscape— the community centers, hotels, service agencies, co-ops, and streets—itself speaks of successful working-class resistance to attempts at community erasure through displacement.

Here, Blomley (2004) offers an important argument contra to Locke's (1988) labour theory of property, in which the entitled productive body of Land improvement and ownership

is based in capitalist production, in favour of alternative property claims based in socially-reproductive labour that is not profit-producing, but community-sustaining. With the intensity of the private property market, however, such a claim to common Lands is not easy to achieve recognition for.

In effect, Blomley (2004) understands the struggle against gentrification as a struggle between various property claims: Indigenous, community, versus colonial-capitalist. These claims can also be understood as a dialectic between enclosure and commons, or public-use property versus private property. Blomley (2004) attempts to integrate Indigenous relations to Land within this Eurocentric dialectic of property even though he acknowledges that there are significant ontological differences between Native and non-Native forms of property. Blomley (2004) agrees that Indigenous societies universally did not have anything resembling the commodification of, or alienation from, Land access that characterizes the European system of private property relations. Nevertheless, Blomley (2004) points to the Squamish people's social practice, as reflected in the klanak or potlatch, as a form of property relation. Blomley (2004) looks at pre-contact Indigenous property practices as being in dialectical relation with European forms of property claims as a way to reframe, redress, to unsettle private property. According to Blomley's (2004) understanding, while dispossession of Indigenous people has taken place in the past, there remain ongoing contested claims within the private property model that are marked by continued displacement within the settler city, and this forms a basis for struggle. Ultimately, his view is that "collective claims can be enacted using ideological vocabularies similar to those that sustain private property" (Blomley 2004, 154). Blomley (2004, 155) calls property "both the problem and the solution," and thus the question remains as to how one

might disagree with the historical theft of Indigenous Lands, but then seek redress within the ideological and legal systems by which that theft was made possible.

Like Blomley (2004), Hern's (2016) work also centers on colonial property relations as key to a theory of urban liberation. Hern's (2016) concern is to move beyond property to open up the possibility of a totally new conception of relations to Land. Hern (2016, 19), thus, also expresses discomfort with a gentrification theory "untroubled" by colonial history. Hern (2016) considers both the ethical and ongoing material problem of colonialism by focusing on questions of Land, property, and sovereignties. Like Blomley (2004), Hern (2016, 244) understands private property as a form of violence imposed on relationships to Land, in that the "domination of Land is integral to the domination of people, and vice versa." Land, for Hern (2016, 201-209), is the basis of freedom and thus must be reimagined "outside the predatory market" and "Westphalian" forms of state sovereignty. Like many Marxist urban geographers, Hern (2016, 165) believes that despite the connection of the city form to capitalist development, the city has liberatory potential — here, he envisions an ecological "city of generosity." Hern (2016, 166) is "convinced that materially destabilizing ownerships is the predicate to the unsettling of Land, to righting past wrongs, and is the route to producing a city air that makes us free." Without giving much detail, Hern (2016, 229) assumes the resolution of complex questions of Indigenous sovereignty alongside the abandonment of the European sovereign nation structure, before discussing at length exemplars of alternative, non-private property arrangements, including "Georgist taxes, nonmarket housing, squatting, or co-ops." The core imperative move for Hern (2016, 169) is to "abolish profiteering from Land." Here Hern (2016) takes up the notion of diverse forms of commons, which must necessarily be unsettled through their placement in a settler/post-slavery historical context that demands a resolution to Land

injustices as a way forward. At the same time, Hern (2016) does not underestimate the complexities of sorting Land relations, historical injustices, and questions of sovereignty among multiple and fluid forms of difference. However, for Hern (2016, 184), unlike Blomley (2004), "taking Indigenous presences, African American reparations, and decolonizing Land struggles seriously rips an unfixable tear in the fabric of the ownership model," where possession is not the correct answer to dispossession. Hern (2016, 170, 215) proposes the "generous city" as the ethical guide for everyday projects of instituting Land access, (re)distribution and shared use across difference, writing that "'sharing' has to be generously complex, and complexly generous, and speak to Land justice." In the final analysis, Hern (2016) questions the usefulness of gentrification as a point of resistance, arguing that the theory does not go outside of the private property paradigm that he critiques so thoroughly. Rather, Hern (2016) sets his sights on a complex set of larger social problems, from questions of democratic decision- making, alternative modeling, and historical justice, to alternative sovereignties.

I agree with Blomley (2004) and Hern's (2016) critiques of private property and the linkages each makes between colonialism and gentrification, but I also offer several points of discussion. Both Blomley (2004) and Hern (2016) take an important and strong ethical position on the necessity of accounting for colonial history in gentrification theory. However, addressing Hern's (2016) dismissal of gentrification politics, I contend that gentrification represents a heightened dialectic and material reality in the current moment of urban development—a key strategy/tactic/ideological tool of politicians, developers, corporations, and the bourgeois subject in their class-colonial war. In this context, I don't find it useful to abandon gentrification as a frame altogether. I prefer to challenge gentrification theory in order to push its radical potential within specific resistances.

Whether Indigenous relations to Land can be usefully understood as property relations, as does Blomley (2004), or whether the idea of possession should be done away with all together, as for Hern (2016), there are pitfalls either way. The danger in Blomley's (2004) position is that the term property will not be flexible enough to allow for the expansive, diverse, and historically-specific possibilities of decolonial Indigenous relations to Land (Coulthard 2014). On the other hand, Hern's (2016) suggestion of doing away with the idea of possession (and legal sovereignty) altogether might undercut the historical and legally-binding assertion of Indigenous Land rights. In either case, notions of property, possession and sovereignty, or their denial, reflect a binary and universalized Eurocentric worldview. Furthermore, Hern's (2016) prescription for a generous city seems to me to be a premature leap forward over the significant problems that arise from an understanding of colonized Lands as occupied, and of the roles of settlers in decolonization. Tuck and McKenzie (2015, xvi) point out that arguing for new relations to Land without acknowledging the pre-existing and "intact" Indigenous relations to that same Land is problematic. Tuck and Yang (2012, 27) clearly state that their purpose is not to solve the problems of non-Native productions of space, writing that "[d]ecolonizing the Americas means all Land is repatriated and all settlers become Landless." Recently, calls for a return of Crown Lands to Indigenous control have gotten louder. For Tuck and Yang (2012), the repatriation of Land also means the abolition of property and the rebalancing of relationalities, according to Indigenous paradigms and processes, not those of settler theorists such as Hern (2016) and Blomley (2004), or myself for that matter. Tuck and McKenzie (2015, 11) state: "decolonization is always historically specific, context specific, and place specific." I interpret this position to mean that it is up to settlers to engage with the specific self-understandings of Indigenous peoples in their relationships to their Land through local struggles against

colonization in all its forms. For me, in my context, such struggles include gentrification. The intention here is to point to a gap, as I see it, between the understandings proposed by Marxist geographers and that of Indigenous theorists and communities, as to what decolonization means and what it demands. This is a hugely complex process underway, which, I feel, demands more on the ground engagement and praxis between settlers and Indigenous peoples in order for the theory to develop in fruitful directions.

The Bourgeois Settler Subject and its Other

The idea of giving up control of Land to Indigenous nations strikes a blow to the heart of bourgeois-settler identity (as is evidenced by the total evasion of the issue by Smith (1996) and other Marxist geographers of gentrification). While discussions of the "who's" and "why's" permeate gentrification theory, there is seldom an articulation of the structural subject position of gentrification. I refer to this position as the bourgeois-settler subject using a dash to indicate their inherent connectivity. I use the term "bourgeois" to represent the foundational, historically ascendant system of capitalism: capitalism as a system of bourgeois power to which we all must conform. This power encompasses the bourgeois-labour relation and also reflects more clearly a colonial subject that encloses and possesses Land and thus is implicated in coloniality. Property possession is in fact the condition of possibility out of which bourgeois-settler subject arises. I think about the bourgeois-settler subject as a naturalized and hegemonic mode of being, where the values of colonial-capitalist society are adopted and performed despite an individual or group's actual position within social hierarchies.[22] The bourgeois-settler subject produces space in the contemporary urban context through gentrification.

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[22] For instance, an individual or group may not necessarily be the owners of the means of production, as in the classical marxist understanding of bourgeois, but they may be caught up in the reproduction of the

While the bourgeois-settler subject of gentrification (particularly in the form of the middle-class) is accorded the moral high ground, is representative of the status to be achieved in society, is who government caters to, and is lauded for its ability to "improve" neighbourhoods, its positioning is actually ethically tenuous. Marx (1990) understood the bourgeois subject as arising from the theft of Indigenous Land, and as one who seeks to conceal their dependence on the exploitation of the working class (especially globally) behind their own moral and meritorious ascendancy. CB MacPherson (2011, 265) sees the bourgeois subject as constructed through European liberal philosophy to be excessively individualized and possessive, writing that "the individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society." Thorstein Veblen (2006, 48) understands the bourgeois subject as aesthetically bound up with its own consumer power and presentation as a way to secure honour and superiority, and to protect itself from "inferiority and demerit."

On the other hand, those who are oppressed within the bourgeois order see right through the bourgeois-settler subject of gentrification. George Lipsitz (2011) describes white supremacist production of space as a form of corruption and crime. Indigenous narratives of contact have in some cases described Europeans as "sub-human and monstrous" in their violent and deceptive behavior (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010, 189), a perception that persists as settler society continues to maneuver corrupt and racist power against Indigenous communities. Fanon (2004, 110) sharply critiqued the self-serving and contradictory racism of the bourgeoisie, commenting that "the bourgeois ideology that proclaims all men [sic] to be essentially equal,

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settler-bourgeois system from their position within it. While this complex issue of power, class-consciousness and intersectionality is outside the scope of this paper, I do recognize that for those on the lower end of the social hierarchy, survival can often mean succumbing to discipline. For an example of how this works in white working-class communities see Veblen (2006, 50–51), for how this works in Indigenous communities see Churchill (1983, 183-195), for how this works within Black diaspora communities see Fanon (1967, 44) and hooks (2000, 127) and Lipsitz with his discussion on Black home ownership (2011, 57).

manages to remain consistent with itself by urging the subhuman to rise to the level of Western humanity that it embodies." For Mignolo (2009; see also Churchill 1983), the settler subject comes into being through the civilizing mission, which has historically deployed various means of achieving civilization from murder, war and discipline to forced cultural assimilation. Linking to De Angelis' (2004) proposal of the ongoing condition of original accumulation, Mignolo (2009, 41) considers the ongoing colonial project, which he calls a condition of "coloniality," as being a "celebratory rhetoric of modernity, a rhetoric of salvation and newness, based on European achievements" that links "a new type of economy (capitalism) and the scientific revolution." Coloniality is both a material system of capitalist exchange and a hegemonic knowledge practice. It is a fundamental Eurocentric drive that operates through a "matrix [or order] of power" (Mignolo 2009, 42). For Mignolo (2009), what is European tradition, what is modern is constructed through coloniality—there is no modernity without coloniality.

I contend that coloniality is the fuel of gentrification. Settler-bourgeois subjectivity is expressed through those gentrifiers whose project is to rehabilitate, cleanse, and restore the underdeveloped and degraded urban Landscape, and the bodies within, in their own image, to their own taste, and in support of their own economic advancement. As Anthony King (1990, 9) notes:

> In the formal institutionalization of "town planning", the notion of "modernity" and "the modern" was informed by two sets of circumstances: the first, constructed diachronically, was in relation to the premodern, preindustrial, or early industrial capitalist cities of Britain, to replace the "disorder" and "squalor" of the old industrial towns; the second, constructed synchronically, in relation to the "traditional," "unmodern" societies confronted in the colonial encounter.

Here, King (1990) is cognizant of the double articulation of coloniality that in one instance operates against Indigenous bodies and in the next against working-class and other subaltern

sectors. The logic of both the colonial and capitalist productions of space is based on cordoning off transgressive (or savage) bodies from the morally sanctified bourgeois/colonial body (Kawash 2000; Razack 2000; Bauman 2004) into segregated urban spaces, reservations, residential schools, prisons, asylums, and hospitals (Gleeson 1999). Gentrifying neighbourhoods might be valorized for their multicultural character, but in the end class mixing does not occur to any significant extent, and the reality is that a cleansing of the Other does (Rose 2004; Slater 2004). The competitive sociality of gentrification that arises out of the legal rights accorded to owners of capitalist private property is "predicated on physical, material practices; notably the state-enforced right to expel" (Blomley 2004, xvii) those bodies (deemed dependent on the state, non-productive, abject, traumatized, colonized, etc.) which seemingly do not contribute to the capitalist growth of the neighbourhood. The right to expel is an important settler bourgeois claim that originates in historical colonialism, continues through ongoing original accumulation, and is re-enacted through displacement caused by gentrification.



Figure 2: The Duke Condo and the Peacock Hotel (low barrier lumpen/low-income housing for the FoWP community) after it partially collapsed due to lack of maintenance and then caught on fire (2018)

Mignolo (2009, 46) refers to the drive to cleanse bodies deemed primitive, pre-capitalist, or "barbarian" as the "darker side of modernity," a modernity that, in effect, accepts violence against Europe's Other for the sake of progress. For David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah (2010, 126), the European philosophical justifications of genocide for the greater good of achieving freedom, through the linear progression of history to a state of hegemonic Western civilization, are a "necro-ontology" or "necrophilosophy." The necessity of exterminating and containing Indigenous bodies, culture, knowledge, economies, and relations to Land in order for capitalism to persist is what Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 7) call the "wound of wealth." The settler bourgeois identity (reproduced through gentrification) is therefore bound up with a denigration and ultimate death of resistant bodies: non-European, Indigenous, non-capitalist bodies. This is the violence of colonization reproduced through gentrification.

In my view, gentrification is the expression of an empowered, and highly normativized, bourgeois-settler subject. While the bourgeois-settler subject projects itself as autonomous, meritorious, and morally superior, at the same time, the fictitious nature of Land markets, in which the bourgeois subject finds its realization, brings about a docility and organic conservatism. As property debt lays a claim on the future labour of owners through mortgages, investment risks, and consumer debt, (Harvey 2006a; Bridge 1995) a docile population is created. Bourgeois gentrifiers become prone to reactionary attitudes towards the economically different, the urban poor, and Indigenous people (Blomley 2004) who are viewed as not labouring and, on top of that, lowering the property values of hardworking settler-bourgeois subjects through their cultural and informal economic expression. Disadvantage, and ultimately exclusion, is produced through bourgeois place-making strategies, economic practices, cultural values, and ideology. Liberal gentrifiers bring their sense of moral superiority into cross-class

and cross-cultural social relations, manifesting as micro- aggressions (e.g., charity, condescension, and pity), symbolic violence (a depoliticized discourse that blames marginalized peoples for the conditions they experience) and as hate speech against poor and Indigenous people (Bauman 2004; Slater 2004). Such attitudes espoused by gentrifiers are fuelled by intense and irrational fears of those who are cast out (Kawash 2000; Lipsitz 2011; Bauman 2004).

In line with their colonial worldview, bourgeois gentrifiers tend to have an individualized sense of spatial and moral entitlement that extends beyond the property they own privately to public streets, parks, urban spaces, and other rental properties. This entitlement is expressed through the desire to protect the morally superior sensibilities, property claims, and values of the deserving, wealthy incoming class through securitization, including neighbourhood watch-style sociality, the denigration of and infringement on low-income public and private spaces, and demands for surveillance and heavy policing that contribute to the vulnerability and further marginalization of poor, racialized, Indigenous, queer, gendered and disabled inhabitants of the city (Coulthard 2014; Smith 1996; Wacquant 2009).

Police violence, coupled with neglect for the safety of poor people, inadequate diet, pesticide toxification, institutional violence, infestation, stigmatization, trauma, stress, poor medical care, addiction, vulnerability to violence, despair, depression, and alienation, have all taken their toll on poor people. From the perspective of the bourgeois settler subject, they have been targeted as un-aesthetic, non-productive bodies to be removed from sight—in the case of Toronto, to be segregated or dispersed into the inner suburbs and other urban spaces that are more dangerous due to being out-of-sight and far away from supports and resources (Hulchanski 2007).

As a socio-spatial process in a landscape of uneven development, gentrification is constituted by a set of normativizing relational forces that relegate and reorder our bodies in space according to their ability to be integrated into capitalist economics. Necro-political spaces within the settler city exist within a continuity of the genocidal colonial practices of the British imperial, and then Canadian state. Gentrification and colonialism share inextricable histories, logics and teleology: the hegemony of the European bourgeois value system and its spatial logic of dispossession, displacement, segregation, privatization and seizure of wealth, and the mobilization of the settler -bourgeois subject against its necessary Other.

Conclusion

Because the neighbourhood is where diverse bodies share space—and struggle to make place—it is where difference is confronted. The ideologies and material relations which underpin gentrification play out between people in daily life, but not as the purported liberatory idyll of diversity. I have proposed that gentrification is involved with a bourgeois production of space that reiterates colonial and capitalist ideologies and relationalities of dispossession, displacement, exploitation, and marginalization. The continual imposition of colonial-capitalist relations on Indigenous and diverse Other economic forms constitutes a gross ethical failure which demands redress before any liberatory project can proceed. While the Marxist geographers discussed above have contributed important analyses to gentrification theory, very significant limits exist. This paper asks for a more historically pertinent political ground in gentrification debates. To follow Coulthard (2014) in his call for a conversation between Marxist and Indigenous thought is not to nostalgically harken back to pre-modern times, as many would suggest, but to recognize colonial-capitalism is not totalized or inevitable and that

Indigenous societies have endured within and alongside it, and have continued to fight for their sovereignty all along (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010).

Indigenous theoretical, philosophical, and historical knowledge are also critical perspectives for not only a practice of liberation, but also for ecological and ethical approaches to future life (Coulthard 2014). It is imperative to take seriously the coevalness and interaction of different knowledges within and around the hegemonic colonial-capitalist system rather than enclosing and foreclosing on those vital epistemologies that contest or conflict with Eurocentric bourgeois theory (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Coulthard 2014). Without subjecting Marxist geography to a decolonizing interrogation, the full ethical problematics of gentrification within the settler city cannot be revealed. A failure to account for the continuity of the twin modes of original and ongoing accumulation from the moment of historical colonization through to the present and to radically unsettle the role of private property in the oppression of Landless and Indigenous peoples, as well as an evasion of issues of Indigenous sovereignty, will prevent gentrification theory from contributing to radical reformulations of urban politics in resistance to capitalism. It is important to inquire into the possibilities of solidarities among those impacted by capitalist hegemony through ongoing colonization in its form as gentrification. Furthermore, gentrifying neighbourhoods such as the Junction offer a field of struggle waged in actual space and time, between those bodies enacting bourgeois culture, economics, and ideology, and the Indigenous/Others of colonial-capitalism who inhabit and haunt the space (such as the lumpen/low income and Indigenous community represented by the Friends of Watkinson Park).

2. "The Changes That Are Happening Are Not For Us Poor People"[23]: Towards a Redefinition of the Lumpen

In the following two chapters I focus more thoroughly on the low-income Other who is the target of gentrification (represented by the community of the Friends of Watkinson Park). In trying to figure out a subjecthood that moves low-income folx from violent relations of charity to political agent, I delve into the marxist theory of the lumpenproletariat. While Marx discussed the lumpenproletariat as criminals, the infirm and elderly, I look to the theory of intersectionality to understand which bodies are cast out of the wage relation and thus fall into a lumpen social position.

poor |p͡oor, pôr|
adjective
1. lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in a society: people who were too poor to afford a telephone
(as noun the poor): the gap between the rich and the poor has widened.
• (of a place) inhabited by people without sufficient money: a poor area with run-down movie theaters and overcrowded schools.
2. worse than is usual, expected, or desirable; of a low or inferior standard or quality: her work was poor | many people are eating a very poor diet.
• [predic.] (poor in) deficient or lacking in: the water is poor in nutrients.
• dated used ironically to deprecate something belonging to or offered by oneself: he is, in my poor opinion, a more handsome young man.
3. [attrib.] (of a person) considered to be deserving of pity or sympathy: they inquired after poor Dorothy's broken hip.

"We cannot understand and end violence without confronting the logic that installs different kinds of humans on a scale of development and demands the obliteration of the Other as the condition enabling the self-determining subject's emergence" (Razack 2015, 61).

Introduction

The annual report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2017) found that those receiving social assistance are the most likely to face discrimination compared to all other groups. Low-income people tend to be represented as pitiable victims, failures, as monstrous, abjectly exotic and/or as needing rescuing (Chapman and Withers 2019; hooks 2000: Lyon Callo 2002; Razack 2000; Swanson 2001; Wilson and Anderson in Bourke et al. 2011). Low-income status is an

[23] Browning 2015-2020.

exponential multiplier of oppression when intersecting with other oppressed identity groups and it is a category that tends to be subsumed into all others.[24] However, it is well known that the low-income social strata is Indigenized, racialized, gendered, queered, trans, and disabled and that these are the intersectional complexities that come to mind when talking about poor people. Indeed, when we look at the police killings of Black and Indigenous peoples, many of them are low-income, trans and/or have (actual or perceived) mental health disabilities. But why does being low-income or poor make a person subject to such heightened discrimination, to what I have witnessed to be a virulent fear, pity and hatred, What Jean Swanson (2001) calls "poor-bashing"? Why does hegemonic society not only refuse understanding and care, but rather socially and a spatially segregates low-income people, warehousing them in institutional forms of social housing, shelters, hospitals and/or prison where they are subject to violence and then silenced?

Such endemic discrimination against those receiving social assistance is manifested in the production of space in the neoliberal city of Toronto, where a housing crisis has been escalating as social services are being rolled back. Rents have increased steadily while incomes have stagnated and job insecurity worsened. For decades shelters have been overflowing. In the winter, the city has been forced by homelessness activists to open makeshift out of the cold warming centres, which are like crisis camps – hundreds of mattresses or cots in one open space, a sports arena for instance, where the lights never go out and the cold sandwiches are the standard fare. Such socio-economic conditions make it possible for Landlords who provide low-

[24] In her theory of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1993, 383) observes that analysis of racism and sexism has usually occurred through the lens of the "most privileged group members," which she says: "creates a distorted analysis of racism and sexism." While Crenshaw notes the importance of class, she proceeds to theorize Black working-class women's experienced as raced and sexed, however, does not push forward theoretically on the question of their working-class status to begin with. Rather class is subsumed into race and gender and thereby normalized: the struggle is against patriarchy and racism, leaving class struggle an unarticulated intersection.

barrier housing to those on social assistance to exploit those vulnerablized people that they rent to. Such Landlords charge high rents for apartments that are very unsafe, illegal, infested, dilapidated and where there is a lot of social strife due to the multiple and intersectional oppressions that low-income people face. This housing crisis results in escalating homeless deaths, deaths from exposure, overdose, immiseration and suicide. The social determinants of health (Mikkonen and Raphael 2010) show that poverty is the largest factor in dis-ease with most people experiencing insecure housing or homelessness, varying degrees of compounded mental/emotional distress, trauma, madness, difference and/or disability, social exclusion, extreme daily life stress, stigmatization and infantilization, institutional and colonial violence, alienation, boredom and loneliness. Low-income bodies, denigrated and looked down upon as pure problem, are torn asunder in a tug of war between factions of the relatively wealthier classes. The underserving poor on social assistance populate the paranoid neoliberal nightmare of an economy supposedly wracked by debt (Bauman 2004; hooks 2000; Povinelli 2011; Wacquant 2009), and are the subject of debates over cutbacks to the social safety net, to housing, medical services, and homelessness crisis relief.

This paper arises out of longstanding work that I have been doing with the low-income community including, most recently, through the grassroots group The Friends of Watkinson Park (FoWP).[25] The FoWP community is located in the gentrifying neighbourhood of the Junction in west Toronto. The FoWP community are a part of the constitutive outside of

[25] The Friends of Watkinson Park (FoWP) work to maintain inhabitation and organize cultural events for low-income community in a public park space (Watkinson Park), which is an important gathering space as the heart of the community. FoWP's work is by and for low-income people to resist the stigmatization to which they are subject which figures them as the supposed cause of property depreciation and thus the targets of gentrification, of removal from the spaces they inhabit. Just maintaining visible and active low-income inhabitation of the park against forces of gentrification is a political act, but FoWP also does more overt political organizing and community advocacy based on community members critical knowledge, needs and desires.

capitalist-colonialism in as much as they are unable (or refuse to) assimilate into colonial/capitalist wage labour discipline. This community is mostly on social assistance, working casually and/or as part of the underground and criminalized economy. They live in low-barrier housing: a residential hotel called the Peacock, a shelter for 'women,' and Mainstay social housing mandated for those who are classified, according to their website, as "living with a mental illness." Many community members are aged and have various combinations of trauma and disability due to multiple and intersecting oppressions under colonial-capitalism and its basis in: racism, classism, heteronormativity, ablism, gender binarism, agism etc. In surviving oppression and/or expressing autonomy in self-medication, substance use is common: pharmaceutical, 'recreational' and/or criminalized.

FoWP community members are the most vulnerable to violence and exclusion and yet their lived and acquired knowledge poses a most important ethical challenge to society. That challenge can be summed up as a question of radical inclusion, a question, which is also a critique - why are certain bodies cast out of the social? What kind of social transformation would be required in order for a society to sustain inclusive relationalities of caring for all of its members as the normative ground? What kind of work can be done by left/progressive movements to prefigure such inclusion? Engagement with those bodies constructed and materially placed as incapacitated within the colonial-capitalist order (such as through the work of FoWP), is viewed in this research as a critical source for understanding colonial-capitalism itself, as well as how to make leftist and progressive movements more politically consistent within their own claimed values, more accessible, more broad-based and therefore more viable. I assert that inclusion of low-income-lumpen critical perspectives and liberatory work starts with the outlining of their political subjectivity.

– what's in a word?

In trying to find an analytic frame that can hold the political subjectivity of low-income people, language is important. I personally don't mind the word 'poor' when I talk about my own background experience, but I am conscious that it is generally felt as derogatory. When I asked what term FoWP community members with whom I work prefer, the response was: "low-income, that's just what we are" (Browning 2015-2020). The factuality of the term seems to lack the moral denigration or implication of personal failure that other terms like poor or marginalized carry (probably why it is preferred). While I accept the community use of the term low-income, it does feel dry and factual, like a column in a chart or an identity that is reduced to an acronym LICO (low-income cut-off). As a label, low-income has no cultural weight. Moreover, if it is understood that 'income' mainly to refer to wages, profits, revenues, earnings, etc., it doesn't adequately describe FoWP community members who are mostly on social assistance, who live via redistribution of wealth and not its creation within a capitalist understanding of wealth. Another term that is also used to describe those who have become increasingly threatened with poverty due to neoliberal economic restructuring is 'precariate.' However, I find that it is not necessarily theoretically productive to group together working people with no benefits or long term security with those who are absolutely cut out of the labour market. Informal is another term that may be applied to how people live in the Watkinson Park community, but it also has limitations as it describes folx who are outside of state regulation, which only applies to part of the community's economic activity. Marx's focus on the working class leads to the categorizing of people as waged and wageless (as do Palmer and Héroux 2016; Dennings 2010), however, this qualifier centers and normativizes the wage relation. Marginalized is a term that I often use as well, but it is very disempowering, and tacitly implies

a desire to access the centre, which is not possible for these community members, nor the objective of this work. Underclass, is another term from sociology that has been used to refer to the unemployable, however, it has been used in highly problematic and racist ways (Cameron et al. 2012; Cowling 2002) and does not come from a context of radical thought. Many Marxist theorists that address low-income people's social condition understand their subjectivity as configured from their inclusion within the working-class. However, I view this as inadequate (as will be explained).

Acknowledging the social position of being on welfare or having a disability, of being 'dependent' on the state is to invite hatred thinly covered by paternalistic pity upon oneself. Life on the margins transforms low-income bodies in particularly visible ways as abject Other (Kawash 1998). Labels, including such seemingly neutral ones such as low-income, reduce complex peoples, lives lived, survived, and often taken, to abstracted entities emptied of political subjecthood within relational and intersectional networks of power.

For me, all these terms are inadequate because while they each describe different dimensions of low-income life, they are not conceptualizations that stand in critical or dialectical relation to hegemonic society and thus lack the political weight that I feel is needed in order for this sector to be recognized through theory. In doing work alongside[26] the FoWP low-income community, I have struggled with an alternative analytical framework that positions the community and its members as having a political subjectivity, as agents with knowledge and experience that arises out of a socio-economic position that is distinct from that of the working-class. In thinking of an adequate identity for the low-income community, most important to

[26] Working "alongside" is an articulation that I adopt from nancy viva davis halifax. Its significance is that I do not organize *for*, or take a leadership position; I acknowledge the power differential in working *with* according to the everyday needs/desires/knowledge of community members at the same time as holding my own needs/desires/knowledge. Working alongside also implies that the work is based on exchange relations.

consider is that the people in the FoWP community are 'non-productive' within a capitalist understanding of wage labour. Most people are on Ontario Disability Support Payments or Ontario Works, and/or having to engage, to some degree, in so-called informal, redistributive and social reproduction economies to offset the immiseration caused by lack of social care. Adequate theoretical recognition will empower an existing practice of low-income resistance and affirm their historical role.

In order to address the inadequacy of these labels, in this chapter I take up the term *lumpen*, popularized by Marx (1990), as an analytical frame to help understand the complex social and economic life of the FoWP community while recognizing that the term also has its own set of problems; it is unwieldy, under-theorized and also highly stigmatizing and denigrating. The term lumpen points to a mode of difference, which revolutionary movements have struggled to account for. It is the difference written on bodies as much by the disabling impacts of colonial-capitalism as it is from vulnerability, aging and congenital difference. The lumpen are predominantly understood in terms of their perceived failure, their victimization or their threat and not in terms of their relation to colonial-capitalism or the means of production and thus to their historical role in liberation struggles. As the poor are deemed the scourge of society, they are also erased from theory. Even Marx (1990), who had an agenda of radical social sustainability, thought inadequately of those who could not assimilate into the working class. However, because the term arises from a political economic frame it is both symptomatic of the politically weak approaches of the Left and progressive movements towards poor peoples *and* also provides a critical opening for debate within radical discourse.

This chapter is the first part of a two-part investigation into the lumpen. In this first part I establish the lumpen as a social formation (perhaps even a class) that is distinct from the

working class. This first part is organized in four sections. The first section focuses on how the lumpen is developed as a social category within the marxist literature. The second section analyses the colonial, racial and disability dimensions of the lumpen as a category and furthers a more comprehensive intersectional understanding that includes gender and sexuality. In the third section I refute the usefulness of Marx's inclusion of the rich as lumpen and the notion of the lumpen as a morally corrupt dangerous class. Rather, I shift the moral culpability to the normative bourgeois-settler structure of colonial-capitalism itself. In the fourth and last section, I look at the significance of disability as a trope that is applied to lumpen bodies understood as already Indigenized, racialized, gendered and queered. In the following chapter (and second part of my investigation) on the lumpen, I argue for a political economics of the lumpen that is the base for their historical role in liberation struggles.

I am interested in more thoroughly rethinking and reformulating the term lumpen in order to see what political openings might arise,[27] to see if it is a term that can be levied towards a political economic position for poor people in their own right, as distinct from the reserve army, and not just as failed workers. I take it up recognizing its problems, in order to address the absence of the lumpen social strata in Marxist political economy as well as its non-critical uptake in social theory in general (such as in criminology or social work).

Lumpen: Marx's name for the Other

Currently, interest in the lumpen and their role in understanding capitalism, colonialism, the production of space and liberation movements is marginal. Historically, Bakunin (1971) argued about the lumpen as having a revolutionary role (Denning 2010; Ingram 2018; Sakai 2017), but

[27] Distinctions between the terms that we use matter because the political goals of each are different. For example, precariously employed have job security demands while people outside the labour market will have social safety net demands. For many Indigenous peoples, either precarious or lumpen, assertions of sovereignty are also important. Furthermore, each of these issues potentially play out in economic competition with each other.

his position was highly critiqued within in the marxist mainstream. Significantly, it is in the context of non-white political movements where one can find the most sympathetic uptake of the revolutionary role of the lumpen. Frantz Fanon (2004) also departed from the marxist mainstream in critiquing the belief that the proletarian was the sole agent of revolution and proposing instead that the lumpen and the peasantry also have revolutionary potential[28] (Worsley 1972). Later movements, such as the Black Panther Party took up the lumpen identity as reflective of their community's socio-economic reality (Worsley 1972). Malcolm X (1999) was known to have graduated from a life of crime, through his radicalization in prison, to the role of revolutionary leader. Mao also took up the revolutionary potential of the lumpenproletariat whose organizations had already been in armed insurrection far before they came to play an integral role in the Chinese Revolution (Sakai 2017). More recently, Bourke et al. (2011) edited a book of essays, *Lumpencity*, which very helpfully analyzes the lumpen within urban geography including chapters on the Ottawa panhandlers union, street-based sex workers in Ecuador, segregation of the urban poor in Turkey and problematic discourses and representations of marginality and the urban poor. Despite these contributions and despite comprising a majority of the world's population (Davis 2006; Denning 2010; Bauman 2004), the lumpen remain marginal in academic and movement discourse. Furthermore, even though the above theorists have acknowledged the usefulness of the skill set of the lumpen in times of struggle, many of these texts figure that the lumpen must be cleansed of its 'destructive behaviors' and submit to the guidance of the working class revolutionary struggle in order to fulfill their potential (Fanon 2004; Worsley 1972; Palmer and Héroux 2016). However, Worsley (1972) notes that to split the lumpen into respectable and anti-social elements is a mistake.

[28] The peasantry in the global south may in some instances be Indigenous peoples, who may be living in accord with traditional subsistence practices, or as market farmers, or a combination of both.

Following Amilcar Cabral, Worsley (1972) asserts that indeed, whatever ones means of lumpen survival, that the lumpen positionality has political potential. This is shown to be true historically (e.g., the Black Panther Party), as well as more currently with important lumpen political organizing by sex workers, trans folx, drug users, (ex)prisoners and homeless peoples.

In proposing that the lumpen hold a unique position as the constitutive outside to colonial-capitalism, I also (tentatively) consider Indigenous Land sovereignty practices that assert their basis in treaty relations and thereby transgress the contemporary colonial legal framework, such as hunting, fishing and gathering foods and medicines, can also be understood as a parallel form to lumpen resistance. While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) report has caused settlers to have to listen to Indigenous people more, the actual politics of giving up colonial power remains buried under hellish good intentions and thus Indigenous peoples are continually forced into lumpen positions of illegality in their survival and in their Land sovereignty assertions.

Theoretically, the status of the lumpen as non-speaking, subaltern and lacking self-representation is normalized, while at the same time, lumpen lived experience knowledge is freely exploited by media, academia, professionals, artists and activists. However, as an outsider culture, the lumpen inherently sit in a position of criticality unique from other positions of oppression - even if the critique is registered through a transgressive embodiment and subversion (living through appropriation or other means).

Marx and Engels both strongly denigrated the lumpen who they observed (and perhaps held a fascination for) being negatively impacted by industrialization and living in the streets of London and Manchester, the centers of imperial power and commodity production (Bussard 1987). Infected by the mid-nineteenth century zeal to categorize (Stallybrass 1990), Marx and

Engels (the German Ideology) labeled the dangerous class unsympathetically as the lumpen: those who fell completely out of the labour market, out of alignment with the needs of the capitalist system and bourgeois values and into the criminalized and dependent void of urban survival. As Stallybrass (1990, 73) writes, “the rag pickers” were considered to be “the dirt that they touch not just because of their contamination by the streets' grime” but because they live outside "meaningful" categories: they themselves are seen as the rags that "have no name in any language."

Lumpen literally means ‘miscreant’ in German, a culprit or wrongdoer, a hoodlum. Brussard (1987, 679) notes that the visual appearance of poverty was thought to reflect the poor character of the lumpen:

> In the seventeenth century Lump denoted a person dressed in rags and tatters, but by the nineteenth century the emphasis was not on the poverty of the Lump, but rather on his knavery. In England (as elsewhere) the notion of raggedness had been connected with poverty in a general way for centuries. By the early nineteenth century it was usually applied to the very poor, to those with a distinctly ‘ragged’ appearance. The term had also acquired a broader definition which carried connotations of squalidness, disrepute and peculiarity.

The lumpen is most often exemplified by a grab bag of diverse forms of labour and illicit survival. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx (1983, 300) describes the lumpen as: “tramps, discharged soldiers, discharged convicts, fugitive galley slaves, sharpers, charlatans, lazzaroni, pickpockets, conjurors, gamblers, maquereaux, brothel-keepers, porters, literary drudges, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife- grinders, tinkers, beggars, in short, the whole haphazard, dissolute, battered mass which the French call la bohème.” This list represents the means of survival for those without access to the paid labour market, who are seen “as lumpenproletarians because they are self-employed and because their forms of work are very easy to take up and abandon” (Cowling 2007, n.p.).

Alongside those engaged in casual labour and crime, Marx (1990, 797) counts disability as an important layer of the lumpen: “those unable to work, chiefly people who succumb to their incapacity for adaptation, an incapacity which results from the division of labour; people who have lived beyond the worker’s average life-span; and the victims of industry, whose number increases with the growth of dangerous machinery, of mines, chemical works, etc., the mutilated, the sickly, the widows, etc.” Here Marx (1990) clearly recognizes that the onset of capitalism creates a whole new disabling social structure, however, he fails to include this fact in his political economics.

Throughout his writings, Marx makes a stark distinction between the lumpen and the proletariat. Stallybrass explains that when Marx and Engels (1988) rehabilitated the meaning of proletariat into a noble class that are “the active agents of struggle” on which society is a parasite, they left the lumpen to inhabit the social the space (formerly inhabited by the proletariat), of the “passively rotting mass” (Marx 1988; Stallybrass 1990, 83). The lumpen refers to a social space drawn in the negative in juxtaposition to the working class who were the real subjects of Marx and Engels’ interest (Marx and Engels 1988; Franklin 1969).

With Marx’s catch all definition of the lumpen (developed across a series of his texts) as those with precarious and legally dubious occupations, raggedy appearance, low character and who have been disabled, he also insinuates a stagist dimension to the category: those considered to be “remnants from an earlier mode of production,” from “older, obsolete stages of social development” (Bussard 1987, 677). Marx, Engels and other commentators of the time deployed colonial, racist and stereotypical terms in describing the lumpen as a “nomadic tribe” that is “innately depraved” (Stallybrass 1990, 70). Indeed, Bussard (1987, 688) notices a connection between the lumpen with another category developed by Marx and Engels that of “unhistorical

nationalities." For Bussard (1987, 688), "[t]he notion of 'unhistorical nationalities,' used by Marx and Engels to relegate east European peoples to historical insignificance bears a close resemblance to the dismissal of the unrevolutionary 'lumpen' as a remnant of the decay of older societies." The presumption here is that because certain nationalities, have not proletarianized, or moved into capitalist modernity, they must not have the potential to develop class-consciousness and therefore be revolutionary subjects.

Within the colonial context, Indigenous peoples and colonized migrants heading to the metropoles of empire would fall into Marx's persistent stagist understanding of unhistorical nationalities (Bedford 1994). The targeting of capitalist resistant, non-European, or Indigenous societies as lumpen, lays the ground for a fundamental racialization of the lumpen category. For instance, Stallybrass (1990) discusses the (white) privileged gaze with which a European public meets the non-white lumpen as an anxious confrontation with heterogeneity, with a spectacle of difference that he says is both loathsome and fascinating to the white bourgeois psyche. During the era of British colonialism, sailors from India called "lascars" became stranded on the London streets without a means of survival until they could find a voyage home. Surviving on the margins of the white London society, lascars were written about as "practically and abominably wicked," as "in the most offensive state" and as having "peculiar habits and religious prejudices" (Stallybrass 1990, 78). Furthermore, *In the Class Struggle in France*, Marx (1983, 276) describes Paris after the 1848 February Revolution in racist and stagist terms, as "a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabond, gens sans feu et sans aveu, varying according *to the degree of civilization of the nation to which they belong*, but never renouncing their lazzaroni character" (my emphasis). The "lazzaroni" were the poorest of the poor of Naples, who lived within a

hierarchical street culture and were considered prone to monarchial and reactionary political influence. Indeed, being accused of having a "lazzaroni character" is to draw on the mixed racial ancestry of southern Europeans as migrants to the metropole and infer their lack of moral compass as people who will shift sides according to where resources might be flowing from (in other words, what people from every class do as a pragmatic approach to surviving within a competitive social system that isn't based on an ethics of care).

Indeed, the writings of Marx and Engels paint the lumpen as primarily a moral category. According to Cowling (2002, n.p.), Marx conveniently gathered an "an assortment of occupations which command widespread dislike to make the lumpen seem less reputable, rather than engaging in any kind of serious social (or socialist) analysis." In Marx and Engels' (1988, 220) *Communist Manifesto*, the complex and conflicted social layer that are characterized as lumpen are theorized as morally bankrupt, untrustworthy and corrupt: "[t]he 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." The lumpen came to be seen as a "propertyless social group, existing in both ancient and modern times, not legally enslaved yet not really free, and which carried on a degrading, destructive mode of life" (Bussard 1987, 683). Rather than seeing the lumpen politically as those forced outside the capitalist order, and/or not disciplinable to abstract labour and commodity production, Marx makes a characteristic bourgeois turn of thought in blaming the victims for their impoverished conditions and modes of survival.

The lumpen are theorized, however incompletely, as not having potential to develop consciousness at all: "[w]ithout a clear class-consciousness, the lumpen could not play a positive

role in society" (Bussard 1987, 677). Marx (1983) noted that the lumpen supported Louis Napoléon Bonaparte III to ascend to power in the 1830 July revolution against the French proletariat. Marx referred to Bonaparte as the "Chief of the Lumpenproletarians" (Marx 1983, 301). Indeed, Bonaparte had promised a welfare society in order to organize the lumpen, and thus it cannot truly be said that the lumpen are without sense of collective interest, if not consciousness (Bussard1987).

Stallybrass (1990, 82) points out that when Marx and Engels "reproduced in the form of a residue, the lumpen", they turned "upon this category much of the fear and loathing, and the voyeuristic fascination, that the bourgeoisie had turned upon the previously less specific category of the proletariat. In the lumpen the spectacle of exotic heterogeneity returned with a vengeance." The creation of a new and cleansed category of "the 'good,' or 'conscious,' proletariat" meant distinguishing them from the "disreputable, frightening (and perhaps, from their revolutionary point of view, even embarrassing) lumpen 'social elements" (Brussard 1987, 687; Wacquant 2002). The presumption that the lumpen would be easily bribed by reactionary forces meant that they would actually be theorized as the enemy of progress. As Worsley (1972, 217) points out the lumpen are not "anomic" or devoid of consciousness: "[i]t is not good enough to simply go on proving that sub-proletarians have generated no revolutionary theory, never act unless led, have been conservative, etc. Similar things were said in history about women, Blacks, the proletariat, colonial peoples, and so on." It needs to be understood that all oppressed peoples have a political existence and thus are capable of political analysis and action. Then the question becomes how will those of privilege ally with those most oppressed in a political struggle for a sustainable life based on relationalities of care, respect, reciprocity and redistribution?

– the rich as lumpen

In what is to me a further very unhelpful move, Marx included sectors of the wealthy classes in the category of lumpen: the "trash of all classes" including "those persons who acted in a 'lumpenproletarian' fashion, no matter how highly placed on the conventional social scale" (Bussard 1987, 685). Thus, Marx's survey of the lumpen Landscape includes the Pope, the state of Napoleon III, the remnants of the aristocracy as well as sex workers and those making their living on the street. Sakai (2017, 127) notes that Marx defines the lumpen as parasitical and indulgent because they were divorced from the capitalist market economy, from the value producing production process itself. As such, Marx (Mark 1983, 262) projected the trope of lumpen moral depravity onto finance aristocracy:

> The finance aristocracy, in its mode of acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the rebirth of the lumpen on the heights of bourgeois society… on the most prominent stages of bourgeois society, the same scenes were publicly enacted that regularly lead the lumpen to brothels, to workhouses and lunatic asylums, to the bar of justice, to the dungeon, and to the scaffold.

According to Sakai (2017, 128), both Marx and Mao identified the capitalist state's propensity towards lumpenism: "a capitalist state in severe crisis had become like a criminal organization at its core: with masses of lumpen politicians and officials, lumpen lower-level functionaries and officers, lumpen cops and soldiers." In *The Class Struggles in France*, Marx (1977, 288) writes:

> Since the finance aristocracy made the laws, was at the head of the administration of the state, had command of all the organized public authorities, dominated public opinion through the actual state of affairs and through the press, the same prostitution, the same shameless hating, the same mania to get rich was repeated in every sphere, from the Court to the Cafe Borgne, to get rich not by production, but by picketing the already available wealth of others. Clashing every moment with the bourgeois laws themselves, an unbridled assertion of unhealthy and dissolute appetites manifested itself, particularly at the top of bourgeois society — lusts wherein wealth derived from gambling naturally

> seeks its satisfaction, where pleasure becomes crapuleux, where money, filth and blood commingle.

Here, Marx reverts to, perhaps a reasonable psychological interpretation, a seeming reference to an id impulse as driving the wealthy lumpen's economic strategies in which the "lies and cheating" of the "financial aristocracy" belie "the moral pauperism of the rich" (Stallybrass 1990, 86).

I remain unconvinced, however, of the theoretical value of considering all the forms of lumpenism, wealthy, poor, organized crime, or what have you, as one phenomenon of moral bankruptcy. The rich lumpen and the poor lumpen are under completely different relation to the means of production and structural privilege. Reducing the problem to one of moral character, can only amount to an anti-corruption campaigns to clean up government, removal of "bad apple" politicians and business elites, root out corruption, fraud and crime from all level of the society and restore bourgeois legal order. Such moralism has a disastrous impact on poor people's necessary lumpen survival modes by individualizing the problem and thus encouraging and justifying hyper-policing, criminalization and institutionalization which disproportionately impacts Indigenous, Black, people of color and those who are disabled, queer, Trans, Two-Spirit and non-gender conforming (Ben-Moshe et al. 2014; Wacquant 2008; Wang 2018). Such a broad take on lumpenism espouses a legalistic moralism based on a colonial (in)justice system that protects the white supremacist private property system over the wellbeing of peoples.

Most importantly though, such an analysis obscures the fact that corruption is not only the normal modus operandi of the wealthy elites whose power hails from histories of autocracy, but that the whole of the bourgeois-settler paradigm is corrupt. While it is useful to loudly critique the moralistic attitudes of the bourgeois and finance classes regarding the poor lumpen

via uncovering the hypocrisy of their own constitutive corruption (Povinelli 2015), it should be obvious why the failure of Marx to distinguish between the marginalized and wealthy lumpen is highly problematic. The poor lumpen who are cast out of the production system are not the agents of colonial-capitalism. They may be, to whatever degree, complicit in it (its members holding white privilege in particular), but are, in any case, also surviving it. The poor lumpen are, because of their dispossession and the lack of a market for their labour, forced to appropriate resources under conditions of criminalization by bourgeois law. The bourgeoisie and finance classes, however, are those who, in a foundational act of corruption within colonial-capitalist history, took the Land by force imposing their ownership paradigm over all resources creating the grounds for Indigenous dispossession and lumpen alienation from the economy. Thus, to theorize the rich and poor lumpen together is to erase a critical historical dialectic.

A more useful discussion can be had if we shift the locus of rich lumpenism from the morally depraved individual to the system of colonial-capitalism as a whole which, as Marx (1990) wrote, is founded on violence, genocide, slavery, war and the most undemocratic means of power during the phase of so-called primitive accumulation. Marx (1990) located the violence of capitalism in its past as a moment that is distinct from established capitalism which he sought to describe abstractly as a system or logic. However, theorists have observed that, indeed, violence and ethical chaos are constitutive and ongoing, and weds capitalism with colonialism (Harvey 2004; Ince 2018; Coulthard 2014). Such ongoing colonization, or what Harvey (2004) calls accumulation by dispossession, operates in tandem with uneven development, spatial fixes and creative destruction to manage the crises endemic to capitalism and restore profitability. Ongoing colonization manifests across scales, from extractive industries on Indigenous Lands globally, to the marketization of urban space, gentrification and

racialization of geography, institutionalization of Othered bodies, environmental destruction and racism and the patenting of life among many more examples (Blomley 2004; De Angelis 2004; Harvey 2004; Hern 2016).

Onur Ince (2016, 9) points out that despite "the liberal disavowal that the coercion in capitalism's historical career is an unfortunate blight that can be remedied by more and better capitalism, it steadfastly exposes the constitutive and continuous status of extra-economic violence." Through a discussion of the temporal differentiation made between the extra economic force (overt violence) of the original accumulation phase and the ongoing economic coercion of capitalism made official through legal and institutional forms, Ince (2016, 11) comments that "to the liberal mind such violence appears inextricably excessive and therefore economically irrational, which then leads it to seek its causes outside of capitalism." Liberal democratic institutions try to hide the rotten core of colonial-capitalism. Colonial-capitalism is ideologically protected in the bourgeois-settler mind because its violence is legally sanctified within liberal democracy. For instance, every assault against Indigenous peoples that have contributed to the attempt at their genocide was "delivered through the law" (Monture-Angus in Razack 2015, 10). Settlers might believe that the law is the ethical foundation or guiding principles of a society, however, legal institutions were developed in order to steal Indigenous Land, hold people in slavery, execute witches, secure property rights, normativize labour exploitation, and unequal distribution and criminalize survival, in short, to support white cis-hetero-patriarchal bourgeois-settler power. Indeed, colonial-capitalism is a system of violence draped in the moral cloth of the law (Sakai 2017). In order to achieve these ends, the law is enacted and enforced in fluxing ways according to what is needed to re-enforce capitalist-colonialism in a given time and space (Foucault 1995). As Gilmore (2012, 43) comments on the

hyper-incarceration of Black folx in the US, "[t]he way the system works is to move the line of what counts as criminal to encompass and engulf more and more people into the territory of prison eligibility." Imprisonment is increasingly used as a political tool to resolve "numerous crises of the neoliberal moment, particularly those arising out of structural joblessness and chronic poverty" (Story 2019, 95), an example being the drug wars (Wang 2018).

Aside from original and ongoing colonization, the classical bourgeois production economy is not immune from corruption. Marx (1990) noted that the tendency towards corruption is systemic to capitalism. In order to increase profits, corrupt practices are employed that include (but not limited to) cheapening inputs with fillers, forming cartels, planned obsolescence, price fixing, conglomeration, hiding profits in tax havens, shell companies as well as pushing wages to below the level by which workers can reproduce their labour power. Hardt and Negri (2000) further describe corruption as the misuse or leaving fallow the potentialities and energies of people when they are forced into 'idleness' which produces a vast global population of "wasted" lives (Bauman 2004; Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Montag 2005; McIntyre and Nast 2011). Even those who have meaningless jobs in factories that produce widgets (such as those Chinese workers in Foxconn plants that produce apple products who were driven to suicide due to their unbearable working conditions) can be seen to constitute a wastage of human energies, potentials and social possibility. Not to mention that capitalism's constant need to overproduce cheapened commodities (hyper extraction and waste) in order for capitalism to continue to generate profit is literally causing mass extinction on the planet. We can no longer ignore the utter ethical failure of the settler-bourgeois system. Indeed, there is no class that is immune from participating in ethical failure in order to either reinforce its privileges within capitalist-colonialism or to survive it. All individuals or classes become rich through adhering to

unethical systems of private property, exploitation, and hoarding. If our project is to care for the Land and peoples upon it then production based on sustainability and actual need, and redistribution of resource are the radical act.

The lumpen as an intersectional category: tropes of the monstrous Other

While I don't think that the plutocratic class and the bourgeoisie can be usefully understood as lumpen since their unethical political economic positionality should be understood as inherent to their current names, the poor are still without a political economic identity. Thus, I seek to expand on an understanding of the lumpen as representing the poorest of the poor, non-employed social strata. It is well understood that poverty unequally impacts those with complex intersectional embodiments and identities. Within this poor lumpen strata, Marx and Engels (1977; 1988; 1990) have included the aging, disabled, those living via criminalized work, 'non-modern' and racialized peoples. I would like to elaborate on the relation of Indigenous peoples to lumpenism as well as point out that historically, gendered and queered bodies are also vulnerable to lumpenization while they are invisible in the discourse.

Coulthard (2014, 32-33) discusses what Fanon calls the "colonial gaze" of the settler-bourgeois subject: a material relation that detracts humanity from the subject and wounds the subjectivity of those gazed upon and which operates across scales from the everyday, "look a negro!" to the state level. Razack (2011, 365, 372) articulates the connection between the lumpen and Indigeneity via her discussion of inquest into the death of Indigenous people in police custody where Aboriginality is viewed intersectionally as a disabling "condition":

> Indeed, the most progressive of inquests and inquiries, those, that is, that acknowledge injury to Aboriginal people insist on a direct parallel between Aboriginality and disability. Not surprisingly, the "natural body" that is made possible by viewing disability as a flawed version of humanity, is the same "natural body" that installs the settler as owner of himself, and as owner of Land. Flawed bodies (insufficiently modern

> bodies frozen in a pre-modern, pre-capitalist mode) are not owners, as the legal principle of terra nullifies confirms. The comparison between disability and Aboriginality yields both similarities and differences. Aboriginality disturbs, as does disability, and Aboriginally reminds settlers of something they know but would rather not, and indeed cannot know if they are to continue a colonial relationship. But what is remembered and consequently repressed differs. Settlers must repress knowledge of their own violent histories of conquest and occupation. The disturbance that is Aboriginality is thus intimately related to the Land and to colonialism.

The Indigenous body, viewed intersectionally as also disabled in this context, is then subject to further impacts of denigration, exclusion, control, multiple oppressions and death. Unless such bodies can be rehabilitated to the exalted white cis-hetero-patriarchal bourgeois norm (Chapman and Withers 2019), as has been a major project of the Canadian government through the Indian Act and the failed Trudeau White Paper, they are viewed through the necropolitical lens as being waste, a necessary "sacrifice" that "cleanses and preserves modern society, purging it of its undesirable elements" (Razack 2011, 365). Indigenous bodies in the urban Landscape haunt the bourgeois-settler as unwanted reminders that the Land they claim is stolen. Razack (2011) points out that the fear, loathing and denigration of Indigenous bodies enables white settlers to perceive themselves as the rightful owner of the Land. Razack (2011, 359) writes that:

> those viewed as unable to govern themselves are seen as underserving citizens, both when it comes to health care services and in matters of collective self-governance. Factors such as alcohol abuse, whether or not they are present, "discredit" Aboriginal subjects as deserving of services and of respect, tying in neatly with longstanding racist ideas of Aboriginal people as polluted, child-like, and incapable of being modern subjects.

Such racist conceptions manifest as settler government interventions into the self-governance of Indigenous nations through the Indian Act and coercive treaty negotiations *and* serve to protect the settler-bourgeois subject from the Otherness of the Indigenous body that threatens the very ontology of the supremacist bourgeois-settler so invested in a desperately failing modernity. Indeed, the traumatic impact on Indigenous bodies that increases the possibility of

lumpenization speaks to the brutality of the system of colonial-capitalism and not to inherent qualities of the bodies themselves.



Figure 3: Marlene Bluebird Stickings, Self-Portrait Collage (2015)

Gender is also an important intersectional category when discussing the lumpen. While Marx and Engels (Bussard 1987) thought that capitalism would change gendered inequality through the move of women into the workplace, at the same time, the rise and imposition of the nuclear family (to recoup women's reproductive role) created the condition of women's dependence on men as the privileged bread-winner and enforced European binary gender norms (Marx 1988; Bordo 1989; Brown 2014; Federici 2017; Ferguson et al. 2019). In the household, the factory and the street, women have been subject to hyper-exploitation, sexism, sexual and

gender violence. Such European binary gender norms were also enforced across cultures where gender identities and relations were historically non-patriarchal, such as with many Indigenous cultures (Morgensen 2012b; Roscoe 1998; Smith 2003). Indeed, Indigenous activists and scholars have pointed out the connection between extractivism and sexual and gender violence against Indigenous women and 2Slgbtqqia+ peoples who are missing, murdered, and trafficked (Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2016). Within Euro-cis-hetero-patriarchy, legal inequalities, unequal wages and social reproduction duties (increasing under neoliberalism) coupled with a thriving criminalized sex trade industry creates particular vulnerabilities for women's lumpenism. The common factor in the lives of women who are imprisoned (disproportionately Indigenous and Black) is sexual abuse (Hansen 2018; Pollack and Brezina 2006), trauma from which a woman can plummet into the margins.

At the same time, non-gender conforming and non-cis women who challenge binary gender norms are further vulnerable to stigmatization, violence and oppression, which can also lead to lumpenization. Marx's time was just prior to the nascent discipline of psychology and sexology, in which Victorian taboos and attitudes that stigmatized what are now known as 2Slgbtqqia+ people as deviant, birth defective and among the most morally depraved were challenged (Foucault 1978). Certainly, when Marx (1858) brings up the lunatic asylum, this is where the gender and sexual non-conformists would be found (Foucault 1978). When laws against sexual deviance were overturned, queerness continued to be medicalized as sickness and thus socially sanctioned exclusion of those expressing gender and sexual difference continue to put folx at risk. Sakai (2017) notes that the persistent criminalization of gay life and social barring of openly gay and especially trans individuals from regular work has meant that gay cultures and economies were forced underground and into marginalized spaces where they

interacted with other forms of criminal life as the “queer unwanted” (Bell and Binnie 2004, 1810). This exclusion has meant that trans folx, gays of color and gay youth have often found work in the sex trade (Rev and Geist 2017) with Black, Indigenous and trans women of color being subject to social conditions of extreme violence (Golkar 2016). Sakai (2017) points out that even those in the gay community that were able to live by having legal jobs, when they entered gay social spaces, they entered into a lumpen zone, which can also be understood as rich, vibrant and agential community spaces culture and survival (Rev and Geist 2017).

Worsley (1972, 215) observes that there is a romantic fetishization of the lumpen as outside of the bourgeois mode of being: “tribal cultures, the search for the exotic and the irrational, for mystical, hallucinatory, sexual and other modes of seeking to transcend the quotidian, the mundane, the everyday and the routine,” for "alternative", "underground" deviant and minoritized social groups and "deviant sub-cultures.” Such fetishization and stereotyping points to the intersectionality of the lumpen as well as the strength of its culture, where Indigenous, queer, crip/disabled, mad, contrary, mystical peoples generate resistant cultural power. The fetishization of lumpen cultures is, however, a move to control, contain and depoliticize through appropriation, while leaving the oppressive structure intact.

Intersectionality theory helps us understand how multiple embodied identities compile and interlock in creating complex forms of compounded oppression within structures of power (Carastathis 2014; Crenshaw 1993; Erevelles and Minear 2010; MacKinnon 2013). For a lumpen analysis, intersectionality can be understood as the compounding of embodied oppressions that relegate person(s) to the constitutive outside of the hegemonic wage labour market and private property paradigms of colonial-capitalism, i.e., a space of debility for those slated for faster or slower death (Puar 2017). Whether a community member is from a

generationally impoverished/oppressed/colonized background, or has become so due to stigmatization, exclusion and/or inability (or lack of desire) to conform to the labour market, the body that is disabled is one from which the capitalist is unable to extract surplus value and thus it is pathologized, not useful, overly dependent, without value (Erevelles 1996; Russell and Malhotra 2002).

While the lumpen is an intersectional category, tropes of disability are the common factor applied to the diverse embodiments that gather (somewhat uncomfortably) under the term lumpen. Disability is understood in the scholarship as socially constructed through the hegemony of the alblist normative, which excludes the labour power of those with different embodiments (Russell, 2001; Di Stefano 2015). In order to police the norm, bigoted stereotypes of disability are generated as Razack (2011) points out above. Stereotypes such as the monstrous, inhuman, inferior, primitive, stupid, slow, hysterical, irrational, lazy, corruptible, deceptive, over/under sexed, inherently criminal, infantilized, incapable, feebleminded, sick, dirty, dangerous, amoral and weak etc. are applied to Indigenous, racialized, gendered, queered and different bodies, marking such bodies outside the bounds of normality and thus making them vulnerable to lumpenization (Ben-Moshe et al. 2014; Chapman and Withers 2019; Erevelles 1996; Erevelles and Minear 2010; Fanon 1967; K. Smith 2010; Muñoz et al. 2015; Lyon-Callo 2002; Shildrick 2005; Rev and Geist 2017; Wacquant 2002). These stereotypes promote disability as a fixed set of pathological biological differences, when, in fact, disability is a fluxing, messy, leaky, unknown, corporeal reality that we all encounter in relation to our own bodies and to each other (Shildrick 2005). Such bodies are subject to institutionalization and segregation in order to protect the "white race" either from its racial outside or those deemed degenerate elements within (Erevelles and Minear 2010, 133; Russell 2001). Indeed,

disability brings to the fore an ontological relational interdependence, which is frightening in a hyper-individualist colonial/capitalist system in which we must compete to survive.

Furthermore, tropes and stereotypes slip slide across diverse bodies that are spatially and historically located. According to Bussard (1987, 682), in *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Engels reveals "an ambivalent attitude" towards the Irish, who were regarded in ablist and racialized terms at the time: "on the one hand, the Irish are victims, brutalized by poverty and exploitation in agricultural Ireland and industrialized England" whereas on the other, Engels also sees "the Irish as inherently prone to filthiness, drunkenness and a happy-go-lucky attitude towards life in general." [29] Disability tropes are applied to those gendered as women, with bourgeois women being characterized as weak, hysterical, over emotional, irrational and prone to episodes and moods (Wilson 1991; Bordo 1989). McClintock (1995) discusses how women labouring in the coal mines in industrial England were considered to be at a substandard civilizational level. Women mine workers were both muscular in stature and soot covered, thus both pathologically masculinized and racialized. Lumpen women who work in the sex trade are seen as evil temptresses, as degenerate, over sexed, and without personhood and thus deserving of violence (Wilson 1991). Indeed, the tropes of disability slide across multiple embodied forms that remain undisciplined according to the morally cleansed colonial/capitalist system of wage labour and capital accumulation. If a body doesn't express its gender according to its sex category assigned at birth or there is impairment, if a body carries non-colonial-capitalist cultural practices has unruly desires or the marks of surviving dire poverty or the

[29] However, once in the so-called new world, the Irish became white and were involved in brutal anti-Black riots with the intention of cornering the labour market for their own (Sakai 1989; Ferguson 2008, 52; Rioux 2015).

trauma of dispossession and displacement, if the body is racialized as non-white, then it is subject to the disability lens, viewed as a lesser being, as ontologically inferior (Fanon 1967).

The lumpen cannot be properly understood outside of a disability frame -- and disability cannot be understood outside of the frame of ongoing historical trauma (Erevelles 2011; Puar 2017). Crip theory looks at how disability is constructed as a material and symbolic condition imposed upon specific/different/unique/oppressed bodies that produces exclusion within the regime of normativity and compulsory able-bodiedness inherent to capitalist-colonialism (Erevelles in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014; McRuer 2006; Puar 2017; Russell and Malhotra 2002). In opening a discussion of crip identity, McRuer (2006) makes an interesting account of the Los Angeles gang, the Crips (a lumpen formation said to have evolved as a nihilistic next generation to the fallen Black Panthers), who were often disabled through poverty, violence and institutionalization in group homes and prisons. According to McRuer (2006), gang members fetishized the disability that they experienced by calling themselves crip as a short form for cripple and by making the canes that they used a fashion statement.

War, colonization, slavery, cis-heteropatriarchy (Chapman and Withers 2019), hierarchical social structures, class, social abandonment, stigmatization, abuse, immiseration, exploitation and hyper-exploitation that mark the bourgeois order are primary factors to consider in understanding the disability dimension of lumpen bodies and social spaces (Puar 2017). For instance, Indigenous bodies can be rendered disabled through multiple forms of attack across generations, including biological, chemical and actual warfare, corporal discipline, impoverishment and psychological abuse, cultural prohibition, forced assimilation, institutionalization and traumatization – all the dimensions of ongoing genocide (Razack 2011, 2000; Lawrence 2002). Trauma results from having our different (individual or cultural)

embodiments forced to conform to a bourgeois-settler normative standard. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, while many disabled people become impoverished because of disability, poverty itself is further disabling.

Erevelles (2011, 6) writes that "disability" is "the central analytic, or more importantly, the ideological linchpin utilized to (re)constitute social difference along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality in dialectical relationship to the economic/social relations produced within the historical context of transnational capitalism." Erevelles (1996, 526) deploys a materialist analysis in which the "ideological category of disability is essential to the continued existence of the capitalist enterprise because it is able to regulate and control the unequal distribution of surplus through invoking biological difference as the 'natural' cause of all inequality, thereby successfully justifying the social and economic inequality that maintains social hierarchies." Thus, disability is a key theoretical and intersectional category in understanding how Indigenized, raced, gendered, sexual and different bodies become classed as exploitable, unproductive and expendable within capitalist colonialism, and are consigned to the lowest ends of the labour market and ultimately, the lumpen sphere. That these bodies are deemed non-productive within colonial-capitalism and neoliberalism permits society to deny access to material, economic, symbolic and political resources and to mete out conditions of genocide, slavery, and eugenics on peoples (Erevelles 1996). If you are not strictly, functional within the profit machine (that can't function with full employment anyways) then you are waste - lumpen, consigned to be the raw material that upholds an institutional industry based on everyday relational and exceptional violence (Chapman and Withers 2019).

As Erevelles (2011) points out, when the frame of disability is rejected, the normative is reinstated. Such a distancing from disabled bodies tacitly reinforces the false idea that disability

is biological and not a historically constructed hierarchy of difference. Rather, we should stand beside those whose disability is made visible and material by structures of power in order to dismantle such hierarchies of difference. The complex lumpen social layer needs to be understood in its own terms as: diverse historical forms of exclusion from the colonial/capitalist mode of production, which is the productive basis for a lumpen political economics as dialectically present and important within history.

While each of the above embodiments are dimensions of a lumpen identity, the historical context of colonial-capitalism adds another complication. Even though there are clearly lumpen practices within contemporary Indigenous socialities, as previously mentioned, settlers still need to consider Indigenous struggles in terms of their own diverse epistemologies and worldviews and not in the terms developed through western thought systems. Some places where Indigenous and Lumpen politics diverge include the point that Indigenous people are subject, as nations, to occupation by a foreign state power, while settler lumpen people are oppressed within their own national identity *and* oppressors under settler society membership, whether through white settler inheritance or through migration to a state with wealth and privileges due to its settler colonial form. Indigenous scholars do not posit their primary oppression within colonial capitalism as the alienation of their labour, but the historical theft of their Land (Coulthard 2014; Dunbar-Ortiz 2016). While I have argued that a lumpen dialectic is concerned with dispossession from Land, this original dispossession occurred in Europe and does not translate to the settler colonial site of North America and thus does not address the issue of Indigenous sovereignty. The Lumpen, according to Marx and Engels (1988), do not have consciousness or a struggle, but, as explained, they are expected to find a place under the leadership of the labour struggle while Indigenous liberation movements undeniably have both consciousness and historical

significance. While settler lumpen and Indigenous folx provide grist for the institutional system, there is the added settler agenda of removing Indigenous people from the Land and quashing their resistance through genocidal processes. As Razack (2011, 354-356) points out, "other marginalized groups may experience a similar violence in custody, notable other racialized groups, poor people and people with disabilities… we might consider the violence that is directed at Aboriginal peoples as the epicenter of the violence of colonial societies; it secures the material basis of settler society and installs the paradigm for all other hierarchical social relations." Thus, violence against Indigenous people is a starting place not to be subsumed by a theory of lumpen politics.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I critically looked at how those positioned as lumpen are stigmatized in the marxist literature as a morally degraded social strata of ragged criminals, beggars, and culturally backwards (Indigenous peoples who have not 'modernized' according to European normative standards), as peoples without a role in social transformation. I contest Marx's conflation of rich and poor lumpen: the plutocratic class is inherently unethical due to its historical formation in the so-called phase of primitive accumulation, that is the violence of colonization and its ongoing nature as constitutive of colonial-capitalism. I attempt to remove the stigma of moral depravity from the lumpen by pointing out that the system of colonial-capitalism is itself inherently ethically transgressive, therefore, it is those who are empowered by the system who are the ones that are tainted by ethical failure, not those who struggle to survive within it. I then elaborate on aspects of the theory that reveals the intersectional nature of the lumpen category. As colonial-capitalism is a regime that prioritizes the enactment of white, bourgeois-settler, patriarchal, cis-hetero-normative, ablism, those Othered bodies that form the constitutive

outside, those who are shut out of, or reject the sale of their labour, who live by other (criminalized) means are: Indigenous, racialized, classed, gendered, queer, disabled, different. As a social strata whose members experience the multiple traumas of colonization, genocide, eugenics, alienation, immiseration and stigmatization, disability becomes an important intersectional category in both lumpen embodied experience, and as a trope that is applied to Indigenous, racialized, gendered and queered bodies to construct them as inferior in the hierarchy of normativity (Erevelles and Minear, 2010). I have uneasily included Indigenous peoples who live on the economic margins within this theorization of the lumpen, partly because Marx and Engels (Bussard 1987) marked them as un-modern nationalities, but also because their identities do have grounding in Canada's settler-colonial history as well as their own, distinctly non-European cultural, economics and political forms, history, modernity and futurity. Thus, the inclusion of Indigenous folx, positioned here as lumpen and thus an important dimension of the constitutional outside, means that decolonizing frameworks are urgent. I recognize that within decolonizing struggles, Indigenous bodies need to be centered, that Black descendants of slavery have a different relation to settlerism (Cooper 2007), and that non-Indigenous, non-Black lumpen bodies *are* settlers. This work is the precursor to a deeper and more elaborated analysis of the political economic role of the lumpen in which I also further engage the very complex Indigenous dimension. Ultimately, I see the lumpen as integral to struggles for a transformed future in a radically different way than the working class.

I have done the above theorizing work to recuperate the term lumpen as a precursor to arguing for their political economic role of in history. However, I recognize the term lumpen as also problematic. Right now, in the FoWP community even the word disability continues to represent a threatening identity and the preferred, safest term remains low-income. I don't know

if ‘lumpen’ could be re-appropriated from the Land of slurs to be an identity of empowerment like ‘queer,’ ‘slut’ or ‘crip.’ To be identified as a crip-queer-slut would be very complimentary in some circles, but what about lumpen-crip-queer-slut? In one sense, the word root “lump”, meaning tatters or rags, might be an adequate starting place for a politics that are oriented to those most vulnerablized within colonial-capitalism, perhaps rags could be mobilized across multiple symbolic registers. Alongside its obvious connotation of social neglect and lack of ethical redistribution, “lump” could also be an indicator of refusal of over consumption, of wearing something out, of recycling, of a humble life within the planet’s means, of anti-fashion. In any case, there needs to be an empowered re-appropriation of a politicized lumpen identity and positionality, no matter what term gets taken up. That said, I also recognize that there is an inherent violence to labeling (halifax and Jackson 2018a) and that all categories overlap, intersect and are complexly fluid.

Circling back to the FoWP community that I started out this chapter discussing and for whom I have proposed the term lumpen as appropriate for understanding their intersectional identity, gentrification in the Junction continues apace. During this time the FoWP community has experienced many setbacks in terms of our access to organizing space in the community. We have also lost several key members to the necro-political-economics – the lack of care that shortens lumpen lives. Nevertheless, we have spent the summer gathering in the park to do art activities and tending the native plants garden. We also put together an anti-gentrification poster campaign in which all the text was by low-income/lumpen community members and thus represented their critical perspectives on urban development. Our anti-gentrification analysis is inflected with concern for the environment, Indigenous Land Sovereignty issues, stigmatization, love for Mother Earth, critiques of the housing market bubble, the violence of privilege and the

trauma that results. We put our posters up all around the new condo development happening a block away from the park. A week later, someone has taken great pains to peel our very well pasted posters off the lampposts.

3. A Permanent Feature of Capitalism: Towards a Lumpen Political Economy

This chapter departs further from a marxist understanding of the lumpenproletariat. While I consider the marxist theory of the lumpenproletariat itself to be inadequate, it is framed within the context of political economy and thus, I believe, worth rethinking. I thus, look more deeply into analysing the role of the lumpenproletariat (who are the global majority) in the political economy as a basis for understanding their role in radical transformation.

"What is the purpose of an economy for: to support market-driven profits or to sustain social bonds and encourage human participation? Is it acceptable to reduce the productive activities of persons to commodity wage labor? Is the capacity to produce for profit an acceptable measure of human worth? Is it defensible to hold in contempt bodies that do not produce the way the capitalist class demands, leaving disabled persons to struggle on low wages or meager benefit checks or to be institutionalized? How can the realm of work be reorganized to provide accommodations for all, and how can all members of society be embraced and rewarded whether they work or not?" (Russell 2001, 94).

"People living underground have a community, are not just 'resilient.' They make life: they do not just 'get going', or 'survive.' This is a life characterised by caring relationships and by an economy – monetary and affective - to support the underground world; in fact, in a way this economy is not so different from what you have above ground" (Lancione 2018, n.p.).

"Living as we did -on the edge- we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center. Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgement that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole" (hooks 1990).

Introduction

Low-income folx, those intersectionally oppressed bodies (Indigenous, Black, racialized, gendered, queer, disabled, different) who are not selling their labour on the market, who are construed as dependant, living by other criminalized means and/or on social services, have long been treated as either not politically relevant, or to be marginally part of the working-class. The lack of political identity causes the distinct lived experience and critical knowledge of low-income folx to be shut out of larger discourses of liberation and thus limits their power to the

communities in which they live. This obfuscation of low-income reality is counter-productive to the liberatory struggle as a whole and maintains social divisions that isolate those most impacted by the brutalities of colonial-capitalism. In an attempt to find a term with political weight from which to analyse the specific economic, cultural and political relationship of low-income people to colonial-capitalism and their role in a liberatory struggle, I have critically followed in the footsteps of Black radical thinkers such as Frantz Fanon (2004) and those from the Black Panthers (Franklin 1969; Heynen 2006, 2009) in considering the lumpen as having a distinct political subjectivity that is a permanent feature of colonial-capitalism. As Stallybrass (1990, 81) asserts, "[t]he binaries of Marx's theory of class struggle is interrupted by a third term, the lumpen, a term that resists the totalizing and teleological pretensions of the dialectic."

In the following chapter, I show that those positioned as lumpen do not share the same relation to the means of production and thus cannot adequately be represented by working class interests and liberation frameworks. Inserting the lumpen into the dialectic is a trojan horse for opening Marxist theory to its failure to do due diligence regarding the colonial basis of capitalism and to Indigenous struggles for sovereignty, something that cannot be afforded in this settler colonial context.[30] In order to understand their political relevance, a materialist account, or specific lumpen political economy, needs theorizing. Figuring out the historical role of the lumpen will hopefully further reveal their dialectical relations to the other classes and their role in a liberatory future.

I start this argument by analysing the emergence of the lumpen within colonial-capitalism through the period that Marx (1990) called so-called primitive accumulation. In

[30] In no way am I suggesting that lumpen theory can adequately stand in for decolonial theory, only that lumpen theory is important because it brings into focus those intersectional low-income bodies, including Indigenous bodies, who are pathologized and thus excluded from the discourse.

Europe, enclosure and the privatization of property forced peasants into the factory or onto the streets while in the colonies the Land and resources of Indigenous peoples were stolen and a campaign of genocide mounted. The private property system is the source of poverty, a tool of ongoing colonialization and the basis of lumpenism. I then take on the wage relation, considered a key dimension of the dialectic[31] between the bourgeois and the working class, which I propose is actually a disciplining relation (as opposed to revolutionary one) and one that does not apply to the lumpen. Furthermore, while the working class is esteemed at the expense of the criminalized lumpen, there is, in fact, class fluidity between the reserve army of labour, considered part of the working class, and the lumpen. Nevertheless, moving from waged to unwaged is to move from one dialectical condition or relation to the means of production to another. Understanding the distinct political economy of the lumpen is especially important since in a global context of economic restructuring, neoliberalism and austerity, the lumpen is a much more dominant experience (Bayat 2000). I then propose that consumption and social reproduction are under-considered within the circuits of capital and thus in need of more emphasis in order to understand the political economy of lumpen folx. I then look at the violence of institutions and charity as both profit-producing industries and as politically debilitating relations of non-lumpen peoples to lumpen peoples. I propose a lumpen politics based in a dialectics of difference and crip theory. Finally, I revisit what is a very uneasy theoretical relationship between Indigenous struggles and those positioned as lumpen. This analysis comprises an initial attempt that deserves much more elaboration.

[31] I understand dialectics as historically founded tensions that exist between the projects of liberation and oppression that different social groups play out in relation to each other. Underlying tensions are bound to emerge, not just between obvious class or colonial adversaries, but also within liberation movements and if not recognized and addressed, can disrupt the possibility of unity across difference. Furthermore, in an age of climate change, we are also forced to take seriously a dialectical relation between humans and nature.

Primitive accumulation

The lumpen was formed as an intersectional category alongside the working class during what Marx (1990) referred to as the brutally violent phase of "so-called primitive accumulation" on which capitalism was founded. Whereas the theory focuses on how peasants were alienated from the Land (property was privatized through enclosure), their means of production, their labour power (which was commodified), primitive accumulation actually unfolds differently according to different embodiments. In Europe, women/gender queer and non-cis-hetero conforming peoples were disempowered starting with the inquisitions and witch hunts (Federici 2004), simultaneously, in what were to become the colonies, Indigenous peoples were genocided and dispossessed of the vast majority of their territories (Coulthard 2014), Africans and other nationalities were forced into slavery (Hartman 2007) and indentured labour (Marx 1990), and disabled folx were subject to eugenics programs (Russell 2001). Capitalist market relations (and accompanying ideologies, moral structures and stigmas) were forced in diverse ways onto diverse peoples and Lands. The historical moment of dispossession from the Land in the origin of capital forever marries colonialism and capitalism as a completely integrated, tension filled and complex social-political and economic dynamic of dispossession, genocide, (hyper)exploitation, discipline, forced assimilation, economic exclusion and death (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Coulthard 2014; Ince 2018; Simpson 2017). The lumpen are those who are produced by the ascending bourgeois-settler order of power: as those dispossessed who are excluded from having their labours/cultures valorized within the colonial-capitalist order, they are born again as paupers who start out with no guarantees of belonging and thus must find any means to survive.

Prior to the onset of capitalist-colonialism in Europe there may have been impoverished outcasts from the community, however, in feudal society everyone had a place in the Land based home subsistence economy: the children, the aged and impaired. Gleeson (1999, 83) notes that the "central predicate of the peasant economy in any context is the need to balance the number of mouths fed with the number of hands deployed in productive activity." Those with embodied differences worked according to their abilities in a "relatively intimate union of domesticity and labour" (Gleeson 1999, 71; see also Russell and Malhotra 2002). As Gleeson (1999, 83) explains, "[t]he material context of feudal production allowed peasant households a great degree of liberty in designing everyday tasks that would match the corporal capacities of each family member." With the advent of bourgeois 'liberal democratic' rule, however, industrialization, colonization and the transition to capitalism, the place for peoples with impairments in society changes. By the 18th century, peasants were removed from the Land and forced to migrate to urban centers to find work in the factory. Peasants became proletarians who were 'free' to sell their labour on the market in competition with each other. A new normative[32] for the laboring body was established: how (and if) bodies could perform the specific tasks required by the owners of production became the basis of categories of difference which had dire consequences for those with impairments who suddenly were subject to disabling structures within the new mode of production (Russell and Malhotra 2002). Differently embodied people no longer had a place in the emergent capitalist order and were thus without means to survive. Those with impairments were forced into dependence, family burdens as opposed to contributors, and were forced both into institutions of care and onto the streets to survive - where many are today (Chapman et al. 2019; Russell and Malhotra 2002). Gleeson (1999) notes that those seen as

[32] Based in socially necessary labour time and the abstraction of labour (Marx 1990).

impaired, whether physically, intellectually or psychologically, come to populate the lumpen class as it emerges with the consolidation of capitalism. Thus, a criminalized social formation of peoples excluded from the labour market and carrying the trauma of oppression became a permanent feature, a constitutive outside, of colonial-capitalism.

While in Europe, lumpen bodies were marginalized within the wage labour relation, in the colonies access to Land meant that Indigenous bodies must be removed (Coulthard 2014; Lawrence 2002; Simpson 2017). Upon arriving on Turtle Island, Europeans proceeded to first rely on the ethical practices of Indigenous peoples (which included helping the Europeans survive on the unfamiliar Land), and then, once established, launched a campaign of genocide against the very people who had enabled their livelihood. As Lawrence (2002) tells us, aside from murderous military campaigns, genocidal acts included the putting a bounty on Mi'kmaq scalps, passing infected blankets from a smallpox hospital and distributing alcohol as a means of debilitation and death. And this on top of instigating trade wars, forced religious assimilation, Land theft, corrupt treaty practices, residential schools, apprehension of children, dehumanizing social violence, governmental policies designed to subvert the power and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and their cultures (Coulthard 2014; Lawrence 2002). Indeed, Ince (2014 112) tells us that, beyond "civilized" bourgeois society were spaces of "savagery" where bourgeois-settlers could unleash their violence on Indigenous bodies. The settler-bourgeois ideology of stagism that constructs Indigenous peoples as primitives in need of 'modernization' (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Chapman and Withers 2019; Razack 2011) resulted in devastating impacts on Indigenous peoples that has led to many experiencing lumpen life conditions.

From the perspective of Indigenous philosophy of communally distributive social organization and spiritual practice of all things sacred, alive and agential (Simpson 2011), Indigenous scholars/cultural workers critique the ethically transgressive ways of settler-bourgeois society. Marmon Silko (1992, 312) writes: "[t]he Indians had seen for themselves the cruelty of the Europeans." Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 188) report that for Indigenous people it was all right to have reciprocal trade relations with Europeans, however, to "fall into a white man's way of behaving" is "identifiable as sub-human and monstrous." John Trudel (2012), AIM activist and poet, describes Columbus as a "virus" and as a "disease," capitalist-colonialism as a "predator energy" and white settlers as "terrorists." Echoing Marx (1990), Trudel (2011) speaks of technological society as being of the "already dead," a society that has no spiritual relationship to life, one that is filled with aggression, violence and greed: a place where "spirits get eaten." Simpson (2017, 7) describes settler colonialism "as an overwhelming, violent, normalized, and dishonest reality" and points out that the Nishnaabeg, while having the capacity to develop a system of accumulation, chose not to. Stories of Nanabush warned against greed and extractivist mentalities and reinforced relational ethics towards the natural world (Simpson 2017).

The transition to capitalism also brought the ascendance of the cis-hetero-patriarchal dimension of the bourgeois-settler figure achieved through the history of the witch-hunts; a history of the violent suppression of women's power within communalistic, pagan/Indigenous societies. Federici (2004) describes the witch-hunts as a pivotal moment when women were deposed as leaders of peasant revolts, holders and practitioners of pagan knowledge that viewed natural forces (not the ruling classes) as omnipotent, medical practitioners and midwives in control of procreation, and conductors of ritual practice where sexual promiscuity and pan- or

homo-sexuality was not pathologized. Practitioners of magic spoke of a relationship to greater cosmic and spirit powers that were antithetical to the control of the Christian churches, the individualistic notions of personal responsibility, and to the dualistic Cartesian thinking of the bourgeois order: “above all, magic seemed a form of refusal of work, of insubordination, and an instrument of grassroots resistance to power” (Federici 2004, 174).

In the settler-bourgeois cis-hetero-patriarchal paradigm, linkages are made between the feminine power, sexuality and Land and thus women must be subject to control and exploitation (Federici 2004; McLintock 1995; Women’s Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2016). In order to disempower the witches (and Indigenous women) and the social order that they represented, a whole administrative apparatus was necessary: the male dominated professions of law, medicine, propaganda, philosophy, administration, accounting, academia, and the military were fostered as the new scientific rationalist biopolitical paradigm (Federici 2004; Foucault 1995). Alongside the control of women’s power, Sakai (2017, 132) notes that criminalization of gender/sexual non-conforming peoples was motivated because it “was subversive against heteronormative capitalism; because it defied the mass regimentation of straight nuclear families owned by men forcing women to endlessly produce/reproduce out of their bodies new workers and soldiers to advance the nation.”

Federici (2004) identifies the witch-hunts as a dimension of class war, however, the witches could hardly be seen as working class. Most likely, those witches with some kind of class privilege were disciplined into the new patriarchal order and saved from persecution. Meanwhile, those poor women who were often caught begging, stealing, or prostituting, many of who seem to have been disabled (Federici 2004), who were representatives of a pre-christian, pre-capitalist, non-modernizing order can be seen as having been among the nascent lumpen.

The Eurocentric cis-hetero-patriarchal order was further transposed to the sites of colonization through the refusal to recognize and interact with Indigenous women and Two-Spirit peoples as holders of knowledge and power in their societies (Hall 2015; Morgensen 2012; Roscoe 1998; Simpson 2017). Furthermore, Indigenous women have been targets of sexual control and sexual violence that persists within a globalized context, notably in sites of resource extraction and large-scale industry (Golkar 2016; Kuokkanen 2008; Women's Earth Alliance & Native Women's Sexual Health Network 2016). Audra Simpson (2016) notes that the important roles of Indigenous women in community resistance means that the violent suppression of Indigenous women, indeed, their very "disappearance," is necessary in order for Canada, as a patriarchal state, to secure its sovereignty.

The white supremacist regime of colonial-capitalism has meant the hyper-exploitation[33] of peoples of color globally. Slavery is a constitutive and historical dimension of the ascendancy of bourgeois-settler power (Ince 2014) and its liberal democratic freedoms, which Hartman (1997, 33) articulates as "utterly enmeshed in the narrative of black subjection." Colonists instituted a code of white supremacy by stripping Black bodies of their personhood, sold into chattel slavery and treated as less than human; to be a Black person enslaved is to be a "hybrid of property and person" (Hartman 2017, 36). Frank Wilderson (2017, 18) puts forward a Black Pessimism perspective that looks at slaves as "social death," which means that "the body of the slave is open to the violence of all others," whose very being is subject to dishonour, even before any dishonourable action has been committed. Wilderson (2017, 24) writes that violence against slaves "actually has no utility, it has no rationale" and is not based on any legal

[33] I understand hyper-exploitation according to McIntyre and Nast (2011: 1472) where histories of colonization and slavery have produced a racialized "calculus of death" for those bodies deemed expendable and vulnerable to greater labor exploitation (and thus productive of more surplus value) than that experienced by the legitimized labour force.

transgression on the part of Black people. Rather the violence is committed firstly as a "bacchanal of pleasure," in which, for instance, plantations families "all participate in the regular beating of slaves — children, wives, husbands" as a way to sustain "the psychic health of the people in the first ontological instance." For Wilderson (2017, 24), that violence contributed to "good sugar cane production" is secondary, however, the productivity and the wealth generated by slavery is historically integral to the establishment of the colonies (Marx 1990). Hartman (2017) writes that abolition did not result in liberation, but a reinstituting of the control and dehumanization of Black bodies with subsequent racialized practices such as redlining, ghettoization, wanton police murder, hyper-incarceration, prison to school pipeline, drug wars etc. (Gilmore 2009; Lipsitz 2011; Wacquant 2002; Wang 2018).

After the dispossession of Land and labour, while many were forced into the exploitation of working class life (or in the case of many Indigenous peoples who have resisted colonization to remain on the Land for as long or as much as possible), many more were forced into lumpen social spheres. Those who were excess to the job market, whose labour could not be assimilated, abstracted or properly disciplined, those Indigenous/racialized/gendered/disabled/ sexualized groups targeted for stigmatization and hyper-exploitation came to inhabit marginalized or constitutive outside spaces within capitalist-colonialism. Since social roles for diverse embodiments were destroyed through the onset of colonial-capitalism, since capitalist-colonialism is dependent on a normatively embodied worker, since the onset and persistence of colonial-capitalism has spread trauma across communities, and since capitalism does not tolerate the existence of alternative economies, the lumpen are created by, and thus a permanent feature of, capitalist-colonialism.

Beyond the wage relation (violence and docility)

The alienation from Land lays the ground for one of the most significant outcomes of the historical phase of original accumulation: the dialectic of wage labour. Alienation from Land forces people to sell their labour (their only property) on the market. The purchaser of labour is the one who controls the labour process (Marx 1932). Most of us do not enter the labour market expecting to be able to contribute our specific gifts, skills, desires, creativity, interests and capabilities, we enter the market hoping to be able to conform to the external set of demands made by employers according to an abstract standard set by the market (Marx 1990). The purpose of the vast majority of jobs is to flood the market with commodities, very often socially useless and ultimately harmful, in order to create profit. The embodied and relational capacities of people are narrowed considerably and disability is constructed as an outcome of the abstraction of labour (Russel and Malhotra 2002).

Despite the wage relation being one of violence, alienation, exploitation, and exclusion, it has become highly normativized (Denning 2010). Within the wage relation a relatively privileged working class (as value producers) come to gain whatever power they can through their relationship with the bourgeoisie in a class struggle (Denning 2010; Marx and Engels 1988) through the possibility of withholding their labour for a higher cut of profits. The short-term fight, what unions are mostly involved in, is over distribution of profits through wage struggles. Workers expect (rightly) to be remunerated for their labour to the extent of achieving an individualized middle-class standard of living: buy a house, send the kids to university, vacation once and a while, own a bunch of stuff, retire comfortably, achieve security (Kawash 2000). Indeed, it is actually the goal of the working class to increase its possessive power (Sakai

1989) as opposed to critiquing the capitalist private property regime, the background condition to their wage captivity.[34]

While redistribution is important and can have radical implications, at the same time, the demand for a middle-class life also creates the basis for an allyship between workers and corporate plutocratic class (Bradley and Lee 2018; Ingram 2018; Kip in Bourke et al. 2011). Protecting the workers share of the value produced, especially when union funds start investing in the stock market (e.g., pipelines on Indigenous territories) and financialized assets (Wang 2018), becomes a concern.[35] The more the working class achieves stability through redistributive gains and access to credit, the more wedded to capitalist-colonialism they become. Pandering to common aspirations for a middle-class life, that we are all supposed to want and feel entitled to, that we are expected to go into debt for, is the ideological life-blood of corporate public relations and their yes-men politicians. Thus, the structural subject position of the working class focused on the wage relation and credit is prone to docility to the settler-bourgeois value system. It is also the case that the lifestyle of the western working/middle-class consumer is not globally sustainable in terms of the wellbeing of the planet. The hyper-exploitation of resources and overproduction of commodities is an environmental catastrophe. Thus, redistribution within the wage relations is not, at its dialectical core, a radical basis for struggle.

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[34] This contradiction also impacts left academic/artists/activists. The more that we are paid and thus professionalized, the more our radicality is potentially curtailed.

[35] R.W. Gilmore (2009) talks about how Black GI's coming home from the Vietnam War stepped back into the "machinery of death" when they decided to get "well-paying, blue-collar jobs in factories," in the Winchester rifle factory, the largest factory in the New England gun belt. For Gilmore, the Winchester figures into a history of white supremacist violence as the favoured gun of Indigenous genocide, as well as in various moments of the murder of Black people from slavery to Jim Crow. For Gilmore, entering the working/middle-class is to enter the military industrial complex.

In terms of the lumpen, as peoples who live off of redistribution and not on value production, they are seen to burden the hard working/middle class through taxes and the demand for a robust welfare state (Russell 2001). As Denning (2010, 279) notes, this view produces an "unjust bifurcation" between the typically white male worker subject and the (often gendered, racialized and disabled) subject of welfare and charity. This bifurcation leads to an antagonism by relatively privileged working/middle-class people towards the lumpen (Franklin 1969). Furthermore, the denigration of the lumpen tacitly establishes the normativity of selling ones labour as the moral ground from which to bargain with the capitalist state (Russell 2001; Wacquant 2002). The antagonism of the working-middle classes and the lumpen was in full play at a community town-hall on the planned placement of a men's crisis shelter in a middle/working class neighbourhood in Toronto. Residents stridently voiced their fears that a shelter would jeopardize the hard work they had put in to upgrade their homes and the benefits of increased house values they hoped to reap. Residents wanted to protect the neighbourhood's safety and the security from the 'rapists and drug addicts' that they fear would prey on their children (Kawash 1998; Lyon-Callo 2001; Smith 1996; Hande 2018). The complex, vibrant and agential life stories of marginalized peoples evaporate behind a projected image of abjection: the paranoid nightmare in the minds of those docile worker citizens of capitalist-colonialism who rest on the moral incontestability of hard work and homeownership. At the same time, many among the working class - especially trades people and builders – are dependent on development, the constant building, renovating and upgrading that characterizes a gentrifying neighbourhood. Co-opted by capital, the working/middle classes actually have a collateral stake in gentrification and the removal of poor bodies from the Landscape.[36]

[36] Lyon-Callo (2001: 197) relays in his article about NIMBYism that lower-income/working class residents who are

Since the lumpen is comprised of those who are denied a market for their labour, attempting to subsume the lumpen into the working class, as many theorists want to do (Palmer and Héroux 2016; Bradley and Lee 2018), evades the schism between the working class and those excluded from paid labour (as capitalism depends upon there being less jobs than workers) due to intersectional embodied differences. For instance, Sakai (1989) tells the important story of how white immigrants from Europe felt entitled to the jobs that people of colour had developed (predominantly but not exclusively Indigenous, Latino, Chinese and Black) during the United States colonial era economy. With bourgeois support, diverse legal and non-legal strategies were employed, including white gang violence and genocide, to exclude people of colour from the labour market and from citizenship (through burdensome fees to outright murder) and thus making them vulnerable to lumpenization (Sakai 1989). Similarly, the heteropatriarchal dominance of the working class is instrumental in the precarity of women and non-sexual/gender conforming peoples. Women have been ghettoized in unpaid social reproduction work and low paying 'feminized' labour, while sexual and gender non-conforming peoples have been historically discriminated against in the legal labour market and thus move into the sex-trade and other forms of lumpen economies where criminalization and stigmatization contribute to high rates of violence and murder (Golkar 2016; Rev and Geist 2017).

The white cis-hetero-male dominated labour market is also ablist. The abstraction of labour theorized by Marx (1990), where all bodies are measured according to the normative and narrow set of demands of capitalist production, means that people who are born without, or at some point in their lives, lose (i.e., through the repetitive stress, immiseration, injury or onset of

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angry about gentrification also resist shelters being built in their area because it reinforces their feelings of being "unwanted," "unimportant" and dispensable with in the larger urban geography of the capitalist city.

impairment as part of the aging process, or even social rejection due to psychic difference) the capacities needed by the capitalist production process, are rendered disabled. Russell (2001, 92) points out that "placing the focus on curing the so-called abnormality and segregating the incurables into the administrative category of disabled, medicine bolstered the capitalist business interest to shove less exploitable workers with impairments out of the workforce." For instance, employers are only interested in hiring disabled workers if they can pay lower wages or access government subsidies and thus the majority of disabled people are consigned to permanent unemployment and poverty (Russell and Malhotra 2002), to the realm of lumpenization.

Denning (2010, 274) calls for a "decentering of the wage relation in life under capitalism." As peoples without a market for their labour, lumpen sociality not only questions the labour-capital relation, but steps, relatively speaking, outside it. Russell and Malhotra (2002, 215) state that: "if workers were provided with a social safety net that adequately protected them through unemployment, sickness, disability, and old age, labour would gain a stronger position from which to negotiate their conditions of employment. American business retains its power over the working-class through a fear of destitution that would be weakened if the safety net were to actually become safe." Forced destitution of those with disabilities reinforces that there is no life to be had outside of the paid labour relation. Thus, disability theorist/artist Sunera Taylor (2004, n.p.) advocates for an anti-paid labour movement: "Shouldn't we, of all groups, recognize that it is not work that would liberate us (especially not menial labor made accessible or greeting customers at Walmarts across America), but the right to not work and be proud of it? How would this shift in thinking affect the goals and attitude of those concerned with the rights of impaired people or the self-image of those who are impaired themselves?" Or more

pointedly, how would this impact the paid labour relation? To have people surviving other than through paid labour is intolerable to colonial-capitalism.

− *The fluidity between reserve army of labour and lumpen/immiseration*

While the lumpen are distinct from the working class, there is also a fluidity between them. Marx (1990,784) refers to unemployed workers as the reserve army of labour considered to be a "necessary product of accumulation" and a by-product of technological advancement (Ferguson and McNally 2015). A certain percentage of permanent unemployment, which fluctuates with cyclical waves of economic expansion and crisis, is necessary for capitalism to function (Harvey 2006a; Russell 2001). Marx accorded a historical role to the reserve army, which is to keep workers insecure by spurring competition among workers and thus keeping wages low, threatening union strength, and keeping workers docile and reactionary for fear of losing their jobs (Marx 1990). Russell (2001) notes that roll-backs in welfare send more people into the labour market including those with disabilities in order to increase competition and thus depress wages. As an impoverished sector of the globalized working class, the reserve army of labour is racialized, migrant, gendered, queered and disabled, those expendable workers who are at times construed as threatening white cis-male working class jobs (Sakai 1989).

Marx (1990, 799) observed that the more that capital accumulates, the more the situation of the worker declines in terms of wages: "[i]t makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole." The greater the industrial reserve army, the greater is "official pauperism" (Marx 1990, 797). Theories of the natural rate of unemployment (needed to keep inflation down) and uneven development tells us that the privilege of the few

necessitates the impoverishment of the many and thus there will never be full employment globally (Hansen 2015; Russell 2001; Smith 1984). As crisis swells the ranks of the reserve army, poverty, debt and precarity move unemployed workers towards lumpenproletarian life strategies (Hansen 2015; Palmer and Héroux 2017; Sakai 2017; Stern 2006; Wang 2018): alter-economic often criminalized sub-cultures of work, trade or other forms of community social reproduction economies of subsistence, working cheap and/or 'under the table,' having wages offset by government employment programs being forced to volunteer in order to participate in the social realm of labour, and/or receiving government social support and/or charity.

One can also move from the reserve army/working class to lumpen life as a result of immiseration, the using up of the workers body by capital due to overwork, repetitive stress, injury on the job, wages too low to sustain health, or onset of impairment as part of the aging process (Marx 1990). Once in a lumpen social positionality, neoliberal roll backs on social supports adds to the cumulative traumas of social abandonment, such as malnutrition, stress, lack of sleep, stigmatization, lack of medical care, vulnerability to violence, institutionalization, settlerism, racism, symbolic violence, bigotry, etc. Such constant marginalization then contributes to more permanent disabling conditions and shortened life expectancy, like a ball gaining speed as it rolls down a hill.

While unemployment is a dimension of working class experience and thus consciousness, lumpenism is not. Once you have moved from the reserve army into the permanent outside of the labour relation, you are no longer politically or historically relevant. The working class, while under constant attack, are considered a legitimate sector, whereas the bourgeois ideological apparatus whips up a moralizing narrative of the violence and abjection of

lumpen life (the absolute Other to the good worker), that effectively scares workers into wanting to keep their jobs, a symbol of social legitimacy, status and security.



Figure 4: Anti-gentrification poster project #1, *End the War on the Poor*, Monday Art Group (2016)

Despite the fluidity between the reserve army and the lumpen, Marx fails to theorize lumpen bodies into history even though they turn out to be the bodies most economically and politically oppressed. Marx's association of poor people with ignorance and moral degradation indicates a classist bias clothed in cultural comment that clouds his ability to analyze this socio-economic location adequately. Indeed, once the lumpen emerges with a different class dialectic than the working class, they are cleaved from the revolutionary project. However, it seems clear that this is a failure in the theory.

Such societally sanctioned stigmatization of lumpen bodies holds in place a false consciousness whereby workers are threatened into voting conservative against their class interest. As workers experience wage freezes and increased precarity they are positioned materially as more apt to be in antagonistic relation to those that are characterized as dependant on social services, which, as mentioned, drives them to support government roll-backs said to

lower taxes.[37] Not only do the working/middle classes tend to have a general disdain for lumpen people, but it is even more indicative of their investments in the labour form of value that they also tend to disdain injured workers. According to Lippel (2007), injured workers are stigmatized as frauds and treated like criminals as much by their fellow workers as by society at large. Within settler-bourgeois strategies to maximize exploitation and profit, difference and homogenization are played off each other by keeping the working/middle classes from allying with the lumpen.

While a fluid connectivity exists between the reserve army and the lumpen, workerization as the ultimate destiny of the lumpen is not realistic. At some point when labour cannot, or refuses be disciplined or abstracted, it becomes the preoccupation of the social imaginary to rehabilitate the lumpen into a proper labourer or capitalist subject, however pointless such a project might be. Thus, the figure of the lumpen is ideologically useful to the bourgeois settler: it is where colonial-capitalism projects its fantasy of the rightness, the normativity of the alienated labour-capitalist relation and its denial of the actual character of capitalism as producing the lumpen as part of its normal functioning (as opposed to it being the fault of the individual). It is in the constant condemnation of the lumpen figure that the rest of the classes reinforce and reinvigorate private property relations and keep the dialectic focused on the wage relation as opposed to ongoing original accumulation, dispossession and private property: the colonial content of capitalism (Denning 2010).

The answer to the challenge posed by the existence of the lumpen to capital cannot be more jobs. Besides the fact that full employment within capitalism is a myth, a demand for jobs

[37] Workers are asked to develop an ethical allegiance to the lumpen when they are materially being overworked and under taxed. As the capitalist society as a whole whips up a moralizing frenzy against the lumpen – they become more likely targets than so-called 'successful' billionaires who are actually the cause of worker immiseration. The failure of the theory to uphold lumpenproletarianism as a permanent feature of capitalism only obscures this material dynamic.

raises the implication that people be required to proletarianize in order to have a historical role. If so, what we have is basically an affirmation of the institutional project of rehabilitation or forced assimilation to the capitalist/colonial norm, to the violent wage relation: a forced integration of Othered bodies prior to those bodies finding a basis for resistance in their lumpen existence and position within or against colonial-capitalism.

− *The global lumpen*

The history of European colonization and the capitalist white supremacist cis-hetero-patriarchal, ablist power structure that it forces on the world means lumpenization is a global phenomenon with increasing relevance (Worsley 1972; Davis 2006; Dennings 2010; Erevelles 2011; Puar 2017). Madoff and Sweezy (in Foster et al. 2011, n.p.) comment that the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation has impacted the entire global capitalist system, with the "third world" experiencing the worst with "unemployment rates that range up to 50 percent" with "destitution, hunger, and starvation" being "increasingly endemic." Through neocolonialism, accumulation by dispossession, structural adjustment and uneven development, the global north continues its project of hyper-exploitation of non-white labour and Land. Furthermore, the pressures of climate change cause plutocratic elites to accelerate their Land grab, undermining environmental protections and pushing Indigenous peoples, peasants, those who practice subsistence economics and other non-human relatives off the Land making subsistence livelihoods extremely difficult (Ince 2014).

The neocolonial force of the global north over the world takes the form of a disabling transnational capitalist/colonial discipline that impact gendered/queered/disabled bodies in amplified and particular ways (Erevelles 2011; Puar 2017). As such, "the majority of the world's disabled people live in the global periphery" (Connell 2011, 1373) and as the United Nations

notes (in Erevelles 2011, 18), in the so-called Third World up to 20% of the general population is disabled. In the global south, disability is produced through extreme hyper-exploitation, immiseration, toxification, dangerous work conditions, lack of social, health, disability supports and social reproduction infrastructure. Most obviously, the desire of the north to maintain economic hegemony leads to both covert and overt wars that produce large populations of injured/impaired former fighters, civilians and torture victims and those suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, as well as decimated infrastructures that cause lumpen and informal economic relations to take root in ungovernable spaces. Such necro-economics configure populations as expendable (Erevelles 2011; Puar 2017).

War and global economic oppression also cause migration. However, peoples from peasant, subsistence or lumpen communities experiencing the worst from dispossession and displacement from their Lands, toxification, hyper-exploitation, and persecution, are not able to migrate because of lack of access to the privileges of mobility in their home countries (Gilbert 2005). As well, Chapman and Withers (2019, 236-237) discuss the historical eugenic biases against disabled peoples in the immigration systems of the West, as well as against racialized workers, such as the Chinese Head Tax policy and the use of disability to exclude Black workers. Meanwhile, those individuals who do manage to migrate to the West, nevertheless, also carry trauma, which for many persists through the extremely challenging conditions of racism and structural barriers to class and social security in their new white-supremacist home nations (Bauman 2004; Ferguson 2008) making them very vulnerable to disability and lumpenization. Conversations with migrant women who lived for a time at the local women's shelter reveal that

they grapple with the relative privileges of the global north[38] as compared to the difficulties of lumpen and disabled bodies and the worst of capitalist exploitation and necro-politics experienced in the global south (Nima 2015-2020). At the same time, they report that in their back-home communities there tends to be more supportive community and family ties that help sustain members who are not able to seel their labour (Federici 2019; Nima 2015-2020), whereas surviving within the privileged space of the global north is more individualized and it is difficult to attain decent living conditions relative to the local standard.

The global plutocratic elite take advantage of the crisis they sow. Increasing globalization and uneven development on the global stage has laid the ground for new rounds of accumulation where workers in developed capitalist/colonial nations experience a stagnation of wages due to the increased profits from highly exploited labour in the global south and former eastern block countries (Hansen 2015). Foster et al. (2011, n.p.) notes that in "the advanced capitalist nations… more than 30 million men and women, in excess of 10 percent of the available labor force, are unemployed" and that in the richest nation, the United States, "poverty rates are rising even in a period of cyclical upswing." Western style development flows resources of non-white nations to support a general higher standard of living of white supremacist nations, but also enriches an increasingly small, plutocratic corporate global elite – the smallest, richest elite in history. In a world of economic crisis, neoliberalism, austerity, and increasing urbanization, Foster et al. (2011) claims that the lumpen actually outnumber the working class by double on the global scale with almost half the world's population living below the poverty line (and in some cases extreme poverty line), in states of propertylessness,

[38] I use the term global north to describe privileged economic space, however, this is not to erase that within the north there exist ever deepening conditions of neoliberal driven destitution, and within the Canadian state, colonial genocidal oppression of Indigenous communities.

dispossession, many living in slums, and in a condition of so-called "human waste" (Bauman 2004, 92; Davis 2006; Denning 2010; Gidwani and Reddy 2011; McIntyre and Nast 2011).

As people have little to no options for survival, lumpen survival strategies that contravene social mores and laws (Stern 2006) swell next to geographies of globalized wealth creating the ground for battles over space. Gidwani and Reddy (2011, 1643) talk about a "parasitic" and "speculative urbanization" that transforms "wasteful spaces in the urban catchment into spaces of value." Such evictions of slum dwellers, hawkers, beggars and small scale service providers are made in order to clear space for bourgeois life, for their relaxing green spaces, their "ultra-modern office complexes," "glittering malls" and condo towers, for tourism and entertainment (Gidwani and Reddy 2011, 1645). Shoved into the margins of the city, living in precarity, working in dangerous, often criminalized conditions, and living on over industrialized and toxified Lands, the lumpen are blatantly treated in the most instrumental and disposable manner in cities all over the world (Davis 2006; Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Guevara 2008; Worsley 1972).

− *Raw materials for institutions*

In that the lumpen dialectic points to the very corrupt basis of capitalism in violent dispossession from Land, the lumpen become targets for a particular kind of stigmatization and control and, as objects of fear, an excuse to bolster the security state (Wang 2018; Wacquant 2009). The lumpen, deemed non-productive, degenerate, social waste within capitalist colonialism, is recuperated as raw materials for the security state's institutional industries. Razack (2011, 14) comments: "[a]lcoholism and Aboriginality simultaneously mark the body as one that contains within it the poisonous seeds of its own demise. Police perform the routines of maintaining public space free from contamination, duties that involved the arrest and detention

of degenerate bodies, but that cannot also include the duty to actively care for such surplus, contaminated, and wounded populations." The network of institutions that warehouse and treat lumpen bodies is theorized by Foucault (1995) as a carceral continuum which today includes prisons, asylums, orphanages, half-way houses, poor houses, seniors homes, social housing, shelters, sites of social work, hospitals, as well as, in a global and settler colonial context, reserves, slave plantations, residential schools, foster care, black sites, refugee camps, detention centers, etc.[39] As institutions are calculated to be inhumane in order to maintain a constant pressure on the sale of labour as the primary access to resources for life (Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014; Palmer and Héroux 2017; Malhotra and Russel 2002).[40] Whereas the working/middle classes might experience the power of economic coercion in the Foucauldian sense of governance, power/knowledge, discipline and docility, Indigenous/lumpen peoples will experience power as extra-economic coercion, as corporal violence (Ince 2016), the overt necro-economics of genocide, criminalization, debility and institutionalization.

It could be said that being subject to institutionalization, perhaps, provides the lumpen its most significant political economic role within colonial-capitalism. As Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe (in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014, 13) write: "[t]he stated political rationalization behind imprisonment is the fight against crime, but the effects are profit making and the social control and removal of those same groups that were once enslaved, killed in colonial violence, or confined in poor houses and medical institutions." Through institutionalization, the lumpen contribute to the economy in a variety of ways as human raw material inputs into the

[39] As carcerality describes the relational structure of colonial-capitalism, factories and schools are also included in Foucault's (1995) carceral archipelago as the disciplinary tools of the capitalist state for middle-class bodies.
[40] Indeed, the cost of raising welfare rates and providing affordable housing is cheaper than the ineffective institutional 'services' that governments provide which reinforces two thesis: that the government wants poverty to hurt (Chapman and Withers 2019), and that it is concerned with maintaining the institutional industry through which that hurt is meted out – regardless of cost.

institutional industry. Prisoners of institutions are also consumers of use values such as industrialized food, clothes, work related products, pharmaceuticals, incarceration technologies and treatments, and of the physical space of the prison. The lumpen are also subject to highly exploitative forms of labour extraction within the institutional context (for instance sheltered workplaces for those with intellectual disabilities, workfare programs and prison labour). The capture, treatment and management of institutionalized bodies as raw materials creates employment for the non-lumpen (Russell 2001). With small towns failing in the era of deindustrialization, a prison and/or similar institution can fill the void by providing jobs and service contracts (Gilmore 2009; Stern 2006; Story 2019; Wang 2018). While the ideology and practice of institutionalization clearly serves the interests of structural power, (settler colonial government and plutocratic/business/money interests), it is the professional class that advocates for, designs and administers institutional technologies and progressive reformers who drive the perceived need for a carceral industry. The carceral industry[41] then provides jobs to the middle and privileged working classes as political officials, research experts, prison administrators, social workers, legal and medical professionals, police, guards, construction workers, maintenance people, service industries etc. (Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014; Russell and Malhotra 2002; Temple Jones 2017). As Chapman et al. (2014, 10) note, institutions are places of scientific research in how to establish the categories of normalcy and the treatments for those differences that are pathologized, indeed, "[i]nstitutions provided places of research and domains of power for institutional superintendents, served as a means to control and segregate a range of individuals perceived as socially deviant, and offered a cost-effective method to deal with lifelong dependency." Thus, in a community discussion among women

[41] The carceral continuum dovetails with gentrification in the removal of bodies from urban spaces and the construction of those, previously lumpen Landscapes, as professionalized.

inhabitants of a shelter, it is clear that such institutions are just make work projects for social workers to collect a paycheck without actually providing services or a safe space. Shelters are understood to be simply warehouses for the homeless (Shelter Video Project 2017-2020)

Within many institutional contexts, folx have been forced to labour unpaid as a cost saving strategy.[42] They perform such work as sewing straightjackets (in some cases for use on themselves), producing farmed food for employees of the institution (while the incarcerated eat slop), doing grounds maintenance, dishes and cleaning, repairing. In the Toronto Hospital for the Insane (now closed), inmates report being told that they had to work for their keep. Suggestions by patients that they should be paid was seen as evidence of their delusional state (Reaume 2009). Work was designated according gender, with males having a wider diversity of work and women doing a smaller spectrum of typical women's work such as sewing and cleaning (Reaume 2009). In the Canadian women's prison system, folx are paid a meagre sum for their work, however, in the neoliberal era, wages are recouped by the institution by charging for food, canteen items and rent (Hansen 2018). Prisoners are also involved in the production of commodities which institutions can then sell at a vastly increased price on the market, or fulfill production service contracts for corporations and/or government at a reduced price.[43] The rehabilitative claims of incarceration programs are negligible contrasted with the budget value of free inmate labour (Reaume 2009). As Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe (in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014, 6) point out: "previously impossible 'development' -- whether of slaves, First Nations, paupers, criminals, queer/gender non, or intellectually, physically or psychiatrically disabled people -- aimed toward integration into society as menial laborers." Thus, the production of

[42] According to Reaume (2009: 144) some patients whose family paid for their place in the institution were exempt from labouring. Hansen (2018) writes that those prisoners with outside supports are able gain more access to resources, which brings the class system into the institutional walls.

[43] Sheltered workshops where peoples with disabilities do assembly line work contracts for corporations and small business are increasingly being shut down in favour of neoliberal 'integration' into the job market.

surplus life is intertwined with institutional spaces raising the question as to where and how capital accumulates, not only in the usual way of exploiting labouring bodies, but through coerced idleness or warehousing of bodies whose labour is deemed hyper-exploitable and extraneous, who exist as fodder for institutional industries. Carceral sites where "care" is meted out at the barest minimum to only give the illusion that precarious lives are actually being sustained. Perpetuating the myth of the costs of 'supporting' poor people through social services enables the capitalist class to continue to keep the working class and the lumpen divided. Meanwhile, it is the plutocratic class who have rigged the tax system in their favor and against the working class, while they hold the whole of society hostage to the threat of wage and job loss. Where the working class fails to negotiate with the bourgeois class, they turn their attention to the government to protect their buying power (through lower taxes) at the expense of the lumpen.

− *Charity relations*

As the constitutive outside, the lumpen exists in the public consciousness as the spectacularized unknown, the fetishized objects of the bourgeois value system. Bourgeois ideology performs the symbolic violence of obscuring their own role in the creation of the lumpen positionality and identity (dispossession/private property and alienation) by blaming individuals for their condition while exercising their moral egos through charity relations (Chapman and Withers 2019; Lyon-Callo 2008). Lyon-Callo (2008), in his discussion of shelter work and in particular the relationship between shelter staff and clients, observes that "guests" of the shelter are considered to have certain deficiencies, which cause their homelessness. Lyon-Callo (2008, 116, 119) reports that despite efforts to politicize the understanding of their work by certain shelter staff, the persistent view was that their work was defined as providing 'help' to shelter guests to

“identify the traits they need to work on to prevent a recurrence of homelessness.” The staff is encouraged to have the attitude that they know what is best for the guests and if guests don’t follow the help that workers give, that they are subject to discipline for their own good, such as being kicked out of the shelter (Lyon-Callo 2008)

In a discussion of Indigenous deaths in police custody, Razack (2011, 22) observes that settlers apply the categorization disabled to Indigenous bodies in order to erase their humanity and to declare them inherently faulty and therefore as lives, not only not worth supporting or saving, but marked for the “killing indifference” of settler society. Disability viewed as a “medical condition” means that the suffering of those who are disabled is seen to reflect the unnaturalness of their embodied difference, and “not a condition of oppression” (Razack 2011, 21). Razack (2011, 20) points out that, “disabled people are disturbed by their marginalization and non disabled people are disturbed by what they experience as a reminder of their own fragility, vulnerability and mortality.” In order to deal with this disturbance, the able bodied become invested in their own perceived normalcy. The establishment of what is “normal” creates the ground of societal “expulsion” of disabled and those people with difference (Razack 2011, 21). Instead, the question of disability becomes a question of “humane treatment” as opposed “human rights” (Razack 2011, 21). For the able bodied whose wholeness as fully human is sanctified, their posture becomes one of pity and "the promised salvation of aid and curative help" (Levinas in Razack 2011, 21). Thus, the disruption to the normative that is signalled by disability “generates the ethical requirement to remedy it, a task that promises redemption for those not "suffering" disability themselves” (Razack 2011, 21).

Lyon-Callo (2008) outlines some of the barriers to shelter staff taking up the larger political issues of homelessness: a sense of powerlessness to change a very entrenched system;

lack of capacity in terms of already trying to provide services while short staffed; difficulties to do political work because of over-work. Facing these barriers, shelter staff revert to strategies of 'helping' based on personalizing the problem of homelessness that reinscribe the toxic charity relation and cements the social workers place within the institutional industry. In reality, individualized forms of rehabilitation, social service and charity do little to change lumpen lives, and more often they become an additional source of violence against lumpen bodies (Chapman and Withers 2019).

− *Hyper-focus on the labour form of value vs. consumption*

As mentioned previously, within a system where value is seen to be produced through the wage relation, lumpen bodies, particularly those who are disabled, are simply considered to not produce value and are thus a detriment to the profitability of the capitalist operation (Russell and Malhotra 2002; Lippel 2007). If value production is seen to operate primarily between the workers and the capitalists, then everyone else, i.e., the majority in the world, are seen as dependant on the waged (who pay more taxes) and the government (who redistributes the taxes -- hopefully at least somewhat -- to the social safety net) for their survival. This fundamental capitalist-state-worker relation defines the precarity, vulnerability and ultimately the expendability of those who are not considered productive. More so, this situation reinforces that the lumpen have a dialectical relationship to the working class. However, I would argue that, while lumpen peoples do not engage in commodity production, they have two very important (and under-theorized) roles in the economy: the consumption of use values and social reproduction.

To only focus on the production of value through marketized labour is to fetishize it (Rioux 2014). While value under capitalism is thought to be produced through the mixing of

labour and raw materials into a commodity to be exchanged, it is also true that value must also be destroyed (through consumption) in order to make way for new values to be produced and consumed (Harvey 1998; Ferguson 1999; Rioux 2015). The denigration of lumpen economic life, particularly notions of non-productivity and dependence, suffer from an over-emphasis on production within the economy, and a lack of emphasis on the important role of consumption. Production of value without its consumption, as we know, causes economic crisis (Marx 1990; Harvey 2006a). Thus, the lumpen can be seen to have an important economic role in the recreation of the ground of accumulation.

Furthermore, the monetary resources that *are* distributed to the lumpen (whether via government transfers, informal economic activities, or via institutional support) are for the most part immediately put back into the hands of the capitalists through rent, the purchasing of commodities for survival and/or paying off debt. The notion that the poor eat up social resources or cause debt is a fallacy. Furthermore, as Nancy Fraser (2014) points out, the maldistribution of value causes crisis such that if the lumpen strata becomes too large (or is subject to welfare or disability cutbacks, or denied income) then the buying power of society as a whole is diminished through its general impoverishment and the economy goes into stagnation and then inflation. On the other hand, if the lumpen gets too small, it would mean that more people are productively employed and thus there would result a surplus in commodities and services without the ability to destroy those values through consumption.

With the tendency to increase corporate profits by cheapening production (by increasing the toxic nature of industrial inputs and the lack of safety on the work floor for instance), the shrinking middle-class moves increasingly towards boutique-made and organic commodities leaving lumpen bodies to fulfill the important function of buying and consuming the low-end

commodities of mass production. Lumpen bodies are literally the ground through which mass-produced commodities are processed. Lumpen bodies are treated like machines for the realization and destruction of the lowest forms of commodity value, which also have very little to no real use value within them: barely nutritional (if at all) industrial food, synthetic clothing and furnishings, toxic homes, commodities of planned obsolescence, dollar store crap otherwise known as mass-produced commodities made in hyper-exploitative labour conditions in the global south. As such, vulnerablized bodies are caught in necro-economic relations across north-south space within a framework of global extreme corporate profit, toxification and garbage pollution of the Land.

− *Social reproduction and ongoing primitive accumulation*

While not everyone is a paid labourer, everyone works. As explained, a hyper-focus on the surplus labour or profit production part of the process of capitalist accumulation serves to obscure a distinct lumpen political economy. Indeed, feminist social reproduction theory and ongoing primitive accumulation, while they haven't to date been applied to the lumpen, provides a more adequate basis for understanding a lumpen economics. Fraser (2014) contends that if the hidden abode of the commodity is the labour conditions of production and the history primitive accumulation, then the hidden abode of production is the role of social reproduction and ongoing primitive accumulation.[44] For Fraser (2014, 56), a more wholesome inclusion of feminist, postcolonial and ecological thought into analyses of capitalism brings into focus the "non-marketized social relations" that comprise the "background conditions" necessary for capitalism to function at all.

[44] What we don't see in the commodity is the labour exploitation and colonial theft of Land and resources that makes the production of commodities possible. What we don't see in the site of production and labour exploitation is the unpaid labour of those who sustain the producers – and themselves when redistribution fails.

Social reproduction theory examines the forms of unpaid labour and non-monetary exchange practices that occur as an aside to commodity production, but which are integral to the reproduction of the labour-capital relation (Ferguson 2008). Such non-marketized relations have the important role of allowing "owners to pay workers less" since the worker is not relying solely on their wages to reproduce their labour power (Fraser 2008, 59). Marxist feminists have focussed on the unpaid (Rioux 2014) work of women in the household, specifically in birthing and rearing children as the next generation labour force. Social reproduction is understood to increase the surplus value appropriated within capitalism since it supports the reproduction of labourers at a cost that is free to the employer (Ferguson 2008; Fraser 2014; Gibson-Graham 2008; Hennessy 1994; Katz 2001; Rioux 2014). For Katz (2001), social reproduction also refers to how wealth is redistributed by governments, civil society, by social groups and individuals. Such redistribution supports labourers by, for instance, providing education at a cost free to the capitalist (Katz 2001). Social reproduction theory is expanded by Fraser (2014) to include a series of legal practices such as self-provisioning (i.e., growing food), informal reciprocity (i.e., bartering), and state transfers (i.e., welfare) as being outside the market economy but still integral to it. Ferguson (2008 48-49) helpfully considers social reproduction labor "as a lived, creative experience" as "survival strategies" that generate a sense of "identity and resistance" and that are "constitutive of society." This means that the diversity of everyone's labor (paid and unpaid) is accounted for from the outset. As Federici (2017, 29) points out, social reproduction is "the largest activity on the planet."

Theorists have also drawn on social reproduction to understand how labour is racialized and gendered, drawing our attention to the historical conditions of survival and away from overly abstracted models, which erase embodied specificities (Ferguson 2008; Rioux 2015).

However, social reproduction theory has neglected how bodies become lumpenized which (as discussed) is a phenomenon linked to intersectional realities of bodies in capitalism. Ferguson and McNally (2015, 2, my emphasis) admit some lumpen labour practices as included in social reproduction, however, they continue to center the labour-capital relation as the "nexus of practices through which *working-class* life is produced and reproduced." All these theories, "insist on the determining role of the formal economy" (Rioux 2015, 198) while social reproduction is viewed as an adjunct to the capitalist profit-producing objective.

In the neoliberal period, corporations and the state continue to retreat further away from funding social supports by refusing a livable minimum wage, rolling back on benefits and busting unions, thus, increased precarity puts further pressure on communities to resource themselves via the intensification of social reproduction practices (Fraser 2014) and resort to non-capitalist, informal, or lumpen forms of unpaid work (Wacquant 2009, 84-5; Wang 2018). Spaces of lumpen social reproduction exist in a dialectical tension, both materially and ideologically, with capitalist production and are integral to surviving capitalism's anti-relational logic. As Ferguson (1999, 6-7) asserts, social reproduction is "antithetical to accumulation" which has no regard for actual human needs. Indeed, we would not survive capitalism without social reproduction, but we could live in a social reproduction economy (of use values) without capitalism.

What I propose is actually foregrounding social reproduction over the labour-capital relation, perhaps even disentangling them all together. Doing so is an uptake of Gibson-Graham's (2006, x) critique of "capitalocentrism," which looks to "deconstruct the hegemony of capitalism" and highlight "the diversity of noncapitalist economic activity world-wide." Gibson-Graham (2008, xxii) views such social reproduction work-based survival strategies as micro-

economies that speak to "other worlds" of non-capitalist cultures of resistance (see also Sheppard in Castree and Gregory 2006). Such a focus on "other worlds" involves a disrupting of the binary of capitalist/non-capitalist in order to open up to queer economic landscapes (Gibson-Graham 2006).

Social reproduction theorists have not generally discussed the "other worlds" of the lumpen and thus have ignored important Indigenized/racialized/gendered/ablist perspectives, which would expand the debate. Indeed, the lumpen are mostly marked for faster or slower death (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; McIntyre and Nast 2011; Montag 2005), and thus they indicate that the expendability of populations is a background condition for capitalism, and that social reproduction is a survival strategy. Lumpen social reproduction forms of marginalized, criminalized and/or informal labour include criminalized sex work and drug trade, urban scavenging, panhandling, busking, bottle collecting, opportunism, scamming, bartering, yard sales, recycling, informal work, criminalized appropriation (theft), urban wildcrafting, urban agriculture, Indigenous urban Land Sovereignty practices, gleaning, hunting and fishing, crafting, encampments, shanty town development, freegan living, dumpster diving, recycling, money lending, social survival networks of exchange, nurturing, ceremony, care giving and crisis response, knowledge sharing etc.[45] Bayat (2000, 536) politicizes lumpen social reproduction practices referring to them as 'quiet encroachment' which refers to "non-collective but prolonged direct action by individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives." This level of economic life is invisible, unvalorized, stigmatized and criminalized in the

[45] A gendered division of labour persists in lumpen sociality where cis-males will be involved in more visibly criminalized forms of lumpen work and women tend to be less represented within criminological statistics (Sakai, 2017). At the same time, women and lgbttqq2sia+ will more often be accomplices in crime, work in the sex trade and do other forms of social reproduction labour, which are important dimensions of lumpen survival.

bourgeois worldview (Gibson-Graham 2008), but exists in communities and neighbourhoods that experience decline, impoverishment and economic abandonment (and thus are also prone to gentrification).

The failure of the labour-capital relation as a relevant focal point is even more stark when thinking through Indigenous labour practices (Coulthard 2014; Koukkanen 2011). For Indigenous people, the history of their struggles is based in rights to traditional economic practices, hunting and fishing rights, ceremony and sovereignty over their traditional Land. Kuokkanen (2011) writes about Indigenous women's economic practices that pre-date and have persisted throughout colonial/capitalist hegemony. For the sake of this discussion, these non-commodified forms of Indigenous labour could be seen as within a broadened understanding of social reproduction.

Often such lumpen/Indigenous economic practices as those mentioned above augment social safety net payments (in nations where they exist) in the forms of state transfers, workers compensation, disability, welfare, universal medical, which some consider a social commons. As such, the informal social reproduction self-sustaining work of the lumpen could be seen to offset the failures of the social safety net in a similar manner as self-provisioning is seen to offset low wages. A dialectic that arises from the functioning of an economic commons is quite different than one over the wage relation with a private enterprise. Taking up the idea of the commons as a basis of struggle, however, needs to be contextualized within specific colonial histories (Fortier 2017). As Coulthard (2014) points out, leftist calls to enact commons as a counter practice to privatized and marketized neoliberal production of space, need to account for the Indigenous Lands on which this commons is to be enacted. For Coulthard (2014, 12), decolonizing the notion of the commons also means engaging with Indigenous principles of

"reciprocity, non-exploitation and respectful co-existence." The Two-Row Wampum Treaty expresses the relationship of non-interference between Indigenous and settler peoples, thus, the dialectic between Indigenous peoples and bourgeois settlers is one of sovereignty and treaty relations within which any other settler commoning practices needs to be understood. Shifting the struggle to one about commons directly addresses the issues of historical dispossession, the private property paradigm, labour exploitation and the lack of distribution of social wealth that makes capitalism possible to begin with.

To broaden the economic relevance of lumpen/Indigenous social reproduction, we can see that the dialectic between the working class and the bourgeoisie is over the rate of exploitation (proportional division of profits) and control over the means of production (workers seizing the means of production), whereas the dialectic between the lumpen proletariat and bourgeois-settler society is over access to, and expansion of the social safety net commons towards the abolition of private property and the decommodification of labour towards an understanding of 'every body' as value producing. A lumpen social reproduction politics can be seen as a demand for the commoning of social resources, not as a future utopian liberated space, but as a current practice of struggle via economic (understood as also cultural) relationalities that exist on the ground, in and around and not fully subsumed by colonial-capitalism: lifeworlds or alternative projects that have more to do with self-provisioning networks of resistance, survival, endurance, Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization (Gibson-Graham 2006; Povinelli 2011; Coulthard 2014).

Notes towards a lumpen politics: heterogeneity and crip politics

Establishing a lumpen political economy necessarily leads to the development of a lumpen politics. Indeed, the lumpen have no political representative (Dennings 2010) to advocate for

their economic inclusion and thus little to no class investment in the state that would result from anything other than 'false consciousness'[46] or bribery (as much discussed by Marx (1937) in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*). Poor folx who are not inherently invested in bourgeois ideology and social structures and therefore are not in class allegiance with the other dominant classes, are a spectacularized political hot potato rather than an economic or political constituent. Any attention from the politician class that the lumpen do get is for charity, which as said, is a relation of violence. Even within non-profit organizations and/or with arts/activism/academic projects that intend to engage low-income/Indigenous people, lumpen bodies have little significant agency or resources for organizing.[47]

Eldridge Cleaver (quoted in Worsley 1972, 223) says that "the students focus their rebellions on the campuses, the working class on factories and picket lines, and the lumpen on the streets" to which I would add, Indigenous peoples focus their resistance on the Land. Question remains, on what basis can these (and many more) movements understand their relationality to each other within structures of historically configured hierarchical power and thus join in a fortified common struggle. The lack of lumpen participation in Left movements is not an indication of their corruptibility or lack of consciousness or interest, but rather is an indication of the lack of accessibility and even pertinence of these movements to lumpen peoples (Worsley 1972) indicating that ablism, classism, racism, gender/sexuality discrimination and coloniality are in operation (Kip in Bourke et al. 2011). Stallybrass (1990, 80) proposes that for a class to form, it is not enough to "endure specific economic conditions," what is necessary is "communal, national, or political organization." While the Left has not necessarily effectively

[46] False consciousness understood as arising out of the idea of political representation for lumpen folx being inconceivable by the society as a whole.

[47] Organizations in Toronto that do try to work within a paradigm of lumpen agency include Parkdale Activities and Recreation Centre, Sistering 24 Hour Drop-In and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, a political organization that also represents lumpen activism.

represented the lumpen in their organizations, Indigenous peoples, peoples of color, prisoners, sex workers, trans, those disabled, low-income, drug users and migrants (etc.) have been on the front lines of their own resistance movements, as well as individuals from these sectors playing key roles in other (non-lumpen) political struggles.

For example, drug users organized to form the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users in 1998 to represent and activate their issues around criminalization, contested urban space and harm reduction in order to create the possibility for drug users to live "healthy productive lives" (VANDU, n.d.). Dennings (2010, 284) reports on the emergence of a union called the Self-Employed Women's Association in Ahmedabad (in the Indian state of Gujarat), which, by 2004, became the largest union in India consisting of "rag-pickers, home-based chindi and garment stitchers, bidi rollers, vegetable vendors" as well as shirt fabric producing cooperatives, waste paper recyclers, office cleaners, embroiderers, cart pullers, as well as banking and health care co-operatives and midwives. McLennan (in Bourke et al. 2011, 391) tells of the Ottawa Pan-Handlers Union formed in 2003 by homeless and street-involved peoples "as an experiment in defense and empowerment via radical street-level democracy" and to assert that their modes of survival are in fact forms of labour and that the street is their workplace. Such lumpen struggles and individuals may be seen as generating class representation organic to the lumpen. As such, it is not so much that the lumpen can't form a class (as Marxists posit), but that they are undermined from doing so by a lack of consciousness and effort of the established Left.

If the common struggle were rooted in confronting dispossession from Land within a decolonial frame, then at least a theoretical commonality would emerge. Working class political economy bypasses the primary dialectic of colonial dispossession and the privatization of property when it founds its struggle with the settler-bourgeoisie on negotiating (and thus

normalizing) the coercive wage relation (Coulthard 2014; Hansen 2015; Rioux 2014). The moment of so-called primitive accumulation is where the political and ethical failure of the capitalist/colonial system is rooted (impacting Indigenous peoples and settlers differentially as noted before). As the historical and legal basis by which peoples become separated from resources provided by the Land for reproducing life, the private property regime is the crux of oppression, exploitation and poverty and the tool by which the capitalist/colonial elites maintain control over people, including the working class (Blomley 2004; Hern 2016). Thus, returning to the dialectics of dispossession and the private property regime (that would be original and ongoing accumulation) would offer a more productive political analysis and lay the grounds for a more inclusive base of resistance that would include Indigenous and lumpen struggles.

Not having an ownership relationship (that is not having ownership capacity) to Land is a key dimension of lumpen positionality. Thus, a critique of the commodification of Land (and life) through private property, the cornerstone of capitalist/colonial ideology, is most evident from a lumpen perspective. If the foundational issue of dispossession is not taken up, then the political relation to the lumpen is left to the realm of goodwill or charity, i.e., outside the dialectic. Inasmuch as lumpen peoples are not in an ownership relation to Land, Indigenous peoples have within their culture a disavowal of Land ownership: “no one can own the Land” (Powless 2020). If the issue of dispossession (through private property) is not taken up, then a decolonial perspective is not activated and the central role of Indigenous peoples in radical anti-capitalist and environmental struggles is not properly accounted for (Coulthard 2014). A return to the moment of dispossession would re-orient the struggle towards the centering of Indigenous peoples and the recognition of the lumpen political subjectivity of being Landless. Thus,

political work that addresses relations to Land is integral to the anti-capitalist and decolonial dimensions of a liberatory struggle.

That said, in a society that seeks the (slower or faster) death of lumpen/Indigenous peoples, survival itself is the ground of the political (Simpson in Razack 2015, 8; Palmater 2016). Everyday street life practices of lumpen folx contest the neoliberal, individualist, wage labour discipline. The lumpen/Indigenous body signifies colonial-capitalist society's failure to reconcile economic and political exclusion with its self-idealization as a liberation producing economic system that is capable of reconciliation with Indigenous Nations (Hartman 2017; Ince 2018; Smith 1990). Stigmatization and bigotry are used to suppress the critical voices of the lumpen viewed as abject and not worthy of public attention; the knowledge that they carry must be negated in order to protect the ideological coherence of the liberal democratic system (Povinelli 2011). Thus, the lumpen finds political significance in that their presence disrupts the perception of a smooth functioning colonial-capitalism (Kawash 1998) and undermines the perception that the legal system that supports it is just; lumpen and especially Indigenous existence is under threat of death as a normative expression of the law (Monture-Angus in Razack 2015, 10).

Indigenous folx living in an urban lumpen mode have a distinct political position based on their particular urban experience and life. For instance, many Indigenous people don't consider themselves homeless just because they are without a rental unit. They may see themselves as wanderers on the Land, as migratory or nomadic as opposed to homeless (Thistle 2017; Two-Crows Tremblay 2018-2020; Bluebird Stickings 2009-2020). While deemed lumpen by its illegality (tickets are regularly given), Bluebird Stickings (2009-2020) understands her inhabitation of railway lines and 'abandoned' urban spaces where nature is pushing back against

industry as an Indigenous relationship to Land.[48] For an Indigenous person to be thought of, and represented as, homeless on their own territory is to re-inscribe the paradigm of settler occupation (Thistle 2017). And yet, the intersection of lumpen and Indigenous life in urban space comes with heightened risks and a unique set of oppressions that can be witnessed in the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, trans and two-spirit people, child apprehension, police violence and death by incarceration (Klein 2014; Palmater 2011). This lumpen Indigenous urban inhabitation represents a mode of spatial persistence and resistance, an assertion of Indigenous sovereignty and connection to territory on the city streets (which are also Land).

At the same time, there does exist overlaps, connections, mutualities, cultural knowledge and economic exchanges within lumpen community between settler and Indigenous members. In the Watkinson Park community in which I work, I have witnessed a certain awareness of Indigenous issues which has inspired empathy for, and solidarity with Indigenous struggles among lumpen settlers. I attribute such understandings to the educational work that Indigenous peoples have done with their settler cohabitants while sharing marginal lumpen spaces, as well as the common (while different) experience of trauma due to structural oppression. These empathies open the possibility of political consciousness and unity across Lumpen settler-Indigenous positionalities.

Furthermore, in a time of environmental catastrophe, when Indigenous peoples globally are on the frontlines of the environmental struggle (Estes 2019; LaDuke 2005), the marginal economies of the lumpen do not have a large carbon footprint due to low production, low

[48] As a settler I am not privy to the codes and interactions of urban Indigenous people, but have had them described to me by Indigenous people with whom I work as I have also partaken in these practices on occasion with Indigenous community members.

consumption, reduced travel, recycling and actually consuming all of what is purchased. Thus, the lumpen may be positioned more in line with ecological necessity having less to lose in the face of massive necessary paradigm shift away from material privilege.

The lumpen represent an embodied, cultural and economic difference that is politically disruptive. As individuals within capitalist-colonialism, we are encouraged to compete, to succeed at becoming homogenous by abstracting our labour according to colonial-capitalist discipline. However, the lumpen resists homogenization and refuses abstraction, and as Stallybrass (1990, 82) argues, the lumpen introduces "heterogeneity" into the dialectic that disrupts the labour/capital binary. In her discussion of racism and capitalism, Bakan (2014, 98-99) writes that the idea of a totality cannot be understood "as purely universalistic" but must be considered "as a contradictory totality dependent upon both difference and its opposite." For Stallybrass (1990, 82), the political is an "interplay between" the "homogenous and the heterogeneous" where normative society (whether liberal or fascist) relies on the "aestheticization of the heterogeneous" as chaotic mob. Breaking with the spectacularization of the lumpen is the beginning of an engagement with the politics of heterogeneity, a politics that works across specific embodied difference. Heterogeneity is a source of social knowledge integral to any liberatory transformation project.

In marxist theory, a heterogeneity of subject positions that contributes to an understanding of the totality of society, creates a more accurate view of the multiple dimensions of interconnected socio-economic and political forces that unfold historically, and thus, ensures a greater possibility of transformation (Ollman 1976, 55). Marxist feminists offer standpoint theory as one way to include diverse and lived experience knowledge into a complex understanding of the totality. Standpoint theory behoves us to engage with the lived

experience/knowledge of the most disenfranchised peoples in order to fully grasp the nature of the totality (Haraway 1988; Harding in Alcoff and Potter 1993; Harstock 2006; Mies 1983) and thus, what specific forms the struggle against capitalist-colonialism should take.

Disability is a significant component of heterogeneity and, as discussed, is an embodied and symbolic dimension of the lumpen identity. Crip theory proposes that bodies are not to be accommodated or rehabilitated into a normative structure, but rather constitute a critical demand that society transform such that all diverse bodies and expressions are valorized. The rather contentious term crip attempts to re-appropriate the derogatory term cripple as a theoretically empowered, desired positionality (McRuer 2006) as opposed to the term disability, which is implies an identity that is based on the marginalization of impaired bodies by the disciplines of normative society (Bone 2017; Shildrick 2005). Erevelles (2010) extends crip theory by understanding racialization through a crip lens where white supremacist society deploys tropes of disability onto racialized bodies deemed non-human, monstrous, criminal, perverse, inhuman, infantile, over/under sexualized, deviant, unintelligent, deficient, irrational, Other, impulse driven, childlike, etc. Other theorists have noted that such tropes are also applied along intersections of gender, Indigeneity, lumpenism, and queerness as justifications for exclusion, control, eugenics, institutionalization and neglect (Lyon-Callo 2002; McLintock 1995; Muñoz et al. 2015; Povinelli 2011; Razack 2011; Shildrick 2005). A particularly fruitful engagement between crip and queer theory notes that disabled bodies are desexualized under compulsory heteronormative able bodiedness, and thus the possibility of their sexuality is deemed queer (Kafer 2003). Queer peoples have been subject, alongside disabled peoples, to pathologization, incarceration, eugenics, medical interventions and rehabilitation.

Social banishment can lead to a perceived necessity to prove social worthiness. For instance, Erevelles (1996) points out that when identity oppression is understood to be socially constructed, it does so at the expense of the disabled body. Disability is actually an embodied difference and not a social attitude applied to what is being reclaimed as a "normal" body. Thus, when oppressed bodies resist their construction as different according to tropes of disability, normativity is re-inscribed. And yet, as these tropes slide across all our bodies, they materialize into actual embodied experiences of difference: the crip body is fluid and indeterminate, spilling over and disturbing the normate (especially within trauma inducing colonial-capitalism). As halifax (2009-2020) notes, while disability represents the feared other, disability is actually within and between us all and at best collectively practiced.

The positive reclamation of crip identity remains contentious and subcultural (Bone 2017) with most people experiencing the disabled label as incredibly disempowering let alone taking on a crip identity. Indeed, the rejection of disability (especially the body stigmatized as 'addicted') as a loaded stereotype placed by normative society on oppressed groups as a justification for stigmatization, exclusion, and exploitation, re-inscribes the oppression of disabled peoples and re-establishes the exclusionary normative (Erevelles and Minear 2010). For instance, Lyon-Callo (2008) disavows the stereotype of drug addiction that is applied to those living as homeless because the addicted body signifies a difference too repulsive to normative society to be able to elicit empathy. Rather, more able-bodied working poor families who are homeless are held up as the pure, morally relatable victim. Or, when Tuck (2009, 412) rejects the difficult stereotypes of trauma placed on Indigenous peoples in what she calls "damage centred research."[49] Or Razack's (2011) problematization of how Indigenous peoples

[49] Tuck (2009) interestingly proposes a desire centered as opposed to damage centered research.

are seen as inherently flawed, as disabled, as opposed to survivors of a violent history who haunt the settler imaginary and its claim to stolen Indigenous Land. However, disability and historical harm are not mutually exclusive, in fact, they are inseparable. The disability community has been very loud in asserting that having a different embodiment does not mean that one is inherently broken (Shildrick 2005) and that recognizing injury and impairment need not come with stigmatization. *Indeed, denying the trauma impacts of oppression on the body turns an impairment or injury into a disability*. A politically intact position would recognize the indispensability of the knowledge held in the bodies of peoples who live with difference and experience embodied impacts of oppression.

Bodily difference, impairment (whether born or onset), brokenness and illness are a fluid and fluxing human condition, a constant, complex and oft times unpredictable social challenge that we collectively and individually face (Fritsch in Fritsch et al. 2016). The lived and critical knowledge of disabled lumpen bodies asserts an ontology of interdependence and intersubjectivity, and thereby exposes the foundational myth of individualism on which capitalist-colonialism is founded (Shildrick 2005). Neglecting or sidelining disability or crip identity evacuates important politics from liberatory movements. A crip politics asks us to orient ourselves towards the most different, excluded, non-normative (and therefore most vulnerablized) and to stand together in struggle across difference at all times (Di Stefano 2015), to overcome ablism, whether that be the form of a settler-bourgeois normative or working class and activist normatives. The disability frame unseats all normatives.

A politics of accessibility is itself transformative and demands that normative society look to disabled peoples for a total overhaul of society on the basis of a refusal of the warehousing of bodies and an ethics of full participation (in the broadest sense) of ‘every

body.'[50] As McRuer (in Fritsch et al. 2016, 125) notes, a crip politics "can invent new ways of countering oppression and generate new forms of being-in-common." It rejects the notion that disabled, transgressive and by extension lumpen bodies should be fixed, made to conform to the settler bourgeois standard while at the same time orients the movement towards a politics of care (Hande 2019). Radical crip theory proposes to embrace a desire for disability as a critical perspective on the ethical basis of reproduction and the limits of humanness (Erevelles 2011; McCruer 2006; Muñoz et al. 2015). While the lumpen are not generally included in crip theory (despite McRuer's (2006) use of the lumpen Crip Gang to introduce crip theory, the lumpen remain largely out of his theory); it is the lumpen who are the constitutive outside that challenges the representational and thus political scope of liberation projects. Rather, we should stand beside those whose disability is made visible and material, those who are most stigmatized by structures of normative power (such as those who use) in order to dismantle such hierarchies of difference (Waterston 1997).

If you could identify liberation objectives for the lumpen, they would be along the particular and interesecting lines of: Indigenous Sovereignty and reconciliation, the abolition of private property and the commodification of labour, the recognition of the value of non-wage, social reproduction labour, radical redistribution of resources,[51] gaining agency and political and social representation, the abolishment of the institutions industry that have sprung up to warehouse lumpen bodies (prisons, hospitals, social work, mental health facilities, rehabilitation), accessing housing and harm reduction including decriminalization of marginalized economic practices and services. These demands could be seen together as rights

[50] This is not to suggest the liberal understanding that everyone should always have access, but speaks to the tensions inherent in an accessibility practice across uneven power where valid reasons may exist to limit access in certain times and places (Fristch in Fristch et al. 2014).
[51] For instance, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty's Raise the Rates campaign for increased social assistance.

to a commons understood both spatially and as collectivized resources. This is different from the Indigenous struggle to extricate from the Canadian state and to practice a resurgent sovereignty on their own historical cultural and Land based terms.

Conclusion

Under the conditions of global capitalist-colonialism, which produces a vast lumpen population, does it make sense that the working class, who actually form a relatively privileged minority worldwide, be the main subject of historical transformation? If we are to truly and accurately consider the global scale of accumulation, we must contend with the lumpen who, as a permanent feature of excluded bodies within colonial-capitalism, might warrant consideration as political subjects with a historical role.

Capitalism focuses on wage labour, and Marx's (1990) analysis of the labour theory of value constructs the worker as the central figure of history. Unfortunately, Marx and Engels (1988) held onto their bourgeois fears and bigotries when it came to difference, and they enfolded a morally armed working class in the arms of the bourgeoisie for a future safe from difference while the lumpen continue to be denied political subjecthood. The under-theorizing of the lumpen has meant that any critique of colonial-capitalism that arises out of lumpen communities is not accounted for and thus the liberatory project is limited.

As permanently excluded from capitalism, the lumpen have a different relationship to the means of production than the working class and thus a potentially different consciousness. Indeed, a lumpen politics is in dialectical conflict with wage labour. A lumpen platform cannot be a right to paid labour, but rather contests the labour-capital relation as a whole. The status of the lumpen in relation to the paid labour regime forms a key historical dialectic that orients us back to the original moment of dispossession. A lumpen politics challenges the condition within

colonial-capitalism of being alienated from Land and having social reproduction labour delegitimized. Maintaining the wage relation (a relation of violence) as the crux of liberatory action maintains the lumpen in an ideological/culturally understood position of dependence and as receivers of charity, while reinforcing the normativizing embodiments of abstract labour.

What the political discourse/struggle forgets is that there is always a critical space, the constitutive outside, the heterogeneous, that which is beyond the reach of the normative, where difference flourishes, but that suffers exclusion. Settler-bourgeois society consistently produces relational and material barriers to solidarity with lumpen communities, even within our activist/academic/artist work. The immediate task is to redress relationships across difference with attention to dethroning the settler-bourgeois subject position and the violent relationalities that flow from it. It is necessary to look to the constitutive outside of colonial capitalist relations, to de-center and decolonize, and commit to a different political ground and liberatory visioning.

For labour to ally with the lumpen and Indigenous peoples to resist and dismantle colonial-capitalism, it would have to ground the struggle in the moment of dispossession and not the wage relation. The moment of dispossession leads to a centering of decolonization and a recognition of non-western and social reproduction economics (as opposed to extraction). The prioritizing of colonialism as a historical condition is to open up space for those other worlds to capitalism, the knowledges and life ways that must be engaged with on their own terms.

The only basis, from the out set, of a liberatory politics then is one of radical inclusion, of a world that valorizes all forms of labour and that distributes life resources to all members. Radical inclusion is the basis for a popularization of political struggle necessary for hegemony. The demand of the lumpen can only be a broad scale paradigm shift in economic relationalities, which also means being in solidarity with resurgent Indigenous economic knowledge and

cultural practice. Indeed, it is a call for a radical ethical reorientation. If the resistance was understood to be based on agential and care filled economic connections across difference, the building of mutual dependency in struggle, and a lateral (or even descending) redistribution of resources, then we could take at least a step away from the double consciousness of performing individualism to survive while we try to enact an actually liberatory politics. This resistance would have to occur in a manner that is grounded historically in Indigenous sovereignty and that builds on an ethical uptake of treaty relations and perhaps the forging of new treaties between settler and Indigenous peoples. A principled struggle would be the death knell of colonial-capitalism as it is totalizing and thus, cannot survive in a multi-economic-cultural world, nor could it survive in an ethical world.

4. Relational Praxis Art: towards a political art that cannot be appropriated

After establishing the political subjecthood and historical role of the lumpenproletariat, the question remains, how to work with this community of intersectionally and diversely non-normative and Indigenous peoples. I argue that left progressive activist, arts and academic modes reproduce the disempowerment of lumpen folx and thus, there needs to be a new method that takes into account the community's specific accessibility requirements. In this chapter I critique bourgeois arts, activist and academic modes and counter propose a relational praxis art, which hopes to recognize and support the political agency and historical participation of lumpen/Indigenous folx and thus cannot be appropriated by capitalist-colonialism.

"The diverse lifeworlds indigenous to the land now called Canada and the United States, like the many qualities and conditions represented by the terms "disability" and "queer," and like poor people's ways of living together and strategies of survival in the face of structural violence, all represent lifeworlds that have lessons of value for the rest of the world, rather than ways of being human that would be best eradicated" (Chapman and Withers 2019, 320).

"In this sense, politicized art would be a matter of developing methods for not only healing and restoring sensuous humanity, but also developing new senses, new *aestheses*" (Haiven 2018, 222).

Introduction

Since 2015, I have been engaged with the Friends of Watkinson Park (FoWP), a community located in a gentrifying neighbourhood called the Junction in West Toronto. The FoWP's work takes place in a small city park that is nevertheless a meaningful gathering space for the local low-income community. The group is largely comprised of people who live in disabling conditions, interface with multiple institutions marked by relational violence, or are on social assistance; they survive by practicing social reproduction and alternative economic means often on the legal margins. I theorize this community by taking up, perhaps problematically recuperating, the marxist term lumpen.[52] As those most marginalized within colonial-capitalism,

[52] I use the term lumpen to bring into conversation those who are persistently marked as different through economic exclusion within colonial-capitalism because of non-conformity to the abstraction of labour which demands a normative embodiment. Bodies that form the constitutive outside to colonial/capitalist discipline because they are

this community is comprised of folx who are economically excluded and oppressed and thus whose identities fall across the multiple intersections of race, Indigeneity, disability, gender, sexuality and other forms of difference. Those who lack any real monetary or cultural capital and are subject to stigmatization, symbolic violence, fear and neglect, even from within the progressive milieu (hooks 2000). While much academic/artistic/activist work focuses on those who are marginalized to the edges of the working/middle classes - this work focuses on those who are completely excluded from class standing.

My relationship to the FoWP community is one across difference as well as overlapping experiences. My own mixed class positionality arises from the downward mobility of my parents from their white settler-bourgeois family backgrounds. One of the results of the mental health difference that my parents carried (and passed on) was that my mother ended up having to raise my sister and I as a single parent who was on and off of welfare to survive. I have worked manual labour jobs my whole life as well as, at times, turning to lumpen culture and survival strategies before entering academia. I identify as a white/settler, mixed class, crip/queer survivor. Engaging in lumpen/low-income community building across multiple differences is one of the main productive challenges that I take up in this work.

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viewed as non-workers, non-contributing and thus dependant. I theorize the lumpen as having an Indigenous dimension, while recognizing that Indigenous identity cannot be subsumed neatly into the Lumpen there does exist some overlap in terms of the realities of who composes marginalized communities as well as the non-capitalist nature of Indigenous relation to Land and sociality which makes their removal and/or forced assimilation necessary for colonial-capitalism. While individuals from oppressed groups may manage to gain class standing, even mobility and cultural capital, I use the term lumpen to refer to those bodies who have very little to no opportunity for the same. The lumpen are those folx from oppressed groups who have been shuffled into, to varying degrees, a permanently excluded social space. Thus, when we talk about the central role of marginalized groups (qtbipoc and working class people) in justice movements - adding lumpen means accounting for those within those groups who are living in conditions of exacerbated poverty, disability, exclusion and stigmatization: those with no cultural or monetary capital.

In collaborating with the FoWP community, I have come to identify a form of engaging creatively which I call relational praxis arts.[53] Relational praxis art is not a new approach, but a new way of understanding work that is, and has been done historically by people (often by women/qtbipoc/Two Spirit/lumpen folx) in their own marginalized communities of struggle, but remains unrecognized and undertheorized. In recognizing and theorizing this mode of engagement, I hope to reframe and inscribe it onto a more politically coherent terrain. The main objectives of relational praxis art, as developed and exemplified in the FoWP project, are to: build community by engaging in an environmentally, materially, historically and spatially grounded emancipatory community art practice; to engage in economic exchange relations recognizing the terms set by community members; to take direction from those community members who experience, survive and endure the oppressions, exclusions and trauma's of colonial-capitalism; to support community members as agents and recognize their lived experience knowledge as valid and indispensible to understanding the ethical failures of colonial/capitalism; to support the entry of those marginalized individuals and communities into the broader liberatory discourse; and to recognize and address the failure of the work when it is unable to reach those most vulnerablized.

Relational praxis art responds to the problematic history of settler-bourgeois art, the dynamics of which infiltrates even the most politically oppositional art form (Haiven 2018). With relational praxis art I am suggesting that liberation projects of artists/academics/activists need to analyze the nature of their relations to the most excluded/oppressed within capitalist-colonialism. Grounded in history and place, relational praxis art is oriented towards the

[53] My understanding of relational praxis art arises from the teachings that I receive from those I have been engaged with over the years in the Watkinson Park community: Marlene Bluebird Stickings, Lynda Solowynsky, Angela Browning, Minutet Nima, Lisa Lavoie, and many others. Such understanding has also developed via my discussions with fellow artists who undertake similar modes: Rebecca Garrett, nancy viva davis halifax and Joce Two-Crows Tremblay.

constitutive outside, those who represent the (monstrous) Other to the normative subject of colonial-capitalism (or, as stated, the lumpen), but who are also integral to the western political mode. In highlighting this problematic, I hope to confront contradictions that I see between the broader strokes of political theorization and practice, and what is actually possible in locations of marginality. I look critically at the 'social turn' in arts that has produced a plethora of community-based arts practices considered by some to be the new avant-garde (Bishop 2006). For instance, the work of artists/academics/activists is often weighted towards symbolic forms of analysis, representation, and mobilization on behalf of oppressed peoples and their struggles. I argue that such symbolic emphasis, detached from relational and materially based connection to community, is a bourgeois mode that forecloses on political possibility. Without a material engagement with community, politics remains a privileged pastime on behalf of, and excluding those who are most marginalized.[54] I draw on marxist analysis (especially its geographical tendencies), Indigenous thought, as well as praxis, crip/queer/disability theory and social practice art as critical sources that reveal the limits of contemporary art's radical potential. Relational praxis art proposes that the relational fabric as produced through colonial/capitalist history is the artist material. Ultimately, I propose relational praxis art as a form that cannot be appropriated, that is uncompromisingly resistant to colonial/capitalist discipline and thus operates in a liberatory vein.

Relational praxis art is not necessarily a method that just anyone can or should practice. I don't imagine leagues of well-intentioned academics/artists/activist (Individuals from non-

[54] The expectation of material benefit is naturalized for professional artists/academics/activists who advance their material interests through the work, while lumpen folx are expected to contribute their content for free or a small honorarium or a gift card. Relational praxis art, problematizes and seeks to rework these economic relations between professionalized artists/academics/activists and lumpen community. Participating in economic relationships across difference does not serve the class mobility of the privileged, but it does serve the generating of a real allyship with lumpen peoples.

lumpen backgrounds) being equipped psychically, ethically or on the level of consciousness for entering into and working with lumpen communities without falling into the traps of benevolent do gooderism, trying to rehabilitate, rescue, represent, appropriate, and/or take power in any number of ways. In describing this work, I do hope that it gains recognition where it is being done as indispensable to liberation movements. For those who do want to work in lumpen community and maybe do relational praxis art, as a non-lumpen person, it is necessary to commit to an extremely difficult, conflictual, often confusing, intersubjective engagement in which one needs to listen and accept critical feedback from community members, constantly question how to work across difference, take on trauma as a significant reality, understand harm reduction, negotiate power and privilege as it infiltrates interactions among people in community, take a back seat to community members whose voices are subaltern, be open to the unexpected and unsolvable, be available and be a real ally. As difficult as this work is, these problems are a vital source of knowledge production and a liberatory practice (or praxis) that prefigures a relationally ethical future. The relational praxis art described here is my contribution to how this work might be theorized and done.

Bourgeois Art

Those of us struggling to do art politically negotiate, to greater or lesser degrees, the hegemonic art world. Whether we are recognized as professional artists determines funding. Funding applications assume that gallery shows, screenings and public performances are the objective. Artists need and want to make a living and thus need to make a name for themselves and find audiences and collectors. These are the pragmatic demands that frame compromises that politically motivated artists must make within capitalist-colonialism.

The contemporary ‘art world’ is, to this day, largely dictated by the hegemonic western history taught in art colleges. The western artist comes to full fruition during the Enlightenment and the transition to capitalism when the bourgeois system of the genius individual artist replaced the feudal era mode in which the artist was an anonymous craftsperson working in a guild structure (Clark 1999; Haiven 2018; Vidokle 2013). Artists were elevated to the level of philosopher, becoming individualized and professionalized while patronage shifted from the church and aristocracy to the new monied bourgeoisie. With modernity, artists come to play a key role in promoting the tastes and philosophical forms of distinction that separated the bourgeoisie from the working and lower classes (Bourdieu 1993; Haiven 2018; Kester 2011; Lowe 1982; Rosler 2010; Vidokle 2013). As with the capitalist system, the regime of European modern art becomes globally hegemonic through colonialism where the European high art cultural form and its philosophical girder have become the standard in art world discourse. The art world is thus a product of, and should be understood as operating within, capitalist-colonial historical conditions with artists playing a powerful role in enacting and depicting the dynamics of European hegemony (Haiven 2018; Todd 1992).

The persisting bourgeois identity of the artist is that of a creative genius art star (Bala 2018; Kester 2004) who is the pinnacle of masculinist individualism. Self-made and autonomous, the artist stands outside society and claims the freedom to express their inner being, thoughts and impulses. The artist is considered a skilled professional elite, a figure of liberation and of free speech, an ascendant philosophical and moral figure, sometimes a hero/shaman/bohemian/badboy (sometimes, but with a different set of risks, badgirl) provocateur personage (Haiven 2018; Vidokle 2013). The bourgeois artist reaches their supreme purpose in the avant-garde (Bishop 2006; Kester 2004) where the view from the ‘outside’

enables the artist to mirror society back to itself, to call society on its hypocrisies. Kester (2004, 88) argues that this positionality operates as if the viewer has an "epistemological lack" which the artist is there to correct through "the experience of consuming the work itself" which will bring the viewer into a more "prestigious or enlightened social identity." This view, Kester (2004, 88) argues, represents an "evangelical superiority that conceives of the viewer as a subject to-be-transformed." The relational hierarchies that evolve out of capitalist-colonialism impact who succeeds and gains cannon status (even if post mortem) in the art world, which means that generally the art world is dominated by white, bourgeois-settler hetero-cis males[55] (Haiven 2018) who promote the illusion that the message, the symbolic content of their work, can transcend their position within structures of power and relations of production.

Art, as a settler-bourgeois field, consolidated in a two-fold form: the mass production of 'low' cultural forms such as pop music, film, designer knock offs and crafting kits directed as appropriate for working class and poor peoples, and high arts produced by genius/virtuosic artists such as ballet, painting, theatre and especially contemporary arts for the bourgeois audience (Bourdieu 1984, 1993; Haiven 2018; Kester 2004). Increasingly, the language of high art, while cannibalizing the low, has become more insular, self-referential and, with the emergence of conceptualism, obscure to the everyday lives of uninitiated persons – the general public in the society which artists claim to represent.

The hegemonic modern art form should also be understood as being historically and by nature appropriative. Diverse, culturally located and/or outsider creative practices, forms and aesthetics have been of fascination to bourgeois-settler artists who often use and abuse such

[55] I understand embodiment itself as one factor in accessing privilege, but I also consider that in a structure that privileges certain bodies, it is incumbent on the rest of us to perform (to greater or lesser degrees) in certain ways that align with the agenda of white cis-hetero ablest power in order to access privilege. Privilege is about both embodiment and performance.

forms in a way as to bring challenges to Western culture (Haiven 2018; Todd 1990). For example, avant-garde type interventions such as Picasso's so-called primitivist phase that appropriated African art, Gaugin's symbolism which romanticized, exoticized and exploited the indigenous culture of Tahiti (especially the women), Jean Dubuffet's appropriation of art by asylum inmates, Paul Klee's interest in children's art, Honoré Daumier's depiction of the urban poor as a part of a trend or 'realism' in art, or the influence of Japanese aesthetics on Impressionism for example were all seen as radical aesthetic shifts in modern art history. These forms rely on a symbolic representation and Othered aesthetics that were shocking to the settler-bourgeois mindset and that expanded the bourgeois philosophical role of art without necessarily addressing or changing existent economic, cultural or political relations of exploitation and domination.

− *Power to represent division of labour*

The appropriation of the images and aesthetics of the Other brings up the political question of representation. For Rancière (2007, 13), "[p]olitics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time." Rancière (2007) refers to Plato who contended that labourers were too preoccupied with their work and thus could not have the leisure time required to become knowledgeable enough to participate in intellectual pursuits and governmental politics. Plato's assertion is critiqued by Marx and Engels (1986, 52) as a separation of manual and mental labour, which marks the moment when "consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory,

theology, philosophy, ethics, etc." As art in the western tradition is elevated to the sphere of mental labour, it is said to have no purpose or use outside of itself other than that of philosophical contemplation. The art object is disinterested and autonomous (Bishop 2012; Eagleton 1990; Haiven 2018; Kester 2015). In the modern paradigm, it is asserted that the art object exists only for its own sake and that meaning is contained within that object, which is then framed, supported and legitimized (indeed constructed) by the gallery context (Haiven 2018; Rosler 2014). Art connoisseurship is a marker of class, of erudition and leisure (Bourdieu 1984, 1993). Art becomes class privilege.

In his *Theses of Feuerbach*, Marx (1983) comments that ideas divorced from reality or from material engagement becomes reified as hegemonic ideology, which is imposed/projected on the labouring people in order to control them politically. Thus, representation has an inextricably double meaning: the use of media to depict reality, persons and social formations, and how one accesses political power i.e., through elected officials (Mansoor in Fritsch et al. 2016). Indeed, Lowe (1982, 28) observes that "[t]he class stratification of bourgeois society was also a perceptual stratification dominated by the triumphant bourgeois field of perception. The bourgeoisie was contained by other perceptual fields in former times, but in bourgeois society the bourgeois field of perception exercised a hegemony over the perceived realities of the other classes and strata." Clark (1999, 52) articulates the conundrum of bourgeois representational power when arguing that "[o]f course the point is not to convict [the bourgeoisie] of hypocrisy or even lack of self-knowledge… It is to wonder what might have been involved for bourgeois individuals - what kind of inventiveness, what sources of knowledge and ignorance - when they began to represent those whose labour they commanded." In the settler-bourgeois psyche, the exploited mass constitutes a threat. Faulkner (2010) contends that for European elites the

populous was considered an "unthinking" "rabble" who, when resisting domination, became a dangerous "mob," "rioters" or "thugs" (Palmer and Héroux 2016; Chapman and Withers 2019) rather than legitimate political agents. The threat of the people is then contained through denying representation, whether political or cultural.

In the settler state of Canada, an agenda of legalized cultural genocide[56] that attacks the power of self-representation of Indigenous peoples is integral to the colonial/capitalist project. Said's (2000) theory of Orientalism describes a representational power move where the European gaze is one that projects a fictional, self-serving, eroticized version of the Other onto a people and a place to justify their subjugation under the construct of a civilizational superiority of the West. Fanon (2004, 149-50) describes that in the colonies, Europeans "have never stopped placing white culture in opposition to the other non cultures," explaining that "colonialism is not content merely to impose its law on the colonized country's present and future. Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it." Fanon (2004, 148) warns national intellectuals that becoming "ensnared in Western culture" would mean "losing themselves, and consequently of being lost to their people." Mingolo (2000) states that western languages, epistemologies and aesthetic regimes are used to dominate Indigenous and minority ethnic groups and bring efficiency to colonial government. Yet, as Million (2011, 317) points out, "[t]he right of indigenous peoples to self-representation and to develop autonomous intellectual projects of political and cultural self-determination has become increasingly foregrounded as one of the central demands hemispherically of Indian movements of liberation."

[56] Cultural genocide also implies actual genocide. Indigenous peoples culture is integral to their survival.

Those Othered subject to lack of, or misrepresentation within the colonial/capitalist aesthetic regime inhabit subcultural realms, centres in their own right but deemed to be on the margins of the art-world from where challenges to the status quo are launched politically and aesthetically. Feminists, people of color, queer, Indigenous, outsider and crip/disabled artists have critiqued the white cis-hetero-male-ablist settler-bourgeois art paradigm for its Orientalism, denial of space and resources to marginalized artists, denial of critical relevance and recognition, appropriative practices, fetishization, exotification and romanticization of difference, false distinction between craft and art, use of different bodies as metaphor, use of everyday, gendered, queered and cripped lived experiences as subject matter, promotion of inaccessible virtuosity, art language elitism, exclusionary gate keeping and bigoted art establishment practices, tokenization and much more. As culturally inclusive as contemporary arts may have become today through the struggles of marginalized groups (who often put their own bodies into their work as a way to politicize their visibility) the structure of the art world remains a firmly bourgeois-settler context to be negotiated on an individual basis by artists. Where arts organizations and artists have made efforts to represent community-based realities and political claims, uneven power relations become urgent. Few artists are engaged in confronting the *social structures* of representational alienation that supports the hierarchization/exploitation of bodies under colonial-capitalism.[57] While the hegemonic centre of contemporary arts is concerned with a contemplative aesthetics, the margins are concerned with representing the unrepresented. Contemplation remains very different objective than one that extends representational power to those who do not have it. And, if those representations

[57] There is a form of institutional critique that does challenge the exclusionary character of the gallery system by drawing connections to the gallery/museum's role in historical forms marginalization, particularly gender, race however, this does not address the broader exclusion of low-income-lumprn peoples.

that are made on excluded peoples behalf remain purely symbolic (aesthetic), they can only really be fetish objects (for contemplation) whose radical potential is already foreclosed. Indeed, those operating within the settler-bourgeois arts structure (no matter of what background, social position, identity) cannot responsibly represent those who continue to be excluded from the representational regime, and especially those most subalternized such as lumpen peoples (who remain firmly locked out of artistic worlds and institutions). Nor do peoples oppressed within settler-bourgeois hegemony want to be represented by those who sit in relatively oppressive relation to them.

− *Privatization/Commodification/Property*

Throughout his writings, Marx offers the diagnoses of how relational violence is made possible in the colonial/capitalist system by the bourgeois classes having seized control of the means of production by instituting private property and thus bringing about commodification of, and thus alienation from the Land, from our labour power and the necessities that we produce (including art). And yet, within colonial-capitalism, private property is a profoundly taken for granted economic institution and hegemonic cultural imperative.

Haiven (2012a, n.p.) characterizes the bourgeois art paradigm as being about the "privatization of creativity" where cultural objects are bought as commodities rather than produced by people in community context. The commodification of art under the bourgeois regime further undermines its radical potential. As Marx (1990, 163, 165) describes, commodities are very "strange things" which appear as an autonomous objects "with a life of their own," glittering on the market shelves. What remains in the "hidden abode" (out of sight of the market and consuming public) is the actuality that commodities arise out of collective social labour: a relational network of extractive violence, dispossession and exploitation that make the

commodity's production and consumption possible. The network of relations among people (and with the Land) is superseded by a relation between commodities, and thus the commodity is said by Marx (1990, 279) to be "fetishized." Under the bourgeois regime, we understand the object fetishistically and not meaningfully (Stallybrass 1998) and thus we reproduce the hierarchies and erasures of settler-bourgeois society. Furthermore, according to Marx, when we produce necessities,[58] we invest (or alienate) our energies into that thing which becomes objective or outside of ourselves - and yet the necessities we create are never completely alienated; they remain a part or extensions of the bodies that produce them, they are repositories of memories, embodied skill, intentions, needs and desires (Stallybrass 1998). The necessary objects that we create are, for Marx (1988), profoundly representative of the human essence, which is fundamentally social, historical, creative, sensual and in metabolic relation to Land. However, the exploitation and violence that are relegated to the hidden abode are integral to the deeper meaning of the objects produced. For instance, when we watch an artist video, even one that has political content, we accept the content as political while we forget that the technology, equipment and other materials used to produce the video were made in highly exploitative labour conditions in Asia. We ignore the environmental harm done to produce tech commodities, the gross amount of e-waste that results from planned obsolescence and the fetishization of the new, we ignore the informal labour (often of children) who are exposed to toxic materials as they recycle our cast-off gadgets and machines, we ignore the pathological consumption of every new technology planned for obsolescence, and likely we forget the relationships between those who appear in and made the video (Sholette 2011; Federici 2019)). We watch the art video in order to enter into a limited set of relationalities that develops our

[58] I am using 'necessity' in place of 'commodity' where a commodity has exchange value and is thus traded on the marked, necessity is a result of our productive energy which has use value.

cultural capital as artist/activists/academics, however, we simultaneously engage in the fetishized function of the art object, which enables the erasure and thus the reproduction of relations of inequality, exploitation and destruction of the planetary ecosystem. Settler-bourgeois aesthetic relations operate as a smaller set of privileged connections that feed off of an invisiblized larger network of oppression.

A huge culture industry of museums, galleries, biennales, cinemas, festivals, auction houses, university faculties, publishing, art supplies and technology (Haiven 2012b; McLean 2010; Sholette 2011; Vidokle 2013) are dependent on the fetishization of both the art object and the artist. The signature of the artist (the persistently dominant white male art star) adds surplus value to the artwork and thus is an integral structuring component of the art economy. Art objects, as private property, become investment items, which are traded at large profits among dealers and collectors (while the artist continues to struggle for the next sale). More recently, artworks are bundled and traded as futures on the market. In order for the art market to maintain the value of the art commodities in which it trades, it is dependent on the stability of the art object's meaning. As Haiven (2011, 101) notes, fictitious capital protects its investments by controlling the future, and for art this means that the hierarchical systems of value and the ideology by which that value is constructed within capitalist-colonialism must be maintained. Thus, the art industry acts as a conservative force against art's political potential (Haiven 2011; Garrett and Jackson 2016) In other words, when art enters the marketplace, its transformative potential is extinguished. Indeed, Haiven (2018, 15) notes that the intention of "artists and art movements" to make "crucial, radical or dissident work" within the contemporary art paradigm is not "the exception to the rule," however, political art only offers "a kind of saleable "contemporaneity," a sense of modernity, movement, cultural vitality and forward motion," a

sense of "experimentation, resistance, refusal and antagonism" all exciting and edgy and thus highly marketable qualities.

Alienation in private property shuts down the wonders and potentialities of the interconnected world and unique embodiments. Putting his patriarchal language aside, Marx (1988, 106) insightfully describes how our alienation via the system of private property abuses the vast and expansive capacities of our bodies:

> The perceptible appropriation for and by man [sic] of the human essence and of human life, of objective man [sic], of human achievements should not be conceived merely in the sense of immediate, one-sided enjoyment, merely in the sense of possessing, of having. Man [sic] appropriates his [sic] comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man [sic]. Each of his [sic] human relations to the world – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving – in short, all the organs of his [sic] individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, are in their objective orientation, or in their orientation to the object, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of human reality… Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., – in short, when it is used by us. Although private property itself again conceives all these direct realisations of possession only as means of life, and the life which they serve as means is the life of private property – labour and conversion into capital.

Left disconnected from all that is life, all that we can do is acquire money to live, a cruel tool of abstraction that facilitates our alienated relationships to each other, other species, spirit and the Land. The private property regime de-socializes the necessities we collectively produce allowing us to only gain meaning through those shallow commodities, which we have purchased back with money gained from selling our labour. Our energies are funnelled from the alienated collectivity of production to the alienated individuality of consumption. As Haiven (2011b, 103-104) notes:

> On the one hand, we are encouraged to see our imagination as a source of potential profit in a world of free-market opportunity: we have only ourselves to blame if we fail to imagine a way out of our economic or social situation. The imagination is fruitless when it does not contribute to or generate profitable new commodities. On the other hand, the

> imagination becomes synonymous with the private, a source of escapism and personal retreat from a world of work, debt, and worry.

Under capitalist-colonialism, the marketplace is seen as the great arbiter of how value enters into and organizes the relational fabric. Haiven (2011b, 103) comments that money becomes the ultimate tool that inflitrates the relational fabric by "offering its material manifestations (money, commodities, institutional hierarchies) as the means through which social relations are imagined and negotiated. Money here represents the necessary crystallization of the logic of the commodity, the apex of a system that transforms use value into exchange value and creates a generalized system of social representation by which we come to know, anticipate, and cultivate our own agency." For Haiven (2011b, 93), "[c]apitalism is a renegade (and ultimately socially destructive) logic of social cooperation, a viral value paradigm that guides social action and agency toward its own endless reproduction and expansion." The bourgeois-settler order is one that has circumscribed and hijacked our relationality, our communal efforts, and our communal product for the private profit of a few. It is one where money has become the most important system of valorization, appropriating our agency into the means of social violence.

Private property eschews collective relationality while elevating the individual owner to fetish status: owner of Land, of women, of labour, of factory, of money. The individual is judged based on how they succeed in obtaining property in a competitive capitalist/colonial system, how they can perform normativity as defined by a reified white, hetero, ablist, cis, masculinity. Under capitalist-colonialism, relationalities are organized in hierarchies which we know are intersectionally racialized, gendered, heterosexist, colonizing and ablist. These are supremacist relations of abuse, dishonour and ignorance, which the bourgeois claims arise out of and are

purported to be the natural variations in merit among individuals. Within this ideology, those who fail to acquire private property are to blame for their own failure, they are considered to be without purpose or value, expendable, without history, voice, social contribution, a drain on the system, or even waste subjects of necro-economics. Those bodies who are locked out of the private property system, become the subjects of relational praxis art.

− *Neoliberalism and the Arts*

The onset of neoliberalism exacerbates the depoliticization of art. While self-employment and contract labour are phenomena linked to the neoliberal era, they are not new to artists for whom precarity is a normal condition. The number of artists vastly outweighs the market demand and artists are in fact the poorest of all the professional classes. Nevertheless, artists who were once mythologized as starving bohemians or avant-garde heroic fighters for freedom of expression (Bourdieu 1993; Clark 1999) are now encouraged to re-imagine themselves more pragmatically as professionalized business people within the multi-million dollar art/culture market (Vidokle 2013). Gregory Sholette (2011, 33) comments that a spirit of entrepreneurship now dominates "every phase of contemporary art," including its "production, its dissemination and its reception." The art market has increasingly become a global market with corporate sponsored art festivals such as Scotia Bank's Nuit Blanche or the RBC Canadian Painting Competition and biennales happening all over the world, notably in Dubai and other centres of global capital (Haiven 2018; McLean 2014). The advertising industry regularly mines the arts for ideas while the arts uses the latest technologies and accept grants and awards from corporations. Artists participate in "trend-setting" for the culture industry who send out "cool hunters" and "risk-takers" to gallery openings, nightclubs and other bohemian cultural sites, where they are encouraged to "imagine localized ways of commodifying social life and opening it up to global

financial liquidity" (Haiven 2011b, 105-106). Art with a progressive political content is no less subject to appropriation by advertising and other liberal or even Right wing causes. Sholette (2011b, 38) points out that "[t]his is the… classless dream, a high-energy band of young people driving the cultural economy ahead, but in a totally privatized and non-subsidy-oriented direction." For Haiven (2018, 19), artists can be considered to be "a part of the petit-bourgeoisie," a class who, as small business owners, exploit themselves - a class which Marx (1988), alongside the lumpen, theorized as having little political subjecthood.

Under neoliberalism, artists are drawn further into conformity with entrepreneurial financial networks while, at the same time, workers are reconfigured as autonomous beings with latent creative capacities to be exploited (Haiven 2011b; Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). For the working class and working poor, this neoliberal subjectivity translates into greater precarity and informality expecting workers to accept contract work or to be self-employed, imposing flexible hours and no benefits, being cast as 'associates' or sub-contractors as opposed to workers, expecting employees to be responsible for the performance of job tasks even if that means working off the clock, giving workers team building seminars in how to integrate their talents into their work, expecting workers to continually retrain themselves at their own expense depending on the market demands. Labour is rebranded as an individualized creative expression where workers invest in developing their own labour power as a commodity by continually acquiring new marketable skills (Sholette 2011).

While workers are being gaslit into accepting the branding of increased precarity as increased independence, they are similarly encouraged to accept consumerism as another form of self- expression. What you buy is supposed to stand in for who you are. Haiven (2011b, 105) asserts that culture itself becomes instrumentalized as a palliative to help people endure

deadening capitalist discipline and daily life, as a Band-Aid for social problems of "deepening alienation and anomie." For Haiven (2011b), the financialization of life indicates the ascendancy of the money form over "the rich, dense world of qualitative social values." The preoccupation with money and what it can buy (as a mode of expression) "comes at the expense of the radical imagination," (Haiven 2011b, 93-94) and the ability to imagine a future beyond the global and humanitarian crisis of colonial-capitalism.

− *Art and Space: Gentrification*

The neoliberalization of arts becomes a feature of urban life as artists participate in the shaping of urban environments (Haiven 2018; McLean 2014; Rosler 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Needful of affordable space to produce and show art and inspiration found in gritty urban terrains (Bain 2003), artists become key players as the shock troops of first wave gentrification. In an age of neoliberal economic readjustment where interest in urban space as an accumulation strategy is heightened (Smith 1996), and seeing arts appeal, city boosters, corporations and governments mobilize creativity as a new ideology for urban redevelopment, growth and regeneration (Brenner 2013; Haiven 2018; Rosler 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Art critic Miwon Kwon (1997a) points out that funders and artists have taken up a place-making role by producing public art interventions that engage urban histories and daily life as a way to revitalize city centres and contribute to a thriving business and commercial centre. Such work "finds new importance because it supplies distinction of place and uniqueness of locational identity, highly seductive qualities in the promotion of towns and cities within the competitive restructuring of the global economic hierarchy" (Kwon 2002, 54). Such creative strategies are seen to uplift a seemingly siteless space into a place by which towns can promote themselves within a "competitive restructuring of the global economic hierarchy" (Kwon 1997b, 106). Businesses, municipal

governments and private developers woo educated and culturally savvy artists, gays and tech industry “creatives” (as both workers and consumers) to promote and commoditize an aesthetic urban lifestyle (Florida 2003). While such creative urban development schemes often do try to integrate localized community projects (McLean 2014), more often they funnel resources to projects with more notoriety. In the reach for global city status, high level spectacularized mega-event art festivals and city beautification projects are hosted that draw tourists and real estate speculation.

At the same time, even in the social practice arts milieu where social justice objectives are claimed, there is acknowledgement that gentrification is a dangerous side effect of our work. Kwon (1997b, 105) warns that "inasmuch as the current socio-economic order thrives on the (artificial) production and (mass) consumption of difference (for difference sake)” that such art “can also be a means to extract the social and historical dimensions out of places to variously serve the thematic drive of an artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfill the fiscal needs of a city." Kwon (1997a) critiques the assumption that socially engaged art (because it represents a shift in intentions towards democratization and inclusivity) must also mean that it represents or enacts a progressive politics (see also Bishop 2012). Kwon (1997a, n.p.) writes: “[t]he shifts in artistic practice, while challenging the ideological establishment of art, may at the same time capitulate to the changing modes of capitalist expansion. What appears to be progressive, even transgressive and radical, may in fact serve conservative if not reactionary agendas of the dominant minority.” Artists contribute to gentrification processes through participatory and beautification projects which attempt to ‘regenerate’ community while glossing over underlying socio-economic inequities by which gentrification rolls forward (McLean 2014).

Contesting Bourgeois Art

Creative expression has long been an important component of enduring and resisting marginalized life, producing and disseminating knowledge, and building community whether you look at the civil rights movement, e.g., the Black Panthers, American Indian Movement, Idle No More and the MMIWG2S+, feminist, youth and working class movements, prisons, asylums, or the street. Wherever there is oppression, there is art. In and around the hegemonic cultural regimes of colonial-capitalism, other non-conforming creative material and art practices and sub-cultures persist that comprise a significant point of contrast and critique.

− *Dark Matter/Indigenous/Creativity*

Sholette (2011, 7) contends that in the neoliberal period, a tension exists between the consumption of mass produced cultural product and a groundswell of mass creative activity which he refers to as "dark matter." For Sholette (2011, 7) "[t]he spread of information technologies" means that "[a]s never before, producing, copying, re-mixing, printing, uploading, and distributing images and information has become (almost) everyone's privilege, even their social responsibility." Exceeding the bourgeois art world, "dark matter" refers to the many diverse or "redundant" forms of culture that "infiltrates high schools, flea markets, public squares, corporate websites, city streets, housing projects, and local political machines in ways that do not set out to recover a specific meaning or use-value for art world discourse or private interests" (Sholette 2011, 4). "Dark matter" practices include "pattern-swapping knitting circles, Flickr photo clubs, garage-kit sculptors, fantasy role-play gamers, devotees of Goth culture, open-source programmers, mash-up music samplers, right-wing groups and militias, and eBay pages filled with the work of both serious and Sunday painters" (Sholette 2011, 30). The art world, as an elite milieu and an industry, is dependent on the creativity of the mass who are

consumers of art supplies, students, teachers, arts administrators, and failed artists, all the dark matter that provides backdrop to the art star (Sholette 2011). Haiven (2018) notes that this represents a relationship of growing inequality between artists and the mass. As such, a plethora of artists who "self-consciously choose to work on the outer margins of the mainstream art world for reasons of social, economic, and political critique" have learned to embrace their own structural redundancy as "dark matter" (Sholette 2011, 4). Being "dark matter" means working in conditions of relative invisibility to a larger public discourse. Sholette (2011, 3-4) contends that those who "grasp the politics of their own invisibility and marginalization" by demanding visibility, will challenge the political "formation of normative artistic values" and rethink history.



Figure 5: Friends of Watkinson Park collaborative installation, *Butterfly* (2018)

Meanwhile, critiques by Indigenous scholars and artists of the settler-bourgeois western art paradigm undermine its very basis. Zoe Todd (2015, 242) relays that as a Metis person she "stopped making art because" she "did not feel welcome in the gentrified, intensely white spaces" where she perceived "real art" and "real literature" were made. In discussing her relationship to modernism and post-modernism, Loretta Todd (1992, 67) notes: "I am still expected to discuss my culture and explore my imagination through "their" language, in terms of the traditional versus the contemporary, where Native is still inscribed with the outsider's "fixed values and practices." For instance, despite growing acceptance of craft practices (deemed traditional) as method, form and subject in contemporary art, craft as a milieu remains quite separate from art.[59] Most people around the world, however, do not make such a distinction and in many Indigenous languages there is no equivalent word for the western definition of "art." Simpson (2011, 141-142) in considering how to translate the term "culture," for which there is no one word in Nishnaabemowin, refers to Nishnaabe/Dakota scholar Scott Lyons who came up with a series of words that contribute to the "overarching concern" which is "the desire to produce more life." [60] Farris-Dufresne (1997, 15) states that, "American Indian art is seldom 'art for art's sake,'" and that "traditional and contemporary thinking do not separate art and life or draw comparisons between what is beautiful and what is functional," rather "[a]rt, beauty, and spirituality are intertwined in the routine of living." Farris-Dufresne (1997, 15) describes how Indigenous women work communally learning such crafts as "basketry, pottery, quillwork, weaving, and leather painting" from "grandmothers, mothers and aunts." Farris-Dufresne (1997, 15) also points out that, in the colonial period, Indigenous artists have, to

[59] This acceptance is due to feminist, Indigenous, Black and POC artists persistence in working with craft techniques. However, the uptake of craft by contemporary artists mostly happens within a contemporary art paradigm rather than having a destabilizing effect on bourgeois-settler conceptions of art itself.

varying degrees, “assimilated systems of non-Indian aesthetics” into their ways of working, this is often done “as social criticism” and to express “alienation from Western culture.”

Haudenosaunee-French artist Laura Hall (2015, 283) also understands Indigenous aesthetics as “rooted in culture and community” while also emphasizing the “enmeshed responsibilities of living well in the ecologies of our ancestors.” Hall (2015, 283) writes about her mother’s garden as a core aesthetic practice, which, she considers as “a creation within Creation -- evoking not only cultural lineage but territorial histories and stories that can serve to renew fractured cultural and ecological connectivity.” The garden was a space in which Hall and her mother could talk about the impacts of colonialism, of residential schools on her family, but also grow medicines and engage in a daily work of “making, appreciating, giving thanks to, and finally letting go of, the beauty in the world’s cycles” (Hall 2015, 283). Hall (2015, 284) understands her mother’s garden not in a “possessive singular” sense, but as a part of Anishinaabe territory and a place of interconnections between “ancestors, and spirits, animals, and the cosmos” and where “soil, water, and air stream toward the same Great Lakes that continue to nourish both Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee nations.” The garden is also a gendered space where women’s teachings about bringing and nourishing life are practiced in a larger context where women, 2slgbtqqia+ peoples contributions are suppressed. Hall’s (2015) practice builds on and renews ancestral knowledge of life and of colonial oppression, and is thus a praxis of creative intervention, performance and survival within the whole of a creative cosmos, an ecological and social network of relationalities. Without deriving some saleable object (such as documentation) and artist statement, Hall’s (2015) creative practice is not readily visible as art from within the western contemporary tradition. In order to for it to register as art in its own right, a decolonized and anti-capitalist lens needs to be applied.

Economics as Culture

Coulthard (2014, 65-66) notes that "culture" should be understood "as the interconnected social totality of [a] distinct *mode of life*" that encompasses "the economic, political, spiritual, and social." Hall's (2015, 287) work in her mother's garden offers an example of an interweaving of culture and economy according to an Indigenous worldview:

> The garden is connected to the woods, to the responsibilities that I have to my clan, to the name I was given, and to the animal, plant, and spirit helpers of the whole of Creation. So it isn't just a matter of growing a family garden for sustenance; it is also about learning how deeply the work of giving away, and giving thanks for the gifts of the garden, has changed and shaped my understanding of these interconnections. Renewing sustainable lifeways is about also renewing Indigenous knowledge of interconnection and responsibility.

Likewise, Leanne Simpson (2011, 15) shows how Indigenous perspectives do not bifurcate culture and economics when explaining how her people survived during the period of contact: "My ancestors resisted and survived what must have seemed like an apocalyptic reality of occupation and subjugation in a context where they had few choices. They resisted by simply surviving and by taking the seeds of our culture and political systems and packing them away, so that one day another generation of Michi Saagiig Nishaabeg might be able to plant them." When Simpson (2011) speaks of "seeds," I take her to mean that the actual seeds for growing food also represent the cultural, political and survival practices that have been passed down from the Ancestors. In Simpson's (2011) descriptions the material, cultural and political are one. Womack (quoted in Million 2011, 316) observes that "a dynamic and engaged relational understanding of culture" is one in which we are understood as "active participants in the continual creation of the people as well as the intellectual and artistic products of the people." Resistance and resurgence are the continuation of these practices by the next generations, which

represents an understanding of economics as simply the cultivation and reproduction of life within a sustainable relational and meaningful web (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).

The cited Indigenous scholars reorient the discussion of political economy towards an understanding of all economies as fully cultural, meaning that the relational systems that peoples develop to interpret and represent the world are inextricable to how we organize our survival within it (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Thrift in Castree and Gregory 2006; Dirlik 1987). Thus, re-imagining the culture-economy relation and developing a defetishized practice where the economic structures of culture are laid bare, might actually make a political art possible. As FoWP member Minutet Nima (2015-2020) comments:

> When I think about art, I see paintings and I'm interested in looking at the paintings, so what I like to see is, I like old paintings to see how the society lived at that time. And most of those that I know they are interested with social divisions and inequality, but nobody came with an answer for those problems. So I am looking always if there is any solution or indication for those inequalities. When I say this, not only for human beings, but for the whole world. For the environment for the plants, for the animals, whatever, for the insects, whatever, because they are already in the world so everybody should have its own place to live. So is there any solution for that? Or everybody is talking only about the problem? So that's what I want to see. I haven't any answer for that.

In stark contrast, the bourgeois-settler paradigm fetishizes art as separate from the economy while it is, at the same time, subsumed/possessed/controlled by the monetary objectives it conceals. Culture is monetized under the market system, and economics is limited to numbers on a spreadsheet, balanced budgets, deficits and profit margins. The numerical, instrumental, technical, production oriented and anti-social notion of economy insists that its "laws operate regardless of the specificities of space, time or the particulars of cultural landscape" (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010, 19). Max Haiven (2011b, 99) notes that capitalism "appears to be preoccupied by a single logic of value that articulates and names itself directly as such and becomes its own total means and ends," a logic that is "articulated in money:

capitalism's medium of circulation, its necessary form of self-representation, and its ultimate arbiter of social value." The technical rationality of economism presumes that its rational and materialistic concerns can operate separately from the messy, irrational, ambiguous and specific meaning making that is seen to constitute cultural life. As Blaney and Inayatullah (2010, 25) write, "[f]or economists, the economy is purified of a cultural content that might vitiate claims about the universality and naturalness of this distinct economic logic and plunge them into political/ethical debate." Thus, the logic of economy embedded in existing capitalist societies is "especially debilitating to human political and ethical purposes" (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010, 23). The domination of capitalist value over culture, or the infusion of culture by market relations, represses the social field of open and ethical inquiry that challenges the domination of one class over all others "by shaping, influencing, seducing, and disciplining the people's agency" (Haiven 2011b, 96). The separation of culture and economy within the settler-bourgeois paradigm reduces both culture and economy to the realms of the symbolic and leaves the material relationalities of survival completely out of the picture.

Despite its reductive understanding of value, bourgeois-settler economics is a fully cultural system supported by an ideological apparatus and enmeshed in a web of culturally constituted social relationships with material consequences (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010). Capitalism is a set of beliefs, values, and symbolic expressions about people and the world that reflects a hegemonic Eurocentric settler-bourgeois system that guide and justify exploitative material engagements (Gibson-Graham 2008; Blanely and Inayatullah 2010). For instance, settler stories about how the Canadian nation state was founded on a *terra nullius* and is a melting-pot of cultures gives framing and justification to the pillage and theft of Indigenous Lands that make capitalism possible (Coulthard 2014; Lawrence 2002; Manual 2017). Protestant

myths of meritocracy that claim hard work will bring individual success are narrativized through popular culture (hooks 2000). Stories of immigration that construct Canada as a multicultural land of prosperity, opportunity and tolerance (Gilbert 2005) paper over white supremacy, racism, the brutality of global capitalism and uneven development and reassert settler colonial domination: wars and economic hardship drive people to flee their homelands in search of a (supposed) better life while Indigenous Lands are considered open for global capitalist speculation. As Haiven (2011b, 217) notes, "imagination is not so much totally reprogrammed by capital as it is funnelled, shaped, harnessed, anticipated, and contorted into routines, and habituated into predefined shapes." The strict self-interest of the individualized colonial-capitalist subject relies on a cultural imaginary that provides justifications, or at least obfuscations, for compliance with a violent system. Haiven (2011b, 116) writes:

> Today capital relies as never before on people expressing their cooperation, imagination, and agency in an economic vernacular, not only in those fields that have recently come to be known as "immaterial labor" but in everyday life as well. "Consumer confidence," the faith people have in their currencies, their willingness to take out loans or save money, the spread of entrepreneurialism as an antidote to the retreat of collective forms of social welfare and community — all of these indicate a moment in which the front lines of capital's colonization of value have become increasingly "cultural," implicating forms of collective belief, "structures of feeling" (in Raymond Williams's well-known phrase), and the world of social meaning-making in new ways.

On the one hand, culture is reduced to a branch of industrialized commodity production and then fetishized as a professionalized pure space of aesthetic enjoyment, reflection, entertainment, pleasure, escapism. On the other hand, culture is put to use constructing people's political identities. In any case, culture is separate from the challenges of the economy, which are dealt with 'logically.'

Dirlik (1987) argues that the economistic approaches that represent western cultural hegemony also tend to dominate marxist and activist theories of social change and thus render

them colonial in nature. Dirlik (1987, 19) instead proposes that culture should be foregrounded as the main field of struggle: "[f]or western intellectuals to deny the importance of the question of culture in the name of the higher truth of a scientistic economism, then, is at best arrogant; at worst, it aids in the establishment of a new kind of hegemony - bourgeois hegemony represented by economism." Dirlik (1987, 18) cautions that an uptake of economism "whether of bourgeois or Marxist variety… reduces the globe to a uniform cultural field upon which economic forces play out their fate" and where the Other is construed "as a plaything in the hands of economic forces."[61] Dirlik (1987, 16) further warns that: "unless marxism itself is examined critically from perspectives offered by culturalism, it may serve as a tool of hegemonic practice by mystifying hegemonic relations between and within societies." For Dirlik (1987, 20) "economic revolution in itself has promised not liberation from capitalist hegemony but a more intense incorporation within its scope." To decolonize capitalist theory then means recognizing that both capitalism and socialism represent the cultural hegemony of a Eurocentric system and colonial worldview and de-centring them from their ideologically dominant position.

Economics should be understood, as with Indigenous thought, to be within a larger context of cultural practices or activity, as a set of social and political relations. That attacks on culture are important dimensions of undermining the economic viability of Indigenous peoples (as a part of a genocidal strategy) also points to the imbrication of economics and culture (Coulthard 2014; Lawrence 2002; Manual 2017; Simpson 2011; Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020). As such, culture is a key field of liberatory practice, one that recognizes the cultural specificities of peoples within larger struggles against Western hegemony and for a future

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[61] Marx himself promoted Eurocentric modernism through stagist ideology in regard to Indigenous peoples - that Indigenous peoples represent an earlier form of human development on a trajectory towards enlightenment. Problematic stagist thinking remains, if not an overt, then covert thematic in marxist thought (Bedford, 1994; Churchill, 1983).

"diversity." For Dirlik (1987, 14) culture is important because it represents the way a people see the world, it constitutes to a certain extent a subjectivity that must be recognized or else one remains "imprisoned… in a cultural unconscious, controlled by conditioned ways of seeing (even unto rationality), without the self consciousness that must be the point of departure for all critical understanding and, by implication, for all radical activity." Dirlik (1987, 13, 20) argues that the "radicalism of cultural activity" should be a priority over economist forms of activism which then brings up the key question (at the centre of this dissertation) of "how to conceive of a culture that may serve liberating rather than hegemonic purposes." To de-centre settler-bourgeois culture and to centre marginalized and oppositional cultures is then an important part of the liberatory project. For Dirlik (1987), this means that the particular complex cultural practices of non-western and economically excluded folx should take centre stage in resistance practice -- and not that of those whose culture relies on the hegemonic western/bourgeois structures of power. Dirlik (1987) offers the hope for a new culture, which is not of the west, nor reflects reified notions of tradition or the past (see also Fanon 2004). Such a cultural approach is integral to the making of a new, actually post-colonial (and non-capitalist) world. To engage with the cultural-economic level is to open up liberatory thought to critical non-western knowledge and resurgence practices, and thus invite a broader based discussion out of which a range of possibilities might emerge that could radically change, not just the methods and practices of liberation, but also how a liberated future might look (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).

For me, the theoretical merging of culture and economy also challenges and invigorates Marx's notion of the labour theory of value by placing emphasis on the creation of use value as

opposed to the economist approach that focuses on exchange value.[62] Marx (1990) describes how use values arise from the mixing of physical, psychic and imaginative (collective and individual) human energies with material elements from the environment in a metabolic relation of reciprocity. The molecular moment of economic practice or use-value production is a profoundly creative moment, well understood as always already fully cultural in Indigenous knowledge. As Simpson (2011, 42) relays, Indigenous people were "dreamed… into existence, demonstrating that the process of creation - visioning, making, doing — is the most powerful process in the universe." For Indigenous communities this can mean "singing, dancing, fasting, dreaming, visioning, participating in ceremony, apprenticing with Elders, practicing lifeways and living… knowledge, by watching, listening, and reflecting in a good way" (Simpson 2011 42). For non-Indigenous people, an expanded cultural economic view can refer to all the labour (i.e., physical, imaginative, knowledge, cultural, emotional, spiritual, social reproduction, lumpen) that is performed for the cultivation of necessities (not just commodities) towards the reproduction life itself and thus can be considered to be a creative activity in the most simple sense of the word - creation. To labour is to create; producing use value is an inherently cultural practice.

However, under colonial-capitalism, use values are transformed into exchange value. In order for capitalism to continue, our labour is seized, abstracted and channelled into the over production of often useless, toxic and/or wasted commodities for profit. We must constantly produce, shop and consume, thus, exchange value takes on a life of its own – the creation of profit regardless of actual need or the limits of the planetary eco-system to sustain such over-

[62] Use value speaks to the direct consumption of what is produced, the necessity of what is produced for the reproduction (survival and thriving) of the individual or community. Exchange value speaks to the commodity as something to be sold in order to bring profit, and is determined by the creation of a desire for a commodity often by fetishizing the object and creating a psychic sense of lack in the consumer (e.g., through advertising) such that they will buy something purely because it is the latest thing to have.

production/consumption. Or else our labour is relegated to un-valorized social reproduction labour, or else it is not recognized as labour at all. The profit system replaces the reproduction of life as the endgame and thus only labour that results in an exchangeable commodity is valued. Haiven (2011b, 98) notes "[c]apitalism here represents a toxic renegade value paradigm or a virus in the social reckoning of value, a product of social cooperation and imagination that turns back upon its human origins." Life itself is devalued and wasted in favour of making profit out of death and immiseration.

Under the exchange value system of colonial-capitalism, western dominant art has failed to achieve a radical capability (Haiven 2018). When art is dissolved back into culture as economic practice (where culture is not beholden to a reductive economic imperative), the understanding of art also shifts from its fetishized, individualized and commodified status in the bourgeois regime to one where art is understood as integral to producing or creating the social fabric. Out of the merging of culture and economics comes a creative, agential, relational subject who cultivates life through broader definitions of labour, creativity and value -- as opposed to the alienated social subject who sells their labour in order to buy cultural commodities of status and entertainment. A decolonized and de-bourgeoisified understanding and practice of art (as culture), one that attends to the disruption that capitalist-colonialism imposes on the relational fabric, is needed to activate arts political power.

Social Practice

The relational praxis art that I am proposing is an extension of the relatively new art genre of social practice that has emerged in response to the limits of bourgeois arts within the global contemporary art field since around the 1960's (Bala 2018; Bishop 2012; Finklepearl 2013; Hutcheson 2014; S. Jackson 2011; Kester 2011; Sholette 2011). The increasing acceptance of

social practice signifies the encroachment of a set of community based art practices into the contemporary bourgeois art world that have up till now been very suspect and delegitimized by contemporary art's gate keepers as not really art, too political, as craft, or simply crappy art (worth appropriating but not valorizing) (Bishop 2012; Hutcheson 2014; S. Jackson 2011; Kester 2004; Sholette 2011). Social practice should also be seen as some kind of a contending with the challenges made by communities of struggle and those where non-bourgeois forms of art are a cultural norm by the contemporary art field. Indeed, long before there was the genre of social practice, people in besieged communities were doing arts based, political community work.[63]

Social practice is just one name that some artists use among a wide variety of practices known by many other names: community arts, dialogical art, participatory art, socially engaged art, place based art, interactive art or relational aesthetics. While recognizing that different lineages exist for each of these categories, social practice is a term that draws attention to the broader sociality in which art is produced and thus, I use social practice an umbrella term (Jackson 2011) to refer to art that falls within any of the above categories. In defining social practice, I am drawing on those practices that I think are of most interest and worth carrying forward while many of the more liberal forms I do not consider relevant. For instance, S. Jackson (2011, 14) notes a difference between those artists for who " the word 'social' signifies an interest in explicit forms of political change," whereas for others "it refers more autonomously to the aesthetic exploration of time, collectivity, and embodiments as medium and

[63] My own art practice is rooted in youth, punk, feminist, low-income and anarchist-feminist activism and community engagement and very much influenced by the political cultures of abolition, anti-imperialism, decolonization. I locate my inspiration in the American Indian Movement, the Black Panthers and the militant white radical left in Canada, the US and Europe, many other social practice artists locate their inspiration in the Civil Rights movement (Finklepearl 2013).

material." As discussed above, for me, all art has political implications, the only question is how it might challenge or reproduce hierarchies of power.

This social turn can be read as a fracturing of the exclusionary gate keeping practices, the market basis and the hyper individualized art-star system of the contemporary art world establishment under the pressure of the current economic and political crisis: the retrenchment of fundamentalist capitalism in the form of plutocratic neoliberal austerity (Kester 2011; Haiven 2018). In the broadest definition, social practice makes a move away from the bourgeois individualist art mode where the viewer is to varying degrees a passive consumer of art objects, towards practices that animates questions about, and engagements with, the relationship between the audience and the artist (Bala 2018; Finkelpearl 2013; S. Jackson 2011; Kester 2004; Sholette 2011). Social practice may produce objects or may work solely in relational, performative or activist realms, however, the relationships formed between artist and participants are under equal, or more consideration as the art objects produced. The artist-participant relation can take many forms: artists produce a work that allows for engagement by a general public; artists direct specific participants in a preconceived work; artists frame a work in which participants provide content; artists offer their skills and relative privileges within a community setting to facilitate the community to realize their creative capacities; artists mentor youths in the gaining of creative skills. Often the dematerialized dimension of the artist's engagement with participants is referred to as performative, as opposed to the production of art objects (S. Jackson 2011; Taylor 2003).

Similar to conceptual art, social practice is a multi-disciplinary and experimental art form that draws on any or all art disciplines and whatever means and methods are available to it and relevant to its objectives: community artists "draw on the entire cultural vocabulary of a

community, from esoteric crafts to comic books whatever resonates with community members' desire to achieve full expression" (Goldbard 2006 cited in Hutcheson 2015, 129). While some social practice works might have a goal in mind, or a set of guidelines to follow towards the making of an artwork, many social practice works have completely undetermined outcomes and processes; the outcomes and processes are developed through the specific contributions of participants who guide the process according to their ideation, desires, needs and interests.

Because meaningful relationships take time to build in the best-case scenarios, social practice is durational and rooted in specific places among a community or in a neighbourhood. The duration of social practice can vary widely, but (like any artwork) a sufficient amount of time is needed to understand and develop trusting relational networks and the art projects that are planned and executed. Sporadic and low funding of social practice art is a major hindrance to durational demands, however, many social practice artists (such as myself) become very rooted in specific communities. Because of its sensitivity to location, social practice often takes place outside the gallery, "often in public or semi-public spaces such as streets, parks, or community centres" (Hutcheson 2015). As Hutcheson (2015, 129) notes: "[a]t all levels, then, community art strives to move away from elite perspectives, forms and institutions in the name of inclusivity, participation and collaboration." Art objects then, are not autonomous, but always connected to those who produced them and the relational structures out of which they arise. With social practice, art is not merely an attempt at provoking revelation in the audience through a fetishized art object, it is not simply a sensual experience to be purchased, art becomes a social engagement. Social practice invites us to look into at least some aspects of the relational web and power hierarchies that subtends the art making practice. That is to say that social practice, to some extent, at least gestures towards de-fetishizing the "autonomous" bourgeois art object.

– *Critique of Social Practice*

Many critics have pointed out that while responding to neoliberalism, social practice also, problematically, takes on its modes and/or fills in the social voids left behind by austerity measures (Bala 2011; Haiven 2018; McLean 2014; Sholette 2011). Some have commented that community arts practices that operate under state funding can be only superficially (if at all) transformative due to historical state censorship of the free expression of the individual artists voice and the government's own objectives for amelioration of social problems (Bishop 2006; Kwon 2002). Under neoliberalism, state funded community arts projects tend to be treated as "a means to other ends," (Haiven 2018, 136) where artists become 'service providers' instead of vanguardists. Professionalized community artists often get grants to pay themselves to work in racialized low-income communities to do, for instance, mural projects that symbolically exotify poor people of color without offering any transformative outcomes, what Hutcheson (2015, 12) refers to as "blurry goals." Such murals then work to "manage difference" by making oppression more aesthetic and palatable for middle-class white people and gentrifiers (McLean 2014; Rosler 2014). Hutcheson (2014, 131-132) suggests that "[e]ven as some practitioners and theorists value community art for its radical potential (as a form of self-representation, reclamation, etc.), others have critiqued the genre's emphasis on collaboration between artists and often marginalized publics as a form of recolonization, ineffectual charity or an abdication of pressing social issues such as poverty and racism." It is also the case that one of the main objectives of marginalized communities is to gain access to material relief and stability. For instance, community arts have a role in mentoring and marketable skills development, particularly in "at-risk" youth based projects. The desire for material relief exists in tension with developing resistant voices and practices. In as much as settler-bourgeois arts are married to the

capitalist market paradigm, community arts can be seen as beholden to the state's domestication of the arts for the purposes of benevolent approaches to marginalized communities.

The term 'community' has also been much critiqued for its potentially exclusionary implications, a term that assumes belonging in community and thus creates un-belonging (Ford-Smith 2001; Massey 2004). Art historian Claire Bishop (2012) rallies post-marxist theory to proffer a critique of the celebratory ethos of community art that contributes to the creation of a false consensus and the suppression of agonism (conflict) understood as the bedrock of democratic process. S. Jackson (2011, 15) observes that "an emphasis on the social interdependence of the art object risks censorship as much as it invites collaboration; an openness to the social can encumber the work of art as often as it activates it... The risk of an interdependent language is that it might compromise an aesthetic practice, especially in the context of social engagement where art could find itself 'governed' by the 'external' claims of communities, special interests, audiences, governments, bureaucracies, and other social entities from whom it must properly stand apart." As such, claims to work with community bring up a host of problematics.

My own issue with social practice art is that I do not think how it is theorized and taken up by practitioners provides enough critical edge. Social practice does not necessarily account for the hierarchical and intersectional power arrangements that mark the colonial-capitalist sociality and in particular the complex material relationality between artists and participants. Many social art practitioners have a weak sense of reflexivity as to their positionality and thus very often end up re-inscribing harmful forms of hierarchical and intersectional power. While the theory of social practice points to sociality as a creative material, it is not sufficiently grounded in historical context, specific space/place or ecological networks in order to

understand the specific problems to be worked on. While many social practice art projects aspire to build community and be engaged politically, nothing in the writing suggests that social practice is inherently anti-capitalist, anti-gentrification or de-colonial (Hutcheson 2015; Rosler 1991). Rather, art making is seen as a universal and unquestioned good considered to have ameliorating effects regardless of the specific contexts and power arrangements in which it is being enacted.

In terms of the relational power dynamics, participation or engagement is commonly understood as determined by the art project and decided (for the most part) by the artists with limited to no effective consultation by the community members in consideration of their agency. Social practice art projects can be disciplining of community bodies by seeking their participation in limited ways where the full bodies and realities of community members are not included in ways that reflect their complexity: as a participant perhaps only part of your presence is required, tell a story, make a mark, contribute a bit of knowledge to a collective project. Community members are mined for content or are counted as participants in order to give a numerical evidence of engagement. While the social practice art project may create a limited space of interest for community member engagement, participants must leave the art space to face whatever other conditions of marginalization that are being endured within a different spatio-temporality of community experience. Communities are also frontline spaces of conflict where exclusion on the basis of intersectional differences at play in the larger society is reflected; for the most part, those most socially stigmatized and excluded remain outside most community arts projects. The social practice art world also, for the most part, maintains a distinct separation between artists and participants, with artists advancing their social capital and professional status while community members remain in their social condition or place. There is

a kind of trickledown economy where participants are expected to receive residual benefits of sharing space with artists and being included in art making, while the artist/researcher/activist carries their content to different sites of privileged consumption (gallery, university, activist spaces), community members remain in their much more circumscribed conditions of existence away from the larger discourse the artwork may engender. Hutcheson (2015, 133) rightly questions how such participation is organized asking: "to what extent is participation co-opted in these processes? Are participants marshalled to contribute to the work but kept out of key authorial decisions? Who has agency and how? Are there unspoken exclusions? How are structural inequities like race, class and gender navigated in the artistic process?"

Finally, in line with the settler-bourgeois art form, the politics of social practice art remain on the symbolic/ideological level. Even those social practice artists that do take on issues of colonial-capitalism often do so in a way that that remains in the symbolic realm and does not actually challenge the relational power hierarchies in any substantial way. Social practice artists are not held accountable or answerable to the communities in which they work, only to themselves, their professional peers and their granting agencies or institutions. Claims to democratization are without self-examination. By what means and to what extent democratization has been achieved (or not) in the project is an important question. Indeed, there is very little accountability within social practice art to historical or social conditions or self-professed transformative goals. This is no small matter: with the role of all kinds of participatory art in gentrification and other neoliberal ventures, it behoves social practice arts to stake itself on serious historical and political ground. Perhaps most importantly, low-income communities do have their own cultural, economic and political practices that could/should/would be the basis of any social practice engagement.

These (and other) limitations often result in low participation and/or cynicism about community arts, academic research and activism that supposedly happens on the behalf of community members. I agree with Hutcheson (2015) in that social practice must be problematized. It is important to recognize the limits of social practice (given the lack of human, material and time resources in communities), to resist a celebratory gloss imposed by the neoliberal fetish for results, and instead, assess what is being done against a greater vision of how arts based work can support relational transformation in marginalized communities. While it is difficult to develop critical reflexivity under pressure to prove worthiness within the productivist capitalist/colonial paradigm, the lack of incisive analysis renders social practice politically weak and potentially reproductive of harms.

In the next section I present my own term, relational praxis art to the mix at the risk of adding yet another genre that no one really needs to contend with. Whether this term is actually taken up or not, I hope this discussion expands the critical perspectives on social practice and the role of art in working with marginalized or lumpen communities.

Relational Praxis Art

In order to take hold of the above problems, I introduce the term relational praxis art. relational praxis art is grounded in my own longstanding engagement with creative practices as part of the survival and resistance strategies of marginalized communities. I seek to distinguish it from both liberal forms of social practice and community arts, as well as, political art that is instrumentalized through activist movements. Like social practice art, relational praxis draws on very diverse techniques, methods, media and forms (as discussed), however, by changing the term ‘social’ to ‘relational’ and ‘practice’ to ‘praxis,’ I am hoping to engage another level of understanding how art can be performed politically, that is towards a liberatory future.

The intention of relational praxis art is to thoroughly critique the bourgeois art paradigm towards developing an art form that is resistant to assimilation into colonial-capitalism's project. Rather than being grounded in abstract ideas, contemporary arts paradigms, individual talents, virtuosity, and/or inspiration, relational praxis art is grounded in the historical moment, in space and time. Taking up the specific power dynamics that are produced and reproduced everyday, relational praxis arts attends to the realities of those who are Othered, those I have theorized as the lumpen, the constitutive outside, those who live in social spaces of the carceral continuum and of impoverishment, those who have the critical lived experience knowledge of the ethical failures of colonial-capitalism. Relational praxis art understands the dialectics of history as it unfolds geographically and provokes counter hegemonic interventions. Relational praxis art attends to the relational dynamics that make up the social fabric, and seeks to challenge and transform, in material ways, relational hierarchies in order to create political subjectivity and activist method alongside those subalternized through colonial/capitalist society. In order to address hierarchical power, relational praxis art responds to the everyday material needs/desires/critical knowledge of those who form the constitutive outside. Thus, relational praxis art suggests praxis is necessarily accomplished through diverse kinds of social reproduction labour. Working from an everyday material basis with marginalized communities is inextricable from, and thus constitutive of, the creative work. In its reworking of praxis, relational praxis art seeks to shift the locus of liberatory knowledge production from the organic intellectual to those with lived experience of marginalization who are often unable to access more typical forms of activism.

− *Relationality*

In the modern western philosophical tradition, Marx (1990) foregrounds the fundamental cooperative nature of human society. Marx (1990, 122) considers the human "essence" to be produced through an "ensemble of social relations" which are historically given and engaged with through conscious labour practices (Gramsci 1971). Similarly, the things that humans produce are not independent in and of themselves (as they may appear) but are realizations of relational networks (Ollman 1986). These relations do not arise out of the specific character of the individuals or the materials of production, but out of the relations between them. Marx developed relational thinking into his study of political economics as the examination of different systems, modes of production, or relationalities and interdependencies of production and distribution that make up the social fabric towards the reproduction of life (Ollman 1986). In this historical period, relationality is mediated by the capitalist/colonial structure that dominates through techniques of violence towards maintaining an exploitable mass for profit production and uneven wealth accumulation.

Relationality is facilitated through communication as an embodied medium. Marx (1986) describes the body's engagement in material processes of sensual expression where the body (the tongue, throat, mouth, hands, feet, etc.) engages with, moves and manipulates substances (air, graphite, paper, clay, wood, water) found outside of itself. The body expresses itself through an engagement with a medium, a medium, which also carries meaning. Within this cultural endeavour, the relationship of specific language forms to reality is indeterminate and thus meanings are never given or fixed. Thus, language is endlessly in a process of iteration and reiteration (Butler 1993) in it is striving to express what is and thus what can be done. As well, individual experience pushes against collective consciousness and what is sayable or comprehensible. Language is an experimental process where new meanings and thus new

consciousness and possibilities within a non-reified cultural economics become possible. Language is a necessary tool for building social consciousness and thus making possible social cooperation towards fulfilling the practical need to engage in production, to survive and thrive as a collective. Haiven (2011b, 103), drawing on Marx, speaks to the collective power of social consciousness as a "unique quality that makes human cooperation political — not merely an isolated toil but a cooperative 'labor process.'" Imagination is a "shared capacity, not an individual one" and is "germane to the human 'species-being'" by which we "cooperatively" transform "the world that, in turn, transforms us." For Haiven (2011b, 103), it is through our imaginations that we conceive of how to intervene "in our social totality" and project "future outcomes." Against the individualist notions that pervade bourgeois arts, Haiven (2012a, n.p.) asserts the social nature of creativity:

> creativity is a social, socialized and socializing phenomenon: it's something we do together as social animals. Every great creative genius was part of a community of peers and a society that supported her or him. Only when we recognize that creativity is a collaborative process (not an individual possession) can creativity help us transform our lives and our world creatively, and employ creativity for the good of everyone.

As a marxist, Haiven (2012a) picks up on relational thinking, however, relationality is idea that remains quite radical in terms of western thought. Even many marxists don't fully understand relationality and many more miss its key importance. Indeed, relational thinking is more highly understood and practiced among Indigenous peoples. In Lesley Marmon Silko's (1992, 311) *Almanac of the Dead*, the character Angelita La Escapia who comments that "every Indigenous people knows that Marx stole his ideas from us." Given his extensive research into early anthropology texts, it seems undeniable that Marx appropriated Indigenous knowledge into his philosophy of relationality (Foster et al. 2020). Despite Marx's uptake of relationality, he also problematically adheres to an androcentric hierarchy of being against which Indigenous thought

offers a relational ontology where humans are not above other entities, but understand themselves through fundamentally grounded interconnectivities within the relational web (Hall 2015; Lee 2011; Simpson 2011; Tuck and McKenzie 2015; Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020).[64] Lee (2011, 7) refers to Sakej Youngblood Henderson when he notes that "both animate and inanimate 'embodied spirits' form the implicate order of relationships of which humans are a small part (…) Place is the reciprocal relationships we find ourselves in with our territories and all the beings within them." Lee (2011, 9) further explains:

> [e]ach expression of energy, whether human, animal, rock language, knowledge, etc., is likened to a unique wave within an ocean of energy. Humans are simply another form of embodied spirit, which, like everything else, relates to this energy and to its multiple expressions in innumerable and complex ways… Indigenous peoples understand their languages, their knowledges and their spiritualities as expressions of the Land in physical, audible, epistemic, and spiritual forms; all are expressions of the ecology of Creation.[65]

For Two-Crows Tremblay (2017-2020), the relational web includes ancestors, both human and non-human, who "download" their knowledge through ceremony. Indigenous cultural and survival practices build non-hierarchical and honorific (ethical) Land based relationships of responsibility and reciprocity to the non-human world (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2011; Two Crows Tremblay 2017-2020; Tuck and McKenzie 2015).

Disability thought also has important contributions to understanding how relationality is embodied and intersubjective: the boundaries between bodies are blurred with the "inter-corporeal" constituting "all bodyliness" (Shildrick 2005, 767). Such a relational ontology signals the existential status of "mutual engagement," "vulnerability," and "fragility," that

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[64] That humans imagine the outcome of their labour, whereas Marx presumes non-human animals (e.g., spiders and bees) do not, is quite problematically thought by Marx (1990 [1867]: 283-284) to be what distinguishes humans from animals. At the same time, however, Marx does recognize human relationality with nature is an intimate and inextricable one through his concept of metabolism.

[65] New materialism also echoes without acknowledging Indigenous thought when it ascribes agency to all entities: biological, organic, chemical (Barad 2003).

pervades our relational interactions and interdependencies and upsets bourgeois-settler notions of the discrete autonomous individual who takes control of the self (Shildrick 2005, 767).

Drawing on this ontology, with relational praxis art, relationality itself becomes the artist materials. Relational praxis art takes up the metaphor of weaving or mending the relational web as its creative and political work. Relational threads that make up the space of the community are tended to with affect, desire, physical affection, material need, inter-subjectivity, intuition, cultural (material/symbolic) practices, presence, practical knowledge, curiosity, aesthetic engagement, need, power, non-human centred exchange relations, communication, wonder, spirit, ethics and care.[66] Through tending the relational threads in a materially grounded way, meaning and knowledge are created and communicated among individuals and as collectivities, and communities are sustained. As discussed, this work is based on an understanding that economy and culture are integral to each other, such that when we create, we also manifest value (not monetary) in all its multi-dimensionality and thus life.

The work of relational praxis art is based in a direct confrontation with the historical conditions of colonial-capitalism that creates distortions in the relational web where the hyper-fetishization of the individual, the rational, the utilitarian, the exploitative, extractive and the profit motive (etc.) drives and disciplines our relationality. The profoundly disturbed and distorted mode of relations under colonial-capitalism have led prison abolitionists to describe carceral discipline as the "core structure shaping social relations in our society -- not just the relationships of those affected directly, but of everyone" (Chapman, Carey and Men-Moshe in Ben-Moshe et al. 2014, 10; Story 2019). Capitalist-colonial relationalities stigmatize, violently

[66] Discussions of relationality, mending relational webs and social fabric with nancy viva davis-halifax (2009-2020), Rebecca Garrett (2009-2020) and with Two-Crows Tremblay (2017-2020) have greatly informed my thinking.

disrupt and erase earth-based, spiritual and non-euro-modernist knowledge and relational forms. Indigenous writers have remarked that throughout the contact period Indigenous peoples have understood that colonialism is a relational dis-ease, perhaps of the spirit (Simpson 2017; Trudel 2012). Marx (1990) likewise understood capitalism as relational unfreedom, as vampiric. halifax and Jackson (2018a, 124) talk of colonial-capitalism as an "anti-relationality." Relational violence happens when the interconnectedness, knowledge and value inherent to all entities within the relational web is not acknowledged, respected, honoured and materially sustained.

− *Spatial dimension*

The spatial dimension is key to relational praxis art. We are connected and responsible to the Land beneath our feet as it is realized through history. In the context in which I work, this is a history of Canadian settler colonialism in its urban manifestation where private property grid is a disciplinary force coercing our bodies into the property owning, nuclear family, work a day life of colonial/capitalist relations. Private property relations to Land are, at the same time, not fixed, but are unsettled by ongoing Indigenous resurgent Land sovereignty practices as well as spatial practices by lumpen/low-income community (Blomley 2004; Hern 2016; Couture et al. 2018).

Relational praxis art understands spatial location as characterized by irreducible specificity and thus offers a radical potential for engagement that resists abstraction (Lefebvre 2007; Massey 2005; Merrifield 2002; Tuck and McKenzie 2015). Massey (2005) formulates space as being comprised of nested scales where no one location is discrete and contained, but consists of slower and more rapid flows, migrations, layerings and semi-permanence and/or stabilities over time. The local can be seen as intersecting trajectories of emplaced relational threads that make up the social fabric (Massey 2005). Smith's (1984) theory of uneven

development tells us that the underdevelopment of the global south, Indigenous Lands and urban neighbourhoods are by necessity related to the overdevelopment of privileged spaces of settler nations, the global north and wealthy enclaves. Thus, the macro level of globalizing landscapes and economics of gentrification and development (such as resource extraction on and transport across Indigenous Lands) impose further forms of social and economic exclusion, forced mobility, embodied attacks and toxification at the local level.

In every space there is a web of life, processes of time and cultural/economic engagements. There are networks of exchange relations among humans and with non-human animals, insects, plant and chemical life, which can be witnessed, or ignored by humans. There is history, which haunts the Land and takes shape in the built environment, a built environment that is a conduit for forms of power that course through and organize the daily sociality of local peoples. There are those spaces and places where hegemonic power thins and retreats, where Othered life forms (vegetal, animal, mineral…) persist, where life can catch a breath and express beyond the disciplinarity of colonial/capitalist relations and the structures such relations produce. All these dimensions take specific shapes and forms in unique located places: from the over exalted refurbished (gentrified) historical architecture and global capital condo developments, to back alleys, so-called vacant lots and residual spaces along the railway tracks where birds nest in the sooty brush. Places where people can take shelter for a minute from the condo mania and have a beer underneath some struggling aspens that soften a busy intersection, where weeds grow and there is a good view to see if cops are coming (Bluebird Stickings, 2009-2020).

Following marxist geography, and the Indigenous practice of doing Land and ancestral acknowledgements, relational praxis art pays attention to ones varied relationships to the ground

that one is on and the diverse dimensions and flows of location. Lee (2012, 6) quotes Vine Deloria Jr. (2001) as saying that "place" is the "relationship of things to each other" and that "place includes the unseen beings that have their own life forces" which "connotes a universe that is alive." The observation of ones modulating connection/alienation/accommodation to place, environment, animals, plants and mineral life, to diverse natures as well as urban forms of cement, traffic, the private property grid, etc. to what aspects are invested in and what aspects are ignored, resisted, mediated, succumbed to, desired etc. Relational praxis art is also concerned with relationships to absence and erasures, to histories written over and histories excavated, to those spirits who are not attended to, and those whose stories are not being told: the destruction of Landscapes, the loss of biodiversity, the covering of rivers and creeks, of habitats and cultures, the genocide on which the city was built (Two-Crows Tremblay, 2017-2020). All those Others that haunt the grid of the city and that cast gentrifier lifestyles in a less benign light as they reproduce the violence of private property relations on the Land.

One can understand relational praxis art from the neighbourhood level as inclusive of all those who appear in a particular place. The daily life, cultural and economic practices and subjectivities of diverse people, necessarily produce a multiplicity of spatialities (Lefebvre 2007) that rub up against each other. Whoever shows up in place, whether plant, critter, human, spirit, weather, rock or car, is part of the community. No matter how far they come, or whether they never left, we find ourselves connected at the local scale with each other meaningfully. Connecting to the local means become attendant to who else is present, what claims are being made, what social dynamics are unfolding, and what power hierarchies are manifesting among all the entities that are present. Being connected through, as well as having competing claims as to how space/place is produced, generates a dialectical context through which political struggles

occur (Lefebvre 2007; Massey 2005; Merrifield 2002; Smith 1996; Springer 2011; Tuck and McKenzie 2015). The dimension of space is always considered to be one of contestation within capitalist/colonial paradigms and historical contexts.

Relational praxis art doesn't eschew conflict. Understanding and taking up such conflicts that are realized between bodies at the local level is the grounding point of the work of relational praxis art. Those whose being contribute to the production of space in a particular place and time are involved in a relational ethics. The ethics of relational praxis art means to orient oneself to those who are most vulnerablized and Othered while questioning and taking responsibility for one's performance of power and/or resistance within the emplaced relational web (De Leeuw and Hunt 2018). For instance, whereas the arts are considered to be a boon to gentrification, relational praxis art orients towards those bodies designated for removal from space and public life to develop, as agents, creative self-representational strategies within cultural/economic relational networks, to assert low-income/lumpen community, to refuse expendability, to inhabit urban space, and to create a basis for dialogue and exchange for critical knowledge production, creative work, material redistribution and reconnection. Thus, community is the space of conflict and of relational web repair.

− *Positionality*

As we are located as specific and irreducible entities in space, we are also positioned within the power hierarchy. In a community understood as consisting of all entities/bodies, our positionalities are inevitably different, and this difference impacts relationality. Working across difference as it is constantly constructed, materialized and reproduced through capitalist/colonial social hierarchy is a source of incredible tensions and conflict that brings constant questions and problems into play. Beginning to work relational threads means coming to terms and being

reflexive about the complex positionality we each hold within the power hierarchy in relation to those who are Othered/marginalized/Indigenous/excluded/vulnerablized. While neoliberal society asks those of us who can, to invest in our own (historically granted) unearned privileges and class mobility, a key question becomes how we (as individuals, allies and/or collectivities) reiterate, reproduce or resist colonial/capitalist relationalities. In considering ones positionality, it then becomes imperative to consider how to work across difference and specifically become cognizant of, and resist the manner in which society configures those with privilege who do "good works"[67] as above, as saviours of the poor/racialized/Indigenous/disabled/lumpen, what Chapman and Withers (2019) have recently theorized as the violence of benevolence.

In an academic context, in working across difference, Mies (1983) asserts the importance of positioning oneself in relation to co-researchers. Each person's lived experience becomes the ground for mutual identification but also difference. Mies (1983) suggests that as researchers we should reveal where our own experiences intersect with those of among whom we work in order to move beyond a critical theory that remains academic and towards developing a methodology that aims at socio-political transformation.[68] In my work with lumpen/low-income community, I am constantly reminded of the power differential between myself and community members. While community members want to support my academic objectives, they also feel vulnerable to my advancing my career status on the backs of their lived experience - this is a fact and a very real problem, which I must constantly attend to.[69] Likewise, in as much as I draw on Indigenous

[67] Here I include artists/academics/activists, not just those working in charity.
[68] Naryan (2002) warns that the desire to form trust in relationships across difference within community can often lead to harm. Thus, with relational praxis art, every effort is made towards levelling agency and building relationships on mutually agreed upon exchange relations as opposed to good intentions couched in lack of awareness of differences in social position within the hierarchy.
[69] Even among very radical activist/artists/academics segregation exists with community members; whether conscious or not, activists/artists/academics network with each other while circumscribing their relationships to marginalization of community members.

thought and my own experience working in Indigenous community to frame relational praxis art, this does not permit the appropriation of Indigenous thought and practices to further my own objectives. At the same time, from my own settler positionality, working on repairing relations with Indigenous peoples means respecting Indigenous knowledge about relationality (Lee 2011). What I propose with relational praxis art is that understanding one's positionality means working in *materially significant ways* to redistribute resources and to take direction on decolonization and real reconciliation from Indigenous community members within specific contexts (Hall 2018).

Relational praxis art is challenged to be reflexive about who is and is not present and why. In maintaining a concern for working across difference, engaging with our different positionalities as a community, may seem to require the co-presence of our bodies in shared space. However, Hutcheson (2015), drawing on feminist and anti-racist scholars, critiques the conflation of face-to-face presence with empowerment and increased potential for democratic relations. Indeed, power hierarchies are reinforced through face-to-face presence and thus presence can often mean vulnerability and violence. Sometimes, not being present can afford empowerment and safety. Refusal to be present can speak critical volumes as to the lack of awareness in how certain spaces are produced hegemonically, normatively, in racist and classist ways.

To ask how presence can be made possible, what forms might presence take, even in absence. Those of us who gather, must have some privilege as we are not yet inclusive of those bodies who cannot, under current - often ablist - conditions, show up (halifax and Jackson 2018b). For instance, when the Friends of Watkinson Park puts on a feast party in the park, many people from the community show up, participate in creative activities, and help out with

tasks that would not come to more intimate events, or would not do meetings. During feasts, plates of food are being brought to people who have stayed home, who have not felt that venturing to the park for a party was possible for a variety of reasons. This reality gives information about what kind of work needs to be developed further on in order to build community, knowledge and resistance. Working in community and being as present as we can to each other's everyday lives, we deal with macro-forms of power in our interactions with each other. We deal with the macro on the interpersonal, intersubjective and community level. The work of bringing into presence is directed to those bodies, to the outside of even us, to support, create a practice for increasing inclusion and safer space. One must enter into the work open to its demands for healing the relational web understood as is its own vital knowledge production practice, as opposed to working one's own agenda of accruing privilege within colonial-capitalism (which is always a tension given capitalist distortion of our relational reality).

To conclude, relational praxis art is critical of the narrow view that conveniently excludes the vast relational network out of which all objects/entities/subjectivities are produced. All art (like any other commodity or necessity) is only possible within the social and metabolic relational web, Lee's (2011, 6) "ocean of energy," in which beings and entities are embedded. If colonial-capitalism can be understood as an injury to the relational web, then it is addressing this problematic that is the substance of relational praxis art.

– *Praxis*

Praxis, the second term in relational praxis art, is a term taken up by marxist thinkers that brings the expectation of radical and anti-capitalist societal transformation into the discussion on art. In its broadest sense, the term praxis is understood to refer to the relationship between theory and everyday life working from "life to thought, not from thought to life" (Labriola in Haug 2000,

6). Gramsci's (1996, 177) idea of praxis is the "philosophy of the act, but not the pure act… but the real act in the profane sense of the word." Praxis is constituted through a series of moments or movements: from everyday survival (engagements with Land), to the knowledge that is generated from it, to the development of liberatory theory, which is then applied in life towards a transformed future, and so on.

Praxis is based on the experience of "history in all its infinite variety and multiplicity" (Gramsci 1971, 428). People experience, and thus knowledge, develops through their everyday life within a historically specific context - whether that be in the form of popular conceptions (common sense), traditional ways of knowing or critique from ones unique vantage point. History as it manifests in thought, that is, the contemporary discourse among the cultural capital classes,[70] (scientists, artists, academics, technocrats, activists, journalists, politicians etc.) does not represent transcendental truths but is historically contingent and class-based.

In settler-bourgeois society, as much as theory is considered the purview of the middle and upper classes and daily life survival is considered the only concern of the lower class masses, praxis also speaks about the relationship between the cultural capital classes and the masses, which is, of course, a relationship of exploitation and oppression meted out according to intersectional hierarchization of bodies. Gramsci (1971) seeks to address this oppressive relation by identifying the organic intellectual as one who rises from among the people, shares their experience and thus can represent their realities (as opposed to the bourgeois-settler intellectual). Gramsci (1971, 330) assigns an important role to the organic intellectual in making

[70] I use the term cultural capital class to address the ablism in the terms intellectual classes or the intelligencia. At the same time, I am speaking to a structure that valorizes hegemonic types of intelligence over the ways of knowing that are also equally valid, but subject to de-legitimization.

"coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity" so that they can come to constitute "a cultural and social bloc" i.e., a political force.

Whereas Gramsci (1971) seems to vacillate between recognizing the importance of the lived experience knowledge of common people, he ultimately falls on the side of their deficiency, re-instituting a class-based relation of knowledge production. Certainly, organic intellectuals tend to shift class once they have accumulated enough cultural capital, eschewing contact with the people in favour of forming community as a cultural capital class (hooks 2000). The shift in social location of organic intellectuals comes with a shift in relation to the means of production – to our own survival within capitalist/colonial relations: how and what we think, how we write, what we problematize, where we publish, the words we use, the time we accord to theorizing work vs. being present in community, whether or not we prioritize community work (in our analysis or in our own work) within our movements, and/or what kind of relational ethics we reproduce. Quite often, members of the cultural capital class persistently obfuscate their own interests and relations to the means of production within their theorization, rendering their theory, perhaps highly developed, but detached from the real problems and questions faced by people and their own positionality within them. An inability to deal with the real everyday life challenges of social transformation leads intellectuals to eschew their relational responsibilities to marginalized community members they claim to represent thereby reinstituting class hierarchy (hooks 2000).

Developing analysis of the social conditions of oppressed peoples is quite different than confronting the material inequalities that mark relations across class. Despite praxis supposedly being about the relation between daily life and knowledge, pretty much all the theorists of praxis that I have read emphasize (whether consciously or not) the theoretical, analytical and textual,

problems of knowledge production and thinking through at the expense of the lived, and further, pay little to no attention to the fraught material relation between (Dirlik 1987). For instance, Gramsci (1971, 431) understands praxis as a "theory of dialectics of knowledge" between the ideologies and practices of power and those of the subjected people. For Gramsci (1971, 323), the primary task of this dialectic is to be able to "combat the ideologies of the educated classes" as they reflect the professionalized interests of those in power, while also combatting the "common sense" belief systems of the common people, which he characterizes as a "folkloric," "mechanistic" and to be an uncritical uptake of systems of thought from ones "immediate environment" and/or from a former time (note the stagism here). Again, for Gramsci (1971, 329), common sense is 'simple thought' that should be overcome through an "ideological unity" between the "bottom" and the "top," i.e., a shift from common sense perspectives to critical thinking. This notion of a merging of the bottom with the top obfuscates the fact that the bottom would have a critical relation to the top and thus a merging is not possible. What is needed is a critical dialogue. The need for those with cultural capital to educate the oppressed classes is a commonplace. Haiven (2018, 19) writes:

> [I]t has been clear to social movement organizers and agitators throughout the history of capitalism that one key problem is the stunted or fearful imagination of the oppressed and exploited. Sometimes this comes in the form of the exploited and oppressed succumbing to the hegemony of the ruling class. Other times it takes the equally pernicious fatalism and resignation that comes from imagining resistance is futile and the system of power is inevitable.

I would suggest that when the people's imagination is not validated and supported it has no recourse but to appear to comply with the hegemony of the ruling class.[71] Furthermore, the imagination of oppressed peoples might be apprehended if organic intellectuals and their social

[71] It is in fact dangerous for oppressed peoples to speak their truth, they will be attacked, gas lit and risk further exclusion which adds to stress and a condition of necro-politics.

movements, showed up in community as allies (or better yet, accomplices) to actually engage in daily life labours and cultural production, rather than remaining socially segregated, as is the tendency that I observe. Gramsci (1971, 330) admits the tendency of the culture capital class to form a “specialised culture among restricted intellectual groups” forgetting “to remain in contact with the "simple." For Gramsci (1971, 330) (and I agree) it is “only by this contact [with the people] does a philosophy become ‘historical,’ purify itself of intellectualistic elements of an individual character and become ‘life.’” However, how to actually develop this “contact with the people” as suggested by Gramsci, this radical union between thought and practice, that also represents a coming together across material difference (intersections of Indigeneity, class, race, ability, gender, sexuality, etc.) remains un-discussed -- and this is precisely the main concern of relational praxis art.

Marxist, anti-racist, transnational and decolonial feminists have attempted to radicalize praxis in the face of the historical legacy of patriarchal western notions of truth and knowing (as hegemonic, cis hetero-patriarchal, white dominated, class-based, ablist, positivist, rationalist, and institutionalizing) by recognizing subjective, affective, embodied and performative, decolonial, lived experience forms of knowledge and knowing (Alexander and Mohanty 2010; Hesse-Biber 2012; Hill-Collins 2000; Lather 2004; Mohanty 2002; Narayan 1988). Feminists understand truth as situated, perspectival, partial, and inflected with power relations (Haraway 1988; Hennessy 2009; Hesse-Biber 2012; Harstock 2006). Narayan (1988) offers an articulation of ‘epistemic privilege’ which tells us to foreground the critical, lived experience knowledge of marginalized peoples as one antidote to the violence experienced through hierarchical relationalities. Feminist methodologies acknowledge the role of difference in research as forming an important dialectic and fount of creative work (Hesse-Biber 2012). As diverse bodies

perceive and reflect, engage with relational networks of survival, and develop exchange and communication relations within community, the more broadened a picture of reality is produced. Thus, the disenfranchised perspective (that is relegated by Gramsci (1971) to "common sense") offers a clearer view of society from the vantage point of oppression that is vital to an accurate representation of the whole (Narayan 1988). Marxist, anti-racist, transnational and decolonial feminist methodologies seek to work to include subjugated knowledges in processes that empower and centre marginalized groups. For Mies (1983, 124), "the 'truth' of a theory is not dependent on the application of certain methodological principles and rules, but on its potential to orient the processes of praxis towards progressive emancipation and humanization."

Nevertheless, marxist and anti-racist feminist thought, as critical as it is, remains focused on the symbolic work of knowledge production and misses the daily life connection to the mass of people that Gramsci passingly articulates. Feminist theory has also been confronted by critiques from Indigenous scholars that call for decolonization of eurocentric practices and discourses of knowledge, which are understood as indispensable tools of violence used in the colonial project (Kovach in Brown and Strega 2005; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999;). Leanne Simpson (2011, 15-16) points out that "[t]hrough the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we [Indigenous peoples] are often unable to see our Ancestors. We are unable to see their philosophies and their strategies of mobilization and the complexity of their plan for resurgence." Battiste and Henderson (2009, 7) note that "[a]s a concept, [Indigenous Knowledge] benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory and methodologies, evidence, interpretation, and conclusions. It fills the ethical and knowledge gaps in Eurocentric education, research, and scholarship."

While the term praxis hails from western philosophy and is persistently under theorized and practiced, the actual meaning of the term, the linking between daily life survival, thought and social transformation becomes most clear through decolonial and Indigenous thought. Wanda Nanibush (Simpson et al. 2012, 3) writes: “I come to the ideas of resistance and resurgence from the place where intellectual engagement is not severed from the bodies’ memories or the heart’s commitments or my culture’s knowledges and practices. Resistance is a daily practice and a community process with an ever-changing meaning.” For Battiste and Henderson (2009, 14): “Indigenous peoples mark their knowing, and learning through visiting, remembering stories that entertain and teach, recalling events as markers of history, and providing continuity in learning and identity. The long-term ecological history of the Land is a cloth woven from the threads of stories and ceremonies provided by many members of the community. It teaches natural laws that are central to our relationship with all life and to our physical and spiritual survival." Battiste and Henderson (2009, 9) further suggest that Indigenous knowledge teaches:

> about the ability to live well within the biological constraints of the surrounding life and its various processes. The teaching reveals the implicit underlying and interconnected order of a vulnerable biosphere. It has implicitly generated the largest cognitive transformation of humanity that states that every place matters and that the stewards of those Lands, the Indigenous peoples, have values that will help sustain those spaces if they are allowed to thrive and flourish.

Battiste and Henderson (2009) describe Indigenous knowledge as a resistance practice against forced assimilation, as well as healing practices that address trauma within Indigenous community and in relation to settler oppression. The purpose of Indigenous knowledge is also to alleviate poverty and create sustainable Indigenous development (Battiste and Henderson 2009) through the resurgence of Indigenous worldviews and cultural practice (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Battiste and Henderson 2009; Coulthard 2014; Tuck and McKenzie 2015; Simpson et al.

2012). Indigenous knowledge, as described here, does not divide people into classes where one educates, represents or organizes on behalf of the other, but represents community engagement with knowledge through living.

− *Social reproduction*

The entry point that I see into doing praxis is through the everyday materially-based survival practices that exist despite and beyond the radical constraints of mainstream colonial-capitalism, that which is neglected in favour of symbolic representational modes (Gibson-Graham 1996, 2008; Fraser 2014). I suggest that such survival practices can be understood through the theory of social reproduction labour, which I have theorized as pertaining to everyday survival practices of the Lumpen (as previously explained). Whereas, social reproduction is generally understood to be the background condition for capital, I understand lumpen social reproduction to be the background condition to the lack of redistribution of state funds (taxes) under neoliberalism. Indeed, Gibson-Graham (2006, 34-35) makes a distinction as to a social reproduction that enables capitalism, and that which could be understood as co-existing, but also perhaps autonomous to capitalism. As such, we can start to decipher what might constitute a transformative social reproduction practice, which I propose is the basis of praxis.

With relational praxis art, the social reproduction culture of the specific community and its members is the ground of praxis. Methodologically, this means engaging with the material needs/wants/desires and exchange relations with community members alongside knowledge production practices. In the work that I do in community, relational praxis art means (aside from creating community arts space and organizing) taking seriously a complex fluid and very relevant hierarchy of needs: making sure there is food available (is essential), loaning money on occasion, giving and receiving hugs, relieving loneliness and boredom, house cleaning,

listening, advocacy, providing public transportation fare, running errands, providing a lift, check-ins, help prepping ones place for insecticide spraying, going to protests, providing adequate clothing, an air mattress to help get adequate sleep, or Depends incontinence underwear. It also means providing one on one time, shelter or safety, assistance with technology, making art, harm reduction support, safer social space free from persecution and stigmatization, harvesting cedar for ceremony, mitigating trauma, supporting self-expression and agency, conflict resolution, gardening and distributing traditional medicines, crisis and everyday reality support, support in enduring trauma due to oppression and institutional violence. Walking alongside and attending to these realities (and many more) *is* the knowledge production process; as we engage these materially founded, embodied relationalities together across difference, knowledge flows in all directions. Attempting to meet whatever material needs arise from the ground work of relational praxis art and sometimes, it is quite possible that a relational praxis art project can wholly, or during certain times, consist of just meeting these needs (Lancione 2018).[72]

Economically and culturally speaking, working with those materially grounded relational webs and across difference makes ethical demands for redistribution, which to a certain extent must happen from those who have access to those without. However, as community is made up of agents it is important to recognize that exchange relations are reciprocal, especially in regard to the undervalued but essential contribution of the knowledge of community members to the work of this dissertation (Bluebird Stickings 2009-2020). The form of knowledge that arises from being embedded in community and engaged with members in their daily life matters is

[72] I want to emphasize that *all* classes require material support for their participation in work. Those of us with middle-upper class positionality receive it through a paycheck, but our access to work is often enhanced through networks of care and support. What I describe here is simply the development of a care network across difference based on the needs of the lumpen/low-income community in which I work.

distinct from the kind of knowledge one might access from doing short term, proscribed research, activism or art. Working from an embedded positionality generates lived experience, which is intersubjective and thus destabilizing of the researcher/artist/activist self-identity. It reorients the work, grounds it in the specific struggles of people and community and in terms of understanding what needs to be done to move towards a liberatory future. Engaging in social reproduction within community produces radical and transformative knowledge on how to upset the relational hierarchies that construct our difference. This engagement becomes the basis for further political articulation, radical consciousness and transformative action.

– *Art*

I propose that the category of art is up for question. Indeed, Haiven (2018, 11) suggests that we might do away with it all together, and I do not disagree. I nevertheless have included the term art in the relational praxis methodology in order to critique the bourgeois-settler art world's reductive and exclusive professionalization of creativity. The work of relational praxis art is to free up people's creativity (from the oppression of class judgement), which is core to the human species being, to being alive, and is integral to the work of mending the relational web towards a future of just and sustainable relations. However, many people that I encounter in community have profoundly internalized the feeling that their expression does not count: "Don't listen to me, I don't know anything, I don't matter, I don't contribute anything" (Szabo 2015-2018). Bauman (2004, 41-42) comments that bodies that have failed at normativity and thus consigned en masse to the category of "waste," have their "individuality," their "idiosyncrasies," and their unique qualities erased. As such, their banishment as "people without qualities" from sites where "socially legible meanings can be and are forged" makes their exclusion permanent

(Bauman 2004, 41-42; Spivak 1994).[73] The discrediting of marginalized/lumpen expression makes knowledge production very difficult: art making can bring feelings of vulnerability and can bring trauma related shame and embarrassment, it can touch on people's sense of unworthiness to express. To have your knowledge discounted and invalidated is a violence, a trauma and an oppression. The denigration of one's knowledge can be seen as a result of the symbolic violence that community members endure, by which they are misrepresented in the press, academia, the arts and in popular culture, not as victims of unequal power, but as to blame for their own suffering and exclusion (Grenfell 2008). Blaming the victim is made to appear natural in ways that mis-frame politics and sets the ground for exploitative approaches to research, art making or activism that treats people as objects to be studied, represented or saved, to take knowledge from.

For those whose knowledge is generally exploited as a resource for the expertise of professional theorists who frame marginalized lives through relations of symbolic violence, the challenge is to claim the right to know and to maintain the embodied integrity of that knowledge. Lather's (1986) discussion of praxis places an emphasis on reciprocity and open ended discourse which lines up with Kester's (2004, 90) dialogical practice, which proposes that "[a]n alternative approach would require us to locate the moment of indeterminateness, of open-ended and liberatory possibility... in the very process of communication that the artwork catalyzes," one that is not "insensitive to the specific identities of speaking subjects" but is a "dialogical exchange based on reciprocal openness." We are co-creators of knowledge that take aesthetic form as we work to find a common ground that can hold community as a basis for politics. Thus, the challenge is to engage, not in organic intellectualism that maintains a

[73] Bauman (2007) is writing about refugees as people subject to Othering, however, I think his observations apply to lumpen/low-income people as well.

relationship where the purported intellectual/artist is elevated to the position of representing and educating the people, but in dialogic praxis in which all participants are mutually transformed (halifax and Jackson 2018a). The work of relational praxis art then is to engage in an emplaced dialogic exchange in the context of material relations (social reproduction labour practices) across difference. Relational praxis art, understood in this way, should contain the hope of escaping from Euro-centric knowledge practices potentially into decolonizing forms, or transgressive forms of "knowing differently" (halifax and Jackson 2015).

Relational praxis art proposes that knowledge production with marginalized/lumpen community members is readily facilitated through art methods. It might not be possible for everyone to write theory but it is possible for anyone to sit down and express something of themselves in the language of their expressive body in engagement with materials of the world. Art is an open and experimental form of language that engages with sensation, feeling, psychology, thought, specificity, and lived experience and is available to diverse embodiments and states of being. Aesthetic language has the potential for direct and embodied expression that does not have to resolve rationally. Art language doesn't have to abide by formal rules as with other disciplines (e.g., science), it doesn't have to be rational (but it can be), it doesn't have to convince or make an argument, it doesn't have to make sense -- but it also can do all of these things. Art can be subjective and doesn't shy away from contradiction, fiction, subjectivity, irrationality, desire, surreality, anger, pain, deceit, fantasy. In other words, art can hold the contradictory, conflicted, abject and profoundly subjective. Art also has a very strong pleasure component: making meaning, expressing oneself with color, texture, words, with different materials, found objects, technology, with pen and page, with natural materials is sensually stimulating. Making art reflects you back to yourself as well as potentially out to the world, in a

way that can bring expansive ripples in your self-consciousness. Because art permits/asks the individual to express, to represent (even if with silence, absence, incoherence), by taking up diverse modalities of communication and transmission of social meaning, it is the basis of agency and thus it has individual and collective liberatory possibility -- liberatory in an immediate sense of being an act of speech on one's own behalf, an act of self-representation perhaps leading to participation in a public discourse, or perhaps leading to the ideal of political self-representation in a larger socio-political sense. Art work can also result in objects that can be gifted or exchanged (a card for a child, a hat for a friend, a quilted wheel chair blanket for a fundraiser) and thus are holders of value in an emotional, knowledge, exchange social reproduction economy. Art experiences inhabit the aesthetic space between specific chaotic experience and organizing and patterning social/metabolic relations (Eagleton 1990). When we gather as a group of lumpen/marginalized people to work on expressing and materializing our knowledge, we understand where we are at in the moment, what is immediately possible and necessary in terms of building community, participating in healing work, developing agency and political subjecthood.

− *Crip/queer embodied*

Considering the specificities of embodiment as a dimension of creative knowledge production is enhanced through an engagement with crip/queer theory. McRuer (2006) takes up the crip body as a site of radical critique that questions, pushes at the edges and blurs the boundaries of what it is to be human: two legged, rational, autonomous, white, cis, male, individual, hardworking, property owning, reproductive. Out of a history of being dehumanized, queer theorists have taken up inhumanism in an attempt to unsettle and denaturalize the human in relation to the non-human, to the animal, mineral and organic world: "an active self-attunement to life as varied and

unsorted correspondences, collisions, intermeshings, and accords between people and nonhuman objects, things, formations, and clusterings" (Muñoz in Muñoz et al. 2015, 210). As a gesture that de-centers normativity, crip/queer approaches do not seek to rehabilitate bodies, but rather draws "attention to critically queer, severely disabled possibilities" which "will exacerbate, in more productive ways, the [multiple] crisis of authority" (McRuer 2006, 31) that hail from normative bourgeois systems. Against a society that constantly works to contain unruly/inhuman bodies within disciplinary parameters in order to achieve productivity expectations, McRuer (2006) asserts the critical radicality of the severely disabled positionality in its ethical and epistemological position of refusal and resistance. For instance, the crip/queer body that doesn't conform to a system of hyper exploitation in over-production speaks to a cultural economy of making just enough to fulfill needs. Also, for McRuer (2006, 198), queer theory is at its most critical when it takes up a crip perspective in resistance to homonationalism, a normative gay culture. More broadly, McRuer (2006, 72) writes that "liberationist models need disability as the raw material against which the imagined future world is formed." Thus "disability liberation is tied to the liberation of all peoples, necessitating anticapitalist movements led by those at the furthest margins of society" (Jaffee and John 2018, 1411).

For relational praxis art, to crip/queer practice means to pay deep attention to differences and connectivities, to the very specific expressions of co-creator community members. Our bodies are understood to be complex carriers of meaning, needs, energies, trauma, sensation and potentialities, they make unruly demands on the relational web: tension, conflict, and particular intensities that cannot always be unravelled, interpreted, assessed, or solved. McRuer (2006, 5) talks about "de-composition" as the failure to achieve the "rational coherence" demanded within ablist capitalism, which he then proposes as a critical practice of bodies in non-conforming

states of being. Ablism is that view which can only recognize or find intelligible or coherent that which conforms to capitalist/colonial discipline and which denies the traumatizing impact of compulsory normativity (Morrigan 2017). The demand is then made to normative society to enter into a world of unruly difference. While we may be a part of a larger collective unconscious or of ancestral flows (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020), it is also true that no two people (or entities) inhabit the same body at the same point in space-time and thus the uniqueness of all things is ontological and epistemological: no one can know what the other knows, we can only co-create knowledge. Where capitalism might construct difference through a denigration of non-normative labour and economic cultures, and a defence of normative ideologies and material relations, the crip relational praxis art proposed works to re-cast difference as embodied uniqueness and social complexity within historical specificity - and this towards a futurity of belonging. As Haiven (2011, 117) notes:

> like the noncapitalist social values that remain the basis of social life, even amid its rampant commodification, imagination remains a space of difference and complexity ultimately untamable by capital, an eternal source of resistance and antagonism, of negation and potentiality… imagination emerges from the fundamental existential phenomenon of difference. No matter how homogenized the world, difference is as elemental as cooperation. Indeed, cooperation is possible or necessary only because of difference. It is the experience of difference that prompts that thing we call the imagination to go beyond our immediate experience.

To crip relational praxis art means to blur the boundaries between bodies and entities where the community is viewed as both a collection of individuals as well as one body. Marx (1990, 451) observed that human potential as collectivized labour is greater than what is possible as a group of individuals working separately. Working across embodied difference means that a division of labour arises according to people's different abilities and needs, in relation to collective purpose determined by the community, and its relation to history and geographic location. The method by which this work is done is derived first of all from the

capacities, knowledges, desires, needs, strengths and aesthetics of the bodies in the project. Each individual contributes their capacities to the whole and the whole community takes shape through the expression of the diverse embodiments of the individuals within; this stands in opposition to normative standards of competitive individualism, exclusivity, virtuosity and marketability imposed on expression.

– *Aesthetics*

Aesthetics and representation are important political fields, in as much as art has the potentiality to transgress, it is also through aesthetics that the messy unruly can be tamed, disciplined and assimilated (Eagleton 1990), mobilized to make difference palatable to the middle and upper classes. Thus, relational praxis art asserts that the marginal aesthetics of lumpen community that arise out of conditions of poverty (halifax et al. 2008, 135) is a political act and statement in and of itself. The knowledge produced creatively by those in community will often look, sound, and feel different than academic, arts and activist knowledge. However, symbolic violence in tandem with neoliberal result-oriented standards of abstract labour, of success and failure, puts pressure on those bodies that can perform aesthetic normativity (such as myself as a trained artist) to shore up the aspects of how the community functions and presents its knowledge. Marginalized communities also have some degree of want for access to a broader social discourse especially in order to deliver their political critiques (Rosler 1991), and so there is always a negotiation between the unruly embodied political expression of community and its members, and how our politics might be recognizable according to hegemonic aesthetic standards. While Hutcheson (2015, 129) claims that "[v]ernacular culture not only provides the basis for the content of most community art but also is equally reflected aesthetically," I beg to differ. In much social practice art, I find that the professional artists have a great influence over

aesthetics that arises from their greater access to technology, media and the art world. For artists/academics/activists, certain aesthetic frames are applied to people's knowledge in order for it to be recognized and thus become financially viable (for them) within the larger bourgeois-settler art world paradigm. For instance, Haiven (2018, 20) writes:

> a whole realm of radical acts and actors are inhabiting the realm of "art" or the cloak of the artist in order to carry out their work. Community organizers, radical teachers, queer activists, racial justice movements, migrant solidarity campaigns and other actors appear to be using art as a vehicle or simply an alibi for advancing their agendas. In part, this comes from the general financialized neoliberal euphoria for "art" and "creativity" which opens up new opportunities for funding and legitimacy in an increasingly austere climate.

Such co-optation of peoples struggles through the deployment of arts methods and certain lefty aesthetic strategies indicate the need for giving up aesthetic control to community members as a radical move. Every aesthetic dimension of lumpen/low-income creativity and representation reflects something of the embodiment of the speaker and the social conditions of abandonment in which they voice: limited access to materials, space, time, energy and skills sharing. Only if we are to understand expression beyond the individualized artist/academic/activist, can we then see a politics emerge. Cutting down people's ability to represent themselves, their issues, reality and knowledge, is a tool of control. The specific expression of the people is what is next to impossible for bourgeois-settler society to contend with. If you can't represent yourself, you cannot make political demands. If liberatory movements cannot deal with people's specific expression in its own terms, then we cannot claim liberatory praxis.

Thus, relational praxis art takes on a crip/queer expression that does not seek to be integrated but speaks to an ethical futurity, which can only be haltingly enacted in a present besieged by normative requirements for speech. The overall intention is to create conditions of possibility for the agential expression of lumpen/low-income community and members. Given

this intention, the priority of relational praxis art is recognizing and validating the self-representation of those in oppressed communities, not as victims of the system to be helped or allied with, but as speaking political subjects in their own right whose knowledge is denied and thus vital to a fuller understanding of society. Via a "crip aesthetic move, capitalism emerges as the monstrous other, to which the crip body speaks back" (halifax and Jackson 2018a, 140).

Conclusion

In developing and applying relational praxis art, I have struggled with how the work that I do in community doesn't appear activist, artistic, or academic in the usual sense. I struggle to make it to demonstrations, academic talks and art events because I am busy doing organizational work in community (sometimes I am shopping at Walmart for art supplies of all un-activist things), or I am just spending time with people because that is what is needed in community. Jenna Graham (in Steedman 2012, 16) articulates it well when she states that "[w]ithin the history of feminist practice, we have this kind of duality and friction between an interest in care and an interest in The Fight. I think that this kind of discomfort; this uncomfortable terrain is a feminist history that's interesting to reclaim because it doesn't choose one over the other. It doesn't say, 'we're doing proper politics' or 'we're caring for the community.'" The invisibility that results from committing time to a form of community expression that has little to no estimated value in the larger political/artistic/academic milieus costs me social capital and, eventually, actual capital as work with lumpen/low-income community (even when we succumb to bourgeois arts' professionalized, productive, aesthetic ethos) has proven difficult to find funding for. Thus, my main hope is that writing about the political indispensability of street engaged work across difference will bring recognition, validity, support to those doing this work (including monetary), and a tentative encouragement to others to take it up.

Despite art's falling prey to dominant individualist aesthetic practices, at the same time, art maintains an "irreducible particularity, providing us with a kind of paradigm of what a non-alienated mode of cognition might look like" (Eagleton 1990, 2). Creative material practices are intrinsic to all humans. Relational praxis art is a social reproduction labour that recovers the individual to the status that I see Marx as hoping for -- as less alienated, as political and economic speaking subjects, at least in moments. In this sense, spaces of creative material praxis should be spaces where the difference produced through the normativizing and disciplinary forces of colonial-capitalism can be confronted and conversely, where actual difference can be productively expressed and explored and nourished.

Relational praxis art is interested in ground up politics that grapple with material relationalities, knowledge production, representation and social transformation. I speak of the work of relational praxis art as prefiguring ethical or just relations (Garrett and Jackson 2016), as mending the social fabric towards a different future. I attempt to work alongside and respect Indigenous scholars who see resurgence as also prefigurative which, in more traditional terms, can be understood in the Seven Generations teaching (Coulthard 2014; Hall 2015; Simpson 2011; Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020). Tuck and McKenzie (2015, 164) point out that "a relational ethics to future generations would de-center a settler futurity because settler futurities depend on the remaking of Land and life into property and because settler futurities foreclose all others." With relational praxis art, invoking a just futurity means orienting towards the constitutive outside, those who experience the worst that colonial-capitalism is serving up, those marginalized bodies who I have also provisionally referred to as lumpen/low-income. As a praxis, relational praxis art looks deeply into how to move from the everyday life of marginalized people to developing liberatory knowledge production and practice. The set of

problematics that are outlined here frame relational praxis art as a methodology or a mode of work that attends to relationships across difference constructed hierarchically under colonial-capitalism. This work involves engaging in existing lumpen social reproductions practices and exchange relations in community, working to create social spaces of mutual care, nourishment and egalitarian relationalities, sharing space in an embodied way to produce a community that is radically inclusive of difference, working and aesthetic politics within the possibilities of our embodiments and the limits of social structure in which we are positioned, developing knowledge production and self-representation practices based on the specific embodiments of community members, attending to the political subjecthood of those whose knowledge and voices are discounted, and projecting critical embodied knowledge into the public sphere as a way to engage with larger political movements (Fraser 1990).

Relational praxis art intends to foreground, interrogate and upset the relational threads out of which contemporary art is produced within the colonial/capitalist context, for instance between the active maker and passive viewer, between the symbolic and the material, between art materials as mute substances to be used towards the artist's own ends as opposed to materials that carry the meaning of their processes of production (the mineral and organic substances, the technologies, their sites of extraction and labour relations that go into their production), between professional artist and community member cultural worker, between the gallery and artist studio as a legitimizing art spaces and the street corner or park as a site of intervention, between art speak and vernacular embodied, complex expression, between normative coherence and unruly, and between human, animal, organic and mineral… as culturally and spiritually imbued relations. As Haiven (2011, 102) notes:

> The promise of revolution was not merely a greater share of the spoils of a life of drudgery but the right to decide to what ends human cooperation might be put. Marx's

> radical political imagination went beyond the mere redistribution of already materialized value or control of the means of production as they existed. Instead his work was animated by the promise of the collective power to coauthor the social narrative, the control of what we might call the "means of valorization." Today we might understand this as "democratizing" the means of social meaning-making as a materialist project.

In a settler colonial context, this work is not always a question of desire, but, as Lee (2011, 22) articulates from the Anishinaabe perspective, one of a "responsibilities-based logic." For Anishinaabe peoples, this means maintaining balance through embodied responsibilities to [their] territories, people and other beings. For settlers, this logic means reconciliation of the harms of colonial history in response to and directed by, Indigenous peoples. Lee (2011, 22) says that responsibility is "the thread that stitches relationships together, where one is constantly seeking the best way to fulfill one's responsibilities to other beings in a humble way that promotes balance." While responsibility is the root of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, it is also a teaching that settlers might absorb in relation to Indigenous peoples and the earth: responsibility recognizes relational oppression and therefore holds the settler accountable. Such relationships, for Lee (2011, 22) are understood to be in need of constant renewal and are embedded in "knowledge of/from the Land."

The work of relational praxis art is extremely challenging in the colonial/capitalist context. However, when issues that are raised through doing relational praxis arts remain unaddressed, (especially on the practical level), there needs to be a critical reflexivity about why this is so, and a consideration as to how the practice needs to be extended in order to be more radically inclusive, aesthetically divergent, healing and/or political. There is little room to take for granted that the representation of politics is equal to political change. There is little time for celebratory, self-congratulatory, self-promotion without acknowledging the failures that are inevitable within the wider and most grave project of resetting the relational ethos to one of

decolonization, sustainability, reciprocity and responsibility. Relational praxis art is meant as a critique that reorients what is understood to be political art. Within the torn social/metabolic fabric of capitalist relations that hierarchizes bodies (human and non-human), relational praxis art works towards the enacting of equitable, egalitarian and respectful materially based relations in community and on Land.

5. The Friends of Watkinson Park: "We need a space where we can relax and enjoy nature"[74]

With this final chapter I give a survey of the work done by the Friends of Watkinson Park to contest gentrification, maintain their presence in public space, build the community, practice decolonization and engage the urban environment in dialogue based on critical lived experience knowledge, as exemplary of the relational praxis art method. I hope to show that the inclusion of low-income/lumpen community in historical transformation is both possible and vital to the liberation project as a whole.

Introduction

"An historical act can only be performed by "collective man [sic]", and this presupposes the attainment of a "cultural-social" unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world, both general and particular, operating in transitory bursts (in emotional ways) or permanently (where the intellectual base is so well rooted, assimilated and experienced that it becomes passion)" (Gramsci 1971, 349).

"Thanks to a wave of gentrification over the last decade, The Junction is starting to become its own version of West Queen West, only a more distinct small-town vibe. The neighbourhood's Dundas West strip now boasts colorful storefronts that practically beg you to step inside, from The Beau & Bauble to Bunner's Bakeshop. An independent farmers' market also sets up shop on the strip every Saturday, which runs from May until October. Combine all that with the Junction's red-brick Victorian architecture and proximity to High Park and it makes sense that so many downtowners are now flocking to this neck of the woods" (Fox Marin Associates, n.d).

"[B]are life… frees itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it" (Agamben 1998, 12-13)

In 2008, I became involved in working with the lumpen/low-income community of the Junction, which led to the development of the relational praxis art method presented earlier. I was working and living above a coffee shop owned by my sister, which was located in a cluster of lumpen/low-income housing. A neighbour who lives in Mainstay Housing, Lynda Solowynsky, first got me involved in doing community feasts and art installations on a fence around a property slated for condo development. It was the start of spontaneous community building

[74] Quote from Angela Browning, Friends of Watkinson Park.

among lumpen/low-income residents in the Junction that also included regular art groups in the community such as Monday Art Group at the local Salvation Army run shelter and A la c'Art group at Mainstay. The basis of my own relationship with the Junction lumpen/low-income community is that I have been neighbours with those with whom I work (since this work began I have moved further west). My involvement with the Friends of Watkinson Park (hereafter FoWP) represents an extension of my own, and by this time, long standing practice of locating myself within and engaging with issues of marginalization and the informal pre-established connections and practices of the lumpen/low-income community on the local scale, in the direct vicinity of where I work and live.

I became a founding member of the FoWP in 2015, a lumpen/low-income led community organization that formed in order to protect their access to the small (900 square meters) city park (known in the community as Watkinson Park but also officially labeled Dundas-Watkinson Parkette) which, sits at the heart of their community and is much loved and appreciated as an important social and nature space. However, the access of the lumpen/low-income community, who are the longstanding primary incumbent users of the park, was being impacted by gentrification. Seen as "sketchy" by the gentrification boosters because of the poor peoples culture there, the park had become contested. Through connections that I had also cultivated with the liberal gentrifier settler-bourgeois set, I was made aware that the city was planning to renovate Watkinson Park. In attempting to consult with the neighbourhood on the park renovation, city officials contacted the local West Bend Residents Association, who mainly represents the gentrifiers and homeowners of the area, in order to host a community consultation meeting. This city practice proves to be highly problematic as it assumes that a residents association can act as a generally representative neighbourhood organization while it overlooks

incumbent park users when they are lumpen/low-income. As Browing (2015-2020) says: “all of us including myself, had been ignored, we had not received any notification ever that a renovation was being planned, not at that point, and so they would have gone ahead with a process that did not include the very people who use the park, the low income people in the neighbourhood.” Indeed, many residents’ association members viewed the lumpen/low-income inhabitation of Watkinson Park as a problem and a renovation was seen as a means to clean it up.

I quickly informed local community members and park users, with whom I had contact, of the upcoming meeting. Prior to the meeting we discussed the general concern that the park renovation would threaten their access to the park. A group of us attended the meeting held by the City to show preliminary design proposals for the park renovation where we made a case that the incumbent park users should be involved in the design process. Beyond feeling threatened, we also felt that it would be a positive community-building project to develop a grassroots redesign process for Watkinson Park that was by and for the incumbent park users of the lumpen/low-income community specifically.

At the meeting, City councilor Gord Perks suggested that we form a “Friends of…” group in order to organize around the park renovation as such organizations are recognized by the City and councilors. Friends of … groups generally steward parks in a quite banal way that appeals to middle-class neighbourhood placemaking with gardening, kids activities, fire pits, pumpkin parades, and neighbourhood fun type activities. In order to work against what we feared would be a bourgeois takeover of Watkinson Park, we took the councilor’s advice and decided to form the Friends of Watkinson Park group in order to maintain the lumpen/low-income inhabitation of the park. I then had a discussion with the community: if they wanted me

to help organize an intervention into the renovation process, I would have to do it as my dissertation project. Community members agreed that the campaign would benefit from my full attention and time. The primary importance and goals of this work would, however, be defined by the community members who have a stake in the redesign of Watkinson Park and in maintaining their access to public space in the gentrifying context.

Hern (2016) openly discusses how community organizing, such as for community gardens, bike lanes, neighbourhood festivals and initiatives for youth can functioned to build community in a vital way, but which also has the effect of contributing to gentrification. The threat of appropriation by the bourgeois-settler agenda is a bind that artists, activists, and academics, as carriers of social capital (Bourdieu 1984), are always in and thus produces many urgent questions as to how to do radical work. Relational praxis art attempts to address the problem that community arts can often play out within a gentrifying agenda (Brenner 2013; McLean 2014; Kwon 1997a; Rosler 2010) and proposes a method that is resistant to assimilation by either contemporary arts and what I see as its bourgeois relational structure or by normative neoliberal society at large.

The core of the lumpen/low-income community of FoWP is a cluster of housing that is (more or less) affordable to those on fixed/lumpen income. Watkinson Park sits between a Mainstay Housing building (mandated for mental-health consumer survivors) and a private live/work warehouse space. Two doors down is a badly run single room occupancy in a heritage building called The Peacock Hotel, across the street is another Mainstay Housing building, one block west on Dundas Street is the women's shelter run by the Salvation Army and there is a halfway house for men is located nearby at Keele and Annette streets. All of these buildings are institutional in nature and thus administer forms of institutional violence (except The Peacock

Hotel which is a space of privatized violence) on the residents who are the main park goers. The area also used to be home to many other lumpen/low-income accessible rentals and rooming houses. At the time of this writing, the gentrification that has been taking place in the Junction neighbourhood for some time is encroaching on the area directly around the park. A large historic apartment building across from Watkinson Park has been bought and, according to a tenant community member, is being slowly gentrified through the lack of maintenance of existing tenants apartments which are upgraded at the time of tenancy turnover with an accompanying raise in (the already substantial) rent. A developer bought a series of buildings just to the east of the park on Dundas West and a new condo development, Junction House, has been approved. A little further south-east down Dundas West at Brad Street, another condo tower is pending and another one is planned at Keele and Vine, one block north of Dundas West. A little further down the road at Dundas West and Bloor Street, a massive mixed-use development is planned. On top of these four confirmed developments surrounding Watkinson Park, a CoffeeTime (serving as a main social space for lumpen/low-income folx and a safe space for people with difference in the area) has also been sold and is boarded up.

While all this shiny new development has been taking place, The Peacock Hotel collapsed in 2018. Residents say that the Landlord had been digging in the basement to make another illegal suite and weakened the building structurally. The residents, who are mostly elderly and some living to greater or lesser degrees within criminalized substance use culture, were housed by the Red Cross for a couple of months. Many who could not find housing (due to being elderly and marked by poverty) ended up moving into another slum building by the same landlord or into the shelter system. After standing condemned for almost a year, The Peacock caught fire. Many residents of The Peacock, despite being a rat and bed bug infested and what

those who lived there described as a “hell-hole,” had lived there on and off for up to twenty years. The loss of The Peacock meant the dispersal of about 20 to 25% of the FoWP community. While the overall availability of lumpen/low-income rental units is diminishing in the Junction, the institutional housing and the women’s shelter remain indefinitely as a shrinking island at the heart of the lumpen/low-income community in a sea of gentrification. As FoWP member, Joe Szabo (2015-2020) relays: “We’re in the process of being gentrified. And the middle class and upper-class are moving in. Uh, the, uh, lower income will be scattered to the different areas of low income. They’ll lose their friendships and all that. Some fortunately will be able to be absorbed into the community. In the new community.”

Urban development exacerbates the structural and daily forms of class oppression, stigmatization and thus stress and trauma that lumpen/low-income people experience (Kerr 2014).

Referred to by community members simply "the park," Watkinson Park forms a key social space and focal point for the community who do not have other access to green space. According to the regime of the urban grid, it is located at 2742 Dundas West. The park itself is (approximately 35 meters square) ringed on three sides by chain link fence and fronted by a waist high iron fence along Dundas West with two entranceways. Approximately 25% of the park is lawn and 25% is pine needle covered bare earth under a grove of Red Pine trees in the back with two Kentucky Coffee trees in the middle providing ample shade. About 30% percent is currently play area, about half sand and half wood chips. The remaining 20% is comprised of cement paths into the park and a patio space with tables and benches. There are vines crawling up the chain link fences that green them substantially, however, these are periodically cut down by the City and residents across the alley, for visibility purposes i.e., to discourage criminalized

economic practices. In the park resides pigeons, sparrows, squirrels, raccoons and rats as well as many insect populations including butterflies, bees, wasps, devil beetles, worms… and many more. Also, the park tends to be windy, with the pine tree canopy in the back creating shade in the summer. It's always cool in the back of the park, which gives respite on even the hottest most humid summer days and some shelter from rain. The front of the park is sunny during the height of day. In the pre-renovation park, there was of a large sandy area with three small play structures and a large somewhat dilapidated wooden climbing structure with a slide, which was often used as a shelter for rough living[75] as well as by the few kids who occasionally visited the park. There were also two benches, one facing the back of the park, the other along the east side of the sandy area.



Figure 6: Before the renovation of Watkinson park (2015)

[75] Rough living refers to those living on the street.

The main social space of the park consists of an uneven brick patio area with three concrete tables that have inlaid chess/checker boards and around which are four unmovable seats. Around these tables, the brick patio is usually scattered with bird-seed, peanuts and bread crumbs. Also typical is a large amount of cigarette butts, several empty alcohol containers, coffee cups, wrappers and other litter. Other left behind items such as clothes, broken kids toys or other random stuff are also common to see in the park. According to my own research and work with the Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society (THPS), Watkinson Park can be understood as situated within a constellation of significant Indigenous sites. Specifically, the park lays on ground that was once ancient Black Oak Savannah, an ecosystem that is the result of Indigenous horticultural practices of controlled burning that extended north from the High Park area (Johnson 2013). The park is also roughly situated along a pre-colonial Indigenous trail that ran from Montreal to the Niagara area, over which the colonial roads of Davenport and stretches of Dundas West were built. Intersecting this ancient trail are multiple criss-crossing trails that extend to the waterfront along the streets currently known as Indian Grove, Indian Road, Indian Road Crescent and Indian Trail. High Park, just south of The Junction is home to ancient Haudenosaunee sacred mounds and just west is the Seneca/Mohawk village of Taiaiako'n covered over by the wealthy gated enclave of Baby Point.

Watkinson Park sits on top of Land that was stolen (under complex colonial processes including war, religion, coercive trade and disease) from the Wendat and Haudenosaunee peoples and swindled from the Ojibwe of the Mississauga under the Toronto Purchase (Mississauga of the Credit First Nation, n.d.). While the Mississauga's of the Credit River have made a treaty for the sale of the Lands of Tkoronto, the Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples

have not ceded their Land rights to the same area. Prior to colonization, the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Treaty was established among Indigenous nations from the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes region to peaceably share and care for the Lands of the Tkoronto area and beyond for future generations. The Dish With One Spoon affirms that there is no concept of Land ownership and was also integrated into relations with settler people. When Dutch settlers arrived, Haudenosaunee peoples made The Two-Row Wampum as an agreement of peace and mutual non-interference in each-other's way of life. The Two-Row Wampum also extended to understandings with other settler nations and was to be forever renewed whenever settler and Haudenosaunee peoples met. The Nan-Fan treaty (1701) is a peace treaty between many Indigenous nations from Ottawa down to Florida. These treaties hold knowledge about a relational ethos of respect, peace, honouring and reciprocity. The Two-Row Wampum has been taken up more widely as a symbol of settler allyship recognizing our duty to decolonize. Also important are the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) and Violence on Our Land, Violence on Our Bodies by Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network (2016), which spell out the illegality of colonial occupation and the harms that are done to achieve and maintain it. These Wampum, other treaties, agreements and reports recognize Indigenous rights to access the Land (in opposition to capitalist/colonial private property) as integral to confronting genocide through cultural and life generating practices such as hunting, fishing, trapping, harvesting, growing foods and medicines, speaking the language, ceremony and collectively being on the Land. The resurgence of Indigenous Land Sovereignty projects in Tkoronto pose challenges and questions to the FoWP community and to

relational praxis art as to how to create a sustainable and ethical relations to Indigenous peoples and their Land in the specific context of Watkinson Park and its lumpen/low-income community.

Local knowledge asserts that during the pre-gentrification era of the Junction, Watkinson Park became an important gathering space for lumpen/low-income folx. The park is a nature space for interactions with animals (feed the birds and squirrels), relaxation in the shade, observation of insects and plant life, material exchange relations and affective exchanges among fellow community members (have coffee and a smoke, read, meet friends, party, play music), all of which is recuperative/restorative for bodies under attack. Since gentrification has taken off in the neighbourhood, the park has been characterized by some as a transgressive space. Indeed, the park is a place where people smoke and hang out for extended periods of time. There are, as a result, a lot of cigarette butts strewn on the ground. There is some partying that goes on which can be loud and include a lot of fights, swearing and obscenity, urinating/defecating in the park. There is some low-grade local drug sale that occurs and local sex trade to support substance use or make a bit of cash. Drug debts can lead to conflict and cause important members to leave the community. There are rumors perpetuated that there have been syringes found in the sand area and it is not uncommon to find used condoms around. This was a much more pronounced culture in the neighbourhood and in the park prior to gentrification which has inhibited lumpen/low-income culture in the park. However, these are also common features of many or most urban parks: they are public spaces where low-income people can gather and exercise their social reproduction lives.

That the park users mostly live in the direct vicinity of the park means that the concerns of the park extend into the housing close by. A serious conflict has developed within the

lumpen/low-income community between those who are street involved and those who are managing their mental health difference through (more or less) compliance to pharmaceutical and therapeutic regimes and who are triggered by the cultures and relationalities of criminalized substance use and sex trade. When I first became engaged with this community, there were peaceable relations between criminalized substance users and others, however, currently, community members report that the dealing in the Mainstay Housing building next to the park has escalated to involve a higher level of risk. The drug trade activity in the building includes a lot of coming and going in large groups as well as people partying and sleeping in the stairwells and hallways, being loud and dominating disrupting the peaceful enjoyment of the property, breaking doors, yelling outside of the building and pushing past residents to get into the building sometimes causing fear and even minor physical injury. Some of the drug trade culture has resulted in violence against women and there have been overdoses. Many of those on compliant regimes living with mental health stress find their conditions exacerbated by living in these conflictual conditions. The Landlord/Tenants Board has declined to support an eviction of the primary dealers in the building. The police are aware of the situation but so far have declined to press any charges. Already living in conditions of institutional violence, with infestation and stigmatization, tenants also endure interruptions in their ability to find peace because of lack of harm reduction, problem solving and conflict resolution skills of the Mainstay organization and its employees. These aggravated conditions and lack of community support and solidarity cause the more 'law-abiding' lumpen/low-income members to turn to the church. Many who visit church-run food banks and meal provisions find a place to go in their day, material supports, solace and social interaction through church activities. While community members may absorb some of the proselytizing that comes with such charity, I have also often heard critiques of

religious dogma and reinterpretations according to personal philosophies and life experience. And yet, despite these conflicts (some of them quite explosive), the park is a space where the community gathers to hang with each other, often unconditionally, within, around and/or and differing cultures.

My own positionality in relation to community conflict is tenuous since I no longer live in the geographical vicinity of the park and am no longer directly impacted by the subculture in an everyday way. Since I myself have a history of being involved in public drug culture, I have some insider knowledge of it as well as empathy, which has contributed to my personal harm reduction stance. At the same time (and while harm reduction is a position shared to some degree by many community members) when speaking from my own identification, empathy and position of attending to the most at risk in a community, I cause irritation to folx who prefer to call the police and banish the substance subculture from the FoWP group and larger community. The position that some individuals take against drug culture within FoWP may be informed by moralism, but I find mostly it comes from a place of family trauma related to substance use. There is also a commonplace and extremely harmful addiction ideology at play that place the sole responsibility on the individual to make a choice to change their behavior to fit in with 'normal' societal standards despite the trauma they may have experienced due to structural oppression and the complexities of interpersonal exploitation and the usual power dynamics that play out along axes of gender/sexuality, class, Indigeneity, race, ability etc. I often hear the very reductive words: not everyone with trauma becomes an addict or behaves in a way that is hurtful to others. Indeed, most of us do have addictions of some kind and we all behave in hurtful ways, but not all of us are criminalized and stigmatized in the way the those involved with illicit drug culture are. While some of us in community may agree with harm reduction, there is no harm

reduction taking place and thus the issue remains as one that is having an extremely negative impact on both the safety of non-users and users.

Meanwhile, the ideological function of city parks is understood in the modernist era as having a reformist function, as being spiritually cleansing spaces for rowdy working-class people to enjoy the pacifying and contemplative effects of nature and recreational time away from the labour regime (Couture et al. 2018). A more contemporary idea of city parks is promoted by Park People, a non-governmental organization, which advocates for cultural activation of city parks by neighbourhood residents in order to improve the quality of life in cities. In the current City of Toronto rhetoric, public parks are hegemonically understood as space that is 'accessible to all.' Actually, it is impossible to have a "park for everyone" in a socially stratified society that dispenses trauma on peoples and communities (Couture et al. 2018). A gentrifying neighbourhood is a class war over space and not a form of urban development that works on a basis of inclusion or to make space accessible for everyone as is claimed, for instance, in city documents such as Toronto's Official Plan (2015), or the United Way's Strong Neighbourhood Task Force study (2005). This notion of universal accessibility does not take into consideration any specificities, such as Indigenous historical or current lumpen inhabitation, or class conflict over stigmatized forms of difference (Couture et al. 2018). The park is regulated in such a way as to protect the inhabitation of a highly normative citizen who can enact/perform white hetero-patriarchal middle-class bourgeois-settler subjectivity, what Couture et al. (2018, 27) describe as the good urban subject: "white, property owning, productively employed, happily recreating, passively employed." That good urban subject is someone who will come to the park to play with their children for a short period of time in between work hours, NOT someone who will stay in the park all day or frequent the park

multiple times a day and who might stay late drinking and doing some transactions, or sleep over night in the park. The normative subject is promoted to the exclusion and Othering of the non-normative bodies who are the heart of the local lumpen/low-income sociality.

The centerpiece of this bourgeois public space ideology, especially when it comes to park space, is the sanitized notion of the innocent child who is often used as the moral bastion against lumpen/low-income culture and cultures of difference. It's not safe for children is one of the main rhetorical devices used against the perceived threat of adults who have experienced oppression and marginalization, who show any form of difference or display of the trauma's that arise from the impacts of trying to survive and endure colonial-capitalism. Whereas in other places and times, children would inhabit much more diverse urban and private spaces, today, children are confined to child only spaces deemed 'safe.' City parks have a role to play in providing such segregated spaces for kids who are prioritized and then used to control, pathologize and criminalize the behavior of other park inhabitants (Couture et al. 2018). Thus, according to the sign that was installed, City of Toronto's municipal code no. 608 states that: "No adults without children allowed in playground area." Smoking and using other substances is also illegal. No sleeping over in the park, curfew is at 11pm. Loitering is prohibited. Selling things in the park (as in having a yard sale or sex trade) is illegal. Having a fire in the park is prohibitively expensive. The park design and by-laws favor usage by families and working homeowners.

The bourgeois ideology of public parks as being for those who can and want to perform neoliberal normativity was recently demonstrated by a downtown Business Improvement Area's (BIA) hiring of security guards to 'clean up' St. James Park of the homeless and lumpen/low-

income culture there. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty waged a successful campaign to stop this practice (Biesterfeld 2017).

However, Watkinson Park is also a space that is policed inconsistently. Police do cruise by and look into the park to see if anyone is drinking or smoking and there have been waves of ticketing for such by-law infractions. After the park was renovated and by-law signs were put up, some of the more marginalized park inhabitants were afraid to go into the park. One Black community member reports that he doesn't feel safe to hang out in the park because if the police see him there, they will stop and question him. He says sitting in the park is like turning himself into the police station. Given the known dealing that goes on, the police presence is more petty harassment than actual enforcement of larger criminalized activity. When lumpen/low-income people in the community call the police (generally because of an incident involving violence and/or drug dealing), anecdotal knowledge is that little tends to happen to bring safety to community members, while I have not heard of incidences of police violence against community members, this is definitely a statistical danger.[76]

– *Demographics of FoWP*

The FoWP has mostly been run by a core group of 4 to 8 people at any given time since its founding in 2015. Demographically speaking, the core organizing group of FoWP have been made up of several white settlers, several members with Indigenous and/or mixed Indigenous identities, a Jewish identified person as well as members who are migrants or refugees of Ethiopian, Guatemalan, Hungarian, Macedonian decent. The larger FoWP community reflects the racialized demographics of Canadian society at large where Indigenous, Black and people of

[76] My personal position is that I do not advocate calling the police ever. The point is, however, that in the Junction lumpen/low-income community there are people who are victimized who go without redress from any of the authorities that govern their lives.

color proportionately experience the most poverty and marginalization. There are also members (including myself) who identify as queer, lesbian, Two-Spirit, asexual or trans. A majority of the core organizers are also women identified.

While FoWP was organized as a community group in which all neighbourhood members are welcome, few middle-class/gentrifiers showed up, and those who did, didn't stay. The individual who initially told me about the planned park renovation was a homeowner/gentrifier who subsequently became a founding member of the group. This person eventually quit over philosophical and process differences. She identified the FoWP project as "capacity building" for lumpen/low-income people, which she said didn't interest her. She also said that she wasn't interested in trying to enact radical democracy but was simply interested in park design. To date there has been no ongoing significant participation of the middle-class neighbourhood members and thus, the FoWP has become almost exclusively a lumpen/low-income organizing group. Indeed, when meeting with City councilor Gord Perks to convey the formation of the FoWP, he acknowledged us as an equity group (which is a nominal designation that has no formal meaning or necessary actions attached to it at the city level) and has recognized that we can work to protect the inhabitation of the park by the lumpen/low-income community. How this panned out in practice however, is a different story.

When we unpack the poverty experienced by the FoWP community, we find that many (if not all) of the members of the group have experienced various forms of historical trauma including intersections of colonialism, war, homophobia, classism, ablism and sexual/gender violence. Many have also experience personal forms of family trauma including the impacts of addiction, poverty, diverse forms of abuse (including medical) and a drop in class standing. These traumas often manifest as visible difference that also intersect with stigmatized racial

identities, embodied signs of poverty and hard/alternate living, and gender non-conformity. Such trauma may result in visible disability identity, but what many community members experience can also be described by Puar's (2017) theory of debility: the systemic immiseration of bodies through the mundane functioning of the capitalist-colonial system.

FoWP community members carry the signification of the failure to sell their labour on the market on their bodies: they have failed to become property owners and thus they lack entitlement to public space. Rather, through the so-called safety net community members are provided an income through Ontario Disability Support Payments or Ontario Works and housing by the Salvation Army women's shelter, Mainstay Housing rent geared to income social housing, or by various local and highly exploitative slumlords. Lack of access to the labour/property system means that the lives of these residents are not considered necessary and therefore, valid. Those who are deemed "dependent" on the system live in a grey moral zone where society does not tolerate the idea of their being euthanized, but nor do they find value in their existence. Thus there is an industry of services that employ the lower/working/middle-classes to 'care' within the limits of policy in what Chapman and Withers (2019) point out is the violence of benevolence, while poor people are subject to the biopolitics of slow-death and debility within capitalist-colonial relations (Montag 2005; McIntyre and Nast 2011; Povinelli 2011; Puar 2017). The structure of service provision provides minimal window dressing on a massive socio-economic abandonment of what are perceived as a surplus population.

While applying these various identifying labels and analysis to specific bodies, I recognize their limitations and the potential violence of labeling itself (halifax and Jackson 2018a). Individual spirits, embodiments, knowledge, and expression spills over, under and through categorizations. Not much can be assumed about the people involved in FoWP from the

above descriptors, and it is in the realm of the complexity of identity that relational praxis art does its work.

Material relations: do whatever the community needs

Relational praxis art seeks to de-fetishize the understanding of 'community' as a cultural artifact by bringing the fact of our mutual survival to the fore. While society generally looks to the government to redistribute monetary and material resources to low-income/lumpen folx through social service provision, under the strong arm of capitalism, the state fails at this important function. Within left/progressive political movements, while redistributive projects do exist, redistribution (especially with the most vulnerable lumpen community) is not foregrounded and fully articulated as a necessary political basis for the struggle -- even though this is what the struggle is ultimately for. Thus, relational praxis art not only takes up the specific, self-understood material/economic needs, wants, demands of a located community as the basis for cultural work (De Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Hall 2017; Mies 1983; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999; Rosler 1991), it also opens to interpersonal forms of exchange relations that are the culture of the FoWP community.

As mentioned, relational praxis art considers the materially grounded relational threads to be the artist material. While we are present in community, each of us diversely reproduce our lives and operate within exchange relations, giving and receiving. These can be organized in a settler-bourgeois manner of labour exploitation and individual economic advancement over others who are living in forced (supposed) idleness, in a manner where culture is alienated, commodified and exclusive rather than innate to community building. Or, our relations can be organized in a manner that is agential, mutually supportive, reciprocal, redistributive and knowledge producing according to the community's stated needs and wants. In a community

where money is scarce, material interest is about all the forms of sustenance that reproduce life in the community, i.e., all the unpaid and mostly unrecognized, on the ground, social reproduction labour that I have theorized as the crux of praxis that constitutes the social web that makes community possible.

Material interests relate to all the embodied necessities for life's reproduction: food, sleep, clothes, housing, acquiring of cash money (by formal and/or informal work, and/or lending, giving, and/or social assistance) as well as knowledge, support, desire, relations to nature, affection, collaboration, activism, friendship etc. Forms of material redistribution happens everyday among FoWP community members such as when they: help the elderly among us, or those with mobility issues with their daily life tasks; are each others first responders in a crisis; check in on each other on the last week of the month to make sure people have food; babysit each others pets; prepare food for each other; organize vigils for those who have passed; clean the park; feed the squirrels and the birds; loan each other money; encourage each other's expression; water the garden; share stories, humor and joy, and much more. As a relational praxis art practitioner and a community member, some of the redistributive social reproduction work that I have done includes helping prepare for bed bug spraying, loaning/giving money, shopping for food or other items, picking up medicines, detox support, support with accessing higher education, accompanying folx to the hospital and medical appointments, preparing food, giving appropriate seasonal clothing, organizing transport for errands, providing public transportation tokens, buying supplies for art activities, emotional support and friendship, and the organizational work involved in the FoWP organization. Any opportunity to have material exchange relations is key to recognizing our mutual survival as the ground of our political work.

That FoWP community members contribute their knowledge to this research (which is a material contribution to my personal academic advancement and therefore wellbeing) brings an ethical contradiction, which frames how I reciprocate materially as the political basis of the work. I reciprocate materially in order to mitigate the exploitative economic relationalities that are the norm within colonial-capitalism, to be reflexive and responsible to the relative material advantages that I have as an academic/artist/activist through my work with a disenfranchised community. Indeed, community members constantly remind me of the imbalance in our economic relationship – ultimately though, I am always going to be receiving more than I can give. Whereas most ethics reviews discourage paying research participants in any way as it is seen to jeopardize the neutrality of the research, I find this specification to re-inscribe exploitative class-based researcher/researched relationships in the context of research in vulnerable communities. I don't believe that researchers who do not acknowledge their own material interests are capable of being more neutral than participants who are getting paid or compensated in one way or another. Aside from the distribution of resources, there is the question of class segregation between academics/artists/activists and community members where social connections are made among those whose cultural capital and material interests are aligned, but not with those whose only role is to provide lived experience knowledge of oppression. Friendship with community members is seen as taxing and not a priority, whereas, for community members this would generally be a strong desire. In the interest of a more ethical and redistributive knowledge production process, relational praxis art looks to address head on the fundamental material interests of all parties to the research as a gesture of political-economic reckoning.

Attending to the specific level of the material is key to deepening awareness of community experience and modes of social reproduction and reveals: where and how the lack of flow of resources needed to sustain community is occurring; the conflictual and ethical issues that arise from resource maldistribution; how and why conflicts between community and larger society occur; how the community builds itself; and when community relations are not mutual but threatening to each other's material well-being. Attunement to the material level of community relations and social reproduction shows why, how and where to intervene in the community building cultural work. Inasmuch as community members have articulated that their inhabitation of Watkinson Park supports their material needs for green space to connect with nature and community space to do social reproduction labour and community building, it becomes the basis of the relational praxis art work. As Dirlik (1987) notes, cultural work is about how we make our worlds, and thus holds the potential for how we change it.

− *FoWP gets organized*

Social reproduction relations, as described above, lay the foundation for the collective organizing necessary to address the fears that Watkinson Park is under threat from gentrification as a space accessible to the lumpen/low-income community. In attending to the material ground through the expressed needs of the community and given that the identified project was to maintain access to a park space that is controlled by the City, the primary relational praxis art method was literally to perform the tasks of formal organizing. As for understanding how formal organizing can be seen as 'art,' I take a cue from Laurie Jo Reynolds (2013, n.p.) of the *Tamm's Year Ten* project who identified a form of social practice that she referred to as "legislative art" to describe a project to change legislation in order to close the Tamm's Super Max prison. Similarly, I see FoWP's work of formal organizing as one performative dimension of relational

praxis art that is made possible by the strengthening of the social fabric from which further relational work of community building, political intervention and creative engagement can arise.

Important to our intervening at the level of the city in the redesign process of the park meant FoWP had to enact a democratic process. As an official "Friends of" group, we had to be open to all neighbourhood members and in order for FoWP to have sway with the City, the Junction's public and the Parks Board, we felt it important to show that we could fairly represent the broader community's interests. The hope was that FoWP would be a space where lumpen/low-income and gentrifier community members might engage in a dialogue that would open up space for the recognition of the lumpen/low-income community's inhabitation of the park.

The first step towards forming the FoWP was that those of us that had attended the City meeting leafleted door-to-door and postered in a two-block radius of the park with an announcement that a group would be formed and that all community members in the vicinity of the park were welcome. We also concentrated our efforts on the lumpen/low-income community by going door-to-door as well as talking to people one-on-one to let them know about the pending park renovation and that there was a group forming to intervene on the redesign process. FoWP member, Angela Browning, organized weekly meetings in the Mainstay Housing's common room, which is directly adjacent to the park. Having the meetings in the Mainstay building increased accessibility to the redesign project of the lumpen/low-income community. FoWP also launched a website and a Facebook page to try to keep the larger Junction community informed of the work. Since park community members mostly don't have internet access and thus are not on social media, we have also sporadically produced a flyer,

which informed lumpen/low-income community members of FoWP activities (halifax et al. 2008).

Community member, Browning, who had much experience organizing within the anti-nuclear movement, brought knowledge about how to develop a meeting process that was solid, transparent and democratic. Under Browning's guidance, the FoWP adopted a pared down version of Roberts Rules of Order at the first meeting, which included having a meeting chair and secretary, a treasurer, an agenda, decisions by vote and speakers by hand-raising.

FoWP quickly developed into a two-tiered organization: a core group of people who took on a bulk of the responsibility of meeting weekly and doing the work and those who had a more informal relationship to the work. Weekly meetings were open and often people from the lumpen/low-income community would drop by spontaneously. Throughout FoWP organizing, the Mainstay's common room became a social and creative space where art is made, food is cooked, issues are discussed and conflicts addressed. Thus, this meeting space became important to developing community threads and working on the relational tensions in community alongside the formal organizing. Outside this meeting space, core group members did outreach in the form of regular conversations with community members about the work that is being done, and receiving feedback, ideas and knowledge.

− *Design process*

Early on in our negotiations with the City, we had hoped that FoWP would lead the design process. However, this hope was stymied by the City's insistence that there were other 'stakeholders' in the city at large (not necessarily from the Junction) whose interests would not be represented through FoWP. Thus, councilor Gord Perk's office viewed the FoWP as just one among many such stakeholders (this question of stakeholders became highly significant in the

political process of the park redesign, which I will come back to). FoWP's response to this was to launch a campaign to rally support from the Junction neighbourhood members for FoWP's work and design proposal. FoWP challenged the neighbourhood to acknowledge the interests of the lumpen/low-income community who are the historical users of the park. In approaching the larger Junction neighbourhood, FoWP was enacting Fezer's (2010, n.p.) proposal that cities should shift "[f]rom being strategic sites for the implementation of neoliberal policy" to becoming "a new political arena for experiments in democracy" (and I would add - decolonization). Such urban experiments in democracy would, according to Fezer (2010, n.p.) "require a new design," which would focus on the city as symbolically and materially produced through everyday processes. This means focusing on conflict and confrontation, as well as exchange relations and social reproduction as the basis of public space interventions. Fezer (2010, n.p.) asks "how would design look if it were inspired by an open, processual, interventionist, communicative, participatory approach that relates to everyday urban life? Would it be destined to be merely an element in the commodified colonization of social spaces, or could it be a strategic tool with a political and social character that can make an essential contribution to a social city?" As such, all those involved in democratic design practices (both professionals and community) "would regard the urban space as a place for discussion and make their contribution to the debate and negotiation of political issues" (Fezer 2010, n.p.). However, for relational praxis art, it is not about the liberal-democratic idea of debate or discussion because not everyone enters the field on equal footing. There must be a continual rebalancing of power that has been refused to people, an attentiveness to who is not present and a redistribution of capacity and agency, an effort to address historical oppressions and a centering of the most vulnerablized.

Despite our efforts, FoWP received little engagement from the gentrifier members of the neighbourhood and thus FoWP launched a community engaged design process primarily as a lumpen/low-income group. FoWP's process included researching park ideas globally via the internet, doing fieldtrips to other local parks including taking photographs of features that we liked, holding community consultations (in Mainstay's common room) where we presented park design ideas, gathering many more design ideas from local community members, did visioning work as to how these might look in the park, spoke to existing park users who we saw in the park about how they inhabited the park and what they would like to see maintained or changed.

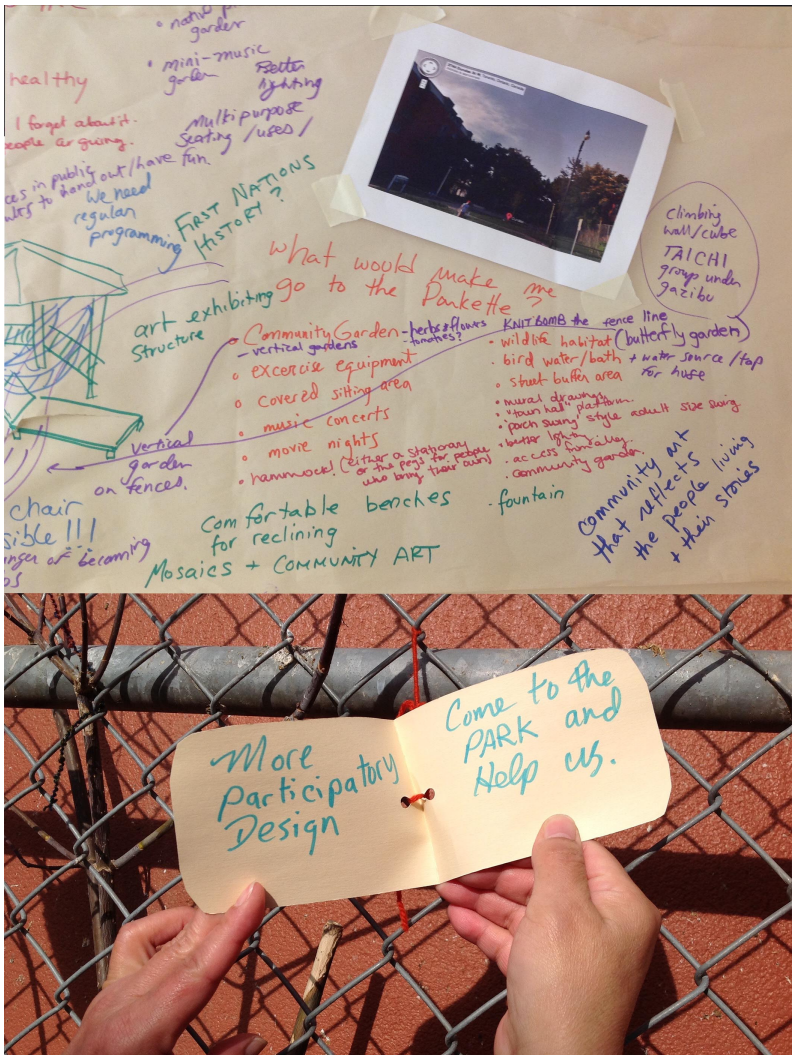


Figure 7: Friends of Watkinson Park participatory design process (2015)

Through all these processes and discussions, we developed our priorities as being (1) the preservation of the social inhabitation of lumpen/low-income folx, and (2) the preservation and enhancement of the nature habitat. We then measured the impact of each design idea against these two priorities. We further identified the Indigenous history of the park in the context of the neighbourhood a future priority. The use of the park and its natural dimensions as a restorative space was put forward as the primary design principle.

FoWP's ground up design process is supported by the approach of French architects Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal who often work on renovating low-income residential buildings, and are known for their unique design process where they reject the assumed necessity to do something new and grand in favor of only doing what is necessary (in Wellner 2012). Lacaton and Vassal prioritize working on extensive community consultation in coming up with design priorities and plans to renovate as opposed to going to a site, making an assessment, then doing preliminary designs to present to community as is the more normal practice.

In Lacaton and Vassal's method, the emphasis is only on fixing what doesn't work in the present according to current usage understood from the inhabitants perspective. As Vassal (in Wellner 2012, 13-14) says: "We think that there is a lot of potential in what already exists. Every existing situation has its own special quality, and you have to take your time and be curious in order to understand it. The phase of observing and talking to local residents is very important to us. Only then do we consider what could be done. I think it's very important today to take the existing situation as a starting point - this includes existing buildings and the existing atmosphere."

− *Results of the design process*

Despite all our research and discussing the many different ideas from the lumpen/low-income community members we spoke to, none wanted changes in the park beyond repairs to existing structures. Locaton and Vassal (in Wellner 2012, 13) consider "making a conscious decision to do nothing" as a completely valid design direction where changes are not made in order to build new places that are often equally problematic, but thought is put to improving or repurposing existing conditions at a minimal social and environmental intrusion. Community members expressed significant attachment to the way the park is because of familiarity, the role of the park space in their daily lives, memories they have and the enjoyment they derive. The natural features of the park, the trees, the sand area where birds bathe and the large grassy area were also highly valorized as bringing a sense of peace and openness that was restorative to the body/mind/spirit. The existing table arrangement had patterned the use of the park such that people had their favorite chairs and had rituals related to where they sat to socialize, and/or feed the birds and squirrels.

During the redesign process, community members were attuned to the connection between gentrification and certain kinds of aesthetics, which, if engaged, could quickly result in their being pushed out of the park space. Ideas from outside were rejected and fear of change was expressed. Thus, ideas such as a drop down stage, a long winding table, built in chairs and a covered area were quickly quashed. The rejection of change could be seen as a conservative and thus reactionary place making strategy that seeks to reproduce an 'imagined' localized community identity (Massey 2005). I would posit, however, that the lumpen/low-income identity that is supported through the park use is not at all imagined but is practiced materially, culturally and economically. I would also say that those fears expressed by lumpen/low-income community members are very astute. If redevelopment was a benefit to everyone instead of a

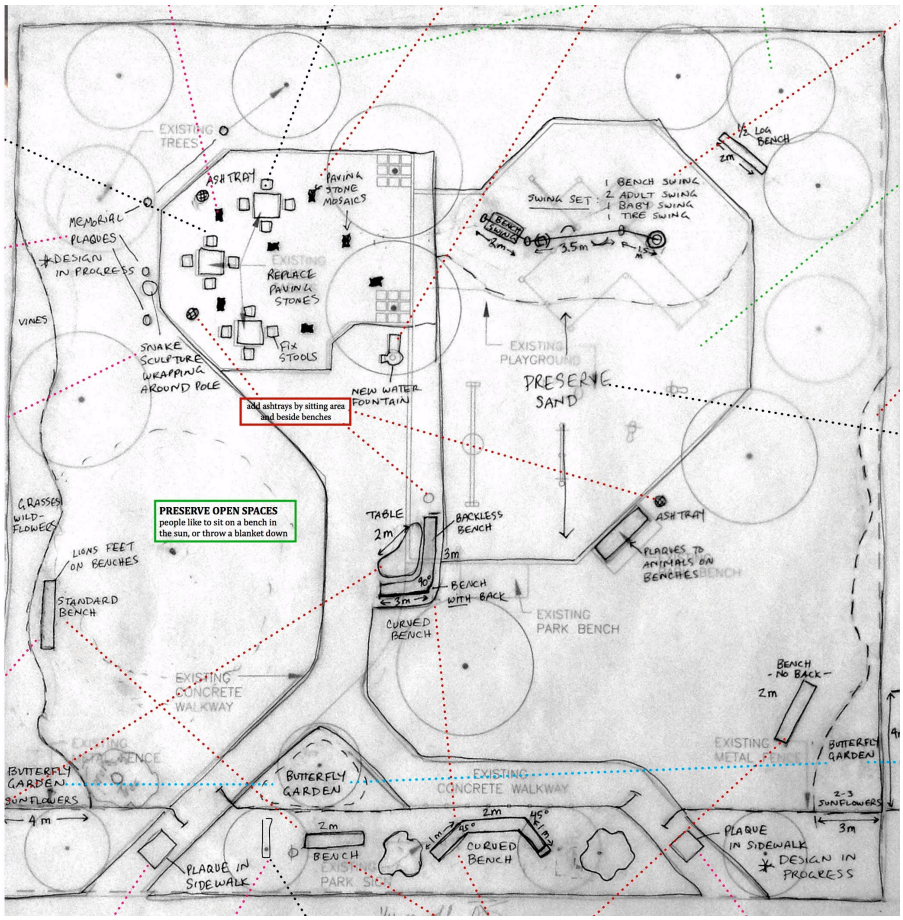
form of class war, there might be more openness to change. Under the current circumstances, trendy or artistic forms of park development signify a gentrification of the park, which is an actual material threat to existing park users.

Thus, FoWP narrowed down the ideas to a fairly simple redesign with the outstanding new features including more park benches, plaques that pay tribute to the importance of the park community mostly through memorializing individuals, pigeon and squirrel friends, a multi-generational swing set apparatus made of wood (in line with the ecological aesthetics of FoWP) that included a bench swing for adults and other more children/infant/accessible swings (to replace the dilapidated climbing structure), a native plant garden to provide resources for butterflies, bees and other critters, birds and insects, the preservation of sand area for birds and squirrels, an outlet for park events and a tap for watering the garden, and an ongoing project to learn about and acknowledge the Indigenous history with some form of historical event and permanent structure in the park.

The FoWP community's idea was to develop the park as a restorative place for adults to relax and enjoy the nature and for intergenerational interaction in play. In promoting the restorative dimension of the park was the vague hope that it would offset and perhaps shift how the park was used as a party space to one where people might respect each other's comfort levels more consciously. The goal was not to try to control how people are in the park but to foster the general understanding in the community that people struggling with mental health, many who are elderly, need/desire a sense of safety and calm. While fostering a restorative healing garden park environment may be part of how conflict can be ameliorated, it certainly on its own cannot heal the ongoing structurally produced trauma's that are the cause of the conflict

to begin with. Ultimately, we need to accommodate all these park uses and negotiate safer space between them through a harm reduction approach.

During the design process, FoWP met with City, parks and design firm representatives in the park to discuss the various ideas that were being floated and to find out what the possibilities and limits were. FoWP noted that there were a lot of cigarette butts on the ground and we asked if we could put in ashtrays. We were told that it was possible, so we included ashtrays in the design proposal. We queried about a bird-bath and were told we could get a three level fountain. FoWP completed a design proposal, which took the form of a large poster that showed a top view of our design and included quotes from park users as to the importance of each element. We then presented our design at another meeting at City Hall with representatives from Parks, the local councilor's office and the design firm. At this time, the City let us know which of our design ideas they would accept or not, for instance, they wouldn't produce all of our plaques. They were especially opposed to any memorializing of community members but didn't mind us memorializing pigeons and squirrels. In this way they exerted the social and class 'neutrality' of the park space (ironically, despite the long practice of memorializing colonial, military and other figures of a violent history in city parks). With some of these limits expressed, they agreed to take our design into consideration when doing their own designs. We all agreed that the next step was for the councilor's office to call another general community meeting to present FoWP's design alongside the designs proposed by the city.



Friends of Watkinson Park

park design, June 1, 2015

ART IDEA:
leave some bricks to be filled in with mosaics made by community members during a future art in the park event



Joe: "I come to the park approximately five days a week during the summer time. I could be anywhere between four hours observing wildlife, socializing with the local people. It is the wildlife that I observe most in the park. It gives me the opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of the concrete jungle. I see squirrels, birds, pigeons, etc. hopefully, sometimes you get racoons to feed. I like to come and veg out, just to clear my mind of all my activities and to put everything into perspective. I like the ability to come and isolate myself with nature, we need to socialize with people, have small talks, hear what the latest is, etcetera. I mostly hang out in the area over there where the tables and chairs are. I also play chess with some friends."



Angela: "If I don't have anything, when I can be I'm here in the park everyday, when I can't be and I have other things to do, I try to be here for at least an hour a day and feed the birds and the squirrels. What I love to do is just come in and commune with nature I feel I have too much of the city inside me, I have too much concrete inside me so when I come here and see the birds eating their seeds and bathing in the sand and the squirrels burying their nuts and then just feels the breeze through the beautiful canopy of the trees I feel at peace and I feel joy, oh but I do observe people coming and going doing the same thing I'm doing and talking with eachother and every now and again coming with their children, so I see all the people, my neighbours, my friends."

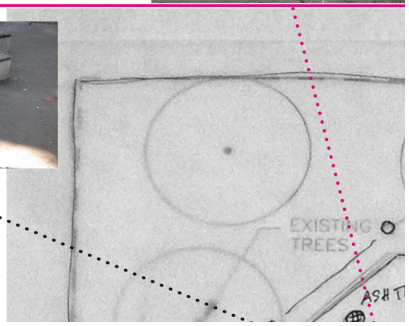


Figure 8: Friends of Watkinson Park, design proposal poster (details) (2015)

This meeting was held at Lucy McCormick School across from the park on September 24, 2015. We encouraged as many community members as possible to come to support our work. Browning and I presented the poster of the FoWP design and the City presented three design options (A, B and preferred, see Appendix A). One of the options presented by the City (Option B) was in direct contravention of all design priorities of the FoWP and thus provided for the possibility for the neighbourhood to totally disregard the low-income/lumpen community's work and inhabitation of the park. At the meeting there was a lot of dispute about the desire of FoWP to maintain the park as a space for lumpen/low-income and there was some poverty hating language that transpired -- one attendee said we may as well pave over the park and turn it into a shooting gallery. The City and Parks representatives actually handled the poor bashing language deftly, which was appreciated by FoWP community members. At the same time though, allowing FoWP to present its design proposal was a liberal approach of giving voice to all sides of the debate without pointing out the social justice issues that subtended FoWP's intervention. Indeed, some of the City's designs directly contradicted FoWP's design objectives and thus created a platform for neighbourhood members to reject our design proposal. While FoWP was not happy with any of the City's designs, fortunately, it was decided at the meeting to take up the FoWP design albeit with some significant compromises. These compromises included foregoing swings in favor of a transparent climbing structure shown in design Option B. The city and designers argued that swings, while favored by kids, only allow a few to play at a time, whereas many kids can climb on a structure. This argument, despite the fact that few children use the playground, was indicative of the hope that as condo development progressed there would be more families coming into the neighbourhood that might become significant users of the park. During the design process, we had considered the removal of the play area all

together, however, community members enjoy the children who do occasionally come to the park. Thus, FoWP proposed a multi-generational play area, but such age and class integrated play areas was not viewed favorably and FoWP's proposal was denied. Furthermore, the particular climbing structure that was proposed in Option B was seen to discourage the common practice of homeless community members sleeping or finding refuge under it. Agreeing to the Option B climbing structure was a decision taken by FoWP under pressure to placate those who were speaking in discriminatory ways at the meeting against homeless and poor folx, but also represented the absence of homeless community members to represent their interests and FoWP's inability to represent homeless community members adequately. FoWP countered that the play structure was to be no larger than the existing one being replaced in order to not lose park space for our community members. Our proposal that the play structure could be made out of logs (seen in many local school yards) rather than preformed plastic ones typically used by the city, again to align with FoWP's eco interests, was also ignored. After the meeting, City project manager Dan Connolly, sent a follow-up email as to the agreements that were reached at the meeting. We acknowledged what was agreed upon and replied with several queries as to aspects of our design that were not discussed such as the ashtrays, an electrical outlet, and a water source. We did not receive a reply. From this point we were in wait mode to receive the final plan from the design firm and parks to see how they had interpreted the decisions made at the meeting.

FoWP received the final design mid-June 2016, with a start date for renovations to start at the beginning of August. However, the final design that was presented to us had several features that were different than what was agreed upon. The main concern for FoWP was that the new proposed play structure was much larger than the original, which contravened our

agreement. In the new design, rather than putting the three smaller kids play apparatus along with the climbing structure in the wood chip area, they were put in the sand area, reinforcing that area as kids play space (for FoWP, the sand area was understood primarily as bird and squirrel habitat). The City then extended the sand area, cutting into existing green space (as proposed in Option B), when it was previously agreed to maintain existing green space.

The issue of the play structure related to one of the major tensions around the design -- kids access to park space. That, historically, not many kids play in Watkinson Park is most certainly due to what middle-class people refer to as the 'sketchy' nature of the park. There is substantial availability of play areas for kids in every other park in the Junction including a recently expanded and therefore now very elaborate play area just few blocks away at Vine Park. Despite no apparent need to expand the play area, the insistence on a larger play area felt like a reassertion of the city park ideology that city parks are for the ideal cis-hetero-normative middle-class family culture which, given the reality of classist assumptions, conflicts with the lumpen/low-income culture. Indeed, when the renovation was complete, suddenly there were two signs put up on the front fence, one next to each entrance to the park, stating municipal code #608: adults unaccompanied by a child not allowed in playground. Since the play area effectively now took up half the park, this meant that half the park was now off limits to community members when barely any children come to the park. This by-law signage is not posted in any other park in the Junction. FoWP were unaware of this by-law and so it was a shock to community members to see the signs and caused a lot of alienated feelings about the park.

A similar issue arose around smoking in the park. While, as mentioned, the City representatives had told FoWP during the design consultation that we could have ashtrays in the

park, shortly after the renovation was complete, the police started ticketing community members for smoking. We approached City councilor Gord Perks about this problem and he told us that it is illegal to smoke in parks within 9 meters of a children's play area. Since the park was now half play area that meant that there was no smoking in the park at all, one of the most important community activities that takes place there. We asked why it was that the City did not tell us this at the multiple meetings we had with them where we discussed ashtrays and play structure. The City representatives responded by telling us that it is up to us to know the law. This response again was very confusing. We met with councilor Perks to tell him how problematic it is to have no smoking enforced in the park, that lumpen/low-income people cannot afford the fines and that smoking is an important part of their sociality and their relaxation in the park. Perks was unsympathetic. He commented that studies show that if people do not see others smoking that it is less likely that they will take up the habit, completely ignoring the significance of smoking to lumpen/low-income communities within a greater context of universally practiced behaviors that are risky to public health (including the threat that driving and gross over-consumption pose to the whole planet, let alone that FoWP community members engage in neither). The other major critique by FoWP of the redesigned park is the extensive cement curbing and bench bases that very much disrupts the wide-open spaciousness and natural flow between the grassy and the sand areas. Whereas before there was very little cement besides the walkway and patio area, now with all the curbing around the sand/play area and the cement pads under the benches, it feels more contrived and cut up.

The FoWP offered the City a design that was progressive in that it was community engaged, socially conscious, while offering the possibility for some neighbourhood level gesture of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and aligning with general ecological concerns

Toronto wide. Ultimately, for Fezer (2010: n.p.), to take up such an alternate design, and to take into account an environmentally sustainable design process would mean “a radical willingness to think beyond the horizon of neo-liberal capitalism" and to “invent cities based on democratic communal thinking.” However, the City and its Parks Department completely missed the point. This position, we feel, is in part due to the neoliberal attitude of the city and in particular, the classist attitude that the City councilor’s office took towards FoWP.

− *dealing with the City*

It was a very disheartening and frustrating moment when FoWP received the final park design with no time or room to negotiate some of the features that contravened the agreement made at the previous meeting. In response, FoWP launched a campaign asking community members to write letters in support of our critique of the ‘official’ design. In seeking clarity on how the changes to the ‘official’ design came about and whether they could be reversed FoWP had, what turned out to be, a disastrous meeting with local councilor Gord Perks (who incidentally has worked for several environmental organizations). Perks declined to answer any of our questions forthrightly while subjecting FoWP members (all of us women identified, some of us Indigenous/persons of color) to a patronizing and belittling attitude. Perks enunciated slowly and carefully while taking up a lot of time explaining to us things we already understood, periodically asking us "do you understand?" This may be the manner in which Perks speaks to all constituents, nevertheless, his approach frustrated FoWP to no end and greatly diminished our sense of agency, our knowledge about the impacts of gentrification on the lumpen/low-income community, and of receiving basic respect. It left FoWP feeling that we were treated like uppity poor people not to be taken seriously despite our supposed status as an ‘equity group.’ This discussion culminated in a rather grimly hilarious moment when Perks kicked FoWP out of

his office saying that he is a champion of poor people. As lumpen/low-income people, we were deeply offended by his treatment of us and completely confused as to what being recognized as an ‘equity group’ might mean.

Needless to say, our objections to the final design received no response. FoWP shifted its attention to how, when there were agreements made about the proposed design at the final community meeting which had also been confirmed in a written email, these changes had come about. Through multiple inquiries the only answer that we could get was that there were other ‘stakeholders’ involved in giving feedback on the proposed design via email (as opposed to at the City meeting). When asked who these stakeholders were and if we could see these emails, the City declined saying that these emails were confidential. Clive Scott, employee of Perks, further relayed that he didn’t want to show FoWP the emails because there was "Othering language" about lumpen/low-income people in them -- to which we replied, don't worry about it, we are used to it. He again refused. I asked him why were these stakeholders being listened to if their input was motivated by bigoted, poor-bashing sentiments? FoWP’s next move was to file a Freedom of Information request for all the documents, emails, designs, meeting minutes and financial info regarding the renovation of Watkinson Park. The first batch of documents we received consisted solely of our correspondence with the City/Parks Department, which obviously we already had most of. We filed an appeal for the rest of the information, which the City responded to by providing designs and budget details, but nowhere near what was requested. We appealed again for the rest of the documents and lost. No stakeholder emails or meeting minute notes were ever supplied. The City gave the excuse that they didn’t want to expose individuals, to which we suggested that they simply redact names and personal information. Basically, the City moved to protect and empower the anti-poor bigots in the

process even though they are not the main park users, i.e., if these supposed stakeholder emails existed at all. It may be that the City can conveniently claim there are stakeholder emails that influence decisions by the City (but that can't be made public), when in reality these decisions are being made by City officials.

Fezer (2010, n.p.) points out that in the neoliberal city, urban dwellers have been made observers rather than producers of urban space -- citing art critic Hal Foster's (2002) critique of a design discipline which is a fully integrated into individualized consumer society, where "design, redesign, and perpetual consumption constitutes a perfect, unending cycle, a consumerist loop without much 'running-room' for anything else." In considering the back and forth moves between FoWP and the local councilor's office, it seems evident that the City sought to placate the FoWP community by pretending to take interest in our design work, but then withholding information from us that disempowered us in terms of the real objectives of our project and having a real conversation about lumpen/low-income space in city parks. The City concealed from us their actual agenda for the park redesign while leading us on by entertaining the possibility of having ashtrays in the park, not telling us about the by-laws against unaccompanied adults in the play area when we asked for an intergenerational play space, extending the play area to half the park effectively excluding low/fixed income community members the vast majority of whom smoke from their space. All of these maneuvers indicated efforts to limit the inhabitation of lumpen/low-income people in the park.

The actual City agenda is revealed in the documents received through the Freedom of Information request where it is admitted in a correspondence between Perks's employee, Clive Scott and City landscape architect Alex Mut, that the whole project was actually a playground enhancement project (see Appendix B), something that was never stated in all of our dealings

with the city including at the community meetings. The City sought to take those elements of our design that did not conflict with their agenda, and leave the main purpose of the FoWP design (to maintain the park as safe for the lumpen/low-income user community, supposedly an 'equity group', to create a restorative nature park and to work on Indigenous history of the area) unrealized and also unaddressed. Fezer (2010, n.p.) draws on philosopher Chantal Mouffe (2005) when he posits that to design democratically means the creation of a space of conflict. However, the questionable manner in which the local councilor and the City interacted with FoWP prevented the social conflict around public space from being revealed and thus we could not fully grasp the conflict that we were engaged in. Because the City hid their agenda behind a process of so-called consultation, FoWP remained unable to deal with it head on. Had we known that this was a playground enhancement project, we would have critiqued this directly and opposed it with our own plan that prioritized a restorative nature park. This misleading process enabled the City to go forward with their own agenda without a real discussion with the community that they deemed an 'equity group.' In the end, the fact that the City sought to placate FoWP is borne out in the Freedom of Information documents where Scott writes again to Mut in response to our critique of their final design that the city has gone "above and beyond to accommodate this group" (see Appendix B). In our view, this position means agreeing to meet with us to hear our ideas and concerns while not ever taking them seriously or recognizing the huge amount of work that FoWP put in to engaging the community and realizing their needs, wants and desires.

The formal organizing performed as a method by FoWP taught the group a lot about how the City operates and what forces and powers are at play. It reinforced community lived experience that the City does not support lumpen/low-income inhabitation of public space, even

when the City representative has the reputation of being one of the most leftist or progressive councilors.

While struggles over sand, ashtrays and green space may seem trivial, they merely represent deeper issues that are at stake. The City does not respond to community members organizing on their own behalf unless they are staying within the bounds of middle-class normativity and the violent, disabling and disempowering relationship of one-way gratitude, i.e., that poor people should be grateful that they even get a hearing from the powers that be. The interactions between the City and FoWP is an example of how public park space is a vehicle for gentrification and the exclusion of lumpen/low-income bodies. The purposing of the park for white, heteronormative property-owning working families reasserts a colonial/capitalist configuration of public space and forecloses on the possibility of city involvement in the park space as one where reconciliation and Indigenization can move forward.

The debacle with the City did clarify issues for FoWP including what we were up against in our work to build lumpen/low-income community and speak out on the issues that we face in the gentrifying context. However, dealing with the pointless resistance to FoWP's work from the City took away our ability to do other urgent work of daily life community maintenance and building. Since the completion of the park renovation, FoWP have shifted our mandate from community-based design work to community-building around maintaining the park as an ongoing gathering space for lumpen/low-income people.

Since the Park Renovation: Laying the Ground for Community-Building

FoWP started out as a group that organized to do a community-led park redesign but continued on after the park renovation to support the persistence of lumpen/low-income life in The Junction. Against what Fezer (2010, n.p.) sees as the "ongoing radical economization and de-

politicization of social space" and the overshadowing of the local by globalized forces of capitalist-colonialism, the local becomes an important space of resistance (see also Hern 2016; Merrifield 2002; Massey 2005; Smith 1992; Tuck and McKenzie 2015). Indeed, localized community-building is the core resistance work of the relational praxis art method as exercised in the FoWP project. Community-building for FoWP means specifically attending to the possibilities of mending and transforming the torn social fabric of the community and its capacities to resist the structures of colonial-capitalism that organize our relationalities. As mentioned, the threads of the social fabric consist of our material/cultural/Land based relational practices i.e., direct forms of subsistence (food, shelter, income, health and wellbeing), cultural and critical knowledge that arise from and surround our subsistence practice, and inextricable relations to non-human natures and the Land. Each of these dimensions are laced through with conflict, creative energy and praxis within the historical context of colonial/capitalist production of space and its unfolding as gentrification (Loftus in Ekers et al. 2013).

Community-building is based on existing social reproduction and relations of redistribution that happens everyday in the FoWP community (as described on page 260-1) such as when members mutually help each other with daily issues or crises, with sharing food, money, medicines, stories, humor or joy, or performing service such as errands, pet caring, checking in on each other on the last week of the month to make sure people have enough food till the next cheque, encourage each others expression; and/or share stories, humor and joy. As a relational praxis art practitioner and a community member, some of the redistributive social reproduction work that I have done within community includes but not limited to providing assistance in daily and occasional tasks; food, money, art supplies, and emotional support; and

organizational work involved in FoWP. Any opportunity to have material exchange relations is key to recognizing our mutual survival.

These caring and sharing practices may feel humble in relation to the institutional violence and marginalization that community members face but it is the basis of political economy -- a pre-figuration of a society to come that is based on redistribution according to needs and desires, rather than how people can perform competitively within a capitalist/colonial normativity. As mentioned, this community-building work is done within a relational web that is fraught with the difficult challenges of lateral violence, theft, sleep disruption, being triggered, lack of safety, bad drugs, infestation, and/or loss etc. Relational praxis art means working materially, in and around tensions, to find out what possibilities and openings might exist for harm reduction, political intervention and liberatory praxis. Furthermore, community redistribution practices are the foundation for further relational praxis artwork that supports the intentional representation and politicization of this marginalized social space, such that it can be present within, and challenge, larger social (political cultural/economic) discourses and material networks.

− *Creating a space*

In order to build community capacity, attention needs to be given to finding or creating a space for people to gather on a regular basis to share embodied presence and do work. No space is an empty container, every space will have its tensions, structural purposes and relationship to hegemonic power. For instance, each of the spaces that are accessed by the Junction lumpen/low-income community are contained within institutions that I theorize become part of the carceral continuum whether it be Mainstay Housing common room, the Monday Art Group space at the women's shelter, and Watkinson Park itself. Each of these spaces are constrained by

rules, regulations, surveillance and authoritarian relations of enforcement that consider poor bodies as subhuman expendable charity cases not worth attention, respect, and caring for. Working within such spaces is to create an opening for liberated relations within spaces of oppression. The relational space that we have been able to create moved between the shelter, social housing, and the park.

After the park renovation was complete, FoWP continued to meet in the common room in the Mainstay building adjacent to the park. As the tenants are predominantly from the lumpen/low-income social strata, the building itself signifies this stigmatized group. As with many social housing buildings, Mainstay is not cleaned particularly well, it is infested with cockroaches and bed bugs and many of the tenants do not receive the support they require to maintain their own apartments. Apartments also go un-repainted and are allowed to deteriorate for decades. According to tenants (which my long-term presence in the community can corroborate) putting in work-orders for apartment maintenance garners minimal response. The housing is institutional in that there are many rules and regulations, tenants are surveilled, and (depending on the housing worker) threats of eviction are the manner in which conflicts are often dealt with.

Also, FoWP, being largely comprised of a group of neighbours brings issues to the organizing; neighbour relations tend to be conflictual anywhere, and Mainstay social housing is no different. As a group who experience stigmatization and class difference from the rest of the neighbourhood, they are thrown together into a fishbowl. There tends to be a high degree of familiarity among people because most do not work and many do not leave the vicinity of the building. Despite these intensified social circumstances, there is little to no effective conflict resolution available to work out differences that arise among tenants or between tenants and

Landlord. Given the nature of Mainstay Housing in particular, and the stigmatization in the neighbourhood at large, the impact on the health and wellbeing of individual community members is detrimental. Mainstay Housing is basically a warehousing facility where people whose value has little recognition in society at large are put.

FoWP continued to meet weekly to discuss events, share meals and do art workshops. This space continued to be a safer and accessible space to the extent that it is comfortable for community members and anyone from the building could drop in to share a meal or activity and catch up on the latest whether they are regularly attending meetings or not. The kitchen was a most important feature; community members would buy ingredients for us to cook and eat together during FoWP's weekly meetings. But even the kitchen had its limits as the fridge and kitchen cupboards are kept locked so there has been minimal access to utensils we need for food preparation. There is also a bathroom on the main floor of Mainstay, however, it remains locked by the janitor most of the time due to those (mostly from outside the building) who use it for their own party purposes. Bathrooms are a main issue for accessibility and this is a major drawback for FoWP, especially during special events. Alongside the common room, Mainstay tenants also have lockers in the basement and individual FoWP members have given their locker space for FoWP storage. We keep a barbecue and a firebowl there, as well as supplies for special events, art making, gardening, bird and squirrel feeding among other sundries.

There also exists a close collaboration between the Monday Art Group that took place at the local shelter that was run by community members and former shelter residents, and FoWP. Many folx from the women's shelter are regular park users as they have to be out of the shelter at certain times of the day and are thus pushed out into public space. Thus, shelter residents are important community members who participate in FoWP's work a few of whom having become

FoWP members. The shelter is run by the Salvation Army and is a site of intense institutional violence, social neglect and silencing. Poor diet, lack of sleep, extreme stress, infantilization, arbitrary rule enforcement, threats of being kicked out onto the street, an unclean environment, over-crowding, a rehabilitation ethos that individualizes failure and lack of relevant and effective support services all contribute to the shelter as a necro-political economic space. The Monday Art Group tried to contest the institutional violence by creating a space where folx could experience relative autonomy, self-expression and material supports.

If it is not too rainy or cold, members also like to meet in the park. The park space is also constructed through ongoing colonialism in the settler city context as described above. Thus, the erasure of the Indigeneity of the Land and the knowledge held there haunts the work. As well, Indigenous bodies in the community carry the history of trauma in the colonization of Land (evidenced by the settler urban infrastructure, private property and ecological harms), a trauma which others of us are ancestrally implicated in reproducing. The Indigeneity of the Land brings a critical perspective on how the community is framed now, and how we might build it in a way that respects the Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishnawbe (and other) knowledges that are buried there. Indigenous knowledge potentially could bring in a different ethics of relationality and community than what is forced upon us by capitalist-colonialism.

As mentioned, the park is a hegemonically normative space and through this lens, FoWP community are transgressive even abject. When meeting in the Park, FoWP participates in the lumpen park economy such as giving/selling cigarettes, warning those who are smoking or drinking when police are around, lending money, or whatever else might come up and checking in with community members well-being. Meeting in the park also affords group members to enjoy the natural aspects of the park: sun, wind, fresh air, trees and how the light dapples

through them, and the shade that cools in the summer. We are close to the gardens and thus can tend to them, observe their progress, harvest as well as observe and take pleasure in the insects, squirrels and birds' life. While we had asked for a watering hose from the City, it was never provided (despite consistent follow-up on FoWP's part). While in the park, we are also visible to the gentrifying community as inhabiting the space and being busy working, which helps build recognition of our presence as a lumpen/low-income community. As the park is a public space, many other park goers wandering by can spontaneously participate in our work or wander and find out the latest news.

Through Indigenous and mixed Indigenous members, FoWP has engaged with Indigenous histories and settler colonial realities that subtend the park space. While the core group of FoWP has developed a working understanding that the Land of Tkaronto is first and foremost ancestral Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishnawbe Land, this is not necessarily taken up by the lumpen/low-income community at large, or the Junction neighbourhood. However, through FoWP's work, we bring the colonial reality to the fore by acknowledging and supporting those Indigenous community members, educating ourselves and having discussions as a community, and engaging the neighbourhood at large with the colonial reality through our public interventions. As a group mostly comprised of settlers, FoWP has dedicated some time to studying the Two-Row Wampum and built connections with Joce Two-Crows Tremblay and the local Indigenous group Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society (THPS) and its director Donna Powless, to guide our work in a conscious and respectful way.

− *Hanging out*

Beyond the physical dimension of space, attention needs also to be paid to ritualistic, psychic and emotional spaces. One of the most important practices of relational praxis art and its

ongoing community building method is simply being present and hanging out, whether that be in groups, or one on one with individual community members. Hanging out with people in community is not for entertainment or having a social experience based on mutual taste-making or building a social scene around shared interests and discourses. Hanging out is a practice that is core to the Watkinson Park community. Hanging out and spending mundane time together is based on neighbourliness and shared geographical proximity, which means that difference and un-chosen socialities are prevalent. But, hanging out also includes the possible development of degrees of familiarity that can build trust and lead to friendships (Krasny 2016; Lancione 2018: halifax and Jackson 2018a). Friendship is an arena of knowledge production that involves affective and material exchange: we need friends, comfort and trust with others, we need to be involved in resource networks in order to survive. At the same time, hanging out also brings the possibility of revealing conflict due to differentials in power, expectations and desires. The possibility of informally processing conflict can be a release valve and can open up conversations, but it can also bring up complexities that cannot be solved. Dealing with conflict forces the group to learn communication skills and gives us the opportunity to learn how to create safer space, and to understand and account for difference as well as sit in the difficulty of being community.

For me, to hang out with the FoWP community as a relative outsider, sharing space and engaging in the everyday little support gestures that take place is a cross-difference exercise and is thus political. Hanging out allows for knowledge flow outside the meeting process and especially with those who hang in the park but are not interested in formal organizing. Hanging out is thick with mutual and dialogical knowledge and affective exchange, a kind of loose auto/collaborative practice where knowledge about others, oneself and the goings on in the

neighbourhood is generated (Lancione 2018 n.p.). Hanging out is integral to checking in with a broader community as to how they are experiencing the park and the park community and thus to generating the knowledge basis for public intervention projects and that also provides the communicative ground for both material and symbolic creative work in the community at large. In truth, I hesitate to refer to the time that I (as the academic in the community) spend hanging out as a "method" per se as it seems to instrumentalize the relationships we have developed which. At the beginning, I tried to keep field notes but I quickly found this burdensome time-wise and I felt uncomfortable trying to capture a fluid, fluxing relational experience through my own lens. Rather, I felt that being present to the relations without trying to capture them in my own terms was the work of relational praxis art. The diverse outcomes of those relationalities (felt, interpersonal, collective, interventionist, etc.) become the explanation of them. Hanging out may be a transgression of the distanced researcher/researched relation and may be seen to distort "objectivity" -- however, objective knowledge is not the goal of this research, social transformation is.

− *Sharing food*

Food is the most vital material need and is the most effective way to bring community together. Material needs are not mechanical functions to be fulfilled. Eating is not just fuelling the machine. Food making is understood as a primary cultural/economic practice by many people of struggle as a ground for political work. Black Panthers spoke to this food need with their Free Breakfast For Children Program that understood that hunger is a barrier to the capacity to resist oppression and that meeting the needs of the people through social reproduction is key to a revolutionary practice (Heynen 2009). The Black Panthers made the Breakfast Program mandatory for all chapters across the states as integral to its revolutionary program. What

distinguishes Black Panther and FoWP food practices from a soup kitchen? Heynen (2009, 408) points out that, indeed, hunger is the main "bargaining chip" of capital with which it can maintain its "coercion" and "dominance." That food is provided *by and for community* (Heynen 2009) and not in a charity or state context, is a basis for resistance while encouraging and mobilizing the critical knowledge of community members.



Figure 9: Friends of Watkinson Park participatory design process (2015)

That we gather and nourish our bodies together with a home cooked meal is a profoundly spiritual and affective level of interaction. Sharing food also brings up the conversation of diet, food desires, memory and creativity. While providing snacks was a consistent practice for all FoWP meetings, after the design process was done, we amplified our engagement with food as a material-relational community anchor. FoWP's food practice received some energy from a new member J, a former shelter resident who had found housing, but without a kitchen. J is Macedonian, a culture she described as centered on food. She would prepare amazing cabbage and beef stew, homemade breads, tomato salads and filo pastry deserts. Others in the group, Marlene, Joe, George, Angela, would bring a food item to add to the menu or would contribute

to food preparation. It was suggested by a group member that we should take a collection, a ‘toonie’ ($2) each or so, to contribute to the cost of buying ingredients. Requests for certain favorite food items (sausages and French toast) would be made by community members and dietary needs were identified, especially for fresh fruits and vegetables, which FoWP tried to fulfill as much as possible. We also paid attention to pleasure in food as well as food for celebration such as birthday cakes or holiday meals. Cooking meals meant we had food scraps which led us to want a composter for the garden (Mainstay Housing doesn't have a ‘green’ compost bin) and thus to further metabolic relations. FoWP meals drew many who were passing by and would be attracted by the food. Around the table we could talk about what FoWP was doing and catch up on different experiences people were having in the park, community and around neighbourhood. Conversations often revolved around whether people were getting ticketed, what people thought of gentrification, how they perceive the neighbourhood changing, what was going on in the building and community, what was going on in the park, how they were feeling about the park space, whether they were interested in having another FoWP event, and what they might want/be able to contribute, etc.

Since FoWP’s organizing comes from the embodied capacities of community members, when J unfortunately lost her housing and had to leave town, our ability to do weekly meals also diminished. Subsequently, FoWP also identified another capacity issue: doing such intensive food preparation hindered our ability to focus on our other organizing work and thus we needed to find a balance between the two. To resolve this problem, FoWP decided to do a meal on the last day of every month just before cheque day. If our capacity increased again, weekly food events would be the most important project that FoWP could do, one that fulfills the relational praxis art methods of accounting for the level of the material, supporting the agency of

community as to what organizing should take place, and to build the fruitful space of community engagement and knowledge production.

– *A basis of unity: trauma, accessibility, collectivization*

The liberatory space that FoWP is trying to create is embedded in forms of power (colonial, liberal democratic, neoliberal, institutional), as well as in lumpen economies of partying, substance use, and appropriation (forms of sociality that are imbued with the trauma and re-traumatizing experiences of living under immiserating power) and thus, these realities become the tensions that we work with and against with our community building process. In order for us to work together effectively we needed to figure out a way to find common ground, a common language and knowledge as we explore the vast experience and diverse desires represented by the group. In order to work with relational threads according to relational praxis art, meeting structure and process is key to fostering egalitarian participation and preventing (as best as possible) power blocks. While Roberts Rules served our purposes for the design phase, in continuing our work we needed a model that was more accessible and organic to the community, and thus inclusive. Because individuals in the community have diverse embodiments and states of mind, accessibility practices such as limiting (or not in some cases) cross-talk and paying attention to triggers was a major challenge we tried to undertake.

We found that a more flexible, open and accessible process was needed, one where everyone could share their thoughts and feelings, be heard and listen and thus feel engaged in the process. In order for FoWP to collectively achieve a more open process, we did an exercise: a stack of cards and writing utensils were put on the table. Each member was encouraged to write what they would like to see happen in meetings, how they would like the meetings to be run and what was important to them to consider in our organizing work. Each person could

write as many points as they wanted. We then put all the cards together and shuffled them and then dealt back out to group members randomly. Each member read the cards that they were dealt that were written by their fellow members. This exercise created a moment of inter-subjectivity among group members where each of us were speaking the feelings, thoughts, concerns of the others instead of holding onto our own ideas. Gaining the perspective of others on the meeting process inspired empathy. After this exercise, the card contents were typed out and organized into a collectively authored basis of unity (see Appendix C). The basis of unity represents the voices, needs, desires of community members and is read aloud before every meeting in order to orient ourselves to the group consciousness. The basis of unity reminds us each time to start the meeting with a quick little game or breathing exercise to get into the mood. The basis of unity is a living document that guides FoWP members on how to participate in community, and also gets amended according to issues that arise.

Still, the creation of accessible group process and meeting space is a challenging and fluxing work in progress. To slow down enough to get in touch with one's sense of group dynamics, to offer up ideas and opinions when this is never expected of you in your daily life, to perhaps chair a meeting, these seemingly simple things have proven hard for community members and there can be a lot of resistance and apprehension in the meeting space.

The work of relational praxis art involves negotiating past and ongoing trauma, trauma as the everyday mundane reality that we attend to throughout our work and which also manifest as resilience, fabulousness, eccentricity, joyful fashion statements and strong personal style, in poignant creativity, critical knowledge, bravery and uncompromising truth telling. As folx building community while in different states of healing from, or managing trauma, we cope with individuals (including myself) who are triggered in the course of the work and the social

relations that we try to maintain. And, most importantly, being in community itself can be hugely triggering for those who have consistently to experienced familial and social abandonment and institutional violence throughout their lives.

Those engaged with trauma-related activities and thus considered abject are cordoned off from normative society (Razack 2015). As government funded social supports fail, it is left to local communities to cope with the crises which the larger society excuses itself from. FoWP is not always able to work through the interpersonal, historical and political webs in which we are caught. Often we fail, pick up the pieces and continue on as best we can. Sometimes, putting boundaries for one's health means having to remove oneself from difficult relationships or from the community as a whole. Indeed, particular members have left the group (not always permanently) over heightened differences of opinion, ethical direction, not wanting to share space with other community members, and/or the need to maintain sobriety.

Continually working through these issues within the group process and between individuals directly, often in a wayward and tenuous manner, is one of the biggest (and unsolvable) but also the most important challenges. As Fanon (2004) understood well, unless we work on the devastatingly alienating impacts of capitalist-colonialism on individuals and collectivities we cannot really become fully subjectivized or resistant agents. Rather than assuming that a trauma identity is disempowering, relational praxis art seeks to lift up trauma as a valid expression and a source of knowledge within the violence of colonial-capitalism and orient the work towards those who (for whatever reasons) do not hide behind the performance of a normative exterior (and thus perpetuate the myth that this society is habitable). Normative embodiments and identities are, in fact, more problematic than those that are marked as outsider in that they are reproductive of colonial/capitalist relationalities of violence. The question then is

does our work unfold as a segregation between identities that are normative vs. demonstrative of trauma and/or difference, or can we come together across difference to perform a mutually reciprocal and sustaining relational web.

Despite FoWP's efforts to create accessibility, I must acknowledge that we ultimately fail to consistently engage the most vulnerablized and stigmatized in the community. It is quite difficult for people in community, who are each other's first responders, to be able to really support those whose trauma is exacerbated. Because some of the things that go on with people (for instance a neighbour who has issues with hygiene and smells extremely strongly of urine) have negative impacts on others as well as contributing to the stigmatization of the lumpen/low-income community, there can be a lot of animosity. The way individuals wield socially given power can be very harmful to others and hindering to liberatory possibilities. While class is a big issue that FoWP community contends with, white dominance and ablism within the organizing work is a force that is not fully discussed. For instance, the social capital that my capacities and privileges garner me for the work that we all contribute to is understood as a class phenomenon, not as due other privileges such as my white settler status and the invisibility of my disability. The privileges I carry are an ongoing source of great frustration for some group members, at the same time, that I am accountable to community members for these privileges and that I show up for exchange relations means I have established relatively trusting relationships.

My central role as a relational praxis art practitioner is to create the ground that supports the participation of community members in the work of FoWP. As a relatively able and privileged body with technological access, part of my work involves flowing my capacities through the group, spending much of my time working against the impacts of individual

disability, alienation and lack of access. Most community members don't have internet access and many do not have a phone, thus, the importance of being present and hanging out to organize with people on a day-to-day level and by word of mouth (we often are just hoping to run into people in order to communicate about projects and events). Many people who are not working have a different relation to time; they don't always keep track of days and thus regular reminders of upcoming events is an accessibility requirement. Furthermore, community members remain largely disconnected from social media -- and I do most of the work to maintain a website and this is simply to archive and represent our work in case we apply for funding.

As mentioned, in this work, I reflect on Marx's (1990) thinking on how a collective can be seen as a single body with a greater capacity than any one constituent individual. FoWP, as a community group, could be understood as overcoming individualist bourgeois and competitive inter-subjectivities as the FoWP community can be seen as a collectivized organism that is the sum of our individual gifts, contributions, capacities, desires, creativities, knowledge as well as our disenfranchisement, the stresses of living in poverty, under capitalist/colonial anti-relations, and the various impairments that we live with. We do not put an idealized abstracted vision of our work ahead of our collective embodiments, rather, we collectivize our labour across embodied difference and then do the work according to our collective capacity and expression. This approach means that there is a redistribution of energies and capacities across bodies towards both the increased capacity of both the individual and the whole. We do the best we can to account for those who show up to be in community, and at the same time, gather our energies to make an impact in the world beyond that of the FoWP community.

Given our collective capacities as a community of disabled folx, we have developed a very open and fluid organizing process in which we never fully sew up the details on any one particular happening or event. Our organizing relies on very spontaneous participation by community members. While FoWP provides a loose structure of events (dates, times, basic ideas about what will happen), how the events actually unfold is left up to who shows up to fulfill the tasks that are needed or contribute the unanticipated. The lack of full organization of events does actually work in terms of providing these openings for greater accessibility to participation, which also interrupts the normal understanding that an organization is built to plan stuff *for* the community. Instead, FoWP events feel like the community doing things for themselves in a free form (often chaotic) and magical dance. During such events, we find out what people have to contribute, what works and what doesn't by the level of participation, interest and enjoyment. For instance, people will jump in to build and watch the fire, cook, bring and serve food, speak, sing and read poems, set up and break down, bring clothes for a give away, attend to those park members who need it, make each other feel welcome. The looseness and openness of our organizing style generates conviviality and also allows for the unexpected to occur. Unexpected magic moments of laughter and connectivity feels like the tangible yet intangible threads of community forming. As already constructed as failed subjects, we are not afraid that things won't turn out -- as long as we are together, community-building will happen. Organizing future events is then based in the organic knowledge that we gain from past events, about who can be relied upon for which tasks and then there are always incredible surprises.

− *Money issues*

The marginalization that marks FoWP's work is also reflected in our lack of resources. Our diminished capacity and discernible low-class position means our cultural capital is scant. We

are, as a community, already stretched by demands such that doing a grant application is often beyond our means. Nor do we generally fit into the priority demographic or geographic areas for funding. The FoWP are a small island of lumpen/low-income people in a gentrifying neighbourhood, not in a priority neighbourhood, we are elders not youth, racially mixed but not reflective of a specific cultural group. In short, we fall between the funding priority cracks. However, FoWP has not let the lack of funds prevent us from doing work.

The seasonal feast/party events we do, especially requires a certain amount of cash flow, so FoWP has had to do some proper fundraising.[77] Like many groups we decided to sell t-shirts. Given our limited resources, we bought t-shirts in Chinatown and then stenciled them with our own slogans and logo.



Figure 10:Friends of Watkinson Park T-Shirts (2016)

T-shirt making jams were organized during meeting times and were quite fun for people once they learned how. Each shirt was unique and quirky. We managed to sell mostly to other community members at our various events, but also two local businesses have sold t-shirts on

[77] For one feast party event, FoWP did receive a cash donation from Michael Ryan, an old activist buddy of mine from the Montreal anti-imperialist/Antifa scene.

FoWP's behalf. T-shirt sales along with individual contributions by FoWP members and friends have kept us barely afloat monetarily.

In 2018, FoWP was joined by another member with relative privileges and embodied capacities to add to our collectivity, which enabled us to apply for funding from the TD Park People funding stream. We went as a group to a funding workshop and then successfully applied for a grant to put on four park events. While we had been doing seasonal feast events since the beginning of the project, funding them through private contributions was becoming increasingly difficult. While we are in opposition to accepting corporate money and it was hard for FoWP to agree to put a TD logo on our posters, we did (critically) accepted this money because the park feast events (described in more detail below) are so important to the community. At the same time, FoWP is the only group who have accessed that fund who represent ourselves politically in our descriptions for the Park People website as overtly a low-income anti-gentrification group.

Of course, those of us doing the FoWP work do it without monetary remuneration, in fact we are actually paying to do this work (Garrett and Jackson 2016). FoWP members are engaged in the necessary social reproduction work of trying to maintain and build community (Krasny 2016). We do knowledge production, practical organization, activism, cultural production, and everyday survival practices, all of which pick up the slack in the lack of redistribution in neoliberal society at large, as well as serves to push society as a whole into a broader discussion of on the ethical failures of colonial-capitalism.[78] While issues around paid labour are a basis for political organizing (union struggles and the Fight for $15 and Fairness,

[78] While it may be commonplace for artist/activists/academics to work for free, there is a tacit résumé building that happens and thus the capacity to do this work does indicates a privilege. This reality creates an economic tension between those with lived experience knowledge who do lumpen social reproduction as a cultural/survival strategy, and those who bring in resources in order to amplify the work (such as myself).

minimum wage and equal pay for equal work), non-paid social reproduction labour of communities is not counted as labour and not even granted cultural capital in activist and academic communities. Indeed, lumpen/low-income people are characterized as having little or nothing to contribute. This position can only be understood as a socially extensive, necro-economic attitude that lumpen/low-income lives are not worth supporting let alone seeing as a site of vital knowledge. The value of our labour is banished into a void.

FoWP's activist art resisting gentrification

Intervening into the park design to maintain the park as a safer space for lumpen/low-income community members against the encroachment of settler middle-class exclusionary spatial practices (Couture et al. 2018; Kawash 1998, 2000; Krasny 2016; Razack 2000) was ultimately a compelling relational praxis art project. Since the park renovation, gentrification continues apace. Thus, contesting gentrification and all its colonial/capitalist priorities continues to frame and drive the mobilization work and art engagement of FoWP and its community members.

For relational praxis art, art and activism are melded in ways that, by external criteria, it sometimes looks like what we would normally understand as activism, and other times it looks like what we might normally understand as art, and sometimes, I would assert that it was both but may appear like neither. Relational praxis art departs from the model of how urban activism and activist art is often done. It is well known that neoliberalism has meant the professionalization of activism (Krasny 2016), and in many cases, seasoned activists and middle-class radicals with relative privileges are front and center in the struggle. Inasmuch as professionalized forms of activism are a privilege of, and support middle-class life, it could also be understood as a form of gentrification on the plane of activism itself -- which should be understood as a space of relative safety for the most oppressed (Krasny 2016). Furthermore,

many forms of activism take place at or around sites of power, government buildings or corporate headquarters. That downtown Toronto becomes the understood space for activist work means that mobility, tolerance of large crowds and other conditions of protest rallies and marches are a normative standard for inclusion. Such routinized forms of activism often arise from an abstract idea of activism without necessarily focusing on the building of individual and group agency and self-representation with the most oppressed within oppressed groups. Relational praxis art confronts the hierarchization of our bodies within power formations and pushes the relational webs, ethics and tensions within the relatively privileged spaces of political struggles to the fore, especially when it comes to the agency of lumpen/low-income peoples within activism.

As discussed earlier, relational praxis art works to maintain the integrity of individual and collective agency in representational processes. Relational praxis art interrogates the relations of representation and moves beyond those forms that are ablist, purely symbolic and/or aesthetically conditioned by community or contemporary professionalized standards and are thus alienated from those bodies whose knowledge is represented. Thus, relational praxis art aesthetics and practices are congruent with FoWP community members' individual embodiments, histories, access to materials, knowledge and time, etc. FoWP's representational strategies work in two directions: (1) the self-representational power, which we re-appropriate to ourselves towards self-realization as individuals and as a community expressed in Watkinson Park as a civic space for cultural production, political discourse and struggle, and (2) as an outward projection of our knowledge to a larger public: the Junction community, the left/progressive arts and political milieu, and at the civic scale through our presence and

interaction with the City councilor's office and parks. What follows is a description of a number of our artistic/activist interventions.

– *Fighting the condo craze: Performance*

FoWP members have intervened on several city held meetings on local developments to perform a counter knowledge to the poor-hating discourse held as normal and uncontroversial by the middle-class neighbourhood members. As Gilbert (2003, 315) notes: "[p]erformative practices of citizenship express the claims rooted in changing social relations and conditions and the constant political, social and environmental disputes that challenge the imposed marginalization of some people." FoWP members attended meetings about the park renovation, the installation of a men's crisis shelter (where the poor-hating vitriol was very intense), and the condo development happening one block east of the park called The Junction House.

The public meeting about the Junction House development was set up and facilitated by our old friend/city councilor Gord Perks with developers and architects in attendance. We had short notice of this meeting and a lot of other demands in community at that time which hindered our ability to organize much of a fight back, but Marlene Bluebird Stickings and other FoWP and Monday Art Group members, trusted ally, Rebecca Garrett and one of the few local middle-class families who have come to FoWP events, and myself attended to represent and show solidarity with low-income interests. For those FoWP members who carry visible markers of Indigeneity and/or lumpen/low-income life, just sitting in the audience can have the performative impact of disrupting the hegemony of the white middle-class space. While others in our group declined to speak out -- I took up a more vocal performative stance. I had made some notes about the impacts of gentrification on the lumpen/low-income community derived from FoWP's work, collective community understandings and lived experiences. At the time of

this meeting, I was carrying deep frustration and grief at the impacts of gentrification and lack of access to city development processes on the FoWP community. Reacting in the moment, in this space of civic discourse, I became pretty fatigued and upset by all the talk of historic buildings, increased traffic and shadows being cast into people's backyards, and my approach became emotionally charged. After talking about the Indigenous history of the neighbourhood, the impacts of gentrification, the loss of affordable housing in the area and housing crisis at large in Toronto and the need for rent geared to income housing in the area, I pointed out that no one, not one person talked about the impacts of neighbourhood development on the existing low-income community. After I finished speaking, no one responded. The next question asked by an audience member was about historic architecture, as if I had never said anything. I raised my hand again to say that my question hadn't been addressed. After trying to avoid giving me the floor again, councilor Perks told me that I didn't ask a question, so I reiterated that I wanted to know why they do not consider the impacts of these developments on low-income people and why was there is no affordable housing going in. Perks explained that while there have been some moves on the part of the province of Ontario to institute inclusionary zoning by which the City would be empowered to require developers to include affordable housing in their condos, the tools to actually do this have not yet been developed at the municipal level. The many condo developments happening now, alongside the backlog of applications, will be immune to these yet to be instituted powers and therefore Torontonians face an extension of the affordable housing crisis housing well into the future.

After the meeting I talked to one of the designers about his proposal of a neon sign, an artwork, for the top of the condo to give it a gateway feel into the Junction. Ironically he used as an example a neon artwork by Chinese working-class artist Ken Lum, *Monument For East*

Vancouver (2010), that consists of East Van written as a cross, which is a copy of an icon from an East Vancouver gang from the 1960's. Growing up in Vancouver I would see their icon graffitied on many walls, as tattoos, and written on peoples jean jackets. I tried to point out to this designer the irony of his example: the east end of Vancouver has been massively gentrified and the neon artwork represents what little remains of the working-class culture as their appropriated iconography is made into pop art mobilized for urban middle-class consumption, for gentrification.

Councilor Gord Perks strategy for the meeting was to protect the architects, planners and designers from having to answer any questions and reinforce for the audience the city rules and by-laws regarding development. After the meeting, I confronted Perks as to his shutting down all debate and he told me he just needs to keep the meeting moving along. Because the City has very poor regulations on development, Perks seems to see his role as just giving us a dose of reality as to how powerless we are without giving us room to exert some vocal agency, to speak to our issues and engage in discussion. Meanwhile, the architects are protected by Perks from being held responsible for their lack of ethical consideration, they are free from accountability for their exploitation of lack of regulation on the part of the City. Perks tells the meeting that he will vote in favor of the condo regardless of what gets said. Fezer (2010, n.p.), points to Foucault's (1978) idea of governmentality to think about the ways that regulatory practices "oriented towards principles of economic efficiency" replace "social conflict and protest with technocratic techniques that promote unanimity and consensus." As the regulatory ethos of governmentality obscures and steps around direct political conflict, the space for resistance at the local level is 'swallowed up' (Fezer 2010, n.p.).

Thus, as an extension of the performative work that we did at this meeting, FoWP members worked on a poster series that represents FoWP member voices on gentrification, which we put up around the condo and around other condo developments in the neighbourhood. As well, Marlene Bluebird Stickings and I began a performative practice of grandly knocking over condo board signs that are placed throughout the Junction neighbourhood. This practice, catching the attention of passersby has encouraged one-on-one conversations about gentrification and the housing crisis. Even where no conversations happen, the gesture is a performance of resistance. After a while of consistently knocking over condo boards, Bluebird Stickings had a conversation with a yoga instructor that she knew from Anishnawbe Health who decided to take up the gesture after witnessing her in the act. Over time, Bluebird Stickings and I noticed that condo boards were knocked over before we got to them and thus had the sense that there were other people joining into this resistance practice. At least the developers and neighbourhood members could see that condo development was not good news for everyone.

− *Seasonal feasts*

FoWP continued the core community project (initiated by Mainstay Housing resident Lynda Solowynsky) of putting on seasonal feasts. In the spring of 2018 we received (as mentioned earlier) a grant from TD Parks People to support us doing three feast events that year. Each feast focused on a different activity: in the spring we gardened, in the summer we did storytelling, in the fall we did a Halloween art installation and corn roast.

At FoWP feasts, a fire is lit, local community member musicians and poets perform, art gets made, the gardens get tended to, food is made and served and sometimes we show videos. The food is provided through FoWP fundraising, with various community businesses also contributing items. Hung, from the Vietnamese Grocery, always gives us two boxes of chicken

to bbq, flats of pop and water, hotdogs and bread. Vesuvio's gives a large pizza and one year we got a box of pears and a box of peaches from the Sweet Potato, a local organic grocery store. Sorella's is also a regular supporter giving us amazing homemade sausages. No Frills gives us gift cards and Kian and Helen from CoffeeTime gives us muffins and cookies. Community members also contribute homemade and/or purchased food items to the buffet and play a major role in helping FoWP prepare dishes from scratch. Making food is a creative social reproduction act that lays the material ground for the community building by fulfilling the basic need for nourishment (embodied, spiritual, emotional, etc.).



Figure 11: Friends of Watkinson Park, *Community Feast* (2015)

Out of this basic need arises all the other benefits that these events provide such as conviviality, belonging, creative outlet, cultural expression, exchange relations, critical knowledge generation and restorative experience in the park. Beyond being merely a platform for creativity, Seasonal feasts are also relational works in their own right.

The fire bowl is vital focal point of the feast events. While food satisfies an obvious material need, community members express that being around the fire also fulfills a vital need.

This need is not just warmth, although warmth is important. Building and keeping the fire, gathering around and cooking on the fire is a potent and visceral practice that provides a palpable contemplative and healing energy space for people. Looking into the fire puts one in touch with elemental properties, contemplation, transformative life processes, with visioning one's life path. Such visioning gives rise to storytelling and song and thus is a special opportunity for expression and listening (and/or experiences of conflict – the best way to put out a fire! - always a present reality).



Figure 12: Friends of Watkinson Park *Community Feast* (2018)

As the fire burns down, FoWP collects the ashes and charred bits as a reduction of our community time together, our collective energies and intentions, and we put them in the garden as chemical and spiritual nourishment. Food, fire, garden and our hearts/minds/bodies flow in a metabolic, cultural/economic relation.

At a certain point in organizing feast events, FoWP decided to rent a microphone and speakers so that we could project our voices more in the community space, which turned out to

be a very positive experience for community members. The microphone enabled those members who have very soft voices to project better, helped boost members confidence and gave some empowerment in speaking or sharing a poem, song or some reflections.

In line with lifting up the creativity of community members, FoWP invites the musical expression of community members as an important dimension that gives the pleasurable effects of sound on the mind, spirit and body whether as musician or audience. FoWP have been fortunate to have a connection with local experimental musician Mike Barth who collaborates with other players on improv, electronic music, as well as spontaneous free form collaborations with community members such as accompanying poetry reading. Also, old time country singer Don Lewis brings friends from a local open mic night to play and they also accompany community members in song. Other locals, such as Jim, a sculptor and longtime Junction resident was always happy to play his clarinet. One year, Jim even brought a wash-tub base for community members to play. All these musicians have been willing accompanists and collaborators with local FoWP community members and invite community members to join in with instruments or singing, which they have done.

After more than three years of doing consistent community feasts, the increased lumpen/low-income presence, comfortability and sense of belonging in the park is palpable. The community feasts are something FoWP would like to do more often as not only do they really bring people together to address material, spiritual and creative needs, but they are a real statement of lumpen/low-income inhabitation of space. Whereas onlookers might see it as a social work project, we see it as a cultural project of lumpen/low-income existence and persistence, of place-making politics in the face of a neighbourhood that would like the FoWP community gone.

– *Decoloniality: Native plant garden*

FoWP members identify one of the main attributes of the park space to be the enjoyment of nature. The native plant garden was not a contentious issue in the FoWP design, however, the City cut our desired garden space by half saying that if we were successful at gardening the first beds that they put in, then they would consider putting in more beds. As it turned out, the City went ahead and planted the garden without consulting with FoWP. While FoWP appreciated the investment that the City made in mostly native plants, we were also disappointed to not have had the chance to develop the connectivity to the garden, the agency, empowerment, creativity, knowledge, communion, sharing and thus creative community building that doing the work ourselves would have engendered. The City's aesthetic which, unsurprisingly, consisted of plants in rows was also much different from FoWP's which was envisioned as a less ordered and tended wild garden full of what are commonly stigmatized as weeds and grasses that didn't necessarily need a lot of maintenance. As it turned out, many plants put in by the City did not return after the winter and some space was available for FoWP to add plants to the garden the following growing season.

While native plant gardens are becoming common in Toronto and can contribute to gentrification, FoWP sought to resist this by enacting our decolonial mandate. FoWP collaborated with earthworker and Indigenous Land Sovereigntist, Two-Crows Tremblay who was working at The Stop/Green Barn's urban agriculture program at the time.[79] On our first visit to the Green Barn, Two-Crows Tremblay graced us with a healthy meal and tea made from plants and medicines grown by Two-Crows Tremblay's program with street involved Indigenous community. We were then introduced to the greenhouse and the Mashkiki;aki'ing medicine

[79] As Two-Crows Tremblay is also a Junction neighbourhood resident they also became a FoWP member and have since been present in many dimensions of FoWP's work.

wheel garden that is located in a nearby city park. Despite being on so-called city Land, Mashkiki;aki'ing is under the stewardship of NaMeRes (the half way house, Native Men's Residence) in collaboration with the Green Barn. The idea of a piece of city park being under Indigenous stewardship was very exciting and inspiring to hear about in thinking about the possibilities of FoWP's hopes to engage with decolonizing/reconciliation work. Two-Crows Tremblay then brought FoWP on as a community partner in their Indigenous Land Sovereignty work.

On our second visit to the Green Barn, FoWP members were guided in planting seeds. We planted evening primrose, prairie sage, milkweed, switch grass, mulva mallow, and blue asters. Two-Crows Tremblay also gifted Bluebird Stickings with some heritage Ojibwe tobacco seeds, which we planted. After the seeds grew to a certain height, FoWP members returned to transplant them into bigger pots. Bluebird Stickings then visited the plants regularly (on her way home from an Anishnawbe Health program she attended nearby) to water them and watch their growth. As they grew to a good size, Two-Crows Tremblay and FoWP organized a planting day. A couple of days before our planting session, we arrived in the park to see that the City had put a whole bunch of geraniums as well as hibiscus plants in the areas we had planned to put the tobacco and other plants we had been growing. FoWP called the city to come and take the plants out, but being the City, it took them too long to respond. We ended up taking all the geraniums out and giving them away to passersby, a impromptu fun engagement with neighbourhood members, which also gave us the opportunity to speak with them about the FoWP project. Women from the local shelter joined FoWP members to plant the tobacco plants we had grown. Three of the women that came from the shelter were from Uganda and had gardening

experience from there. They were very keen to be gardening and shared a lot of knowledge with us about collectivity and community from the perspective of their cultural experience.



Figure 13: Friends of Watkinson Park, Re-Indigenization of Watkinson Park, Tobacco Tie, Sweet Grass braids, drying Ojibwe Tobacco (2015-2020)

Since adding native plants to the garden so many butterflies, bees and other amazing insects (e.g., devil beetles, wood beetles) have been in the park and this has been gratifying for community members to witness. Bees and butterflies garner much attention in the city and it is affirming that FoWP community members can partake in this citywide movement to create sustainable habitats. Come fall, FoWP harvested the sage, tobacco, and lemon balm from the garden. We gathered to share a picnic and make smudge sticks and sweet grass braids. These were distributed throughout Indigenous community. Bluebird Stickings brought smudge sticks to her program at Anishnawbe Health to distribute among her cohort and in finding out about the garden they gifted her with sweet grass to plant. We dried the tobacco, which was mostly used by within the community because of its small amount, to honor and show gratitude when harvesting and to give to elders when appropriate. In subsequent years, the garden has thrived and this practice has grown. Sage is so abundant, so we continue to harvest and process. Each

year, the tobacco that we planted has reseeded itself, which Two-Crows Tremblay tells us is very rare. As well, the sweet grass is taking off. We are continually gifting sage sticks in community[80] as well as making sure that Indigenous community members know to harvest as much sage, tobacco and sweet grass as they need/desire.



Figure 14: Friends of Watkinson Park, planting the native plant/pollinator garden (2017)

The Fall, FoWP learned from Two-Crows Tremblay, is the time for seed saving. Since we have native plants including Ceremonial Tobacco, collecting and distributing the seeds is an important part of participating in the re-Indigenizing of urban nature. Two-Crows Tremblay attended a FoWP meeting in the park answered our questions and spoke generously with us about how to collect the seeds, how we might compost, what plans we might have for the future, how to encourage growth of certain plants we have and how to harvest plants from around the city to bring into the garden. At this seed saving workday, as is the way with FoWP, shelter residents and community members who were hanging out in the park just joined in our work and

[80] FoWP sage sticks have been gifted to Lee Maracle, as well as to such important events as the Occupy Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada protest to bring attention to Indigenous youth suicides, the Re-Sistering Project to rematriate Indigenous seeds on stolen land, and most recently to the Black Lives Matter/Indigenous camp in Nathan Philips Square for defunding the police.

brought with them their own spirit, knowledge and desire for participation. FoWP member Browning had a strong feeling to do a smudge, which Two-Crows Tremblay guided us through using a smudge stick we made from sage we grew. Smudging brought a moment of spiritual bonding and knowledge transmission for the group. One community member who had joined us spontaneously turned around and invited a pair of Indigenous people who just happened to be sitting in the park at that moment to join us in the smudge and thus extended a really nice moment of community outward even more. This community member, with only six days clean, also collected medicines from the garden to make herself a tea. In doing so, she taught us something about what need the garden might provide for.

The native plant garden is an important beginning for FoWP to further develop its decolonizing spatial practice within the context of alienation from Land through private property, developmentalist/extractivist (settler colonial) relations to non-human nature, and the ablist, exclusive normative park ideology. The garden provides the possibility for generation and regeneration of the lost (but persistent) Indigenous ecologies of the local place where we are, to reflect on environmental issues, and the restorative dimensions of engagements with nature. The garden invites us to mix our energies with plant, insect, animal and microbial life, with soil and water. Touching on this primal level of creativity is simultaneously and inextricably both materially productive and cultural, and constitutes the value producing moment described by Indigenous scholars (Hall 2015; Simpson 2011; Tuck and McKenzie 2015) as well as Marx (1990) himself. As we feed our desire to create a space for non-human life in the form of pollinator, butterfly friendly and medicinal plants, as well as plants that produce berries for birds, we become part of what Marx understood as a metabolic process of environmental energetic exchanges (Foster 2013). Two-Crows Tremblay (2017) describes how Indigenous

relationships to nature are understood as mutually sustaining, cultural, economic and sacred: that to experience oneself as a part of the larger forces of nature, which, unlike human society, do not stigmatize, classify, judge, devalue and disempower, is to restore a sense of wholeness or rightness in ones being. For Two-Crows Tremblay, this is especially important in relation to LGBTQ2SIA+ identities, which are affirmed by the radical queerness of nature. Whereas our historical selves experience unequal power and exploitation within androcentric orders, our natural selves experience the possibility of a freedom from human made oppression in relation to non-human nature, to the natural entities of our specific environments and our powers of engagement with them. According to Two-Crows Tremblay, plants have agency and seduce humans into relation with their beauty and scent. Where the autonomy and agency of nature is recognized, human consciousness can inhabit the realness of our place (and responsibilities) within the world, within the relational web, and the possibility of overcoming the imbalances of human society (Two-Crows Tremblay 2017-2020). The need to reconnect to nature has within it a transformative and revolutionary kernel, which is key to any just and viable future (Wall Kimmerer 2013).[81]

The garden project clearly confirms what community members had said during the park redesign process, that the park was a healing nature space for them. After each time of community interacting with and around plants a vibration of positivity and connectedness is palpable among community members. Working with plants is restorative in terms of the traumatizing conditions of marginalized daily life, knowledge enhancing in terms of interspecies and plant-based exchange relations, as well spiritual in terms of being imbued with affective

[81] This position might entail a different reckoning of historical tensions, that between nature and humans, than what dialectics proposes as the internal contradiction or movement within a limited androcentric understanding of history, whereas the nature-human tension is all encompassing and points to a greater totality than just the totality of human society.

resonances such as appreciation of beauty, sensual experience, happiness, care, mutuality and reciprocity. It does not solve the problem of oppression, but it provides an alternate space (of experience, sociality, ecology) to the space of institutional violence. Thus, gardening in Watkinson Park transforms it to a space that supports material survival and healing within oppressive life conditions.

FoWP's collaboration with Two-Crows Tremblay and with the Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society has extended out from Watkinson Park to further garden work in the Junction area. Currently some FoWP members have been involved in supporting the Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society in arts-based decolonial work that they do in High Park, as well as in supporting Two-Crows Tremblay's Re-Sistering Garden on the Niwa'ah Onega'gaih'ih (known under the colonial name of Humber River). FoWP's native plant garden has become a small part of a larger initiative to re-indigenize city parks.

− *Protest*

Enacting more direct forms of protest have also been part of FoWP's praxis. Some FoWP community members (including Bluebird Stickings) participated in a sleepover protest at Toronto Mayor John Tory's condo that was organized by Ontario Coalition Against Poverty for the premier of the film *Bursting at the Seams* about the lack of shelter space in the city. This protest did two things for FoWP; it solidified a growing connection with OCAP (an obvious ally in Toronto for FoWP) and it ignited what was for some, a long desire to do a sleepover in Watkinson Park. While many FoWP members see community building work that we do as politically grounded social reproduction work, FoWP member Angela Browning draws on her background in the anti-nuclear protest movement in driving FoWP towards more conventional protest practice. As such, FoWP decided to do our own sleepover in Watkinson Park. In the

statement issued by FoWP, our agenda was to fight gentrification, assert a decolonial understanding of the park as well as to express concern over climate change (See Appendix D).



Figure 15: Friends of Watkinson Park, sleepover protest, August 26-27 (2017)

While it is very difficult, as mentioned, for many community members to make it downtown for a protest, FoWP brought the protest to the community park. Decentralizing protest from the city core upsets the notion of the neighbourhood as a privileged and politically neutral space of domestic retreat and leisure.

The protest started with a feast: a firebowl, music, vegetarian and meat chili, corn roasted on the fire, and music by local regulars. There were also speeches by OCAP member Randy McLin, Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society director Donna Powless from Six Nations, and Angela Browning from FoWP. Local musicians Mike Barths and Don Lewis played music and the several community folx stepped up to the open mic to share songs. Rebecca Garrett and I also screened a selection of short videos, made in the community as well as OCAP's *Bursting at the Seams*. Also important to every FoWP event is the spontaneous contributors who come forward. Joce Two-Crows Tremblay and Naty Tremblay from Drawing With Knives came and gave an impromptu shadow show and lesson on shadow puppetry to FoWP members. As the night progressed, folx wandering by were attracted by the fire and came

over to share songs, poems and do sign painting. Some of us slept, while others talked the night through. In the morning we served up breakfast sandwiches. A few of us lingered in the park, sharing space until late in the afternoon.

This first protest event didn't have the draw on community that previous feast events had. I surmise that this is partly due to the fact that I was away the week before and therefore wasn't able to put in the time to talk it up in community thus, many community members were unaware or just forgot. Also, early in the evening, the day of the sleepover protest, park police ambassadors had come by to oversee what we were doing and report that back to police. The park ambassadors dress the same as bicycle cops and this made some community members uncomfortable so they left. It was clear that the park ambassadors, Toronto cops and probably Gord Perks office had all agreed to let us go ahead with the sleepover protest. The park ambassadors said their main concern that there not be any drinking in the park, citing respect for children as one of the main justifications.

Despite the lower than expected attendance, the event was potent. Those of us who had participated in the OCAP sleepover had experienced something quite magical. To radically transgress the 9 to 5 order of life, the tyranny of the schedule, to take up night space in the city, to put forward our truths, our radical and just social intentions, to do this collectively was to conjure an energy that I had rarely felt. The FoWP sleepover had a similar effect. Those of us who lingered well into the next afternoon didn't feel to disrupt this bubble of freedom, this temporary autonomous zone. It was as if we were under some euphoric spell. FoWP's sleepover also garnered media attention from the *Toronto Star* newspaper, which interviewed Angela about the event.

– *Posters and placards*

While all of the practices described above are dimensions of the relational praxis art methodology, they are very non-typical ways of understanding art. The seasonal feasts and native plant garden projects are both materially and relationally significant as creative endeavors and contribute to affirming the lumpen/low-income inhabitation of the park. However, FoWP also do projects more typically understood as the production of aesthetic/symbolic objects. As mentioned, art is an important form of individual expression where people can mix their embodied (psychic, physical, emotional, mindful) energies with various media in order to symbolize their knowledge, engage with issues of importance to them and produce self-representational meanings for a public. Using methods more typically understood as art, FoWP has done several site-specific poster/placard campaigns that bring our critical/poetic messaging (political discourse) into the public space of The Junction neighbourhood aimed at upsetting the easy flow of gentrified life.

The first project that we did was a collaboration between FoWP and Monday Art Group (MAG) which resulted in a poster campaign throughout the Junction on the theme of stigmatization of the poor and lack of safe affordable housing. One MAG member hand drew the posters and another reworked them in Photoshop. These were pasted throughout The Junction especially targeting condo hoarding as sites of gentrification (see figure 4 on p. 138). A second poster project was initiated by FoWP member Abby Jackson and targeted a condo development called The Duke across the street from Watkinson Park and the shelter. The posters consisted of large texts on a white background that stated “Your Profit, Our Trauma” (a slogan that FoWP has continued to mobilize) and “Affordable Housing Now.” FoWP members pasted

the posters onto the condo hoarding. Those of us less precarious did the postering while others who we want to avoid interacting with police or hostile neighbourhood members kept a lookout.



Figure 16: Anti-gentrification poster project #2, Abby Jackson and Friends of Watkinson Park (2016)

A third anti-gentrification poster project was initiated in response to the city meeting regarding the Junction condo development (described on p. 303). The FoWP members had a



Figure 17: Friends of Watkinson Park, Anti-gentrification poster project #3 (2019)

discussion on gentrification out of which a poem was created. The poem was then broken down into phrases and utilized as poster text. These posters were again hung on condo hoarding, but also electrical and street lamp poles up and down the gentrifying core of Dundas West.

In response to the debacle with city officials in regard to smoking in the park the FoWP initiated another visual strategy. The by-law states that you are not allowed to smoke within 9 meters of the children's play area which meant that there could effectively be no smoking in the park whatsoever. Out of our experience trying to negotiate getting ashtrays in the park and then having community members get ticketed for smoking, a discussion transpired in community about how those people driving carbon emitting vehicles up and down Dundas West Street, especially all the SUV's favored by gentrifiers, were the ones who were really threatening our health on top of contributing to the destruction of the whole planet. The privileged but extremely harmful activity of driving is normalized while low carbon footprint smokers who were also lumpen/low-income are penalized. We found that stigmatizing the practices of poor people while excusing the middle-class much more harmful practices, hypocritical. Again, we see the attack on smokers as a gentrification strategy where, for instance, women from the shelter are banned from smoking (and are forced to sweep up cigarette butts) outside the building, and where local business owners have lobbied to have benches removed where lumpen/low-income people hang out and smoke.

Addressing the issue of smoking, FoWP developed a signage project that we mounted in the park. Following strategies of other site-specific public intervention artists (REPO History, Ogimaa Mikana, Department of Public Memory), our poster was made to mimic the official city no-smoking sign and was hung directly below it.



Figure 18: Friends of Watkinson Park, anti pollution poster intervention (2016)

The FoWP sign just replaced the no-smoking with no-driving. Instead of the cigarette, we put a car billowing carbon dioxide smoke, and instead of the City of Toronto logo on the bottom, we put an icon of the globe. From the poster we also advanced our ecological position by hanging a laminated copy of the Cochabamba document on the Rights of Mother Earth. In this way, FoWP enacted its concern with climate change, a concern consistently foregrounded by Angela Browning.

FoWP have also supported, and tried to animate locally, issues raised in other communities in the city. During a heightened period of resistance to Islamophobia due to the US closing of borders to designated Muslim countries, FoWP community decided on a placard campaign that spoke to the multi-dimensions of hate and capitalism, something we know a little bit about. During a FoWP meeting, we had an art session where we made hand painted signs on cardboard. During this art session we talked a lot about the various messages that we were

hearing in the news and elsewhere, how we felt about them, our sense of powerlessness and yet wanting to do something. We then mounted placards around the neighbourhood with our messages of anti-Islamophobia, anti-homophobia, anti-sexism, anti-racism, but also anti-pipelines and billionaires who profit from them, and anti-Trump and the hate he stands for.



Figure 19: Friends of Watkinson Park, hand painted placard campaign against oppression (2017)

– *Video*

While poster campaigns are very accessible for community members, video is more technically demanding, time intensive and less accessible. Nevertheless, I have tried to bring in video making (a skill I have) as way to offer more space to elaborate knowledge and politics in a form that can last and be widely disseminated.

FoWP member and first time videographer Abby Jackson and myself collaborated on a video project critiquing the culture and economics of gentrification called *Your Profit, Our Trauma* (2016) after the poster project that she initiated. Abby Jackson, a long term former resident of the Junction, and I took a stroll through the Junction, sharing the camera and taping whatever caught our eye. Together we then edited the video. The project consisted simply of shots of the Junction overlaid with text that came from community discussions. We decided to do a guerrilla projection during the Junction Solstice Festival, which is put on by the Junction's

Business Improvement Area (BIA) every year. Jackson, Bluebird Stickings and myself chose the storefront of Channel Zero right at Dundas and Keele Streets as the location. This storefront has a built-in sheltered bench area where women from the shelter often sit and is thus a significant site of lumpen/low-income inhabitation.[82] Local community member and experimental musician Mike Barths played electric guitar live on the sidewalk as an accompaniment to the guerrilla



Figure 20: Friends of Watkinson Park (Abby Jackson, Marlene Bluebird Stickings, Kim Jackson), *Your Profit, Our Trauma*, guerilla screening, Junction Solstice Festival (2016)

[82] This regular hang out space for low-income/lumpen neighbourhood members has recently been boarded up.

screening. The screening attracted some other community members. Another guitarist played and a friend initiated some spontaneous dancing in which we all took part -- while crowds of gentrifiers flowed back and forth taking in the Solstice Festival event (which is basically to promote business in the area).

Bluebird Stickings and I also worked on a video project together called *Demolished* (2015). Stickings did a photo project of the progression of The Duke condo as it was being built. She also photographed a particular hangout space next to the railway tracks, which was overgrown with urban nature. At one point the area was razed and all the plants killed, and then a development sign went up announcing a mixed-use development with a condo. This devastation broke Bluebird Stickings' heart. The video project therefore was a meditation on how gentrification disrupts the marginal urban nature spaces in which she takes solace from her perspective as an Ojibwe Two-Spirit person and long-time resident of the city.



Figure 21: video still, *Demolished*, collaboration with Marlene Bluebird Stickings 2015.

Members of FoWP who attend Monday Art Group at the women's shelter also participated in OCAP's *Bursting at The Seams* video project. While women from the shelter had contributed their knowledge to the video, much of it didn't end up getting used in the final edit. OCAP's video was intended to support the fight for more shelter space, while the women had mainly spoken about the institutional violence that they experience in the shelter, so in this, their testimonies were deemed not helpful. Feeling responsible to those who spoke out with the expectation of contributing to the raising of consciousness and action, video director Rebecca Garrett and I decided to launch a second video project that worked with the leftover footage. working title of which is *We Want You To Listen*. Currently the project has taken the shape of two videos: one an installation loop and the other a single channel. The installation loop was developed to do a guerrilla screening which was projected onto Toronto City Hall during Nuit Blanche (September 30, 2017). A second screening took place on October 21, 2017 at Watkinson Park to specifically show community members as well as OCAP members a rough cut of the single-channel version in order to get feedback and a wider confirmation (even though there is approximately 20 women whose knowledge is represented in the video) of its general relevance in describing the shelter experience.



Figure 22: We Want You To Listen guerrilla screening Nuit Blanche (2017)

The video screening in the park was hosted by FoWP and thus included having a fire bowl, popcorn with curry powder and yeast, salt, pepper and butter, hot dogs and marshmallows. Shirley Berry from the video project provided cider, which we heated up and spiced. Also, our stalwarts, Mike Barths and Don Lewis, played music. OCAP members came as well as women from the shelter and other community members who were attracted by the fire and happening in the park.

After we screened the video, there was a reasonably good discussion despite the traffic noise that made it difficult to hear. Most of the feedback was positive, with some critiques as well. After the discussion Barths and his keyboardist continued to play improve experimental music into the night. After they finished playing, we kept the fire going until midnight with a small group of people sharing space, talking. No one really wanted to leave the night fire under the trees, but practicality meant we had to break the moment. These gatherings in the park seem to invoke a very strong communal energy: we are palpably coming together despite being mostly under siege.

− *Nuit Blanche*

On top of the guerilla screening of *We Want You to Listen*, FoWP engaged with another project for Nuit Blanche also in 2017. Starting with the sleepover protest, FoWP have sporadically attended OCAP meetings and linking with their agenda around anti-poverty. At a meeting in August 2017, FoWP learned that OCAP would be collaborating with well-known artists Carol Condé and Karl Beverage on a contribution to a project called *Monument to the Century of Revolutions*, curated by New-York-based social practice art organizer, Nato Thompson and Russian art collective Chto Delat (to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution). In reference to L. Lissitzky's *Beat The Whites With The Red Wedge*, the project consisted of a

group of shipping containers arranged in the shape of a wedge projecting into City Hall. Each container was hosted by a different Toronto arts activist project. The Condé and Beverage/OCAP container was about the history of protest against poverty, for more shelter space and affordable housing. At the meeting between OCAP and Condé and Beveridge, I had asked if there were any people who had lived experience participating in the project. They said that no there wasn't and agreed that I could facilitate that dimension of the work. FoWP collaborated with Monday Art Group on a multi-media mural to hang on one side of the container representing our lumpen/low-income creative community building and resistance work. The mural was made up of images of the poster projects that we had done, signs from our events, artworks and slogans, as well as individual artworks by community members. The centerpiece was a strawberry dream catcher by Marlene Bluebird Stickings (and myself), which is dedicated to missing and murdered aboriginal women, girls, trans and two-spirit folx.



Figure 23: Friends of Watkinson Park, Nuit Blanche installation, *Housing Not Profit – Stop Global Warming* (2017)

Also prominent was a collaborative painting by FoWP members that depicts the earth engulfed in climate disaster and a large crochet collective quilt made by Monday Art Group members. We also printed out our homelessness banner postcards that demand the city build affordable housing to be sent to the Mayor John Tory and passed them out to audience members on the night of Nuit Blanche.

This was the first time for both Monday Art Group and FoWP to participate in a large scale, official arts/activist milieu. While in general I am highly critical of such art spectacles (and this was borne out by the audience members mostly just taking selfies with our work), community members came down to the event and witnessed our artwork garnering a huge audience in this context. To be included on an international political art and activist stage was very significant for the community who experienced a lot of pride.

– *Halloween Effigies*

FoWP continued to branch out in its artistic expression on Halloween of 2017 with the creation of a fence installation (as part of our TD Park People events grant) consisting of two effigies



Figure 24: Friends of Watkinson Park, Halloween effigy installation (2017)

portraying a gender non-binary creature called Free Spirit dancing on a Trumpish character called the Developer From Hell.

The following year for Halloween, FoWP made effigies of Doug Ford and Justin Trudeau. Bluebird Stickings had the idea that they should have swollen heads and that they would be surrounded by spirit creatures including a pumpkin spirit with a bow and arrow aimed to deflate. The effigies were painted in a ghoulish, zombie manner and had an oil pipeline wrapped around them. Lisa Lavoie had brought some doggy bags that she stuffed and hung between their legs as testicles.



Figure 25: Friends of Watkinson Park, Halloween effigy installation (2018)

Like sleeping over in the park, making effigies also conjured a very potent energy among those of us who participated in their making. Angela Browning truly fell in love with Free

Spirit: it was incredible to witness. Taussig (1993, 2) discusses how the replication of a live figure in another material, such as in the making of an effigy, offers "a sizzling revelation exercising the peculiar powers of the mimetic faculty." Taussig (1993, 2) comments how under colonial-capitalism we experience the object as a commodity that is disconnected from its own source, having its essential powers repressed through reification and fetishization. In a non-alienated culture, however, the representational object "shares in or takes power from the represented." Mimetic objects, made outside the commodity relation are imbued with magic, which upsets hierarchical relations and casts spells for a different future.

− *Memorial in the park*

During the design phase of FoWP's work, we had asked the City to create plaques dedicated to lost community members both human and animal. The City would only approve plaques to pigeons and squirrels saying that to memorialize personal pets or people would lay too much claim to the park and would upset its supposed neutrality (although we memorialize colonists and other famous people throughout public and parks space). However, FoWP has practiced memorialization in other ways. When a community member Caroline was found dead in the park from an overdose, friends from the shelter where she lived organized an event in the park. I had known Caroline through Monday Art Group. We spent some time talking as her tears flowed and she told me she was still grieving hard about the loss of her husband, I think it was two years before. We would always say "hi" as we passed each other on the street. Many times, also, she would slide by me into Mainstay as I was going in or coming out. Those times that she asked for entrance and I had to say "no" (out of respect for Mainstay residents who were troubled by the dealing activity that was going on in the building), she was always understanding and respectful. Women from the shelter organized a memorial gathering in the

park attended by about 15 community members to share their thoughts, feelings and song about Caroline and about death. Many commented on death as a release from a painful life. Our candles wouldn't light because of the wind, so we passed around a smudge stick that was made from the sage that was harvested from the park garden. People just held the sage or smudged themselves according to their own impulse/desire/need. The sage that we have grown ourselves from seed in the garden has had an integral role in weaving the social fabric of this community. The sage is carrying our intentions of love, connectivity and spirit through our gathering as community and to each individual in our life paths.

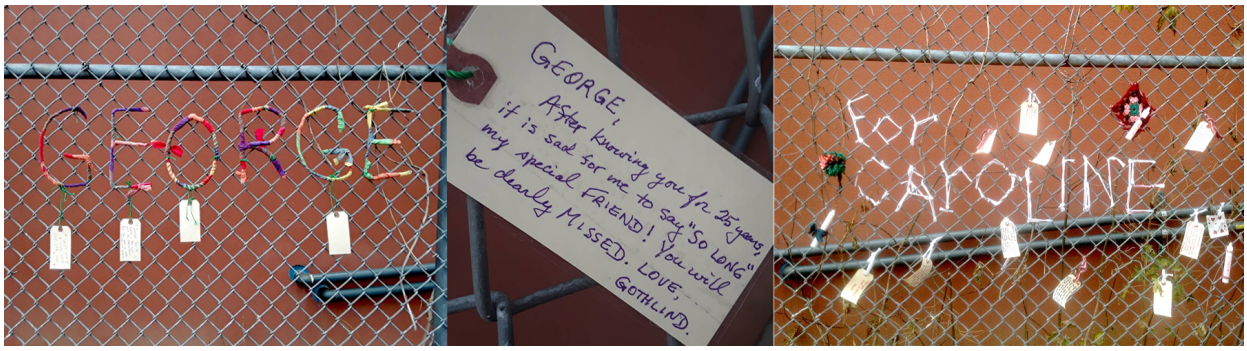


Figure 26: Friends of Watkinson Park memorial, *George* and *For Caroline* (2018)

I also brought some tags from Monday Art Group for people to write messages on and then hang on the fence. I put a granny square there as a focal point for the fence memorial that had the color of Caroline's hair in it, bright burgundy red. I wrote "For Caroline" on the fence with white t-shirt yarn and added the candles that we had tried to light for her memorial.

Recently, two other important community members passed on. George, who was always in the park and participated in FoWP meetings and events. He had been taken from his home and permanently hospitalized on St. Joe's psychiatric floor. I ran into him there when I was visiting Bluebird Stickings who was dying of cancer. He had told me he wanted to go home to his apartment in Mainstay. FoWP member, Browning envisioned this method of lettering with

colored fabric wrapped around a wire armature, and a few of us gathered again to write notes to George and hold candles for his spirit journey. For Bluebird Stickings, a key organizer in community, we had huge memorial event in the park and in the Mainstay common room with feast and a fire. The grief in community for her passing has been substantial. When we get some funds, there will be a tree planted in the park, in her honor.

Community members see the park as an appropriate place for memorialization, for acknowledging the community members who have spent time in the community and who might have died there. To memorialize community members in the space of the park is to make public the everyday reality of loss related to poverty that this community endures; members who have died, who might have been so easily passed over, seen as expendable because of stigmatization by poverty and criminalized drug consumption by the larger civic agenda, by gentrification and neoliberal violence. As a lumpen/low-income community we resist the erasure of bodies, we stand up for our loss and grief, we stand up for our community members who we couldn't hold onto in the face of all they suffer/endure/resist.

Conclusion

All of the above described practices taken on by FoWP community members contests the normative ideology that is enacted through the city on the park spaces it manages. For the city, making parks "accessible for all" amounts to making parks accessible to a middle-class nuclear family as the normative standard. FoWP works against such abstraction of space to open up an understanding of the park space to its actual and historically specific inhabitation. In this case, its pre-colonial and colonial history as well as its lumpen culture. FoWP works for a more complex understanding of both parks and neighbourhoods.

In the case of FoWP's community-building, the objectives of relational praxis art are to participate in social reproduction cultural economic redistributive exchange relations including with non-human natures, to protect the lumpen/low-income inhabitation of public space in The Junction as a contestation to the attitude that we don't belong and should be targeted for removal, to work on an accessible community building practice that represents the collective capacities, desires and needs of the bodies present in community and that prefigures egalitarian community relationalities, to mobilize community member knowledge to challenge the discourse of gentrification, and bring to the fore issues of colonization, climate change and other forms of oppression of concern to community members, to approach the neighbourhood as a site of protest that is relevant and accessible to lumpen/low-income people, and to develop the capacity to connect to other groups in the city to do political work around the material realties of lumpen/low-income life, environmental issues and decolonization of urban space in Toronto (including working with Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society).

The intention of the relational praxis art project is to repair and weave the social fabric, to recognize the un-measured value of each person, entity and life form in the located community (as informed by Indigenous philosophy). The critical assessment of our work (or potentially, any artwork in terms of its liberatory claims) will be based on how we are able to maintain, mend and enliven the relational fabric within the ethical problems served up by the colonial/capitalist historical moment, not on an aesthetic standard that hail from exclusive, privilege spaces of contemporary art, activism and academia. Relational praxis art is a ground up project of radical inclusion that works towards building non-exploitative, respectful, reciprocal relationships with all the entities present as a basis of resistance.

In the course of the work of FoWP, needs have arisen that have been much discussed in community but have not been addressed fully due to lack of resources. One is to deal with infestation support. Tenants are constantly in a cycle of having to prepare for getting sprayed, an intense and often unmanageable labour of laundering and bagging possessions only to become re-infested. Mainstay Housing tenants have lived for years in a constant state of upheaval with all their possessions pushed to the middle of their room in semi-preparedness. Such upheaval causes trauma, shame, social isolation, health concerns, fear of entering certain spaces and becoming re-infested, or the fear of passing bugs on to others. The second and perhaps the most significant issue is around the relations between those involved in the criminalized substance use and trade culture and tenants who are not. Criminalized substance users are among the most stigmatized in hegemonic society. Harm reduction between those who do and don't consume criminalized substances and who share community space is an important project in order to further enable the FoWP community to engage with more vulnerablized community members and in larger political work. Both of these issues (that could be taken up with a relational praxis art approach if resources came available) have taxed the community to the degree that limits participation in larger political struggles. In order for FoWP to overcome these issues and others related to disability and differences that present challenges to community, a full-time core group of present and resourced community members[83] working on conflict resolution, harm reduction (including the physical work of home cleaning support) and developing forms of access to political activism tailored to the abilities and availabilities of individuals and sub groups is a starting place.

[83] What I mean here is that the work requires more bodies to bring their privileges into the redistributive work between bodies to elevates everyone's capacity and agency.

However, over the past few years of doing FoWP work it is easily apparent that whereas in the beginning some of the middle-class neighbours and academic/artist folx that I would connect to on Facebook came around for FoWP events, over time these folx stopped showing up to share space with lumpen/low-income residents. The last feast was all lumpen/low-income folx, not one middle class person showed up. It appears that FoWP, as a lumpen/low-income group, carry NO cultural capital that might inspire academics, artists or activists to show up.

Yesterday I sat down for a beer and a bite to eat with FoWP co-founder Angela Browning to try to work through some issues that she is having with me. She critiques my role in the community as an outsider with privileges, feeling that I have too much power and visibility and that this leads people to identify the project with me as an individual instead of the low-income group who make up FoWP. She says that this is disempowering to the low-income/lumpen community members whose agency I seek to recognize and elevate. She put forward to me the idea that since poor people have been made to feel so disempowered the only way to overcome their passivity is to not do anything for them, but to meet them where they are to the extent that they are able to be empowered. Much of our discussion also revolves around the issue of illicit substance use culture in the Mainstay Housing building where she lives. She has a zero tolerance for those who use criminalized drugs. I have a harm reduction approach. Despite my own experience with drug culture, because I don't currently live in close proximity to the user culture, for Browning, I don't have a valid position. These are *very real* issues on how privilege divides community. On the one hand I can try to redistribute my privileges, on the other hand, I still have them to redistribute and this causes problems. Browning and I can move through this difficult conversation (in which there is pain, frustration and anger) because how I work is materially grounded. That I have participated in supporting her in dealing with the drug

culture in her housing situation as well as other kinds of daily support (as part of our exchange relationship where she supports my work), there is a basis of trust -- trust that wavers but is also real. I try to convey how seriously I take the issues that she brings up.

Before our chat, Browning directs my attention to a pine tree in the park that someone has girdled, stripped the bark in a one foot swath completely around the tree. The pine tree is oozing pitch from its wound. Browning tells me with pain and urgency that the tree will die if we don't do something. She has researched on the internet how to make a graft with the trees own bark to create a bridge through which nutrients can flow from the top of the tree to the roots, which will save the tree. She asks me to get in touch with Two-Crows Tremblay to see if they will help save the tree. It turns out that a neighbourhood resident has been training his dog to chew at the bark of the tree. We did not manage to save the first tree (which the City cut down) but we manage to put chicken wire around the rest of the trees.

Since the writing of this dissertation, the two groups that form the ground for relational praxis art in the lumpen/low-income community in the Junction, FoWP and the Monday Art Group, have lost access to our organizational spaces. After nine years of free labour providing programs, the shelter, without warning or cause, decided that the artgroup could no longer be held at there. We also lost access to an art supply room and weekly time and space that we could build community with women residing at the shelter. This space was also key to creating such projects as the FoWP effigies, the Nuit Blanche installation as well as various video projects discussed earlier. Additionally, due to the particular Mainstay strategies of dealing with a criminalized drug scene that was escalating, a new housing support worker decided to close the common room permanently as well as access to the storage lockers. This decision meant that FoWP no longer had kitchen access to stage feasts, or space for art production and meetings. At

this time, FoWP and those remaining members of Monday Art Group have only the park as a space to work. The loss of these two key spaces on top of the collapse of The Peacock Hotel and the rampant condoization of The Junction has also meant the community is smaller than ever, more under siege and struggling with less resources. Subsequently, we have had some success organizing smaller events out of the common room at the Mainstay building across the street, as well as using community members' private apartments, but because the kitchens are much smaller, doing larger events such community feasts turned out to be incredibly taxing. The summer of 2019 is the first in many years that we have not done large community feast events in the park. We continue to meet to tend to the garden, do outdoor art projects and have small feasts around the fire bowl, but our organizing capacity has been very diminished.

At the same time, as FoWP's work in community continues, there is more crossover with Indigenous Land sovereignty projects, namely, through my involvement with the Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society as well as through FoWP's collaboration with Joce Two-Crows Tremblay. Lumpen/low-income community members have participated in monthly Elder led Full Moon events in High Park and have helped steward the Re-Sistering Garden on the Niwa'ah Onega'gaih'ih/ Kobechenonk/Humber (a three sisters garden that centres Two-Spirit and Indigenous women). Such crossover between these projects is primarily meant to create access for Indigenous community members to Indigenous Land Sovereignty spaces. Secondarily, it offers the possibility for settler low-income/lumpen community members to do material solidarity work and thus participate in decolonial consciousness raising. In inviting community members into these Indigenous organizing spaces, the community is extended out and interactions across difference unfold between lumpen/low-income members and those with relative cultural capital, and between settlers and Indigenous people. New friendships are made

and solidarities are tentatively formed. While these Indigenous spaces have been very triggering (at times) for some Indigenous community members, they have also been very healing. We harvest sage and tobacco from the FoWP garden and bring it into Indigenous spaces, in to ceremony for lost loved ones, for mother earth, our community's wellbeing, and for personal growth. We grow and shift as a community, engaging with the worlds around us, participating in discourse where we can.

Currently, a key community member, artist, close collaborator, teacher and dearest friend has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. My main work is now focused on being present with her as she makes her journey to the spirit world. As low-income/lumpen community, we gather around her to support her desire to be in nature as much as possible. Marlene and I lie by the river in each other's arms under blankets while ceremony and community unfold around us. Without alcohol in her system, she is able to grieve her pain and open to community connections in new ways. This is precious. I try not to focus on the fact that her living space has been toxified by the constant insecticide use as Mainstay sprayed common areas every two weeks for years (a cursory google search brings up many articles on the connection between insecticides and colon cancer) – even though regular spraying never really manages to control infestation. She is one who lived with her belongings piled in the center of her living room and lived with bedbugs and cockroaches despite also having her apartment sprayed regularly ever since I have been working in the community. Or, why was she diagnosed in Emergency Department when she had a family doctor who she saw regularly? Why wasn't the cancer detected sooner? Did the doctor not pay attention to the pain she had been experiencing in her abdomen for over a year because she is Indigenous and has an alcohol addiction? And then there is the nightmare of dealing with her Sixties Scoop adoptive family who hold fast to their

identities of having done right by our friend while ignoring the harms she experienced under their settler normative nuclear family. Bluebird Sticking's family can barely sit at her bedside and show resentment towards me for wanting to be with my friend more than going for dinner with them. I try to put aside my fear and anger because this is a sacred time.

While we do all this work in order to survive (or die knowing the Love of community), building community and participating in resistance, the fact that lumpen/low-income members are alive at all and take up space is a political act (Guevara 2008; Razack 2015; Simpson 2011, 2017). Where society wants to let us die invisibly, that we live and speak back, that we refuse to succumb to oppression, that we show our vitality, knowledge and creativity *is* resistance. It is incumbent on the broader left progressive movements to intentionally ally and thus, elevate lumpen/low-income peoples' resistance to higher level of contradiction; in order to do so, it must redistribute its material privileges to those of the constitutive outside in order to stand by the most marginalized towards a liberatory future.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this writing is to strengthen, deepen and build the relevance and resiliency of the movement for liberation (for all entities, human and non-human) from the current historical mode of oppression of colonial-capitalism. I begin my argument looking at how the spatial unfolding of gentrification promotes the marketization of relations (ongoing primitive-accumulation), as form of actual (not metaphorical) colonization. As gentrification means the marketization of relations, it is the lowest income folx, Indigenous peoples, those with disabilities and those whose economic cultures fall outside the wage relation (criminalized and/or social assistance) who are the targets of displacement, as opposed to the working class.

In thinking on who is cast out of the reductively understood, hegemonic economic system of global capitalism (and its expression through gentrification), I attempt to rehabilitate (without defending) the term 'lumpen.' I propose that the 'lumpen' represents an intersectional category *based in those who are outside the wage relation:* those who carry embodied difference from the white supremacist cis-heteropatriarchal norm. Those cast out are largely Indigenized, racialized, gendered, sexed, disabled and otherwise and subject to institutional violence within the carceral continuum. I have taken up the term lumpen in order to provide some kind of cohesive identity from which a dialectics can be discerned that is distinct from the working class that they are often thrown together with. I propose a political economy of the lumpen in order to bring the category into focus from its denigrated status as having no historical importance in the Marxist literature and to assert that *they* are the subjects of social change as opposed to the working class. In working through a lumpen political economy, I theorize that going back to issues of Land and private property (in which the oppressive wage relation is founded and the constitutive outside is formed) is a stronger starting place for

liberation, and one that is inclusive of Indigenous sovereignty. The wage relation is one of oppression and exploitation, whereas social reproduction theory offers a different understanding of economy which, I propose, describes the survival practices of the low-income/lumpen community, the FoWP.

In arguing for the integral role of the lumpen in political movements, the question remains how to create the possibility to politically mobilize this social strata. I assert that Left/arts and academic milieus are ablest, exclusive to bodies that are different, and are culpable in reproducing relations of exploitation, charity and classism. In working with the FoWP, we have co-created a community building method based on members material needs, wants and desires given their daily life survival and political expression. The primary objective of this method is to recognize low-income/lumpen community members as political agents (as opposed to receivers of charity). Indeed, this method seeks to see all entities as agents, human and non-human. From the work with the FoWP and my historical experience doing socially engaged art and activist practice in community settings, I theorize a methodology called relational praxis art. This method is grounded locally (understanding that the local is also tied to the global) and orients to those most marginalized in a given setting as well as those who are not, or no longer present. Relational praxis art queries the reductive understanding of economy as being numbers on a spread sheet and balanced books while asserting that it is through an understanding of economy as actually fully cultural that we can then access ethics. Whereas praxis theory supports the idea that an engagement with everyday cultural-economic life should be the basis of liberatory theory, I see through the literature, that this is rarely practiced – the focus of most writing on praxis circulates in the symbolic realm. With relational praxis art, I seek to look at the relation between everyday lumpen cultural-economics and the development of a theory of

liberation. What becomes evident is that in order for folx to be available for liberatory work, their material needs must be addressed (this is universally true). When it comes to folx who are the most impacted by colonial-capitalism, who carry intense trauma, a disability theory that puts forward *accessibility* as a radical practice is of primary importance to prefiguring a future of radical inclusion. Such inclusion is based in economic exchange relations within a social reproduction culture as a basis for community building as well as in self-representational strategies. Artistic practices provide an open language that can be accessible to community members in that it is embodied, open and even pleasurable. Self-representation by low-income/lumpen peoples, whose voices are subject to symbolic violence and considered not worthy, whose lived experience cannot be ethically or accurately reproduced by any other actor (academic, artistic or activist) is a beginning of a praxis that lives up to its name.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this writing seeks to respect the Indigenous knowledge of this Land and to work alongside and in solidarity with Indigenous sovereignty. The relational philosophy that I have encountered in Indigenous community, activism, academic and other texts has had a deep impact throughout the history of my work. In my research, I have been struck by how much the Indigenous peoples of this Land understood ethical relationality or what is often called ‘right relations’ and the recognition that all entities (human and non-human) have spirit and gifts to offer the world. As the Indigenous peoples I reference in this work tell me: facilitating the expression of such gifts in right relations within the world, the encouragement of Life, is what is striven for as a guiding principle to live by that we try to enact in the present towards a different future.

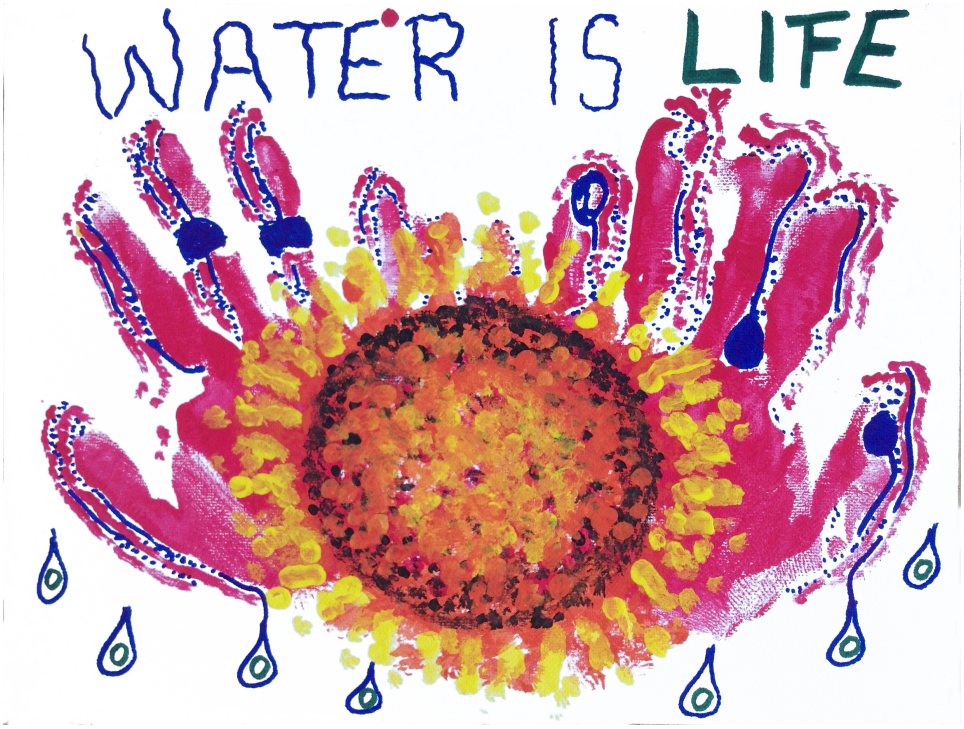


Figure 27: Water Is Life by Marlene Bluebird Stickings (1960 -2020) 2018

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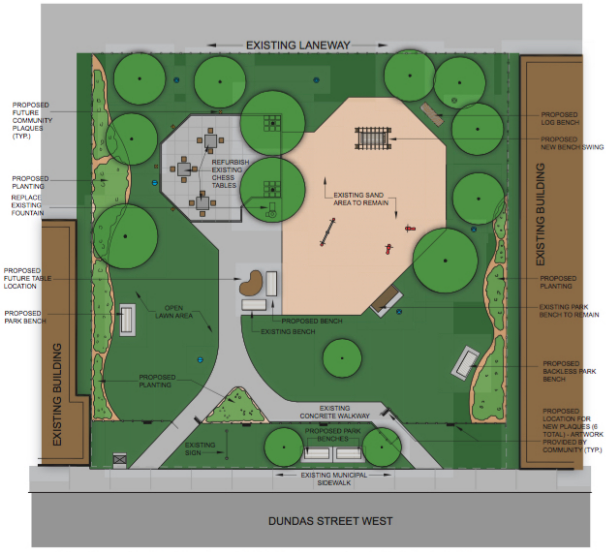
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APPENDIX A: City Park Design

DUNDAS-WATKINSON PARKETTE
SEPTEMBER 2015

PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENTS - OPTION 'A'



PROPOSED DESIGN - OPTION 'A'

PLAN SCALE 1:150



EXISTING PARK PLAN



PROPOSED NEW BENCHES



PROPOSED NEW WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATION



PROPOSED SWING BENCH CONCEPT



EXISTING CHESS TABLES TO BE REFURBISHED



PROPOSED PLAQUES (ARTWORK PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY)



PROPOSED BUTTERFLY GARDEN

16-01873 PFR (part 1)
34

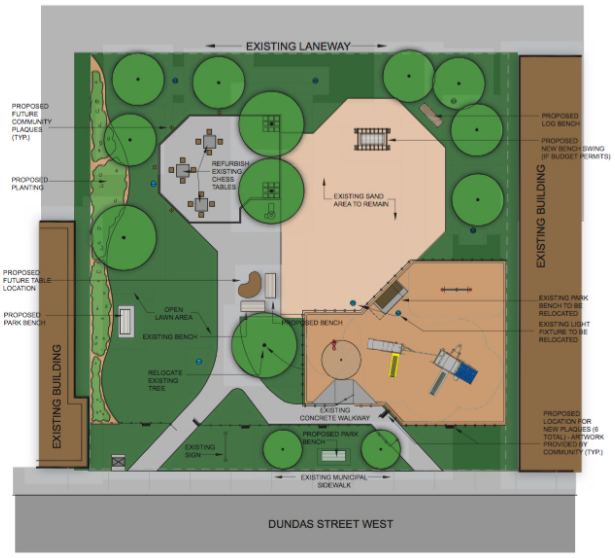
MEPDESIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

TORONTO

DUNDAS-WATKINSON PARKETTE

SEPTEMBER 2015

PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENTS - OPTION 'B'





EXISTING PARK PLAN



PROPOSED NEW BENCHES

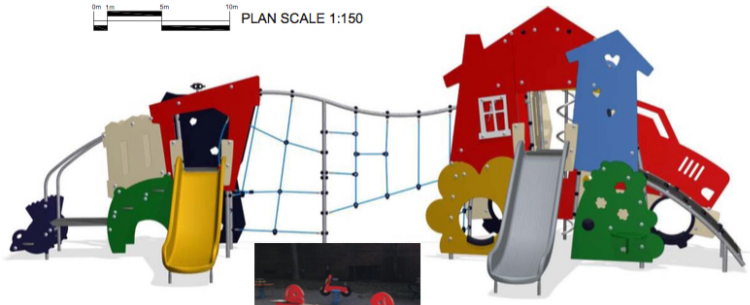


PROPOSED PLAQUES (ARTWORK PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY)

PROPOSED DESIGN - OPTION 'B'

0m 1m 5m 10m

PLAN SCALE 1:150



PROPOSED PLAYSTRUCTURE



EXISTING SPRING TOYS TO BE RE-PURPOSED



PROPOSED ALTERNATE THEME PLAYSTRUCTURES

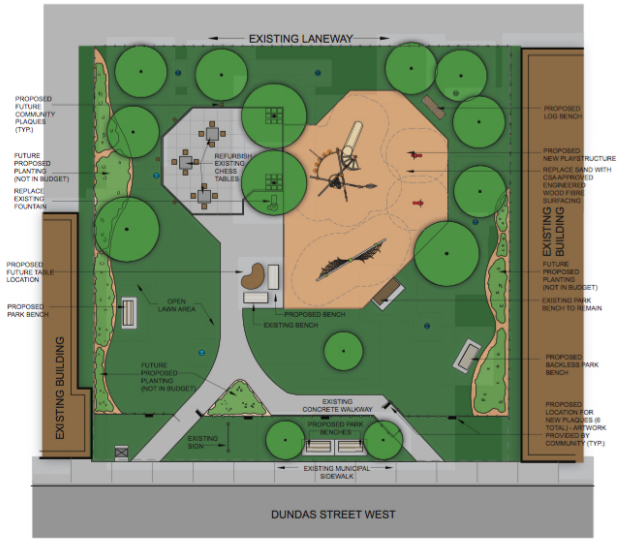
MEPDESIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

TORONTO

16-01873 PFR (part 1)
35

DUNDAS-WATKINSON PARKETTE
OCTOBER 2015

PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENTS - PREFERRED CONCEPT



PROPOSED DESIGN - PREFERRED CONCEPT

0m 1m 5m 10m PLAN SCALE 1:150



EXISTING PARK PLAN



PROPOSED NEW BENCHES



PROPOSED NEW WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATION



EXISTING SPRING TOYS TO BE RE-PURPOSED



EXISTING CHESS TABLES TO BE REFURBISHED



PROPOSED PLAQUES (ARTWORK PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY)



PROPOSED PLAYSTRUCTURE (PREFERENCE TO USE EARTH TONE COLOURS)

MEPDESIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

TORONTO

16-01873 PFR (part 1)
36

APPENDIX B: Correspondence between city and Friends of Watkinson Park

Resending with attachement

[redacted]

HI Alex,

I called Peter and got his out of office response.

I've also copied Michael from MEP Designs on this email.

First off, Dan and Michael have gone above and beyond the call of duty in working with this community group.

The Friends of Watkinson Parkette (FoWP) formed shortly after the first meeting (January 21, 2015) about this small parkette that would be receiving 125K in improvements.

Councillor Perks will be meeting with the group at his constituency office on Friday July 8th at 10:30AM

Please see my general comments / questions below:

Play Structure

- The FoWP asked for more neutral colours for the play equipment

We specified Green/Tan/Brown because group wanted "Natural"colours knowing we could not use wood structures. Structure is ordered and being built so further changes cannot be made.

- The community (including FoWP) agreed that an aspect of play would be included in the park. It is my understanding that this play equipment is sufficient to meet the needs of children and that anything too 1 dimensional or boring would be neglected and defeat the purpose of having any equipment there.
    - Any comments from staff on the size of the play structure, cost and the age range that it will serve will be helpful.

Last public meeting created consensus that a proper play structure with good play value was the appropriate direction to take. Target Age Group 5-12 years. This is a play enhancement project after all.

Sand Area

- I don't have much to share about the sand area other than a member of the group (Kim) wanted "some incorporation of sand for birds and squirrels to bath and bury nuts" early on in the process.
    - Any other comments would be helpful

F of W Park felt strongly about keeping the sand area / it's not acceptable for new playgrounds so a compromise was to salvage the spring toys and place in a sand area. The footprint of the sand play could be reduced somewhat, but the safety zone (indicated with dashed line) will have to be maintained. To reduce further will require one spring toy to be removed. This can be explored.

Bench(es)

- From what I can tell, there will be 6 benches (2 of which are backless) that will be incorporated into the new design as opposed to only having 2 that are currently in the park

Correct – and chess tables will be salvaged and restored. Custom "art" table designed to all encourage "Social Interaction" which was one of the important points emphasized.

Water fountain

- I am not one hundred percent sure as to whether the replacement of the fountain has made it into the budget. I do know that we had to go a little bit over budget to incorporate the plaques the FofWP wanted.

A new Water fountain will be included. I believe it will be a single spout/bowl to suit budget.

Clarification on these items will be helpful for Gord's meeting with the FoWP on Friday.

Thank you all for your time.

Regards,

[redacted]

The Toronto Municipal Code, 140-10 provides: 'No person shall lobby a public office holder without being registered as required under Articles 11, 111, or 1V, unless otherwise exempted under this chapter." For more information about the City's lobbyist registration requirements and how to register, please contact the Office of the Lobbyist Registrar at [redacted]

APPENDIX C: Friends of Watkinson Park – Basis of Unity

Friends of Watkinson Park
Feb 23, 2016

Basis of unity

FoWP is an open community group everyone is welcome. FoWP is not a clique; FoWP is a democratic group who work through consensus and vote only when necessary.

We understand that every one makes mistakes. We have respect for each other anyways. If members respect group agreements they are welcome to come to meetings.

Everyone is important and everyone is allowed to speak. speak respectfully to each other in the meeting space. We try not to interrupt and we try to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. We respect our differences of opinion.

Members of FoWP are here for the park project. If someone is disruptive we give them space but we do not kick people out of the group. Conflict is inevitable, blow off steam and then its over. FoWP try to use group process to resolve conflicts to do with our work. If you have interpersonal conflict you shouldn't bring it into the project or meetings. Deal with conflicts on your own time.

FoWP develops a group process and as a group we take this experience to the community – so that we can work with the community despite differences.

We try to remember that at FoWP meetings starting with breathing exercise to loosen up the mind and let go of our burdens, or a nice little game, will get people in a good mood.

Distribution of information should be to everyone and everyone should have the same information. There should be no exclusion.

Respect everyone inside and outside of the group.

FoWP reserves the right to request that individuals take a 3 week to 3 month leave from meetings if these agreements are not respected.

APPENDIX D: Friends of Watkinson Park Statement for Sleepover Protest

Friends of Watkinson Park

[redacted]

STATEMENT – Sleepover Protest, August 26, 2017

Intro

Friends of Watkinson Park is a community group that got together when the city decided to renovate this park. Our first project was to become involved in the redesign process so that that the low-income people who use the park could have a say in how the park was. Since then FoWP has been doing activities with the low-income people of the neighbourhood. Watkinson park is important because it is really the only accessible green space for people who live in the surrounding affordable and social housing and women's shelter down the road.

Gentrification

Those of you who live in the Junction are aware that over the past 8 years or so we have seen the neighbourhood gentrify at an alarming rate! This has meant there is no more room for the poor.

We know that there is permit application with the city for the next block just east of here for a 12 storey multi-use development. Probably retail on the ground floor and condo's above.

Across the street here we here we know that the tenants units are not being maintained and that businesses have been forced to leave so that higher rents could be charged to new tenants. We know this is a common strategy that landlords use to gentrify their buildings.

We see this elsewhere in the Junction as well. Low-income people are being forced out and those who remain have less options for shopping and finding affordable services.

Loss of affordable housing, stigmatization and discrimination is a common experience. Many low-income folks in this area live with disabilities and often times addiction. While many people see us as transient and disposable in fact we make up a very stable and long term community.

People moving into condo's or buying homes around here complain about people smoking on the street and see us as a blight on the neighbourhood and a danger to their children. We welcome all people to the park as long as they respect our rights to be here too.

We refuse to be treated this way any longer!

Our demand is for more really affordable housing, properly maintained, safe and rent geared to income.

Climate

Those people who are taking away our homes are also for the destruction of the environment via consumer lifestyles! We recognize climate change is brought on by the greedy and powerful, and it is the poor folks, mostly Black, people of color, Indigenous folks and disabled people who suffer the worst consequences.

Floods, droughts, melting poles, rising ocean levels, severity and intensity of storms, are indicative of this huge threat to life on the planet. These threats will cause intensified gentrification as wealthy people look for the safest places to live in a climate change time.

On the ground, we have seen community members getting tickets for smoking in the park, often because neighbourhood people have complained to the police. Supposedly this anti-smoking law is to protect children. It is ironic that at the same time as people are complaining about cigarette smoke, that WE and the children are forced to breath the toxic car exhaust from the traffic on Dundas West which is increasingly gridlocked and idling because of all the development is increasing density in the area.

The oil and gas industry fuelling these cars are also the cause of war abroad and come from resource extraction on native land and are killing the planet for future generations.

Part of FoWP's environmental work is the native garden that we had installed. This native plant garden shows us the connection we have to plants, insect and bird ecologies. It's about spiritual healing in the park for low-income community members and others.

The native plant garden is also about recognizing and playing a small part in restoring Indigenous ecologies.

And now we are going further to network in a national movement to stop climate change. FoWP, is committed to working with others for a unified and powerful environmental movement, FoWP is also declaring our unity with the earth.

We agree with The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth
Presented by Bolivia for UN recognition and which outlines some of the fundamental rights mother earth.
(1) Mother Earth is a living being.
(2) Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings.
(3) Each being is defined by its relationships as an integral part of Mother Earth.
(4) The inherent rights of Mother Earth are inalienable in that they arise from the same source as existence.
(5) Mother Earth and all beings are entitled to all the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status.
(6) Just as human beings have human rights, all other beings also have rights which are specific to their species or kind and appropriate for their role and function within the communities within which they exist.

(7) The rights of each being are limited by the rights of other beings and any conflict between their rights must be resolved in a way that maintains the integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth.

Occupation of Indigenous Lands

Friends of Watkinson Park are also aware that the fight against climate change has been led by Indigenous peoples around the world.

We are also aware that Toronto is built on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Six Nations, Anishinaabe and Metis, and on the treaty lands of the Mississauga of the New Credit.

We are aware that the Junction sits in the middle of significant Indigenous sites:
There are ancient trail that runs along Davenport to Dundas. Also there are many other trails that are marked now by the road names: Indian Rd, Indian Grove Crescent and Indian Trail. There is the old Black Oak Savannah, which was formed through Indigenous horticultural practices that extended up from High Park and covered much of the Junction area. Also, in High Park and along the Humber River there are the ancient Iroquoian Burial Mounds. As well there is the ancient Seneca-Mohawk village of Taiaiako'on in Baby Point.

The history of colonization is violent and ongoing.

Friends of Watkinson Park will continue to resist the colonial historical narrative of the Junction that celebrates the white men, bankers, industrialists and land speculators who supposedly built the Junction. We will work towards greater awareness of the Indigenous history, both current and past. An Indigenous history that also includes important knowledge of how to live on the land in a respectful and sustainable way.

FoWP also stand with the women who have been camped out in front of INAC in solidarity with Indigenous youth who have a high risk of suicide – please write to

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

and tell her that the high rate of Indigenous youth suicide is unacceptable and that the Canadian gov't must act right away to remedy this situation.

Now we would like to welcome Donna Powless, a Cayuga elder from Six Nations to speak.