“WE ARE DAMAGED”

PLANNING AND BIOPOWER IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, 1880-2010

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how modern urban planning has sought to manage human life in the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Covering the period between 1880 and 2010, the dissertation examines a series of key moments and initiatives in the history of urban planning in Halifax. Drawing on archival research, semi-structured interviews, and social theory, it examines how planning sought to protect, improve, or otherwise alter the condition of human life; how power was implicated and exercised in these initiatives; and how acts of violence were committed against certain individuals or groups in the paradoxical name of safeguarding “life.” Drawing centrally on Foucault’s analysis of biopower, this dissertation argues that the seemingly paradoxical character of modern planning – its stated commitment to protecting or improving life, on the one hand, and its observe capacity to damage life, on the other – can be connected to the particular configurations of knowledge and power through which life is managed in modernity. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis, life is shown to be perceived by urban planning in relation to certain norms, and those who are perceived to betray these norms are liable to be exempted from the benefits of planning, compelled to bear its costs, or both. Across a series of initiatives, from the construction of “model tenements” in the early 1900s to the mobilization of public “participation” in the 1970s, planning is shown to operate within a divided, bifurcated conception of human life. Damaged lives, and a damaged city, are often a consequence of such divisions. In contrast to analyses that attribute the damage caused by modern planning to a deviation from its proper (or possible) role as a guardian of life, this dissertation concludes that damage is often integral to precisely the latter role, and it argues for a deeper interrogation of the configurations of knowledge and power that planning has come to serve.
Preface

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Let the damage be remembered,  
For we are damaged.  

– George Elliott Clarke, *Black*
Chapter 1

A Damaged City

1.1 Cornwallis’s Ghosts

Halifax is, and has always been, a damaged city.

The city’s founding dates to 1749, when the British state moved to fortify its control over the province of Nova Scotia by building a new military settlement on the banks of an Atlantic coast inlet known, by the native Mi’kmaq, as Chebuctoo.¹ Between June 21st and July 1st of Halifax’s first year, Colonel Edward Cornwallis and a coterie of 2,575 would-be settlers reached shore at Chebuctoo after a two-month Atlantic crossing. For the next month and a half, the newcomers huddled in a compact, make-shift camp while a pair of military engineers prepared the all-important territorial surveys and settlement plans. As elsewhere in the British Empire, these documents were considered essential to the seizure, control, and administration of land.² The surveys disclosed the precise boundaries of ostensibly sovereign territory (a necessary counterpart to agreements and disagreements with other nations, including the Mi’kmaq), while the plans ensured a distribution of people across the territory that would make it possible for both people and the territory to be administered by the colonial state. Expressing the designs of Empire, the plans for Halifax described a compact, defendable settlement and a mosaic of discrete, contiguous property allotments. The city would be rimmed by a stone wall and five equidistant “defense” towers. Within these walls, the territory would be divided into 29 rectangular city blocks, each comprising 16 lots of precisely the same length and width. On August 8th, with the surveys and plans completed, 464 house-

² Lennox, “Empire on Paper.”
holds were allotted to the new city’s 464 lots and, thus, could finally begin to fell trees, level the ground, and build the houses in which they would endure their first Halifax winter.

Establishing the new city would require more than meticulous plans and arduous labour, however. The territory claimed by Britain and allotted to the settlers traditionally belonged to the Mi’kmaq, and British aspirations in the area were in contravention to the “Peace and Friendship” Treaties of 1713 and 1745. The founding of Halifax, as Mi’kmaq scholar Daniel Paul suggests, was effectively an act of war, and could therefore be expected to provoke a reprisal. Sure enough, the Mi’kmaq soon made their continued presence felt – striking, in fact, at the very machinery of city-making. On September 30th, they descended upon Major Jarmon’s sawmill on the Halifax harbour and killed four workmen as they prepared planks for the building of Halifax homes. British blood spilled on the ground and mixed with sawdust: one of the first explicit signs that Halifax would be a damaged city, and that its development would provoke and need to occur through violence. Cornwallis’s response to the attack was neither retreat, nor negotiation, but a violent reassertion of an illegal territoriality. On October 2nd, the Colonel issued the so-called “Scalping Proclamation.” Claiming that Halifax (and the province of Nova Scotia) were under threat from a band of “Ruffians” who refused to recognize British rule, and that “nothing but force” could resolve the situation, Cornwallis called on military and civilian subjects alike to “annoy, distress, take or destroy the Savage commonly called Micmac [sic].” A volunteer band of fifty men was ordered to “scour the wood all around the Town [of Halifax],” a further band of one hundred was sent to hunt the Mi’kmaq “over the whole province,” and all settlers, military and civilian, were offered a bounty of ten Guineas for every Mi’kmaq captured or killed. The bounty would be paid upon the delivery of evidence – either the “Savage taken” or “his scalp” – to one of three military command posts in the province (including Halifax).

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5 Barnes “A Near as May be Agreeable,” 4. On later Mi’kmaq attacks on Halifax and Dartmouth, see Upton, Micmacs and Colonists.
6 Paul, We Were Not the Savages, 108
7 Ibid.
In colonial Halifax, the imbrication of planning and violence could scarcely be more clear: the former describes a state of affairs that only through the latter can be brought into being. This is not to say that planning is the direct purveyor of violence, and it may be helpful at times to distinguish between actions that promote violence and those that physically carry it out (e.g., a distinction between “epistemic” and “physical” violence). Without collapsing all acts of violence into one, I find it important to extend responsibility for violence beyond its most immediate perpetrators. Planning, when it establishes objectives that can only be fulfilled through violence, bears greater responsibility than it has sometimes been accorded. In the colonial context, I have suggested, planning drew up a settlement that was meant to fit beneath exclusive, sovereign control. There is no place in this plan for the Mi’kmaq, even as the plan pertained to territory that the latter occupied and claimed. The Mi’kmaq, while they could accept co-existence with the British, would neither submit to British rule nor forfeit all traditional claims to territory. In relation to planning’s objectives, therefore, they were positioned as an “external enemy” – and only by “root[ing] them [out] entirely,” a massive act of violence, could colonial plans be realized.8

Indeed, the violence inflicted upon the Mi’kmaq eventually had its intended effect: between 1749 and 1752, soldiers and mercenaries delivered scalps “by the bagful,” the Mi’kmaq population was decimated, and although the war on the Mi’kmaq would continue – and though it continues, albeit less gruesomely, to this day – no further attacks would be experienced in Halifax.9 To suggest that Halifax is a damaged city, at this point, is simply to acknowledge the gory violence that enabled the city to exist. It is to see the first official plan for the city and the “Scalping Proclamation” as intertwined: the two-volume founding document of the new city. The packed-tight settlement on the banks of Chebuctoo was raised as much by soldiers and mercenaries as by the more immediate work of planners and householders.

The passing of time has altered, but not severed, this initial affiliation between violence and urban planning. In the second half of the nineteenth century, civic leaders in Halifax began to adopt a range of techniques, forms of knowledge, and objectives that they labelled “modern.” Planning, as a result, under-

8 Adams, “Ghosts in the Court,” 331.
9 Paul, We Were Not the Savages. Another “external enemy,” of course, was the Acadians. Adams demonstrates that upwards of 10,000 Acadians were expelled from the Maritimes by the British between 1755 and 1762. “Ghosts in the Court.”
went significant changes. “Modern” planning in Halifax has tended to be concerned less with securing physical territory than with arranging material conditions in such a way that the condition of human life is protected and improved. Whereas Halifax’s first planners sought to establish a territory that could be controlled and administered by the colonial state, an exemplary modern planning initiative would more likely seek to make the city “a more agreeable place to live in” (1908) or improve “the overall welfare of the population” (1957).10

The violence that accompanies planning, meanwhile, needs to be recharacterized. In a context in which planning is concerned with the condition of human life, violence occurs primarily through the suspension of this concern in certain circumstances – in relation, that is, to certain segments of the population. As I will elaborate below, there is a modern form of violence in the sanctioned exposure of certain lives to more dangerous living conditions, increased impediments to good health or welfare, or new restrictions on movement or activity. In many cases, it is precisely in order to protect or improve the dominant population that new dangers or more degraded living conditions are imposed on the subordinate. There is a certain violence, as well, in the deprivation of certain groups from the promises of modern planning. To the extent that planning delivers improved conditions of life to the population in general, its withholding of improvements to certain groups entails a relative worsening of life that needs to be recognized as a form of violence. In both cases, the violence of modern planning differs substantially from its colonial cousin. It is, quite plainly, less brutal. Killing and scalping are replaced with more subtle forms of violence that seldom involve the extinguishing of life, but that certain bring about a worsening of life (in relative or absolute terms). It is distinguished, as well, in its points of application. Once directed outward (toward an “external” enemy), the violence of modern planning is turned decidedly inward. Its effects are experienced among residents of the city itself.

An example of this new configuration of planning and violence can be found in the *Halifax Master Plan*, delivered to City Council in 1945.\(^{11}\) Aiming to “safeguard and promote the general welfare of the community,” the plan provided a detailed analysis of existing land use characteristics in the city and offered recommendations that would purportedly lead to “the best use [being] be made of the land available” within city boundaries.\(^{12}\) The most significant recommendation emerged from an analysis of property assessment data. The plan compares, for various areas of the city, the average value of buildings to the average value of the subtending land, and purports that the resulting figures “clearly indicate” that certain areas of the city are not achieving the best use of land and will require an immediate “slum clearance” program to be visited upon them.\(^{13}\) A later report, submitted in 1957, reaffirmed the goal of achieving the “best use” of land, and provided more detailed advice on how to do so: as many as 7,000 Halifax low-income residents of the downtown would need to be moved and their homes destroyed; a portion of the displaced (around 4,500 residents) would be offered new lodgings in the public housing projects to be constructed on less valuable, peripheral land.\(^{14}\)

Approving the plan almost immediately, City Council proceeded to work toward its realization. In the spring of 1958, the City dispatched a flank of bulldozers to rip through a densely populated, 16-block neighbourhood north of City Hall. Over the next two years, the former neighbourhood gradually became a barren, hollowed-out terrain. As in parts of war-ravaged England, some Haligonians observed, all that remained in place were concrete stairways leading to vanished homes.\(^{15}\) With housing in short supply – even the promised public housing was not made available until a year and a half after the demolitions began – many evictees ended up on the streets, staying with relatives, or leaving the city entirely. A city official reported to Council in 1961 that at least 1,000 families had been forced to crowd into single-room

\(^{13}\) Halifax, *Master Plan*, 52.
apartments and that 200 families a month were leaving the city due to the demolition-induced housing shortage.¹⁶

An improvement in the welfare of the “overall” population – the stated goal of the 1945 and 1957 plans – clearly did not extend to all city residents. Rather than having their lives improved by planning, the tenants of the downtown “slum” were thrown from their homes and into the vagaries of a tight, uncertain housing market. Their new living conditions, when they could be documented at all, were found to be much worse than before.

The seemingly contradictory operation of modern planning, its capacity to damage certain lives in the ostensible name of protecting or improving “overall” life, is the major focus of this dissertation. Central to my analysis, as I will elaborate below, is the role of social and spatial norms in rendering the condition and improvement of human life intelligible. Norms, I will suggest, help to reveal where spatial conditions are substandard, where, for example, prevailing land uses are less than “best” and constitute, therefore, an impediment to the city’s welfare. Norms are also used to assess human beings. Through the circulation of norms, certain human behaviours or characteristics may be perceived as sub-normal or abnormal: a betrayal of assumed norms. Those who are perceived to exhibit these abnormal characteristics or behaviours – moral deviants, racialized groups, and certain political activists are some examples that I examine in this dissertation – are liable to be regarded as a lesser form of life, or not quite “life” at all.¹⁷ From the perspective of modern planning, it follows, these lesser lives may not seem to need or deserve the benefits that are extended to the population “overall,” and may indeed be subjected to damage or danger in the name of protecting or improving “life.”

As the case of “slum clearance” suggests, there is often a disjuncture between the domain of life that planners seek to manage and the lives of certain groups. The latter, it seems, are simply beyond the realm of planning’s concerns, and the effects of planning upon their lives need not be considered or calculated. A case in point: the conclusions of the Halifax social worker’s 1961 report on slum clearance were

not interpreted as an indictment of the welfare-focused urban planning operation. To the contrary, Council’s response to the report was to pass a resolution to “aggressively continue the established policy of slum clearance” throughout the city.\textsuperscript{18} In the eyes of civic leaders, an improvement in overall welfare was indeed occurring. A better life was being produced in the city despite, and indeed through, the upending and damaging of thousands of lesser lives. The violence of modern planning, a form of violence often enacted against lesser lives in the name of improving overall life, goes unrecognized as such.

It is not hard to imagine Cornwallis’s ghost lurking in City Hall on the day that councillors resolved to dispatch bulldozers to destroy the neighbourhood just to their north, just across Duke street, and especially on the day that councillors were informed of the social consequences of their plan and resolved to carry on to the end. It is harder – and, I suspect, more urgent – to apprehend Cornwallis’s ghost in the fruition of less dramatic acts. A smaller-scale, more mundane form of violence was expressed, for example, in a long series of planning decisions pertaining to the community of Africville and its surroundings. Africville, once a community of 400 African Nova Scotian residents at the northern edge of the Halifax peninsula, is widely remembered for its dismemberment by City bulldozers in the 1960s – an act that succeeded the demolition of the downtown “slum” and that was promoted by many of the same planning reports.\textsuperscript{19} For more than a century before its demise, however, Africville residents experienced the more mundane effects of a mode of planning devoted to the improvement of lives, but not their lives.

Between 1880 and 1920, for example, Halifax embarked upon a major program of sewer and water main construction – the objective being to remove prevailing “sources of danger to the community” (i.e., illnesses that could spread through polluted water).\textsuperscript{20} In pursuit of this objective, sewerage and clean water were eventually provided to all areas of the city, except Africville. The conditions surrounding these planning decisions are complex, and will occupy my attention for an entire chapter of this dissertation. For now, it is enough to note that the prevailing conception of life at this time was structured by ideas about “race,” and that African Nova Scotians appeared in this conception as a lesser form of life. Assessed

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Bacher, \textit{Keeping to the Marketplace}, 217.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} See, principally, Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill, \textit{Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community} (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1999); Jennifer Nelson, \textit{Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 15 May 1906, 24.
\end{itemize}
in relation to “white” racial norms, African Nova Scotians were perceived as sub-normal: a biologically inferior form of life, as well as a detriment to the condition of the overall Halifax population. Among the many consequences of the City’s enduring disregard for Africville, and its withholding of planning improvements like sewers and running water, was an outbreak of Paratyphoid B in 1962. The outbreak was easily linked to the community’s water supply: shallow, makeshift wells that a water inspector dispatched by the City found to be “dangerously contaminated.”21 (An inspector later speculated that only an immunity built up over many years of drinking polluted water had prevented major fatalities from occurring.22) The City’s response to this information, rather than removing an obvious “source of danger to the community” that had persisted decades after such dangers had been addressed elsewhere in the city, was to affix a sign on Africville wells that instructed residents to boil the withdrawn water “before drinking or cooking.”

While much worse acts have certainly been committed against Africville, I want to emphasize, nevertheless, the damage entailed in this smaller act. The finely lettered signs adorning Africville wells were, at some point, stenciled, painted, and put in place. The signs were the result of a decision, or the continuation of a decision, on the part of an institution entrusted with the city’s health – a decision, it seems, to regard Africville as beyond or outside its mandate, to allow a group of people whose health was most at risk, and most in need of protection, to fend for itself. It was as if the City said to Africville: we protect lives from danger, but not your lives – or, we protect lives, but yours are not lives, or not quite. There is a modern form violence, here, in bodies uniquely exposed to danger, bodies transformed by danger, over a stretch of time. There is a violence in what planning does and what it does not do, in a non-decision, in routine ignorance and sanctioned disavowals of particular human needs. This, in addition to more visible and spectacular acts, needs to be grasped.

An understanding of modern urban planning must come to terms with its peculiar, seemingly paradoxical, relationship with violence – a violence directed unflinchingly inward, directed against certain residents of the city itself, even as planning is deployed in the name of protecting or improving “the over-

22 Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 256.
all city.” While it is certainly possible to say that planning does some “good things,” or that its effects have been good “overall,” this kind of statement itself needs to be regarded as integral to the operation of modern planning. This is what planning itself declares. The “overall” benefits of planning are its major justification in modernity, its license to proceed in its work even when evidence of its costs manage to emerge. It is not the overall effects of planning, but the seldom-recognized damage that is enacted in the name of overall effects, that this dissertation seeks to document.

Modern planning is indeed devoted to life, in a particular sense. It approaches the urban terrain as a phenomenon that, through proper management, can be made to produce a better form of life: a life less vulnerable to “dangers,” a life of greater “welfare,” a life otherwise protected or improved. The peculiarity of modern planning, as I will show in this dissertation, is that it often creates the conditions for a better life “for the city” or “for the community” at the same time that it neglects, or even worsens, the living conditions of many people. Moreover, conditions of increased precariousness (for some people) are sometimes created not only at the same time that, but in order that, precariousness “overall” can be attenuated. Modern planning, in contrast to its colonial predecessor, is accompanied by violence but does not want to see violence. Its consequences are seldom accidental (they are, by definition, planned), but they sometimes go unrecognized nevertheless. The violence of modern planning is sometimes one of commission, but often one of omission – a failure to recognize inflicted violence as violence, or precarious lives as lives. To suggest that Halifax is a damaged city, in this context, is to move toward something very difficult to grasp: damage enacted, first of all, in the name of its antitheses (in the name of protection, repair, or improvement); damage, moreover, that was scarcely recognized as such at the time it was enacted. Forgotten the moment after it occurred, this damage may take a special, focused effort to bring to recognition in the present. It is precisely this that preoccupies this dissertation.

1.2 Outline of this Dissertation

This dissertation examines the making of a damaged city. In particular, it examines how damage is enacted in the course of modern urban planning in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The “damage” in question is sometimes spectacular, but more often mundane; it includes the effects of high-profile initiatives like slum
clearance, as well as an array of smaller-scale practices that deny certain groups of people the expected benefits of planning, forcing them to bear planning’s costs, or both; it includes, in sum, the many ways that particular lives are rendered more precarious, in relative as well as absolute terms. In the period that I examine, roughly from 1880 to the present, the creation of precariousness often has the peculiar characteristic of being connected to practices that aim, or seem to aim, to bring about the very opposite state of affairs. Modern planning, as many accounts have suggested, is described as a mechanism for protecting and improving the life of “the city” or “the community.” My dissertation, then, focuses on forms of damage that are enacted not as an end in themselves – the decimation of lives being precisely what planning is supposed to prevent – but as a byproduct of practices that seek very different ends. It asks, above all, how a damaged city is created through practices that aim to bring about preservation, repair, or improvement; and how, if the latter are indeed the aims, the enactment of damage is not immediately recognized as a problem – as a sign, that is, of planning’s failure or misconception.

In drawing links between the damage inflicted by planning, and its seemingly antithetical aims, my dissertation departs significantly from the dominant approaches to this subject/topic. That modern planning is devoted to the improvement of life is commonly recognized. As I will discuss below, the creation of a healthier, more productive, and more contented form of life was precisely the role that early planning pioneers allotted to themselves, and planning practitioners, theorists, and critics have continued ever since to see this as its proper role. Commonly recognized, as well, is planning’s penchant for wrecking lives; though focused largely on the spectacular violence of slum clearance, freeway projects, or state-facilitated gentrification, the literature ably demonstrates that not all lives have been protected or improved by planning practices. And yet, these dreadful effects, perhaps because they are so difficult to

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square with planning’s self-ascribed mandate, are typically treated as an aberration, a deviation from planning’s proper role that can be attributed either to prevailing economic exigencies (e.g., the need for planning to facilitate capital accumulation) or to a faulty epistemology (e.g., a “modernist” rationality too confident in its comprehension of the city and its capacity to bring about a better order of things). Planning’s concern for “life,” in this literature, appears unblemished. Because it is not this concern, but deviations from it, that are responsible for the worst effects of modern planning, the observation of such effects becomes an occasion to insist, yet again, on the capacity and responsibility of planning to protect and improve life. Indeed, for this literature, one of the foremost reasons to overcome capitalism or replace planning’s faulty epistemology is to enable urban planning to assume its proper role, unhindered.

From a sharply contrasting perspective, Foucault suggests that attempts to manage or optimize human life are integral to the operation of power in modernity and deserve, for that reason, to be interrogated rather than accepted unhesitatingly. What he calls “biopower,” in fact, is precisely a political technology that “[brings] life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and [makes] knowledge/power an agent of the transformation of human life.” Crucially, Foucault argues that the exercise of biopower requires “life” to be differentiated from the forces or elements that appear to deplete it, endanger it, or simply impede its development. Where such elements are conceived to be human beings—and Foucault shows that they often are—the management of life can justify and call for all manner of mundane and spectacular forms of violence to be committed: from Nazi pogroms, to “mere” political exclusion, exposure to increased health risks, or enforced economic vulnerability. Certain acts of violence, in other words, are central to biopower, to the optimization of life. Foucault, I want to emphasize, is not ruling out the protection or improvement of life as social goals, nor is he advocating that biopower should be overthrown. However, he does depart from the dominant perspectives on urban planning in asking what is at stake in the apparently noble goal of managing life—how certain actors and institutions come

26 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 256.
to exercise “surplus” power within an empirical terrain called “life,” and how certain forms of violence might be committed, not as a deviation from this goal, but as an important mechanism of its achievement. Foucault, in raising such questions, offers a different approach to modern planning and, I think, the making of a damaged city; thus, a critical engagement with his work on biopower (an engagement I explain in more detail below) provides the foremost scholarly point of reference for this dissertation.

Following Foucault, this dissertation examines urban planning as a technology of power centered on life – a technology that seeks to protect, improve, or otherwise optimize life through calculated interventions in the production of urban space. While indeed focused on modern urban planning, the scope of my inquiry is, in some ways, broader than the usual scholarly treatment of the subject. It is broader, first of all, in its attention not simply to what planning does – the decisions it makes, the actions it carries out, and so on – but also to how planning conceives of what it does, and how it is able to conceive of what it does. Following Foucault, whose method I describe in more detail below, I am interested in how planning operates as a “technology of power” within empirical worlds disclosed, or rendered intelligible, by particular “modes of knowledge.” (The assumption being, here, that the world can be made intelligible in many different ways, and that power operates differently depending on how this intelligibility is constituted.) Especially important among modes of knowledge, I will try to show, are conceptions of spaces and conceptions of human subjects (the two are often inextricable). It is on the basis of such knowledge, such renderings of spaces and subjects, that planning can establish its purview, calibrate its interventions (and non-interventions), and seek to achieve its social and spatial objectives. Accordingly, my inquiry aims to identify, and track the historical emergence of, particular conceptions of spaces and subjects that have been central to modern planning and its (attempted) optimization of life in Halifax.

Examining planning-related modes of knowledge, already a move beyond the narrowly construed world of planning, broadens the scope of my inquiry in three further ways: it compels me to trace some of the geographically extensive social connections through which modes of knowledge are formed and propagated; it transports me into disciplines, concepts, and theories that may not be immediately or explicitly concerned with planning (but that nevertheless become essential to the operation of the latter); and finally, since important modes of knowledge seldom arise at their moment of use, it draws me toward
moments in time that precede, often by decades, the planning practices that I most want to understand. As this might suggest, accounting for the modes of knowledge that help to make planning conceivable often takes my attention away from the practices and effects that most concern me. It means devoting less space in this dissertation, for example, to the actual destruction of Africville (and the people who actually carried it out) than to the events and actors that made it conceivable to do so. And yet, this dissertation is not just an intellectual history; with the exception of Chapter 2 (in which I examine a planning initiative that, in the end, was not implemented), I focus on the emergence of ideas that would eventually have important and objectionable effects in Halifax, and I remain committed to demonstrating how this lengthy historical investigation can support a politics of transformation in the present.

My inquiry is broadened, finally, in taking an interest not just in the practices of professional urban planners and official urban planning departments, but also in a very wide array of actors and institutions that partake in the management of urban space. Long before a certified urban planner was hired in Halifax, urban spaces were studied, planned, and regulated in the expectation of achieving some specified outcome. The actors involved were usually engineers, medical doctors, philanthropists, clergymen, or social reformers; and their actions included the layout of streets, the establishment and enforcement of building codes, the construction of sewers and water systems, the regulation of land use, and much more. Even after the founding of an official urban planning department in the 1950s, moreover, some of the most significant planning ideas and practices emerged from elsewhere: most notably, from activists, economists, and property developers. In this dissertation, then, I am interested in “planning,” not necessarily certified “planners.” And I define planning, at least for the present purposes, as a set of practices that aim to coordinate, manage, or regulate the form or use of urban space in the interest of a certain social (non-individual) objective. As I have suggested, the objective that interests me here is the one that planning commonly ascribes to itself: that of protecting, improving, or otherwise optimizing human life.

This dissertation moves across more than a century of urban planning in Halifax, from 1880 to the present, stopping at particular moments in time to examine the emergence of modes of knowledge.

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(i.e., conceptions of spaces and subjects) that would eventually provide the intellectual conditions of possibility for major planning interventions. Each of these conceptions, I try to show, are closely related to one or more of the “qualities” of life that modern planning has described itself as being able to address. Principally, these are: health, wealth, and well-being/welfare.\footnote{For an early and influential treatise on these three goals in modern planning practice, see Thomas Adams, \textit{Municipal and Real Estate Finance in Canada} (Ottawa: Commission of Conservation, 1921).}

I begin my investigation with a close look at an early twentieth century planning initiative that was meant to improve the moral and physical health of the city’s working class population – an initiative premised on the belief that a better “environment” could elevate people to a “higher form of living.” In the next chapter, I track the emergence of a mode of knowledge in which urban space is conceived in relation to a broad set of “underlying” economic relations, and in which the prosperity and progress of the local population is deemed to require that certain uses (and users) of space be diminished. This perspective, as I show in the next chapter, came to structure the City’s view of Africville for several decades. Charting the connections between this conception of space and prevailing conceptions of “race,” I examine how these entwined modes of knowledge underpinned Africville’s lengthy and damaging treatment by planners and other city officials. In Chapter 5, I examine how local activists and certain Federal-level planners sought to challenge and rework the prevailing configuration of urban planning by promoting a more direct, “participatory” role for local residents in planning decisions. The final chapter attempts to consolidate the major themes of the dissertation and point toward potential future research. It provides a brief discussion of a recent urban planning project in Halifax in order to highlight certain themes and demonstrate how a historical analysis of planning can help to disrupt and reorient problematic practices in the present.

Overall, this dissertation aims to locate the making of a damaged city in the midst of planning practices that aim to achieve seemingly opposite results. The enactment of damage in Halifax, I contend, has often occurred as a consequence of, rather than a deviation from, planning’s concern for “life.” As a technology of biopower, urban planning has aimed to protect or improve human life through the promotion of particular living conditions (or, in other words, the management of urban space). The modes of
knowledge that make such aims conceivable, however, require that life and its spatial conditions be differentiated from the forces or elements that seem to impede or threaten life’s flourishing. When such impediments or threats seem to include human beings – as they often do – planning is liable to neglect the living conditions of certain populations or, worse, actively degrade or revoke such conditions as a means of improving “the overall city.” Thus, planning, in its “biopower mode,” can create devastation (for some people) at the same time that it proclaims the importance of protecting life; it can create much more precarious conditions of life at the same time that, and in order that, “overall” precariousness seems to be attenuated. A damaged city is made, at least partly, in precisely this way: through practices that aim to protect life from damage, but that cannot recognize the damage inflicted in the process.

That the violence of modern planning is sometimes not recognized as violence requires a politics of transformation that, among other things, can summon something of the unrecognized past into the coordinates of the present. To approach planning as this dissertation does – that is, as a technology of biopower that can wreck or damage certain lives as a means of fulfilling its broader life-improving aims – is not simply to advance a somewhat different critique, but also, I contend, to open up new political possibilities. As I hope to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, and in the final chapter in particular, my approach and analysis ultimately suggest a transformative politics that, while it may also focus on overcoming capitalism or addressing epistemological limits, seeks to diagnose how “life” has been conceived, who has been included and excluded within this frame, and how historical and ongoing acts of violence that have not yet been recognized as violence might be brought to recognition (and interrupted). This dissertation is, I hope, a movement in this direction.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I describe, first, how I came to focus my attention on Halifax, and why I think Halifax needs such attention. Thereafter, I review the scholarly literatures that inform my analysis, and explain how they relate to one another. I next provide a description of the methods and primary sources that I draw upon in the dissertation. The final section summarizes the dissertation’s four substantive chapters and its concluding chapter.
1.3 Halifax as a Focus of Research

Halifax needs to be written about. One of my early motivations for writing about Halifax has to do with its relative smallness – a smallness, in terms of population, that it shares with my hometown in Northern Ontario (North Bay) and with most of the other places that I have lived. During my lifetime, the state-assisted globalization of capital has tended gradually to undermine the economic prospects of smaller, First World cities. The mining companies that once constituted an important part of the economic base in North Bay, for example, have been bought up and downsized by US or South African multinationals; mining work, where it is still available to local residents, largely involves flying out to remote sites in Northern Ontario for intense, three-week shifts, and then flying back home to recover. As elsewhere, the city’s small businesses have tended to be replaced by franchise operations whose owners and high-level managers do not reside locally and that do not rely on local professional services (e.g., accounting, law, advertising, or real estate) as locally owned businesses did.

The decimation of small communities had been facilitated by Federal-level economic policies and was clearly anticipated when these policies began to be enacted. The 1984 MacDonald Commission report on the implications of Canada-US “free trade,” for example, concluded that metropolitan cities were likely to benefit from closer economic ties at the expense of smaller and more remote communities.29 Two decades later, the predictions of the Commission have largely come true, while the state’s role in this outcome is often overlooked. Instead, government officials, government-funded research, and various think tanks pronounce the inviability of small cities in the age of “globalization” and advocate their gradual depopulation.30 The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, a Halifax-based think thank, echoed the perspective of many analysts when it concluded that government programs like Employment Insurance and


inter-provincial transfer payments ought to be restructured in order to compel outmigration from declining areas and gradually repopulate the country in accordance with new economic realities.\textsuperscript{31}

It was to a \textit{slightly} larger city (Halifax) that I eventually migrated. It was in Halifax that I began graduate school (at Dalhousie) and began to engage deeply with the fields of urban geography and urban studies. Given my accumulated “urban experience” up until that point, I could scarcely avoid finding the urban literature’s characteristic fixation on metropolitan cities – and, of these, primarily the very largest – both puzzling and unnerving. Above all, the prevailing metropolitan bias of urban scholars struck me as somehow complicit in the decline of places like North Bay and Halifax. In focusing in larger cities, urban scholarship seemed to suggest that smaller places were less interesting – less interesting to study, surely, and perhaps less interesting to inhabit as well. From this perspective, which I would not claim is always deliberate, the decline of smaller cities might seem to be no great loss. Before I had any other ambitions for this dissertation, then, I knew that it would need to focus on a city outside the metropolitan world. One of the reasons that smaller cities are important, it seems to me, is simply that they matter to the people who live there. They are no different, in this sense, than larger cities. The difference is that larger cities are often studied and are generally assumed to be important, whereas smaller cities are seldom studied and sometimes considered expandable. My first reason for studying Halifax, therefore, was to restore a modicum of proportion to the field of urban studies. My aim was, and is, to show that scholarship on smaller cities can be as compelling as anywhere.

Another reason to write about Halifax – a more important reason, ultimately, but one that took me longer to grasp – has to do with the city’s history, the dominant understanding of this history, and the way that this understanding of history is implicated in the perpetuation of an objectionable present. Africville, and current perspectives of it, are a prime example. After moving to Halifax in 2004, and after having had the chance to learn about the city from local people and written accounts, I came to sense that the dominant perspective on the City-directed demolition of Africville in the 1960s was that it was indeed a mis-

take, even a profound injustice, but one enclosed in the receding past. So perceived, this history can seem distant, faint, sealed-off; its relevance to the present is ambiguous, and it certainly demands nothing of the present. Indeed, it seems to be generally assumed in Halifax that nothing of this kind would be done in the present, and so, as this implies, everything that needs to be learned from the terrible event has already been learned. Expressive of this enclosed, “sealing-off” perspective on history, it seems to me, is the official apology recently extended to former Africville residents by the municipality. The apology, issued in February 2010 and entitled “Africville: Recognizing the Past, Present, and Future,” asks for forgiveness for “what happened in Africville” in the 1960s, as well as for the “repercussions” that have endure to this day. “Our history cannot be rewritten,” the apology concludes, “but, thankfully, the future is a blank page and, starting today, we hold the pen with which we can write a shared tomorrow.”

Although the apology was indeed welcomed by some former Africville residents, it was seen as flawed and disingenuous by others. For Denise Allen, an activist and spokesperson for several Africville-connected families, the apology pertains to an isolated action (i.e., the decision to demolish the community) and fails to address the broader, racist conditions in which the decision was made – conditions that existed well before the 1960s, that continue to exist in the present, and that affected (and continue to affect) more than just residents of Africville. For Allen, the narrowness of the apology suggests that the City, whatever its allusions to history, still does not “understand history.” “They don’t like history in Nova Scotia,” she says. Without dismissing the favourable responses of some Africville residents to the apology and the “collective compensation” that came with it, it is worth examining the kind of “recognition” that it entails. The apology isolates a particular historical event in order to accept responsibility for it and move on. In sealing off this event from the conditions that made it possible, the apology effaces any discernible connection to the present, other than enduring “repercussions.” Accordingly, the past demands nothing further of the present; it ostensibly can be “recognized” without troubling any current social or institutional arrangement and, indeed, can be followed six months later by new planning decisions that are

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33 Razzaq, “Refusing to Forget.”
34 Ibid.
quite reasonably perceived, by the African Nova Scotian community affected by them, to be fundamentally racist.\textsuperscript{35} Such are the effects, it seems, of a “sealing-off” relationship to the past that, as Denise Allen puts it, elects to “bury” history rather than “deal with [it].”\textsuperscript{36}

The implications of a flawed relationship to the past were exemplified much more subtly in an experience that I had early in my fieldwork in Halifax. In 2007, the City launched a major urban planning initiative called Halifax by Design.\textsuperscript{37} Promoted as an opportunity to “design your city,” the initiative lasted two-years, solicited the participation of hundreds of city residents, and resulted in several significant changes to the management of urban space, especially in the downtown core. (I discuss the process, and the resulting changes, in Chapter 6.) At the inaugural event, held at the city’s historic Pier 21 complex, around 600 people attended. At the front of the room, a lineup of urban planners and consultants adorned a raised platform, each, at the designated moment, rising to address the seated crowd. The general message was that a better Halifax was possible and that participants in the present planning initiative would help to bring this better city into being; participants would be asked to contribute to a common vision for the city’s future, while the planners and consultants would translate these desires into appropriate changes in policies, regulations, and political processes.

While it would be naive to think that a common vision for the city could ever be created, or that city officials would take their direction fully from the participants in a public process, it did seem likely that major, far-reaching changes would result from the initiative and that the changes, to appear legitimate, would need to have some correspondence to the views of participants. If the outcome of the initiative would indeed affect nearly everyone living in Halifax, it was worth noticing, I thought, that participation seemed to be far less comprehensive. Most obviously, and quite importantly, the crowd at the event appeared to be almost entirely white – not a surprising situation, necessarily, but one that I was not the only person to remark upon and to worry about. Some of the people that I spoke to at the event expressed


\textsuperscript{36} Razzaq, “Refusing to Forget.”

\textsuperscript{37} The full name of the project is Halifax Regional Municipality by Design; I have shortened the name for convenience. I have written about the project elsewhere; see Ted Rutland, “The Financialization of Urban Revelopment,” \textit{Geography Compass} 4, no. 8 (2010): 1167-1178; Rutland, “Designs on Downtown Halifax,” \textit{Halifax Media Co-op}, 9 May 2009, \url{http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/1508}. 19
concerns about the social narrowness of the attendance, and some suggested that a better effort needed to be made to “include” absent social groups – African Nova Scotians, a group historically affected very badly by the planning decisions of the white society, in particular.

Leaving Pier 21 that night, I felt concern about two aspects of what I had experienced: both the exclusivity of the event and the suggestion that absent social groups be “included” in it. Whereas the first aspect entailed that far-reaching decisions would likely be made by a narrow, relatively privileged segment of the population – something that has long been characteristic of planning in Halifax and that has resulted periodically, if not consistently, in devastating outcomes – the second aspect seems to express a desire to fill in an evident gap, to reach a state of inclusion, without deeply considering how planning practices have been constituted precisely through the identification and evisceration of marginal groups.38

This double-bind, this pair of objectionable options, strikes me as the kind of impossible situation that can emerge when the past is “buried” rather than “dealt with.” As with the Africville apology, Halifax by Design involved no attempt to understand the present as the continuation of the past, as a carrying-forward of many of the conditions that contributed to past planning disasters.

A better relationship to the past, I think, would minimally involve a profound consideration of how certain prevalent, taken-for-granted planning concepts and processes were formed in conditions of social division, and have helped to create better living conditions for some people, while neglecting and often worsening the conditions of other people. It would ask how exclusion is carried within the very terms of planning practices and how a polite gesture of inclusion, as a result, involves its own kind of violence. This dissertation, in its excavation of the modes of knowledge and technologies of power that have historically made planning possible in Halifax, aims to begin such a consideration. I do not have a solution for the double-bind that I observed at the Halifax by Design event. I do hope, however, to provoke a disruption of planning as it now stands. I hope, in the end, to show that something other than the two options described above – continued exclusion or unreflexive inclusion – is both possible and necessary.

Before going any further, I want to emphasize that Halifax is not just a damaged city. It is also—and this is my third motivation for choosing to study Halifax—a remarkable city, a captivating city; a city of imperfect compassion and attempted solidarity; a place where the absence of a strong economy compels people to create and depend upon a multitude of non-market relationships (e.g., for goods, shelter, and entertainment); a city in which art and activism often overlap, in which political actions can be organized with a day’s notice (or less), and where street parties can emerge almost spontaneously. I am taken with Halifax, in short, and I believe in the possibility of a future for the city that is leagues more interesting and satisfying than the bland, regurgitated images presented during Halifax by Design. All of these qualities need to be affirmed, for without them there would be no point in writing about Halifax, except perhaps to encourage people to leave it (as a local think tank continues, unconscionably, to do). I focus on the damage, then, because it is not all damage, and I because I think enough people have enough attachment to the city—which is to say, to each other—to see the city significantly transformed. In other words, to paraphrase James Baldwin, it is precisely because I care about Halifax that I insist on the right to criticize it perpetually. It is this kind of spirit, at last, that motivates this work.

1.4 Relevant Literatures

My dissertation draws centrally on two specific literatures and engages critically with a third. My task in this section is to introduce these literatures and explain how they contribute to my analysis. In addition, because the two main literatures are relatively distinct, and no not refer to one another, I need to explain precisely how I propose to bring these influences together in what follows. Each literature, I will explain, brings something indispensable to my analysis of modern urban planning practices in Halifax—from an analysis of biopower in general, to a description of racialized power relations in Nova Scotia—and I believe that engaging with these literatures can help to underwrite rich and persuasive analysis.

*Foucault and the Politics of Life*

The first (and foremost) point of reference for my dissertation is Foucault’s account of what he termed “biopower” – a distinctly modern invention that, as he puts it, “[brings] life and its mechanisms into the
realm of explicit calculations and [makes] knowledge/power an agent of the transformation of human
life." While the term “biopower” first appears in Foucault’s later work (i.e., The History of Sexuality),
his interest in the appearance of “life” within the realm of certain discourses and institutions dates back to
his earliest published works, and I find his conclusions from this earlier period to be indispensable to the
interpretation of what comes later. A close reading of Foucault’s extended work on the phenomenon of
life, I want to suggest, can contribute to an analysis of urban planning as a mechanism in the management
of life – a mechanism, that is, of biopower.

For Foucault, “life” first emerges as an object of knowledge in the early modern (late seventeenth
century) medical and biological sciences. In The Order of Things, Foucault explains that “life” first be-
comes intelligible as such when an older distinction between “the organic” and “the inorganic” begins to
serve as the basis of a distinction between two new concepts: the “living” and the “non-living.” In the
modern sciences of life, Foucault writes, “the organic becomes the living and the living is that which pro-
duces, grows, reproduces; the inorganic is the non-living, that which neither develops nor reproduces; it
[i.e., the non-living] lies at the frontiers of life, the inert, the unfruitful – death.” The main terms here,
the “living” and the “non-living,” have parallels in a series of other couplets that appear in the modern life
sciences: “healthy” and “morbid,” “normal” and “pathological,” and so on. What is crucial here, there-
fore, is not the terms employed (e.g., “living” and “non-living”) so much as the particular, “bipolar” struc-
ture of knowledge in which they acquire their meaning. This structure ensures not just that various posi-
tive terms (e.g., “life,” “healthy,” “normal”) appear in relation to a negative counterpart (e.g., the “non-
living,” the “morbid,” the “pathological”), but also that the latter provide an essential condition for the
intelligibility of the former. “Life,” as a result, is always and indissolubly inter-meshed with, and stalked

40 For accounts of biopower that also turn back to Foucault’s earliest writing, see Melinda Cooper, Life as
Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era (Seattle, WA: University of Washington
Press, 2008); Tiziana Terranova, “Another Life: The Nature of Political Economy in Foucault’s Geneal-
ogy of Biopolitics,” Theory, Culture, and Society 26, no. 6 (2009): 234-262; Maurizio Lazzarato, “From
Biopower to Biopolitics,” PLI: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy 13 (2002): 100-111; Mika Ojakangas,
41 Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Routledge,
1970), 251.
42 Foucault, Order of Things, 252, emphasis added.
by, the forces of decline and death. “A living being,” Foucault writes in *The Birth of the Clinic*, is a phenomenon that “one can see degenerating.”

The entry of “life” into practices of medical and biological knowledge production already provides an empirical terrain for the exercise of power. Practitioners of modern medicine, Foucault suggests, establish a certain authority on the basis of their ostensible capacity to protect and improve human life by keeping at bay the now-opposed forces of disease, degeneration, and death. Such efforts at managing the health of individuals and populations, exerted from the birth of modern medicine itself, are an important element of what Foucault would eventually call biopower. Without using the term, therefore, Foucault is already engaged in an analysis of the deployment of biopower by doctors and other medical officials. The latter, as it turns out, were some of the first people in Halifax to propose that urban planning initiatives be used to bring about an improvement in the “moral and physical” health of certain residents (i.e., the poor and working classes). My analysis in Chapter 2, which focuses on the planning proposals of doctors and other medically concerned social reformers, draws centrally on insights from this early phase in Foucault’s work.

While the Foucault-inspired literature on biopower often remains here, focusing narrowly on biomedical conceptions of life and their affiliated techniques of intervention, Foucault is clearly interested in a broader realm of knowledge and biopower as well. Among the most important discourses to establish itself in the domain of “life” (in the wake of the bio-medical sciences) is modern political economy. The significance of modern political economy, for Foucault, lies in its excavation of the complex, two-way relationship between life and wealth: the effects of human life upon the production of wealth, and vice-versa. For Foucault, life begins to occupy a central place in political economy with the seminal works of David Ricardo. The latter is most famous, of course, for his argument that labour is the unique and fun-

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damental source of all values. In Foucault’s reading, however, it is not so much labour that Ricardo situates at the original of value as it is human life. At the origin of value, in other words, is the same living being that was earlier revealed in the bio-medical sciences: a living being who “produces, grows, [and] reproduces,” as well as “spends, wears out, and [struggles to] evade the immanence of death [i.e., the non-living].” As this suggests, the characteristics of human life comes to acquire important economic consequences in such a formulation. The wealth of a nation, in effect, comes to depend fundamentally on the lives of its workers: the length of their lives, their health and vigour, their imperviousness to illness and fatigue, their self-discipline, their rate of procreation, and an array of other attributes. To any institution concerned with the production of wealth, it becomes important to assess and manage the lives that appear at its origin.

At the same time that life comes to appear at the origin of all values, it also becomes the major end point of values: the phenomenon that the production of wealth must ultimately sustain and satisfy. Ricardo’s primary concern, in Foucault’s reading, is to explain how the economic affairs of the nation must be managed in order to sustain a national population that could easily outstrip the “spontaneous fruits of the land” and eventually perish. Present in Ricardo’s political economy, accordingly, is an attention to the dynamics of the population and the dynamics of wealth creation; his analysis straddles, as Foucault puts it, “the accumulation of capital” and “the accumulation of men,” and a significant part of his project is to show how the two processes are entangled. Beginning with Ricardo, therefore, human life becomes a kind of double entity: it becomes assessable in terms of its variable wealth-creating potential, as well as the wealth creation that it requires. As I show in Chapters 3 and 4, insights from Ricardo indeed had an (indirect) effect on urban planning initiatives in Halifax; these insights, as Foucault would

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45 Foucault, Order of Things, 280
47 Foucault, Order of Things, 279. Indeed, labour becomes important in Ricardo’s work primarily because it alone can overcome a potentially situation of resource scarcity. In the midst of an environment “that in itself is inert,” Foucault writes, “labour must grow in intensity and employ all possible means to make itself more prolific.” (Ibid.)
48 The quote is from Foucault, Knowledge/Power, 125. See also Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage, 1977), 221; Cooper, Life as Surplus, 7.
suggest, enabled planning to become a mechanism in the conjoined management of life and wealth. Early twentieth century land use decisions, I demonstrate, were often framed in terms of their ability to deliver “efficiency” and sustain a growing population, while initiatives like the provision of sewers and running water were regarded as a means of improving the health, welfare, and economic productivity of the local population.

From the early revelations of political economy and the bio-medical sciences, an ever-expanding array of discourses gradually established themselves around the phenomenon of “life” and enabled new aspects of life to be opened up to the assessments and interventions of biopower. While diverse in their points of application, these discourses are unified in at least one important respect. Like the bio-medical sciences, Foucault emphasizes, each succeeding discourse on “life” relies upon a fundamentally “bipolar” structure of knowledge: “positive” forces or elements are continually arranged against “negative” ones, with the later providing the condition of intelligibility for the former. Human life, whether analyzed in the life sciences or the social sciences, is revealed to be entangled with the forces or elements that weaken it, impede it, or degrade it. Linking an array of discourses to the biopolar structure of the bio-medical sciences, Foucault writes:

> When one spoke of the life of groups and societies, of the life of the race, or even of the “psychological life,” one did not think first of the internal structure of the organized being, but of the medical bipolarity of the normal and the pathological ... If the science of man [i.e, the social sciences] appeared as an extension of the science of life, it is because it was medically, as well as biologically, based.\(^{50}\)

In a wide array of discourses, therefore, “life” makes its appearance in relation to specific norms that it is imagined either to honour or betray. Human beings either exhibit norms, or fall short. They either uphold a social or biological order, or they threaten to undermine it. As Foucault stresses, norms (and their betrayal) provide an essential principle of intelligibility within an array of discourses on life; to the extent that norms help to make life intelligible, moreover, they also help to make it manageable.\(^{51}\) The techniques of biopower, as we will see, find their targets amid a field opened up in this way.

\(^{50}\) Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 41.

When, at last, Foucault introduces the concept of “biopower,” it is clearly a continuation of his longer-standing interest in the fields of knowledge that render life intelligible and the techniques of power that seek to control and manage it. He does, however, introduce an important distinction at this point: a distinction between two “modes” of biopower and their associated discourses and practices. The first mode, “anatomo-politics” or simply “discipline,” is defined principally by its targeting of living beings as individuals. Its aim is to enhance, train, modify, and extract the forces of individual bodies, and its means of achieving these aims tend to involve direct surveillance, interventions, or threatened interventions. The purveyors of disciplinary power, finally, are liable to include a vast “archipelago” of “local” institutions and individuals, from prison guards and teachers, to doctors and clergy.

Consistent with his earlier investigations, Foucault emphasizes the indispensable role of norms within disciplinary regimes of power. On the basis of norms, first of all, individual lives are assessed; they are “qualified” as either normal or abnormal, and they are delivered to particular spaces or institutions on these grounds. The fate of ostensibly abnormal individuals, Foucault suggests, is liable to include relegation to specific “spaces of exclusion” (e.g., the asylum, the reformatory, the approved school, the model housing complex). “All the authorities exercising individual [disciplinary] control,” Foucault writes, “function according to a double mode: that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be ... etc.).” More than simply branding and distributing individuals, however, norms also provide a means of correcting, reforming, or otherwise “normalizing” the abnormal. Once individuals are branded as abnormal, norms provide a model against which they can be evaluated, trained, and gradually brought in line with prevailing norms. In the context of disciplinary power, Foucault explains, “the norm brings with it a principle of both qualification and correction.” The norm’s function is not simply “to exclude and reject,” but also to configure techniques of “intervention and transformation,” a strategic

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53 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 249.
“normative project.” It is precisely such practices of qualification and correction, a distinctly “disciplinary” form of urban planning, that I investigate in Chapter 2.

The second mode of biopower, which Foucault calls “biopolitics,” is defined primarily by its targeting of living beings as an “aggregate” or “mass” (e.g., populations, species, or communities). Rather than studying individuals and acting upon them directly, moreover, biopolitical power seeks to comprehend human life through forms of knowledge that disclose and assess the characteristics of broad aggregates, and to manage life through relatively indirect strategies – by acting upon, as Foucault puts it, “factors and elements that seem far removed from the population itself and its immediate behaviour.” Biopolitics, finally, is exercised primarily by the state (including the “municipal” state); it is, as others have suggested, what biopower looks like when it comes into the hands of the emerging welfare state.

Norms, though they remain indispensable, play a somewhat different role in the operation of biopolitical power. Rather than qualifying and correcting individuals, norms are sought out within an array of processes or conditions that are conceived to have effects upon the population. A normal “mortality rate,” for example, might be used to assess the lives of a particular population and (if necessary) calibrate interventions. A standard population density might be used to evaluate whether certain neighbourhoods are unsuitably “overcrowded,” and whether planning interventions are required to preserve the moral and physical health of the residents (and, thereby, the overall community). As these examples suggest, norms can appear within the dynamics of the population itself, or amid the material/spatial conditions that are perceived to affect populations. Urban planning, as I will show in this dissertation, quite often relies on both.

A clear emphasis in Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics is the role of “racial” categories in the assessment, differentiation, and management of populations. With the rise of biopolitics, Foucault suggests, older ideas about races are redefined and put to new uses. The dominant race in a population becomes, in

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57 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 72.
58 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 250; François Ewald, Histoire de l'État providence: Les origines de la solidarité (Paris: Librarie Générale Française, 1996); Rabinow, French Modern, 8.
59 Rabinow, French Modern, 37-38.
this context, the effective norm – the single “normal” race, in contrast to which other “sub-races” are perceived to be aberrations whose existence and reproduction threaten to dilute the condition of the overall population. Through the deployment of this new, modern or “state” racism, the overall population can be broken up into parts. Distinct “races” can be marked off, each with their own (assumed) group-level characteristics. With such divisions established, it becomes conceivable to manage the population and its characteristics by augmenting or decreasing the preponderance of particular races within the totality. In order to produce a more healthy, productive population, for example, state racism might be wedded to a variety of strategies: eugenics policies might be introduced to curtail the reproduction of specific groups; immigration quotas might be set to favour certain races over others; or life-improving initiatives like health care, clean water provision, or sewerage might be provided to some groups, while overlooking others. In all of these cases, the discourse of “races” serves to fragment or “create caesuras” within the domain of aggregate life such that biopolitical strategies can be deployed selectively: improving the lives of favoured groups, while depriving or gradually eliminating the lives of others. I examine the unrolling of race-based biopolitical strategies in Chapter 4.

Racism is clearly a major concern in Foucault’s work on biopolitics. Indeed, some scholars have argued that this work was initiated primarily in order to address the problem of racism that deeply concerned Foucault during this period of his scholarly and activist career. However, the operation of state racism unquestionably needs to be situated and understood within the larger “normalizing” project that inaugurates and sustains it. What distinguishes sub-races in the context of biopolitical power, Foucault emphasizes, is their perceived effects upon the overall population. In this respect, crucially, they are liable to be joined by an array of other sub-populations that are not identified by racial characteristics, but that also perceived to weaken or impair the overall population: criminals, the insane, sexual deviants, and so on. In certain places, in fact, it seems that Foucault wants to use the concept of state racism to under-

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61 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 255.
63 For Foucault, Stoler emphasizes, “modern racism is the historical outcome of a normalizing society.” *Race and the Education of Desire*, 35.
stand the branding and exclusion of all the “abnormals” that he had earlier examined. State racism, he suggests at one point, need not have anything much to do with biologically defined races. Rather, it is a “biological-type relationship,” a conception of human difference that regards the diminution of “the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) [as] something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.”65 In the context of the Soviet Union, for example, Foucault argues that “racism – not a truly ethnic racism, but racism of the evolutionist kind, biological racism – [was] fully operational” in the Stalin regime’s treatment the “mentally ill, criminals, political adversaries, and so on.”66

As this suggests, a vast series of social divisions are gathered together by Foucault under the single heading, “state racism.” This is clearly an unconventional approach, and I find it both fruitful and limiting in the context of this dissertation. Its fruitfulness comes from the similarities that it recognizes between various forms of differentiation and their connection to relations of power. Foucault’s analysis of state racism is best seen as a continuation of his larger concern with norms and normalization.67 Racial categories, for Foucault, are a way of recognizing norms (and their betrayal) within populations, and they are not entirely different from other categories of difference in this respect. In both modes of biopower, disciplinary and biopolitical, norms enable human life to be evaluated and managed; they allow human beings to be assessed, divided up, and subjected to differentiated forms of intervention. These operations, whether based on imputed bio-racial differences or not, are “biological-type” in the sense that they cleave superior forms of life from inferior, and positive population-level processes from negative.

Recognizing such general processes of differentiation is important to this dissertation. In Chapter 2, for example, I examine how the residents of a downtown “slum” were perceived by middle-class reformers as a lesser form of life. These residents were largely “white.” Their major difference from the reformers was one of social class, not race. And yet, their lives were nevertheless set off from the broader population; they were attributed certain differences that allowed their subjecthood to be denied and put others (the middle-class reformers) in the position of overseeing and managing their lives. Assessed in

65 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 255, emphasis added.
66 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 261-262.
67 Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 62.
relation to “normal” lives, the residents of the slum appeared aberrant and could be treated differently on this basis. Differences of social class, in this context, operated very similarly to those of race. Both class and race helped to enact caesuras in the population, to divide the normal from the sub-normal.

While fruitful to some extent, Foucault’s approach to social differentiation is also limited. There is a danger, I would suggest, in collapsing all categories of difference into one. For one thing, the suggestion that white people can be subject to racism risks fitting into highly problematic and analytically incoherent contemporary arguments about “reverse racism” (i.e., arguments that treat the criticism of white racism by people of colour as tantamount to racism, a criticism of people rather than their practices). More importantly, it risks eliding potentially important differences in the significance and meaning of dominant social categories. Both class and race, for example, can underwrite the eviction of certain people from the category of normal life. As I detail in Chapter 4, however, this eviction can take different forms. Whereas the (white, working-class and poor) residents of the downtown slum were perceived to be pathological but improvable, the (black, working-class and poor) residents of Africville were perceived to be inherently pathological. Accordingly, the 1915 plan to redevelop Africville departed significantly from the 1905 plan to redevelop the downtown slum. The latter was meant to improve the residents of the slum through improved housing; the former seems to ignore that Africville residents were “lives” at all.

It is important, I think, to grasp the similarities between social categories in the purview of biopower, as well as their differences. It is helpful, in other words, to gather a variety of differentiations under the heading “state racism” only to the extent that it allows their similarities and their connection to biopower to be recognized, while remaining attuned to the potentially fine distinctions in their significance and meaning. To be a “lesser” life might mean something different for a group distinguished by class than one distinguished by race. It may mean something different, moreover, from one “non-white”
race to another (e.g., Asian Canadians versus African Canadians). The presumed basis of a group’s distinction from the broader population, finally, may be subject to change. As Ignatiev’s seminal contribution on racialization demonstrates, a racial difference at one point in time may be effaced (or reinterpreted as a class or ethnic difference) at a later date. The Irish, his analysis shows, were not always “white” in North America or Europe. Rather, they were admitted to this category in the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (and received very different treatment from the state, as a result). Ignatiev’s fine-grained attention to categories of difference makes an important general addendum to Foucault’s analysis, and I enlist it explicitly in Chapter 4 to account for the differing social positions of Irish and African Nova Scotian residents of Halifax in the nineteenth century.

Recognizing the imputed boundaries between normal and abnormal or superior and inferior – however these boundaries happen to be constituted – is clearly essential to an analysis of biopower. These boundaries allow biopower to operate, and they are liable to become the fortifications across which violence takes place. Violence, while it is sometimes downplayed in Foucault’s work, makes an important appearance in his analysis of biopower in three places. The first is the violence of deprivation: the denial to certain individuals or groups of the conditions or experiences that are made available to the population in general, and that are conceived to be essential to human life in a particular context. The second form of violence is degradation: the deliberate exposure of certain individuals or groups to dangerous living conditions, impediments to good health or welfare, or major restrictions on movement or activity. Whereas deprivation would make people’s lives relatively worse (i.e., worse in relation to the improving condition of the general population), degradation would create an absolute worsening. In both cases, the accom-

70 On Foucault’s hesitations about the concept of violence, see Thomas Flynn, Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason: Toward an Existentialist Theory of History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Consider also the vast contrast between the pre-disciplinary and disciplinary modes of punishment that are described in the opening pages of Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. My understanding of violence and biopower stems primarily from Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, 256.
plice to violence is the idea that the affected are abnormal or inferior; their lives do not require protection or improvement because they do not qualify as “lives” at all. These two forms of violence, this dissertation will suggest, have often been effected through urban planning practices in Halifax. The third form of violence, less relevant to this dissertation, is decimation: the explicit killing-off of certain individuals or groups. While modern planning could sometimes been seen as responsible for deaths in Halifax, I do not believe that killing people was ever an outright planning goal in the modern period. The pre-modern, colonial period is another story.

Foucault’s account of biopower is, I think, exceptionally relevant to the study of urban planning practices in Halifax. My rationale for drawing on this work, and drawing on it centrally, is threefold. To begin with, Foucault himself draws a close connection between planning and biopower. In his foremost study of disciplinary power – one mode, as I noted, of biopower – the calculated management of lived space is famously shown to be a central mechanism for training bodies and extracting their forces. Especially relevant to my investigation is Foucault’s claim that early urban planning interventions like model working-class housing estates are paradigmatic examples of “the disciplinary mechanisms that function throughout [modern] society.” I pursue this claim, asserted more than substantiated in Discipline and Punish, in Chapter 2. In the case of biopolitical power, the connection to urban planning is even more pronounced. Indeed, Foucault suggests that the management of urban space is the “primary technique” through which the biopolitical state attempts to bring about effects at the level of aggregate life. Further emphasizing this relationship, Foucault goes so far as to identify the author of a 1778 urban planning text as “the first great theorist of what we could call biopolitics.” To examine urban planning as a technology of biopower, in either of its modes, is clearly consistent with Foucault’s project. Accordingly, my engagement with this work not only helps me to analyze planning in Halifax, but also allows me to contribute to the literature on biopower (which, due to its tendency to focus narrowly on bio-medical interventions, only seldom looks at urban planning).

71 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 298, 171.
72 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 22-23.
73 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 22.
My second rationale for drawing on Foucault’s work is that planners themselves, along with planning theorists and critics, have consistently identified the protection and/or improvement of life as their primary concern. Thomas Adams, a pivotal figure in early twentieth century urban planning, famously described his nascent profession’s major role as “the conservation of life.”74 “Life,” for Adams, was a broad category, encompassing both human and nonhuman elements. To “conserve” life (in its many forms) meant to eliminate or regulate the processes that led to it being wasted, depleted, or degraded. Many of the problems plaguing cities, Adams thought, stemmed from planners’ penchant for allowing, and indeed enabling, inefficient forms of urban development. (Adams was particular unnerved by “the disease of land speculation.”75) Rather than bowing to narrow economic interests, Adams thought that planners ought to manage urban processes and urban space in the interest of cities’ overall prosperity, health, and contentment. Nearly a century later, progressive planning practitioners, theorists, and critics continually extol the capacity and responsibility of well-conceived planning practices to improve cities’ “quality of life” while consistently decrying what they see as deviations from this priority – deviations that ostensibly result from either the interference of economic priorities or the reliance on faulty “modern-ist” rationalities.

Foucault, it should be clear, presents a very different analysis of urban planning’s self-ascribed function. Again, it is not that Foucault rejects the improvement of life as a social goal. He is interested, however, in examining what is at stake in certain conceptions of “life,” as well as in certain efforts (on the part of philanthropists, doctors, planners, or the state) to manage this entity, “life.” Moreover, he wants to consider (as I do) whether at least some of the violence and subjugation in modern societies is attributable, not to a deviation from life-improving objectives, but rather to their attempted fulfillment. That planning itself describes its aim in terms of biopower – though without using the term, and without considering the stakes that might be involved – is a second reason to engage with Foucault’s more wary consideration of such practices.

74 Adams, Municipal and Real Estate Finance.
75 Adams, Municipal and Real Estate Finance, 14.
Above all, I find Foucault’s analysis helpful in coming to terms with the peculiar, seemingly paradoxical character of modern urban planning: its capacity to enact immense damage in the innocent name of protection, repair, or improvement. For Foucault, this apparent paradox is related to the configurations of knowledge and power that make life intelligible (and, thus, manageable). “Life,” as I explained above, is apprehended between the binary poles of “normal” and “abnormal.” It is conceived as a positive process of development and growth that must be protected from the forces that ostensibly impair or divert it. As Foucault stresses, the region beyond “life” – the individuals branded as abnormal, or the subpopulations labelled as inferior – does not seem to deserve the care of biopower, and it may even be inflicted with various forms of violence in the name of caring for “life in general.” State racism, as I noted, is one important mechanism for fragmenting the domain of life under the power’s control, but others are liable to arise as well. The major task is to examine how lives are conceived and differentiated in particular contexts and how power is deployed upon this differentiated biopolitical terrain. The central conclusion of Foucault’s work on biopolitics, in my view, is that the improvement of life is not at all incompatible with the dismissal or destruction of certain lives – and, indeed, the latter can be a condition of achieving the former. That such a paradox is evident in the operation of urban planning, in Halifax and elsewhere, makes this work an important resource in this dissertation.

The achievement of biopower’s objectives, in sum, is often sought through the management of urban space. Planning, in this case, can become one of biopower’s foremost accomplices. The effects of biopower, partly because of the way that life has been conceived, might include better living conditions for many people, along with worsening, precariousness-inducing conditions for others. These are important insights for my inquiry, and I draw them primarily from Foucault. My engagement with Foucault is not an uncritical one, however; nor do I find it sufficient to address all of my concerns. Other points of reference, to which I now turn, are also important.

**George Elliott Clarke: Remembering the Damage**

My second point of reference is located much closer to home – although one of its effects, as I will suggest, is to unsettle the ground on which any possible “home” might be established. Poet, novelist, and es-
sayist George Elliott Clarke grew up in Halifax’s North End, and his writing is indelibly marked by his experience of this city and the surrounding province. I have turned consistently to Clarke’s writing, both before I began this dissertation as well as throughout the process of writing it, in search of a guide to the city that I was hoping to understand and a critical strategy appropriate to the specificities of its historical geography. Specificity, for Clarke, is indeed paramount. He notes, for example, that “modernity” in Nova Scotia has not been a singular or homogenous historical process. Whereas its unfolding may have meant “progress” for the province’s dominant society, Clarke suggests, for African Nova Scotians in the province “the advent of modernity ... was marked, not by the founding of a university or the election of a premier, but by the bulldozers of ‘progress’ destroying the Seaview United Baptist Church and the entire community of Africville at the end of the 1960s in the name of integration and urban development.”76 The figure of the “bulldozer” is a recurrent one in Clarke’s writing, and it serves primarily as a symbol and reminder of the always-polyvalent character of historical-geographical change in Nova Scotia.77 In the bulldozer, Clarke suggests, the instrument of “progress” (for the center) and “catastrophe” (for the margins) are fused.

And yet, for Clarke, there is no single “margin,” and even the “center” is a kind of margin too. The dominant society in a place like Halifax, Clarke recognizes, is dominated itself by more concentrated centers of economic, political, and cultural capital in Canada and abroad. “Maritimers,” he once argued, “live degrees of marginality. We are the Maritime region relative to Toronto, but we are the Canadian margin in regards to the States.”78 His own social position, moreover, cannot be grasped by the term “marginal” or even “African Nova Scotian.” Ethnically, he describes his background as “seventh-generation Canadian of African origin,” but also emphasizes his Mi’kmaq and Caribbean heritage;79 socially, his marginal position as a descendant of “black” migrants to Nova Scotia must be measured against

the prior (and continued) dispossession of the Mi’kmaq and Acadian inhabitants of the land that his ancestors came to occupy, and culturally, his formation as a subject and a writer has been shaped by a polyglot of sources, including the cultural output of other marginal communities (e.g., African-American music and literature) as well as the various dominant literatures (e.g., Euro-Canadian, British) that he has sought, as he puts it, to “sack and plunder” in his own writing. Even if an African Nova Scotian subject or “people” could be identified within such “degrees of marginality,” finally, its retrieval would tend to efface the many severe divisions – geographic, ethnic, gender, class, religious, and so on – that occur within it.

Attentive to this heterogeneous social situation, and consistent with the work of certain postcolonial theorists, Clarke sees “the margin” as such as unrepresentable. His term for African Nova Scotians, “Africadians,” suggests both a rejection of the simplistic, hyphenated identities of Canadian multiculturalism, as well as an assertion that group identities are always, at best, a necessary fiction. Hence, rather than only seeking to disrupt dominant narratives by asserting, or privileging, a certain marginal “understory” – documenting, for example, the catastrophe (for the margins) that occurs in lockstep with progress (for the centre) – his approach assumes that the recovered “margin,” too, must ultimately be disrupted (lest it create, and efface, its own margin). Describing the critical dimension of his work, Clarke suggests that the aim is a “treason” of accepted understandings, but a necessarily unfinished one: “a treason,” as he puts it, “that betrays itself constantly.”

Geography, as others have noted, is central to Clarke’s writing, and his writing of specific geographies is perhaps the clearest and most impressive evidence of his practice of “constant betrayal.” Like the dominant narrative of “progress,” Clarke suggests, the Nova Scotia landscape has a recognized and unrecognized dimensions. The appearance of this landscape to the “untrained eye,” he remarks, “hides

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81 Compton, “Standing Your Ground,” 143.
and shrouds” the violent history through which it was produced: a history that unfolds from the original dispossession of the Mi’kmaq, through the subsequent expulsion of the Acadians and the eventual brutalization of black slave labour. It is a “great beautiful landscape,” he suggests, “but behind it or beneath it is this incredible history of sometimes great pain and tragedy.” Clarke’s writing practice is partly an attempt to recover, or remember, these geographies of the past – and, in so doing, to transform the geographies of the present. In the introduction to his epic poem, Whylah Falls, he describes his project as an attempt to remember the precise and everyday details of the fictionalized black community that is named in the poem’s title (a pseudonym, some commentators have argued, for Africville).

In truth, I was trying to remember, I was trying to remember, a shy woman’s smile and an oval, maple table of thickness and sheen ... Suddenly, I could see a radical woman’s gift of coffee, beans, and wiener, her country blues, her blue denim, her pink hair curlers, her white cotton robe, her goldfish, her mathematical intellect, her bluebell-brilliant earth, her tired tractors put out to pasture, her cornbread smelling like sunrise in the night of a pan, her bed swimming with mackerel, her moonshine tasting of sweat and run and rosewater, her coconut oil pomade, her Bible of roses ...

In the course of his remembering, and his writing, a community and a geography come into being. The completion of Whylah Falls, Clarke explains, brought with it not just “the cessation of [poetic] creation,” but also “the cessation of exile.” Exile ceases, by definition, with the reclaiming of place. And if, as he suggests, places like Whylah Falls have been absent from the dominant representation and apprehension of the Nova Scotia landscape – if their existence as places has been effaced or denied – then Clarke is attempting to write an entire community into place and thereby out of exile. Or partly so, for there is, in Clarke’s view, no final or complete return. The margin, for him, is not fully recoverable, and the practice of “treason” must continue forever to betray itself. Indeed, in the provocative final line of an important poem about violence, Clarke seems to suggest that modernity’s “bulldozers of progress” have had effects that can never be fully or finally undone. “Let the damage be remembered,” he writes, “for we are damaged.” The practice of remembering, like the practice of treason, is never complete.

84 McNair, “Interview with George Elliott Clarke.”
85 Ibid.
86 Clarke, Whylah Falls, xii.
87 Clarke, Whylah Falls, xxv.
88 George Elliott Clarke, Black (Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books, 2006), 112.
“Let the damage be remembered” strikes me as fitting advice for a historical treatment of urban planning in Halifax, and it is indeed the inspiration for the title of this dissertation. And yet, the heeding of this advice would clearly entail something different for myself than for Clarke. As a dominant subject in several ways (e.g., in terms of race, class, and gender), I cannot straightforwardly take up Clarke’s strategy of writing himself and his “semi-fictional” community out of exile. Indeed, the history of European-descended people in Halifax is only too well remembered and emplaced at present: from the Pier 21 museum, which commemorates the arrival of immigrants to the city’s shores at a time when non-European populations were specifically discouraged from making such a journey, to the historic military fort atop Citadel Hill that prominently and not-so-subtly celebrates British military supremacy in the Maritime region (and thus the decimation of the Mi’kmaq) while failing to recognize the more diverse population that participated in the building and maintenance of the fort over its centuries-long existence, an ethnically singular representation of Halifax history is nearly everywhere represented at the expense of the city’s other, less predominant communities. The displacement and exile that Clarke depicts as his situation is, to a great extent, an effect of the emplacement and non-exile of European descended people in Halifax. It is not, therefore, through straight emulation that I can heed Clarke’s advice in this dissertation.

There are, I would suggest, two potential critical strategies in Clarke’s writing that seem to avail themselves to a European-Canadian author. The first is to examine the historical production of “centers” and “margins” within dominant spatial practices like urban planning. This would mean, in particular, describing how the modes of knowledge that planning comes to rely upon often entail positions of centrality and marginality – how, in other words, the constitution of planning knowledge makes it possible for certain subjects to speak intelligibly, while denying others the same possibility. It is precisely such an intertwining of centrality and marginality, proper knowledge and subjugated knowledge, that Clarke seems to gesture toward in his writing about Nova Scotia (e.g., in the figure of the bulldozer and the “progress” that it seemed to heralded to people who were unable or unwilling to listen to the perspectives of those whose lives were about to be ripped apart by the machine). Whereas Clarke aims to write an exiled community into recognition, however, my aim is to create openings toward the writing and speaking of others
by documenting the creation of the margins that silence and subjugate others. Throughout this dissertation, my analysis seeks to connect the making of margins to the making of centers, to demonstrate how it becomes possible for planners and other dominant subjects to act on the condition that others cannot do the same. From social surveys of the Halifax “slums” in the early twentieth century (Chapter 2) to practices of public participation in the 1970s (Chapter 5), I show how the silencing and subjugation of certain knowledges was an important condition of the production of proper, predominant knowledge.

Tracking moments of epistemic subjugation is clearly consistent with Foucault’s project, from his work on “madness” to his analysis of biopower. Indeed, Clarke’s distinction between centers and margins could reasonably be described as mapping onto Foucault’s conception of “life” and its “outside.” Part of what Clarke’s writing contributes to this dissertation is his affirmation of the relevance of Foucault’s more European-focused analysis to the history of Nova Scotia, as well as his emphasis on the specific spatiality of subjugation in the latter context. As Clarke suggests, to be subjugated in Nova Scotia is to be denied the possibility of representing one’s place, and often to give up one’s place as a consequence. In Africville, and many other places, a representation of space that could not accommodate the perspectives of marginal residents helped to open up that space to the designs of planners and (eventually) the displacement of the area’s inhabitants. An analysis of urban planning as a technology of biopower must, therefore, come to terms with the materials and symbolic displacement of marginal subjects – whether this occurs through conceptions of “life,” conceptions of space, or some combination of the two. Only then can the creation of centers and margins within dominant spatial practices be adequately “betrayed.”

A second strategy that emerges in Clarke’s writing is to disclose the collective experiences that cut across the divisions of centre and margin, and that, as such, open up possibilities for mutual recognition and ethico-political solidarity. As Clarke suggests, marginality in Nova Scotia is a matter of “degrees,” with even dominant subjects living in some degree of subservience to dominant subjects elsewhere (e.g., in Montreal, Toronto, or New York). As uncritical as it might seem to point out the marginality of all subjects in Halifax, I believe there are merits in doing so. For one thing, my analysis shows that some of the most important and damaging urban planning initiatives in Halifax have been devised to improve collective “life” on the premise that if it were not improved, then residents would be compelled to
seek a better life elsewhere, and the city would eventually cease to exist. In other words, while displacement has clearly been experienced overwhelmingly by marginal subjects, it has often been anticipated and dreaded even by very privileged people. This seemingly widely shared sense of vulnerability to displacement has much to do with Halifax being a marginal place in relation to wealthier cities, and it could provide an opportunity for dominant and marginal subjects to recognize one another as living beings – something that biopower seems to occlude. To the extent, that is, that dominant subjects believe themselves to be vulnerable to displacement, it may be possible for them to recognize the displacement that others have actually lived, and to recognize them as living beings (like themselves) as a result. Bringing attention to the context-specific experiences that cut across the divisions of center and margin is a strategy that Judith Butler has recently suggested as an antidote to the violence of biopower.⁸⁹ I draw this insight largely from Clarke, however, and I believe it may be a fruitful strategy in Halifax. I explore this possibility, in earnest, in Chapter 6.

Spectres of Jacobs and Harvey

This dissertation also engages with two other literatures, though in a substantially different way than with the work of Foucault and Clarke. There is, first of all, a critique of planning internal to the discipline and profession itself. Such a critique is evident from the earliest years of modern planning, and it extends unabated into the present. When Halifax planner Francis Doane informed City Council in 1915 that planning was not about constructing “expensive boulevards and parks available only for the rich” but rather about achieving “efficiency” in the overall development of the city, he was not only reciting the positive message of Thomas Adams (whom he had just encountered in Toronto).⁹⁰ He was also reciting Adams’s critique of a form of planning that indeed focused on the construction of parks, boulevards, and monuments (a form of planning that is often remembered as City Beautiful).⁹¹ Later on, yet another form of planning would seek to establish itself on the grounds of a critique of the planning rationalities that Adams and Do-

⁸⁹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.
⁹⁰ Halifax, Minutes, 9 June 1914, 48.
ane had espoused. Emerging prominently in the 1960s, this critique is often associated with Jane Jacobs, but it was developed and propagated by many others as well.92 Here, planning is chided precisely for its emphasis on rational order and efficiency; what this form of planning overlooks, according to Jacobs, is the order that emerges spontaneously from the actual decisions and interactions of neighbours (not from abstract mathematical models or biological metaphors).

While I think it is important to recognize these critiques as they emerge in practice, I do not draw upon the work of planning theorists and practitioners in the development of my own critique of planning. One reason that I distance myself from this work is that I am deeply uncomfortable with the critiques and reformulations advanced by planning figures like Adams and Jacobs. There is certainly something compelling about this work, especially that of Jacobs. Her vision of well-planned neighbourhoods contains much that I have observed and appreciated in the places that I have called home over the years. However, I also recognize that I am a rather privileged city resident (even when my income as a student has been small or non-existent), and I worry that a vision like Jacobs’s not only expresses the ideals of rather privileged people, but also depends on the exclusion and subordination of other people. This was clearly the case in Jacobs’s activism. In her struggle to save Greenwich Village from the onslaught of urban renewal, she actively excluded and sought to discredit a major tenants’ association that supported urban renewal on the (possibly ill-founded) rationale that it would provide low-cost rental housing.93 Her proposed alternative to urban renewal, moreover, bears the imprint of such exclusions. This alternative, a process of incremental investment in home improvement that she called “unslumming,” can only be entreated by people who own their homes and have the resources to invest in them. Tenants, certainly, have no place in this vision.

Much of the “order” that Jacobs suggests emerges spontaneously from neighbourhood interactions, finally, seems in fact to be premised on structures of violence that her analysis both effaces and (in this effacement) naturalizes. It is helpful, for example, to read Jacobs’s explanation of how “eyes on the street” naturally reduces crime rates alongside James Baldwin’s writing on New York from the same pe-

riod. Whereas Jacobs believes that the physical presence of neighbours on the street or peering out of windows reduces crime in neighbourhoods like hers, Baldwin discusses the role of police officers in maintaining South Manhattan as a relatively privileged space. When Baldwin, a middle-class African American, attempts to pass from Harlem to South Manhattan, he is assaulted by police officers and told to “stay out.”

(One can easily imagine what would happen to a Harlem African American without Baldwin’s class privilege.)

Similar critiques could, I think, be levied against other planning theorists and practitioners, and I favour the work of Foucault and Clarke over the latter for this reason. Another, more important reason to take some distance from this work is that it often has a direct, observable influence on the planning practices that I examine in this dissertation. It is, in other words, an important element of the forms of power and knowledge that I seek to diagnose. Jacobs’s ideas, for example, are present in the emerging form of planning that I examine in Chapter 5. Some of the activists who promoted this new form of planning actually read Jacobs’s work and were influence by it; others recognized an affinity between their vision and that of Jacobs, but claimed to have arrived at this vision without reading her work. Here, as in other parts of this dissertation, it is important to see how planning ideas are incorporated into practices and initiatives, and how they contribute therefore to the operation of biopower. Hence, the main reason that I cannot draw upon the work of planning theorists and practitioners to develop an analysis is that they are often part of the worlds that I seek to analyze. I cannot simultaneously examine how certain planning ideas help to shape planning practices and also use these ideas to found a critique. My approach in this dissertation, therefore, is to situate planning theories in the processes that I seek to critique (when they are part of these processes), rather than using them to develop the critique itself. This is not to say that planning practitioners never have a positive contribution to make. It is simply to say that this contribution, when it exists, needs to be coupled with a vigilant recognition of its limits and its participation in relations of power. It is this kind of recognition that I aim to enable in this dissertation.

A second literature that I engage with in a similar way is the work of David Harvey and his still unsurpassed analysis of the connections between urban planning and capital accumulation. Given the tremendous influence of Harvey’s work in geography and urban studies and my own appreciation for it, it is important to explain how it fits into this dissertation. My engagement here is similar to my engagement with planning theory, but it has a slightly different and much more affirmative objective in mind. It was Harvey’s work that first drew me to the discipline of geography, and I continue to find his work rich and compelling. In the course of my research, I sometimes considered drawing deeply on his work, or else appending it to Foucault’s work. Ultimately, I decided otherwise. Partly, this is simply because I find Foucault’s work more helpful when it comes to assessing the particular practices that interest me here. As I want to explain, however, there are also elements of Harvey’s analysis that I think need to be interrogated and that Foucault’s work can help to interrogate. While it might be tempting to draw on both Foucault and Harvey, moreover, I think there are good reasons to keep the two approaches apart. My aim, in the end, is to produce an analysis of urban planning that complements and sympathetically critiques Harvey’s work, rather than draws upon it. My rationale in this strategy warrants further explanation.

When it comes to the analysis of urban planning, the most important difference between Foucault and Harvey is methodological. They approach planning in different ways. Whereas Foucault (in his work on biopower) invites us to examine how planning seeks to protect and improve the condition of human life, Harvey is interested in how planning comes to fulfill more explicitly economic objectives. As Harvey makes clear, his analysis takes capitalist social relations as its starting point, and proceeds to consider how planning is involved in the production and reproduction of these relations. Capitalist processes, Harvey argues, have certain spatial requirements (e.g., facilities, ports and roadways, an efficient organization of

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95 Harvey, “The Ideology of Planning.” Michael Dear and Allen Scott lay out a Marxist approach to urban planning that Harvey indeed pursued. “Modern urban phenomena are comprehensible only in the context of some prior analysis of the production and reproduction relations of capitalism,” they write. “In short, urbanization is decipherable only as a mediated outcome of the social dynamics and imperatives of the capitalist mode of production in specific conjunctural circumstances.” “Towards a Framework for Analysis,” in Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1981), 4. Underlining the particular starting point of Marxist approaches to urban planning, Kevin Gotham writes: “The work of Marxists helped focus scholarly attention on the capitalist system of for-profit production generally, and class struggle and capital accumulation specifically, as analytical starting points for understanding the nature of urban redevelopment and disinvestment.” “Urban Redevelopment: Past and Present,” Critical Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment 6 (2001): 3.
industrial, commercial, and residential land uses), and not all of them are easily or efficiently provided by capitalists themselves. There is a role, therefore, for urban planners to fulfill certain spatial requirements, and capital will tend to be attracted to cities that fulfill these requirements particularly well.

In the movement of capital from place to place, in its touching-down in some places and its departure from others, the fate of cities clearly hangs in the balance. A city’s ability to attract capital is, Harvey argues, the basic prerequisite for achieving a wide range of political objectives. The investment of capital in a city tends to sustain not simply the profit-making of local capitalists, but also the availability of local employment, the extent of municipal tax revenues, and the ability of municipalities to provide citizen-pleasing services and amenities. What hitches together the interests of capital and the practices of planners, Harvey concludes, is the profound dependence of cities upon the attraction of capital in a situation in which capital is relatively mobile (at least in the medium term). Planners, in this situation, may not want to remake the city in the image of capital, and they may not understand precisely how to do so, but the structure of capitalist urbanization gives them a very strong incentive to try.96

In tracing a line between capitalist social relations and urban planning, Harvey provides a compelling and remarkably nuanced treatment of the subordination of the latter to the former. As an analysis of the connection between capitalism and planning, Harvey’s work is unsurpassed. As an analysis of planning, however, it is also rather narrow. The issue is not so much that Harvey ignores other potential influences upon planning, but rather that he leaves other influence unproblematic. In its meticulous attention to the problems of capitalism, Harvey’s analysis ends up suggesting that the problem with planning is only that it serves the interests of capital, and that in situations in which planning is not serving such interests it must be socially beneficial, or at least benign. Indicative of this orientation, Harvey often describes planning initiatives under a binary set of headings: those that are “purely capitalistic in method, intent, and result,” versus those that are “well-intended and benevolent.”97 Such a typology seems to ignore the possibility that planning may involve practices that are not “purely capitalistic,” and that might indeed be extremely “well-intended,” but that are nevertheless violent or otherwise objectionable in their

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96 Harvey, “Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 16.
97 Harvey, “Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 16.
effects. Moreover, Harvey seems at times to acknowledge the biopolitical character of modern urban planning – explaining, for example, that planning has often “vaunt[ed] is capacities to create a new species of human being,” or that the state, partly through planning, has tended to position itself as “the guardian of all further advances in human welfare” – but his major concern with these aims is either that they were not fulfilled (due to the exigencies of capitalism) or that they were never really aims at all.  

Whereas Foucault urges us to interrogate the implications of biopower, Harvey leaves this form of power unproblematized and seems to propose state-wielded biopower as a promising post-capitalist scenario. The stakes in this approach, in other words, are not just analytical, but political as well. An analysis, like Harvey’s, that starts out from capitalist social relations and moves upward to urban planning tends to support a practical political program that seeks only to remove the influence of capitalism upon political affairs. Indeed, in various places this is precisely what Harvey proposes: a working-class or “progressive” takeover of the municipal state and its planning functions that would free the state apparatus to pursue socially beneficial objectives. While I would not want to rule out such a project, and while it could certainly be a positive short term or tactical move in certain circumstances, I would want to worry a bit more about the epistemic and institutional structures that would be occupied and potentially maintained here. More specifically, I would want to consider what forms of domination or violence might be unleashed once urban planning is released from the constraints of capital and is thereby free, among other things, to “create a new species of human being.” In Halifax, this dissertation will suggest, there has existed a form of power that speaks in noble words and a form of violence that is sometimes so silent that it goes unrecognized. It is important, analytically and politically, to bring these, too, to one’s attention.

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98 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Blackwell, 1991), 70. The rather narrow critique of the state in Harvey’s work has been recognized for some time. Mark Gottdiener suggests that “in the entire corpus of Harvey’s writing, the state’s ontological status is as the agent of capital in general. Thus Harvey’s view does not progress beyond a traditional marxist notion of the state as the agent of the ruling class.” *The Social Production of Urban Space* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1984), 98. Harvey seems to respond to this critique in “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” but his response involves a more complex analysis of the impingement of capital upon the state rather than (also) a critique of the state’s other determinations. Kanishka Goodenwardena locates the limitations of Harvey’s analysis in the tradition of Western Marxism more generally. Harvey’s analysis “shared with Western Marxism ... a soft spot on politics,” he writes. “Urban studies, critical theory, radical politics: Eight theses for Peter Marcuse,” *City* 13, no. 2-3 (2009): 208-219.

99 Harvey, “Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism,” 16.
Were the differences between Foucault and Harvey simply methodological, it might be possible to propose a synthesis of the two approaches. It might be possible, in other words, to draw on Foucault’s work to critique the affiliations of planning and biopower, while enlisting Harvey to reveal the pernicious effects of capitalist processes. There are certainly precedents for such a poststructuralist-Marxist synthesis, and I am intrigued by the flourishing of synthetic work in geography and other disciplines since the mid-1990s. Ultimately, however, I think that bringing together Foucault and Harvey in this dissertation would dull the critical potential of both theorists. In particular, it would make it very difficult to follow Foucault in analyzing how a particular form of knowledge – political economy – is involved in the calculated management of human life. As I suggested above, political economy is considered central to the emergence and operation of biopower, and Foucault, while he has often written and spoken favourably about certain forms of Marxist political economy, would want nevertheless to consider how Marxism might end up furthering the operation of biopower and its associated forms of violence. Adopting Foucault’s approach, therefore, does not mean repudiating or rejecting political economic theories like Harvey’s, but it does require the latter to be considered part of the society that is to be understood and not (simultaneously) a tool with which to understand society. (It is, incidentally, the converse of this approach, the placing of poststructuralism within the society that is to be understood, that Marxist scholars like Frederic Jameson have very productively pursued.) It is, above all, because Marxist political economy is liable to support and shape the operation of biopower that I have chosen not to append it to my approach in this dissertation.


101 Indeed, Balibar has suggested that Foucault’s own “genuine struggle” with Marxism over the years provided one of the primary sources of his originality. “Foucault et Marx.” Brady Heiner also provides an exemplary analysis of Foucault’s engagement with the Third World Marxism of groups like the Black Panther Party, and how this engagement influenced his work on biopolitics. “Foucault and the Black Panthers.” On Foucault’s concerns with the potential violence of Marxism, see Society Must Be Defended, 261-263.

In following Foucault at the expense of Harvey in this dissertation, I aim to produce an analysis that complements rather than rejects the existing Marxist scholarship on urban planning. As Rabinow aptly suggests, Foucault’s work on biopower is best understood as a critique of the “third leg” of modernity: a critique of modern life-managing strategies that adds to the Marxist critique of capitalism and the Weberian critique of bureaucracy. Foucault’s work does not ignore capitalism or bureaucracy; the latter are clearly central elements of the contexts in which biopower operates and need, for this reason, to be brought into the analysis. But placing the focus on biopower involves different methodological and epistemological commitments than a Marxist (or Weberian) analysis, and these differences need to be acknowledged. The major promise of a biopower-focused analysis, I would suggest, is its capacity to contribute to a more thorough and radical critique of bourgeois planning and society than presently exists. In critiquing practices and priorities that Harvey’s Marxism either ignores or takes for granted, my aim is both to provoke the further development of Marxist theory, as well as to deliver an analysis that can stand alongside the latter. This, I feel, is the best way that I can presently contribute to the radical tradition that Harvey has helped to carry for over four decades now.

1.5 Methods and Materials

The research for this dissertation was primarily archival. Over a two and a half year period in Halifax, I spent most of my days at the Halifax Municipal Archives and the Nova Scotia Archives; I also relied to a lesser extent on the Dalhousie University Archive, the archive at St. Paul’s Church, and the National Archives in Ottawa. My aim in this archival research was to link certain technologies of power to their enabling modes of knowledge – linking, in effect, certain urban planning initiatives to the conceptions of space and life that enabled them. This typically required me to work backward from a certain planning initiative (and the document in which the initiative was recommended) to a series of materials through which I could track the emergence of a new, or significantly transformed, mode of knowledge. My analysis in Chapter 3, for example, began from a close reading of a 1957 planning report, which seemed to be premised upon a conception of urban space that, subsequently, I found spelled out in an earlier report: the

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103 Rabinow, French Modern, 8.
1945 Halifax Master Plan. The latter seemed to premise its argument for an extensive “slum clearance” program in Halifax upon property assessment data that, with time, I discovered had begun to be collected in 1914. My task, accordingly, was to explain how this new property assessment data came to seem important – and what people believed this data could indicate about urban space. As I suggest in the chapter, the data began to be collected because groups like the Halifax Board of Trade had argued that “land” and “improvements” participated differently in the production of social wealth and ought, therefore, to be taxed at different rates. The assumed differences between land and improvements were enshrined in a new system of assessment, and would later enable the authors of reports like the Master Plan to evaluate the extent to which land was contributing adequately to the overall well-being of the city.

As the above suggests, there is sometimes a misfit between the ends served by a particular mode of knowledge at the moment it comes into being and the ends that it later comes to serve. (A new system of assessment was introduced to enable new taxes to be instituted, not to guide a broad-based program of slum clearance.) A misfit of this kind is certainly visible in Foucault’s analysis of biopower as well, and one of the major characteristics of his work in general is its tracing of particular events and effects back to a point in time, and a complex of power relations, in which such events and effects would not have been anticipated (nor necessarily desired). To track the emergence of a salient mode of knowledge, Foucault insists, requires setting-aside the “metaphysical” assumption that knowledge emerges to serve a specific, present need. “In placing present needs at the origin [of knowledge],” Foucault writes, “the metaphysician would convince us of an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it arises.”

In contrast, a genealogical method – the method that Foucault employs in his analysis of biopower – seeks to document “the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us.” In plain terms, Foucault is insisting that knowledge can serve purposes that would be inconceivable to those who helped to bring this knowledge into being – and that, for this reason, it is inadequate to place the emergence of a mode of knowledge strictly at the moment that it happens to be used. Accordingly, a major task of my research was to move in less-than-obvious direc-

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105 Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 146.
tions, to seek the conditions of possibility for a certain planning initiative amid debates and power struggles that may have had little to do with planning per se. There is no formula for such a search. But this search, as I have described it, was a central preoccupation of my research in the archives.

The specific files that I examined in the archives were many. The records of the municipality itself were important. Among these, I turned often to the minutes of City Council meetings; the minutes of Council committees (standing and ad-hoc); and documents produced by various City departments (e.g., the Assessment Office, the Development Department). Written submissions to the City from local residents were also useful, especially after the 1960s, when the involvement of residents in the affairs of municipal governance was encouraged. Submissions related to the Harbour Drive expressway proposal in the early 1970s are substantial, and are held at the municipal archives. For the more recent Halifax by Design project, the submissions of residents are held at the City Clerk’s office, and I am grateful to City staff for enabling me to review them. In addition to municipal records, I relied centrally on those of various civil society organizations. The Nova Scotia Archives maintains records (e.g., meeting minutes and annual reports) for several important organizations whose activities I discuss in this dissertation: the Halifax Board of Trade, the Trades and Labour Council, the Local Council of Women, and the Victorian Order of Nurses. The records of the Movement for Citizens Voice and Action are held at the Dalhousie University Archives, and include meeting minutes, newsletters, mailing lists, and various reports. Materials pertaining to certain civic leaders were also consulted. The written correspondence and newspaper editorials of Agnes Dennis (of the LCW) and Richard Harris (Civic Improvement League) is maintained at the Nova Scotia Archives, and was also useful to my research. Archived newspapers, finally, helped to fill in important details. Past issues of the Halifax Chronicle and Evening Mail are held in microform at the Halifax Public Library, and proved to be an indispensable, if tedious, source of information.

Inevitably, my initial archival research would lead me outside the archives. The main reason for this was that the emergence of a new mode of knowledge could never be attributed to people or events in Halifax alone. People in Halifax, for one thing, often drew upon the written work or advice of non-local individuals or groups. The Halifax LCW was, as its name suggests, a specific chapter of the broader National Council of Women, and the annual meetings of the latter were an important venue for the formula-
tion of campaigns and the circulation of information that would have effects in Halifax; it became useful, for these reasons, to read local archival materials alongside the annual reports of the National Council. In other cases, significant extra-local connections were less formalized. The Halifax Board of Trade made contact with the Ontario Commission on Taxation in the course of its tax reform campaigning. The City’s Chief Engineer, Francis Doane, attended a pivotal town planning conference in Toronto in 1914, and he maintained connections thereafter with the conference’s keynote speaker, Thomas Adams. Members of an important 1970s social movement, Movement for Citizens’ Voice and Action (MOVE), attended workshops by the Chicago-based community organizer, Saul Alinsky, and sought to popularize his ideas in Halifax. Connections like these had important effects in Halifax, and they compelled me to review additional historical materials (e.g., the proceedings of the 1914 town planning conference, the writings of Thomas Adams and Saul Alinsky). Sometimes, finally, a significant extra-local connection was made strictly through a written work: a text or document that groups in Halifax read and drew upon, without making contact with the author. The Board of Trade drew centrally on Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty* in its tax reform campaigning. City officials read documents on British “model tenements” projects, on property assessment methods, and the so-called “creative class.” In these cases, I was compelled to consult the relevant texts myself, and connect what I learned in the archives to the ideas that Haligonians had absorbed.

My research also relied, to a lesser extent, on a series of interviews. Given the historical focus of the dissertation, this method could not be used in all chapters (the relevant individuals having passed on). It was useful strictly for Chapters 5 and 6, which address events in the 1970s and 2000s, respectively. During my field work, I conducted 46 semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. The vast majority of these interviews pertained to the events surround the recent Halifax by Design project (discussed in Chapter 6). As the project seemed to be concerned largely with eliminating regulatory obstacles to property development in the downtown core, I conducted interviews with City officials, property developers, bankers, and other development-related institutions in order to understand how they perceived the design project and how they had been involved in shaping it. Fewer, though more important, interviews were conducted with former members of the MOVE alliance. The interviews that I con-
ducted, twelve in all, were helpful primarily in assessing the significance of particular events that were recorded in the archives, and confirming some of my provisional arguments. (My claim that MOVE’s success in blocking a major expressway project was secured at a public forum in February 1973, for example, stems partly from activists’ own conclusions about their campaign.)

Incorporating interviews into an essentially Foucauldian methodology proved to be difficult, both intellectually and emotionally. Intellectually, it was difficult to remain focused on the coming into being of news modes of knowledge – the focus of my research – amid the stream of interesting biographical details that inevitably emerged from the interviews. I felt enticed, at times, to move toward a more conventional historical method that would create more room to represent the stories of the people I interviewed (and I may, in a later project, do just that). Committed to an analysis of biopower, however, I generally conducted interviews with the aim of understanding how activists conceived of the city, how they had come to conceive of the city in this way, and how competing concepts of the city were entangled with context-specific power relations. Emotionally, I found it more difficult to retain a critical mode of analysis when my critique might seem to implicate the individuals whom I interviewed, and whom I often deeply admired. I have tried to make clear, of course that it is not individuals, but power and knowledge, that I aim to critique, and I am confident that academic readers of this dissertation will grasp its intent. However, the distinction between knowledge and individuals is sometimes harder to discern outside the realm of the academy, and I sometimes struggled, for this reason, to conduct and recount the interview within a critical mode. I submit these as challenges that were mostly overcome in the process of writing this dissertation.

My final non-archival research source consisted of existing historical research on Halifax, as well as other contemporary cities. The literature on Halifax is sparse, in comparison to larger cities, but it was often extremely helpful. David Sutherland’s work on racism in nineteenth century Halifax was pivotal to my analysis in Chapter 3, as was Michael Boudreau’s impeccable dissertation on early twentieth century “law and order” initiatives in the city. Other important literature included Janet Guilford’s and Judith Fingard’s work on the Local Council of Women, Henry Roper’s work on the Board of Trade, and various edited collections on Atlantic Canadian economic and social history. Outside Halifax, I have relied on the
work of seminal Canadian urban historians like Paul Rutherford, Richard Harris, and John Weaver, as well as the more focused work of Mariana Valverde (on moral regulation in Toronto) and Veronica Strong-Boag (on the National Council of Women). The methods and projects of these authors differed, often significantly, from my own. Their description of people and events, however, provided a rich set of materials to work with. Along with my archival research, interviews, and other methods, this work provided the empirical basis for an analysis of planning as a mode of biopower.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

This dissertation traces the trajectory of urban planning as a technology of biopower in Halifax, from the late nineteenth century to the present. It aims, in particular, to reveal how planning’s efforts to improve the life of individuals and populations have resulted in the creation of damaged lives for particular groups, and it aims to connect the inflicting of damage to the conceptions of life and space that have given planning its vocation during this period. Collectively, the chapters of this dissertation trace the deployment of a single mode of power (i.e., biopower) over a century of urban history. Individually, the chapters draw out the particularities of power: the specific conceptions of life and space that have guided planning at particular moments, and the specific power relations in which these conceptions emerged. While planning and biopower undoubtedly operate differently today than they did a century ago – and these discontinuities are indeed important to my account – I am interested in what has remained the same across this period as well. Planning, I will suggest, has been centrally concerned with the management of “life” in Halifax for more than a century, and for just as long it has tended to conceive of life in bipolar terms. As a result, while many Haligonians might find themselves included within the category of “life” at a particular moment, others would fail to achieve such recognition. A history of biopower and a history of damage therefore converge in the modes of knowledge that have rendered life intelligible to planning in non-extensive ways, and the struggle to transform planning in the present must contend with its commitment to a certain conception of life (not, rather, its divergence from such a commitment).

The dissertation begins, in Chapter 2, with an examination of urban planning as an expression of disciplinary power. Focusing on a 1905-1915 public campaign to tear down and rebuild a particular
downtown “slum,” I demonstrate how the growing Halifax middle class came to see the moral and physical health of the urban poor as a problem; how they came to see the material environment of the slums as the source of the problem; and how the strategic reconstruction of the slums – the implementation of an architecture of discipline – was conceived to be a viable solution. The chapter draws together historical materials on Halifax with Foucault’s extended analysis of disciplinary power. As the sole chapter devoted expressly to the deployment of discipline, its primary purpose is to provide a contrast with the later, biopolitical configurations of knowledge and power. However, the chapter also highlights a certain silencing at the core of modern urban planning in Halifax. At a moment with life and space were coming into the light of knowledge, and when significant initiatives were being designed to manage both, the knowledge of slum residents was constitutively excluded from this new enterprise. An important aim of the chapter is therefore to demonstrate how this silencing occurred, and what its consequences might be.

The next three chapters examine the formation and deployment of a biopolitical mode of urban planning. Chapter 3 focuses on an early twentieth century debate about municipal taxation and property assessment, and traces the new conceptions of life and space that emerged along the way. In particular, I examine how the debates helped to introduce a conception of the urban terrain as a geometric expanse of property value whose contribution to the growth and prosperity of the local population could be evaluated and ultimately managed by the municipal state. Implicit to this new mode of knowledge, I emphasize, was a deeply bifurcated conception of aggregate life: a “caesura,” as Foucault would describe it, appeared to exist between the population and mere individuals, such that a better life for the former could conceivably be achieved through initiatives that would worsen the lives of the latter. Indeed, the fate of the population now seemed to require the municipal state to identify areas of the urban terrain that were impeding overall growth and prosperity, and take appropriate action. The first actions of this kind were relatively modest (a tax on land values) and largely affected a privileged social group (land owners). However, this precedent, and the mode of knowledge that made the action seem legitimate and necessary, would be significant later on. The capacity of the municipal state to manage the urban terrain in the ostensibly interest of the local population would soon become a fixture of modern, biopolitical planning in Halifax, and the effects of this management would often exceed the mere imposition of a tax on a social
group well disposed to paying it. The material in this chapter is important, therefore, as a contribution to a genealogy of planning, biopolitics, and damage in Halifax.

Chapter 4 takes a wider view of biopolitical planning initiatives in early twentieth century Halifax. Whereas the previous chapter examined the emergence of a new conception of the urban terrain and a tightly linked conception of the population, this chapter considers how a more explicit and *bio-racial* conception of the population came to be entangled with the City’s biopolitical strategies. Focusing on the period between roughly 1880 and 1916, I examine how the municipal state gradually implemented a series of measures that were intended to improve the health, welfare, and prosperity of the local population; how, when it came to the community of Africville, the operation of urban planning differed markedly from the rest of the city (such that the lives of Africville residents were damaged, rather than improved, by biopolitical planning initiatives); and how this differential deployment of planning was related to then-prevailing conceptions of space and aggregate life. The differential deployment of planning, as well as the differential conditions of life *produced* by planning, are certainly consistent with Foucault’s analysis. Indeed, comparing the fate of Africville in this period to the rest of the city offers a striking example of the capacity of the biopolitical state to “make live,” as well as “let die.” Coming to terms with this situation, however, requires an analysis that departs in certain respects from Foucault. In the final section of the chapter, I seek to demonstrate how the operation of planning at this time was shaped by a pair of intersecting logics: one “racial” (in Foucault’s specific sense), the other “economic.” It is by tracing the intersection of these logics, I conclude, that it becomes possible to understand how the state could simultaneously devote itself to the protection and improvement of collective life, as well as expose the residents of Africville to a precarious and increasingly dire situation.

It was not until the 1960s, of course, that Africville was finally demolished, and by then the ravages of biopolitical planning had become evident elsewhere as well. In the two decades after World War II, planning brought about the most significant transformation of the material and social character of the Halifax peninsula since its founding in 1749. As this transformation proceeded, new forms of opposition to planning came into being. In Chapter 5, I examine how a series of new oppositional movements emerged in Halifax in the 1960s; how, as a result of new Federal and Provincial state priorities, these
movements were encouraged to work together as part of a broad-based alliance and give direction to planning through new “participatory” venues and processes; and how the new emphasis on participation indeed changed planning in certain ways, but also carried forward certain forms of silencing and subjugation. With respect to the latter, I show how processes of participation in Halifax entailed particular political norms that ultimately proved more difficult for certain groups to embody than others. In particular, major black and working-class organizations seem to have had difficulty expressing their aspirations within the norms of the prevailing political discourses, and eventually withdrew from the activist alliance that was meant to embody the interest of the “community” in planning debates. In documenting how certain lives remain unrecognizable within a substantially reformed, ostensibly “participatory” form of urban planning, this chapter builds upon the previous chapters and enables an analysis of biopolitical planning in the present. While the conceptions of space and life that emerged in the early twentieth century remain significant to planning in the present, a focus on participation (also significant in the present) did not appear until the 1960s.

In Chapter 6, I bring together the overall argument of this dissertation and consider precisely what it might mean for contemporary planning practices. Modern urban planning in Halifax, I summarize, has attempted to protect and improve human life through calculated interventions in material conditions. Consistently, however, planning has relied on modes of knowledge that help to cast certain individuals and groups outside the category of “life,” and consequently subjects the latter to degraded living conditions and imperiled forms of existence. Through a brief review of the recent Halifax by Design project, I show how a subset of human beings continues to appear as “life” in its entirety in Halifax, and how planning initiatives continue to be geared toward ameliorating the conditions of this subset while ignoring the lives of others. While recognizing the damaging continuities that stretch from the inauguration of planning as a technology of biopower into the present, I also point toward potential future research projects that might address some of the concerns that this dissertation left to the side. One important project, I suggest, would involve an exploration of alternatives to the present configuration of planning, and I suggest that George Elliott Clarke’s writings might help to locate a starting point (at least) for such an undertaking.
Chapter 2

“Higher Living Through Environment”

2.1 Introduction

In February of 1905, William Armitage, the rector of St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Halifax, had an announcement to make: he, and a group of associates, had recently formed a company with the goal of providing a higher standard of housing for the city’s poorer residents. The company would focus on a particular 12-block area at the northern tip of the downtown core – the site, Armitage argued, of the most “squalid” material and social conditions in the city: a veritable slum (see Figure 2.1). The company intended to acquire and tear down the area’s existing buildings and erect a large-scale, modern tenement in their place. Referring to the success of similar projects in England and Scotland, Armitage suggested that a transformation of the slums could indeed be achieved, yielding the company’s investors a modest profit, while inducing a significant improvement in the physical and moral health of the rehoused poor. “I have personally seen enough to convince me,” Armitage announced, “that it is the duty of the community both from the standpoint of self interest and of ethics to act in this matter.”

With a small amount of public support, he claimed, the company might succeed not just in eliminating a disgraceful, disease-ridden part of the city, but also in helping to “educate the people into a higher form of living through better environment.” Armitage’s plan was known as the “model tenements,” and the seven-year campaign to realize this plan in Halifax is the focus of this chapter.

The proposed model tenements were novel in their design, and even more novel in their aims. In their promise to transform the lives of individuals, the tenements were expressive of a form of power that Foucault calls “discipline.” As Foucault explains, the aim of disciplinary power is to act upon individual bodies – to mold them, train them, and gradually produce within them a set of “forces,” “aptitudes,” and

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1 Halifax Evening Mail, 5 February 1905.
“capacities” that support the imperatives of power.\(^3\) With the emergence of disciplinary power, Foucault explains, a new form of architecture also appeared: “an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to ... know them, to alter them.”\(^4\) Through the creation of new, strategically arranged spaces, threats to bodily health would be removed, new habits would be inculcated, and reformed individuals – individuals whose health, behaviour, and other characteristics are aligned with prevailing norms – would be produced. The model tenements that Armitage and his associates aspired to build in Halifax were a new architecture in this sense. Mimicking the designs of buildings already constructed in Britain, the tenements were meant to transform the lives of their inhabitants, to “alter them” and “educate them,” through the

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\(^4\) Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 172.
medium of space. There were, as Armitage stressed, precedents for such an achievement. The aim of the model tenements proponents was thus to apply an already-proven solution to Halifax’s apparent problem.

The idea that the Halifax slums were a problem, and that a group of middle-class reformers had the authority to diagnose and to address the problem, was clearly a fundamental premise of the model tenements campaign. Indeed, one of the campaign’s most significant achievements was to win public acceptance for the general idea that a certain group of people could legitimately, and benevolently, seek to transform the lives of other people. To achieve their objectives, the reformers sought ambitiously to produce the slums as an object of public knowledge and to constitute themselves as the preeminent and most reliable subjects of that knowledge: the spokespeople, as it were, for the deficiencies and needs of the slums. Over the duration of the seven-year campaign, the reformers made frequent visits to the slums, produced a “systematic” survey of slum conditions, toured representatives of the media and visiting reformers through the streets and homes to observe conditions first-hand, and took every opportunity to provide their perspective on the slums to public audiences.

Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power, the targeted individuals were brought into the light of the reformers’ knowledge, and thereby opened up to a possible architecture of discipline, on the basis of a profoundly divided, bipolar conception of human life. In this view, individuals were either healthy, moral, and therefore “normal,” or they were morbid, immoral, and therefore “pathological.” Consistently approaching the slums through such a bipolar frame, the reformers encountered what would appear to be a deeply pathological milieu. In relation to prevailing norms of bodily health and moral behaviour, the reformers believed the inhabitants of the slums to be falling miserably short and to require, for this reason, a form of remedial action. While it was certainly the lives of slum residents that most deeply preoccupied the reformers, it was not exactly the residents themselves that were understood to be the fundamental problem. The perceived problem, rather, was the material environment of the slums – an unsanitary, cramped, and generally unwholesome environment that seemed to produce the observed incidences of ill-health and immorality. Like housing reformers in other cities, Armitage and his associates insistently attributed the slums’ pathological forms of life to the pathological conditions of life that enveloped them. One of the primary effects of this mode of knowledge was, of course, to illuminate a strategy
of transformation that might have eluded other Haligonians: a way of acting upon individual lives indi-
directly, through the medium of space. It was in the midst of a problematized environment, an environment
that seemed to manufacture social problems, that an instrument like the proposed model tenements could
be presented as both sensible and necessary.

The reformers’ perspective on the slums, while certainly consistent with that of other contempo-
rary reform movements in North American cities, was far from the only available, or potentially convinc-
ing, perspective in Halifax. Many middle-class Haligonians, for example, preferred to attribute social pa-
thologies to the sick and vice-ridden themselves (rather than to their environment), and their vision of re-
medial action was more likely to include the expansion of prisons, residential hospitals, and programs of
“good breeding” (i.e., eugenics) than the provision of better housing. The actual residents of the slums,
meanwhile, would certainly have their own understanding of their material situation, and there is evidence
to suggest that it tended to be a very different one than that of their ostensible advocates, Armitage and his
associates.

Laying claim to the discursive and material terrain of the slums was thus a matter of discounting,
or subjugating, an array of competing claims on this terrain, and there were two aspects of the reformers’
purported knowledge that seem to have been especially responsible for their achievement of this result.
First, the reformers touted their knowledge of the slums as having emerged from extensive, first-hand ex-
perience in the area. Having observed the condition of slum streets and homes first-hand, the reformers
would claim, made their perspective more authoritative than the limited, “superficial” knowledge of their
middle-class detractors (i.e., those who blamed pathologies upon the people themselves). Second, the re-
formers consistently depicted the inhabitants of the slums as an aberrant, pathological form of life (albeit
one that could be improved). Cast into this vexed position, the slum residents were simultaneously cast
outside the position of “subject” and could not, therefore, be recognized as having anything important or
intelligible to say about their situation. Both the reformers’ emphasis on first-hand, visual knowledge, and
their systematic disavowal of the slum residents’ possible knowledge, fit squarely within a broader struc-
ture of knowledge that Foucault calls “pathological perception” and that he connects to the rise of discki-
plinary power. The fit between the reformers’ claims and a broader, disciplinary structure of knowledge conferred an intelligibility and authority to their vision for the slums that would otherwise be much harder to achieve. It was certainly true that the reformers, as they often insisted, had “better opportunities” to see slums conditions first-hand than other Haligonians. But knowledge gleaned in this way had not always been accorded such prestige, nor would it retain this prestige forever. As I will demonstrate in later chapters, crucially, urban planning in Halifax would soon turn away from the insights procurable through direct observation. It would take recourse to different forms of knowledge, and it would seek to exercise a different form of power.

The model tenements campaign was a tense contest over urban knowledge and power. As one of the city’s first urban planning initiatives to promise a transformation in human life through the strategic rearrangement of space, an examination of the tenements campaign can help to reveal how life was conceived in this context, how life was conceived to be improvable, and who could (and could not) oversee such an improvement. This chapter’s attention to the campaign is divided into four sections. I begin with an overview of the model tenements movement in Britain (the inspiration for Armitage’s venture in Halifax) and its affiliations with disciplinary power. Connecting a summary of Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power to a description of the physical design of important model tenement projects, I demonstrate how three aspects of the latter were meant to act upon, and reform, the lives of individual tenants. In the next two sections, I return to Halifax and document how the proponents of the model tenements articulated the need for a particular form of remedial action in slums. Focusing on three groups of proponents – Armitage, the local medical community, and the Local Council of Women – I demonstrate how the campaign represented the slums as a pathological milieu; how social pathologies were attributed to the material environment of the slums; and how the proponents’ claims fit within a broader structure of knowledge that helped to give them intelligibility and authority. In the final section, I examine the “solution” that the reformers envisioned, and how it was almost realized.

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6 *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
The model tenements campaign, I conclude, remains a significant event in the history of urban planning in Halifax – despite, and partly because of, its disappointing end result. It is significant, above all, because the City ultimately refused to support the tenements plan on the grounds that it would likely result in the displacement of many existing residents of the slums. This concern about displacement in the management of space and life contrasts sharply with other, later urban planning initiatives in Halifax, and it is important to consider how concern about displacement was expressed in one context (and in relation to one population) and not in another. The difference, I will suggest, hinges partly on the divergent ways that class- and race-based differentiations are mobilized within the operations of biopower.

2.2 Model Housing in Britain

The inspiration for Armitage’s model tenements idea was rooted in Britain, where a major experiment in working-class housing had been underway for over seventy years. The first model tenements were constructed in the 1830s. After a few one-off projects in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London, more ambitious model tenements companies began to be formed, and the extent and pace of construction increased considerably. By the end of the century, the largest five model tenements companies in Britain had introduced over 100,000 housing units.

Armitage evidently looked upon these existing tenements as a model to emulate. He travelled to Britain in 1904 to tour several model tenements projects and meet with prominent housing reformers. He

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8 Wohl, “Philanthropy,” 147-149.

9 *Evening Mail*, 5 February 1905.
and his associates also read the available literature on the tenements. Impressed by what he saw, Armitage would eventually express his commitment to constructing housing in Halifax that would “embody all the good features of the most successful tenements [in Britain].” Indeed, Armitage’s proposal for Halifax not only mimicked the physical design of the British tenements, but also espoused many of the same goals. Armitage’s goal of “educating the people into a higher form of living” was central to the British model tenements movement as well, and it is important to consider how this goal was understood. As I argue in this section, the model tenements were designed to operate as an architecture of disciplinary power. Through the strategic arrangement of space, the tenements were expected to break up and reorder the domestic lives of their inhabitants, and introduce a regime of general visibility in which the inhabitants were watched over by others and would come ultimately to watch over themselves. Beginning with a description of the British model tenements movement, and proceeding through an analysis of the tenements’ spatial strategies, I aim to demonstrate how a spatial exercise of disciplinary power was expected to produce reformed individuals – a result that certain Haligonians were eager to copy.

The major model tenements companies were a peculiar amalgam of capitalism and philanthropy. Indeed, their organizational form has sometimes been termed “capitalist philanthropy,” or “five-percent philanthropy,” in recognition of their simultaneous pursuit of financial and social objectives. The companies’ financial goal was to make a profit for their investors – albeit, a relatively modest profit (typically set at five percent per year). The companies eschewed pure acts of charity, government poverty programs, and any substantial modification to the status quo. The tenants of their buildings were required to pay rent (and, thus, to work for a wage); but the smaller than usual profit target made room for the pursuit of a second, social motivation.

The companies’ social goal was, of course, to improve the “condition” of the poor – a combined physical and moral condition that that was perceived to be abnormal, degraded, and yet remediable. This goal was to be achieved in two steps. The first step was to eliminate the material conditions that the reformers believed to be the fundamental source of disease, moral vice, and criminal tendencies: the envi-

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10 *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
11 Ibid.
12 Tarn, *Five Per Cent*; Wohl, “Philanthropy.”
ronment of the slums. The slums, in other words, were to be demolished, and this demolition was itself a substantial step toward the improvement of the condition of the urban poor. As the leader of one model tenements company explained, “many of the sanitary and social evils which affect the condition of the labouring classes” were located in the material environment of the slums, and the demolition of the slums would therefore eliminate a major “obstacle to the advancement of their moral and physical well-being.”

Such an ascription of ill-health and immorality to the material environment was an important part of the model tenements campaign in Halifax as well, and I examine this conception of the slum milieu in greater detail in the next two sections.

After an area of slum housing had been eliminated, the second step in the fulfillment of the companies’ social goal was to insert the poor into a new, strategically ordered environment. The specifics of the new environment can be outlined by looking at two especially influential model tenements. The first building was constructed by the Society for Improving the Dwellings of the Labouring Classes (SIDLC), an organization formed in 1844 by some of Britain’s leading reformers. The building was completed in 1850, stood five storeys tall, and was designed to accommodate 53 families (see Figure 2.2). The first aspect of the building’s physical design to notice is the building’s inward orientation. Individual units, rather than opening directly onto the street, were arranged along a lengthy, shared corridor. To exit the building, tenants would need to pass along this corridor, descend a common staircase (in the case of upper-floor units), and pass by the superintendent’s office on the way to the building’s sole entranceway. The three wings of the building also wrap around and enclose a large courtyard, creating an open recreational space (intended for children) that is separated from the surrounding neighbourhood.

The second design aspect to notice is the provision of domestic space. The units were quite large relative to existing working-class housing, and each comprised a small lobby, one or two bedrooms, a living room, a cooking area, and a toilet area. Aside from bathing facilities, which were shared among the members of each floor, the units were heralded as containing “all the requisite conveniences for household life.” The building was intended to redefine what could be achieved in working-class housing, and

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it was indeed the SIDLC’s most influential project. The organization’s contribution to the World’s Fair in 1851 – a smaller, scalable tenement – garnered more public attention, but it mostly replicated the design innovations of the earlier building.

A somewhat different design was completed in 1871 by the Peabody Trusts, a company founded in 1862 by the American banking magnate, George Peabody.16 This building is remarkable foremost for its massive scale. Taking up three acres of land, and designed to accommodate 320 families in 16 identical tenement blocks, it was the largest housing project anywhere in Britain at the time (see Figure 2.3).17 The site layout enforced a clear separation between the project and the rest of the neighbourhood: the tenement blocks walled-off a pair of courtyards, and a wrought iron fence, whose gates were locked each evening, rimmed the perimeter. On the inside, we find smaller units than in the first tenement. Rooms were

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small, and cooking facilities and toilets were shared among the occupants of each floor. This arrangement of space was a departure from the ideals of the model tenements movement (which hoped to make most domestic tasks fully private, rather than collective), but it helped Peabody to keep rents relatively low (often 25 percent below prevailing market rates). If the SIDLC’s building expresses the purest ideals of the movement, then, Peabody’s building demonstrates the furthest compromise of these ideals. Between these two poles, a model tenements movement took shape.

The capacity of buildings like these to bring about an improvement in the lives of their inhabitants can be understood as a function of their incorporation of particular strategies of disciplinary power. The latter, Foucault suggests, is a mode of biopower that operates upon individual bodies, and seeks to achieve alterations in behaviour and physical condition through various overt interventions. The relevance of disciplinary power to the model tenements is suggested, first of all, in the centrality of space to its operation. Foucault’s work examines a vast “archipelago” of spaces whose physical layout enabled bodies to be assessed and trained. In spaces like hospitals, asylums, prisons, schools, and (tellingly) “working-class housing estates,” Foucault shows how the lives of individuals were reordered, differentiated, and rendered
visible to the purveyors of disciplinary power precisely through the arrangement of space. The visibility of individuals enabled by these spaces would, in itself, be an important means through which power was exercised. As individuals are submitted to the gaze of various “judges” – teacher-judges, doctor-judges, foreman-judges, warden-judges, social worker-judges, and so on – the bodies and activities of the former enter a realm of near-constant evaluation, correction, and alteration. The lives of individuals are thereby remade: their physical condition altered, their habits reformed, the forces of the bodies increased and (potentially) hitched to the imperatives of power.

The aims of disciplinary power are also profoundly consonant with those of the model tenements movement. In Bentham’s famous Panopticon, for example, the expected benefits were several: “Morals reformed – health preserved – industry invigorated – instruction diffused – public burdens lightened ... all by [means of] a simple idea in architecture!” This combined attention to “morals” and “health,” among other concerns, appears in the other settings that Foucault examines as well. Many of the medical institutions that were established in nineteenth century, for example, had the goals of “curing” the physical and moral ills of their patients. Consistent with my analysis of Halifax, Foucault argues that nineteenth century doctors extended the expertise of their professional beyond the realm of health, constituting themselves as authorities on the “healthy life,” as well as “the standards for physical and moral relations of [the] individual and of the society in which he [sic] lives.” Foucault’s analysis of the linkage between disciplinary power and moral reform has been taken up by many other scholars. Drawing centrally on Foucault, Driver suggests that British “model housing” proponents aimed to rearrange the “domestic spa-

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18 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 171.
19 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 304.
20 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 207.
22 Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, 40.
tial economy” of the working classes to achieve disciplinary outcomes. “What was necessary,” he writes, “was the design of new environments – new spaces – in which alternative forms of behaviour, alternative moral habits, were to be cultivated.” Model housing, it seems, has an important place in the disciplinary archipelago.

The disciplining effects of model tenements bear further examination. These effects, I want to suggest, are related to three specific spatial strategies that were incorporated in the design of the tenements: “partitioning,” “enclosure,” and “surveillance.” Partitioning, to begin with, involves the breaking-up of physical space into discrete areas, and enables people and activities to be assigned to specific, separate spaces. The partitioning of space enables certain people and activities to be drawn together, while others are kept apart. In the case of the model tenements, the partitioning of individual units into multiple, specific-purpose rooms was designed to inculcate new morals in the inhabitants by differentiating and keeping-apart the activities that proper “modest and propriety” should not allow to occur in the same space. Activities like cooking, undressing, sleeping, bathing, defecating, and sexual intercourse – activities that, in the conventional one-room home of the poorer classes, were performed in the same space – would henceforth be distinguished and assigned a proper space. Deeply anxious about the sexual proclivities of the poor, moreover, housing reformers consistently sought to enforce the separation of the beds of adults, boys, and girls; three bedrooms, therefore, was the reformers’ ideal, and in cases where this was considered too costly, sheets of metal could be installed as low-budget partitions between sleeping spaces, or boys could be urged to sleep on the roof. Through the partitioning of space, in sum, new behaviours and new domestic relations would be encouraged. That the model tenements were meant to instill middle-class domestic norms should be easy to recognize. As Evans suggests, the model tenement units were essentially middle-class homes in miniature – architectural technologies through which “middle-class reformers ... sought to re-mould the lower classes in their own recently crystalized image.”

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26 Evans, “Rookeries,” 33.
28 Evans, “Rookeries,” 33.
While “partitioning” imparted a structure to the domestic spaces of the tenements, the overall form of the tenements was organized by an accompanying strategy of “enclosure.” The latter, Foucault suggests, involves the creation of a wholly new spatial environment through the construction of physical barriers to the older, surrounding environment. One of the stated purposes of the buildings’ inward orientation was precisely to produce a clear separation between the reformed space of the tenements and the as-yet unreformed spaces of the slums. Such a separation would enable the tenements’ overseers to distinguish between the people and activities that were to be reformed and those that were not; it would allow them to evaluate whether reforms were taking hold, to make adjustments where necessary, and to gradually “cultivate” (as one proponent put it) an isolated “plot of civilization ... within the midst of a wide swath of barbarism.” For the subordinate residents of the buildings, meanwhile, the effects of spatial enclosure would be evident. To enter the space of the model tenements would be to enter a different world. A surrounding fence would have to be breached (by means of a gate that might or might not be unlocked), building supervisors would have to be reckoned with, and new rules and regulations would have to be honoured. As Foucault suggests, the operation of disciplinary power requires the creation of a new, highly “artificial” space, an enclosed and meticulously planned space where the minute details of individual lives can be assessed and acted upon. Whereas biopolitical power generally works with existing spaces, aiming to impart small changes to reality as it already exists, disciplinary power is more ambitious. As a power of individualizing detail, discipline requires a space where details can be distinguished, observed, and managed. A strategy of enclosure makes discipline possible.

As this suggests, the possibility of ritual observation or “surveillance” was essential to the model tenements, and this indeed constituted the third spatial strategy incorporated into their design. Surveillance, Foucault explains, is a technique of enforced visibility. To the extent that individuals are visible to the conveyors of power, the actions of the former can be discerned, evaluated, and corrected where necessary. At the same time, the state of being visible (or potentially visible) tends to induce its own

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29 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141-143.
32 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170-177.
disciplinary effects, compelling individuals to scrutinize their own actions as their overseers would and to correct themselves, to reform themselves, in accordance with the principles of power.

In their enablement of surveillance, the model tenements were expressive of a new architecture that Foucault links to the rise of disciplinary power: an architecture that exists not simply “to be seen” but “to render visible those who are inside it.”33 The overall layout of the tenements, for example, ensured that the comings and goings of tenants was observable to the buildings’ superintendent. The latter were often hired from the ranks of the police force or military, and were usually housed in a designated apartment next to the entrance of the building.34 From this location, they could easily survey the tenants as they entered and exited the building, and efficiently evaluate some of the tenants’ behaviours (e.g., the time at which they left for work and came home, whether or not they came home inebriated). The buildings’ inner courtyard, moreover, provided an efficient machinery for the surveillance of children. In contrast to the streets and alleyways of the slums (where poor children usually played), the open space of the courtyard put the children’s play on display from the multi-level hallways that surrounded it.35 While a building’s superintendent could always ascend to an overlooking hallway and conduct an inspection, it was generally assumed that surveillance would occur through a kind of relay: the building’s mothers were expected to oversee the children, assess their behaviour, and impart discipline. The occasional inspection of the superintendent, in this case, was meant to act upon the mothers, to observe in the play of the children whether the mothers were doing their job. In at least two ways, therefore, the model tenements enabled disciplinary power to operate through the creation of an efficient “general visibility.” The tenements were among a range of new spaces in modern cities that ensured that individuals were observed, and that they came to observe themselves.

How well the model tenements met their objectives was mixed. Financially, the assumption that contemporary capitalists would voluntarily forgo higher profits in order to support housing reform was a somewhat optimistic one, and attracting capital was often a challenge. At the same time, expecting social reforms to be profitable at all – and to be achievable, moreover, without any major modifications to capi-

33 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 172.
34 Wohl, “Philanthropy,” 149.
35 Tarn, *Five Per Cent*, 47.
talist social relations – presented a second set of challenges. Accepting that real property should be owned privately and rented out at a profit to non-owners, and accepting the prevailing rate of workers’ wages, provided little room for the reformers to maneuver. It proved very difficult to provide a higher standard of housing that yielded a profit and was affordable to workers. One response to this predicament, as I suggested above, was to build at a slightly lower standard. Another response was to petition municipal governments for assistance.\footnote{Wohl, “Philanthropy,” 144-145.} Even with design ideals compromised and government assistance reaped, however, the tenement companies were usually unable to re-house anyone but the higher-paid members of the working class: “the artisan” as opposed to “the labourer.”\footnote{Wohl, “Philanthropy,” 155} The poorest slum residents were, in the majority of cases, displaced by the same tenement projects that in principle aimed to re-house (and thus reform) them.\footnote{Tarn, \textit{Five Per Cent}, 64; Wohl, “Philanthropy,” 163.} This seemingly counter-productive result, as I discuss below, would eventually come to the attention of decision-makers in Halifax. It did not dispose people to support the tenements campaign.

The model tenements in Britain were, as I have suggested, a strategically designed architecture of discipline. Through the partitioning of domestic spaces, the enclosure of the overall tenement environment, and the built-in platforms and relays of surveillance, the tenements were meant to instill new forms of life in their tenants. Placed in a new environment, the urban poor were meant to be improved both morally and physically. Once lost in a world of “barbarism,” the poor residents of the tenements would now find themselves in a separate and higher orbit of “civilization.” While my discussion in this section has shown how the strategically designed environment of the model tenements was meant to act upon and reform the lives of their inhabitants, it touched only briefly on the environment from which the inhabitants came: the presumably problematic environment of the slums. As I indicated, however, the premise of the model tenements movement was not just that a new environment could improve the lives of the urban poor, but also that the existing environment was degrading the latter. The homes and streets of the slums made individuals sick, impaired their moral judgement, and sapped their economic usefulness. As we turn now to Halifax, therefore, I want to begin with the problematization of the slum environment: the discursive production of the slums as a milieu of social pathologies the roots of which lay in the material
terrain. As we will see, popularizing a particular understanding of the slum milieu was a central and contested element of the model tenements campaign in Halifax.

2.3 Assessing the Slums

As in Britain, the model tenements in Halifax were bound up with a particular understanding of the lives and living conditions of the urban poor. Specifically, these lives and their living conditions were understood as interlinked. Just as the “better environment” of the model tenements was seen as a mechanism that would uplift the lives of the poor, so too the prevailing, problematic living environment of the poor was seen as degrading their lives. In this section, I examine how the situation of the Halifax poor came to be understood as a problem that could be resolved through a transformation of space. In particular, I examine how three groups of influential Halifax reformers came into contact with an area described as the “downtown slum” or “the upper streets,” and how they understood the ostensible problems that existed in this area.

Along with Armitage and his St. Paul’s parish, the city’s major housing reformers included the local medical community and a group called the Local Council of Women. These reformers had different backgrounds and slightly different concerns, and their understandings of the slums varied somewhat for these reasons. Common to all three groups, however, was an understanding of the ostensible health and moral problems of the slums as a symptom of individuals’ problematic conditions of life. Also common to the three groups, I will suggest, was their reliance upon certain social norms that helped to make the slum milieu intelligible and a solution to its problems thinkable. While the Halifax (middle-class) public would not find it hard to believe that vice and disease were rampant in the downtown slum, they would not necessarily conclude that these pathologies were caused by the degraded environment in which people lived. Establishing a connection between pathological lives and pathological living conditions would therefore be essential to the model tenements proposal, and it was this connection that the major proponents of the tenements sought hardest to elucidate. For all three groups, the slums were a milieu of thwarted norms of health and behaviour, where the fundamental problem, and thus the available lever of reform, resided in the material environment.
**Doctor Hattie and the Board of Health**

Although Rev. Armitage was certainly the most prolific and high-profile proponent of the model tenements plan, he had the faithful and articulate backing of the local medical community (or at least the most influential members of it). The support of medical doctors and their professional expertise was indispensable to the model tenements campaign in Halifax, as indeed it was in major British and US campaigns. During the campaign, and in the years leading up to it, medical officials made relatively frequent visits to the homes of the “upper streets” slums, and they continuously informed the Halifax public about the problems that lurked there – problems that, as we will see, exceeded the explicit realm of the officials’ expertise. The city’s most outspoken medical doctor in the early twentieth century was the McGill-trained physician, William Hattie. After completing medical school in 1891, Hattie moved to Halifax and quickly established himself within the leadership of several medical institutions (Canadian, British, and American). He was also an associate of Rev. Armitage’s, and he spoke forcefully in favour of the proposed model tenements.

A second important conduit of medical knowledge in Halifax was the municipal Board of Health (an institution that was, for many years, overseen by Hattie). The Board became a more significant institution in 1904, when it was reconstituted and provided a mandate to send inspectors around the city in search of potential public health threats (many of which were assumed to be located in the interior of poor people’s homes). The reports of the Board’s inspectors provided a rare description of the domestic lives of the city’s poorest residents, and the audience for these descriptions certainly exceeded the personnel of the Board itself. The public hearings at which the inspectors’ evidence of substandard living conditions was presented (along with counter-evidence, in most cases, from slum landlords or tenants) were consistently covered by the local press. As a result of this (often graphic) coverage, the Board hearings served

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40 Significant progress reports on the Board’s home-to-home inspections appear in the *Evening Mail* between 1905 and 1911. See, in particular, *Evening Mail*, 15 March 1906; 18 May 1906; 6 June 1907; 8 October 1901. Reports that focus specially on the “upper streets” appear in *Evening Mail*, 18 August 1908; 22 November 1911.
much more than their immediate purpose. For middle-class Haligonians who knew little of the city’s slums, this coverage would be one of the major ways that they came to know how “the other half lived.” The Board and its inspectors would be important to the model tenements campaign, therefore, in providing a relatively exhausting and official documentation of the homes of the poor, and in bringing these condition to the attention of the Halifax public (who would be asked to support the tenements proposal).

When they entered the slums, Halifax medical officials were taking with them a form of professional expertise that had long been instrumental to housing reform campaigns in other, larger cities. The capacity of the profession to contribute in this way, I want to suggest, is related to certain changes that Foucault identifies in the practices of late eighteenth-century medical science. Three changes are particularly significant, and I would like to review these changes briefly before showing how they affected the perspectives of medical officials in Halifax. The first change concerns the prevailing understanding of human life. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Foucault suggests, it became possible for doctors to bring “death” (and its ostensible causes) into visibility for the first time. The cause of death could now be observed in the bodies of the deceased, and the spectre of death (i.e., life threatening illness) could be observed on the surface of the bodies of living individuals. The significance of this new visibility, Foucault suggests, lies in the understanding of human life that it made possible. Human beings could now be perceived and diagnosed in relation to the twin poles of life/health and death/morbidity. Assessed between these two poles, an individual could be seen either as exhibiting the norms of good health, or else imperilled in its normal functioning by the “morbidity” that it could not keep at bay.

This new health/morbidity “bipolarity,” Foucault suggests, was an important development in the field of medical science, and it would have effects well beyond its initial domain of application. Indeed, the second important change in medical practice discussed by Foucault involves the extension of this bipolar understanding of life into ostensibly “moral” concerns. In the course of the nineteenth century, Foucault suggests, medical doctors would become important arbiters of society’s moral standards and moral relations. The latter issues, while they might seem to exceed the actual expertise of medical doctors,

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were rendered intelligible within a familiar “bipolar” structure of knowledge. Like ill-health, immorality was conceived as a departure from the assumed regular or “normal” functioning of human beings. In the case of both “physical health” and “moral health,” in other words, the expert diagnosis would begin with an understanding of “[the] ‘regular’ functioning of the organism and [then] go on to seek where it had deviated, what it was disturbed by, and how it could be brought back into normal working order.”

Consistent with Foucault’s analysis, the most influential public health investigations in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cities (including Halifax) clearly attended to the issue of morality (often termed “moral health”), and their observations relied on the same normal/pathological “bipolarity” that structured their diagnoses of “physical health.”

The third important change is particularly significant to housing reform. It involved the extension of medical practice outward, from the clinic to the streets and homes of the city (and especially the streets and homes of the “slums”). In the interest of curing the ills of urban society, Foucault suggests, doctors would gradually be dispersed across the urban terrain, transforming the latter into a kind of medical clinic or laboratory. In the process, the physical and moral pathologies that doctors conceived as impairing the normal functioning of human beings were ascribed a spatiality. Very often, the “slum” became a space of morbidity and immorality within the otherwise healthy and moral city, and the material conditions of the slum became the major cause of these pathologies.

Major outbreaks of disease were an important occasion for the spatialization medical science. As Rabinow shows, a devastating outbreak of cholera in France in 1832 exposed the limitations of older medical strategies and brought into practical reality the “medical bipolarity” that Foucault identifies in earlier medical texts. A commission struck to investigate the disease observed not just that cholera had a

44 Foucault, Birth of the Clinic, 40.
46 Foucault, Birth of the Clinic, 28, 35, 38; Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 207-209.
47 See Poovey, “Anatomical Realism”; Rabinow, French Modern; Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 207-209.
location in the city (i.e., the slums), but also that certain particularities of the “housing conditions” and “social conditions” of the poor seemed to nurture potential outbreaks.\(^48\) (High residential “densities” were found to be significant, as was the overall “quality” of living conditions.) While “moral” concerns were not the focus of the French commission, they certainly received attention, and they too were diagnosed as a symptom of the particular living conditions of the poor. In Rabinow’s Foucauldian analysis, the conclusions of the commission represent the entry of “norms” – or rather a normal/pathological bipolarity – into the study and planning of urban spaces.\(^49\) The prevailing ill-health and immorality of slum residents (itself a departure from physical and moral norms) would now be understood as a result of the pathological conditions in which they lived (a departure from normal living conditions).\(^50\) To know the city, for the medical doctors of this period, was to know it within the bipolar terms of their profession. It was to know the city as healthy, or not healthy – as milieux of normal, healthy functioning, as well as milieux of pathological malfunctioning.

In Halifax, medical officials played a central role in popularizing the mode of analysis pioneered by their European forebears. They too saw the slums as a departure from norms of good health and moral conduct, and they most often attributed this twofold abnormality to the material environment. William Hattie, for one, offered his public support to the model tenements plan on several occasions, explaining that “respectable citizens” in Halifax “should be ashamed” to have allowed slum conditions to exist for so long.\(^51\) Hattie’s perspective was clearly shaped by this medical education and his manifold ties to the medical community in Canada and Great Britain. At the time of the model tenements campaign, for example, he was the head of the Nova Scotia branch of the British Medical Association.\(^52\) In this position, Hattie would likely have read the *British Medical Journal*, where articles frequently advanced the conclusion that public health problems could be attributed to material conditions and that housing reform was

\(^{48}\) Rabinow, *French Modern*, 37.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906. Hattie’s support for the model tenements was also vocalized at an annual meeting of the LCW. *Minutes of the Local Council of Women*, 16 April 1907, NSARM, MG 20, vol. 535, no. 3.
\(^{52}\) *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
therefore a program that medical professionals ought to support. Hattie was also connected to reform-minded doctors across the province of Nova Scotia and across Canada. On the issue of housing, Hattie sought the advice of the Toronto-based doctor Peter Bryce, an influential figure on issues of public health and a consistent proponent of housing reform as a solution to the problem of ill-health and disease. Promoting the model tenements plan in 1906, Hattie referred to Bryce’s endorsement of the plan and his stern “arraignement of the citizens of halifax was permitting for a day, the existing conditions [in the slums].”

The foremost concern, for Hattie, was evidently the threat to the city’s physical health posed by the degraded material conditions of the slums. The city’s death rate, he told the public in 1906, was “higher than it should be in this favoured locality.” Exhibiting the centrality of norms in Hattie’s analysis, he described the city’s problem not as death per se, but rather the abnormal rate of death then prevailing. By Hattie’s calculations, roughly 400 too many individuals were dying each year, and this was the problem that needed to be addressed. Consistent with other medical doctors, Hattie understood this aberration among human beings as attributable, to a significant extent, to the aberrant material conditions of the slums. Eliminating the “pest spots” and “revolting dens” that “physicians are so often called on to enter,” Hattie explained, would “tend to improve the health of the city, and thus lower [the abnormally high] death rate.” About immorality, Hattie had slightly less to say, but it was certainly a major concern for him. His claim that “the places where many of our people dwell are a disgrace to the citizens,” for example, seems to suggest that something more than health was at stake in the conditions of the slums. In domains other than housing, moreover, ill-health and immorality were unmistakably intertwined in Hattie’s mind, and his concerns about both could reach nearly apocalyptic intensity at times. Both “healthy man”

53 See, for example, Charles Cameron “Sanitary Science and the Prevention of Zymotic Disease.” *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 1754 (1894): 293-301.
54 *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Among other reform causes, Hattie was a strong proponent of eugenics programs. In an influential 1920 article, he tied the strength of the nation to the “physical, mental, and moral qualities of [its] people,” and worried that the latter qualities were in the process of being undermined. “Canada is faced today with a situation not less perilous that that involved in accepting the challenge of the Hun. We have entered upon a period of competition such as never before dreamed of. Our place among the nations depends upon our ability to meet this competition, and this in turn depends upon the physical, mental and moral qualities of our people.” “The Physician’s Par in Preventing Mental Disorder,” *Public Health Journal* 11 (1920): 315-320.
and “moral man,” in sum, were subjects of Hattie’s knowledge, and the slum environment was evidently an impediment to the development of either one.

Alongside Hattie, the Board of Health was an important purveyor of medically-informed knowledge in its own right. From 1904 to 1907, the Board’s chief inspector went door-to-door along the city’s poorest streets and produced a record of the prevailing condition of people’s homes. Where conditions were deemed to be unsanitary, the inspector would prepare a report for a future Board meeting at which the landlord or tenants of the property might be present to offer their own perspective. The Board, after hearing the available evidence, could order the relevant property owner to make improvements or order the property condemned (see Figure 2.4). While the inspectors were not officially trained in medicine, their overseers clearly were, and their reporting on housing conditions was consistent with the perspective of medical doctors in its linking-together of health threats and certain material conditions. Indeed, following a revamping of inspection procedures in 1907, the reporting of the inspectors would closely mirror that of the French cholera commission of 1832. Guided by a newly introduced inspection form, the inspector would now seek to record various characteristics of domestic spaces (e.g., number of rooms; number of adults and number of children; condition of drainage, cellar, plumbing, water closet, and yard), the results of which, when available for the entirety of the city, would make it possible to distinguish between areas of “normal” and “pathological” conditions. What it was important to know here, crucially, was not the present health of the home’s occupants – indeed, this was not even to be recorded – but rather the conformity or deviance of the material environment with respect to city-wide norms. Like Hattie, in sum, the Board of Health helped to reveal the slums to the Halifax public as a pathological milieu: a terrain of potential diseases, where the terrain was the foremost source of the problem.

Armitage and St. Paul’s

As Doctor Hattie and the health inspectors were making their rounds of the slums, Rev. Armitage was carrying out his own form of inquiry. Armitage was, of course, the city’s most prolific and enthusiastic

58 See, in particular, Evening Mail, 15 March 1906; 18 May 1906; 6 June 1907; 8 October 1901.
59 The details of the new inspection form are discussed in Evening Mail, 18 August 1908.
proponent of the model tenements. From the announcement of the tenements plan in 1905 until the conclusion of the campaign in 1912, Armitage extolled the various benefits of improved working-class housing in the context of public lectures, in meetings with local organizations, and through his work at St. Paul’s Anglican Church.
As rector of St. Paul’s from 1897 to 1929, Armitage had many opportunities to get to know the slums. The church, in addition to being the oldest church in Halifax, was distinguished by its location in the northern part of the downtown core, just two blocks from the edge of what were called “the upper streets.” Many people who attended the church, consequently, were poor. Many who were not poor became involved in church-based efforts to bring relief, both material and spiritual, to poor individuals and families living in the vicinity. Through such efforts, the parishioners were offered an intimate and privileged view of the homes and habits of the poor, and many of this period’s foremost champions of reform – including the model tenements – were indeed members of St. Paul’s. The foremost authority on the slums, however, was undoubtedly the church’s rector. During his tenure, Armitage made an astonishing 10,000 house calls, a sufficient proportion of which were to the houses of the poor that the Halifax Evening Mail once described him as “better posted on the subject [of the slums] than any other man [sic] in the city.” Armitage’s diagnosis of the slums differed somewhat from that of the local community. He was much more likely to emphasize the moral and spiritual predicament of the slums, for example, and the composition of his analysis drew more immediately upon theology than medical science. Like other Evangelicals, however, Armitage was able to work alongside medical officials in the struggle for housing


61 Emsley notes that St. Paul’s sunday school program were attended by “poor children in rags.” St. Paul’s, 63.

62 In addition to several relief-focused committees, St. Paul’s had maintained a formal mission hall in the North End since 1873. It added a mission hall to its main building in 1902, and began to operate a home for “neglected and dependent” Protestant girls in 1887 onward. Harris, Saint Paul, 248.

63 Two of Armitage’s closest collaborators on the model tenements campaign were Charles Blackadar (chairman of the local Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor) and George Wright (a prominent businessman and philanthropist). Emsley notes that both men were parishioners at St. Paul’s. St. Paul’s, 34, 35. Another influential reformer was LCW member Bessie Egan. She too was a member of St. Paul’s, and historian Judith Fingard suggests that she likely provided the closest link between Armitage and the LCW on the model tenements campaign. “Bessie Egan,” in The Haligonians: 100 Fascinating Lives from the Halifax Region (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing, 2005), 48-49.

64 Evening Mail, 5 February 1905.
reform, and the possibility of this affinity has much to do with the compatibility (if not identity) of their perspectives on the slum environment.

The faith of Evangelicals, of which Armitage was one, lent itself quite amicably to the pursuit of social reforms in general, and housing reforms in particular.65 For Evangelicals, social reforms were a straightforward extension of their more formal, spiritual commitment to “saving” individuals, and procuring better housing for individuals was consistent with the particular way that they understood salvation. Salvation, in their view, was not a matter of attending church or reciting prayers per se; rather, it was a result of deeply acknowledging one’s own unworthiness with respect to God’s love and accepting that Christ’s “atonement” had created a perpetual “hereafter” for all those who put their faith in it.66 One of the consequences of this emphasis on “realization” was to shift, or extend, the setting of the spiritual life from the environment of the church to the environment of the home (the place where contemplation, and potential realization, would tend to occur). The material condition of people’s homes (i.e., whether or not they were suited to the spiritual life) was thus an important concern. Alongside their emphasis on realization, Evangelicals also believed that it was their duty as already-realized individuals to assist others in achieving the same situation. More precisely, it was their duty to identify and eliminate the obstacles that might stand in the way of others achieving their own salvation.67

To the extent that the homes of the unsaved were seen as an obstacle to salvation, as sites ill-suited to realization, the mission of Evangelicals would tend to carry them into the orbit of housing reform. Indeed, Evangelicals were among the leading figures of the early housing reform and model tenements movements in Britain, the United States, and Canada. In Britain, Lord Shaftesbury (an Evangelical) worked alongside influential public health doctors on the creation of two major model tenements companies, as well as a range of committees and public inquiries on the question of working class

66 Allen, *Social Passion*.
67 Allen, *Social Passion*. 
The affinity between Evangelical and medical perspectives on slum housing is evident in these collaborations, and (more overtly) in the private reflections of Lord Shaftesbury. After spending three days touring the slums of Manchester in the company of James Kay-Shuttleworth, a leading public health doctor and proponent of model tenements, Shaftesbury reflected in his journal that the two men had “conversed from morning till night, and scarcely ever touched on a subject unconnected with the moral and physical condition of the poor, and the means of repairing it.”

Although Shuttleworth was not an Evangelical, moreover, Shaftesbury felt that he had nevertheless been touched by “the grace of God” and found “his whole pleasure in [the pursuit of] moral good.” If the two men differed somewhat in their ultimate aims, they could clearly agree that the “moral and physical condition” of the poor needed to be improved, and that a transformation in the home environment of the latter was the best means of achieving this.

Armitage’s perspective on the connection between Evangelicalism and housing reform is spelled out in his 1908 book, *Cities of Refuge*. Although the title is a metaphor – Jesus Christ, in fact, is the only “city of refuge” – the book offers instructions for physical, earthly cities as well.

A city, Armitage suggests, ought to be administered such that it “point[s] to Christ as the sinner’s refuge.” Principally, such an administration would involve purging the “environment” of exterior pleasures, the “things of sense and time,” so that city-dwellers might instead look inward and find true enjoyment in their cultivated connection with God. Like the medical officials with whom he collaborated, therefore, Armitage had an idea about the proper state of individuals, as well as the kind of the environment that would or would not produce such a state. For Armitage, the proper state of an individual was a “realized” state, and this proper state would exist to the extent that it was not undermined by an improper environment: an environment not properly purged of exterior pleasures. With “realized” individuals and purged environments as the

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69 Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, 434. The meeting is also discussed in Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, 188.

70 Ibid.


73 The quote is from *Cities*, 84. This point is elaborated in *Cities*, 86.
assumed norm, other individuals and environments could appear to contain irregularities, and it was clear, for Armitage, that creating a “city of refuge” was a matter of spotting and removing these irregularities. From this understanding of the connection between individuals and the environment, in other words, the homes of unsaved, unrealized individuals would become a target of reform: a terrain from which obstacles to realization could be removed.

Indeed, gazing across the Halifax landscape, Armitage and his reform-minded parishioners certainly found some areas of the city to be “pointing to Christ” and others, improperly, pointing in the opposite direction. The Evangelicals described the slums, in various ways, as a veritable den of sin – a breeding place, as one parishioner put it, “of sloth, poverty, and immorality.” Their descriptions seldom ignored the problem of ill-health and disease; echoing the arithmetic of Doctor Hattie, Armitage would repeatedly claim that “the death rate” was “astonishingly high in Halifax, largely [due] to the existence of the slums.” Much more than just a health threat, however, the slums were an ever-present “menace to the morals” of the community and an enduring “curse to the city.” While the potential supporters of housing reform (i.e., middle-class Haligonians) would likely not need to be convinced that there were problems of moral deviance in the slums, they would not necessarily move to attribute these problems to the slum environment. It was this conclusion, or causal link, that the Evangelicals sought valiantly to elucidate.

Clearly contesting with the belief that slum dwellers were inherently immoral, Armitage and his parish continually stressed the connection between “the habits of the people” and “the indescribable character of the places in which they live.” As Armitage explained, “the home” needed to be seen as “the cradle in which the morals of men [sic] are formed.” The effect of unsuitable homes, he argued, was to produce “bad tendencies” in people; in contrast, proper, well-built homes would produce a range of “good

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74 Wright, “Better Housing for the People.”
75 Armitage made this point at an annual meeting of the LCW in 1906. *Evening Mail*, 4 April 1906.
76 *Evening Mail*, 16 May 1907.
77 The quote is from Charles Blackadar, the associate of Armitage’s and St. Paul’s parishioner. He was speaking to the annual meeting of the Victorian Order of Nurses in 1909. *Victorian Order of Nurses, VON Minutes, 1904-1909*, NSARM, MG 20, vol. 765, no. 1.
78 *Evening Mail*, 16 May 1907.
tendencies.”

According to this framework, the city of Halifax could be divided into two segments: good tendencies and good environments, on one hand, and bad tendencies and bad environments, on the other. Perceiving the city in this way – identifying a problematic segment of the city and then attributing the problem to the proximate environment – tends to suggest a particular form of solution. The model tenements proposal, in replacing the improper, “squalid conditions” of the slums with a set of “decently constructed dwelling places,” could be expected to “stamp out vice” in the city and summon-forth a contrasting condition in the same place. The positive outcome of the tenements would be, as a proponent argued, to “educate the people into a higher form of living by better environment.” For Armitage and his parish, as for the local medical community, the Halifax slums were a space of pathology in dire need of normalization. If the aims of the former were more spiritual than medical, they nevertheless proposed a compatible mode of intervention: an operation upon individuals, achieved through the medium of domestic space.

Local Council of Women

One of the most active and interesting proponents of the model tenements was the Halifax Local Council of Women. Founded in 1896, the LCW provided a context for existing women-headed organizations to network, as well as a broad organization for women to combine their efforts on what they perceived to be the pressing public issues of the day. Several member organizations, and the LCW, were intimately involved with the Halifax slums. One LCW member, Bessie Egan, had managed a women’s shelter in the slums since 1892, and after 1902 had opportunity to visit the homes of many poor families as a representative of the provincial child protection agency. Egan was also a parishioner at St. Paul’s, and she pro-

79 Ibid.
80 Evening Mail, 5 February 1905; 16 May 1907.
81 Wright, “Better Housing for the People.”
83 Fingard, “Bessie Egan.”
vided a key link between Rev. Armitage and the LCW. In 1902, the LCW opened up another important avenue to the slums when it created a local branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses. In the ensuring years, VON would dispatch its tiny staff to all corners of the city, but ultimately concentrated its “missionary spirit” in the most palpably “wretched” areas. As these types of involvements would suggest, both theology and medical science were relevant to the LCW’s diagnoses of the slums. LCW members learned from doctors like Hattie and Evangelicals like Armitage. Yet, they also brought forward their own analysis: an analysis rooted in a particular feminist conception of the city.

The LCW, as its name indicates, was a local branch of a larger organization: the National Council of Women of Canada. The latter was formed in 1896, the same year as the Halifax branch, under the leadership of the British immigrant, Lady Aberdeen. Aberdeen had been active in the women’s movement in Britain before moving to Canada in 1895, and she brought the ideology of British feminism with her. It was an ideology, often called “maternal feminism,” with two main principles: firstly, that women were the natural and proper “guardians of the home,” and secondly, that women’s interests could be advanced by accepting, rather than overturning, the associated division of the world into “separate spheres” (public and private). In practical terms, the take-up of maternal feminism within the NCW meant that the organization sought to constitute a voice for women in public discussions by stressing the needs and interests of children (something that women were recognized, within the logic of separate spheres, to know about). Such an articulation of the rightful role of women in public life, as many have argued, was partly a strategic choice: it helped to carve out a small niche for women in the public sphere, and created an opportunity for women to demonstrate the contributions they could make to the public good, without overtly threaten-

84 Fingard, “Bessie Egan.”
ing the territory of men. In the early twentieth century, the NCW was a powerful vehicle for the trans-
mission of maternal feminism in Canada. Through its publications and annual meetings, local branches
across the country would be connected to a broader struggle and encouraged to undertake activities, lo-

cally, that would contribute to a unified, national movement.

The Halifax branch learned from, and contributed to, the national organization. While taking up
Aberdeen’s maternal feminism, Halifax women also played leading roles on some of the NCW’s most
important committees, including those concerned with public health, taxation, and “feeble-mindedness.”

In the hands of the LCW, maternal feminism provided a unique way of perceiving the city – and the role
of women in it. “Women’s sphere,” the LCW would concede, was indeed synonymous with the home.
The home, however, was defined in particularly broad terms, encompassing “the place in which children
grow up, meaning not merely the four walls of the house, but the atmosphere in which the little life un-
folds, develops, and comes to maturity.” Such an “atmosphere,” she continued, included the spaces of
factories, schools, public spaces – effectively any place that directly or indirectly affected the lives of
children. That is to say: the entire urban terrain. Within this expanded “domestic” terrain, the LCW had a
clear role to play. Its members would be the city’s guardians, “the mothers of the municipality.” In this
role, crucially, the LCW would oversee not just its own children, but other people’s children as well; chil-
dren in the city would become children of the city, and the LCW would be the mothers of them all. Rear-
ing and educating children, one member put it explicitly, was the responsibility not just of parents, but of
the entire urban community. More specifically, it was “the never-ending responsibility of the people who
are trained to think, toward the unthinking, the demand of those who need teaching upon those who
know.”

89 Forbes, “Battles in Another War.”
90 The LCW’s Eliza Ritchie was named the convenor of the NCW’s committee on public health in 1905. LCW, Minutes, 14 November 1905. Elizabeth Murray was named convenor of the NCW’s committee on taxation in 1918. LCW, Minutes, 19 September 1918. Ms. Stead was appointed head of the National committee on feeble-mindedness in 1918. LCW, Minutes, 19 September 1918.
93 “Young girls who frequent thoroughfares of Halifax in evenings,” LCW Scrapbook, January 1908.
The LCW’s understanding of the slums stemmed largely from this perspective of the “city as home.” Seeking to fulfill their role as the city’s mothers, the LCW saw certain environments as problematic vis-a-vis the rearing of children. Certain environments, the group would suggest, had a corrupting, rather than nurturing, influence on the moral character of children. For many years, for example, the group had sought to remove the play of children from the environment of the streets – the veritable “re-supervised recruiting ground[s] for Satan’s armies of evil.” Its main strategy here was to introduce a series of supervised playgrounds around the city – “counter-attractions,” the group called them, and “mighty agents in the mental and moral well-being of the children in our congested districts.” In the city/home, the behaviour of children was influenced either positively or negatively by the environment. While backyards and playgrounds were “agents” of well-being, the streets had a degrading, corrupting effect on children’s natural capacity for self-control and morality. Correcting the character of children was thus a matter of eliminating corrupting environments and substituting wholesome ones. Looking across the urban terrain, the LCW’s attention inevitably focused upon the slums and their remediable deficiencies. The streets and homes of the slums were perceived as the major cause of the poor behaviour of poor people. In this situation, the model tenements would provide a clear solution: they would eliminate the present, un-wholesome environment, and install a proper environment in its place. In the view of LCW members, the tenements would finally bring the environment of the poor in line with social norms. The result of this transformation of the slum environment would be an improvement not just in sanitation, but also in “decency” and “public morality.”

Like the other model tenements proponents, the LCW understood the slum milieu as a problem, and the material environment as the fundamental cause of this problem. The women came to this understanding, however, largely on the basis of their own interests and ideas. While the LCW indeed affirmed

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94 See, for example, Ritchie “White slave trade must be stopped,” *LCW Scrapbook*, 12 January 1910.  
96 Ibid.  
97 Ibid.  
98 The LCW’s major discussions of the Halifax slums appear in *LCW, Minutes*, 4 April 1906; *Minutes*, 26 March 1912; *Minutes*, 12 March 1906; Stead, “Pure clean food should be eaten,” *LCW Scrapbook*, 11 July 1908.  
the conclusions of doctors like Hattie, and while the work of VON nurses and other LCW members drew upon a medical conception of the slum environment, the group’s analysis was based primarily on the analogy of motherhood. Approaching the slums as civic mothers, LCW members found an expanse of streets and homes that they could not recognize as proper spaces and in which they could not imagine proper childhood development occurring. The role of social norms, here, is unmistakable. What the LCW apprehended in the slums was, above all, a departure from middle-class domestic standards: middle-class houses and backyards. Like the medical doctors described by Foucault, the LCW began their inquiries with an idea of a regular, functioning home, and proceeded to assess the world against this norm. A reliance on norms helped to make the otherwise bizarre milieu of the slums comprehensible. The wayward behaviour of youth became explainable. A strategy of regularization became conceivable. For the LCW, the model tenements were seen as a way of normalizing children by normalizing their environment – a strategic and effective alteration of the “atmosphere” in which “little lives” unfolded.

In their slightly different ways, the three groups of reformers arrived at a compatible diagnosis of the slums – and, following from this, a compatible conception of necessary action. Each of them encountered in the slums a pathological mode of life that could be attributed to the pathological environment that enveloped them. For its effectiveness in making the slums intelligible, and a remedial action conceivable, this understanding of the slums imparted tight restrictions on what could enter the realm of useful knowledge. In attributing the problems of the slums exclusively to the environment, the reformers ignored many other phenomena that could easily have been considered relevant to the lives of slum residents: the availability of employment, for example, or the wages paid by employers. At times, the posited all-importance of “the environment” led to conclusions on the part of the reformers that bordered on the absurd. Attempting to explain why poor children behaved differently than their more privileged peers, an LCW member provided an analysis that first recognized, and then nullified, the matter of wealth disparities. “Children are not born equal,” she admitted. “One [child] is born with a silver spoon in its mouth and another is not.”

100 This significant, material difference, however, was then described as having no bearing upon the

100 Stead, “When will philanthropy take this wide direction,” LCW Scrapbook, 1 February 1910.
lives of the two children. A “silver spoon,” she argued, “is but an item, [and] silver spoons amount to but very little in the race of life. What does count – overwhelmingly – is ENVIRONMENT.”¹⁰¹

The idea that “silver spoons” and “environments” were unrelated things, that a family’s wealth did not in any way affect the kind of home environment that it made for itself, might sound rather peculiar (as indeed it would have to at least some Haligonians). Other, seemingly more plausible explanations of the phenomena of urban slums were routinely put forward in the industrializing cities of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Friedrich Engels, for example, famously produced an analysis of the industrial slums of England that, rather than attributing social ills to the material environment, sought to provide an explanation for this environment (as well as the forces that had compelled poor people to inhabit this environment).¹⁰² In a somewhat different analysis, WEB DuBois tangled with the white slumologists of Philadelphia, describing the African American slum as a “symptom” rather than a problem in itself.¹⁰³ To understand the racialized slum, DuBois claimed, one needed to understand the history of slavery, the (unwelcome) arrival of freed slaves in Northern cities, the racism of employers and landlords, among other factors. While Halifax had no equivalent of Engels or DuBois, there were certainly people whose understanding of the slums differed from that of the reformers. In addition to the above examination of the reformers’ diagnoses of the problems of the slums, therefore, we also need to understand how they were able to elevate their diagnoses over those of other Haligonians – how they were able to constitute themselves as the spokespersons for the slums, while denying others the same possibility. It is to this question that we now turn.

2.4 Knowing the Slums

The reformers’ understanding of the Halifax slums was notable not just for its attribution of physical and behavioural pathologies to the material environment. It was notable, as well, for its associated practices of investigation and representation: the practices through which the reformers would claim to have come to

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understand the slums and would communicate this understanding to others. The reformers would continually emphasize, for example, that their conclusions about the slums had emerged from a first-hand, visual observation of existing conditions, and they routinely criticized the perspectives of those who professed to know the slums without having seen the area comprehensively for themselves.

As this might suggest, the issue of methods was a politically significant one. It was partly through the reformers’ practices of investigation and representation that they would seek to constitute themselves as authorities on the slums, as well as foreclose such a role to others (i.e., those who disagreed with them). In this section, I examine three aspects of the reformers’ knowledge-making practices and seek to demonstrate how these practices were related to the public confidence that they ultimately garnered in Halifax. The authority of the reformers was certainly buoyed by the experience that they each had acquired in the slums through their professional and voluntary activities. Few, if any, local residents could match them on this count. As I seek to demonstrate, however, the reformers’ claims were also strengthened by their conformity with a broader, recently emerged structure of knowledge that Foucault calls “pathological perception.” In highlighting the connections between pathological perception and certain aspects of the reformers’ knowledge-making practices, I hope to demonstrate how the reformers ended up winning public confidence in Halifax, even as their claims (and aims) seem to have been contested – not least, by the slum residents themselves. Without this hard-won authority, this outmaneuvering of competing claims on the terrain of the slums, the model tenements could not be implemented.

Pathological perception, for Foucault, is tightly related to the conception of human life that I discussed in the previous section. At the same moment that medical science was beginning to understand life in relation to the twin poles of life/healthy and death/morbidity, it was also creating a new “schema” of scientific investigation and representation. The first and most striking aspect of this schema, Foucault suggests, is its emphasis on visual perception. Increasingly, it was through the eyes that knowledge about human beings would now be procured, while the representation of knowledge would now attempt

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to recreate, as closely as words or images would allow, an original perceptual act.\textsuperscript{106} The doctors themselves, of course, would tend to describe their new emphasis on sensory perception simply as “empiricism.” The latter, in the context of nineteenth-century medicine, would be defined by the bracketing of theoretical knowledge in favour of insights procured through direct perception (usually visual).\textsuperscript{107} For Foucault, however, the doctors’ “supposed empiricism” and faithfulness to “the perceived” had certain material and epistemic conditions of possibility that need to be recognized.\textsuperscript{108} One important condition, Foucault suggests, was the assumption that life/health could be understood in relation to death/morbidity, and that the latter could be “seen” on the surface of the body. In other words, it was because life was re-conceived in such a way that it could be seen that visual perception emerged as a privileged method of investigation.\textsuperscript{109} This emphasis on the visual perception of “life” is one of three aspects of pathological perception that emerged in nineteenth-century medicine and that I want to highlight in the practices of the Halifax reformers.

In Halifax, the major proponents of the model tenements plan had the most extensive, first-hand experience in the slums of any local resident, and their campaigning in support of the plan would attempt to capitalize upon what they had seen. All three groups would emphasize that their knowledge was derived from what they had “seen,” and they would often criticize competing claims about the slums for not having been derived in this way. The Board of Health, by the time of the model tenements campaign, had already conducted many inspections of slum homes. Doctor Hattie, drawing on his association with the Board, as well as his own practice of making house calls in the slums, attempted to present himself and his medical colleagues as authorities on the slums, their problems, and their most viable solution. When Hattie claimed, in 1906, that “medical men” had had “better opportunities than any other class of people to know the conditions in the poorer parts of the city,” he was referring less to their knowledge of scientific...
tific theories than to their comprehensive, first-hand observations of the “hovels” and “revolting dens” that “physicians are so frequently called upon to enter.”

For Hattie, in fact, public health knowledge was so intertwined with visual observation that in 1922, when he became Professor of Hygiene and Public Health at Dalhousie University, he endeavoured to turn the entire city into a learning laboratory, sending students out to conduct “environmental studies” in private homes that would corroborate the doctrines outlined in the classroom. Not only could the health and illness of Halifax residents be apprehended by means of the medical gaze, in other words, it needed to be. It could not be truly known without seeing it.

Rev. Armitage, as well, would continually emphasize his first-hand experience in the slums, a level of experience that he had acquired in the course of his work (i.e., his astonishing commitment to making house calls). Even more explicitly than Hattie, moreover, Armitage would assert that it was the faculty of vision, the act of seeing, that underpinned the credibility of his knowledge. “I have personally seen enough to convince me,” he proclaimed in 1905, “that it is the duty of the community both from the standpoint of self interest and of ethics ... to do something to secure for its deserving poor, places to live in [that] are constructed with at least a moderate regard for sanitary principles.”

Like his Evangelical forebear, Britain’s Lord Shaftesbury, Armitage expressed confidence in the act of seeing and a firm commitment to seeing. To take “refuge” in Jesus, for him, was to go into society, observe its situation, and identify the obstacles that undermined its condition. Only by observing first-hand, in other words, could he know society, and know how it could be uplifted.

The LCW, finally, had considerable first-hand knowledge of the slums that it could draw upon and employ to buttress its public statements on housing reform. The LCW-established Victorian Order of Nurses, in particular, offered a vehicle for reform-minded women to inspect the homes of poor Halifax residents and deliver their observations to other LCW members (and the broader public). Between 1903 and 1908, VON nurses made over 3,000 home visits per year, and many of these were conducted in what Agnes Dennis called “the home[s] (if it may be called that) of extreme poverty, where nothing was found

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110 *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
111 Boyer, “Dr. William Harop Hattie.”
112 *Evening Mail*, 5 February 1905.
113 On Shaftesbury’s commitment to seeing, see Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 49.
except a rude bed, a chair, and a patient.”

VON annual meetings in the early twentieth century were a prime occasion to publicize the impoverished conditions that nurses had come to know about, and to link the first-hand knowledge of nurses to rousing calls for housing reform. Unlike most Haligonians, Dennis announced at the 1908 annual meeting, VON nurses had “actual contact with poverty, filth, and disease in ... wretched tenement[s].” Other speakers at VON events would affirm Dennis’s position, extolling the model tenements proposal as a means of addressing the ill-health and “degraded habits” that “the conditions in the hovels” had helped to create.

On occasion, the nurses would also report their findings to the local press, or would invite reporters to view the homes of the most impoverished residents. In 1905, a pair of VON nurses toured an Evening Mail reporter through the slums, enabling him to produce a series of front-page exposés of the city’s “dark side.” These articles sought to convey the reporters’ visual impressions of the slums, and invited the reading public to imagine itself as participating in the home-to-home tour:

As you entered the door you saw to the left, ranged in confusion and dirt, cooking utensils, and two empty kettles on a little stove in which there was not fire. Everything appeared to have a composite varnish of dirt and grease, and on a miserable table an oil lamp gave a feeble light. To the right were what appeared to be two beds, moved so close together as to be practically one, in [which] lay three small children, including a baby and just beyond them, so still as hardly appearing to breathe, and swathed in dirty woollen rags, lay a coloured woman.

Stressing the primacy of vision, the reports encouraged readers to create a mental impression of the Halifax slums on the basis of other images or sights that they may have encountered: “Imagine to yourself, if you have ever seen one,” a report encouraged its readers, “the most squalid peasant hut in Ireland, and you may then do justice to this place.”

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114 At the 1908 annual meeting of the VON, president Agnes Dennis announced that 14,755 home visits had been made in the previous five years. “Work of Victorian Order of Nurses Commended,” VON Minutes.
115 Ibid., emphasis added.
117 The series of exposés appear in Evening Mail, 29 January 1905; 13 February 1905; 17 February 1905. The Mail could continue to publicize the conditions in the slums for years thereafter and explicitly positioned itself as an advocate for the model tenements. The newspaper was owned, incidentally, by the husband of LCW president Agnes Dennis. See, for example, Evening Mail, 24 February 1906; 1 September 1906. The the VON nurses were responsible for touring the Evening Mail reporters through the slums is mentioned at the 1909 annual meeting. “Victorian Order of Nurses,” 1909, VON Minutes.
118 Evening Mail, 29 January 1905.
119 Ibid.
While drawing on their existing experience, the reformers also sought to produce new, ostensibly “systematic” studies of the slums, and this too relied on visual observations. The first major “survey” of the Halifax slums was produced by a special committee of the LCW in 1906. The survey was part of a nation-wide initiative that the LCW’s Eliza Ritchie had played a leading role in promoting through her position as Convener of the NCW’s Committee on Public Health.\textsuperscript{120} In 1905, the various local chapters of the NCW were encouraged to undertake a “systematic” study of various conditions “relating to public health,” the results of which would be combined to produce a comprehensive, nation-wide assessment.\textsuperscript{121} The resulting surveys were remarkable, however, precisely for their absence of systematicity. The Halifax LCW’s survey found sanitary conditions in the slums “bad,” buildings “dilapidated,” plumbing “poor,” and homes “overcrowded.”\textsuperscript{122} The major source of systematicity in the survey was simply that the investigators had employed an established set of questions that “framed” (Ritchie’s term) their viewing of each slum home.\textsuperscript{123} Their answers to the questions evinced no special expertise, nor any clear criteria for distinguishing “good” sanitary conditions from “bad,” or normal from “overcrowded” homes. The authority of the answers seems to stand on no firmer ground than the fact that someone had gone and looked at the conditions and produced a judgement on the basis of what had been seen.

This faith in the unstructured gaze was not unique to the LCW. Prior to the changes introduced in 1908, for example, the Board of Health’s inspectors were not obligated to follow any fixed, systematic procedure in their hugely consequential reporting on housing conditions.\textsuperscript{124} As with the other visitors to the slums, the inspectors could acquire the knowledge they needed simply by opening up the homes of the poor to their observing gaze.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{120} LCW, \textit{Minutes}, 12 March 1906.
\textsuperscript{121} National Council of Women, \textit{Yearbook, 1906} (Ottawa, ON: National Council of Women of Canada), 30.
\textsuperscript{122} LCW, \textit{Minutes}, 12 March 1906.
\textsuperscript{123} LCW, \textit{Minutes}, 14 November 1905. The survey questions that Ritchie had devised are also discussed in the transcripts of the NCW’s 1905 annual meeting. See National Council of Women, \textit{Yearbook, 1906}, 30.
\textsuperscript{124} A criticism of this unstructured approach is expressed in \textit{Evening Mail}, 18 August 1908.
\textsuperscript{125} On the power of the middle-class gaze in housing reform movements, see Sharon Marcus, \textit{Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 248-249.
As passionately as the reformers tried to communicate their knowledge of the slums to the Halifax public, the words and images at their disposal often fell short of the task. The act of seeing, in other words, could not always be faithfully recreated for the benefit of others. This avowed excess of observed reality over the capacity of representation is, for Foucault, a second important aspect of pathological perception. The pathological schema, Foucault suggests, is characterized by a commitment to visual observation, as well as a continual concession that representational practices cannot quite recreate the perceptual act from which knowledge was acquired. Though doctors and scientists would make great efforts to convey what they knew about human life, what they had seen about life, they would almost inevitably encounter and concede the limits of the representational medium. The ostensible “clarity” of “everyday vision” would thus begin to outstrip the capacity of “everyday speech,” and language would finally enter “into that penumbra where the gaze is bereft of words.”

Conceding the limits of representation, in this situation, would tend to become a central part of the practice of representation itself. The major significance of such concessions lie paradoxically in their generally beneficial effects upon medical authority. While conceding the limits of representation might seem to weaken the authority of prevailing knowledge claims, their major effect would be to bolster the privileged experience and authority of those who had “seen” for themselves.

For the Halifax reformers, it was indeed commonplace to couple their descriptions of the slums with a proviso regarding the limits of description. They would, for example, frequently assert that the observed conditions were “beyond description,” “beggared description,” or were simply “indescribable.” The 1905 Evening Mail exposés that so eagerly entreated readers to imagine themselves in the place of the reporter also acknowledged the impossibility of actually doing so. “It would be difficult,” an article claimed, “for anyone who had not seen this place to understand in how serious a degree it is unfit for habitation by any living creature.” In 1910, the British housing reformer Henry Vivian expressed a similar sentiment during a visit to Halifax. After being toured through the slums by George Wright, a

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126 Foucault, Birth of the Clinic, 208.
128 Evening Mail, 17 February 1905.
wealthy businessman and close associate of Armitage’s and the LCW’s, Vivian’s comments to the local press seem to convey his near-total incapacity to represent what he had seen. The houses were “unspeakable in their filthiness,” he said. “They were pigsties – too dark even for that.”129 The force of Vivian’s description seems to derive partly from what it cannot accomplish, from its gesture toward a reality that ostensibly eludes the words that might be used to convey it to others.

Rather than undermining the reformers’ credibility, these admissions of modest representational failure seem to have elevated their authority by enacting a division between two types of knowers: those who had seen the slums extensively and first-hand, and those whose knowledge was acquired second-hand. For others to climb into the seat of authority occupied by the reformers, in this view, they too would have to go to the slums and make a comprehensive tour. And since few Haligonians seem to have had the time or inclination to undertake such a task, the opinions of a vast segment of the Halifax public could essentially be discounted and dismissed. In a characteristic move, an Evening Mail reporter distinguished between the comprehensive, credible knowledge of the housing reformers and the “superficial” knowledge of those who opposed the reforms. People who had only minimal contact with the poor often “doubt as to their needs,” the report explained. However, “if the superficial observers would accompany the city missionary [i.e., Armitage] into the homes, they would ... see sights which speak forcibly for themselves of the need for liberal support [for the poor].”130 People who opposed serious reforms, therefore, were simply ignorant. Were these opponents to acquire actual knowledge, which would mean seeing the slums comprehensively and first-hand, they would come to the very same conclusions as Armitage and his collaborators on the question of reform.

The reformers’ reliance on first-hand, visual knowledge and their recurring acknowledgment of the limits of representation seem to have garnered them considerable credibility in the eyes of the Halifax public. The Evening Mail provided substantial and laudatory coverage of the model tenements campaign, and at least once described Reverend Armitage as the city’s preeminent authority on the slums.131 Doctor Hattie and the reform-minded medical establishment received similarly supportive coverage. Hattie’s

129 Evening Mail, 28 October 1910.
130 Evening Mail, 29 January 1905.
131 Evening Mail, 5 February 1905.
claim to having had “better opportunities than any other class of people to know ... the poorer parts of the city” was printed in the Mail without qualification.\textsuperscript{132} As well, though they were relatively silent on the issue, the Board of Trade and Halifax Trades and Labour Council each passed resolutions in support of the tenements campaign (and delivered the resolutions to City Council).\textsuperscript{133}

These and other expressions of public support were certainly related to the fact that the reformers had some knowledge of the slums to draw upon, whereas few other Haligonians would have had much of anything to support their conclusions. Relevant statistical knowledge, for example, was just beginning to emerge in this context. As the LCW noted in 1906, existing state-produced “vital statistics” were generally imperfect and “wholly lacking” in many parts of the country.\textsuperscript{134} In the absence of better state knowledge, the LCW’s own social survey could be deemed comprehensive and systematic: a more authoritative account of the slums than the state, or any other institution, could then purport to possess. But the ability of the reformers to speak about the slums needs to be related, as well, to the epistemic structure in which their particular knowledge claims acquired their intelligibility. As Foucault suggests, the authority ascribed to medical doctors and other experts on the phenomenon of “life” pertains not just to what they saw and said, but also to “the non-verbal conditions on the basis of which [they] can speak: the common structure that carved up and articulates what is seen and what is said.”\textsuperscript{135} In addition to what they knew, the Halifax reformers’ authority was derived from the pathological schema that structured and validated what they professed to know.

Of course, there were some other Haligonians who had seen the slums first hand – namely, the slum residents themselves. The perspectives of the latter, however, seem to have been either ignored or discounted in the public discussion of the proposed model tenements, and this too needs to be related to the structure of pathological perception. In the Halifax model tenements campaign, as in campaigns else-

\textsuperscript{132} Evening Mail, 28 March 1906.
\textsuperscript{133} The Board of Trade’s support for the model tenements is discussed in City of Halifax, Minutes of the Council of the City of Halifax, 8 February 1912, Halifax Regional Municipality Archives (hereafter cited as HRMA), RG 102-1A, 309; Minutes, 21 March 1912, 383. Armitage spoke to the Trades and Labour Council in 1907; John Joy, a towering figure in working-class politics in Halifax, lectured in favour of the model tenements in 1909. Evening Mail, 16 May 1907; 26 April 1909.
\textsuperscript{134} National Council of Women, Yearbook, 1906, 30.
\textsuperscript{135} Foucault, Birth of the Clinic, xxi.
where, there does not seem to have been any effort to ascertain what the residents of the slums thought of
their own situation or what improvements (if any) they aspired to see implemented.\textsuperscript{136} Neither the reform-
ers, nor the press ever claimed that the residents \emph{wanted} to be moved into the proposed tenements (only
that such a move would improve their lives), and the absence of any survey that would reveal what the
residents actually wanted leaves us with little purchase on the issue in the present. However, from the best
written records that exist, it appears that the residents sometimes objected to the intrusion of reform pro-
grams into their lives. Some working class mothers, for example, refused to send their children to the
LCW’s supervised playgrounds, despite the persistent outreach and coaxing of the LCW to participate in
what might be seen as free daycare.\textsuperscript{137} An exhibit that the LCW and other reformers had set up on Gottin-
gen Street to instruct the neighbourhood on proper upkeep of homes and yards was also vandalized, and a
middle class couple that was admiring the exhibit one afternoon had sheets of cardboard and other trash
thrown at them by a group of black teenagers (who were, it might be imputed, less than impressed by the
moral of the exhibit).\textsuperscript{138} On some occasions, finally, poor residents contested the official designation of
their homes as “unsanitary,” and refused to leave their homes when the Board of Health ordered a
condemnation.\textsuperscript{139}

In one of the only records in which a slum resident’s verbal response to a housing reform initia-
tive can be discerned – and even here, it is discernible only second-hand, through the ventriloquy of an
\textit{Evening Mail} reporter – the tenants of a home on Buckingham Street contested the conclusions of the
Board of Health. The home was rented by the Orton family, and was represented at the hearing by Mrs.
Orton. After denying the Board’s assertion that their home was “filthy,” Mrs. Orton explained that “the
rooms were as clean as they could be made.”\textsuperscript{140} Mrs. Orton and her family had evidently defied earlier
orders to vacate their home, staying put even after an authority had removed the home’s windows. Having

\textsuperscript{136} The lack of attention to the views of slum residents is mentioned by Wohl, \textit{Eternal Slum}.
\textsuperscript{137} In a 1908 article in the \textit{Evening Mail}, an LCW member mentioned that many mothers were not send-
ing their children to the supervised playgrounds and that “two lady supervisors” would soon “visit the
homes of children living near the playgrounds who do not make use of them and explain to their mothers
the advantages offered without charge to their little ones.” \textit{LCW Scrapbook}, 1908.
\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Evening Mail}, 8 September 1910.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Evening Mail}, 15 march 1906.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Evening Mail}, 15 March 1906.
refused to leave a windowless Halifax home in the still-frigid month of March, it is unlikely that the Ortons would respond any differently to the Board’s renewed call for their eviction (which the article recounts). It is impossible to know precisely why the Ortons wished to stay put. Perhaps their expectations in the realm of housing were somewhat different than those of the Board of Health and they were therefore puzzled to be informed that their home was “filthy.” Perhaps they simply knew better than the Board that their meagre income could not bring them any better lodgings in Halifax’s tight, privately controlled housing market. Whatever their reasons, however, it seems safe to say that the Ortons would be reluctant to be forcibly uprooted and moved into someone’s else’s idea of proper housing – and the Ortons lived on precisely the street that the reformers aimed to demolish and rebuild first.

The evident discounting of the slum residents’ perspectives on housing reform is more than incidental. Rather, I would suggest that it relates to a third aspect of pathological perception. As Foucault suggests, the ostensibly observation-based claims of pathological perception in fact rely upon certain assumed (non-observable) norms, and one effect of these norms is to enact boundaries between the subjects and objects of knowledge. To be perceived as exhibiting norms of good health and morality is to be a potential subject of knowledge; in contrast, to be perceived as betraying norms is to be cast beyond subjecthood, to appear as an object (at best) in someone else’s project of investigation or reform. The primary significance of pathological perception to disciplinary projects like the model tenements is thus its role in defining a group of individuals whose apparent pathologies disqualify their perspectives from consideration and “qualify” others to manage or discipline their lives without their consent. As Foucault emphasizes, the application of disciplinary power to individuals is generally preceded by a practice of “binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal).”¹⁴¹ In Halifax, as elsewhere, the pathologizing of individuals not only presents them as requiring disciplinary interventions, but also denies them any say in the matter. The residents of the slums could not be subjects of knowledge, their perspectives could not be recognized, precisely because they were cast as its objects. They were a problem to be solved, a pathology to be normalized. It was an effect of the structure of knowledge in which the slums were revealed, in sum, that the perspectives of slum residents were never explicitly surveyed or

cited in support of the model tenements campaign. There was, structurally, no reason to ask them what they thought.

Pathological perception had important effects on the Halifax model tenements campaign. In its validation of first-hand, visual knowledge, pathological perception provided legitimacy to the knowledge claims of Hattie, Armitage, and the LCW. In its recognition of the inevitable limits of representation, it enabled the reformers to communicate their knowledge to others without making others their equals – without making them also knowers. In its reliance on norm of health and behaviour, finally, it cast the residents of the slums outside the sphere of life and preemptively undercut their potentially competing perspectives on the slum environment. The most immediate effect of this structure of knowledge was to enable the reformers to speak credibly and authoritatively about the slums, and indeed they seem to have won considerable public support in Halifax for the implementation of their proposal. At the same time, though more subtly, this structure had the effect of denying the residents of the slums the opportunity to speak about their own situation, rendering them vulnerable to the calculations and manoeuvres of others. Their home environment would now be opened up to the deployment of reforms that they had no role in devising. There are perhaps worse things than having one’s living conditions modified by another, especially when this “other” seems to have good intentions. But the history of relatively privileged Haligonians deciding among themselves what would improve the lives of the less privileged is not a happy one, and it is a history that could be said to begin here, at this moment.

2.5 Transforming the Slums

The reformers, having developed an understanding of the slum milieu and having garnered substantial public recognition of their authority on this matter, may have seemed well-poised to bring about a transformation of slum spaces and lives. Given the close attention paid by Armitage and his associates to the British experience in constructing model tenements, it should come as no surprise that their plan for Halifax mirrored the overseas situation. Indeed, the group came to prize a specific British tenement project, and worked to replicate this project in Halifax. In this section, I describe the solution that the reformers proposed and how it was almost implemented. While the reformers seem to have won the moral support
of many Haligonians, they struggled nevertheless to secure the full financial support that they required, and it was here that the campaign ultimately floundered. The undoing of the campaign, as I will show, was partly a function of matters well beyond the reformers’ control. It was related, in particular, to a major migration of financial capital out of the city. The campaign can hardly be faulted for that. However, I want to suggest that the failure was related, as well, to the reformers’ impossibly narrow framing of the slum situation. Unable to see anything else but “the environment” as the problem, the reformers gave themselves very limited scope for improving the situation. In the end, the group failed to convince some important constituencies that the model tenements would indeed bring about the changes that they described as necessary.

The details of the proposed transformation of the slums were revealed gradually, over a period of two years. The first revelation was simply that the tenements company had identified “one of the very ugliest and most squalid portions of the city” and would begin immediately to acquire properties in this area with a view to tearing them down.\(^{142}\) In the former place of such squalor would be erected a large-scale, modern tenement “identical” to a project in Liverpool, completed in 1888, that Halifax proponents believed had been particularly successful in its hygienic, moral, and pecuniary outcomes (see Figure 2.5).\(^{143}\) The building would be massive in scale: 480 feet long by 180 feet wide, with a large courtyard in the centre serving as “a playground for children.”\(^{144}\) It would comprise 550 individual units, ranging from three-bedroom to single room dwellings: suitable, collectively, “for almost every condition of family life.”\(^{145}\) The building would be “handsome,” “properly constructed,” “comfortable,” and attentive to prevailing “sanitary principles.”\(^{146}\)

What went unstated, but was certainly evident in the design, was that the tenement would be designed to discipline its future inhabitants. Like other British tenements, the example chosen by the Halifax reformers would incorporate three specific disciplinary strategies. It would be laid out, first of all, so as the “enclose” the reformed environment from the still-unreformed surroundings of the slums. The build-

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\(^{142}\) *Evening Mail*, 11 June 1906.

\(^{143}\) Ibid.

\(^{144}\) *Evening Mail*, 24 February 1906; 28 March 1906.

\(^{145}\) *Evening Mail*, 4 April 1906; 28 March 1906.

\(^{146}\) *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906; Halifax, Minutes, 30 May 1906, 311; *Evening Mail*, 5 February 1905.
ings themselves would create an imposing barrier: each side of the project erected a long, straight wall, the height of which would exceed nearby homes by at least three stories (and be all the more imposing, for that reason). Entry to the complex, meanwhile, would occur at a few designed points: through gates that presumably could be locked and unlocked by the building’s superintendent. The individual housing units, secondly, would be “partitioned” in such a way that distinct spaces, with distinct uses, would be constituted. In many units, the ideal of three bedrooms (one for the adults, one for the children of each gender) would indeed be provided, and bathing, cleaning, and cooking would certainly be kept apart from sleeping. The idea that the units would provide a middle-class home in miniature is expressed in the reformers’ claim that the new environment would be fully conducive to “family life” (a characteristic that was thus far provided only outside the slums, in the neighbourhoods of the better classes). The overall design of the tenement, finally, would provide built-in platforms and relays for “surveillance.” In a feature
that would have particularly pleased the LCW, an open courtyard would be available as a “counter attraction” to the streets. The chosen model, like the model tenements in general, was designed for the exercise of disciplinary power. It would act upon individuals, “educate them” as it were, through the medium of space.

While the area to be transformed was indeed enormous, and the undertaking was often described in terms that suggested the panicky eradication of an infestation or life-threatening disease, the company’s ambitions were nevertheless tempered by its interest in ensuring that the area’s residents were actually re-housed. The residents of the area were counted; the weekly rents they paid were recorded. Based on specifications “carefully drawn up,” Armitage estimated that the housing units to be provided by his company would be “within the reach of every working man [sic]” in the city. The latter would obtain higher quality housing “without any additional expense.” In total, roughly 1,800 people would be re-housed in the newly constructed tenements. This overall goal, however, would be brought about quite gradually: one block of houses would be completely demolished and a new tenement block erected in their place before a further block was targeted. It is unclear whether the residents of a targeted block would have anywhere to live in the interval between the demolition of their home and the completion of a new tenement. Nevertheless, the decision to proceed “block by block” was at least intended to minimize displacement, and even the Board of Trade premised its support for the proposal on assurances that the current tenants of the area would be rehoused. Given the project’s aim of reforming people by transforming their environment, it could hardly have been conceived otherwise.

147 A count of 150 people per block in the targeted area was reported in Evening Mail, 26 March 1912. A summary of weekly rents appears in Halifax, “Report – Re: Armitage Building Scheme,” 26 March 1909, HRMA, RG 35-102(1B), box 7, no. 75.
148 Evening Mail, 16 May 1907.
149 Evening Mail, 26 March 1912.
150 Ibid. An interest in proceeding “block by block” was not shared by all model tenements proponents. A City councillor otherwise supportive of Armitage’s plan argued that the City should “expropriate the entire area and raze all buildings thereon excepting only such as I have referred to above [i.e., some business premises]. After the cleaning [sic] of the expropriated area, the City should undertake the replanning of the entire district.” Halifax, Minutes, 8 February 1912, 293.
151 Halifax Board of Trade, Minutes of the Halifax Board of Trade, 1906-1967, 19 March 1912, NSARM, MFM #12395.
In addition to architecture, the tenements company sought to imitate the peculiar organizational form of the British model tenements: capitalist philanthropy. Espousing the view that “the most purely philanthropic of movements cannot be carried on without money,” the company aimed to secure roughly $200,000 of private capital. While pursuing its social goals, it expected simultaneously to produce a modest profit of 7 percent annually for its investors. By 1906, several major investors seemed to have been secured, and two years later the company announced that it had purchased “a large strip of property” on two intersecting streets. The transformation of the slums, at this point, appeared simply a matter of time. An optimistic Halifax Evening Mail in 1908 reported that, owing to the property having been purchased, “one of the greatest forward movements for the betterment of the workingman [sic] was ... sure to materialize.”

At some point, the company’s investors backed out. The first public sign of trouble was registered in 1907, when Armitage complained in a public lecture that “it would be easier to move the Citadel [Hill] than to move the people of Halifax to have these [slums] torn down and replaced by proper and modern tenements.” Two years later, Armitage had to admit that the company’s initial investors had withdrawn. The reasons for the withdrawal were never stated, but Armitage offered an important hint in 1912 when he lamented that Haligonians were willing to invest their money in Cuba or Mexico, “but not on Brunswick Street.”

This was indeed a time of massive capital flight out of Halifax. Especially significant, as well as representative of a broader pattern, was the trajectory of the Royal Securities Company. Founded in 1903, RSC was devoted initially to selling securities for Scotia Group, a Halifax-based conglomerate of

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152 Evening Mail, 11 June 1906; Halifax, Minutes, 10 March 1909, 375.
153 Evening Mail, 4 April 1906.
154 The major investors are listed in Evening Mail, 24 February 1906; the purchase of property is mentioned in Evening Mail, 6 June 1908; Halifax, Minutes, 10 March 1909, 375.
155 Evening Mail, 6 June 1908.
156 Evening Mail, 16 May 1907.
157 “Abolition of the slums,” LCW Scrapbook, 26 March 1912.
regionally based steel, coal, and financial concerns. However, it soon turned its attention to more lucrative opportunities in Western Canada, the Caribbean, and Latin America. By 1907, the firm’s leadership had reached the conclusion that there was little future in Maritime-based industry and uprooted its operations to Montreal. In enlisting local capital, sending it elsewhere, and then leaving the city entirely, RSC was taking part in a broad and well-documented migration of capital out of the Maritime region in the early part of the twentieth century. As capital moved Eastward, the prospects for model tenements in Halifax were certainly impacted: of the tenements company’s five initial investors, four were heavily involved with RSC and the Scotia Group, while the other was president of the increasingly Toronto-centered Bank of Nova Scotia. The flight of financial capital, therefore, was also a flight of “philanthropic capital.” The money that was to be invested in the model tenements was quickly leaving town, whether its owners physically moved with it or not. In 1907, it would have to be conceded that the model tenements could not be constructed as originally planned.

159 Frost, Merchant Princes, 256-257; Marchildon, “John F. Stairs,” 216.
161 The five initial investors were William Stairs, John Payzant, Richard Henry Brown, Jr., Thomas Ritchie, and Charles Blackadar. William Stairs was closely associated with RSC, as well as Eastern Trust (acquired by Bank of Montreal in 1905) and the Union Bank of Halifax (acquired by Royal Bank in 1910). He died unexpectedly in 1904. Frost, Merchant Princes. Richard Henry Brown, Jr. was the manager of the Sydney-based General Mining Association from 1866 to 1901, when GMA was sold to Nova Scotia Steel (a Scotia Group company). His capital, in other words, was tied into Scotia Group and RSC from 1901 onward. Marilyn Gerriets, “The Rise and Fall of a Free-Standing Company in Nova Scotia: The General Mining Association,” in Canadian Multinationals and International Finance, eds. Gregory Marchildon and Duncan McDowall (New York: Routledge, 1992), 42. John Payzant was president of Bank of Nova Scotia from 1899 to 1918; the Bank moved to Toronto in 1901. Frost, “‘Nationalization’ of the Bank of Nova Scotia.” Thomas Ritchie was a part of a law firm that represented Merchants Bank of Halifax (later Royal Bank); in 1891, he left the firm to serve as vice-president of Merchants Bank. David Flaherty and Carol Wilton, eds. Inside the Law: Canadian Law Firms in Historical Perspective (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 281, 299. Charles Blackadar was also tied into fleeing financial capital. His primary occupation was proprietor of the Acadian Reporter newspaper; he also served as a director of the Union Bank of Halifax (acquired by Royal Bank in 1910). As a close associate of Armitage’s and chairman of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, it is unlikely that he would have wanted to back out of the model tenements plan. His newspaper came on very hard times in the early 1900s, however, and it could be that he lacked the capital to contribute as he had planned. Henry Morgan, ed., The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography (Toronto, ON: William Briggs, 1912), 107; Murray Beck, “Blackadar, Henry Dugwell,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1901-1910, Vol. XIII, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994)
In 1909, however, Armitage tried another route: he petitioned City Council to become involved in the tenements, either by undertaking the project itself as a municipal enterprise or by guaranteeing an estimated $150,000 bond issue.\textsuperscript{162} Council, after studying the issue for two months, refused either option.\textsuperscript{163} Their main rationale was twofold: first that the City was unlikely to be able to implement the project any more economically than the businessmen who had abandoned it; and second, that similar projects in Britain and the United States had been unsuccessful in re-housing the intended population (largely because the rents in the new buildings were invariably too high). The second argument would seem to be the most damaging. Council’s report was informed by the 1906 book, \textit{On Municipal and National Trading}, from which it lifted Lord Rosebury’s polemical message to housing reformers in Britain: “You build admirable buildings, but the inhabitants of these new dwellings are not the people you dispossessed.”\textsuperscript{164} It was politically untenable at this point for Council to support a plan that might result in significant displacement. Such evidence of displacement would obviously be devastating to the reformers’ cause. Having premised the model tenements plan on the idea that it would transform people, the possibility that it might instead throw people out of their existing homes, and into a highly uncertain and risky situation, would nullify the whole proposition. There might be other reasons to tear down the slums and build something different – as indeed there eventually would be – but \textit{this} reason was no longer convincing. The City, accordingly, could not go along with the plan.

The City’s decision, to a great extent, drained the life out of the model tenements campaign. Armitage and his associates would continue to advocate for the tenements proposal for a few more years, but with less intensity and to no ultimate avail. After 1912, public discussion of the proposal ceased entirely, and the reformers energies were finally reined in – or rather, in many cases, redirected.\textsuperscript{165} (I explore some of these new directions in the next chapter.)

The ultimate failure of the tenements campaign offers important insights about the contours of disciplinary power in this context. The campaign’s failure, it should be emphasized, was not the result of

\textsuperscript{162} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 7 January 1909, 301.
\textsuperscript{163} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 10 March 1909, 375.
\textsuperscript{164} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 10 March 1909, 376.
\textsuperscript{165} LCW, \textit{Minutes}, 26 March 1912.
poor public support for its aims. To the contrary, the reformers evidently succeeded in tapping into pre-existing public concerns about the ill-health and immorality of the slums, and also worked to amplify and broaden such concerns to a remarkable extent. From the local press to the Trades and Labour Council, from City Council to the Board of Trade, the most vocal and influential constituents of the Halifax public discourse concurred with the reformers that “educating the people into a higher form of life” was an eminently worthwhile pursuit. Disciplining the poor, intervening in their conditions of life so as to modify the condition of their lives, was clearly seen as a legitimate project, if not a necessary one. Where the disagreement occurred, in the end, was on the affiliated and vexed question of means – specifically, whether a project that aimed to transform the environment of the poor, while simultaneously delivering a modest profit to the project’s investors, could actually succeed. Reservations about the project were expressed from both sides of the campaign’s calculus of reform: whereas the potential business investors in the tenements seem to have been concerned that a reform project would not deliver an appropriate rate of profit, the City contributed the contrasting concern that a profitable project would not achieve its intended reforms. Profits might be achieved without reforms, or reforms without profit, but the likelihood of hitting both goals simultaneously was seen as highly doubtful (as indeed it should have).

While the reformers’ somewhat improbable vision of urban change need not have undermined their campaign – the model tenements proposal, after all, would not have required the support of City Council had its initial financial backers not wandered away – I want to suggest, nevertheless, that certain limitations were constitutive of the tenements campaign and disciplinary power in general. Limits were revealed, first of all, in the reformers mode of knowledge. Narrowing-in on the material environment as the major cause of the observed pathologies of the slums had the effect of blinding the reformers to other, potentially relevant phenomena. Such unremarked phenomena, from the depredations of absentee landlordism to exploitative relations in the workplace, could reasonably have been considered relevant to the reformers’ concerns; they could have been considered impediments, for example, to people obtaining better housing conditions on their own terms. The narrowness of the reformers’ understanding of the slums stands in contrast not just to the more radical analyses of Engels, DuBois, or the Orton family, but also to the new, more “comprehensive” forms of planning knowledge that would soon come to guide mainstream
planning practices in Halifax and elsewhere. Whereas planning knowledge would soon include phenomena like wage rates and employment levels, and could thus understand degraded housing conditions in somewhat broader terms, the Halifax reformers could only point, again and again, to the apparent fact of insanitary and unwholesome environments in the “upper streets.”

A second limitation, closely related to the first, appeared within the reformers’ espoused technology of power – that is, their vision of the model tenements as an architecture of discipline. Aiming to achieve a transformation of human life through the construction of a wholly new, meticulously designed environment would prove to be a rather ambitious project. The slums would need to be completely eliminated, and entirely rebuilt. A middle-class domestic environment (in miniature) would need to be provided, without charging substantially higher rents or effecting economic reforms that would allow the intended residents to pay higher rents. The effective deployment of this technology of power, the construction of a life-altering disciplinary space, would apparently involve a level of expense that neither the state nor civil society was willing to cover. The failure of the model tenements campaign, again, was not its coveted ends, but rather its means: the achievement of the campaign’s objectives would simply be too expensive. The costliness, or inefficiency, of the model tenements is in fact a central characteristic of disciplinary power in general. As Foucault remarks, the “efficiency” of power has been an important consideration in modernity. While disciplinary power was itself an improvement over older, sovereign technologies of power, its dependence upon the creation of wholly new, “artificial” spaces entailed an expense that would eventually be seen as prohibitive, especially with the eventual conception of “biopolitical” technologies of power that could work with existing material spaces and processes. If the management of human life in Halifax would come to involve different, more efficient planning initiatives – initiatives that would no longer require the wholesale reconstruction of spaces – then the expense of disciplinary power, its inefficiency, might be regarded as one of the conditions of possibility for this transition.

2.6 Conclusion

In the early years of the twentieth century, the “slums” of Halifax came to public attention as never before, and a bold solution to the area’s ostensible problems was promoted. In the eyes of certain Halifax
reformers, the slums were a milieu of pathological lives and pathological living conditions. The residents of the slums were seen as betraying established norms of good health and morality. Their bodies were abnormally vulnerable to disease, and their natural capacities for moral restraint and good judgement had been subverted. For the proponents of the model tenements, these evident departures from established norms were attributable not to any differences in social class or biological makeup, but rather to the surrounding environment. It was the living conditions of the poor, their crowded and unsanitary homes in particular, that had impeded their attainment of a “higher form of living.” As other contemporary cities, the achievement of housing reforms in Halifax would be premised on the illumination of a causal connection between the condition of individuals and the conditions of their surroundings. In the course of the seven-year campaign, the proponents of the tenements aimed to convince the public that the ostensible moral and physical pathologies of slum residents could be attributed to the pathological conditions in which they lived. As a favourable editorial in the *Evening Mail* suggested, the high concentration of disease and moral vice that “had been allowed to take possession” of the slums were the result of the “bad condition of the houses and the evil surroundings in which the residents have been compelled to live.”

The reformers’ attribution of certain pathologies to the material environment would be forced to compete with other, conflicting evaluations of the slums. As the reformers acknowledged, some middle-class Haligonians would tend to blame the poor themselves for their problems and question the necessity or effectiveness of an initiative like the model tenements. Other analyses, meanwhile, might have attributed the impoverished living conditions of the poor to the lack of employment and decent wages in the city, and would have focused their reform efforts on these conditions. Aiming to win public support for their own program of transformation, the reformers consistently drew attention to the knowledge-making practices through which their perspective on the slums had been produced. Consistent with the structure of knowledge that Foucault calls “pathological perception,” the reformers stressed the importance of first-hand, visual observation; they highlighted the limits of representational methods to convey precisely what they had “seen” in the slums; and they discounted the perspectives of individuals whose ostensible pathologies placed them beyond the domain of normal, healthy life. As in other contexts, the schema of

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166 *Evening Mail*, 28 March 1906.
pathological perception gave structure and validity to the reformers’ knowledge claims. It helped to position the reformers as authorities on the Halifax slums, as well as foreclose such a position to others. The public support that the reformers ultimately garnered in Halifax was related to the structure of knowledge in which their claims acquired intelligibility and validity. While first-hand observation might seem a relatively uncontroversial method of knowledge production, it is important to recognize that it would not always be treated as authoritative, and that it would soon cede its authority to other, more theoretical modes of analysis.

Having laid claim to the material and discursive terrain of the slums, the reformers could put forward a far-reaching program of transformation. The construction of the model tenements would involve, first of all, an extensive project of slum clearance, the demolition of perhaps 300 existing working-class homes. In this newly opened terrain, a new form of living would be made possible and (ideally) enforced. Like other disciplinary spaces, the model tenements would incorporate three spatial strategies that were intended to reshape the behaviour of individuals. The exterior walls of the tenements would “enclose” a distinctive disciplinary milieu, with a clear transition between the transformed environment and the surrounding city. Individual housing units would be “partitioned” in such a way that certain activities would be grouped together, others would be kept apart, and new modes of behaviour would thereby be imparted upon the inhabitants. And the overall layout of the tenements would make the “surveillance” of residents’ lives a more tenable and consistent undertaking. Just as the gaze of the reformers had rendered the pathologies of the slums residents intelligible, so too the medium of the gaze would assess and help to impart a “normalization” of these lives.

The ostensible capacity of the model tenements to “educate the people into a higher form of living” was premised both on the elimination of prevailing, pathological living conditions, as well as the creation of a new environment that would act upon individuals through the medium of space. The model tenements were thus an expression of biopower in its disciplinary mode. Whereas later planning initiatives would aim to improve the overall population through relatively indirect strategies, the tenements would focus on individual lives and seek an alteration through a massive, comprehensive intervention in their lives. It was by assessing individuals, and seeking to correct their betrayal of physical and behav-
ournal norms, that the model tenements would achieve the objectives of their proponents. Civic leaders, Armitage would proclaim, “had it within their power to stamp out vice if they but cared to exercise their influence.” The Reverend’s proposed mechanism of power and influence won substantial public support in Halifax, but ultimately went unimplemented. The problems of vice and illness would remain to be addressed through other means.

The model tenements campaign was a significant event in the history of urban planning in Halifax despite, and because of, its ultimate failure. It was significant foremost in its popularization of a particular conception of life, space, and the relationship between the two. The campaign was premised on the idea that certain forms of life were pathological and problematic; that pathological forms of life were essentially a symptom of pathological conditions of life; and that it was the role of healthy, moral, and therefore “normal” individuals to seek a solution to the present pathologies of urban life. The evident division between the subjects and objects of reform, in this situation, need to be highlighted. The capacity of the reformers to speak intelligibly and authoritatively about the slums was, I suggested, conditional upon the enforced non-speaking, or silencing, of the slum residents themselves. As in other model tenements campaigns, it does not seem to have been important to ascertain what the poor thought about their own situation, nor whether they supported such a large-scale transformation in their living conditions. Indeed, the best evidence suggests that the poor were opposed to this period’s creeping interventions in their lives, and might very well have refused to move out of their homes as the demolition process got underway. Hence, there is a certain silence in the structure of the emerging urban planning regime in Halifax. At the very moment when planning began to take “life” as its object, a significant number of Halifax residents were cast outside the category of normal life and thereby denied a role in devising new planning initiatives. Marking this itinerary of silence is an important first step in the longer critique of urban planning that I develop in this dissertation. It is a critique that will mark other silences and seek to consider what their existence suggests about the operation of planning in the present.

167 Evening Mail, 16 May 1907.
And yet, it is important to recognize the specificities of this pathologization and the possibilities that were offered to certain pathological groups. The residents of the downtown slum were considered deficient, but improvable. Their eviction from the category of normal life meant simply that their lives were no longer their own to oversee and manage; others (normal individuals) would need to step in and sight things straight. The very prospect of improvement, paradoxically, resulted in a kind of care being bestowed upon their lives – a kind of care that was not shown to all pathologized populations, nor in all redevelopment plans in Halifax history. Indeed, it is important to recognize the obstacle that the model tenements plan ultimately encountered: City Council’s concerns about possible displacement. While the tenements initiative was intended to proceed slowly, tearing down and rebuilding a block of the downtown slum before proceeding to the next block, it is very likely that many residents would have been displaced (at least for the interval between the destruction of their homes and the completion of a new tenement). It is significant that the prospect of displacement was prominently raised. It was important, in this context, that people not be displaced, and the arrival of a strong argument that people would be displaced seems to have been enough to undermine a particular urban planning initiative. Such a concern about displacement would not always exist in Halifax. The residents of Africville, for one thing, were not accorded such concern. The model tenements plan went unsupported by City Council partly because of a concern (about displacement) that it would certain not have when it came to Africville.

One insight to take away from the model tenements plan, therefore, is the operation of classism (as opposed to racism) within the purview of biopower. Whereas Foucault would tend to group both of these differentiations under the same heading, I want to underline the existence and significance of fine distinctions between the two. The very prospect of improvement among poor white residents put them in significantly different situation than racialized groups in Halifax, groups who would also be pathologized but for whom improvement would not be an option. As I discuss in Chapter 4, the residents of Africville would be seen as deficient, but inherently and irredeemably so. With no apparent prospect of improvement, the operation of planning in the vicinity of Africville would differ markedly from its application to the downtown slum. An elaboration of these differences awaits Chapter 4. For now, it suffices to note that differences exist, and to consider the model tenements plan an important event in the history of planning.
in Halifax partly for its aid in discerning these differences. Both class and race can license evictions from
the category of life in the purview of biopower, but the significance and meaning of these evictions is li-
able to diverge.
Chapter 3

“A Dog in the Manger”

3.1 Introduction

At the annual meeting of the Halifax Local Council of Women in 1912, “the abolition of the slums” was the official focus of lectures and discussions. In attendance that day were all of the major proponents of the model tenements plan (discussed in the last chapter). Local doctors spoke about the health impacts of “crowded districts,” the LCW’s Mary Ritchie drew attention to the “the struggles of mothers to bring up their children in such streets,” and Rev. Armitage lectured optimistically about model housing experiments in Britain that might be emulated in Halifax.¹

Amid these familiar diagnoses was a distinctly new one. Frederick Sexton, Principal of the recently established Nova Scotia Technical College, brought forward an economic analysis of the slums. Rather than discussing the present conditions in the slums or the social effects of such conditions, Sexton lectured on the underlying economic processes “which go to produce the slums.”² He analyzed the slums as a terrain of real property, and explained how their existence could be addressed by acting upon the processes through which the condition of property is produced. In particular, he advocated the shifting of (some or all) existing municipal taxation onto the value of land (whereas, in the current system, land was just one form of wealth subject to taxation). Rather than acquiring slum housing, tearing it down, constructing a meticulously designed alternative in its place, and inserting former slum residents into a new environment, Sexton argued that the introduction of a “land tax” would increase the cost of owning slum housing and would therefore prompt owners to undertake major improvements. A “land tax,” he concluded, “would do away with many of [the slums].”³

¹ Halifax Local Council of Women (hereafter cited as LCW), Minutes of the Halifax Local Council of Women, 26 March 1912, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (hereafter cited as NSARM), MG 20, vol. 535, no. 5.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
The LCW, for one, appears to have been moved. The 1912 meeting was the last time that the group publicly discussed the model tenements plan, and the next ten years were marked by an ardent effort on the part of LCW members to understand the underlying processes that Sexton had described. Instead of surveying the slums (as the group once had), the LCW now studied texts: a Dalhousie University professor was asked to provide a set of lectures on political economy;⁴ a committee on taxation was formed with the aim of studying the “Canons of Taxation” and crafting policy positions on behalf of the group;⁵ and in 1921 the group submitted a resolution to City Council that advocated a very different remedy to the problem of housing than its once-advocated model tenements. While continuing to describe prevailing housing conditions as a “menace” to “the life of this community,” the LCW now advocated a heavy tax on land values (and a lighter tax on other forms of wealth) as an effective means of addressing “extortional [sic] rents, overcrowding, and high mortality” in the city.⁶ In the space of a decade, then, the group advanced two very different modes of analyzing and treating the same problem.

Observable in the LCW’s changing approach to the Halifax slums is the emergence of a substantially new technology of biopower. Whereas the model tenements plan involved a “disciplinary” configuration of knowledge and power, the “land tax” indicates the arrival of what Foucault calls “biopolitics.” While both “discipline” and “biopolitics” focus on the management of “life” (and are both, for that reason, considered forms of biopower), they differ in at least three major ways. First, whereas discipline focuses on the lives of individuals, biopolitics seeks to manage “aggregate” life (e.g., the life of populations, species, or communities). In Halifax, as we will see, aggregate life was most often denoted by terms like “the community,” or “the city as a whole,” and the emergence of biopolitics would be marked by the introduction of policies and initiatives that aimed to improve or otherwise manage the referent of these terms. Second, whereas discipline involves direct interventions in the lives of particular individuals (e.g., surveillance, training, strategic rearrangements of living spaces), biopolitics seeks to act upon life through more indirect means, through actions directed toward “factors and elements that seem far removed from

⁴ LCW, Minutes, 11 September 1911, MG 20, Vol. 535, no. 5.
⁵ LCW, Minutes, 21 October 1920, MG 20, Vol. 535, no. 8.
⁶ City of Halifax, Minutes of the Council of the City of Halifax, 3 March 1921, Halifax Regional Municipality Archives (hereafter cited as HRMA), RG 102-1A, 755.
the population itself and its immediate behaviour.”^7 Finally, whereas discipline operates through a wide range of institutions and individuals, biopolitics is largely the province of the state (at least in its early manifestations). One of the reasons that biopolitics emerges in the hands of the state, Foucault explains, is that the knowledge required for its exercise is more complex, and more costly to produce. The disciplining of individuals, he contends, could occur on the basis of the “intuitive, empirical, and fragmented” knowledge of various institutions.^8 Managing the elements and processes that affect populations, in contrast, would require new systems of knowledge that were not available to the purveyors of discipline, and that the state, with its larger scope and financial resources, would bring into being.

The specific concerns of biopolitics are wide-ranging. While scholars have tended to focus on Foucault’s analysis of eugenics and other mechanisms of acting upon the biological or genetic character of the population – and, indeed, this will be essential to my own analysis in the next chapter – biopolitics can also work through other discourses and strategies. An additional and highly significant domain of biopolitics, Foucault suggests, is political economy. The significance of modern political economic theory, for Foucault, lies in its twofold incorporation of the “population” into the analysis of wealth: its attention, first, to the effects of economic processes and elements upon the condition of the population (e.g., its growth, health, wealth, and well-being), and, second, to the effects of the population and its characteristics upon processes of wealth creation. The principal marker of modern political economy, he suggests, is precisely its incorporation of the population as the “subject-object” of overall wealth creation: the major source/subject of wealth-creating activities, as well as the recipient/object of economic output.^9 (The work of David Ricardo is pioneering in this regard, and Foucault regards the latter as the first modern political economist and, thus, a pivotal figure in the genealogy of biopolitics.) Without dismissing other critical approaches to economic matters (e.g., Marxism), Foucault stakes out a somewhat different mode of critique. He is interested foremost in how the state takes up a role in the management of economic processes in order to control, protect, or otherwise manage the phenomenon of the population, and how this pursuit

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is enabled by particular political economic discourses and knowledge. Following Foucault, this will be my interest in this chapter as well.

As instructive as I find Foucault’s analysis, I need to highlight (and seek to address) one of its major shortcomings. As I will suggest in this chapter, one of the primary biopolitical strategies of the municipal state will be to evaluate and manage the economic characteristics of real property as a means of improving local housing conditions, and therefore addressing a manifold “menace to the life of the community.” While I regard such strategies as consistent with Foucault’s general thesis, it is important to recognize that his analysis scarcely mentions a connection between property and biopolitics. Where it does mention property, moreover, it is regarded as a limit to biopolitical power. Specifically, Foucault suggests that property rights serve to mark off a terrain where the state cannot intervene, where the purview of individual citizens must be recognized and honoured. What this analysis fails to recognize, I would suggest, is the way that real property was reconceived at the dawn of what he calls “modern” political economy (i.e., in the work of Ricardo), and how a new conception of property enabled the imagination and deployment of state strategies that would assertively cross over the bounds of property rights in the name of the population. In the work of Ricardo, and the later political economists that I discuss in this chapter, real property is conceived in such a way that its economic condition appears to have major effects on the population, and an intervention in the former can be described as beneficial, even necessary, to the fate of the latter. Property, rather than a limit to biopolitical power, becomes one of the terrains through which biopolitical objectives can be pursued.

Connecting Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics to events in early twentieth century Halifax, the aim of this chapter is to chart the emergence of a mode of knowledge in which calculated state interventions in the realm of real property could be conceived as a viable means for managing the local population. A new mode of knowledge, I contend, can be observed in the protracted unfolding of a pair of inter-related political struggles at the dawn of the new century. The first struggle pertained to the issue of municipal taxation (i.e., the rate of taxation, as well as the forms of wealth that would be subject to taxation). In the

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course of this long-running struggle running between 1892 and 1922, new connections were disclosed between certain forms of property and the condition of the overall community. In particular, it was argued that many forms of individually owned property effectively contributed to the growth and prosperity of the overall community, whereas property in land tended to benefit individuals at the expense of the community (and constituted, for that reason, a domain of justifiable state interventions).

The second, related struggle pertained to the issue of property assessment (i.e., the methods used to determine the value of taxable property). The effect of this struggle was to undermine the City’s existing methods of assessment and propel the search for an alternative, more authoritative system of evaluating and representing the value of property. In the end, a new system was introduced at City Hall that would not just estimate property values in a more “scientific” fashion, but would also disclose a range of new empirical realities that would enable the state to imagine and carry out novel biopolitical interventions. In the new assessment system, I argue, the urban terrain was disclosed as a geometric expanse of existing and potential property values, where the contribution of any given property or area to the overall population could be calculated, and opportunities for the state to intervene in order to serve the ostensible interest of the population could be glimpsed. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics, an improvement in the condition of the “community as a whole” would be understood to require state interventions that would foreseeably harm particular individuals. The tax reform debates would indeed institute a conceptual division, or “caesura,” between the “community as a whole” and mere “individuals.” State interventions meant to benefit the former, moreover, might end up disrupting or damaging the lives of the latter. The “land tax,” of course, was precisely such an action. In effectively penalizing the owning of bare or underimproved land, the tax would harm certain land owners while ostensibly benefiting the community as a whole. Later interventions, as I suggest in subsequent chapters, would connect the same mode of knowledge to more significant, and much more damaging, state interventions.

This chapter has three substantive sections. In the first section, I examine the struggle over municipal taxation and the new conception of real property that emerged within it. The struggle, I document, was initiated by the Halifax Board of Trade. Aiming to bring about tax reforms that would ensure the viability of local merchants and industrialists, the Board took up the ideas of the Ricardian political economist,
Henry George, and argued that a tax on land values (and not other forms of property or wealth) would best support the success of local businesses and the overall prosperity of the community. In the second section, I examine the struggle over assessment. As the City increased its tax levels to fund its expanding operations, a substantial challenge to the prevailing methods of property assessment was initiated by a group called the Ratepayers Association. In order to restore its authority over property values, the City moved to adopt a “scientific” system of assessment (already in use in other cities) that linked property values to their ostensible “determinants,” and submitted the work of assessment to a precise system of rules and practices of external verification. In the final section, I demonstrate how the changes instituted in the City’s systems of taxation and assessment signal the arrival of a new configuration of knowledge and power. Connecting the arguments of the previous two sections to an explicit discussion of biopolitics, I show how the new conception of property in Halifax enabled the urban terrain to be understood as an expanse of property value that the state could justifiably manage in the ostensible interest of the local population.

While the “land tax” was a relatively modest and short-lived biopolitical strategy, other, less modest strategies would soon be implemented on the basis of the same mode of knowledge. I conclude that property, as it was reconceived in early twentieth century Halifax, would come to appear before the eyes of the municipal state less as a limit to biopolitical power (as Foucault suggests) than as a compelling and highly conspicuous terrain for its exercise.

3.2 Taxation Reform in Halifax

The period between 1890 and 1920 – a period dubbed by many historians, “the reform era” – was a time of immense change, intense debate, and new ideas in Canadian cities. Major changes included quickening industrialization and a “demographic revolution” that saw Canada’s urban population quadruple in

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just four decades. A significant middle class emerged for the first time, as did a larger and better organized working class. Political debates ranged widely, with possible reforms evaluated in areas like government, citizenship, public health, urban planning, and poverty alleviation. An important issue in virtually all Canadian cities was that of taxation. The most visible component of these debates centered on possible reforms to the tax system (i.e., what property is taxed and at what rate), but they often broached the issue of assessment practices as well (i.e., how taxable property is valued by municipal authorities). In Halifax, both of these components were indeed debated, and a fervent struggle for taxation and assessment reform endured from 1891 to 1922. In this section, I focus on the struggle over taxation, and examine in particular how the city’s principal business association, the Halifax Board of Trade, responded to a changing and increasingly challenging economic situation by demanding reforms to the municipal tax structure. What is significant about this struggle, above all, is the way in which it introduced a new way of thinking about property. The Board of Trade, drawing on the ideas of prominent political economists, found it useful to articulate its demands on the basis of a fundamental distinction between land and all other forms of property (e.g., built improvements and “personal property”). This distinction would eventually be incorporated into changes to the tax system, and much else. My task in this section is to demonstrate how this distinction was drawn and what purpose it was expected to serve.

**The Struggle Begins**

The first major effort to transform the tax system was launched in 1891. The impetus for reform stemmed from recent economic changes that, although not entirely detrimental to Halifax, were perceived as disastrous by segments of the local merchants class (wholesalers in particular). The latter had long constituted

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12 Rutherford, “Tomorrow’s Metropolis.”
13 Weaver, “Tomorrow’s Metropolis Revisited.”
14 Rutherford, *Saving the Canadian City*.
the backbone of the Halifax economy. The city, founded in 1749 as a military outpost, moved beyond its original role primarily on the basis of commodity trading within an expanding British Empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, the city had become an important relay point for the Atlantic region’s products bound for the British Isles, the West Indies, and eventually South Africa, and it received and distributed, in turn, the region’s imports from the same locations. Since the 1870s, however, the policies of the fledgling Canadian state favoured the development of industrial enterprises within a national economic space. The import tariffs imposed by the 1879 National Policy and the opening of the east-west Intercolonial Railway (ICR) aided the development of new industries in the region. Indeed, the industrial output of Nova Scotia increased 66 percent between 1880 and 1890, more than in either Ontario or Quebec. The effects on merchant trade, however, were largely negative, and severely so. Import tariffs on goods like sugarcane hurt Halifax merchants, while the ICR brought new, larger merchant competitors from Montreal and Toronto onto the locals’ long-time turf: the region and even Halifax itself. Local business groups, principally the Board of Trade, sought to organize a response. While they fought for years for lower import tariffs and preferable freight rates on the ICR, they also fought for changes in municipal taxation.

The reformers’ argument, which they brought before City Council, was that the prevailing tax system had become anachronistic. The system had, for at least a half century, targeted business and household wealth in two defined forms: real property (i.e., real estate) and personal property (i.e., stock in trade, machinery, and other equipment for businesses, and personal belongings in the case of households).

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19 Acheson, “The National Policy.” The Halifax Board of Trade (hereafter cited as HBT) frequently commented on its trading relations with the West Indies in its annual reports of this period. See, for example, Annual Report of the Halifax Board of Trade, 1899, NSARM, MFM #12400, reel 6, 10.
The tax on personal property was common in Canadian cities at this time, though it had been recently been eliminated in Montreal and would soon be extinguished in Toronto as well.\(^{20}\) This tax, the reformers argued, had always hit wholesalers especially hard, since they tended to carry large quantities of stock that turned over relatively slowly. In the past, they group explained, this had not posed a problem: “when the present scheme of taxation was first introduced ... the whole condition of affairs was different, competition was not keen, and the city of Halifax had a monopoly of all the trade of the Province.”\(^{21}\) With profits high, taxes could be absorbed, and, indeed, wholesalers deserved to pay them. However, with the entry of new merchant competitors, many of them based in cities that had already instituted tax reforms, the old system had become “disadvantage[ous]” and “oppressive.”\(^{22}\) To modernize the tax system and rejuvenate the local wholesale trade, the group demanded that the personal property tax be eliminated. They were unsuccessful at first. Reflecting later on their failure, the group concluded that it had been unable to convince City Council that it wanted anything more than to “unload [its] taxes on other members of the city.”\(^{23}\) Indeed, had the group not proposed exactly that?

The debate was far from over. For the next ten years, the Board of Trade kept the issue alive, continuing to put pressure on City Council and reminding its members that, without tax reform, wholesalers and also manufacturers would continue to be “driven from [their] midst” and “prevented ... from establishing themselves” in Halifax.\(^{24}\) In 1901, the group’s efforts were rewarded: City Council agreed to form an ad-hoc taxation committee and hold a series of public hearings with the aim of devising broadly acceptable reforms. By this point, however, both the prevailing economic situation and the Board’s argu-

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21 HBT, “Discussion by the Halifax Board of Trade on the tax reform proposed by the Halifax Tax Reform Association,” 23 March 1892, NSARM, 5.


ment had changed in important ways. I will discuss the sources of both changes before examining how they inflected the 1901 public hearings.

Economically, the end of the nineteenth century was the beginning of a major boom in Canada that would continue with short interruptions until 1913. The boom was centered in the western provinces, but was experienced in Atlantic Canada as well.\(^{25}\) For Halifax businesses, the important developments were the opening of the coal fields in Cape Breton, and the new steel and iron industries in the area surrounding New Glasgow.\(^{26}\) Both developments were located in the historical remit of Halifax merchants, and the increased demand for hardware, dry goods, and other wholesale goods was significant enough that in 1899 the Board of Trade declared that “never in [the city’s] history [had] she occupied a more promising position than at present.”\(^{27}\) And yet, Halifax’s prevailing share of the region’s wholesale business was far from secure (wholesalers from Montreal or Toronto were active in the region as well), and the Board frequently expressed its concern that few industries were being established locally (rather than elsewhere in the region).\(^{28}\) Looking to the future, the Board concluded that the prevailing tax system remained a “heavy burden” and a “serious handicap” to the city’s development.\(^{29}\)

Less celebrated (at the time) than new industries and the new wholesale markets they represented was the accumulation of financial capital in Halifax.\(^{30}\) The assets of the locally based chartered banks were growing, and new investment and brokerage houses were being established. The latter tended to draw capital, often in the form of small investments, from cities and small towns around Nova Scotia and

\(^{25}\) Green, “Regional Aspects of Canada’s Economic Growth.”


\(^{27}\) HBT, *Annual Report*, 1899, 7. In an optimistic mood, the Board concludes that the new iron and steel works in Sydney, and the new coal and copper mines in Cape Breton, “will directly reflect upon our city.” *Annual Report*, 1899, 16.

\(^{28}\) The Board reports in 1900 that trade in Cape Breton suffered because of Montreal competition, “which was hard to stand up against, as coal steamers coming back from Montreal empty were willing to bring goods to the Sydneys at very low freights.” *Annual Report*, 1900, NSARM, MFM #12400, reel 6, 16. The threat of competition from central Canada, and its connection to taxation, is explained more thoroughly in the Board’s testimony to the City’s Special Committee on Civic Taxation. Halifax, *Special Committee Meeting Books, Vol 1: 1898-1902*, 22 October 1901, HRMA, 102-1G, 76.

\(^{29}\) Halifax, *Special Committee Meeting Books*, 27 February 1902, 101.

New Brunswick, and used the capital in various ways: to finance utility ventures in Latin America, to buy up and consolidate the region’s coal and metal industries, and to capitalize on the boom in the western provinces. Some of this capital found its way into local property markets, and the city suddenly found itself in the midst of the first speculation-led real estate boom in its history. Previously, capital had been too scarce in Halifax to finance the speculative construction of buildings, much less the speculative buying and selling of bare land. In contrast, at the turn of the century properties were observed to be changing hands with abandon, and prices were rising accordingly. City Council first observed the price escalation in 1901; this upward trajectory would continue until the end of the great boom in 1913. Increasing property prices, along with the perceived need to develop industrial enterprises in Halifax, would be the major preoccupations in the tax reform debates in 1901 and thereafter.

_A New Argument_

More than simply referring to different economic conditions, the Board’s argument in the 1901 public hearings on taxation bore the palpable imprint of new ideas. In particular, the Board would advance an argument about the nature of real property that stemmed from the work of the contemporary American political economist, Henry George. The Board, echoing George, would connect a particular conception of property to a political position that all prevailing taxes should be replaced with a “single tax” on land values. To explain George’s views on property and why a “single tax” might seem an attractive policy, it is helpful first to consider the work of two significant predecessors, David Ricardo (1772-1823) and Johann von Thünen (1783-1850). The older pair, as others have noted, had a profound influence on George, and it

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is worth examining how their ideas were formulated before they were taken up and modified (slightly) in the hands of George.

Ricardo’s contribution to tax reform in Halifax, indirect though it would be, was to outline a new way of thinking about property. Central to his view was a newly conceived distinction between land and improvements on it. The basis for the distinction is found in his 1817 treatise, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*.\(^ {34} \) Having identified labour as the sole origin of the value of all commodities, he then provides an explanation of why the non-produced commodity “land” seemingly also has a value as embodied in its price, and in the rent that its owner can charge the tenants who use it. For a start, part of what might appear to be compensation for the use of pure land, Ricardo asserts, in fact pertains to the improvements made to the land (e.g., machinery, buildings, long-term increases in soil fertility).\(^ {35} \) Such improvements are not “natural” but are produced by the application of capital and/or labour to the land, and hence they have value.

The category of land for Ricardo is unimproved and unchanging, by definition. Payments for the use of land, he argues, pertain strictly to the “original and indestructible powers of the soil,”\(^ {36} \) as well as what he calls “the peculiar advantages of situation”\(^ {37} \) (i.e., location). Land defined in this way is not produced but given by nature (land owners have simply monopolized certain parts of nature). In this case, rent is produced only when the quality of a certain parcel of land is higher than other parcels of land currently in use. As all of this suggests, Ricardo insists on the distinction between land and improvements because each is conceived to be related, or subject, to different underlying processes. Specifically, each component participates differently in the production of value.\(^ {38} \) The output of the land itself is essentially static (and, in fact, declines on average as a country grows and progressively lower quality land is put into use). Capital and labour can in contrast be combined to augment the total output and material wealth of a country without inherent limit. To the extent that a country’s wealth indeed increases, the value of land

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\(^ {34} \) David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: John Murray, 1817).


\(^ {36} \) Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy*, 33.


\(^ {38} \) On this point, Ricardo specifies: “the laws which regulate the progress of rent are widely different from those which regulate the progress of profits, and seldom [do they] operate in the same direction.” *Principles of Political Economy*, 34.
tends to increase as well, but the latter, Ricardo concludes, needs to be seen as “a symptom ... never the cause of wealth.”

Von Thünen’s major contribution to discussions of real property was to highlight the importance of its location. In his 1826 book, The Isolated State, he attempted to model the geographical distribution of land values (and rents) in the vicinity of a single, hypothetical market town. Like Ricardo, Von Thünen posited that payments to land arose on the basis of its relative contribution to productive activities (rather than its natural productivity). Whereas Ricardo emphasized the land’s differing soil fertility, however, Von Thünen stressed the differing distance to the central market place. (Their major differences were indeed one of emphasis: both thinkers recognized the effects of soil fertility and location, but their greatest attention was given either to one or the other.) Holding the physical characteristics of the land constant, he showed (in a mathematical model) that a more peripheral parcel of land will incur greater transportation costs to deliver its output to the market than a more central parcel, and that the economic advantages of the latter parcel will result in locational rent. The surroundings of a market town would thus exhibit “rings” of prevailing rents and land values that decreased with distance, and much of Von Thünen’s attention in The Isolated State is given over to depicting an “ideal state” where different agricultural activities have been distributed efficiently upon this landscape.

The influence of Ricardo and Von Thünen on Henry George is well recognized. In his major work, the 1880 Progress and Poverty, he explicitly affirms Ricardo’s theory of rent and announces his

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41 Comparing Ricardo and Von Thunen, Lewis Haney argues that, “if anything, Thünen goes to the other extreme than that found in Ricardo’s theory, emphasizing situation rather than fertility; and his statement is thus a valuable corrective of the Ricardian formulation.” History of Economic Thought (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 283. Ricardo’s recognition of the contributions of both soil fertility and location evident when he argues: “If all land had the same properties, if it were unlimited in quantity, and uniform in quality, no charge could be made for tis use, unless where it possessed peculiar advantages of situation. It is only, then, because land is not unlimited in quantity and uniform in quality, and because, in the progress of population, land of an inferior quality, or less advantageously situated, is called into cultivation, that rent is ever paid for the use it.” Principles of Political Economy, 35-36. Von Thünen expresses a similar position on fertility and location: “The land rent of a farm arises, therefore, from the advantage which it has in its situation and in its soil over the worst farm which must produce in order to satisfy the demand.” The Isolated State, 182.
intention to explore its “corollaries.” Much like Ricardo in his 1819 parliamentary testimony on the “corn laws,” George linked the argument that rent was *derived* from the value created by other productive activities (i.e., activities involving capital and labour) to a further political claim that rent was *parasitic* upon productive activities. Parasitism, for George, was especially problematic in cases where speculation in land led to rents, a situation that Ricardo did not consider. Whereas Ricardo assumed that unused land would tend to be the least productive land, and would thus attract no rent, George observed that “in any city” in the United States “valuable plots of land [could] be seen lying vacant” for the sole reason that its owners expected to sell it later for a higher price. Buying and holding land for speculative purposes, George reasoned, would have a series of detrimental social effects: it would increase the rent obtainable on land in general; it would increase the cost of doing business and the cost of living; and, to the extent that costs were higher, it would deter the undertaking of otherwise viable, value-producing activities and undermine the overall progress of “civilization.”

On the basis of his conclusions about rents and their social effects, George put forward his most famous argument: the confiscation of rent was both advisable and justifiable. His proposal, as he put it, was to make land “common property” once again. This would occur not through the outright dispossess-ion of land owners, but rather through the replacement all existing taxes with a “single tax” on land values (a tax on land values being effectively a confiscation of rent). A single tax, George argued, would tend to bring about desirable changes in land use. Under the weight of the tax, the owners of bare or underimproved land would be compelled either to sell it or to carry out improvements themselves. Consequently, over time, the supply of good quality business and residential premises would tend to increase; the price of owning and renting premises would tend to *decrease*; and the overall “best use” of land would gradually be attained.

A single tax, in addition to enabling better land use and overall progress, would also be a *more just* tax than those presently in force. George’s argument here rests on a fundamental distinction between

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43 Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Appleton, 1880), 120.
44 George, *Progress and Poverty*, 286.
47 George, *Progress and Poverty*, 286.
“individuals” and “the community.” He argued that because the income of land owners is created by the broader community (and not individual land owners), whereas the income of capitalists and workers is created by individuals, the community is justified in confiscating the entirety of the former through the mechanism of taxation.\textsuperscript{48} A municipality, in taxing land, would reclaim what the community had created, while leaving the fruits of individual initiative undisturbed. Ricardo, it should be noted, would not have supported the economics of this proposal; indeed, he considered and flatly rejected the idea of a land tax in his major work (on the grounds that it would restrict agricultural expansion at the margin).\textsuperscript{49} Yet, Ricardo’s thought is nevertheless present here. His newly conceived distinction between land and improvements effectively isolated land owners from all other classes (i.e., from “the community”). Land owners, like no other social class, derive individual benefit from the efforts of the broader community. Their interests, therefore, can and should be suppressed. In a passage that aptly summarizes his overall proposal, George concludes that land owners are “the dog in the manger who, in this country especially, so wastes productive power” and must, for the good of the community as a whole, “be choked off.”\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{The Struggle Continues}

“Georgism,” as Cook has argued, was a major influence on a range of reform-era debates in Canadian cities.\textsuperscript{51} George visited Canada on several occasions. His work was discussed in the mainstream press, certain specialized periodicals, and political pamphlets, and single-tax campaigns were waged in many cities, especially in western Canada.\textsuperscript{52} Precisely how the Halifax Board of Trade absorbed George’s ideas is not entirely clear. Some of its members may have indeed read \textit{Progress and Poverty}, and the Board’s fifteen-person taxation committee, formed in 1892 to survey existing municipal tax systems, would likely

\textsuperscript{48} George, \textit{Progress and Poverty}, 293.
\textsuperscript{49} Ricardo, \textit{Principles of Political Economy}, 201-213.
\textsuperscript{50} George, \textit{Progress and Poverty}, 293.
have made contact with Montreal- and Toronto-based Single Tax Associations.\textsuperscript{53} At the least, the Board was aware that other cities had implemented the single tax and sensed that a broad single-tax movement was gathering strength.\textsuperscript{54} In the 1901 public hearings, Board representatives used George’s ideas to advance a new analysis and new demands. Their reliance on George was particularly evident in their analysis of rising property prices and in their advocacy of a new tax system that would target and suppress land values as a purported means of bringing about city-wide prosperity.

An analysis of rising property prices was central to the 1901 public hearings, and it was here that a firm distinction between land and improvements first appeared in the public discourse in Halifax. The Board’s analysis observed that rising prices were unrelated to the material condition or quality of property. Though property had, “after [a] lapse of time [become] valuable,”\textsuperscript{55} the “dismal state of real estate in [the] city”\textsuperscript{56} had remained unchanged for perhaps fifty years. Rising prices, moreover, pertained not to property \textit{per se}, the Board argued, but specifically to the land portion. Enforcing this point, a Board representative offered the following illustration:

A man [sic] purchases a lot of land for $1,000 and erects a $60,000 building on it. It is in a desirable locality and is assessed for about what it costs. In twenty years time because properties in the vicinity have increased in value this property has increased in value ... Has the building increased in value? No ... The increase in value is not in the building but in the \textit{land} in this situation.\textsuperscript{57}

The Board’s next observation concerned the mechanisms of the land’s escalating market price. In a position that could have been drawn equally from Ricardo, George, or many other contemporary political economists, the Board explained that rising prices pertained not to individual plots of land, but to \textit{all} plots of land in the city (the prices of which tended to rise and fall in tandem). Moreover, what caused

\textsuperscript{53} There is no doubt that members of the Board of Trade were reading political economic texts. Richard Ely, for example, is quoted in HBT, “Discussion,” 31. In the local press, letters to the editor (possibly written by Board of Trade members) also cited political economists. See \textit{Evening Mail}, 1 August 1908; \textit{Evening Mail}, 26 January 1905. Discussion of the Board’s 15-person taxation committee is mentioned in HBT, “Discussion,” 1-2.

\textsuperscript{54} See Halifax, \textit{Special Committee Meeting Books}, 22 October 1901, 73. The City, too, was closely following tax reform developments in other parts of North America and Europe. Any tax reform in Halifax, the City stated, would involve the review of “a large array of data” on other systems. See Halifax, \textit{Special Committee Meeting Books}, 11 November 1901, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{55} Halifax, \textit{Special Committee Meeting Books}, 18 October 1901, 61-62.

\textsuperscript{56} Halifax, \textit{Special Committee Meeting Books}, 22 October 1901, 73.

\textsuperscript{57} Halifax, \textit{Special Committee Meeting Books}, 22 October 1901, 70, emphasis added.
land (in general) to increase in price was the money invested, not in land, but rather in merchant and industrial enterprises. The Board had a decade earlier attributed a similarly heroic role to capital. It was the capitalist class, one Board member remarked, “that stands up manfully to beat back competition from abroad ... [and] whose enterprise employs labour, distributes wages, enhances the value of real estate, [and] feeds the growth of the city and the sources of taxation.”58 The main difference in 1901 was that capital was proclaimed to enhance the value of land specifically, not undifferentiated “real estate.”

The Board’s analysis of property provided the basis for a larger argument about taxation. Its argument hinged on the ostensible benefits and justice of potential tax systems. In terms of benefit, the Board emphasized that the investment of capital in businesses and improvements profited the whole community. In contrast, investments in land were described as profiting individuals at the expense of the community. While the Board approbated the “evils of unoccupied lands,”59 it also seemed to regard the profits reaped on rental housing (land, plus improvements) as a kind of lesser evil. Its argument here was that the profits tended to increase the cost of living for workers, thus raising the wages demanded by workers and impeding the expansion of businesses.60 The most beneficial tax system for the community, it followed, would target land values and leave improvements and personal property untaxed.61 Concerning the justice of taxation, the Board argued that the returns on capital and labour were the product of individual initiative, whereas the profits of land owners were an “unearned” deduction from the wealth created by the community as a whole. Echoing the message of George, one Board representative suggested that land was essentially held on “lease from the city,” and that taxes on land were therefore akin to “a rental [payment] to the civic treasury.”62 A land tax, the Board suggested, would take back what the com-

59 Halifax, Special Committee Meeting Books, 22 October 1901, 73, emphasis added.
60 The Board’s concerns about workers’ cost of living, and its effects on wage rates and profits, are expressed most vividly in its annual reports. See, for example, Annual Reports, 1902, 14; Annual Reports, 1905, 12.
61 The benefits of the single tax to the progress of the overall city were emphasized in a 1906 lecture to the Board of Trade by the political economist Adam Shortt. “If concentrating the taxes on the value of the land won’t boom the city and the province,” he explained, “there’s nothing this side of Kingdom come that ever will. Fiat Justitia.” See Evening Mail, 9 May 1906.
62 Halifax, Special Committee Meeting Books, 22 October 1901, 73.
munity had created and leave the fruits of individual initiative untouched. For this reason, it was the most justifiable tax system.

The 1901 public hearings failed to resolve the struggle over taxation. The latter endured for another two decades, with major changes instituted in 1914 and 1916, and then further changes in 1922 that finally brought the debate to a close. What emerged from the hearings, however, was a new way of thinking about property: land was discussed as a separate entity from improvements, and both components of real property were linked to different economic processes. The conceptual isolation of land from other forms of property (i.e., improvements, as well as furniture, equipment, and other “personal property”) enabled the Board of Trade to argue that its advocated reforms were not simply a way of offloading its tax burden onto other residents, but were in fact a broadly beneficial and incontrovertibly justifiable system of taxation. The City, while initially wary of reform and intensely sceptical of the land tax, eventually came to accept the Board’s argument.63 In 1905, a minority Council report praised the Board for its “public spirit” and rejected any suggestion that the group’s demands were “introduced for the purpose of evading taxation.”64 Many of the reforms eventually instituted, moreover, were justified by Council using roughly the argument presented by the Board in 1901. To institute a tax on land values, however, would require other changes. It would require a property assessment system that could discern “land” from “improvements,” which it could not yet do. This limitation, however, was just one of the problems facing the City’s methods of assessments. A full-scale struggle over assessment practices was about to begin, and it is to this struggle that we now turn.

63 The most direct expression of City Council’s wariness of the single tax came from Councillor O’Brien, who mused that “the present proposals are from merchants, who want to offload their taxes onto real estate.” Halifax, Special Committee Meeting Books, 4 November 1901, 76. The conclusions of the Special Committee on Civic Taxation include the claim that “the question whether taxation on real estate should be based on land value only or on land and buildings thereon is one for purely academic discussion, and as the single tax has not so far as your Committee are aware been adopted in any country they felt that they would not be justified in recommending any change in the present system.” Special Committee Meeting Books, 27 February 1902, 99.

64 Evening Mail, 22 January 1905.
3.3 Ratepayers, Assessors, and “Violin Lessons”

The new way of thinking about property advanced by the Board of Trade would, if translated into changes in the tax system, already require new forms of property knowledge. The City’s approach to assessment, after all, drew no distinction between land and improvements, and it had no reason to do so. Additional and more substantial reasons to modify the production of property knowledge, however, would soon emerge. Beginning in 1902, the issue of assessment became the focus of an intense and protracted political struggle that led eventually to the introduction of a new assessment system in 1918. In this section, I examine how the City, as it increased tax levels to fund expanding operations and responsibilities, came into confrontation with a group called the Ratepayers Association, and eventually hundreds of individual taxpayers, all of whom questioned the reliability of the City’s estimates of property value. It was at root a struggle over taxation: the City’s need to collect taxes and the unwillingness of certain residents to pay them. The outcome of the struggle, and the most explicit demand of the Ratepayers, was not a diminution in taxation, however, but a new way of producing knowledge about property. The new assessment system adopted in Halifax, modelled on the approach of a pioneering assessor named William Somers, would link assessed values to measurements of the ostensible determinants of such values and would submit the work of assessment to a precise system of rules and new mechanisms of external verification. My task in this section is to describe the struggle over assessment in Halifax and how a new way of assessing property became the means of resolving it.

Assessing Halifax

If the struggle over assessment practices was, at root, a struggle over taxes, then it is worth examining how taxes came to be perceived as a problem. At the time of the Ratepayers’ first petition to City Council, municipal taxes had indeed been on a steep upward trajectory for two decades. In 1881, the tax rate had been 1.10 percent, but by 1902, it had risen to 1.70 percent. Part of the reason for higher taxes was, of course, higher municipal expenses. As in other cities, expenses were escalating in Halifax in this period for three main reasons: a growing population, a sprawling settled terrain, and expanding municipal serv-

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65 Halifax, Minutes, 30 December 1908, 278-280.
ices. Between 1850 and 1880, the city’s population grew from 30,000 to 45,000. After 1880, population growth levelled off and the expansion of services, and a sprawling terrain upon which to provide services, became the main drivers of municipal expenses. Though services were sometimes expanded haphazardly, and sometimes in response to immediate problems (e.g., public health threats), city leaders had by the turn of the century generally come to see the provision of services like sewers, water mains, and street and sidewalk paving as a way of securing public support for city government. By 1905, some city leaders had also come to see the provision of services as the best way of promoting “the general welfare of the community,” and creating a “more agreeable city to live in and do business in.” By means of providing certain services, therefore, the city could attract new residents and new businesses. I discuss the priorities of the City in more detail in the next chapter. For now, I want to note primarily that expenses were increasing and that there were good reasons for this.

Tax increases were not the only means of funding the City’s expenses. Indeed, they were seldom the first choice. Borrowing, in fact, was the more popular choice, and the expansion of services was therefore paralleled by a great surge in the value of municipal bonds issued by the City. (Under Provincial legislation, major bond issues were necessarily tied to specific projects, such as sewer or sidewalk construction.) Between 1881 and 1902, the City’s outstanding debt increased from $1.5 million to $3.4 million. There were limits here, however. With a major financial panic between 1893 and 1897, and the growing consolidation of banking capital, it was sometimes difficult to place bonds at an acceptable rate of interest, and financiers also began instructing their client-borrowers (including Halifax) to circulate their annual financial statements among potential investors (which, with more scrutiny upon debt ratios, tended to suppress the appetite for borrowing).

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66 Halifax, Minutes, 8 May 1901, 7.
67 Halifax, Minutes, 30 December 1901, 138-9.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Halifax, Minutes, 30 December 1901, 138-9.
71 The difficulty of placing bonds, and the attendant pressure to put the City’s book in order, is discussed periodically. See, for example, Minutes, 9 May 1902, 309; Minutes, 5 August 1907, 100. On the consolidation of financial capital in Halifax and its region, see Marchildon, “John F. Stairs.”
Aside from reining in expenses, the foremost strategy between 1899 and 1902, the primary alternative to borrowing was to increase tax revenues. This was, of course, a risky pursuit. Former mayor Alexander Stephen had been ousted by the electorate in 1899 simply for permitting the tax rate to climb from 1.63 percent to 1.72 percent in his two-year term.\(^{72}\) Three years of fiscal austerity and stable tax rates followed. The trend of increasing expenses soon resumed, however, when Adam Crosby was elected mayor in 1902 on a platform emphasizing “good streets, good sidewalks, good and sufficient sewerage and plenty of water all over the city.”\(^{73}\) Crosby’s strategy for funding increasing expenses was evidently different than his predecessors. While keeping the tax rate stable, the tax base (i.e., the assessed value of local property) increased by an unprecedented $3 million in his first year in office.\(^{74}\) The largest previous single-year increase was $0.7 million in 1888.\(^{75}\) Though he remained popular enough to serve until 1905, Crosby’s move was met by an immediate, activist response that would have long-term effects on tax assessment in the city.

It was in 1903, at the end of Crosby’s first year in office, that a group called the Ratepayers Association made its first petitions to City Council. Fronted by a prominent Board of Trade member and pulp-and-paper company executive, the Ratepayers were evidently upset about tax levels.\(^{76}\) Rather than arguing for a lower tax rate, however, they raised questions about the assessed values of property to which taxes were applied. The group’s first move was to pay a visit to the Assessment Office and demand to examine the records kept there. The records, it turned out, were so insubstantial at the time that the group found itself in disbelief, complaining to City Council the following week that the assessors were withholding the information they sought.\(^{77}\)

Indeed, at least as far back as the City’s incorporation in 1841, the only records maintained by the assessors were a set of valuation books, one for each year (see Figure 3.1). On each page of the valuation book appeared a pre-ruled table and the assessors’ hand-written entries: taxpayers’ names were inscribed

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\(^{72}\) Halifax, Minutes, 27 April 1899, 158.  
\(^{73}\) Halifax, Minutes, 14 May 1902, 3.  
\(^{74}\) Halifax, Minutes, 30 December 1908, 280.  
\(^{75}\) Halifax, Minutes, 30 December 1908, 278-280.  
\(^{76}\) The Ratepayers’ first communication with City Council appears in Halifax, Minutes, 14 July 1903, 64.  
\(^{77}\) Halifax, Minutes, 6 August 1903, 79.
in the leftmost column, and estimates of their taxable wealth would follow in subsequent columns (see Figure 3.2). The valuation books pertained to an assessment procedure that was equally old. Each year, in the spring, the assessors would leave their office to perform a survey of local property, both “real” and “personal.” Visiting each home and business, they would visually inspect the real property and the personal property contained in the building (if there was a building). On the basis of this visual inspection, they would estimate the present, cash value of each category of property and then record their estimates in the proper column of the valuation book. Over the years, small changes in procedure were introduced.\(^\text{78}\)

Before 1883, for example, the assessors had been volunteers selected on the basis of their knowledge of business affairs, and they had divided the city between them (so that each surveyed just a particular area). Beginning in 1883, assessment became the task of a team of three individuals elected by Council, and the team was expected to inspect all property together, “on the same day at the same time,”\(^\text{79}\) and develop their estimates collectively. In all cases, the assessors were expected to rely on their judgement to determine the value of property.\(^\text{80}\)

The Ratepayers, dissatisfied by what they observed at the Assessment Office, spent the following two years petitioning Council for reforms. Their proposals aimed, in general, to bring greater scrutiny to the assessors’ work through specific changes in record-keeping.\(^\text{81}\) Two changes are significant. First, the records in their entirety would henceforth by surveyed by the newly hired City Auditor; each month, he would compare the assessors’ records to those of the City tax collector, scanning for discrepancies. Given that the latter record was simply a transcription from the former, and given that the City Auditor would be expected to have no special knowledge about local property against which to compare recorded figures, the discrepancies that would be detectable here would be confined to mathematical and typographical errors.


\(^{80}\) Ibid.

\(^{81}\) A summary of the changes appears in Halifax, Minutes, 10 December 1903, 175.
Figure 3.1  Cover of annual property valuation book, 1910-11. City of Halifax Property Assessment Rolls. HRMA, RG 35-102-19A. Image courtesy of HRMA.

Figure 3.2  Pages of annual property valuation book, 1910-11. City of Halifax Property Assessment Rolls. HRMA, RG 35-102-19A. Image courtesy of HRMA.
The second, more consequential change was to institute a set of mechanisms for individual taxpayers to scrutinize the assessors’ work. The Ratepayers’ request that a list of taxpayers and their assessed property be published each year in the local newspapers was flatly rejected by Council (for reasons that, in a city of growing inequalities in wealth, are not hard to imagine). Approved and implemented, however, was the group’s request that taxpayers be provided additional ways of inspecting records pertaining to their own property. They would henceforth be issued a duplicate of their annual tax bill (to enable the keeping of private records), and a full-time clerk would be installed in the Assessment Office for the duration of the assessors’ annual rounds of the city (to ensure that the Office’s doors “would never be closed during business hours” and that the inquiries of curious taxpayers would thus be promptly served).\(^{82}\) The major effect of these changes was to allow the assessors’ figures to be compared against the taxpayers’ own knowledge of their property’s value, as well as compared from year to (rising) year. If there were, as the Ratepayers assumed, major discrepancies between official assessments and market prices, this would allow the assessors’ work to be challenged through the appeals process.

The instituted reforms changed very little at first. Record-keeping had indeed been altered, but the actual assessment of property continued to involve (as ever) a simple visual inspection by a team of assessors. However, enabling taxpayers to keep their own records and evaluate, each year, whether their taxes had increased and why that was (i.e., due to a higher tax rate or a higher assessment), effectively constituted them as the authority on their own property, and this led to major challenges to the prevailing practices. When, in 1908, taxes began to climb once again, it set off a measurable taxpayer revolt that would escalate over the next five years and would gradually rattle the confidence of the assessors as well as City Council.

In 1913, the assessors’ annual report to Council showed that in the previous year 47 taxpayer appeals had been made, and $127,000 in revenue had consequently been surrendered. The assessors’ frustration was also evident. “In submitting this report,” they wrote, “we desire to call the attention of [Council] to the unsatisfactory system under which we are obliged to perform our duties.”\(^{83}\) Over a number of years,

\(^{82}\) Ibid.
\(^{83}\) Halifax, “Report of the Board of Assessors for the City of Halifax, July 18, 1913,” HRMA, RG 35-102-1B, Box 17.
the assessors had been drawing Council’s attention to both “the very obvious difficulty in estimating” property values in general, as well as the growing challenge of assessing properties that were “constantly changing ownership, being bought at a low figure and resold at a large advance, and these sales occur frequently in the same locality.”

Council’s confidence with the prevailing methods had similarly been undermined by this point. In 1912 and 1913, certain councillors issued very pointed criticism of the methods. One noteworthy argument focused on the structure of assessment (or the lack thereof). The City’s “present guess work methods of ascertaining property values,” one councillor argued, needed to be replaced with a new, more “scientific” system. Another related argument indicates perhaps a more profound insufficiency. Rebutting a suggestion that the City develop a new assessment system on its own, rather than employ outside experts to install one, a councillor offered an instructive analogy. “A musician offers for consideration to play for me the violin,” the councillor began. “Another unfriendly musician urges that a violin is in reach of my hand. Why not play it myself? The answer is that I do not know how.” The City’s assessors were now akin to untrained musicians; property was an unplayable instrument. Clearly, an immense distance had opened up between the assessors and the world that they had once claimed to understand. Whereas the truth of property had once been discernible, indeed immediately visible to their inspecting eyes, it had now become indiscernible, opaque, invisible. Property was now an instrument they were untrained to play. A new assessment system would therefore need to supplant both unstructured “guess work” and reveal something important, yet presently invisible, about property.

The Somers System

The system that Council and the assessors had in mind was one developed by a pioneer in the field of property assessment, William Somers. The latter had, by the time of Halifax’s interest in his method, retired from his position as the chief assessor in Cleveland, Ohio. And yet there remained many ways to learn about him and from him. Hired as a deputy assessor in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1891, Somers spent

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84 Halifax, Minutes, 4 July 1912, 168-169.
85 Halifax, Minutes, 10 October 1912, 273.
86 Halifax, Minutes, 5 December 1913, 302.
the next ten years developing an innovative, theoretically informed approach to property assessment. In 1901, he published a treatise, *Valuation of Real Estate for the Purpose of Taxation*, that codified and justified his approach and that would eventually provide an important reference for a generation of property assessors and analysts. He moved to Cleveland in 1902 when the city’s newly elected mayor and self-proclaimed “Georgian,” Tom Johnson, decided that Somers’s expertise would be helpful in achieving his political aims. Specifically, Johnson expected to institute the “single tax” as part of his reform agenda and saw the need for an assessment system that could distinguish land and improvements and, crucially, withstand the deluge of taxpayer appeals that his reforms were likely to compel. Perceiving rigorous assessment practices as indispensable to the single-tax movement, Johnson eventually offered Somers’s expertise to a range of other cities, including New York and Chicago.

Halifax, in its search for a new approach, evidently came into contact with dozens of cities that had instituted Somers’s system or some variant of it, and a report to Council in 1912 included glowing testimonials from several of these cities. The City also encountered a firm called Manufacturers’ Appraisal Company of Cleveland (MAC), which had been formed under the tutelage of Somers to implement the now-branded “Somers System” in interested cities, for a professional fee. After some correspondence, MAC was invited to send a representative to Halifax to lecture Council and members of the public on the merits of its product. Responding to the invitation, the president of the company arrived in

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88 Bremner, “Civic Revival in Ohio”; Barker, *Henry George*. If HW Batt is correct, Somers was himself a “Georgian.” “Land value maps are not new.”

89 Barker, *Henry George*; Batt, “Land value maps are not new.”


Halifax in 1914. Evidently impressed by the representative’s lecture, Council resolved thereafter to retain MAC and issue $15,000 in bonds to cover the professional fee. What, we might ask, did Council see in Somers’s approach?

Somers’s system was exceptional in two major respects: what the system recorded (i.e., its objects of knowledge), and how it did so (i.e., its methods of knowledge-production). What Somers sought to record, to begin with, was not primarily the present, cash value of property, but rather the determinants of such value. Whereas Ricardo, George, and other political economists had theorized how property contributes to the production of wealth (and derives its value therefrom), Somers aimed to make this relationship measurable. In the case of land, the focus of his system, Somers considered the determinants of value to include: the overall prosperity of the community; the proportion of this prosperity that “attaches” itself to the land (as opposed to other factors of production); and the precise distribution of land value across the urban terrain (and, so, across individual lots). For reasons that I discuss below, Somers elects to bracket the first two issues to focus squarely on the third. His instruction, here, is that the distribution of land value in a community is a function of the spatially uneven quality of land, and that in an urban setting the quality of land is entirely a matter of location (what Ricardo called “the peculiar advantages of situation” and von Thünen established as the primary determinant of rent). Somers’s term for the quality of location is “site-value.” In its concise definition, site-value refers to “that value which attaches to land on account of its [relative] usefulness” for residential or commercial purposes. For residential land, usefulness is a function of social surroundings; for commercial land, it is “accessibility and proximity to centers of business activity [that] will be the important element.”

What is useful about a location, Somers suggests, is essentially its frontage upon a particular street, or rather a “street-block” (a block length strip of street). Every street-block in the city has a site-value, Somers explains, that indicates its usefulness relative to all other street-blocks. For assessment purposes, site-value can be expressed by an integer in a system of integers (e.g., 1 to 10), where the dif-
ference between each integer corresponds to a proportional difference in site-value. The first determinant of the value of a plot of land, it follows, is the site-value of the street-block on which it fronts. The other determinant relates to the amount of site-value that a plot of land occupies. If the relative usefulness of land pertains to its frontage on a particular street, then the value of an individual lot must encompass the amount of frontage it permits. For assessment purposes, Somers defines a standard amount or “unit” of urban land as one foot of frontage, with a lot depth of 100 feet.97 The amount of site-value occupied by a lot can thus be expressed as a multiple (i.e., a certain number) of unit-feet. The value of a plot of land in the end becomes a function essentially of its quality and quantity: the site-value of the street-block on which it fronts, multiplied by its unit-feet of frontage.

Somers’s rationale for seeking to uncover the determinants of land value (rather than just land value itself) is worth recognizing. It is crucial for Somers that the determinants he identifies are neither arbitrary nor artifactual. Rather, they represent the fundamental basis of all property transactions. What buyers and sellers of property actually evaluate with respect to property, he contends, is site-value and frontage. The latter are therefore “the true measure of the value of the land ... [and] the measure[s] which must be used in any successful effort to find the true and full cash value of each piece of property.”98 Not only do these measures correspond to actual property transactions, moreover, they also distil from such transactions what is particular to property. Whereas, Somers suggests, market prices fluctuate for various reasons – including, as political economic theory explains, growth in population and prosperity – the only fluctuations that pertain to property itself are those that concern site-value and frontage. Amid the vicissitudes of broader economic processes, Somers’s system registers the truth of property “as the thermometer registers changes in temperature.”99

Yet something more than “truth” is being sought here. At several points, Somers makes it clear that he is attempting to establish certain advantages over would-be challengers to property assessments. Assessors, Somers recognizes, are at a disadvantage with respect to knowledge of market prices; it is, he

97 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 19.
99 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 19.
claims, “impossible” for anyone but individual property owners and property agents to “form any opinion whatever of the [market] value of specific tracts.” When it comes to knowing the ostensible determinants of value, in contrast, it is necessary that all properties in the city be grasped at once and therefore requires the use of materials and methods (discussed below) that only municipal assessors are likely to possess. Moreover, the very definition of the determinants of value tends to make appeals on the part of individual property owners unfruitful. To appeal an assessment derived from Somers’s system would tend to entail either claiming that attributed site-value was incorrect (in which case, the taxpayer would essentially be demanding that taxpayers on all other street-blocks pay proportionally higher taxes), or asserting that the amount of the assessment was too high (in which case, there would be no individual grievance, as all local taxpayers would be affected in equal proportion, and the complaint would be better directed to the government that requires such a sum of tax revenues). The structure of Somers’s system, therefore, helps to constitute a strong defence against would-be taxpayer appeals. His definition of site-value as relational, while certainly supported by political economic theory, is one of the ways that Somers attempts to deflect potential challenges. Another, to which I now turn, can be found in the methods he outlines.

The methods that Somers prescribes would contrast markedly with those in use in Halifax (and most other cities) around the turn of the nineteenth century. One reason for the difference, of course, is that Somers is attempting to measure something that cannot simply be observed with the naked eye. Site-value, for example, is defined in such a way that it can be measured only within a city-wide system of proportions. Special methods and materials are therefore required to make site-value measurable.

There are other objectives at work in Somers’s methods, however, and it is useful to review the ordered set of procedures that he outlines. In the first step, a set of maps are produced. The streets, blocks, and lots of the city are exhaustively surveyed and plotted on paper (at an ideal scale of forty feet to one inch). Lot lines are recorded, as are lot dimensions. In the next step, site-values are selected for each street-block and added to the maps. The procedure for selecting site-values, Somers suggests, may involve the formation of special committees “consisting of citizens qualified to judge” the relative useful-

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100 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 18.
101 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 3.
ness of various locations; alternatively, the advice of local experts may be sought. Once every street-block has been valued, the next step is to create a set of property cards. For each city lot, an individual card is prepared. Each card records the relevant block and lot number, the dimensions of the lot, its owner, and the site-value of the street-block on which the lot fronts. From here, the determination of land values is often a simple matter. The site-value pertaining to each city lot is multiplied by its unit-feet of street frontage. The product is the assessed value of the lot, and it too is recorded on the appropriate property card. Somers’s approach is obviously focused primarily on assessing land values. However, for cases in which improvements are taxed as well, he outlines an analogous set of procedures. After assessing the land, the length and width of major buildings would be multiplied by a figure signifying the building’s “quality,” and the product – the assessed value of the improvement – would be recorded on the appropriate property card alongside the value of the land.

The methods and materials that Somers prescribes indeed make it possible to measure what would otherwise be indiscernible: the determinants of property value. Here again, however, there are other considerations (than truth) involved in the approach. It is clear, to begin with, that Somers is attempting to establish a coherent system of rules that would impart a kind of perfect and ineradicable consistency to the work of assessment. That this is one of Somers’s goals is evident in his prescribed approach to “standard” lots, but it is particularly so in cases that depart from this standard (which includes the majority of cases). Much of Somers’s manual is devoted to explaining how to adjust assessments for such irregularities as non-standard lot depths, non-rectangular lot shapes, corner lots, and different classes of use. For every irregularity, Somers provides an appropriate procedure, which typically involves the consultation of a provided chart or table. To assist with the assessment of lots that depart from the standard depth of 100 feet, for example, his manual provides a table that explains how the value of land decreases (exponentially) from the front to the rear of the property. For corner lots – complex cases, as they front on two streets of potentially different site-value – there is another table that explains how value decreases from the street corner to the middle of the block, and how this spread interacts with the front-to-back spread described by the previous table (see Figure 3.3).

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102 Somers, *Valuation of Real Estate*, 20.
These and other prescriptions in Somers’s method can be certainly be defended in a variety of ways (e.g., on the basis that property value is really distributed in this way). The defence that Somers actually puts forward, however, is instructive. The rigid and seemingly exhaustive rules, in addition to enabling the measurement of a rather complex reality, are described as making the work of assessment consistent, routine, and ultimately “clerical.” Once the site-values have been chosen and street frontages measured, Somers explains, “the balance of the work, that is, the determination of the value of each particular tract throughout the city is purely clerical, and may be computed by anyone having a knowledge of the rules and understanding the use of the scales.”103

Along with the set of rules that make assessment “clerical,” Somers’s method also introduces a relatively elaborate system of written records, and this too seems to be partly an end in itself. Each step in the assessment, Somers emphasizes, is associated with a written record. To the extent that such records are surveyed by an appointed auditor or made accessible to the public – and he insists that both of these be done – the work of assessment itself appears to become visible. An auditor or taxpayer can always examine what was done at each step and verify whether mistakes or missteps were made. The main benefit of such a system of records and external verification, Somers suggests, is to build public trust in the assessment system. The fact that the records are “always accessible to the public,” he explains, tends to “create in the minds of all citizens a confidence in the justice and equity of the work.”104 As with other aspects of Somers’s approach, the rules and records that he introduces to the work of assessment are consistent with broader changes in the structure of knowledge-making in modernity. These parallels, I think, help to explain the appeal of Somers’s method, and I discuss them in some detail in the next section. For now, however, we can still see how the method might be expected to protect tax assessments from challengers like the Ratepayers Association. Whereas the latter complained that assessments in Halifax were subject to too little scrutiny, nothing seems to be shielded from visibility in Somers’s approach.

Indeed, considering the system as a whole, it is not hard to comprehend its appeal to city leaders in Halifax. If the existing method of assessment had come to seem like mere “guess work,” and the assessors

103 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 25.
104 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 25.
were seen as too bumbling and “inexperienced” to discern the necessary truth of property, Somers might seem to have a potent remedy. With a precise set of rules to follow, the assessors would have little opportunity for “guessing,” while new mechanisms of external verification would seem to ensure that the rules were truly followed. Much of what the approach reveals, moreover, would indeed be invisible without the procedures, tables, maps, and other materials that it prescribes. The City’s problem, however, was less the epistemic shortcomings of its assessment practices per se than the vulnerability to challenges and appeals that these shortcomings allowed. It was certainly significant, in this case, that Somers’s system was developed partly to withstand the challenges of property owners and that, as Halifax came to know, it had proven its ability to withstand such challenges in the many cities that had already adopted it. In the end, the services of MAC were not retained, but not because anyone criticized its product. In 1914, a new set of councillors came to power in the city and, although the mayor continued to advocate the retention of MAC, Council apparently felt that city staff had learned enough from the maestros in Cleveland to teach themselves the

Figure 3.3 Table for assessing the value of corner lots. William Somers, *The Valuation of Real Estate for the Purpose of Taxation* (St. Paul, MN: Rich and Clymer, 1901), 25.
“violin.” The City introduced a new system on its own, which paralleled the Somers approach in every major respect. I turn now to a consideration of how the struggles over assessment and taxation changed the way that property was assessed, analyzed, and managed in Halifax.

### 3.4 The Terrain of Biopolitics

The tax reform debates of early twentieth century Halifax had major consequences for the city in the realms of taxation and assessment, and beyond. The first and most obvious consequences were revealed in the period between 1914 and 1918. In 1914, the personal property tax was finally eliminated, and a City Council resolution that would have gradually shifted all property taxes onto the value of land (i.e., the gradual implementation of a “single tax”) was narrowly defeated.\(^{105}\) Though the “single tax” was not ultimately instituted, the Assessment Act passed in 1916 did call for a form of “land tax” (a tax that applies more heavily to the value of land than improvements).\(^{106}\) As a result of the reform, the tax rate on “improvements” would be forever fixed at the present rate, while the rate applied to land would be permitted to increase in future years to fund any new expenses incurred by the City. In terms of assessment practices, the first major reform was a 1914 resolution calling for the separate assessment of land and improvements.\(^{107}\) Two years later, the City moved to introduce a generic, local version of the “Somers System.” In 1918, after a successful trial run the previous year, the assessors would finally undertake their work in accordance with the new system. While the immediate effects of these reforms was simply to introduce new ways of levying municipal taxes and assessing taxable property, my argument in this section is that much more than this was in fact at stake. A closer inspection of the instituted reforms shows that their broader effects were to enable new, more authoritative forms of state knowledge to be produced, and to enable a new “biopolitical” form of power to be exercised. To the extent that urban planning came to operate as a biopolitical technology in twentieth century Halifax, its genealogy can be traced in part to the subtle shifts in the work of taxation and assessment that I examine in this section.

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\(^{106}\) A copy of the 1916 “Tax Act of the City of Halifax” is included in Halifax, *Report Special Committee on Tax Exemptions*, 13 March 1913, HRMA, RG 35-102-1B.

More Authoritative State Knowledge

The first product of the new assessment system was a new and more authoritative form of state knowledge. The major challenge presented by the Ratepayers Association and dozens of individual taxpayers in previous years, of course, concerned the authority of the municipal state to assess the value of taxable property. The City’s turn to the so-called “Somers System” was largely an attempt to shore-up its perilous authority through the adoption of a system that was devised, at least partly, to achieve precisely this purpose. Somers, while extolling the “accuracy” and truthfulness of his system’s assessments, was also concerned with neutralizing potential challenges to municipal assessments, and Halifax was not the first city to identify this potential in his approach. While it is clear that Halifax sought to restore its authority over property values by introducing a Somers-like system, it is less clear how the new system delivered this result; that is, how the system helped to quell the challenges of the Ratepayers and other, individual taxpayers. An answer to this question can be gleaned, I want to suggest, by looking closely at the changes introduced in the work of assessment, and considering how these changes relate to broader shifts in the production of economic knowledge.

With the introduction of the new system, the practice of assessment changed in two major ways. First, the assessors no longer had to make their long, customary tour of the city to inspect and evaluate taxable property first-hand. Whereas the value of taxable property had once been assumed to be visible to the naked eyes of the municipal assessment team, and whereas seeing property first-hand had once been the major and indispensable task of assessment, the assessors would now discern the value of property through other indirect methods. Rather than undertaking a first-hand, visual inspection of local property, the assessors would now turn their eyes to a series of charts and other materials that were housed in the Assessment Office, and they would find property values revealed only at the tail end of an ordered set of procedures. One of the new materials used by the assessors was a set of maps, produced by a local surveyor at a cost of $9,450 that revealed (for the first time) the city’s prevailing lot lines and building dimensions.108 Other materials delivered to the Assessment Office prior to the inaugural year of the new

108 Halifax, Minutes, 5 October 1916, 262.
system included 25,000 file cards (that would be used to record information about local properties), adding machines to aid with the newly necessary mathematical operations, typewriters to enter information about properties onto their respective file cards, and several large, fireproof filing cabinets in which to store the maps and property cards.\(^{109}\)

With these materials at their disposal, the assessors would now work toward a determination of property values by proceeding through an intricate series of materially-aided steps: identifying the dimensions of city lots and buildings from the markings on the new maps (see Figure 3.4); examining the layout of the city and selecting site-values for each street-block; preparing an individual card for each local property, and recording on the card the dimensions of the land and buildings, as well as the relevant site-value (see Figure 3.5); and, finally, using the adding machine to derive the value of every plot of land and building in the city. As they worked through these steps, the assessors would be adhering to the “Somers System” in nearly every respect. (In the only major departure from Somers, the assessors would treat a lot’s “amount” of site-value as its total area, that is, its length, multiplied by its width. Somers’s more complex approach, requiring the use of charts and tables, was not adopted in Halifax.) The introduction of the new system had involved considerable costs (while cheaper than the brand-name version, the generic Somers system adopted in Halifax cost at least $10,000), and it called for considerable extra work on the part of the assessors in the early years. Reflecting on the changes, the assessors might well have wondered why the City had incurred such expenses and asked them to do so much extra work simply to attain a result that had once been reachable more directly and efficiently. The new materials and procedures, however, were more than just an extra-cumbersome means to the same end result. Rather, they were integral to the production of a slightly different result, and the difference would be politically significant.

Rather than simply producing an estimate of property value, the new system helped to disclose a new realm of property that had previously been invisible, and that would remain invisible to everyone but the municipal state. In each major step of the new system, the assessors would be producing new and important knowledge about property, and at the end of the process they could claim to know not just the value of property but also the ostensible determinants of that value (e.g., site-value and lot size). They

\(^{109}\) Halifax, Minutes, 7 March 1918, 449.
could claim to know, in other words, how the particular characteristics of a given property had caused a certain amount of city-created wealth to “attach itself” to that property.

This disclosure of a hidden world behind or beneath the value of phenomena is consistent with a much broader transformation of economic knowledge that Foucault connects to the rise of biopolitical power. A more immediate effect of the new knowledge, however, was to enhance the authority of the municipal state over local taxpayers on the question of property value. Whereas anyone could potentially stand in front of a building or plot of land and estimate its value (as the assessors once did), and while the owner of a given property might reasonably claim to know its value better than the assessors, the source of property value would tend to be much more elusive. The site-value of a property, in particular, was assumed to emerge only in relation to the site-values of all other local properties, and it could be brought

Figure 3.4 Map of Halifax showing lot lines, lot dimensions, and building dimensions, 1918. City of Halifax Engineering and Works Department Plans. HRMA, RG 35-102-39P. Image courtesy of HRMA.
into view only by means a very special, materially aided perspective. One of the novelties of the new assessment system, therefore, was its provision of a mechanism not just for estimating property values, but also for revealing, and laying claim to, a fundamental and otherwise invisible realm of economic knowledge. With a newfound surplus of knowledge over local taxpayers, the authority of the state on the question of property value was significantly enhanced.

A second important change in the work of assessment concerns the sources of validity, or credibility, in the knowledge produced by the Assessment Office. Under the old approach, the credibility of assessed values was linked to the good judgement of the assessors (either as individuals or as a team). Legally, the determination of property values was classified as a “judicial act,” meaning that it required “the
exercise of discretion and judgement,”¹¹⁰ and a variety of mechanisms were put in place to ensure that assessors, and their judicial acts, were made accountable to the electorate (e.g., the election of assessors by City Council, and the oath sworn by the assessors to follow the proper procedures in their work). The new system, in contrast, is structured precisely to prevent, or reduce as much as possible, the assessors’ exercise of judgement (the estimation of site-values being the sole, and possibly unnoticed, act of judgement involved in the new system). Instead of individuals and their judgement, the credibility of the assessed values is now considered to arise from the system’s precise set of rules and its built-in mechanisms to ensure that rule-following has occurred. Like the first change in the work of assessment, the present change from good judgement to rule-following and external verification is also expressive of broader changes in the production of economic knowledge. In particular, the new system’s submission of assessment practices to a rigidly defined set of rules expresses a broad-based, parallel effort in European-derived societies to eliminate or reduce the involvement of individual judgement in the production of knowledge.¹¹¹ The question here is how the credibility of the assessments, and the authority of the municipal state over property values, was enhanced by this transformation.

Both rule-following and external verification have been linked to broad changes in the production of knowledge that deliver credibility in new, politically significant ways.¹¹² Rule-following, to begin with, seems to impart a kind of unerring consistency to the work of knowledge making. The work appears to be carried out in precisely the same way, no matter what particular specimen is being examined, when the work occurs, or who is involved. In the new assessment system, accordingly, the determination of property value seems to proceed along a clearly defined set of steps, and the particular individual adhering to the steps appears to be inconsequential (or at least minimally consequential) to the end result. The work and its result, therefore, appear to be “impartial.”¹¹³ The possibility of external verification, in turn, rests

¹¹³ See Poovey, Modern Fact.
on the creation of figures and records that refer to one another, and that seem to render deviations from
the prescribed rules observable (in the system’s records) in the form of mathematical or typographical
errors. In the new assessment system, each step in the procedure is linked to a written record that can be
scrutinized by an auditor or individual taxpayer and compared with other, systemically related records:
the figures on a tax bill can be referred back to the site-value and street-frontage recorded on the relevant
property card. The property card can, in turn, be compared to the figures on the relevant map. The records
and figures are meant to be audited, and the public is meant to have access to them. To the extent that the
work of knowledge-making leaves behind traces that can be examined by others, it creates an impression
of “transparency.”

While neither impartiality nor transparency, of course, necessarily result in better knowledge – and,
indeed, it is far from clear that the new system in Halifax delivered any improvement in the estimate of
properties’ market value – the credibility of the knowledge was enhanced, nevertheless. As Porter argues,
the creation of rule-bound systems of knowledge production exacts “severe discipline” from practitioners,
and seems to minimize the need for “personal trust” among the producers and consumers of knowledge.
In situations where personal trust is lacking, or where differences in individual judgement cannot easily
be resolved, the introduction of precise systems of rules may provide a solution. A “highly disciplined”
process, Porter contends, appears to “produce knowledge [that is] independent from the particular people
who make it.” Indeed, Somers tended to describe the benefits of his system in similar terms. The work
of assessment, he argued, would become (after the selection of site-values) “purely clerical” and entirely
divorced from the minds of individuals. The figures and records of the system would be “always acces-
sible by the public,” and any “inaccuracies of judgement” would therefore be quickly detected. Pro-

114 Poovey, Modern Fact. Poovey’s argument that modern systems of knowledge-making often produce
effects of “impartiality” and “transparency” is mirrored in Somers’s own writing. On the effect of trans-
parency, he suggests that “the fact that these figures are always accessible to the public ... must tend to
create in the minds of all citizens a confidence in the justice and equity of the work.” Valuation of Real
Estate, 25. On impartiality, the most relevant passage is Somers’s pronouncement that “any citizen can
quickly and easily compare the work and judge its accuracy, both as to the relative value of the streets and
the actual value of the property.” Valuation of Real Estate, 20.
115 Porter, Trust in Numbers, ix.
116 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 25.
117 Somers, Valuation of Real Estate, 25.
ponents of the system, meanwhile, seem to have concurred with Somers. As an assessor in Springfield, Illinois, remarked: “[it is] the only system I know of that produces accuracy, uniformity [i.e., impartiality], and publicity [i.e., transparency].” Through the combined effects of impartiality and transparency, therefore, the new system delivered an increase in the credibility of the assessments and a reduction in the likelihood that taxpayers would issue an appeal or organize a revolt.

The overall outcome of these changes in the work of assessment in Halifax – the disclosure of a new domain of property knowledge, along with the shift from judgement to rule-following and external verification – was to put a new, more authoritative form of economic knowledge in the hands of the state. The basis of this authority was, first of all, the state’s exclusive access to this knowledge (neither a group like the Ratepayers, nor individual taxpayers, possessed the materials and methods required to reveal the ostensibly hidden determinants of property value); and second, the “impartiality” and “transparency” of its new knowledge-making practices (no one else, submitting to the same rules and mechanisms of external verification, could be expected to produce different results). With this newfound (or regained) authority, the City could once again assess property values without encountering major challenges from taxpayers, and it could look forward to the arrival of a dependable, estimable stream of tax revenues each future year. The municipal state’s existence, its capacity to fund its operations, was now on firmer ground. And yet, to the extent that the new knowledge would become relevant to more than just taxation – to the extent, that is, that it would come to enable the conception and exercise of new forms of power – the new authority hereby gained by the state would have more profound effects in Halifax. Indeed, as I now want to demonstrate, the new assessment system would not simply give the state a virtual monopoly over a new realm of knowledge, but also a relatively restricted capacity to conceive and implement certain techniques of power that would be premised on this knowledge.

\textit{A Knowable, Calculable, and Manageable Urban Terrain}

The new assessment system would enable the state to produce a more sophisticated representation of property value, but also much more than that. At first glance, the system simply provides a more specific,

\footnote{Halifax, Minutes, 5 December 1913, 301.}
detailed account of property value. Whereas the old approach delivered but a single output (i.e., the value of real property, as a whole), the new system breaks property value into two components (i.e., land and improvements) and links these two components to their ostensible sources. I suggested above that the new system provided a more authoritative account of property value, and this was certainly an important, and explicitly intended result. But the system produces more than simply an account of property value. It also produces fundamentally new objects of knowledge, new empirical realities, and it enables new techniques of intervention as a result. The new system addresses itself to previously indiscernible phenomena, and in the very act of bringing these new phenomena into knowledge – in measuring them, assessing them, and disclosing their inner workings – it makes it possible to manage these phenomena as well. The most important effect of the new system, I want to suggest, was its disclosure of the urban terrain as a knowable, calculable, and manageable phenomena. It was now possible, for example, to know the value of land alone (something precluded in the previous system); a correlate or implication of this, as I will explain, was the capacity to know the urban terrain as land. Upon this newly disclosed terrain, finally, it would be possible for the state to conceive and potentially deploy techniques of management in order to produce desired outcomes at the level of the local population. In allowing space to be managed in the interest of the population, the new assessment system was a critical instrument of biopolitical power.

That the new system helps to produce not just property but the urban terrain as a knowable object is apparent when one looks closely at its outputs. The system’s disclosure of “land value” as a distinct phenomena, as well as its disclosure of the ostensible determinants of that value, ultimately points to the distribution of land value across the urban terrain. Through the work of assessment, land value is not just estimated as a figure, but also is linked to a location (via site-value) and to set of physical dimensions. This work effectively demarcates a specific, measurable area of the urban terrain, and assigns this area a value. Land value, as a result, is not only conceivable as a sum of money, but also a substance that spreads across the urban terrain, saturating every square foot of every city lot.

One way to describe this result is to say that land value has been given a geography: it has come to be connected to an expanse of the urban terrain, as well as to a location within the overall terrain. Another way is to say that geography has been given a value: the terrain of the city has come to be knowable as a
specific, precisely knowable distribution of land value. From now on, every location in the city can be
gauged in terms of its specific value; every square foot of the urban terrain can be grasped as a measur-
able quantity of site-value. It is a corollary of value being assigned a location and an area, in other words,
that locations and areas acquire a discernible, measurable value. In the end, what the new system crucially
transports into the knowledge of the municipal state is not just individual properties, but the terrain of the
city itself. The point is not that this terrain is rendered knowable to the state for the first time; clearly, ear-
erlier mappings had been produced, from the colonial maps that enabled the area’s conquest from the native
Mi’kmaq, to the City’s Official Plan that plotted the location of streets, sewers, and water mains.¹¹⁹ What
is new is precisely the disclosure of urban space as an always-measurable economic phenomenon, a phe-
nomenon with a specific, spatially variegated capacity to produce wealth-effects among the local popula-
tion. Clearly, this was something new. The earlier approach to assessment neither distinguished the value
of land from the value of improvements, nor tied the value of land to a location or area. To know the ur-
ban terrain as a differentiated economic phenomenon, comprehensively and systematically, was a possi-
bility introduced by the new system.

And yet, the capacity of the City to evaluate and manage the urban terrain is severely limited inso-
far as the latter is grasped strictly as land. It is clear, at this point, that value is distributed across the urban
terrain in a particular way, but it is hard to know what to do with this value. What kinds of state interven-
tion, for example, might capitalize upon this value and deliver benefits to the local population? It is sig-
nificant, in this case, that the new assessment system records the value improvements as well as land. In-
deed, it is important to recognize that the intelligibility of land and improvements arose in tandem within
the tax reform debates, and the initially posited relationship between the two elements of property value
came to structure their mode of appearance within the new assessment system. For the Board of Trade,
the need to distinguish land from improvements was related to the distinct ways that each form of prop-
erty was involved in city-wide processes of wealth creation. Specifically, the Board argued that land, un-

¹¹⁹ See Jeffers Lennox, “An Empire on Paper: the Founding of Halifax and Conceptions of Imperial
like all other forms of wealth, contributed nothing to the overall prosperity of the community (and, indeed, detracted from it). For this reason, the Board argued, land alone should be taxed.

The City, along with the LCW and the Trades and Labour Council, eventually adapted a similar position to the Board’s. The negative view of land value was affirmed, and further elaborated, in the preamble to the City-composed 1916 Assessment Act. Herein, the City describes the benefits of the prescribed “land tax” as imposing a penalty on the owners of bare or underimproved land, and thereby “exerting pressure” on the owners either to construct more valuable improvements themselves or to sell the land to someone who would. In stimulating a process of improvement, according to the City, the land tax would “greatly benefit the community.” For the City, like the Board of Trade, the need to distinguish between land and improvements was connected to the posited negative features of the former. Land appeared in the tax reform debates as a distinct entity in order to distinguish it from beneficial forms of property; it was recorded separately in the new assessment system in order to penalize it. In the taxation debates, as in the assessment system, land was clearly a situation to be overcome. The extent to which it had been overcome would now be analyzable by examining the value of improvements stationed upon it. Henceforth, it would be possible, and perhaps even necessary, to ask: Is land bare? Is it underimproved? It is contributing to the prosperity of the community? Could it be contributing more? In enabling these questions to be posed, the new system provided an essential condition for the exercise of biopolitical power (as I detail below).

The production of land and improvements as distinct and hierarchically related objects of knowledge makes the proper condition of the urban terrain a possible question. It becomes, in fact, a “calculable question,” a question that can be posed and answered in quantitative or mathematical terms. From the data collected by the Assessment Office, it becomes possible to perceive how value is laid out across the

120 Local Council of Women; Trades and Labour Council.
121 Halifax, “Tax Act of the City of Halifax.”
122 Ibid.
surface of the city, how the various uses of this surface capitalize (or do not capitalize) upon its value, and how changes in land use might be made in order to benefit the local population. The land tax was the first intervention of this kind. On the basis of a distinction between land value and improvement value, it was possible to target improper uses of land (i.e., bare or underimproved uses) and induce changes that would benefit the community. An improper use of land, in this case, was gauged calculatively; it was assumed to exist wherever the value of improvements was low relative to the value of land. Here, as in other cases of calculative politics, the question of proper land use is channelled between extremely narrow boundaries. Whereas the issue of proper land use could reasonably be presented in many ways – it could take into account, for example, the aesthetics of certain buildings and land forms, or the social needs of local residents – the reasoning of the land tax bracketed all but the quantitative relationship between land value and improvement value. The tax was, of course, a short-lived and relatively minor intervention in the lives of Halifax residents. However, as we will see in later chapters, a similar calculative approach to land use would eventually emerge in more significant ways.

Implicit in the above, of course, is the idea that the state has the right to intrude in the use of space. It is assumed to have the right, perhaps even the duty, to manage the urban terrain in the ostensible interest of the local population. This implicit, acquired right may have been the most subtle and important outcome of the tax reform debates, and it is clearly related to the new conception of property that emerged in the course of these debates. To the extent that land value is construed as an unearned deduction from social wealth, as well as a potential limit or obstacle to the creation of the latter, a new role emerges for an institution that is capable of managing community-created value in a way that actually benefits the community. This formulation of the role of the state with respect to land was indeed spelled out in the preamble to the 1916 Assessment Act.

The City may be regarded as a huge combination of a market and apartment house in which one pays for the space occupied, and in which the City has no more concern with the means or income or gains or losses of the occupier or the amount of his personal property or the nature of his business than the owner of a market or an apartment house would have with those of his tenants.124

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In a few words, here, the City gathers the urban terrain within its oversight and control. Whereas the City has no right to interfere with personal property, for that is created by individuals, the urban terrain becomes “a market and apartment house” that the City is entitled and compelled to manage as if it were a landlord. The urban terrain enters the realm of state knowledge, in other words, as an entity without individual claimants. It appears to be an entity that is produced by the city and that, for that reason, belongs to the city. Of course, all the City is proposing here is a new tax on land values. However, as city residents come to live upon a terrain whose value they (now) do not seem to have individually created, and whose optimal management is the responsibility of the state *qua* landlord to ensure, the spectre of evictions may not be terribly far away. This description of land as essentially the property of a public “market,” of which the City is the primary manager, might be considered a striking and ominous epistemic dispossession at the beginning of a century that would witness the City frequently acting to remove particular residents from the land in order to bring about a calculated improvement in the life of overall population. The role of “landlord” and “market manager” that the City is claiming here, in other words, would enable more extensive, disruptive, and displacing techniques of management.

The mode of intervention suggested above differs substantially from interventions like the proposed model tenements, and it needs to be understood in relation to a slightly different form of power: biopolitical power. Whereas the model tenements entailed an individual conception of life, and aimed to achieve direct effects among individuals through the creation of a wholly new, strategically designed environment, the new knowledge expressed in the tax reform debates and the assessment system enable interventions that will benefit overall or *aggregate* life. As Foucault suggests, the ascent of biopolitical power is premised on forms of knowledge that can disclose the elements that affect the condition of aggregate life (e.g., the life of the population, nation, or species). To the extent that such elements or processes can be rendered intelligible, it becomes possible to manage aggregate life, to alter its condition, by acting upon “a range of factors and elements that seem far removed from the population itself.”

While Foucault does not consider how a new conception of property (originating with Ricardo) is implicated in the exercise of biopolitical power, it should be clear, at this point, that it is. Through the enlistment of a new conception

of property in the work of assessment, the urban terrain became intelligible for the first time as an entity whose contribution to the wealth of the local population can be calculatively ascertained. The municipal state, in bringing this new view of the urban terrain into being, simultaneously ascribes to itself a role in managing the urban terrain in the interest of the local population. It becomes possible for the state, in other words, to affect the population (e.g., its wealth or welfare) by managing the condition of urban space.

A New Conception of the Population

A third and final effect of the new assessment system was to disclose as an object of knowledge the local population: the population as the constituency of the municipal state. The arrival of the population as a knowable object is, of course, implied in the discussion above. It is the local population that the management of the urban terrain is intended to benefit, and it is this aggregate (rather than individual) conception of life that most starkly distinguishes a biopolitical intervention like the “land tax” from earlier, disciplinary initiatives like the model tenements. This new role, this new exercise of power, would clearly be inconceivable without conceiving the population as biopolitically managed by the state. And yet, this new political object deserves much closer attention. Its particular character can be revealed, perhaps most vividly, through a comparison with other, earlier conceptions of the state’s avowed constituency. Specifically, whereas the City had historically described the object of its allegiance as “the taxpayers,” “the ratepayers,” or “the citizens,” the reform era saw the emergence of a new entity, “the community as a whole.”

(Analogous terms that appeared at this time include “the city as a whole,” or “the public.”)

The idea that the state and its policies ought to serve the “community as a whole,” as opposed to mere “individuals,” was emphasized in the tax reform debates by the Board of Trade. Indeed, one of the Board’s major arguments for the replacement of all existing municipal taxes with a single tax on land values was that such a change would benefit the community as a whole, even as it would tend to harm particular individuals (i.e., land owners). This somewhat peculiar formulation – a conception of a “whole”

126 Halifax, Minutes, 15 May 1906, 20. For analogous descriptions, see Halifax, Minutes, 12 May 1897, 3; 10 May 1899, 13; 15 May 1906, 20.
that can benefit from a certain action, even as elements that might conceivably be included within this “whole” do not benefit – is integral to Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics. What I want to emphasize here, however, is the close, constitutive relationship between this divided conception of the community and the divided conception of property that the Board also articulated. The Board’s oft-asserted distinction between land and improvements, it turns out, served not only to isolate a form of property that ostensibly contributed nothing to the broader community (i.e., land), but also to isolate a social class that contributed nothing. All that distinguished land owners from other segments of the community, for the Board, was their possession of land; it was because land had the characteristic of being parasitic upon other activities that the owners of land were seen as parasitic as well. As a result of this affiliation between land and land owners, a new, divided conception of the population could be articulated, and certain initiatives could be conceived as benefiting the population “as a whole,” even as, and to the extent that, a certain class of individuals was harmed. In a clear echo of Ricardo and George, the Board effectively argued that land owners were a “dog in the manger” who needed, for the benefit of all, to be “choked off.”

Of course, the Board’s argument was eventually accepted by the City. Taken up by the City, the divided character of property helped to define a class of individuals who could legitimately be harmed by taxation and whose harm would tend to benefit the community as a whole. The benefits of a tax on land values (and thus on land owners) were described above: the tax, while penalizing some city residents, would tend to promote the development of land and would thereby deliver various benefits to the community. The legitimacy of the tax, a distinct but related matter, stemmed from its application to a form of wealth that was appropriated by individuals but created by the community as a whole. The tax, as the pre-amble to the 1916 Assessment Act explained, would fulfill the spirit of the “only sound [principle] on which municipal taxation can be based”: namely, that taxes be levied “in proportion to the benefit received” by individuals from the “only thing which the City itself has created” (i.e., the value of land).127

For the City, therefore, the distinction between land and all other property indicated not just where it could intervene to produce a benefit for the overall community, but also where it could justifiably intervene. Both of these issues were articulated most explicitly in relation to a divided conception of property.

Given that property is owned and used by people, however, a division in property helped to produce a conception of the state’s political constituency in which certain interests needed be recognized while others could be suppressed (for the greater good).

That the population appears internally divided – indeed, that it is intelligible on the basis of this internal division – is essential to Foucault’s account of biopolitics. In political discourse, Foucault claims that the population emerges as an entity ostensibly divided between “the interest of all” and “private interests” (two terms that were explicitly invoked in the tax reform debates in Halifax). In other discourses (e.g., in the life sciences), the population is divided in different ways (e.g., into a hierarchy of “races”). Foucault’s more general argument here is that the aggregate conception of life to which biopolitical power is directed is always a divided one. A “caesura,” as he puts it, seems to exist between the level of the “population” and the level of mere “individuals.”

In a relevant example, Foucault notes how certain political economists discovered that food “scarcity” – a great risk to the population as a whole – could be eliminated by allowing food prices to rise and thereby stimulating food production. Allowing prices to rise, of course, would make food unaffordable to certain people; the latter may even starve to death. The condition of eliminating “scarcity in general,” therefore, was precisely that “scarcity that causes the death of individuals ... does not disappear.” As this suggests, the “population” is conceived in opposition to individuals. Consequently, “we will have an absolutely fundamental caesura,” Foucault writes, “between a level that is pertinent for the government’s economic-political action, and this is the level of the population, and a different level, which will be that of the series ... of individuals.” Individuals, Foucault continues, are pertinent to biopolitical power only to the extent that acting through them, or upon them, “will make possible what one wants to obtain at the level that is pertinent [i.e., the level of the population].”

What needs to be grasped in this newly-arrived, divided conception of the population is not just that certain individuals seem to be excluded from the benefits of biopolitical power, but also that the exclusion of some people is often seen to be the means of ensuring benefits to “all.” The violence of biopolitics, in

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129 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42, emphasis added.
130 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42.
131 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42.
Foucault’s explanation, is connected to the “biological-type relationship” that is conceived to exist between the population and mere individuals. It is a relationship in which the political exclusion, “social death,” or outright killing of individuals is sometimes believed to uphold, strengthen, or otherwise benefits the overall population. Foucault’s analysis seems to emphasize the most dramatic renderings of this “biological-type relationship” (e.g., Stalin’s purges, Nazi death camps), but it certainly acknowledges less exceptional cases as well. A group or class whose interests are described as “private” may well be harmed in non-lethal ways by state policies or initiatives that aim to serve the “public interest.” The exclusion or harming of private interests, moreover, is one of the perceived conditions of serving the so-called “public interest.” This curious, seemingly paradoxical relationship between the improvement of aggregate life and the exclusion or decimation of many individual lives is, for Foucault, woven into biopolitical configurations of knowledge and power themselves. The moment that the population becomes intelligible, he insists, its “caesuras” are intelligible as well. As such, a caesura suggests what (or who) might be targeted in order to produce an improvement in the condition of the population.

Returning to taxation and assessment in Halifax, it is clear that the distinction between land and improvements underwrites a caesura in the population and that this caesura makes a form of biopolitical intervention conceivable. It was by “choking off” land owners and speculators that George, the Board of Trade, and eventually the City of Halifax conceived of enhancing the life of the overall population. The new assessment system, in incorporating a division in property asserted for essentially “biological-type” reasons, becomes an enduring record of this period-specific conflict. In other words, a kind of division or conflict is effectively inscribed in the assessment records and indelibly marks the perspective on the city that it makes possible. To see the urban terrain as an expanse of value that may or may not be properly capitalized upon by the structures that adorn its surface is also to see people whose ownership or occupancy of the terrain may or may not be proper. Significantly, while the targeting of land speculators in this context seems to fit Foucault’s definition of state racism as a biological-type relation, it is clearly not dependent upon their assumed bio-racial characteristics. Land speculators are differentiated on the basis of

132 Foucault, Society Must be Defended, 255.
133 Foucault, Society Must be Defended, 255.
134 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42.
an analysis of property (its improved or underimproved condition); their division from the broader population occurs on the basis of social class, not race. It will be important as we proceed to compare this particular differentiation to the others that emerge within the purview of biopolitics. As I will suggest in the next chapter, the meaning and significance of class- and race-based differentiations indeed diverge, and while an analysis of property can help to mark off racial groups, their presumed status as inherently different and deficient people ultimately carries consequences more grave than those that accompany class categorizations. While an analysis of (underimproved) property can potentially constitute any owner or occupant of land as a “dog in the manger,” the fate of these ostensible “dogs” may be much worse if they are also differentiated by race.

The new system, in sum, provided more than simply a resolution to protracted struggles over taxation and assessment. While it indeed provided the City with the kind of authoritative knowledge that it needed to dampen potential taxpayer challenges to its assessments of property values, it also opened up a terrain upon which power could be exercised in a new way. From the records accumulated in the Assessment Office, it would now be possible to analyze the condition of the urban terrain and to gauge where interventions might be made that would improve the condition of the overall population. An intervention in spatial conditions could, and could perhaps not avoid, impinging upon certain individuals. And yet, within the divided conception of the population that arose in the tax reform debates, and that was ultimately inscribed in the new assessment system, this would pose no real obstacle. Individuals, after all, were conceived to be living upon a terrain that the community as a whole had brought into being. If their mode of living did not advance the life of the “whole,” then it could be altered, or harmed, in the interest of making things right for everyone. The land tax, the first initiative to be based on this conception of the population and the urban terrain, was clearly a modest and short-lived one. It would be repealed in 1922. The individuals most directly harmed by it, moreover, would likely be able to bear the pain. In the years to come, however, a series of City officials would turn relatively frequently to the storehouse of property data maintained in the Assessment Office in order to derive an authoritative, ostensibly impartial perspective on various biopolitical matters, and the violence of their proposals would affect much less privileged
individuals than the reform era’s land owners. This violence, these initiatives, find a good part of their genealogy here: in debates about taxation, and a deftly-devised resolution to them.

3.5 Conclusion

The twentieth century opened in Halifax with a pair of political conflicts. The first conflict pitted merchants and industrialists against land owners on the question of taxation; the second pitted organized and individual taxpayers against the state on the question of assessments. At stake in these conflicts, most immediately, was the competitiveness of Halifax businesses within an increasingly national economic space (their competitiveness, in particular, vis-a-vis businesses from Montreal and Toronto), as well as the continued ability of the municipal state to assess property values, collect tax revenues, and, thus, remain viable as an institution. The resolution of these conflicts was achieved by means of a small collection of reforms: the elimination of the personal property tax, the shifting of taxes onto land values (for a while), and a new, more “scientific” system of property assessment. Also observable in these changes, however, were more profound changes that would significantly shape urban politics in the twentieth century. In the records of the Assessment Office, it became possible to see the urban terrain as an expanse of economic value that might or might not be capitalized upon by the particular built forms on its surface – and a terrain that the state ostensibly had the right and duty to bring to its optimal condition. To the extent that the state would concern itself with the condition of the population, the management of the urban terrain would be its foremost recourse. Whereas the federal or provincial state might seek to improve aggregate life in various ways, the municipal state would turn primarily to the space of the city, and seek to unlock the population-improving potential stored within it. In the state’s disclosure and claiming of the potential of urban space, a new realm of biopolitical interventions were rendered possible.

The new assessment system, though it seemed to reveal something fundamental about property and seemed to excise individual judgement from the representation of property value, did not in fact represent the “truth” of property any better than the old approach. Looking closely, we can see that the new system incorporated various rules and procedures that had little relationship to the conception of property value that it ostensibly relied upon. Ricardo or Van Thünen might argue that the value of land was determined in
a different way than the value of improvements, but neither offered an explanation of how land value was
distributed across the space of an individual lot. (And yet, the assessment system needed to calculate such
a distribution.) Looking at the property cards actually used in Halifax, moreover, we can see that the as-
sessors, while they purported to be deriving assessed values from a prior measurement of the determinants
of value, sometimes worked in the opposite direction instead (see Figure 6). If the outcome of the
assessment procedure conflicted with what the assessors thought a property was worth, it seems, the “de-
terminants” were simply adjusted to achieve the desired result. No, the primary outcome of the instituted
reforms was not truth, but power: the power to assess property without major challenges from property
owners; the power to institute a tax that would harm “individuals,” but benefit “the community”; and the
power, as we will see in the next chapter, to achieve broader biopolitical aims through the management of
urban space as property.

The new configuration of knowledge and power that I suggested could be observed in the unfolding
of the tax reform debates in Halifax has important affinities and disaffinities with Foucault’s analysis of
biopolitics. Its major affinity lies in the disclosure of a set of elements or processes that could be con-
ceived to have effects upon the condition of the population, and that seem to gesture toward, therefore, a
new form of state intervention that could conceivably indirectly alter or manage the population. The man-
agement of aggregate life, the life of the population rather than individuals, is the most defining feature of
biopolitical power in Foucault’s analysis, and the ascent of this new form of power would clearly have to
wait for the arrival of a form of knowledge that would make the population intelligible and the available
means of improving the population conceivable. Indeed, the introduction of the new assessment system in
Halifax is a prime example of the kind of complex, not-quite-intuitive knowledge that Foucault locates in
the wake of disciplinary knowledge (a more intuitive way of knowing subjects and spaces), and that he
suggests arrives through the initiative of the state. Modes of knowledge that could apprehend “the proc-
esses characteristic of human masses,” he argues, required “complex systems of coordination and
centralization.”135 The state, rather than “local” institutions like schools, hospitals, and barracks, put these
new modes of knowledge-making into place.

135 Foucault, Society Must be Defended, 250.
In Halifax, such a transition is observable in the passage of just a few short years. Whereas in 1905 members of the LCW sought to know the city through the power of their eyes (through first-hand, visual observation), in 1912 they turned their gaze to political economic texts and the possibility of discerning, and acting upon, something that had not been apparent a few years before: the economic processes that “go to produce” the built form of the city. The capacity to see and act in this way, Foucault emphasizes, required substantial work to be undertaken. As with biopolitics in general, an urban biopolitics was enabled in Halifax through a mechanism of knowledge production assembled by the state. The LCW, no matter how much it might have desired a precise account of property values, could not have borne the expense.

While deeply informed by Foucault, the configuration of knowledge and power that I diagnosed in this chapter exceeds or contradicts Foucault’s account of biopolitics in one significant respect. Foucault, as I noted, scarcely recognizes the relevance of real property to the exercise of biopolitical power, and when he does mention property it is described as a limit to power: the boundaries of property mark off a region where power must not tread, where individual property owners and their “rights” must be left undisturbed. The recognition of property rights indeed posed a formidable challenge to the municipal state, at a certain point in time; it was the reign of property rights, as others have noted, that most severely impeded the development of modern urban planning and the functions of the modern municipal state in general. What helped to overcome this obstacle, it seems, was the reconception of property. It was the disclosure of property as a divided entity that, depending on its condition, could enable or hamper the growing prosperity of the city as a whole. In the course of the tax reform debates, the reality of property was reconceived. New empirical realities were brought into public discussions and institutionalized in the new assessment system, and these new realities were overseen by the state almost from the moment that they became discernible. As the land tax demonstrated in a modest way, and later initiatives would demonstrate less modestly, the disclosure of a connection between the condition of property and the condition of the population not only allowed the state to intervene in the realm of property, but compelled it to do so. Bare or underimproved land, it was now believed, could impair the prosperity of the city. The state, in the interest of the city as a whole, was compelled to act in such circumstances. Far from a limit to biopolitical
power, property would become one of the primary means of its exercise. An analysis of urban biopolitics, I submit, requires this modest correction to Foucault.

If the new form of knowledge revealed things that had been indiscernible before – if, indeed, it created new empirical realities – it is important to recognize as well what it did not reveal that had been discernible before. What the new knowledge potentially displaces is a way of grasping spaces and subjects in which particular spaces matter because of their relationship to particular subjects (a major characteristic, as I suggested in the last chapter, of disciplinary knowledges). It is still, of course, a relationship between spaces and subjects that the new knowledge represents. Yet there is a major difference between a conception of what the management of land in general can do for the community as a whole, on one hand, and a conception of what precise modifications to a particular area can do for specific people. The model tenements, in the minds of their proponents, would bring about an alteration in particular spaces in order to improve the lives of particular individuals. The tenements were far from an innocent intervention; they were an instrument through which a certain group of people would intervene in, and rearrange, the lives of scarcely consulted others. The effects of the tenements upon individuals were nevertheless an abiding concern, and it was the surfacing of doubts regarding the capacity of the tenements to fulfill their intended effects that contributed to the downfall of the campaign. A planning initiative that seeks to improve the life of the city as a whole, in contrast, tends to lose sight of individuals, and it might very well achieve its intended effects through a measure of violence against certain individuals, the owners of land, for example, or its occupants.

The LCW’s eventual support of the land tax as a solution to the problems of the slums is indicative of this distancing from individuals. Would the improvement of downtown land, an increase in the value of its improvements relative to the value of land, actually result in better housing for the poor (rather than just higher value buildings)? The LCW assumed that it would. History, as we will see, offers another conclusion.
Chapter 4

“ Ain’t Living, Just Existing”

4.1 Introduction

Among the most important and distressing moments in the history of urban planning in Halifax occurred in 1915, with the submission to City Council of a brief report on the outlying community of Africville. The report was authored by City Engineer Francis Doane. Hired in 1896, Doane had taken up an expanding set of planning duties over the course of his career, overseeing such initiatives as the paving of roads and sidewalks, the installation of street lights, and the contribution of sewer and water lines. In 1914, he was sent to Toronto as the City’s representative at the first nation-wide Town Planning Conference, and he was evidently inspired by what he learned. “I shall endeavour to utilize the information obtained,” he announced to Council upon his return, “whenever the opportunity [should] offer.”

Doane’s report the following year proposed something new in the history of Halifax urban planning: it proposed that the City seize a vast tract of land presently inhabited by its citizens so that it might be converted to a better use. The land occupied by Africville homes, the report advised, ought to become an “industrial district,” and the achievement of this use of land ought to be “assisted in any way not prejudicial to the interests” of its present occupants. “In fact,” the report concluded, “we may be obliged in the future to consider the interests of industry first.” Council evidently welcomed the proposal and its rationale. Recognizing that the redevelopment of Africville land “would have certain advantages for the City,” Council announced that it would be permissible to “expropriate[e] ... part or the whole of the property known as Africville.” Doane’s proposal, though it would remain unimplemented for many years, would have immediate and profound effects on life in Africville from the moment of its submission until the

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1 City of Halifax, Minutes of the Council of the City of Halifax, 9 June 1914, Halifax Regional Municipality Archives (hereafter cited as HRMA), RG 102-1A, 48-50.
3 Halifax, Minutes, 9 September 1915, 218.
1960s, when the City at last fulfilled the advice of its long-retired planner and wiped the community off the map.

The 1915 proposal for Africville, I want to suggest in this chapter, represents an important moment in the history of urban planning in Halifax and a striking example of biopolitics at work. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, biopolitics involves the calculated management of populations (e.g., their size, growth, health, wealth, and welfare) and is effected primarily through interventions in urban space. While biopolitics is clearly concerned with the life of the population, this does not imply that it is concerned with all living beings, or concerned with them equally. Rather, as Foucault points out, the population is understood as divided by various “caesuras” that effectively cast many individuals beyond or outside the domain of collective life and, thus, beyond the reach of the state’s protection.\(^4\) As a result of conceived caesuras, a particular biopolitical intervention might be regarded as improving or safeguarding the overall population, even as it leaves the lives of many individuals unaffected, or affected in very negative ways. The emergence of an initiative like the 1915 proposal for Africville would seem, at this point, to be understandable on the basis of Foucault’s analysis. The proposal purports to bring about “advantages” for “the [overall] City” by means of an intervention in urban space; and it seems to involve, and rely upon, a fundamental caesura between “the City” (and its foreseen advantages) and the inhabitants of Africville, whose foreseeable disadvantages are apparently so unimportant that they need not enter the realm of explicit calculations.

An understanding of the 1915 proposal is aided not just by Foucault’s general analysis of biopolitics, however, but also by his close attention to the role of racism within techniques of population management. Racism, or racism of a specific kind, plays a central role in Foucault’s analysis, and some scholars have suggested that racism is essentially what “biopolitics” is supposed to understand.\(^5\) Foucault’s analysis focuses on what he calls “state racism.” The latter is a period-specific conception of human difference that not only divides the domain of life into distinct and hierarchically ordered “races” (as other

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racisms do), but also regards inferior or subordinate “races” as a kind of impurity within the overall population. In an argument that I will suggest applies very well to Halifax from the mid-nineteenth century onward, Foucault contends that the rise of state racism establishes the dominant race as the “one true race,” while other races comes to be understood as “sub-races” or “counter-races” whose continued existence threatens to weaken or undermine the condition of “the race.” From this perspective, the existence of “sub-races” is irrelevant (at best) to the concerns of the biopolitical state. Collective life might even be improved or better protected to the extent that they cease to exist. The emergence of state racism thus helps to explain the otherwise contradictory existence of lives left unprotected, and even subjected to grave damage, on the part of state institutions that exercise power through their care for life. Life, as far as the biopolitical state is concerned, simply does not include all human beings.

Foucault’s analysis of state racism is immensely helpful in coming to terms with urban planning in early twentieth-century Halifax and especially with the relationship of planning to the community of Africville. It is also, however, a limited analysis, and I want to emphasize the importance of examining state racism in its context-specific relationship to other non-racist imperatives. As I will suggest, the 1915 proposal was indeed conceived in the context of a strengthening conception of the local population as essentially “white,” while African Nova Scotian residents (like those in Africville) were perceived as an unnecessary and often undesirable presence within the population. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of state racism, the rise of what I will call a “white city” policy in Halifax helps to explain the juxtaposition of the state’s intensifying efforts to improve and safeguard human life through urban planning on the one hand, and its equally intensifying imperilment of Africville lives through initiatives like (but not limited to) the 1915 proposal on the other.

Also essential to the 1915 proposal, however, was a second imperative that pertained not to the population – or not directly so – but rather to urban space. As I documented in the last chapter, the early twentieth century witnessed the rise of a new Ricardian conception of real property in Halifax, and one of its major effects was to enable the City to assess the relative contribution of urban spaces (as property) to

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the condition of the overall population, and to compel the City to manage urban space in the ostensible interest of this population. The 1915 proposal for Africville, I will suggest, expresses precisely such a concern with the relative contribution of space to the population. Its most explicit aim was to introduce what contemporary planners called a more “economic use of land” in Africville, with “industry,” rather than Africville homes, considered to be this more “economic” use. This second, more explicit imperative effectively conjoined with state racism to render the 1915 proposal conceivable and implementable, and it is essential, for reasons that I will discuss, to trace precisely how these two logics entwined in this context. Such an examination, I will argue, is essential not just to gaining an understanding of the 1915 proposal, but also to intervening in planning processes in the present.

My aim in this chapter is to examine the conditions of possibility for the 1915 proposal for Africville and, along the way, to make some sense of how racial and economic logics intertwine in biopolitical planning practices. I begin with a discussion of the actual destruction of Africville in the 1960s and the conditions that prevailed in the community around this time. This discussion is important because it allows me to describe some of the long-term effects of earlier initiatives (like the 1915 proposal), as well as to highlight the limitations of contemporary analyses of Africville that fail to examine how the City initially came to see the community as a problem. In the next section, I return to an earlier period and examine the emergence of a distinctly biopolitical planning regime in Halifax and consider how Africville was treated within this regime. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, I suggest, the City sought increasingly to safeguard and improve collective life through a range of new planning initiatives. When it came to Africville, however, planning operated very differently, and the 1915 proposal was perhaps the best indication that a “caesura” existed between life in general and the lives of Africville residents. In the final section, I probe the making of this caesura. Describing the emergence in Halifax of a new conception of the population and a new conception of urban space, I argue that the 1915 proposal was made possible by a pair of interlocking logics: one racial, the other economic. While the proposal sought most explicitly to achieve the “best economic use of land” in Africville, its conception was conditional upon an unexpressed but widely held conception of Halifax as an essentially “white city.” The intertwining of state racism and
political economy in the early years of urban planning in Halifax, I conclude, has important consequences for planning debates in the present.

4.2 Re-Remembering Africville

Africville has a long history. It was mostly likely founded as a community in the 1840s, when William Brown and William Arnold bought 16 five-acre lots at the northern tip of the Halifax peninsula from a white merchant and began to build their homes (see Figure 4.1). The earliest residents migrated from surrounding African Nova Scotian settlements like Preston and Hammonds Plains where the soil was too thin and rocky for agriculture, and the distance from Halifax too great to secure waged work. By 1851, the new community was home to 80 families, and it could boast a small Baptist church and a school house.

Over the next hundred years, the community would experience the many joys and pains of living on the edge of a predominantly white (and racist) community. Among other pains, the operation of urban planning in Africville and its vicinity was a profound imposition and menace for much of the community’s existence, and eventually wiped it off the map entirely. The so-called “relocation” program of the 1960s is the best known element of Africville’s history, and the most obviously predatory act of Halifax urban planning. It was certainly my point of entry to Africville’s (and Halifax’s) history, and it compelled me to wonder and worry about urban planning for the first time. While I will present an earlier history later on, I begin here with the period leading up to, and including, the “relocation.” A description of conditions in Africville during this period, and how planners sought to improve these conditions (i.e., by removing the people who inhabited them), provides useful context to my later analysis and helps to frame

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7 There is debate regarding the exact date of settlement. The official registry of deeds by William Brown and William Arnold date to 1848, but Mary Vincer suggests that there is reason to believe that Brown moved to the land in 1838 and simply took 10 years to register the deed. “A History of Marginalization – Africville: A Canadian Example of Forced Migration” (MA thesis, Ryerson University, 2008), 35. Further, some former Africville residents and their friends have suggested that Africville was established as early as the mid-1700s, though likely not as an exclusively black community.
8 Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill, Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1999).
my broad intervention in this chapter. As I will suggest below, much is at stake in how this period is un-
derstood and remembered, and I am driven to disrupt two common practices that I think minimize the
political implications of Africville’s memory in the present.

**Conditions in Africville**

A surface-level appraisal of Africville in the 1950s and 60s would produce a grim and shocking impres-
sion. City reports from this period would often refer to the area as a “slum,” while visiting planners and
other professionals would register their horror in more evocative terms: University of Toronto planner
Gordon Stephenson wrote in 1957 that the community was a mere “encampment” or “shack town,” while
his sociologist colleague Albert Rose visiting in 1963 called it “the worst urban appendage [he had] ever

![Figure 4.1 “Map of the City and Harbour of Halifax,” 1910. Africville denoted in black. City of Halifax
Clerk’s Office Records, HRMA, RG 35-102-5A-26. Image courtesy of HRMA.](image-url)
More concretely, the condition of homes was remarked to be sub-standard. A 1962 study disclosed that the community’s 400 residents were packed into roughly 60 houses, for a per-house average of over six people (perhaps double the average for the city as a whole). While some houses were solid and well-built, the survey showed, many were “roughly-patched, one-room or two-room shacks built by amateurs.” A photojournalist who visited the community in 1965 provided further evidence. The house to the left in Figure 4.2, and to the middle-right in Figure 4.3, would seem to fit in anywhere in the working-class North End; their “salt box” design is a North End staple, and their cedar-shake cladding appears to be intact and recently painted. Other homes are considerably smaller and appear to be either unfinished or damaged. A few look off-kilter or porous in parts, and their capacity to defend their occupants against Halifax winters would seem to be limited (see Figure 4.4 and 4.5).

As the photographs also depict, the conditions surrounding Africville homes could be seen as substandard as well. Roads are unpaved, and street-lights are absent (as indeed they always were in Africville). The water well in Figure 4.6 depicts an oft-noted situation. Africville homes all lacked running water, and residents were forced to depend on shallow, makeshift wells. Lack of reliable water presented an array of problems. Between 1940 and 1960, three fires broke out in Africville, and fire crews were slowed considerably in their response by having to pump water from hundreds of meters away from their target. Six homes were levelled by fire in this period, and four children were killed. The water secured from wells was also, for multiple reasons, liable to be contaminated. Africville homes lacked sewer services, and the proximity of outhouse pits to the wells provided a constant source of impurity. Further contamination of the water (as well as the air) was provided by pollution-causing facilities on the periphery of Africville, of which there were many. A major source of contamination was the raw sewage from a nearby City-run hospital, which coursed through the community and infiltrated the water table. When an outbreak of Paratyphoid B in 1954 sickened many Africville residents, it compelled the City to test the

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Figure 4.2  “Africville houses on either side of a hillside land, seen from the opposite side of the railroad tracks,” ca. 1965. Bob Brooks. NSARM accession no. 1989-468, vol. 16, negative sheet 4, image 29. Image courtesy of NSARM.

Figure 4.3  “Canadian National freight train passing through Africville,” ca. 1965. Bob Brooks. NSARM accession no. 1989-468, vol. 16, negative sheet 5, image 8. Image courtesy of NSARM.
Figure 4.4 “Africville house, with two children on doorstep and laundry hanging on the line,” ca. 1965.

Figure 4.5 “Three Africville houses, with house at centre undergoing repairs,” ca. 1965. Bob Brooks NSARM accession no. 1989-468, vol. 16, negative sheet 7, image 10. Image courtesy of NSARM.
well water. A public health official found the wells to be “dangerously contaminated,” and speculated that only the built-up immunity of the residents’ bodies had held off the spectre of death.\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Relocation Report}, 106, 190.}

In addition to the hospital, the vicinity of Africville also included an abattoir, several small industrial plants, and a stone-crushing facility, all of which brought air and noise pollution to the life of the community. Electrical towers cut straight through Africville, as did three sets of railway tracks (much of their base established on long-ago expropriated or stolen land). The passage of trains through the middle of the community entailed considerable noise and pollution (especially before the trains converted from coal to diesel in the 1950s), and made it inconvenient and dangerous for residents simply to get around. (At least two Africville residents were killed by passing trains.\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Africville}, 94.}) The City dump was also located nearby, and in 1955 it was expanded onto land a few hundred feet from the community. Two years later, the City built an incinerator just to the south of Africville. The dump brought with it a putrid smell, a wasted land-

\begin{figure}[ht]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image46}
\caption{“About 15 houses, with a well and nearby sign reading, ‘Please boil this water before drinking and cooking,’” ca. 1965. Bob Brooks NSARM accession no. 1989-468, vol. 16, negative sheet 6, image 31. Image courtesy of NSARM.}
\end{figure}
scape that shaped Haligonians visual impression of Africville itself, and nourished an expanding horde of rats that scurried through the community’s streets and into its homes.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite being surrounded by industry, few Africville residents had the benefit of reliable waged work. A 1962 report found that less than half of Africville residents in the labour force had year-round work (compared to 82 percent of the overall Halifax labour force), while 42 percent were forced to make do with less than 30 weeks of waged work per year (compared to 9 percent of the overall labouring population).\textsuperscript{16} Africville men could sometimes find intermittent work on the coal and salt boats, as stevedores at the harbour, as mechanics, or as day-labourers. Work was sometimes available in factories, but only in the lowest-paid positions (e.g., cleaning staff). As in other Canadian black communities, the job of “sleeping car porter” on the railroad was one of the most lucrative available.\textsuperscript{17} Among women, the most common waged position was that of domestic, or char-woman. Teaching and nursing work was a possibility, but an unlikely one. Some Africville residents fished for subsistence in Bedford Basin, and a few kept small vegetable gardens.\textsuperscript{18}

To survive, some Africville residents retrieved usable materials from the nearby dump. Scrap metal could be gathered and sold at junkyards; building materials and car parts could be collected for use in repair jobs; and used clothing, canned food, and fuel sources like coal, wood, and car batteries could be recovered for residents’ own use.\textsuperscript{19} While Africville residents were not the only people who retrieved materials from the dump, “scavenging” was an activity that the Halifax public strongly associated (disparagingly) with the community, and it entailed certain risks for those who did partake.\textsuperscript{20} In 1958, a family was hospitalized and treated for lead poisoning that had reportedly been transmitted from car batteries that

\textsuperscript{15} Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Africville}, 50, 115.
\textsuperscript{16} Institute of Public Affairs, \textit{Condition of the Negroes}.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Africville}, 116, 118, 161.
they had retrieved from the dump and burned for warmth.\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Africville}, 118.} A few years later, three adults were fatally poisoned by duplicating fluid that found its way into their home-brewed beer.\footnote{Ibid.}

Such observations have the advantage of having been produced by professional planners and academics; they conform, as a result, to codified and disciplined knowledge-making practices. But their starting point is the assumption that Africville is a problem of some kind, an assumption that shapes the observations in major ways and that was not, importantly, shared by Africville residents themselves. The latter, while they were far from satisfied with their situation, would often describe the community in very different terms.\footnote{See Saunders, “Africville”; Susan Precious, “The Women of Africville: Race and Gender in Postwar Halifax” (MA Thesis, Queen’s University, 1998); Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Relocation Report}.} On the matter of living conditions, for example, they would point out the lack of sewers and clean drinking water, but would also chart a connection between these deficiencies and their more distant, non-immediate cause: namely, the longstanding, brutal withholding of these services by the City. Africville residents knew about this long history of withholding. They knew that they, and their ancestors, had petitioned the City for services for decades and as recently as 1955 (when residents blasted City officials for their intransigence at a public hearing held in Africville).\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Relocation Report}, 63.} And they knew that white racism was woven through the historical geography of Africville. As one resident remarked in 1962: “The city didn’t do anything to improve Africville ... because we were coloured. If they had been white people down there, the city would have been in there assisting them to build new homes, putting in water and sewers and building the place up.”\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Relocation Report}, 69.}

For these residents, the problem was not so much their community, nor even their living conditions, but rather City Hall, the institution that should have upgraded conditions, but continually did not.

With regard to housing, as well, residents would provide a different perspective. They could point out the varying quality of housing, and explain why the older homes were generally more sturdy, well-built, and ornate than the newer structures (e.g., because work opportunities and wages were better in times past). They might also mention that residents who hoped to improve or expand their homes in re-
cent years had been denied building permits by the City, or that the ever-present threat of expropriation (from the early twentieth century onward) had greatly discouraged residents from improving or maintaining their homes. They might, finally, bring attention to the industry-created dust and dirt that drifted into their community and clung to their homes; to the efforts that many residents had made to counteract the filth through regular house-painting; or to the interior of their homes, which were in many cases as well-appointed as those of other black communities in the region. In all of these ways, Africville residents would point beyond the surface-level appearances and quantifiable phenomena that captured the entire attention of visiting professionals. Like WEB DuBois in his famous challenge to white “slumologists” in *The Philadelphia Negro*, Africville residents would often point to the deeper problem of which their living conditions were the mere symptom.\(^{26}\) And the problem, or a major part of it, was white racism.

More than just redefining the problem, however, Africville residents would also highlight what was not a problem, indeed, what was flourishing in the community. Whatever the difficulties they endured, there was nevertheless richness to their lives that the City had not created and had not (yet) managed to stamp out. Some residents were musicians, for example. Some of them had gone on to study at prestigious music schools or to play in metropolitan orchestras, and local church-goers were recognized for their “soul music” and were eagerly invited to sing at other black churches in the region.\(^{27}\) Mildred Dixon, the ballet performer and wife of Duke Ellington, had roots in Africville. The couple visited the community often, and gave out free tickets when Ellington was playing a show in Halifax.\(^{28}\) Residents swam in Bedford Basin in the summer, skated on frozen ponds in the winter, and many excelled in organized sports: the girls softball team won a Nova Scotia championship in the 1940s, and George Dixon, the world boxing champion, was raised in Africville.\(^{29}\)

Every Easter, the Africville church became the centre of a lively, weekend-long celebration, as black Baptists from around the region came to mark the occasion and to observe or participate in shallow-
water baptisms in Bedford Basin. More informal gatherings and celebrations were also commonplace, with residents often remarking that they felt welcome in the homes of their relatives and neighbours, and needed no reason to drop in. Above all, residents generally liked living in Africville. Indeed, roughly two-thirds submitted such a response to a 1962 Institute of Public Affairs survey. Although few residents would deny that the community had problems, from absent sewers to unemployment and substance abuse, they greatly valued their relative freedom, the view of the Basin, the open spaces, and their “congenial neighbours.” Gordon Stephenson hypothesized that life in Africville was “far from idyllic.” But did he ask anyone? An older resident interviewed in the 1960s evoked a more amenable existence. “I didn’t see no hard life all the time I was comin’ up,” she remarked.

The Destruction of Africville

The destruction of Africville, when it finally occurred, was premised on a pair of mutually supporting arguments. The first concerned Africville land, and expressed a conclusion about how this land could best contribute to the overall development of the city. As the director of the newly formed Halifax Development Department explained in a 1962 report, Africville land was “required” for the construction of a new expressway and to accommodate the expansion of industry within city boundaries; the former, according to the director, was “a major requirement of the city,” while the latter would uphold the “vigorous employment factor” on which “the economic wellbeing of a community depends.”

The conviction expressed here – that Africville land was not contributing adequately to the development of the “overall community,” and that it ought to be seized and converted to other uses – has a rather long history. As I suggested above, this conviction was first expressed a half century earlier (in an important 1915 planning report), and it was reiterated in roughly the same form in a long series of subsequent reports. An interest in seizing Africville land gathered strength after World War II, as planners, city

30 Institute of Public Affairs, *Condition of Negroes.*
31 Institute of Public Affairs, *Condition of Negroes.*
33 Clairmont and Magill, *Africville,* 91.
34 Clairmont and Magill, *Relocation Report,* 147-8
officials, and business leaders looked to intensify development in the northern section of the peninsula and put forward a series of proposals for what might be established upon the land then occupied by Africville homes. While the 1945 Master Plan saw Africville as the ideal site for a more “desirable residential section” (and proposed the removal of the area’s existing residents in order to achieve this vision), most proposals focused on the potential establishment of industry, transportation infrastructure, or both.\(^{35}\) The latter two elements were emphasized in Gordon Stephenson’s 1957 report for the City, as well as the 1962 North Shore Development Plan.\(^{36}\) The latter report was accepted by City Council in November 1962, and put wheels in motion for the redevelopment of Africville land and the displacement of its residents.\(^{37}\)

This development-oriented argument for the destruction of Africville was soon joined by a second, more “humanitarian” premise. Here, the argument centered on the prevailing social conditions in Africville, and how the state ought to address such conditions. The idea that social conditions in Africville required some kind of remedy was noted by City officials as early as the 1940s, but its expression in the 1960s involved a new and ultimately consequential element: namely, that Africville was a racially “segregated” community, and its existence as such was an injustice. The problem of segregation was raised most influentially by the University of Toronto sociologist Albert Rose, who was invited to visit Halifax in 1962 to advise the City on the social dimensions of its redevelopment plans.\(^{38}\) A brief, two-hour visit to Africville reportedly left Rose feeling “appalled” by the severity of the observed racial segregation, and he became convinced that “the only solution to this problem was to get the people out of there and into something that more approximated a normal way of life.”\(^{39}\)

Rose’s conclusion would have clear effects. From that point forward, it became part of the City’s official rationale for eliminating Africville, and it was accepted by individuals and groups in Halifax that would have opposed a strictly development-oriented agenda for Africville. Among the latter, crucially,


\(^{38}\) On Rose’s visit to Halifax, see Clairmont and Magill, *Relocation Report*, 154-164. On local response to Rose’s observations, see *Relocation Report*, 164-166.

was the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee – a group, comprising one Africville resident and four non-residents, that had been formed in 1962 to represent the Africville community in urban planning discussions and that had strongly opposed the City’s plans to bulldoze the community and relocate its residents.\(^{40}\) After Rose’s visit, the HHRAC adopted the position that “relocation” was in the best interest of Africville residents, and began to advocate simply for the most socially beneficial terms of relocation.\(^{41}\)

With the newly-arrived problem of segregation, therefore, the destruction of Africville could be advocated for both economic and social reasons. Whether the planning imperative was acquiring land for the further development of the city, or helping Africville residents to lead “a normal way of life,” the elimination of the community in its present location was part of the solution. The two conclusions, together, enabled the consolidation of a wide spectrum of consent to the destruction of Africville, without which it likely could not have proceeded.

Absent from this spectrum of consent, however, were the vast majority of Africville residents themselves, and the willingness of decision-makers to proceed without their consent is thus a crucial part of the story. Africville residents, while they indeed desired an improvement in their living conditions and had been urging to City to make certain improvements for decades, were overwhelmingly opposed to the proposed relocation and they had expressed this position publicly on numerous occasions.\(^{42}\) As one resident recalled:

> We knew all about segregation. But we didn’t look at ourselves as a segregated community. We just looked at ourselves as a community. And when the people from the Progressive Club and others like them held out integration like some kind of Holy Grail, we told them we weren’t sure exactly what integration could do for us as a community.\(^{43}\)

The dismissal of this perspective by planners, city officials, and even the residents’ supposed advocates in the HHRAC has been explained as the product of racism. Indeed, it is hard to explain it in any other way. As Nelson documents, the conditions in which Africville residents lived were predominantly

\(^{40}\) Clairmont and Magill, *Relocation Report*, 125-143.
\(^{41}\) Clairmont and Magill, *Relocation Report*, 143.
\(^{42}\) Nelson, *Razing Africville*, 89. Saunders notes that the apparent support for the relocation among some Africville residents tended to be based on the premise that going along with the City’s plans was a damage mitigation strategy. The point of view would have been, as Saunders puts it: “Better sell now. You don’t sell, City’s gonna take it anyway, and you’ll be left with nothin’. Buddy next door just old -- that oughta tell you what’s goin’ on.” “Africville,” 16.
seen as a result of their own failings as economic and social subjects. Perceived as incapable of understanding or addressing their own situation, Africville residents would seem to have nothing meaningful to offer the discussion of relocation. They would seem to require others to make decisions for them. The aspirations and knowledge of the residents could thus be dismissed, even when the purpose of relocation was ostensibly to make their lives better. A local journalist expressed a widespread point of view among non-Africville residents when she wrote in 1964 that it would take “courage” on the part of city leaders “to move persons who do not want to be moved ... even with it will surely be for their own good.” Segregation was thus a problem, even if Africville residents did not see it as one. The relocation of residents was in their own best interest, even if they opposed it.

The clearing-out of Africville began in 1964. The process was long, unpredictable, and traumatic for most of the displaced. “If you ever watched someone you love die slowly, day-by-day, hour-by-hour,” a local writer and oral historian suggests, “then you know what it was like being in Africville during the relocation.” The compensation provided to the residents varied: homeowners (with clear, legal title to their property) were offered an average of $7,847, while other residents received as little as $500. When an agreement was reached, the City would move immediately to have the residents’ belongings removed (sometimes in a moving truck, other times in big yellow garbage trucks) and either bulldoze or set fire to the residents’ home. The sight of the community coming to pieces in cumulative, episodic busts provided an incentive for stubborn residents to sign an agreement with the City. One morning, residents awoke to find that the Seaview Baptist Church had disappeared. Later on, two boys were nearly crushed when the City’s bulldozers arrived in the community unannounced and began to demolish a shed in which the boys were playing. When residents refused to leave, the City would threaten to expropriate their property, and in at least four cases it proceeded in this direction before reaching a “negotiated” agreement.

44 Nelson, Razing Africville, 72-78.
45 Nelson, Razing Africville, 75.
47 The figures for calculating this average (though not the average itself) are presented in Clairmont and Magill, Africville, 189.
48 Clairmont and Magill, Africville, 190-203.
After leaving their old homes, Africville residents found the City’s promises of a better life unwarranted, disavowed, or both. To expedite the relocation process, the City committed to finding the residents new accommodations elsewhere. In many cases, this meant putting the relocatees in city-owned buildings that had been acquired for the purpose of having them demolished, which, when the time came, would displace Africville residents a second time. Some residents were placed in public housing facilities, where the taps delivered clean running water and the toilets were indoors and sanitary, but where restrictions on living arrangements broke up extended families that had once lived in the same house, and where the burden of paying rent (often for the first time in their lives) proved stressful.\(^49\) Other residents were deemed “unsuitable” by public housing authorities and had to make do in a tight, racist private housing market.\(^50\) Some endured racist attacks in predominantly white neighbourhoods, while others were compelled to leave the region entirely. Disappointed by their new living conditions, the residents also discovered that City-promised programs to facilitate their incorporation into the central city disappeared. An adult education program promised to relocatees was cancelled after the first year.\(^51\) A promised employment program managed to find work for between 13 and 15 people, and was disbanded in 1965.\(^52\) Access to welfare benefits that the City had included in relocation agreements lasted until 1967 when the social worker in charge of disbursement left his position and the official taking over the file refused to recognize the residents’ special status (thus requiring them to fulfill the general requirements for welfare provision, which many residents did not).\(^53\)

By 1969, all but one resident had been forced off the land. The last holdout, Aaron “Pa” Carvery, owned three houses in the northern section of the community, an area that the City had earmarked for the construction of an onramp to the new cross-harbour bridge. With construction well underway, and the delay in the onramp costing the City $20,000 a month, the City threatened Carvery with expropriation (an

\(^{49}\) Clairmont and Magill, *Africville*, 222-229.
\(^{50}\) The existence of racism among Halifax landlords is demonstrated in a 1962 study. African Nova Scotians were found to have purchased homes (despite their low incomes) in order to avoid the problems of racism for renters. Institute of Public Affairs, *Condition of Negroes*.
\(^{53}\) Clairmont and Magill, *Africville*, 195-197
action that Council approved in May 1969). When this failed, the City played “good cop,” offering him a suitcase containing $14,000 in cash (which Carvery found insulting and promptly refused). Finally, in October, he reached an agreement with the City for $14,398, paid by cheque. Preparing to leave his life-long home, Carvery expressed his fondness for Africville and his sadness at the prospect of leaving it behind. “If I had been a little younger the city would never have gotten my land,” he told the press. “I didn’t want to leave … [and] I would have fought them to the end.” On November 23, his home was levelled.

**Re-Remembering Africville**

Whereas the northeastern edge of the Halifax peninsula had, for over a century, been the site of a community called Africville, it now upholds something very different: the material footing for a cross-harbour bridge, a part of major roadway, a few small industries, and an expansive field of grass where dogs are walked and where, once a year, former Africville residents and their friends hold a reunion. The area is also a symbol and a reminder of a set of events and a period of time consisting of a long trail of sanctioned disrespect, coercion, and broken promises that helped to produce this strangely sparse terrain. But where does this trail begin? Where does it end? And how should the history of Africville be understood and remembered? Much, I would suggest, is at stake in how these questions are answered, and it should come as no surprise that the memory of Africville has constituted a kind of battle ground nearly from the moment its material site was cleared of inhabitants. For former residents, the accepted memory of Africville helps to shape, among other things, the financial reparations (if any) offered by the City and other state institutions, as well as the changes (if any) that are effected in the planning practices of the present (to ensure that “another Africville” does not occur). Meanwhile, it is apparent that the City, along with many white Haligonians, have felt compelled to shape the memory of Africville in their own narrow interests, either by denying that any injustice occurred or (more often, in recent years) by confining the recognized injustice to a narrow span of time and a limited set of enabling conditions.

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Two struggles over the memory of Africville strike me as especially significant, and they help to frame my broad intervention in this chapter (and, to a significant extent, in the dissertation as a whole). The first concerns the axis of time. While the City was long reluctant to admit any injustice in its treatment of Africville, its more recent practice has been to admit some fault, but to confine it within tight temporal boundaries. As I noted in Chapter 1, the City issued an official apology in 2010 that expressed regret for “what happened in Africville” in the 1960s, as well as for the “repercussions” that have endured into the present. This apology was understandably welcomed by some former Africville residents who struggled for decades to receive any official recognition of their plight and were content to move on. But it was also seen as deeply inadequate by other residents. As Denise Allen suggests, the apology refers to an isolated event (and its repercussions), and therefore dismisses the longer history of racialized injustice – both before the 1960s, as well as long after this period – that Africville has come to represent for many former residents and for African Nova Scotians in general. The apology, Allen suggests, attempts to “bury history” rather than “understand” it. It shrinks the memory of Africville to its smallest possible size, ostensibly takes responsibility for it, and then seeks to move forward unencumbered. Contained in this way, the memory demands nothing further from the present, nor from those whose present entails social privileges that have been produced partly through the racist history that Africville could represent. (I would certainly include myself in this privileged and too-easily forgiven group.)

The second, related struggle concerns the perceived enabling conditions for the City’s treatment of Africville, or rather, the role and analysis of white racism as one of the key enabling conditions. This struggle has taken place in many forms and locations, including public debates and everyday conversations in Halifax, but it is perhaps most clearly articulated in the scholarly literature. In Clairmont and Magill’s *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, to take the first and most influential scholarly source, racism is woven through the history of Africville in many ways. Racism helps to account for Africville residents’ economic impoverishment; for the City’s continual denial of services like sewers and clean water to the community; and for the City’s dismissal of the residents’ desire to stay put,

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58 Razzaq, “Refusing to Forget.”
rather than be removed to ostensibly better living conditions, in the 1960s. These are important, persuasively conveyed insights, and they were first published at a time when white Haligonians were unlikely to admit anything but their own compassion in dealing with Africville. The authors’ conception of racism, however, warrants scrutiny.

In their account, racism refers to the discrimination of one social group against another, with the result that the discriminated-against are excluded from participation in many aspects of society. Central to the destruction of Africville, for example, was the barring of the residents from participation in planning decisions affecting their community and the absence of “advocates,” either within City Hall or outside it, who would genuinely side with the residents politically.59 My concern here is less the analysis itself than its political implications. In gesturing implicitly and often explicitly to the need for “inclusion” and “advocacy” for marginalized groups, the analysis risks leaving intact the existing structure and conception of urban planning. The problem here is that the structure and conception of planning may have been one of the conditions for the longstanding mistreatment of Africville, and may have been defined partly through the exclusion of Africville residents from any of its positive aims. In other words, planning may have acquired certain tenets, ideas, and priorities as a result of its prolonged operation within a racist society, and through its role in producing and maintaining such a society. In this case, the impulse to “include” or “advocate” for marginalized groups in planning discussions – an impulse that I have observed in recent planning initiatives like “Halifax by Design” – may partake in its own subtle epistemic or physical violence.

Without rejecting the idea of inclusion or advocacy, therefore, I think it is important to consider whether racism exists not just in practices of discrimination, but also in the very structure of urban planning. To remember Africville might then involve an effort to locate white racism in the conception of planning as it affected Africville in the past, and to trace such a conception into the present such that it might be better recognized and politically disrupted.

My project in this chapter is therefore to interrupt a pair of foreclosures: the first, a confinement of the memory of Africville to a tightly bounded period of time and a set of actions that occurred only in this time (and can thus be apologized for, and then forgotten); the second, a confinement of the enabling

conditions for the mistreatment of Africville to deliberate discrimination, political exclusion, or the absence of advocates (conditions that can be addressed in the present without any major alterations to the structure of planning practices). Both of these foreclosures, I contend, serve to circumscribe the memory of Africville within tight boundaries and leave the present largely undisturbed. I pursue this task by turning to an earlier period – a period, around the turn of the twentieth century, when a new regime of urban planning was just coming into being and when, not coincidentally, the very first proposal for the municipal state to seize and redevelop Africville land was proposed.

4.3 Planning and Biopolitics in Early Twentieth Century Halifax

The history of Africville is bound up with the emergence of a new, biopolitical regime of urban planning in Halifax around the turn of the twentieth century. The new planning regime was defined by a vast increase in its scope and cost, but more importantly by a new purpose. More than just laying out roads or guiding the subdivision of outlying areas of the city, planning came to be concerned primarily with the condition of human life in the city.

In this section, I document the new planning initiatives that were introduced in this period, and connect them to Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics. While these initiatives might be taken for granted in Canadian cities today, their introduction constituted a new role for the state (and for planning) in the lives of its constituents. Through the construction of sewers and water mains, the state would seek to influence the health of the local population. Through the provision of surface paving (on roads and sidewalks) and electric street lighting, it would seek to create a more “convenient” or “agreeable” form of life. Through new modes of land use planning, the state would seek to secure the growth and progress of the population (and everything that was conceived to depend on the latter). In these rather mundane ways, a person’s existence in Halifax would now be shaped significantly by the state; it would become, as Foucault puts it, a “political question.”

Consistent with Foucault’s analysis, however, these efforts to safeguard and enliven human life were not applied everywhere to all lives. In the space of Africville, in particular, the initiatives

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that were meant to improve life were never introduced, and many planning initiatives in fact imperilled and damaged the lives of Africville residents. Whereas I seek to explain this juxtaposition in the next section, here I am interested simply in describing its contours. I aim to chart the “caesura” that seems to have existed between the population that planning sought to protect and enhance, and the lives that were apparently regarded as not worth saving, nor enhancing.

Planning Sanitation and Convenience

The emergence of new, biopolitical regime of urban planning can be observed first in the material infrastructure that the City conceived, planned, and gradually laid out across the urban terrain. This was indeed a new and significant undertaking. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the city possessed no sewer system. Potable water had to be retrieved by hand from area reservoirs, and roads and sidewalks were a dusty (or, in other weather, soupy) mess. The next fifty years saw major changes in each of these domains. Clean running water began to course through conduits installed beneath the street surface and into many people’s homes. Electric street lighting was introduced where dim gas lamps (or no lighting at all) had once prevailed. “Permanent pavement” was gradually laid down – with City-purchased machinery – upon the area’s “more important business streets” and “most travelled sidewalks.”

Sewerage, the most costly venture in this period, remained all but absent in Halifax until 1890, when the City at least received Provincial approval to issue an unprecedented $400,000 in municipal bonds (tied to the implementation of its long-stalled sewerage plan). With financing in place, the City proceeded to install 206 block-length sewers between 1890 and 1898. In 1901, sewer construction received a further boost when the City Board of Health was given authorization to order the installation of sewer connections to any Halifax home when it was deemed to be “in the interest of public health.”

Henceforth, as the City’s Deputy Mayor remarked (somewhat begrudgingly), local residents seemed to

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61 A general history of infrastructure of improvements is provided in Halifax, Minutes, 26 April 1895, 234-236; Minutes, 3 May 1897, 206-207; and especially Minutes, 8 May 1901, 7-9.
62 Halifax, Minutes, 8 May 1901, 7-9. On the paving of sidewalks and streets, see Halifax, Minutes, 10 May 1905, 22-26; Minutes, 15 May 1906, 20-26.
63 Halifax, Minutes, 26 April 1895, 234-236; Minutes, 30 December 1901, 138-9.
64 Halifax, Minutes, December 20 1901, 138-139.
have the right to “have water and sewerage extended to their houses, in no matter how out-of-the-way place they may locate them.” The Board of Health mandate, and another $150,000 bond issue in 1903, underwrote the construction of a further 78 sewers by 1908.

This vast, and very expensive, transformation of the urban terrain was conceived by the City as a means of supporting a pair of specific objectives. Running water and sewers, for their part, were devised to protect the ever-imperilled health of the local population. Dangerous and potentially water-borne illnesses were a well-recognized threat in Halifax in this period: a major cholera outbreak had occurred as late as 1881, tuberculosis was reported to be killing 146 Haligonians per year in 1901 (down marginally from 186 per year in 1881), and a range of other afflictions were helping to prop up an annual death rate that was judged in the early 1900s to be 400 units above “normal.” In this situation, the provision of clean running water and waste-dispensing sewers were seen as a remedy (and a necessary one). Their introduction was called for, insistently, by the local medical establishment. Citizens, in turn, were reportedly eager to see the city “placed in a good sanitary condition,” and were willing to pay higher taxes in order to have water and sewers introduced. City Council, finally, tended to describe these planning initiatives in defensive terms. They were prudent steps, as one City official put it in 1906, “toward safety and the removal of sources of danger to the community.” By transforming space, by making it more “sanitary,” the health of the population could be protected from illness.

The expected effects of surface paving and street lighting, meanwhile, were harder to pin-point, but certainly important. These provisions were described by City Council as “material advantages,” as conducive to the “progress,” “growth,” and “general welfare” of the community, and (most often) as a “public convenience.” The concept of “convenience,” which would soon fall out of usage, had a mean-

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65 Ibid.
66 The $150,000 bond issue is discussed in Halifax, Minutes, 10 May 1905, 23. On the next few years’ expenditures on sewer construction, see Halifax, Minutes, 16 May 1907, 31; Minutes, May 7 1908, 10.
68 Evening Mail, 28 March 1906.
69 Halifax, Minutes, 26 April 1895, 234-236.
70 Halifax, Minutes, 15 May 1906, 24; see also Minutes, 12 May 1897, 4-5.
71 Halifax, Minutes, 14 May 1902, 3.
72 Halifax, Minutes, 12 May 1897, 3-7; Minutes, 15 May 1906, 21-22
73 Halifax, Minutes, 15 May 1906, 21-22; Minutes, 7 May 1908, 10.
ing in this context similar to what other contemporary planners called “amenity.” Both concepts referred to spatial conditions that are able to produce a positive qualitative experience among a population, an experience usually described as “agreeableness,” “contentedness,” or simply “happiness.” Concretely, such an experience could result simply from being able to walk from one place to another “without going ankle-deep in the soft mud” (as one mayor put it), but it seems to have been related as well to the aesthetic or visual impression created by a set of well-maintained, well-lit streets.

While life certainly did not seem to depend on convenience in the same way as sanitation, it was nevertheless an important consideration for early twentieth century planners in North American cities. For Thomas Adams, whose influence in Halifax I detail below, the “contentment of citizens” was one of three indicators of a successful city (the other two being health and prosperity), and it was therefore a central preoccupation of good planning. Such a concern with the general happiness of the population is also, according to Foucault, one of the defining features of the biopolitical state. Biopolitics is undoubtedly concerned with “the immediate problem of living and not dying,” Foucault explains, but it also extends into “the problem of living and doing a bit better than just living.” It aims, where possible, to create an increase in “men’s convenience ... their amenity, or even [their] felicity,” and to connect this result to the existence of the state. It aims to create a condition beyond mere being, a “well-being,” that citizens could not obtain without the state.

In Halifax, the production of “convenient” spaces was seen as an important mechanism for pleasing the existing population, as well as enlarging it. It seems to have become an especially high priority for the City in the first years of the twentieth century, when rising municipal expenses, borrowing, and taxes were causing alarm among the citizenry and calling into question the need for city government. At issue, crucially, was not just the tenure of individual politicians, but also the existence of the institution over

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74 Halifax, Minutes, 7 May 1908, 10.
75 Halifax, Minutes, 7 May 1908, 10.
76 Thomas Adams, Municipal and Real Estate Finance in Canada (Ottawa: Commission of Conservation, 1921), 5-6.
77 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 326.
78 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 327.
which they presided. Attempting to re-establish political legitimacy in the eyes of the public, the City took a number of important steps. Among them was an attempt to more concertedly shape the appearance and experience of city streets. Streets, one mayor explained in 1902, were “constantly under the public eye,” and if the City could simply provide “good streets [and] good sidewalks,” therefore, the citizens “would not have much reason to complain [about city government].” If convenient public spaces could please existing residents, of course, they could also impress potential residents. The prospect of using urban planning to increase the local population, in fact, seems to have greatly inspired City officials around this time. For Robert MacIllreith, mayor of Halifax from 1906 to 1908, the growth of the city depended on making it “an agreeable place to live in and do business in,” and this meant, perhaps above all, the creation of pleasant streets. Drawing a clear connection between convenient spaces and a contented population, MacIllreith pushed through a $100,000 program of surface paving and street light installation and, in his farewell address to Council in 1908, drew special attention to the “progress that [had] been made” in these respects.

Through such initiatives as the construction of sewers and the paving of roads, planning was becoming a more noticeable and important part of the Halifax urban experience. More than just transforming the urban terrain, these initiatives helped to bring the municipal state into the usually intimate domain of human life; they made the condition of life a state preoccupation and responsibility. Whether a person remained healthy or fell ill, whether a person’s life was agreeable or disagreeable, was now partly a function of the state and its urban planning operation. Implicit in this new configuration of planning and state power was the assumption that human life and urban space were intimately related, that space constituted

79 Mayor Hamilton seemed to be particularly concerned about the continuing viability of City government. “I would ask the earnest consideration of the Council to this phase of duty that confronts us as a body,” we told the Council, “as to whether the Corporation is too expensive an institution in itself.” The Mayor’s major activities were intended, as he put it, to put “this question ... at rest.” Minutes, 10 May 1899, 13.
80 Halifax, Minutes, 14 May 1902, 3. A similar sentiment is expressed in Halifax, Minutes, 15 May 1906, 21. The lack of progress in pleasing citizens in this way is discussed in Halifax, Minutes, 7 May 1908, 10.
81 Halifax, Minutes, 30 April 1908, 365.
82 On MacIllreith’s program of surface paving, see Halifax, Minutes, 15 May 1906, 21-22. For his important farewell address, see Halifax, Minutes, 30 April 1908, 364-373.
one of life’s essential bases, its “living conditions.” As Foucault remarks, urban planners were among the first technicians to recognize that life could be altered indirectly, or uninvasively, by acting upon the “natural” and human-made elements of the material environment. Urban planners recognized, Foucault insists, that the life of human beings was essentially “bound to the materiality within which they live.”

The point is not just that planners found a way to affect life, a kind of entry point to the intimate reaches of a subject’s existence; it is also that life was coming to be seen as dependent upon its material situation, and thus upon urban planning. In Halifax as elsewhere, caring for life was now partly a matter of arranging and outfitting urban space.

Despite the perceived dependence of life upon space, it is clear that the life-improving management of space would not extend to all parts of the city. The inconsistency or unevenness of planning in this period was generally acknowledged by City officials, and it does not appear to have been their intention to rectify it. This accepted unevenness, I want to suggest, is related to the way that the City had come to perceive its political constituency and its responsibilities. An important change, in this respect, can be observed around the turn of the twentieth century. Whereas City officials had longed avowed responsibility to “the citizens” or “the ratepayers,” they began around this time to refer to a new entity. The exact term employed could vary; most often, City officials referred to “the city as a whole,” but “the community as a whole” or “the public” could operate as synonyms. More important than the terminology employed was the core idea. Significantly, this “as a whole,” while it might suggest a new inclusivity, was defined above all by its explicit non-inclusivity. For the new concept was nearly always invoked in relation to an opposite entity: something (various terms could be used here too) much more narrow. Referring to this new constituency in 1897, for example, the newly elected mayor stressed the need to distinguish between the interests of “the public” and those of “particular class[es] or bod[ies].” Only by “exercising comprehensive views of the wants of the community,” and dismissing more narrow interests, the Mayor announced, could “the true interests of the city” be served.

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another mayor in 1899 (contrasting the interests of “the whole community” versus those of “proprietary element[s]”); and, again, in 1906 (the “good [of] the community as a whole” versus the good of particular individuals).

What is essential here is that the City’s new planning initiatives would be calibrated in relation to a divided, bifurcated conception of aggregate life. There would be a caesura between the domain of life that the state would care for, and a domain that it would not. While the emergence of a new political discourse around the turn of the century is well-recognized by urban historians – Rutherford, for example, discusses the increasing tendency to distinguish between “particularism and partisanship” and the true needs of “the city” – its connection to a new form of state power is overlooked. For Foucault, in contrast, such a bifurcated conception of the human population is fundamental to biopolitics, and its appearance is not confined to political discourse alone. In a great range of disciplines, Foucault argues, it gradually became possible to grasp human beings as an aggregate, and in each case this aggregate makes its appearance on the basis of a fundamental “caesura.” It does not, that is, appear without a caesura. While Foucault focuses primarily on the emerging conception of life within the modern life sciences, he identifies a similar conception within political economy, political theory, and elsewhere. As far as the biopolitical state is concerned, moreover, life is likely to be perceived at the intersection of these disciplinary knowledges: as biological life, but also economic life and political life. “The population,” he writes, “is ... everything that extends from biological rootedness ... up to the surface that gives one a hold provided by [the political idea of] the public.”

Among City officials in turn-of-the-century Halifax, the population was conceived primarily – though not solely – through the paired ideas of “the city as a whole” and mere “particularities,” and this conceptual opposition would have clear and profound effects on the operation of urban planning. At the

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87 Halifax, Minutes, 10 May 1899, 13.
90 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 42.
91 On the caesura in political economy, see Security, Territory Population, 42. On political theory, see Ibid., 355.
92 Foucault, Security, Territory, Population, 75.
very moment that the City was beginning to see planning as an instrument in the protection and improve-
ment of human life, and an instrument without which life would be at risk, it was simultaneously coming
to see its constituency as a divided phenomenon and its responsibilities as pertaining to just one side of the division (the larger side, surely, but a side that clearly excluded certain residents of the city). Caring for life, in this context, seems to have explicitly involved not caring for the lives of certain residents; that is, not improving certain living conditions. Precisely where this division between “making life” and “let-
ting die” appeared, and how it was enacted in practice, remains to be examined. (As one might expect, it will become most apparent when we consider the situation of Africville within the emerging urban plan-
ning regime.)

*Planning “Economic” Land Use*

A second group of planning initiatives, emerging somewhat later than the first, approached the urban ter-
rain in a somewhat different way. They approached the terrain as an economic phenomenon. The first planning initiative of this kind was the short-lived municipal “land tax” introduced in 1914. The latter, as I discussed in Chapter 3, was promoted in Halifax partly as a means of reallocating the burden of taxation in the city, but it was also connected to an explicit vision of how urban land ought to be used. Proponents of the tax argued that shifting taxes onto the land (rather than on the improvements to it) would penalize the holding of land in a bare or underimproved condition. Such a tax would therefore stimulate the intro-
duction of improvements through the construction of new buildings or through the upgrading of existing ones. Underpinning this argument, again, was a Georgian/Ricardian conception of real property. Bare or underimproved land was seen as an obstacle to the progress of the city. Improvements, in contrast, were regarded as widely beneficial, and as something to be promoted by the state. The idea that the land tax would bring about a better form of land use in Halifax was mentioned by many of the tax’s proponents. The Board of Trade discussed this feature of the tax in 1902; the City cited it as one of two major bene-

fits of the tax in the preamble to the 1916 Assessment Act;\(^9^4\) and the Local Council of Women seems to have supported the tax entirely on the basis of its presumed capacity to induce housing construction and thereby address the prevailing housing shortage in the city. The latter was, in the LCW’s view, “one of the most menacing things in the life of this community.”\(^9^5\)

The introduction of the land tax in 1914 was followed almost immediately by other planning initiatives that would rely on roughly the same logic to evaluate and address the economic condition of urban land. These initiatives were linked, most immediately, to City Engineer Francis Doane. Hired into this position in 1892, Doane’s responsibilities tended increasingly to exceed those of a civil engineer. In the absence of a formal urban planning department, Doane was the City’s *de facto* planner until 1916, when this role was made official.\(^9^6\) In addition to overseeing the distribution of streets, sewers, and water mains on the Official Plan, Doane was called on to adjudicate such citizen-driven planning issues as the establishment of public parks, the proper storage of garbage, the upkeep of private lawns, the installation of ornamental street lighting, and the creation of boulevards designed to “improve the general character” of the downtown core.\(^9^7\) An explicit recognition of the urban terrain’s economic condition – that is, its economic existence as real property – seems to have been absent from Doane’s work until 1914. It was in that year that he represented the City as the National Town Planing Conference in Toronto, and had the first of what would become a series of influential encounters with the British-born planner, Thomas Adams.\(^9^8\)

The Town Planning Conference attended by Doane and 60 other municipal representatives was convened and funded by the Federal Commission of Conservation. The latter was a relatively short-lived, but influential public body that aimed to bring about more a modern, economically efficient form of re-

\(^{94}\) Halifax, “Tax Act of the City of Halifax,” contained in “Report Special Committee on Tax Exemptions,” 13 March 1924, HRMA, RG 35-102-1B.

\(^{95}\) Halifax, *Minutes*, 3 March 1921, 755.

\(^{96}\) The formation of the City’s first “town planning board,” with Doane as its executive officer is discussed in Halifax, *Minutes*, 10 February 1916, 415.

\(^{97}\) The quote is from Halifax, *Minutes*, 17 October 1912, 276. Doane’s other planning activities are discussed in Halifax, *Minutes*, 5 September 1912, 225 (establishment of public parks and upkeep of private lawns); *Minutes*, 16 May 1912, 67 (storage of garbage); *Minutes*, 17 October 1912, 276 (street lighting).

source use in Canada, as well as a more healthy, long-living, and productive national population. In the curious formulation of the Commission, both natural resources and human beings could be grouped under the category of “life,” and the Commission’s role was to ensure the proper management of life in this expansive sense. Within this mandate, urban land came to assume an important place. It was, in the Commission’s view, both a resource in itself that needed to be used efficiently, as well as an influence upon the health, longevity, and productivity of urban populations. To promote the proper management of urban land, the Commission eventually lured Thomas Adams to Canada to provide leadership to the nascent field of urban planning. Adams delivered a keynote lecture at the Town Planning Conference in 1914, and shortly thereafter became the Commission’s Advisor on Town Planning, a position he held from 1915 to 1921. Adams’s 1914 lecture provided the first opportunity for Doane to become acquainted with his approach to urban planning. His subsequent work as Advisor provided additional opportunities, as Adams visited Halifax in 1915 to aid with the drafting of the Nova Scotia Planning Act, and returned in 1917 to spend two years overseeing the replanning and redevelopment of the area of the city destroyed by the infamous Halifax explosion (a task with which Doane was centrally involved as well).

Adams’s central contribution to planning in Canadian cities, including Halifax, was to focus planners’ attention on the economic condition of land. His argument was not that planners should ignore other priorities, but rather that economic matters were the precondition for the achievement of any priority at


100 As Charles Hodgetts, a key Commission official, explained: “There are two important factors in the question of national conservation, the physical and the vital. The former relates to the protecting of our land, our forests, our minerals, our waters, our sunlight, our fresh air; the latter, to the prevention of diseases, to health and to the prolongation of life. In housing and town planning we are dealing with most of the former and all of the latter.” Cited in Armstrong, “Thomas Adams,” 22.


102 Ibid.

103 Adams’s visit to Halifax in 1915, and his role in the drafting of the Nova Scotia Planning Act, is discussed in Leifka Vissers and Jill Grant, “Planning Experts and Local Reformers: The 1915 Town Planning Act in Nova Scotia” (Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the IPHS, Istanbul, Turkey, July 2010). The City’s efforts to bring Adams to Halifax in 1917 to replan the “devastated area” are discussed in Halifax, Minutes, 12 December 1917, 286; Minutes, 20 December 1917, 305.
all. “The health and contentment of citizens” was paramount, Adams argued, but it could only be ensured to the extent that the proper, “economic” use of land in a city was brought about.\textsuperscript{104}

Adams’s notion of “economic” land use – a notion that would become extremely important in Halifax – was derived from a Georgian or Ricardian conception of real property. It is likely, in fact, that Adams acquired this view directly from Henry George.\textsuperscript{105} Like George, Adams saw bare and underimproved land as an impediment to the overall development of the city. Such a condition tied up scarce capital in an unproductive investment, restricted a city’s supply of housing and business premises, and (consequently) increased the local cost of living and doing business. Improvements to land, in contrast, were a boon to “the community as a whole.”\textsuperscript{106} Although Adams did not favour the construction of especially tall buildings, he generally saw high-value buildings as an indication that a scarce resource (land) had been used “economically.” Precisely what constituted a sufficiently high value improvement, or a sufficiently “economic” use, is left unclear in Adams’s writing and lecturing of this period. He seems, at times, to suggest that an improvement of the highest possible value on a site is “economic,” while elsewhere he seems to place special emphasis on the construction of business premises. The idea of economic use seems to take its meaning for Adams primarily in relation to what it is not; that is, underimproved land. That thrust of Adams’s advice in this period is directed toward the elimination of such conditions within municipal boundaries. In language that seems to demand a biopolitical analysis, Adams called the phenomenon of underimproved land a “disease,” or “a condition of property injurious to life.”\textsuperscript{107}

Adams’s advice, and his espoused conception of property, would be central to the establishment of urban planning in its biopolitical mode. As I noted in the last chapter, urban planning faced a major obstacle in the early twentieth century in the form of widely cherished doctrines of individual property

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\textsuperscript{104} Adams, \textit{Municipal and Real Estate Finance}, 8-10, 14.
\textsuperscript{105} Daniel Rogers documents that Adams and George travelled in similar circles when the latter visited Britain in the 1890s. \textit{Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). More importantly, Adams credits George in an important 1917 publication for the insight that a “community” ought to “obtain ... as much as possible of the value which is socially created [i.e., land value].” \textit{Rural Planning and Development: A Study of Rural Conditions and Problems in Canada} (Ottawa: Commission of Conservation, 1917), 17. For a discussion of this point, see Harld Buttenheim et al., “Urban Development: The Pattern and the Background,” \textit{Planners Journal} 1, no. 4 (1935), 83-84.
\textsuperscript{106} Adams, \textit{Municipal and Real Estate Finance}, 3, 7, 12.
\textsuperscript{107} Adams, \textit{Municipal and Real Estate Finance}, 14; Armstrong, \textit{Thomas Adams}.
\end{flushleft}
rights (a major part of what Ian McKay calls, in the Canadian context, this period’s “liberal order”). The belief that the state ought to honour and protect property rights made it difficult for state-directed planning to get a hold on the urban terrain, aside from such municipally owned spaces as streets, sidewalks, and public parks. The reconception of property such that its condition could be deemed “injurious” to overall population helped to constitute a legitimate role for the state in entering upon and managing ostensibly private spaces (in certain cases). To protect collective life now meant ensuring that urban land achieved its most economic use, or (more importantly) did not persist in an “injurious” condition.

While Foucault, as I noted in the last chapter, does not acknowledge how Ricardo’s reconception of property fits into the emergence of biopolitical power, it certainly needs to be. Ricardo, at various points, explicitly urges that land be put to better economic use in order to sustain an increase in population, wealth, and prosperity. For George and Adams, taking up Ricardo’s conception of property, better land use is essential to the prosperity and welfare of the population. The importance of Ricardo’s work here, as I discussed earlier, is that it makes it possible to assess how property contributes to, or undermines, the condition of the overall population, and how the management of space as property, therefore, can “achieve effects at the level of the population.” For Ricardo, and even more for the planners he influenced, the proper management of land is indispensable to the survival and flourishing of the population. It is essential, in other words, to biopolitics.

Adams’s distinction between “economic” and “injurious” uses of land, of course, introduces a certain contradiction or tension into the field of urban planning. While Adams insists that the “health and contentment of citizens” is the ultimate aim of planning, and that the achievement of this aim depends most immediately on the provision of a sanitary and amenity-rich environment, all of this is conceived to depend fundamentally on the economic condition of land (i.e., the elimination of bare and underimproved land). In cases where certain people happen to live upon underimproved land, therefore, their immediate

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109 See Rogers, “Civic Ambitions,” in Atlantic Crossings; Rutherford, “Tomorrow’s Metropolis.”
health and contentment may be considered disruptable, even sacrificeable, in the pursuit of the eminently more “economic” land use that the city’s overall health and contentment is understood to depend upon.

Indeed, among the various measures that Adams outlines to promote the economic use of land, some of the measures would clearly sacrifice the land’s immediate impact upon people to achieve favourable city-wide outcomes. Rather ominously, Adams recommended that infrastructure like sewers, running water, and surface paving be withheld from areas of underimproved land.\footnote{Adams, \textit{Municipal and Real Estate Finance}, 15.} While he appears to have considered such measures a penalty to selfish landlords – a class that Adams, like George, explicitly denigrated – they could also apply, through the same logic, to impoverished owners of low-value housing, and the effects of the measures could easily wind up being felt by the tenants (as well as the landlords) of underimproved premises. Like George’s promotion of the “single tax,” Adams’s brand of urban planning seems to entail an “caesura” between the population (that planning aims to serve) and certain individuals (whose interests, or lives, planning may need to impair in the service of the broader community). It remains to be seen whether, or how, such a caesura was constituted in Halifax.

Doane seems to have been impressed by Adams’s teaching. Upon his return to Halifax from the Town Planning Conference, Doane delivered a lengthy address to City Council in which he set out the “higher ideals” that he had learned to associate with urban planning.\footnote{Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 9 June 1914, 48-50.} More than just laying out streets, or building “expensive boulevards and parks available only for the rich,” Doane explained, planning was fundamentally about achieving an economic use of land. The latter, as Adams had taught him, was not the sole aim of planning, but it was indeed the foundation upon which everything else rested. Planning was “not [about] spending money but saving money,” he lectured. “The health of the people is its first care, convenience next, \textit{with economy considered all through}.”\footnote{Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 9 June 1914, 48.} Concluding his address, Doane vowed to “utilize the information obtained [at the Conference] whenever the opportunity offers.”\footnote{Ibid., emphasis added.} A newfound concern with “economy” seems to be expressed in Doane’s first two significant moves after the 1914 Conference. The first move was to extend residential zoning protections across the entirety of the city’s

\footnote{Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 9 June 1914, 48.}
South End.\textsuperscript{115} This move would serve to protect an area of already-economic land uses (i.e., the highest-value residential properties in the city). Doane’s second move was to submit the fateful 1915 proposal in which the demolition of Africville was advised.\textsuperscript{116} Rather than pertaining to already-economic uses, this move would seem to establish an economic use in an area where it did not yet exist. I return to this proposal, and its relationship to the city’s emerging biopolitical planning regime, after a more thorough discussion of planning in Africville.

\textit{Life and “A Life Apart”}

In relation to the emerging purpose of urban planning in Halifax – in relation to the City’s avowed commitment to improving collective life through the management of space – Africville, a community of 300 people at this time, might seem to inhabit an altogether different city: “a life apart,” as one planner would later put it. Planning initiatives that focused on the health and welfare of the local population were consistently withheld in Africville. The sewage system that the City had long maintained, and that it had expanded massively between 1890 and 1910, never reached the homes of Africville. The Board of Health’s mandate to order sewer construction when it was “in the interest of the public health”\textsuperscript{117} was never exercised here. Running water, which citizens of Halifax might have been able to expect in their homes “no matter how out-of-the-way ... they may locate them,”\textsuperscript{118} was similarly absent in Africville. The City did, in response to petitions from Africville residents, once provide its assistance with the construction of a shallow well in 1852, and it helped out, at least once, with repairs to this ill-functioning water source.\textsuperscript{119} Surface paving and street lighting – conveniences that the City elsewhere saw as an important contributor to “general welfare” – were also withheld in Africville, and the community eventually came to known precisely by its absent pavement: “Where the road ends,” it was often said, “there’s Africville.”\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{thebibliography}{120}
\bibitem{115} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 23 March 1915, 484.
\bibitem{116} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 9 September 1915, 211. For discussion of the proposal by City Council, see Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 9 September 1915, 217; \textit{Minutes}, 27 April 1916, 569.
\bibitem{117} Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 30 December 1901, 138-139.
\bibitem{118} Ibid.
\bibitem{119} Clairmont and Magill, \textit{Relocation Report}, 74-77.
\bibitem{120} See Saunders, “Africville.”
\end{thebibliography}
While the basics of sanitation and convenience were forever withheld from Africville, this is not to say that planning was *absent* from the area. In tandem with its evident failure to *improve* living conditions in Africville, planning was simultaneously taking actions that would make conditions worse. This negative effect was brought about, principally, through the regulation of land use. From the 1850s onward, the most undesirable and noxious facilities in the city had a tendency to spring up on Africville’s doorstep. In the 1850s, a prison and a “night soil” deposit pit were established in the area. In the 1870s, a variety of new industries were established nearby (an oil plant storage facility, a bone mill, a cotton factory, two slaughterhouses, a tar factory, a coal handling facility, and a foundry).\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, *Africville*, 93-96, 109.} In the same decade, the City constructed an infectious diseases hospital at the edge of Africville, and in 1903 the City added a trachoma hospital on a plateau overlooking the community.\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, *Africville*, 93, 109.} As might be expected, these facilities fouled the air, contaminated the water table, and nourished an expanding horde of rodents (the recognized preponderance of which, in Africville, became a part of the community’s public image). At least *some* of these land use decisions were made, importantly, at a time when the City believed that planning should seek to improve people’s conditions of life. In a seeming paradox that I examine below, this is precisely the objective that some of these decisions were meant to achieve.

The effects of planning in Africville could certainly be observed in the condition of the material environment – in sanitation facilities not provided, or in the stream of human waste passing from the trachoma hospital, through the community, and into the Bedford Basin – but also, just as certainly, in the lives that depended on this environment. Without sewers or running water, Africville residents were left to rely on outdoor toilets and shallow, makeshift wells that habitually ran dry in the summer and that incorporated harmful contaminants from the ever-degrading water table. As a result, illnesses that were prudently kept at bay in the rest of Halifax remained a threat in Africville well into the twentieth century. A medical report in 1962 concluded that the health of Africville residents was deeply imperilled by the contaminated state of the community’s well water, while a City official later speculated that only the tenacity of the residents’ own immune systems had staved off major outbreaks of disease.\footnote{Clairmont and Magill, *Relocation Report*, 106, 190.} Meanwhile, endur-
ingly unpaved roads (along with infrequent snow plowing) could make it exceptionally “inconvenient” to move around in Africville and, especially, to come and go from it. The spring thaw, the “ankle-deep ... soft mud” that City officials had specifically identified as a problem in the North End (in 1906) would certainly prevail in Africville. The road leading into the community would break apart, vehicular transportation (if not pedestrian) would become impossible, and many food supplies, health services, and other basics of life would become effectively unavailable.

The City, if undisturbed by conditions in Africville, was certainly aware of the situation. As early as 1852, representatives from Africville brought petitions to City Council and organized meetings with City officials to apprise them of problems in the community and to request municipal services that were available elsewhere (see Figure 4.7). With the exception of two requests (the community well installed in 1852 and repairs to the well in 1902), the City remained unmoved. Furthermore, at least two of the land use decisions that badly impacted life in Africville were calculated precisely to avoid such impacts ... elsewhere. The trachoma hospital, for example, was originally slated to be built in another location, several kilometres from Africville. However, residents in the vicinity of this location raised concerns about the effects of the hospital on their lives. The City saw the concerns as reasonable, and the location was switched to Africville.

Planning, as I have suggested, dealt not only with sanitation and convenience, but also with the economic condition of urban space. When it came to economic conditions in Africville, planning operated just as discordantly – as blatantly afoul of its avowed purpose – as it did in other matters of concern. At some point, for example, the City stopped approving building permit requests from Africville residents, an evident contravention of the City’s general interest in stimulating the improvement of land (and all the benefits that were presumed to come from this). Further, the “things that [had] value” in Africville (i.e.,

125 Clairmont and Magill present the following observation from a former Africville resident: “In the spring of the year, when the road began to break up, nothing was done. The people who did have automobiles were getting stuck in the road, they were breaking springs, breaking tires, and what have you ... If someone was sick, it was difficult to get a taxi to come into the area. If they called up the store to have an order delivered, the storeman would being the order so far, and then they had to walk the rest of the way and try to bring their order home.” *Relocation Report*, 255.
property holdings) received none of the protection that they did in other parts of the city. Residential zono-
regulations were certainly not established in Africville, and the area surrounding the settlement seems

to have been regarded unofficially as an industrial zone since the mid-nineteenth century. The effects of
industry on property values were probably not always well understood by the City, nor were they always
something that urban planning was meant to mitigate. But, certainly, these effects came to be understood
and became a major concern, and yet the unofficial industrial zoning of Africville continued unabated
until 1947, when, in the City’s acceptance of a brief planning report, this zoning became official. 128

Finally, and most importantly, one of the City’s first and most ambitious plans to unlock the eco-
nomic potential of the urban terrain – to bring the land to its best, most economic use – pertained to pre-

128 Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 104-105.
cisely to Africville. The plan’s anticipatable effects on life in the community raise important questions about the configuration of modern urban planning. The plan, as I mentioned in the introduction, was disclosed in a brief but pivotal 1915 submission to City Council by City Engineer Francis Doane. The proposal states:

The Africville portion of Campbell Road will always be an industrial district and it is desirable that industrial operations be assisted in any way that is not prejudicial to the interests of the public [i.e., in this case, Africville residents]; in fact, we may be obliged in the future to consider the interests of industry first.¹²⁹

The vision conjured in the proposal – a vision of industry taking root in the place of Africville homes – was clearly compelling to City councillors. Council accepted Doane’s submission, without debate, and added its conclusion that the scenario’s potential “advantages for the City” were sufficient to justify using the available legislation to “expropriate part of the whole of the property known as Africville.”¹³⁰ A year later, Doane reaffirmed (and the City reaccepted) the earlier vision, writing: “in the near future, all property in this district [Africville’s] will be required for industrial purposes, and it will be abandoned as a residential district.”¹³¹

The advice of the 1915 proposal, of course, was not immediately fulfilled. Africville would be spared the onslaught of demolition equipment, and continue to exist, for another half century. The report remains significant, nevertheless, for two main reasons. First, it introduced a coherent, rational argument for the seizure and redevelopment of Africville in its entirety. It was an argument that had not been made before and that would be reiterated, again and again, in future planning reports. Bits and pieces of Africville had certainly been regarded as seizable before. In 1853, the Nova Scotia Railway Company extended tracks across the edge of Africville and expropriated several properties in the process (a theft that the City effectively sanctioned in failing to intervene, and by refusing later on to hear the petitions of dispossessed residents).¹³² Later, in 1907, a large section of land was nearly expropriated by the City to provide a setting for an Imperial Oil refinery (ultimately established across the harbour, in Dartmouth).¹³³

¹²⁹ Halifax, Minutes, 9 September 1915, 211.
¹³⁰ Halifax, Minutes, 9 September 1915, 217-218.
¹³¹ Halifax, Minutes, 27 April 1916, 569.
¹³² Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 95-97.
¹³³ Halifax, Minutes, 11 January 1907, 252. The expropriation is later discussed in Halifax, Minutes, 10 December 1903, 175.
The 1915 proposal, in contrast, proposed something different. It departed from these earlier incidents in at least two important respects. First, it proposed to seize the entirety of Africville (rather than just a small area that was needed for a particular development), and it called for the City itself to carry out the seizure (rather than private businesses, like the Railway). Second, the proposal was understood, peculiarly, as providing potential “advantages for the City,” even as it would conceivably and quite explicitly involve significant disadvantages for the residents of Africville. A “caesura” was thus implied between the level of “the city” and Africville residents. The proposal was novel, therefore, in its ascription of a legitimate role for the state in managing privately-owned space, and in the apparent “caesura” that it invokes between the political constituency of the state (“the city”) and the individuals who would deliberately be thrown off the land. These two premises, it is worth emphasizing, would be present and fundamental in every major subsequent report on Africville. When the fateful 1962 report (that was in fact implemented) recommended that Africville be demolished to make way for “industry,” and claimed that “the economic wellbeing of [the] community depend[ed]” on such an action, it was essentially a reprise of a decades-old conviction.134

The 1915 proposal, on top of its licensing of a later-unleashed urban planning disaster, was significant for another reason as well. This second reason is implied in the first, but it is somewhat obscured in the language and scope of the above discussion (and, indeed, in that of the report itself). It is clear from the above that the redevelopment of Africville was considered to have advantages for “the city” that outweighed, if not nullified, its impacts on Africville residents. But the impacts, it needs to be emphasized, could be anticipated to vastly exceed the taking of “land” or the disregarding of “interests.” For the City, as I have tried to show in this section, had come to recognize a much more vital connection between people and space, and its conception of urban planning at this time revolved around this perceived connection. The City had come to see space as the basis of a healthy, agreeable life. Hence, the 1915 report, according to the City’s own view of things, proposed not simply to expropriate land or disregard certain interests, but also to abduct one of the major bases of life, to revoke what it conceived as living conditions. The fulfillment of the plan would foreseeably sever Africville residents from material conditions that, al-

134 Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 148.
though degraded, served to modestly support and uphold their existence. It would do so, moreover, at a time when securing alternative living arrangements in the city would be (as Doane and City Council would have to know) highly unlikely. A prevailing housing shortage in the city, already recognized as acute in 1909, had become eminently worse in 1914, with the onset of the Great War and the arrival in Halifax of military personnel far too numerous to house. (Hundreds of soldiers were camped in tents on the Halifax Common, a few blocks from City Hall.)

The second aspect of the 1915 report – its subtle conclusion that the advantages to be gained from redeveloping Africville outweighed the likely damage done to its residents’ lives – did not await the implementation of the plan itself to have major life-impairing effects. Indeed, the official slating of Africville for redevelopment, along with the official acceptance that the latter outcome was more important than the viability of Africville lives, seems to have introduced a new and compelling rationale against the undertaking of any positive planning interventions in the area. In the interval between the 1915 report and the actual destruction of Africville, the area was effectively sealed off from infrastructure improvements that the City might eventually have been persuaded to provide and that were indeed provided to the semi-circle of residential communities that gradually emerged on Africville’s perimeter. Once Africville’s future had been decided, as Clairmont and Magill suggest, periodic proposals from the community and its allies to have sewers or running water installed were met with the argument that “the days of the settlement were numbered ... and it wasn’t worth the cost of putting in water [or other services] for the time that they were to be there.”135 And so, as time and “progress” wore on, a gulf of ever-widening proportions came to separate life in Africville from life in the rest of the city. But perhaps another description of this enduring contrast would be more appropriate: “We ain’t living,” an Africville resident explained in 1962, “we’re just existing.”136 This contrast, expressed in biopolitical terms, requires an investigation. How could planning, if it was devoted to the protection and improvement of life, leave Africville lives exposed to a variety of risks and inconveniences? How, indeed, could planning become one of the foremost risks to Africville lives? I consider these questions in the next section.

135 Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 100; Africville, 141.
136 Clairmont and Magill, Relocation Report, 122.
The new biopolitical regime of urban planning in Halifax was thus a complex and contradictory affair. On the one hand, it sought to manage the urban terrain as a means of achieving effects upon collective life in the city: better sanitation was thought to produce better health; more convenient public spaces would create greater welfare (or a more “agreeable” life); and more economic land use was thought to be the basis of continued, city-wide prosperity. On the other hand, there were limits to these positive effects: if planning was meant to serve “the city as a whole,” it was also meant not to serve narrow, particular interests. The location of this line, the precise division between collective life and mere individuals, does not seem to have been predetermined. It could conceivably have been enacted in various ways. No group of people, however, seems to have been as consistently and thoroughly cast outside the definition of “the city as a whole” as Africville. Everything that planning introduced to protect and improve life in Halifax was withheld in Africville. The residents’ own efforts to improve their living conditions were often obstructed by the City. And planning, when it did venture into the vicinity of Africville, consistently made conditions in the community worse. If, as I suggested, the City had come to recognize a vital connection between life and space, and had come to conceive of planning as a means of safeguarding life through the management of space, then what does the treatment of Africville in this period suggest? If urban planning eroded living conditions in Africville in anticipatable ways, and if in 1915 it proposed to revoke the community’s living conditions altogether, then how did this not seem to contravene the professed purpose of planning? How could planning disregard and damage the lives of Africville residents as consistently as it did, if not through a failure to recognize the latter as lives at all?

4.4 White Cities and Economic Land Use

The 1915 proposal for Africville was shaped by a pair of interlocking logics. The first, which was implicit in the proposal, was related to the rise of a new form of racism in the late nineteenth century that defined Halifax as an essentially “white city,” and non-white residents as an unnecessary, aberrant, and generally unwanted presence in the community. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of “state racism,” the strength and health of the overall population in Halifax came to be equated with its whiteness. To speak of the protection and improvement of the population was to speak implicitly and often explicitly about protecting
and improving the white population. For biopolitical planning, as a result, the lives of Africville residents could be regarded as essentially irrelevant; their health and contentment need not have been secured, and the dependence of their lives upon their living conditions need not have been recognized. The casting-out of Africville residents from the category of “life” was clearly essential to the conception of the 1915 proposal, as I detail below.

But the proposal was not just about racism. It was also, and more explicitly, about the redevelopment of Africville land. It was about the delivery of the area to a more collectively “advantageous” land use. Also essential to the proposal, as this suggests, was a relatively new conception of property that allowed the relative contribution of property to the overall population to be assessed, and the management of property in the ostensible interest of the population to be conceived. I discussed the emergence of this conception of property in detail in Chapter 3. Here, I want to review its contours and link its role in urban planning to the rise of state racism in Halifax. These two logics – one racial, the other economic – were both essential to the conception of the 1915 proposal, and I will suggest that attending to their entanglement and co-constitution in this context opens up a different, and politically preferable, perspective on the history of Africville in the present.

**White Cities**

An understanding of Africville in the early twentieth century must involve an apprehension of the gradual appearance, over the previous half century, of a new and distinctly “state” form of racism in Halifax (and in Canada, more broadly). Racism, in some form, had always existed in Halifax, of course. The City’s founding as a British military installation in 1749, for example, was accomplished through a brutal and often grotesque campaign to annihilate the native Mi’kmaq people. A racist conception of African people, meanwhile, made it possible for the latter to be retained as slaves by British settlers from the city’s very first year until 1833 (when slavery was abolished in the British Empire).

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the prevailing conception of “races” and racial inferiority in Halifax began to change. One important change was the gradual inclusion of the city’s Irish population within the dominant racial category – a category that came to be defined by “Britishness”
(or simply “whiteness”) rather than “English-ness.” The Irish, as others have documented, occupied an ambiguous social position as they emigrated to North America in the period from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. In Ireland itself, Catholics had long been distinguished from Protestants. In the eighteenth century, Irish Catholics had been perceived and treated as an inferior race (demonstrating that racial categories need not depend on differences in “phenotype”), while the rise of a Catholic bourgeoisie and the changing imperial stance of England toward the end of the century helped to rescript a prior racial difference as an ethnic one. In North America, Irish immigrants, and especially Irish Catholics, were often seen as a separate racial group, perhaps on par with or slightly above African Americans. (The term “white negro” was sometimes applied to Irish Catholics, while African Americans were sometimes called “smoked Irish.”) It was only in the course of the nineteenth century that these ambiguities of race were resolved and the Irish “became white.” The whitening of the Irish, Ignatiev emphasizes, was a contingent achievement. “The outcome,” he writes, “was not the inevitable consequence of blind historical forces, still less of biology, but the result of choices made, by the Irish and others, from among available alternatives.”

In Halifax, Irish immigrants arrived in great numbers in the 1830s and 40s, with the result that Irish Catholics comprised 40 percent of the Halifax population by mid-century. As in US cities, Irish immigrants largely settled in the poorest sections of town, first neighbouring and then displacing the local African population. Although the Irish were in the midst of a whitening process elsewhere in North America at this time, there is no reason to see this process as inevitable in Halifax. The incorporation of the Irish into the dominant racial category was freighted, first of all, by the extension of Provincial voting

139 Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White, 34-61.
140 Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White, 2.
rights in the 1850s from property owners (alone) to all adult males. This change made it suddenly much more important for political parties to win the support of the Irish population, which had been significant in size for some time, but was comprised largely of tenants rather than property owners. Symbolically, the Britishness (rather than Englishness) of Halifax was established through practices like the opening of the Public Gardens in 1841, an 17-acre park northwest of the downtown that expressed a specifically British tradition of horticulture and landscaping. Britishness as a category was also reflected in the reception of immigrants to the city, who came to be classified (beginning in the mid-1800s) as either “British” or “foreign,” and were channelled upon their arrival to receiving quarters that were organized according to this binary.

This broadening of the dominant racial category to include the Irish was paralleled by a diminishing regard for all those who did not fit within it, including African Nova Scotians. This parallel was not, in all respects, coincidental. The arrival of Irish immigrants, for one thing, tended to displace black Haligonians not just from the lower end of the housing market, but from the low-end of the labour market as well. With the arrival of the irish, there came to be a new, substantial “white” working-class that employers and landlords could rely upon instead of the black population. The expansion of voting rights had similar effects. Black residents, while they never comprised a large proportion of the Halifax population, quite often owned property (as was the case in Africville). Hence, the arrival of voting rights for non-property owning men tended to turn the attention of political parties toward the large, newly enfranchised Irish population, while leaving behind their prior, albeit modest, attempts to win over black voters. But the social position of black Haligonians descended in this period for other reasons as well. In the 1850s,

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142 Sutherland, “Race Relations.”
143 Stephen Poole notes that the superintendent of the garden was Ricard Power, who had gardened for the Duke of Devonshire in Ireland. He devised a plan, Poole suggests, “that remains remarkably intact.” Halifax: Discovering its Heritage (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing, 2000), 41. Patrick Keane documents the early activities of the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society, the initial developer of the Public Garden. In 1836, the Society lamented that “we have few or no professional gardeners.” The Society cited Massachusetts horticultural societies as examples worth emulating, and thought that public gardens in Halifax would “promote an exercise of domestic affection, and create a more refined taste for social pleasures.” “Joseph Howe and Adult Education,” Acadiensis 3, no. 1 (1973): 35-49.
144 Carrigan, “The Immigrant Experience.”
145 Sutherland, “Race Relations,” 42.
traveling minstrel shows from the United States began to touch down in Halifax by ocean steamer and presented the locals with a comic, intensely demeaning portrayal of the black personality based on the stereotypes of the US South. Local newspapers, which were becoming increasingly influential at mid-century, consistently used racist language, derided the ostensibly inferior productivity and morality of the black population, and sometimes expressed favourable views about slavery. The ending of legal slavery in 1833, moreover, had stimulated public discussion about the place of black residents within the city, and whether there continued to be one.147

These events, from the “whitening” of the Irish to the ending of slavery, contributed to a more widespread and intense denigration of the black population in Halifax. Publicly expressed denigration typically focused on the supposed laziness and moral laxity of black people, and it seems that both of these attributes were perceived to be special problems among Africville residents. In a representative example, an editorial in the local Morning Post described black Nova Scotians as “an unproductive, destitute, and begging class,” and suggested that “the Slavery of the Southern States was ... in truth and practicality, a more suitable life for the Negro.”148 Comparisons between black people and the supposedly more productive Irish were also common, with the daily Sun drawing a contrast between “illiterate Negro beggars ... hardly raised in intellectual capacity above the inferior order of the animal creation,” and “the intelligent handcraftsmen, and labourers” of the Irish community.149 Africville residents would be affected by these derogatory views for a long period. Residents interviewed in the 1960s who were old enough to remember the early 1900s recall that hailing from Africville involved its own special stigma when it came to securing work from white employers.150

References to moral laxity were often entwined with claims about laziness and unproductivity, but were also freighted by the increasing bourgeois concerns about moral order that I charted in Chapter 2. If poor “white” residents could be morally suspect, poor blacks were even more so. As a writer in Provincial Magazine put it in 1853, “we have no hesitation in pronouncing [black Nova Scotians] far inferior

147 Sutherland, “Race Relations.”
148 Cited in Sutherland, “Race Relations,” 42.
149 Cited in Sutherland, “Race Relations,” 47.
150 Clairmont and Magill, Africville, 129.
in morality, intelligence, and cleanliness, to the very lowest among the white population.”

The writer proceeded to speculate that the institution of slavery had kept the immorality of the black population in check, instilling “gratitude ... and genuine morality” that had withered away with abolition. By the early twentieth century, such perspectives had become sufficiently ingrained in Halifax that a person’s “race,” and associated proclivities toward criminal activity, could be raised in a court of law as relevant evidence. Racial stereotypes, as Boudreau demonstrates, could be invoked by prosecutors to confirm the guilt of a particular suspect, or by the defending attorney to seek the court’s leniency for an accused member of a race that, as one lawyer put it, possessed “very strong passions and feelings ... without the mental qualities [to] offset them.”

While these prejudices applied to black people in general, Africville, again, seems to have been especially ill-perceived. In the early twentieth century, for example, gambling, drinking, and prostitution were generally believed to be rampant in Africville. This apparent fact was blamed on Africville, crucially, even though most of the people committing the depraved acts resided elsewhere in the city (and were often white), and even though Africville had asked the City repeatedly to bolster police patrols in the community to root out such activities.

As Clairmont and Magill observe, the very word “Africville” could function in the twentieth century, if not before, as a potent symbol of black criminality and vice.

Clearly, the emerging conception of Halifax as a “white city” entailed a derogatory and often hostile perception of black residents. What is most particular to the new form of racism exhibited in Halifax, however, was not so much the heightened sense of black inferiority, but rather the perceived source of this inferiority. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of state racism, racial attributes were coming to be seen as inherent or inherited, rather than environmental. Whereas racial differences had once been understood as the product of human development within (regionally or globally) diverse environmental milieus, they were increasingly understood, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, as harboured in the blood, and transmitted from parent to child through the generations.

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151 Cited in Sutherland, “Race Relations,” 52.
153 Nelson, Razing Africville, 71.
154 Clairmont and Magill, Africville, 120-125.
155 Foucault, Society Must be Defended.
of racial attributes was invoked in an editorial by a Halifax writer in 1853 that observed that black people seemed to have “progressed but little from their original condition” since arriving in the province.\footnote{Cited in Sutherland, “Race Relations,” 52-53.} A change in environment, from Africa to North America, had apparently produced no observable improvement among African people, and could not be expected to in the future.

This sense of racial attributes as inherent and largely unchangeable (in the short-term) was affirmed and strengthened by the popularization of scientific theories of species evolution and degeneration in the second half of the nineteenth century.\footnote{See David Theo Goldberg, \textit{Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning} (New York: Wiley, 1993); Kay Anderson, \textit{Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980} (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995); Anderson, \textit{Race and the Crisis of Humanism} (New York: Routledge, 2007).} By the early twentieth century it was relatively common for Haligonians to invoke the pop-science notion of “the survival of the fittest” as an explanation of how the local population might improve in quality.\footnote{See the National Council of Women’s brochure “Lovest Thou Thy Land? Facts Given to the Royal Commission on Defectives,” from which the Halifax Local Council of Women drew insights in its campaign to “protect” the feebleminded. Local Council of Women, \textit{Scrapbook, 1908-1917}, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM), MG 20, no. 204, MFM #14723.} Black residents, of course, could take no part in such an improvement, for the new hereditary explanation of race suggested that the failings of the black population were unchangeable and that their potential contribution to the improvement of the overall Halifax population was therefore non-existent. Morally and economically deficient by birth, their presence in the city could only undermine the quality of the overall population. A fitter population was a whiter population, by definition.

Such a perspective was not unique to Halifax, of course. Both the new conception of race, and the practices that followed from it, were widely shared in Canada in this period.\footnote{See Anderson, \textit{Vancouver’s Chinatown}.} Indeed, the idea of Halifax as a white city emerged in parallel with the idea of Canada as a white \textit{nation}. While the Nova Scotia black population was proportionately larger than anywhere else in Canada, moreover, the publicly expressed denigration of black people, and potentially violent hostility to their existence, stretched across the country. As Winks notes, a longstanding but “vague” mythology about black people had developed by the early twentieth century into “a more exact” denigration of their moral and economic deficiencies, and it
was often expressed that “there were enough of these people in Canada without adding to the problem.” Crucially, the idea of Canada as a white nation was also translated into a program. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, a range of policies were introduced to ensure that Canada remained predominantly white, or became more white. While calls for non-white populations to be deported from the country generally went unheeded, a similar effect was achieved in other ways. Immigration policies were altered to favour British (or at least European) arrivals, and specific attention was paid to bar Chinese and African arrivals to Canada from the 1910s until well after World War II.\textsuperscript{1} Juridical controls over “miscegenation,” though never as widespread as in the US, were effectively imposed upon aboriginal populations through the Indian Act.\textsuperscript{1} Eugenics programs aimed at preventing the reproduction of the “feeble-minded” by means of forced sterilization or incarceration were implemented in many parts of Canada (including Halifax), and could certainly involve racist characteristics.\textsuperscript{1} Finally, prevailing stereotypes that associated racialized populations with criminal tendencies contributed to their being incarcerated in relatively large numbers from the early twentieth century onward.

Both the new conception of races, as well as the new practices that developed in accordance with this conception, relate closely to Foucault’s analysis of “state racism.” Before considering how the new racism was implicated in the City’s treatment of Africville, I want briefly to suggest how the historical observations above connect to Foucault’s more general argument. Foucault’s central and most original claim about “state racism” is that its primary purpose is to aid in the management of aggregate life.\textsuperscript{1} It serves this purpose, Foucault explains, by enacting divisions within the domain of life, by separating out and hierarchizing life’s elements in relation to the qualities that the state aims to enhance. “Races” in the

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Foucault, \textit{Society Must Be Defended}. 

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modern “biological-type” understanding represent precisely such separated and hierarchized elements of overall life. The management of life thus becomes (at least partly) a racist operation: it becomes a matter of protecting and enhancing the “good” race, while leaving “bad” races exposed to a range of risks, accidents, and damage, if not outright inflicting damage upon them. That the biopolitical state simultaneously aims to protect and improve overall “life,” while also allowing or compelling many living beings to waste away is, for Foucault, no great paradox. According to the pertinent conception of life, it is only the normal, non-deficient members of the population that must be sustained and enlivened, and the disappearance or death of the abnormal, deficient members is not just acceptable but conducive to improving overall life. Foucault writes: “The death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race ... is [seen as] something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.”

Connecting Foucault’s analysis to Halifax, it is clear that the new form of racism indeed made it possible to fragment the domain of life and hierarchize its elements in relation to certain to state priorities, and that “white” life came to be synonymous with the qualities that the state (and other institutions) aimed to enhance. The new racism – state racism – enabled an improvement in the overall condition of life to be imagined and pursued. The pursuit of an optimal state of life meant, in effect, securing and enlivening the “one true race” that was considered to be the population of Halifax, Halifax the “white city,” while ignoring or seeking to diminish the various “sub-races” or “counter-races” that persisted in their low existence (despite the indifference or hostility of their white neighbours).

While Foucault does not explicitly connect his analysis of racism to his analysis of urban planning (though he claims, in different places, that both are essential to the operation of biopolitical power), the implications of a racist conception of life for the operation of planning, insofar as it is concerned with life, are clearly profound. In Halifax, the conception of African Nova Scotians as inferior in their productivity and moral character “to the very lowest among the white population” – and as inherently, irredeemably so – would effectively remove them from the domain of life that planning sought to protect and improve. Planning, in this case, could be devoted to “life” and yet operate without any interest in im-

165 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 255. This point is emphasized by Achille Mbembe, “Aesthetics of Superfluity,” *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004), 384-5.
166 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 254-255.
proving Africville. Such indifference to Africville life is evidenced in planning’s perpetual denial of sew- 
ers, running water, and other improvements in the community. It is evident in the siting of the City’s in- 
fecious diseases hospital in 1905. The hospital could not be placed in its originally proposed location be- 
cause it would pose a “menace” to the lives of nearby residents, but it could straightforwardly be placed 
in Africville. It is evident, perhaps above all, in the 1915 proposal.

Two aspects of the 1915 proposal need to be diagnosed in relation to the work of state racism. 
First, as I noted above, the proposal was interpreted by City Council as providing “advantages” for “the 
city,” even as it could only with great difficulty be conceived as providing advantages to Africville resi- 
dents. The evident caesura between “the city” and the residents of Africville, I would suggest, is compre- 
hensible when one considers the profound racism that made “the city” intelligible at this moment: that “the city” was predominantly conceived to be white. Accordingly, the absent “advantages” of the 1915 proposal for Africville residents in no way invalidates the claim that the proposal would have advantages for “the city.” Africville was simply not part of the city as far as the dominant society was concerned. Its fate within the operation of the prevailing planning regime was irrelevant at best.

The second, more disturbing aspect of the proposal, of course, is the violence that its implementa- 
tion would bring upon the lives of Africville residents. More than simply being denied certain advantages, 
the residents would have their existence completely undermined. As I have suggested, the proposed dis- 
placement needs to be grasped in the context of planning’s prevailing commitment to life, and its concep- 
tion of urban space as an essential basis of life’s endurance and flourishing. Understood in this light, the carrying-out of the 1915 proposal would constitute an attack on Africville life. It would not have brought 
the annihilation of life, but it would certainly have decimated its overall condition. The possibility of such 
a proposal in this context, I would suggest, needs to be understood in relation to the city’s prevailing state 
racism. It was only because Africville residents were not quite recognized as life that their existence could 
be overlooked and exposed to state violence without hesitation.

This “casting out” of Africville from the category of life is perhaps best demonstrated in the con- 
trast between the two major redevelopment proposals of this period. The first, the proposed redevelop- 
ment of the largely white downtown slum (discussed in Chapter 2), was far from laudable or liberatory in
its conception, but it did at least recognize the slum residents as a viable manifestation of human life. The residents of the slum were seen as deficient, but improvable, and it was precisely the goal of the tenements plan to bring the residents to a “higher form of living” through the creation of better living conditions. This, it appears, is the consequence of being cast off from the broader population on the basis of social class: the arrival of an unwanted, but well-meaning planning intervention. The proposal for Africville, in contrast, involved no comparable aim. Rather than seeking to uplift Africville residents through better living conditions, the proposal would revoke their existing living conditions and eject them into the uncertainty and existential danger of a contracting, almost non-existent local housing market. Differentiated by race rather than class, the lives of Africville residents appeared to be beyond improvement and were ultimately disregarded entirely. The capacity of the state to simultaneously “make live” and “let die” is emblematic of biopolitical power, and seems to be expressed most vividly when it is “race” that distinguishes higher and lower forms of life. The City’s treatment of Africville in the early twentieth century fits this analysis well.

“Economic” Land Use

But the 1915 proposal was not only about state racism, and it is important to attend to its other, not-explicitly-racist determinations. While the City was certainly willing to damage the lives of Africville residents, to expose them to great risks, its most explicit aim was to bring about a different form of land use in Africville. The aim was to introduce a form of land use that would, as City Council put it, have “advantages for the City.” As Doane’s proposal explains, the vision here was to establish the site of Africville as “an industrial district.” It was in order to achieve this not-explicitly-racist end, according to the proposal, that the “interests” of Africville residents would need to be “prejudic[ed].” An analysis of the proposal therefore needs to diagnose this more explicit logic – an evaluation of land and its potential contribution to “the city” – and consider whether, or how, it relates to the more subtle, unexpressed racial logic that I discussed above.

The ostensibly economic logic of the 1915 proposal is not as straightforward as it might initially appear. For one thing, it called for a breach of individual property rights. These right were, as I suggested
above, highly regarded and privileged within the “liberal order” that prevailed in Canada at this time, and they presented an obstacle to state planning interventions in private spaces. That the 1915 proposal could call for such a breach of rights is related to the emergence of the new, Ricardian conception of property that I discussed in Chapter 3 (and above). Central to this new conception is a fundamental split between “land” and “improvements.” Land, in this view, is essentially inert. Its exchange value might rise or fall in accordance with the overall growth of the city, but it could not make any contribution itself to development (and any rise in rent or land value was thus deducted from the city’s development-producing activities). Improvements, in contrast, are a sign of progress. For Ricardo, “improvements” referred primarily to the machinery and other elements that would increase the output of agricultural land, but later thinkers like George and Adams would recognize a positive role for city-centered improvements like housing and (especially) business premises.

Among the Halifax civic leadership, improvements in general were explicitly promoted, and the establishment of business premises was typically regarded as the highest possible form of land use, as it would support economic activities that created wealth, provided jobs, and delivered tax revenue to the City. The establishment of business premises, in this view, would benefit not just individual property owners, but the entire city. This new conception of property would make it possible for the urban terrain to be assessed (and potentially managed) in a new way. The contribution of a given use of land to the local population could now be evaluated. Whereas, in this view, bare or underimproved land contributed very little to the population, and could even constitute “an injury to life” (as Adams put it), an upgraded, more “economic” use of land would deliver benefits to the overall population.

The new conception of property clearly presented an opportunity for the municipal state. An intrusion in local land use could now be conceived as a collectively advantageous action, something that would improve collective life, eliminate an “injury” to life, or both. In Halifax, the state had indeed begun to take up this role in the early twentieth century, and it would become a small but important part of its emerging planning regime. The short-lived land tax, as I suggested, was premised on the view that the urban terrain constituted “a huge combination of a market and apartment house,” with the City as the pseudo-landlord. The entry of the state into the previously sacrosanct domain of private property is clearly
signalled here, and the state’s avowed position as all-encompassing landlord might be regarded as particularly ominous in light of what it would propose for Africville. Moreover, the very same role was evoked in Francis Doane’s suggestion that the state ought to manage the urban terrain according to the tripartite aims of “health,” “convenience,” and “economy.” While the first two aims had been a longstanding part of urban planning in Halifax by the 1910s, the third was a new arrival. A concern with “economy” seems to express Thomas Adams’s notion of “economic” land use, and its fundamental importance to urban life overall. That Doane encountered Adams for the first time in 1914, and produced the fateful proposal for Africville the following year, seems an essential connection.

The new conception of property, and the state’s role in relation to property, was an essential condition of the 1915 proposal. On this new intellectual basis, Africville would be disclosed as the site of an opportunity: a chance for the state to bring about a more economic use of land and thereby contribute to the overall growth and progress of the city. This calculation was not only abstract. If Africville was envisioned as an industrial district, it is surely significant that the community was located on the shore of the Bedford Basin (close, therefore, to potential port facilities); that it was far enough away from other residential areas that the growth of industry would not adversely affect their property values and good health; and that the City owned land in the vicinity of Africville that would be packaged with the expropriated land to form a sizable industrial district. But the new conception of property was nevertheless essential. In delineating a connection between land use and the condition of the overall population, it made the improvement of land a mechanism in the improvement of life, and thus a justifiable and necessary state preoccupation. Africville residents would have their property rights breached in the ostensible name of collective life. It was the new conception of property that made this action imaginable.

**Intertwining Logics and Their Implications**

Indispensable to the 1915 proposal, therefore, was a pair of logics: one racial, the other economic. An economic logic was the more obvious of the two. It was this logic that dictated that “industry” should replace Africville homes. However, to imagine such an advantageous scenario, much less to bring it about,

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167 See the City’s evaluation of the opportunity in Halifax, *Minutes*, 9 September 1915, 217.
would depend on a dismissal of the land’s existing inhabitants and their vital dependence upon the land. It
would require the anticipatable damage inflicted upon Africville through the proposed redevelopment to
be somehow bracketed in the calculation of the advantages conferred upon the city and peripheralized in
relation to planning’s vision of itself as the guardian of human life. Racism arrives here as an enabling
condition for an initiative that would otherwise be impossible to reconcile with the avowed purpose of
planning (and the state more generally). The logic of state racism, in casting Africville residents outside
the category of collective life, made it possible to imagine an ostensibly economic intervention. This logic
shaped, indeed opened up, a terrain in which planning could be deployed. State racism, in constituting
human beings as expendable, helped to make the land upon which they lived available. Racism effec-
tively cleared a terrain in which the logic of “economic” land use could hold sway. The 1915 proposal
thus expressed the combined, intertwining force of economic and racial logics. Economism and racism
were two threads in a rope that wrapped itself around Africville like a noose, and gradually tightened.

Recognizing the precise affiliations of economics and racism in early twentieth century opens up
a somewhat different perspective on the history of Africville. Most immediately, it demonstrates that the
City’s violent treatment of Africville vastly pre-dates the demolition of the community in the 1960s, and it
demonstrates that the living conditions that liberal Haligonians in the 1960s sought to address – substan-
dard housing, absent sewers and running water, and so on – were partly created by the City’s planning
operations in Africville and its vicinity. If the City has anything to apologize for in the present, it is cer-
tainly not restricted to “what happened” in the 1960s. There is a much longer history to recognize and
account for.

The myopic focus of the recent apology can be opened up, as well, by noting that the history of
Africville is simultaneously the history of Halifax as a whole. The improvement of living conditions
elsewhere in Halifax was shaped by, even conditional upon, the non-improvement and degradation of
conditions in Africville. That Africville was cast outside the domain of life as urban planning was being
established, and that it continued to occupy such a position as planning unfolded over the next six dec-
ades, certainly affected what planning could produce on the Halifax peninsula. The history of Africville is
inscribed in the Halifax roads that were laid out and paved; it is expressed in the property taxes that Hali-
fax residents paid (or, rather, did not need to pay, as a result of municipal expenses that were not incurred in Africville); it is silently manifest in the new parks and playgrounds that were established, and the older ones that were maintained; it is reflected in the noxious facilities like the City Dump that other residents do not have in their neighbourhood, as these facilities were situated near Africville; it inheres, in short, in the various lives that were safeguarded and enlivened by planning, as it dismissed the lives of others.

In the end, it is difficult to think of any part of the Halifax peninsula that was not in some way affected by the damages inflicted upon Africville. As George Elliott Clarke has suggested with respect to the Nova Scotia landscape in general, it is a “great beautiful landscape, but behind it or beneath it is this incredible history of sometimes great pain and tragedy.” To remember Africville, in this sense, is to recognize the history of state violence that has produced the Halifax landscape, but that is not immediately apparent. It is to see violence where it seems not to have been enacted, and to see this violence as a condition of the present form of urban spaces and urban lives in Halifax.

In addition to unbounding the meaning of Africville, I think the analysis above suggests the need to hesitate over attempts to “include” and “advocate” for marginalized Haligonians in the planning discussions of the present. What is this project that former Africville residents and their descendants would be included within? What would it mean to include them within a discussion that excluded them for a large part of the twentieth century (if not longer), and that was shaped partly by their exclusion? I have suggested that the idea of “economic use” would not have been incorporated into planning practices in Halifax without the existence of an expendable population whose land it would be applied to, whose land it could take hold of and transform. It is worth asking whether this particular idea has persisted into the present (I think it has), and whether, more importantly, other concepts have emerged upon a similarly divided, bifurcated conception of collective life. It needs to be asked whether urban planning continues to rely upon conceptions of life that, if not racist in a specifically “statist” sense, nevertheless involve a division of life into differentiated elements and an assumption that a certain segment is the norm to which all life ought to conform (but does not). This question is important, I think, since the specific “state” form of racism that shaped urban planning in the early twentieth century had certainly lost credibility. It is far less

168 “Skeletons people these white fields,” he writes in a poem.
acceptable to see racialized populations as inherently, biologically inferior, and I would suggest that it has become less necessary for state strategies to draw upon this precise discourse. Beyond the specific way that the population is divided up, however, how much has changed?

As I noted above, what is important in Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics is not so much the rise of state racism per se, but rather the emergence of a form of power that is centered on life and that seeks to manage life, to improve life, by segmenting and hierarchizing life’s elements. For Foucault, state racism becomes predominant because it serves this purpose. Racism, he writes, “is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s controls.”\(^{169}\) In dividing up and differentiating the field of collective life, racism makes it possible to imagine an improvement of life that occurs through the enhancement of certain elements and the disavowal or sacrifice of others. What is essential, then, is not the specific form of racism, but the specific form of power and the “object” that it operates upon. As long as planning seeks to manage life, and as long as it conceives of life in bifurcated terms, racism of some kind – perhaps even a racism that looks nothing like the racisms of the past – is likely to be called for. Something like state racism in its function may be called on to elevate certain lives, demote others, and make the improvement of overall life, or the overall “city,” an unequal and potentially violent endeavour. For Foucault, a bifurcated conception of life is endemic to social thought in modernity, and a whole range of discourses have emerged in relation to it (to render its management conceivable). These discourses, the broad “science of man,” he writes, are premised on a profoundly bipolar structure – the normal and the pathological, “life” and not quite life – and “cannot be detached from the negative aspects in which [they] appeared.”\(^{170}\) To remember Africville, in this case, is to ask how life is conceived in the present. It is to consider whether it continues to entail a bifurcated structure, and, if it does, to seek to disrupt this bifurcation rather than (solely) seeking to include the expelled within its terms.

\(^{169}\) Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 254-55.

4.5 Conclusion

The biopolitical state, Foucault suggests, “can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point.”\footnote{Foucault, \textit{Society Must Be Defended}, 254.} I have suggested, in this chapter, that a biopolitical regime of urban planning can indeed rely upon, and function through, state racism. The latter helps to underwrite planning interventions that would otherwise (i.e., without racism) appear blatantly to contradict the professed purpose of planning. To demonstrate my argument, I turned to the late nineteenth century and examined the emergence of a new, biopolitical regime of urban planning. The aim of this regime was to protect and improve collective life through the calculated management of urban space. Whereas new planning initiatives were deployed to improve the health, welfare, and prosperity of “the city as a whole,” Africville had a different encounter with this new planning regime. Africville was not just denied the improvements of planning, but was also forced to bear many of its costs. This strange juxtaposition – life cared for, on one hand, and exposed to damage and great risks, on the other – indicates something about how collective life was conceived at this time. In the final section of the chapter, I showed that the racialization of Africville residents shaped how planning could operate in the community. The 1915 proposal, which would have immediate and long-term effects on the community, involved an intertwining pair of logics: one economic, the other racial. While the 1915 report undoubtedly involved economic considerations, the latter were made possible, and perhaps even \textit{intelligible}, by the predominance of biological racism. Racism, in casting Africville residents outside the category of collective life, opened up a terrain in which an economic calculation could be conceived (and its result implemented). Racism and economics are, therefore, intertwined in a deep and intimate way. Together, they enable planning to apprehend its object, or objects (plural): both “life,” and the living conditions that support it (or do not).

Recognizing this intertwining of economic and racial logics makes possible a somewhat different analysis of the history of Africville, as well as the history of modern urban planning. There is no question that the proposed destruction of Africville involved an economic analysis. It evaluated the existing use of the land and considered whether it could be better, more efficiently used. To remain here would leave us with a conclusion consistent with Clairmont and Magill’s important study of Africville’s history, as well
as with the predominant interpretation of modern, “city efficient” planning. At the same time, however, planning in Africville was also shaped by the prevailing racism of the time. It was a specific form of racism that made it possible to disregard the effects of planning on Africville lives, and that seems to have aided in making the inefficiency of the prevailing land use apparent. To offer just this conclusion would conform with a more recent analysis of Africville, as well as with an emerging literature that seeks to locate the racial origins of many modern planning initiatives. The conclusions that I have presented, in the end, make it difficult to remain strictly with economics or strictly with racism. Indeed, I have tried to suggest that what we call “economics” and “racism” are mashed together, more intimately intertwined than might usually be thought. I do not believe that planning in Africville could operate as it did without an economic logic and a racial logic that were, to some extent, co-constitutive.

I want to conclude by emphasizing that Africville, while it appeared as a space of non-life, or not quite “life,” to city leaders, it was certainly not experienced in this way by its inhabitants. Outside the official category of “life” in Halifax, there seems to have existed something that planners had a difficult time recognizing but that Africville residents enjoyed and cherished. It was a form of life, or existence, that the state did not produce, that it could not recognize, and that it ultimately brought to an end. One of the great injustices of the Africville’s eventual destruction is that, in spite of the City’s disregard and even contempt for the life of the community, residents had developed a mode of existence that they valued and that they were never able to re-establish after their displacement. As the testimony of former residents demonstrates, the Africville community provided for itself nearly everything that the City refused to provide (and provided elsewhere): places of recreation, systems of child care, social institutions (principally, the Africville Baptist Church), financial support in times of difficulty, formal and informal opportunities for education, and rich and varied cultural practices.

It was partly because of what residents had created for themselves that they loved the community and mourned its destruction. This is not to say that they wished to remain in some kind of autonomous space outside, or beyond, the state. Their appreciation for what they had was always paralleled by demands for the trappings of the state that they had been denied. It is to say, however, that if Africville resi-

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dents were not “living” but simply “existing” (as one resident put it, in the 1960s), then this “existing” is not the binary opposite of “living.” It is something else, something different and yet treasured, something that cannot appear within the frame of either “life” or “non-life.” The struggle to transform planning in the present would seem to require a strategy that could bring recognition to this “outside,” this realm of existence that has not yet appeared within the terms of “life” but that somehow must.
Chapter 5

“A Reorganization of the Public”

5.1 Introduction

In Halifax, the “post-war” period never quite lived up to its name. As World War II drew to a close, the city looked forward to the return of its young men and women from fighting overseas, and prepared to say goodbye to the over 30,000 Navy and Air Force personnel stationed at bases in Halifax. At City Hall, a small team of elected officials, bureaucrats, and civic leaders were making their own preparations for the War’s end – a plan of attack, as it were, that would be sweeping in its ambitions and unflinching in its assault on the city’s prevailing physical and social forms. Urban planning was about to be let loose upon the city as never before. And for some residents, astonished and horrified, planning was perceived not as the successor to war, but its redirection: war turned inward.

In the twenty-five year period after WWII, urban planning would engulf the city in a tumult of physical and social change. Longstanding neighbourhoods were blown apart; thousands of residents were displaced from their homes (some re-housed, many not); old commercial buildings that, for many residents, defined the visual character of the city and testified to its long history were targeted for destruction; and a new, unfamiliar landscape emerged from the rubble of the old: a landscape of tall, concrete office towers, enclosed shopping spaces, and wide, high-volume roadways. This rapid and sweeping transformation of the city, while it would be seen as haphazard and callous by some, was nevertheless conceived to be quite the opposite. Post-war planning was exhaustive and meticulous in its study of urban conditions; it was consistent in its pursuit of a logical ordering of space; and it was committed, above all, to the safeguarding and nurturing of collective life. Post-war planning was applied to spatial conditions, but devoted to its human occupants. Its envisioned end products were improvements in public health, social adaptation, and “general welfare.” In planning reports and discussions throughout the post-war period, a consistent conviction was expressed: the population could be improved through planning, and it might just be imperilled without it. Hence, the very same mechanism that was experienced as an interminable, spread-
ing catastrophe by some residents – an assault on their conditions of life, on the meaning of the city, or both – was, for post-war planners, a means of maintaining urban life and carefully, assiduously improving it.

By now this apparent disjunction between destruction and preservation is a familiar one. It has been explored in previous chapters of this dissertation, and it has nurtured the attention of scholars in a diversity of fields. This chapter, while it seeks to describe post-war planning in Halifax and show how it relates to the biopolitical analysis of planning that I have been advancing, is concerned foremost with the response to post-war planning. Specifically, it examines the opposition to post-war planning that began to emerge in the mid-1960s, and it seeks to evaluate the changes that were implemented as a result. Oppositional movements began to emerge as the ill-effects of planning became recognizable. Beginning with a few disconnected groups, it acquired greater breadth and strength as more residents became active, new groups were formed, and certain business and state institutions began to see the need for a new model of economic development in Halifax. The changes introduced as a result of these oppositional movements included greater attention to the aesthetics and qualitative experience of urban space (especially in the downtown core); respect and protection for local architectural heritage; and a greater emphasis on public “participation” in planning processes.

The new emphasis on “participation” was the most significant change in planning practices, and it serves as the major focus in this chapter. On the surface, participation refers to the active involvement of city residents in the formulation of planning priorities and initiatives. Whereas post-war planning tended to assume that the best interests of the population could be discerned from a meticulous, quantitative representation of social and spatial conditions, the turn toward participation would open up opportunities for residents to express their planning-related ideas and interests, propose planning alternatives, or otherwise influence the planning process. In Halifax, as in other North American cities in the late 1960s, opportunities for participation were demanded by activists and community organizations, and facilitated by certain state programs.

Especially significant in Halifax’s case was the role of a new Federal institution called the Nova Scotia Planning Secretariat. For reasons that I will discuss, the Secretariat saw the need for a new form of
urban planning in Halifax and believed that well-organized community organizations could bring this new form into being. To this end, the Secretariat organized an important week-long public event on planning issues; channeled funding to community organizations; and sought to train and organize local residents in accordance with a particular political model. In line with this model, individuals would be encouraged to identify their “self-interests” and establish organizations with others on the basis of their common “interests.” The Secretariat also facilitated the formation of a broad-based alliance of interest-based organizations called the Movement for Citizens’ Voice and Action (MOVE) that would share resources and information, and (sometimes) seek to advance alliance-wide “community interests.” For the Secretariat, the new interest-based organizations and the MOVE alliance were envisioned as the basis of a new, “participatory” form of urban development, and a means of achieving a range of related demographic and economic objectives.

While the turn toward “participation” would indeed involve a significant break from certain elements of the post-war planning regime, my argument in this chapter is that it needs to be understood as a reformulation, rather than an attenuation, of the connection between planning and biopower. Central to my argument is the political model that Federal planners hoped to establish as the basis of participation in planning processes in Halifax. The model, I suggest, was premised on a conception of the “population” and a set of practices that Foucault places under the heading “liberal government.” The latter, Foucault explains, involves a range of state practices and interventions that take their guidance from the ostensible “interests” of the population and that seek to regulate or guide the conduct of individuals toward the expression and fulfillment of their “interests.”1 The aims of liberal government may certainly exceed the domain of biopolitics; however, Foucault emphasizes, they also constitute the most “general” way of acting upon individuals in order to achieve biopolitical objectives.2

In line with these insights, I argue that “participation” emerged in Halifax as a technology of liberal government with biopolitical objectives. Through the convening of public events, the delivery of funding to “interest groups,” and the training and organization of local activists, Federal planners aimed

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2 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 22.
to guide individuals and groups toward the expression of their “interests” within the planning process. In this way, it was hoped, planning priorities and practices would be altered, desired changes in the size and skill-level of the population would be achieved, and a new form of economic development (premised on changes in the population) would ensue. Planning, now as before, would be devoted primarily to achieving effects upon the population; participation was simply a new way of doing so. More importantly, planning would continue to apprehend and regulate the population in differentiated, bifurcated terms. As I will suggest, the political model that would ultimately structure the new planning practices involved certain norms of participation that not all city residents would evidently be perceived as honouring. While residents who expressed their interests in accordance with these norms would have an opportunity to influence planning practices, others would see their (attempted) participation criticized or ignored.

This chapter has three main sections. In the first section, I describe the unleashing of post-war planning in Halifax; diagnose its affiliation with biopolitical power; and examine the first stirrings of opposition to planning in the mid-1960s. In the next section, I examine how the Nova Scotia Planning Secretariat sought to organize existing political dissent in Halifax and transform the prevailing planning regime. In seeking to effect certain changes in the Halifax population and propel a new form of economic development, the Secretariat introduced a model of “participatory” planning that I analyze in relation to Foucault’s account of “liberal government.” While the Secretariat helped to finance, train, and organize local activists, its envisioned transformation of planning practices was not quite achieved. As I show in the final section, the MOVE alliance was organized in accordance with the Secretariat’s espoused political model, but it ended up campaigning against a major expressway project that the Secretariat (along with most of the city’s state and business institutions) saw as essential to metropolitan-scale development.

MOVE’s anti-expressway campaign was a dramatic and pivotal moment in the history of Halifax planning. Its eventual success (the plans for the expressway were indeed scrapped) represents a rare instance in which the state, the local business elite, and urban planners could not achieve their objectives. The dissolution of MOVE following the campaign, however, indicates some of the limits of the political organizing model that MOVE had adopted. The ostensibly alliance-wide interest that MOVE’s campaign sought to advance was not as wide as it might have seemed, and some MOVE members found that their
interests could not be advanced or recognized within this political formation. I conclude with a brief consideration of how the boundaries of “participation” in planning shape the kinds of spaces that can (and cannot) be made.

5.2 War by Other Means

Urban planning, in the quarter-century after World War II, was ambitious in scope and astonishingly destructive in its effects. The unleashing of “post-war” planning in Halifax would eliminate thousands of homes, wipe out large sections of the historic downtown, and strew the city with concrete office towers and wide, high-volume roadways that many local residents found unfamiliar, imposing, and unwanted. Though planning might have appeared reckless, haphazardly conceived, or indifferent to human life, it was (in its conception at least) none of these things. Indeed, planning had never in its history been so dependent upon the detailed study of urban conditions; never so logical in its management and ordering of space; and never so ambitious in its efforts to safeguard and nurture human life. Post-war planning was thus, as I will explain, a paradigmatic, yet period-specific instance of biopolitics at work: a technology of power devoted to managing the life of the population through calculated interventions in urban space. For many Halifax residents, however, planning was not so much improving collective life as undermining it, and as the effects of post-war planning on the social and physical character of the city become more recognizable, some residents and organizations began to mount a challenge to planning as it was then conceived. These nascent oppositional movements would eventually be enfolded within a broad-based urban movement that I discuss later on. In this section, my aim is to describe the deployment of post-war planning in Halifax, diagnose its biopolitical formation, and introduce three local groups that aimed to halt and reconfigure the “post-war” planning regime.

Post-War Planning Unleashed

One of the first acts of post-war planning in Halifax was to dispense, at last, with the long-reviled downtown slum. Renewed concern with the prevalence of slum conditions in the city was clearly expressed by
the ad-hoc “civic planning commission” struck in 1943. Central to the commission’s advice, conveyed in the well-received 1945 *Halifax Master Plan*, was an expansive “slum clearance program” that it argued should be delivered upon the downtown slum, as well as “the greater part” of the old North End, the entirety of Africville, and a small area of the South End (see Figure 5.1). The report’s submission to Council was followed by several years of inaction, as the City struggled to secure much-needed Federal funding for its planning priorities and contemplated first-step clearance projects of various sizes and locations (most of them outside the downtown). When, in 1955, the City learned that Federal funding under the National Housing Act would soon become available for clearance projects that, rather than producing higher quality low-income housing in the same location, simply converted the land to its “highest and best use” (whatever that use might be), progress began to be made.

A more detailed “housing study,” prepared by the University of Toronto urban planner Gordon Stephenson, was quickly commissioned by the City. (Such a study was a condition of receiving Federal slum clearance funding, and the study itself was financed under the NHA.) *The Stephenson Report*, as it came to be called, would provide a blueprint for slum clearance and many more post-war urban planning initiatives. While calling for the eventual demolition of the homes of 7,000 local residents, the *Report* identified, as the first priority, an 18-acre area of the downtown that it described as the site of “the worst tenements” in the city – and the potential site of a flourishing office and commercial district (see Figure 5.2). Council received the *Report* in 1957, and approved it immediately. Its implementation would begin a few months later.

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Figure 5.1 1945 Master Plan with areas targeted for slum clearance highlighted. *The Master Plan for the City of Halifax as Prepared by the Civic Planning Commission* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1945), 68. Image courtesy of HRMA.

Figure 5.2 “Aerial View Showing Central Business District from the Harbour to Citadel Hill,” ca. 1935. “Downtown slum” denoted in black. Nova Scotia Bureau of Information. NSARM Photo Collection. Image courtesy of NSARM.
Between 1958 and 1962, over 1,600 longtime residents of the downtown core were evicted – often with little notice – in the shadow of City-dispatched bulldozers. As the destruction proceeded, a terrain of densely packed wood homes and small shops became a vast, hollow crater that Haligonians, with fresh memories of war, often compared to the bombed out cities of Europe after WWII (see Figure 5.3 and 5.4). Less observable, but more devastating, were the project’s social effects. With new public housing units at Mulgrave Park still unfinished as the demolitions began (they would not be open to residents until October 1960), many early evictees had nowhere (adequate) to move. A City social welfare officer reported to Council in 1961 that at least a thousand evicted families had been forced to crowd themselves into single-room apartments, many others were staying with friends or relatives, and 200 families a month were departing the city altogether as a result of the severe, demolition-induced housing shortage. Council, in the face of this news, was resolute: its response to the social worker’s report was to pass a resolution to “aggressively continue the established policy of slum clearance” throughout the city. Planned demolitions would thus proceed, the building code would be yet more strictly enforced, and buildings that were not quickly brought up to code would be condemned. The destruction of the downtown slum was, as this suggests, just the beginning of a broader program.

With the downtown slum eliminated, the City turned its attention further north. It turned to Africville. As I described in Chapter 4, the destruction of Africville began in 1964, and proceed “in agonizing slowness” until 1969. The project was more limited in its scope (only 400 families would be displaced), and more attentive to social consequences. This attentiveness did not include, however, a recognition of the expressed desire of Africville residents, which was, nearly unanimously, to stay put. It was thus, perversely, in the interest of clearing land and the ostensible interest of Africville residents themselves that they would be removed against their wishes. The destruction of Africville, crucially, was not

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9 Bacher, Keeping to the Marketplace, 217.
10 Ibid.
Figure 5.3 “Duke Street Tower, Scotia Square, Under Construction,” ca. 1967. NSARM Photo Collection. Image courtesy of NSARM.

Figure 5.4 The future site of Scotia Square, 1962. City of Halifax Development and Planning Department photographs, HRMA, RG 35-102-105-1-35. Image courtesy of HRMA.
intended to be the final stage of the City’s plans. City officials and planners also had their eyes on “the old
North End” – a low-income neighbourhood just north of the downtown core that, while racially/ethnically
mixed, contained the city’s largest remaining African Nova Scotian population. This area had been tar-
geted for demolition in a series of reports, and would likely have been wiped out if the political opposi-
tion to post-ward planning that I describe below (and in later sections) had not emerged.

While the destruction of slum housing was sometimes described as an end in itself – the particular
“end” of which remains to be closely analyzed – it was more often twinned with optimistic visions of the
structures that might be constructed in its place. For the cleared downtown site, planners envisioned a
large-scale commercial development that would allow the core of the city to retain its historic role as the
centre of head office, administrative, and regional-scale retail functions, and that would (simultaneously)
maximize the value of downtown property (the most expensive in the city). The fruition of this conver-
sion would take several years, as the City struggled to find an appropriate developer. The first prospective
developer, the UK-based Woking Group, overwhelmed the City’s own towering ambitions for the down-
town with its submission of massive-scale proposal. It proposed a complex that would include two 30-
storey office towers, a 30-storey hotel, and six apartment buildings of 30-40 storeys each. When the City
balked, the Group returned to the drawing board, but then struggled and failed to secure financial backing
for a second, more modest proposal.

In 1964, with the cleared site still an empty crater, a local firm called Halifax Developments In-
corporated (HDI) was formed under the combined leadership and capital investment of Nova Scotia’s ten
wealthiest business magnates, and the firm entered immediately into negotiations with the City to develop
the downtown site. After its “Scotia Square” development proposal controversially won a City-issued
call for proposals the following year, HDI was set to begin work. The firm initially sought to retain the

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13 The plan to bulldoze the “old north end” is discussed in Halifax, Master Plan; Halifax, Halifax 10 Year Development Plan (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1950; Stephenson, Redevelopment Study. The proportion of African Nova Scotians living in this neighbourhood is estimated in Institute of Public Affairs, The Condition of the Negroes of Halifax City, Nova Scotia: A Study (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dal-
housie University, 1962).
14 Halifax, Master Plan, 38; Halifax, 10 Year Development, 7; Stephenson, Redevelopment Study, 25-26.
15 Pacey, Citadel Hill.
16 Collier, Cathedrals, 160.
services of IM Pei, the influential, modernist architect of Montreal’s Place Ville Marie (among other buildings), but was rebuffed. It settled for Boston-based Carl Koch, an architect whose modernist credentials were ample (he was a close associate of Bauhaus co-founder Walter Gropius), but had thus far applied his skills largely in the design of suburban homes and subdivisions.17

Koch’s design for Scotia Square, by far the largest-scale that he had yet produced, would saturate the 14 acre site with a complex of interconnected towers: three 14-storey office buildings, a 10-storey hotel, three 12-storey apartment buildings, and a shopping mall anchored by a department store and a grocery store. The development would fully eliminate two East-West streets and sever three major North-South streets (creating a major barrier between the North End and the downtown). The new towers were constructed one by one, a methodical march toward progress for some Halifax residents, but a dawning horror for residents who were unprepared for the actual impact of Scotia Square upon the city’s skyline and who perceived the new concrete towers as an assault upon the downtown’s squat, stone-built architectural character (see Figure 5).18

This first assault (for those who perceived it as such) was quickly becoming a bombardment, as an emerging development industry began to take up the task of buying up and leveling older buildings. Between 1964 and 1966, five major downtown sites were cleared for development, each of which had previously been occupied by eight of more older buildings.19 Upon these sites, a phalanx of concrete towers would emerge upon the skyline alongside Scotia Square: the 12-storey Centennial Building, the 13-storey Citadel Inn, the 13-storey Royal Bank building, and the 17-storey Bank of Montreal building.20 None of these towers would be giant by the standards of larger cities. New office towers in Toronto and Montreal were often three times taller, and Ottawa-based developer and CMHC head Robert Campeau lambasted Halifax for putting up “uneconomically” miniscule, low-density structures.21 Taken together, however, the imposition of these towers upon the form and style of Halifax’s relatively compact down-

18 Erikson, *North End*, 80; Pacey, *Citadel Hill*.
19 Pacey, *Citadell Hill*; Collier, *Cathedrals*.
20 Collier, *Cathedrals*.
21 Ibid.
town was substantial. For some residents, as I describe below, the trajectory of development was fast de-
spoiling the aesthetic, architectural, and historic character of the city. Considerations like these were vir-
tually absent from the conception of post-war planning, but they happened to matter very much to some
people.

The coordinated destruction of the physical and social form of the city was related, as well, to the
problem of transportation. Post-war planners in Halifax sought to improve the circulation of existing traf-
fic, as well as accommodate increases in traffic that were expected to occur as the population expanded
and the urban footprint sprawled outward.\textsuperscript{22} Some circulation-improving measures were modest and re-
quired no great disruption to people’s lives. Concluding that “[traffic] congestion” was often the result of
“unnecessary interference” on important streets, the \textit{Master Plan} recommended the elimination of curb-
side parking, the sequestering of delivery-making to the back (or side) of buildings, and the shifting of
shopping related pedestrian traffic on streets like Gottingen, Agricola, and Quinpool to dedicated shop-

\textsuperscript{22} For an early view, see Halifax, \textit{Master Plan}, 29.
ping complexes with in-front parking lots.\textsuperscript{23} By removing “interferences,” these measures would establish streets as the domain of (automobile) traffic, and would thereby improve circulation without the destruction of buildings that would accompany other planning initiatives.

Proposed alongside these measures, however, was the construction of several new roadways, and (eventually) the development of an expanded, integrated transportation system.\textsuperscript{24} The fulfillment of this vision would certainly require the destruction of homes and other buildings, and this was, at times, considered not so much an acceptable cost, but a valued side-benefit. The \textit{Master Plan}, for example, proposed the construction of a diagonal roadway cutting through the “old North End” to the ferry terminal in the downtown core (see Figure 5.6). According to the \textit{Plan}, the road would not only “facilitat[e] movement to and from the main business district,” but also dispense with considerable slum housing and “add to the value of the properties through which [the road would] pass.”\textsuperscript{25} The transportation system that eventually came into favour among Halifax planners and City officials would include at least two new bridges (one across the Halifax Harbour, the other across the Northwest Arm); several road-widenings; and the construction of a major “feeder” expressway that would be called “Harbour Drive” (see Figure 5.7). The new expressway, first proposed in the \textit{Stephenson Report}, was planned to conduct six or more lanes of traffic from a new harbour-spanning bridge at the North of the city all the way to the container terminal in the South (passing through the downtown core along the way). The first steps toward the realization of this plan were taken in 1963, when City Council borrowed $150,000 to acquire intervening properties and begin to construct a major interchange (now known as the Cogswell Interchange) just East of the former downtown slum.\textsuperscript{26} The following year, Council borrowed another $500,000 to acquire more properties and commission an engineering study for the northern section of the Drive.\textsuperscript{27}

As laid out in the study, the path of the expressway would tear through many existing structures. Historic commercial buildings in the downtown would be demolished (or else “dismantle[d] and recon-

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\textsuperscript{23} Halifax, \textit{Master Plan}, 29.
\textsuperscript{24} The first clear plan for an expanded transportation system appears in Halifax, \textit{Central Business District – Draft Development Plan} (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1964).
\textsuperscript{25} Halifax, \textit{Master Plan}, 14, 8.
\textsuperscript{26} Halifax, “Letter from Byars to Mayor and Development Committee,” 5 March 1965, \textit{Development Department Records}, Halifax Regional Municipality Archives (hereafter cited as HRMA), RG 102-41 (B16).
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Figure 5.6 Proposed “diagonal road” leading from North Street intersection to downtown ferry terminal, 1945. City of Halifax, *The Master Plan for the City of Halifax as Prepared by the Civic Planning Commission* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1945), 66. Image courtesy of HRMA.

Figure 5.7 “Harbour Drive Proposal,” 1963. Harbour Drive denoted as a thick dotted line running along harbour at bottom of the map. City of Halifax Engineering and Works Department Plans, HRMA, RG 35-102-39P, plan no. SS-10-15719. Image courtesy of HRMA.
“structured” on a new site) so that road curvatures of over four degrees, and corresponding traffic slowing,
would be avoided. Commercial and military facilities on the harbour would be eliminated for the con-
struction of a major on-ramp (facilities that would, perhaps, be recreated further north by dumping con-
struction waste into the harbour, and thereby reclaiming an equivalent area of land). A significant group
of low-income residences (eventually estimated to house 80-100 families) would need to be eliminated.
And part of a public housing complex – just recently completed and home to many people who had been
displaced from other post-war planning projects – would be partly taken over and dismantled. For many
City officials and business groups, Harbour Drive was the centre-piece of the envisioned transportation
system and the sine qua non of a functioning, growing city. Further progress on the expressway would be
averted, however, as a result of new oppositional movements that I discuss later on.

Post-War Planning and Biopolitics

The post-war transformation of Halifax, of course, had clear parallels in other cities. A relatively consis-
tent program of “urban renewal” – encompassing slum clearance, large-scale property developments, and
vastly expanded and reorganized transportation systems – had been implemented in the 1940s and 50s in
cities across Canada, the United States, and beyond. These parallels derived, in large part, from the pro-
grams’ common institutional backing and relatively similar conceptual underpinnings. Institutionally, the
Federal National Housing Act (and its implementing body, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corpora-

D.3), 15-16.
29 Ibid.
32 The literature on urban renewal is justifiably vast. For seminal contributions on the Canadian experi-
ence, see Bacher, Keeping to the Marketplace; Margaret Rockwell, “The facelift and the wrecking ball: Urban renewal and Hamilton’s King Street West, 1957-1971,” Urban History Review 37, no. 2 (2009):
53-61; Roger Picton “Selling national urban renewal: The National Film Board, the National Capital
Commission, and post-war planning in Ottawa, Canada,” Urban History 37, no. 2 (2010): 301-321; Sean
Purdy, “Framing Regent Park: The National Film Board of Canada and the Construction of ‘Outcast
Spaces’ in the Inner City, 1953 to 1994,” Media, Culture, and Society 27, no. 4 (2005): 523-549; Graham
Fraser, Fighting Back: Urban Renewal in Trefann Court (Toronto, ON: Hakkert, 1972); Humphrey
Carver, Compassionate Landscape (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Richard Harris, “A
social movement in urban politics: A reinterpretation of urban reform in Canada,” International Journal
tion) provided at least half the funding for all major post-war slum clearance programs. This funding was channelled to 45 Canadian cities between 1946 and 1968, and helped to propel the clearing of over 1,500 acres of urban land.\textsuperscript{33} The initial version of the NHA (1946) restricted Federal funding to clearance projects that would result in the construction of low-income housing in the same location, and it was little-used by Canadian municipalities. (Only Toronto took advantage of this version of the NHA, demolishing a 69-acre area of Cabbagetown to construct the Regent Park public housing project in 1952.\textsuperscript{34}) In 1956, the restrictions in the Housing Act were loosened; cleared sites could now be rebuilt according to their “highest and best use.” With this amendment, clearance projects were soon launched in Halifax, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, and several smaller cities. Further changes to the NHA in 1964 made funding available for expressway projects that would carry traffic to redeveloped areas. This provision would aid the construction of Harbour Drive in Halifax, the Ville-Marie expressway in Montreal, and the first phase of the Spadina expressway in Toronto (the later phases being halted by protests).\textsuperscript{35}

While the majority of funding for urban renewal projects came from a single source (the CMHC), the conceptual underpinnings of these projects were derived from more dispersed sources. As Klemek suggests, post-war planning in North America was guided by ideas and aims that had emerged in the first half of the twentieth century and had become widely accepted on both sides of the North Atlantic by the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{36} Consistent with this perspective, post-war planning was enabled by newly available Federal funding, but guided by forms of knowledge and power that had been coming into place for decades. Like the planning initiatives that I have examined in earlier chapters, those of the post-war period sought to achieve positive effects on the overall population through the rearrangement of space.

\textsuperscript{33} Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill, \textit{Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community} (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1999).
Planning, here as elsewhere, would operate as a technology of biopolitical power. Examining the major planning documents and debates of this period, I want to suggest that three specific elements were particularly significant in allowing biopolitical planning initiatives to be conceived and implemented. The three elements are calculation, efficiency, and population. I discuss each one in turn.

Central to the conception of post-war planning, to begin with, was a vast registry of quantitative data, as well as the seldom-questioned assumption that planning decisions could be derived from a proper analysis of this data. The 1945 *Master Plan* was paradigmatic in this sense. Aiming to adjudicate “the best use ... of land available in the city,”37 the report’s authors gathered together property assessment data for several areas of the city and compared the average value of “improvements” in each area to the average value of the subtending “land.” This calculation was evidently enough to allow the authors to apprehend and evaluate the prevailing uses of land in the city; they were able, that is, to differentiate between areas that were achieving the best use of land and areas that were not. Beneath a table in which improvement-value to land-value ratios are presented, the report concludes that “the foregoing figures clearly indicate the necessity for a slum clearance and adequate [re]housing program” in areas of less-than-best land use (i.e., areas where a low ratio prevailed, such as most of the low-income North End).38

This submersion of decision-making within a world of numbers was carried forward, and carried further, by the 1957 *Stephenson Report*. Drawing on data from every imaginable source – the Canadian Census, the Tuberculosis Hospital, the Department of Health and Welfare, the Juvenile Court, the Police and Fire Departments, the Assessment Office, and others – the Report provides a wide-ranging quantitative representation of people and spaces. Tables of data are presented; the data are (is some cases) spatialized on topographical maps; and the results are understood as providing a thorough and definite assessment of the city. Areas of high property values can be differentiated from areas of low values; areas of good health can be set apart from areas of poor health; through mathematical operations (see Figure 5.8), it even becomes possible to quantify and map such characteristics as “overcrowding” and “unwholesome sanitary conditions.”

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Observable in this reliance on quantitative data is a rationality that I earlier termed “calculation” – a way of thinking that perceives the world as quantitatively intelligible and that favours decisions that are derived from a quantitative or mathematical analysis of real-world conditions. A well-recognized feature of post-war planning in North American cities, “calculation” was also revered by the pioneers of the planning profession a half century earlier. In post-war Halifax, City officials seem to have yearned for quan-

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titative data, and seem to have been frozen without a sufficient amount. The findings of the Master Plan, for example, clearly impressed City Council, but they were not enough to proceed with a slum clearance program. For many Councillors, a more detailed “housing study” was required to guide and justify such a significant and inevitably controversial endeavour.\(^{40}\) (The 1957 Stephenson Report seems to have filled this need.) As this suggests, calculation provides a valuable support for political decision-making. One of its major effects is to enable otherwise complex and contentious issues like the “best use” of urban land to be channeled through an ostensibly factual and value-free procedure. From a table of data, anyone can see that some areas of the city are achieving the best use of land and others are not. (The figures “clearly indicate” this conclusion.) Calculation thus imparts a way of knowing – a way of knowing what to do and where to do it – without endless and wide-ranging debate among elected officials, the bureaucracy, or the public at large. Political direction can be obtained through calculation. Planning, in the post-war period, could scarcely have proceeded without it.

But numbers and number-crunching were not the only guideposts to a better city. Indeed, they could not be, for the quantities themselves say nothing intrinsically about what should be done, or how they should be read.\(^{41}\) Also crucial to planning documents and discussions of this period, then, was a conception of what the city might become, and how planning might bring this city into being. This element is observable, most immediately, in a series of hand-drawn images that are distributed throughout the Master Plan and Stephenson Report, and that offer an optimistic and tantalizing look at the world that planning might soon create: a world of new commercial spaces, with a tailor, a cobbler, and a green grocer located together in a single complex (see Figure 5.9 and 5.10); a world of streets heading directly from their starting point to their end point, with fewer street-crossing pedestrians, delivery vehicles, and parallel-parking cars to impede the flow of traffic; a world, above all, in which the mistakes of the past have been left behind by a well-conceived urban transformation and a rationally guided course of future development. For City officials, this vision of the future was clearly tinged with optimism, as well as

\(^{40}\) Paterson, “Slum Clearance,” 32-34.

\(^{41}\) A low ratio of improvement-value to land-value may differentiate one area of the city from another, for example, but it is only on the basis of some evaluative logic, or some ideal, that this ratio can be interpreted as a problem, and thus point toward a definite course of planning action.
Figure 5.9 “Community Shopping Centre,” 1945. Overhead view. City of Halifax, *The Master Plan for the City of Halifax as Prepared by the Civic Planning Commission* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1945), 64. Image courtesy of HRMA.

Figure 5.10 “Community Shopping Centre,” 1945. Horizontal view. City of Halifax, *The Master Plan for the City of Halifax as Prepared by the Civic Planning Commission* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1945), 65. Image courtesy of HRMA.
trepidation: optimism about the better city that might soon be created; trepidation that other cities, especially larger cities, had already moved toward such a future condition, and that Halifax was falling behind.  

While a better future was plainly evoked in planning images and optimistic-trepidatious speech, the assumed means of achieving this better future was more subtly disclosed. More than anything else, a better urban future was assumed to be achievable in this period through a logic of “efficiency” – through an assessment of the city in terms of efficiency, that is, and through planning interventions that would implant efficiency within the workings of the city. As others have noted, efficiency is an historically variable logic that, in its broad, twentieth-century application, generally refers to the optimization of performance within a “system” through the attenuation, or elimination, of wasted capacity.  

A concern with efficiency was, of course, central to a range of early twentieth-century endeavours (from business management to urban planning); and it was a machine-like logic of efficiency that influential modernists like Le Corbusier hoped to implant in the inner workings of the city.  

For Gordon Stephenson, author of the eponymous 1957 report and a former student of Le Corbusier’s, efficiency was the overriding imperative of planned development. Concretely, this would entail: capitalizing on high-value land (by putting high-value improvements upon it); separating residential, commercial, and industrial land uses into distinct zones (where an “intermixture” of land uses would not create “obstacles to healthy growth”); and promoting the smooth circulation of automobile traffic (within and between the three zones). These were, as Stephenson conceded, very technical measures, and not very inspiring in themselves. However, they were also the principal means of optimizing the urban sys-

\[42\] See Jill Grant, The Drama of Democracy: Contention and Dispute in Community Planning (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 59.  
\[46\] On Stephenson’s education, see Paterson, “Slum Clearance,” 9.  
\[47\] Stephenson, Redevelopment Study, 27.
tem, of replacing the “vicissitudes” of earlier urban development with “new healthy growth,” and thus of bringing about an urban future that could be inspiring (especially when evoked in images and speech, rather than tables of data and technical instructions). This was the promise of efficiency. The mere passage of time could lead anywhere. It was through the elimination of “vicissitudes” and introduction of efficiency, in contrast, that time could bring something better into being.

The shape of post-war urban planning would be incomplete without one final element. Whereas calculation makes spaces and people intelligible, and efficiency provides a logic though which the condition of spaces and people can be evaluated and (conceivably) improved, the final element – “the population” – indicates the overall concern of planning. Post-war planning was a practice of population management. While planning was applied to spatial conditions, its aim (in doing so) was to achieve certain effects at the level of the population. Consistently, these desired effects in post-war Halifax pertained to the size and growth of the population; its level of health and social adaptation (as measured by rates of crime, unemployment, and so on); and, above all, its “general welfare.” Throughout the planning documents and discussions of this period, a connection between spatial conditions and the population was invoked, and this connection served as the overarching rationale for concerted planning efforts.

This assumed connection was, in some cases, presented in simple, uni-directional terms. The existence of slums, for example, could constitute “a drain on the resources of the community and [be] detrimental to the welfare of the entire city,” while a positive planning measure like zoning could “promot[e] the health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of the population.” In other cases, the connection was conceived in more complex terms, with planning needing to respond to changes in the population as well as create certain changes. Consistent with Foucault’s suggestion that “the population” is often conceived to have its own internal processes that need to be apprehended and accommodated (even as biopolitical power aims to induce processes and effects in the population), the Stephenson Report traces a complex chain of consequences that run between the population and spatial conditions. Noting that the population is expected to increase three-fold between 1957 and 1980, for example, the Report explains

48 Stephenson, Redevelopment Study, 6.
49 Halifax, Master Plan, 53.
50 Halifax, Master Plan, 37.
that spatial conditions are likely to become overcrowded (without concerned planning efforts); a higher rate of spatial crowding, in turn, is likely to result in higher rates of crime, ill-health, and unemployment in the population. As this suggests, planning finds its purpose in responding to the population and managing the population, in creating positive effects and staving-off negative effects. Indeed, much of the rationale for planning in this period was linked to the sense that a disaster would ensue without planning – that individuals would experience “hardship” and “misery,” that the municipality and local businesses would incur financial costs in proportion to this hardship and misery, and that the city as a whole would fall behind other cities, enter a trajectory of decline, and cease to exist in its accustomed form. Planning, in this period, is both an aspiration for something better, as well as search for protection, self-repair, and preservation.

Hence, the now-familiar paradox of modern, biopolitical planning: that its capacity for undermining and damaging human life is conjoined with a fundamental concern with preserving and protecting life. This persistent coupling of damage and protection is related, I would suggest, to a pair of characteristics of biopolitics. First, life is apprehended in this configuration of knowledge and power not in its concrete and particular manifestations, but rather at an abstract and aggregate level. It is apprehended as qualities or variations within the population, as rates of crime and juvenile delinquency, as levels of overall health and welfare, as percentages of unemployment. There is nothing in this formulation to say that damage to certain individuals could not be coupled with an overall, aggregate improvement in these characteristics. There is, as Foucault suggests, a “caesura” between the phenomenon of the population and concrete individuals. As a result of this caesura, a measure like “housing conditions” can be improved, even as a vast number of homes are destroyed, and a great many individuals are left without a home or forced to flee the city entirely.

Such a damaging outcome is all the more likely, given the second major characteristic of biopolitics: that perceived threats to life, as well as opportunities to improve life, are generally understood as departures from defined standards, averages, or norms. It is, for example, by identifying less-than-best uses of land than an improvement in overall land use (and a corresponding improvement in life) can be con-

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51 Stephenson, Redevelopment Study.
ceived; it is by isolating and eliminating areas of relatively high crime rates, overcrowding, or “unwholesome sanitary conditions” that overall social and spatial conditions can be improved. Crucially, because problem areas are defined in relative terms, as departures from norms that change as overall conditions change, they are never finally eliminated. Departures from norms are ever present. There ever remains, consequently, an opportunity to improve life, an imperative to protect life, or both. Biopolitical planning, as Foucault would suggest, is a practice not just of purification, but of “permanent purification.” The violence of post-war planning can be related, I would suggest, to this interminable imperative.  

**Opposition to Post-War Planning**

If the operation of post-war planning was meant to improve collective life in Halifax, it was certainly not perceived as fulfilling this aim (or even having this as its aim) by all city residents. By the mid-1960s, the first stirring of what would become a broad-based challenge to this configuration of planning had begun to take shape. Three opponents of post-war planning, I would suggest, were especially significant.

The first significant oppositional group was concerned largely with the apparent decline of the downtown core, or rather the decline of certain economic sectors (once) located there. The post-war period had, of course, greatly expanded the extent and concentration of business management and administration activities downtown. (The phalanx of new office towers, their leasable space largely occupied, was proof of that.) At the same time, however, other economic activities languished. The old port, once the heart of the Halifax mercantile economy, was fast becoming an empty shell: ocean-bound shipping activities had either ceased to exist or shifted to the new container terminal south of the downtown; light manufacturing had largely migrated to inland locations in Dartmouth; and the old warehouses and workshops on the Halifax Harbour were thus becoming vacant. A more vexing change, it seems, was transpiring in downtown retailing. The opening of new indoor shopping spaces (especially Scotia Square) had lured some retail activity away from the downtown’s long-important shopping streets. Meanwhile, the

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arrival of new suburban malls was pulling retail activity away from the downtown entirely. As a result of these two movements, the viability of downtown retail (aside from the new malls) seemed to be in peril – a condition registered in newly gathered statistics, in boarded-up storefronts along Barrington Street, and in the symbolically significant migration of the Eaton’s department store from the downtown to the suburban Halifax Shopping Centre in 1964.

While planning was far from fully responsible for these conditions – the suburbanization of retail, for example, had much to do with the broad, multi-city strategies of corporate retailers and property developers – neither was it entirely innocent. Planning had been explicitly committed, for one thing, to decreasing the residential population of the downtown while concentrating new residential development in the suburbs. That suburbanites might not make the trip downtown to shop, and that new suburban malls might make it especially easy not to, had not been seriously considered. (Or, rather, the construction of more efficient roadways was supposed to ensure that the suburbs and the downtown would support each other, despite the distance between them.) Planning, though only partly responsible for the condition of the downtown, could be called on to respond. If the downtown was to remain the commercial and symbolic centre of Halifax, a new approach to planning would need to be devised.

The major advocate of a new approach to planning in the downtown core was a longstanding but usually inactive lobby group called the Halifax Downtown Business Association (HDBA). Revived and renamed in 1968 – it had been known as the Downtown Business and Professional Men’s Association – the HDBA began to petition the City to address the worsening predicament of downtown retailers. The City’s most significant response to these petitions occurred in 1971, when it moved to form an ad-hoc Downtown Committee (with the HDBA as one of its members). Under the auspices of the Downtown Committee, a series of workshops and public forums on the future of the downtown were convened; plan-

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ning studies were undertaken; and, gradually, a new vision of what the downtown could be was created.\textsuperscript{57} One of the Committee’s most important proposals was to leave behind the post-war fixation with covering the downtown terrain with the highest-possible-value land uses, and to aim instead to create a “varied urban centre” – a mixed-use landscape of office buildings, arts and entertainment venues, civic spaces, hotels, and even new housing units.\textsuperscript{58}

The end goal of all this variety, as a series of reports makes clear, was to lure people downtown, to put people on downtown streets during the daytime as well as at night. The aim was to use planning to create a “lively, vibrant” environment that would draw people downtown “to work, live, and enjoy themselves” no matter how inconvenient it might be to get there.\textsuperscript{59} A mix of attractions, and an attention to the overall urban experience that their juxtaposition created, was thought to be one way of fulfilling this aim and (thus) reviving the downtown. In this emphasis on the experience of urban space, and how planning might help to create a particularly attractive experience, the Committee was suggesting something subtly new. It was pointing planning beyond its prevailing focus on quantifiable characteristics and machine-like efficiency. And it would soon be joined by others in making this gesture.

A second form of opposition to post-war urban planning focused on the aesthetic qualities of the city, as well as the ostensible harms committed against the latter by the post-war planning regime. At issue here, first of all, was the ongoing destruction of the old commercial and residential buildings that, for some Haligonians, had contributed significantly to the city’s unique and appealing character: squat, stone office buildings from the 1860s and 70s; older stone and shingle-clad warehouses on the edge of the Harbour; and various old mansions and smaller, architecturally distinctive private residences around the city. By the late 1960s, many old buildings of this kind had already been destroyed, and many more were in the path of projected development. The new structures that were emerging in the place of the old, moreover, were seen (by some) as exhibiting no discernible relationship to the city’s existing character or his-\textsuperscript{57} See Halifax, \textit{Minutes}, 16 September 1971, 561; \textit{Minutes}, 10 November 1971, 650; “Letter from CE Babb, Director of Planning, to members of the Downtown Committee,” 18 September 1971, Town Planning Board Reports, HRMA, RG 102-40 (D.15); Halifax, \textit{What Kind of Downtown Do We Want?} (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax, 1972).
\textsuperscript{58} Halifax, \textit{What Kind of Downtown}.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
tory and tended to create an obstruction to the prevailing view of the Halifax Harbour from the top of Citadel Hill (the city’s tallest point, a fort-topped mound just west of downtown).

Highlighting and contesting these manifold threats to the city’s historical and aesthetic character was an organization called Heritage Trust. Formed in 1959, the Trust started out with rather small ambitions. Its first action was to contest the demolition of a Georgian mansion in the city’s South End (slated to become the site of a new Saint Mary’s University ice rink), and its early history followed this pattern in seeking the protection of individual, architecturally meritorious buildings. By the late 1960s, however, the Trust had broadened its focus – contesting, now, not just the destruction of individual buildings, but also the overall form of urban development in the city. The Trust’s major impact in Halifax stemmed from a series of specific measures that it fought to institute, as well as a new sensibility that it sought to bring to the art of city-making. Two of the significant measures that it advocated were, first, the establishment of recognized “view planes” that would ban the construction of high-rise buildings in certain downtown areas and thereby preserve the visibility of parts of Halifax Harbour from the top of Citadel Hill; and second, the institution of heritage designations for an inventory of (ostensibly) significant local buildings that would prevent their outright demolition, as well as require certain standards of upkeep.

The group’s broader impact in Halifax was to bring attention to the existing visual and historic qualities of the city, and to insist that they were worth preserving. In taking this position, the Trust was part of a broader North American movement of urban heritage preservationists that was in the midst of challenging and reworking the configuration of planning. One of the venues through which the Trust would promote a new conception of planning was the above-mentioned Downtown Committee (of which the Trust was eventually named a member). Its work on the Committee helped to bring explicit attention to an emerging planning approach: “environmental design.” The aim of “design,” in the case of the Halifax downtown, would be to ensure that all future development was “in harmony and in scale with the ex-

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61 Pacey, *Citadel Hill*; Renwick, “City Building.”
62 See, Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*. 

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isting [environment],” that the “historic character” and available “views” were preserved, and that an overall sense of “visual pleasure” was produced. Like the HDBA, the Trust focused attention on the qualitative experience of urban space. However, rather than advocating a certain mix of land uses (and a resulting “liveliness” and “vibrance”), the Trust emphasized the visual enjoyment and meaning of space. This gesture too, while it was never wholly absent from post-war planning, would gradually help to push planning in a new direction.

While the HDBA and Heritage Trust focused on the qualitative experience of space, and the effects of planning upon it, a third opposition group sought to address the social and racial consequences of post-war planning. Planning had, after all, impacted more than the distribution of retailing and the prevailing built form. It had also remade the social conditions of the city and inflicted considerable damage upon certain people’s lives. As some activists would point out, low-income and racialized populations were continually being displaced from their homes (either as an end in itself, or to make way for some-such necessary urban structure); the new low-income housing being contributed was both inadequate in its extent (far fewer units were produced than destroyed by planning) as well as unsuitable in its form; and the overall trajectory of urban development was clearly delivering benefits to the already-privileged at the expense of the already-marginalized.

Among an array of new social and racial justice organizations formed in the 1960s, the most influential was the Black United Front. Established in 1968, BUF was the product of turbulent times for the city’s black population. Africville had just been destroyed; the remaining Halifax black settlements in the “Old North End” had been marked for destruction in several planning reports; and an emerging Black Power movement in North America (and worldwide) was bringing new ideas and new energy to black resistance in Halifax (resistance that had existed, in various forms, for a century or longer). The most immediate catalyst for the establishment of BUF was a visit to Halifax by members of the Black Panther

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63 Halifax, Minutes, 16 September 1971, 561.
Party in October 1968. The visit had come at the invitation of the young radical Rocky Jones, who was a friend of Stokely Carmichael and had met members of the BPP at the watershed 1968 Black Writers Congress in Montreal. Once in Halifax, the Panthers compared the situation to their hometown of Oakland, California, and advocated a more militant challenge to white supremacy in the city than existing organizations, like the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP), were then offering. What made the new group a “united front,” however, was its inclusion of diverse political positions, and its politics thus emerged somewhere between the radicalism of Jones and the moderation of NSAACP-founder Rev. William Oliver.

BUF’s opposition to post-war planning was incisive and thorough. Its activist activities, in its first few years, included fighting for reparations for displaced Africville residents, petitioning to have tenant representatives added to the board of the City’s public housing commission, and protesting at least two (allegedly) racist hiring decisions at City Hall (one of them in the Department of Planning). In addition to specific battles, BUF advanced a broad critique of the racial and class dimensions of post-war urban development. The latter, for BUF, was little more than a prolonged process of displacing black and low-income residents from the downtown core (and, soon, the old North End), and confining the evictees in far-off, prison-like public housing projects on the periphery. “In brief,” a BUF report explained, “the center of Halifax and the old northern suburb [are being] saved for the developer. The Blacks and the poor Whites [will be] contained and supervised in ... housing schemes [that] serve as prevention against [them] moving into surrounding suburbs.”

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67 On Oliver’s impressive activist career, see Colin Thomson, Born with a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver (Halifax, NS: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986).
While targeting urban planners and developers, BUF also looked beyond them. It took aim at the various unofficial or informal processes of spatial regulation that, in their racial and class effects, exacerbated the work of planners and developers. Landlords, BUF pointed out, would often refuse tenancy to black residents; businesses would often refuse to provide service; and racist hiring practices among local employers were rampant. These problems existed in much of the city, BUF noted, but were especially pronounced in the downtown core, a terrain that it claimed was circumscribed by a “colour line” that was consistently, albeit “quietly enforced.” Though a whole range of practices, therefore, the city was in the midst of being made unlivable for many residents. BUF, more than any other local organization, attested to the vast inequalities and routine violence of post-war planning. It spoke, in a sense, for those who inhabited the unrecognized far-side of a biopolitical caesura: the racialized and low-income groups whose lives were neither protected nor improved by post-war planning – whose lives were disrupted, wrecked, and ravaged, perversely, in the name of collective life. This challenge to planning, too, would have significant effects in Halifax.

5.3 A Reorganization of the Public

Ongoing conflict over urban planning in Halifax would be significantly influenced, in its form and content, by the involvement of certain state institutions, particularly the Nova Scotia Planning Secretariat. Formed in 1967, the Secretariat was a novel (and ultimately short-lived) institution. One of its roles was to bring some coherence to the development programs of the two upper levels of government, and its unconventional institutional structure reflected this mediating role: while funded by the Federal Fund for Rural Economic Development and directed by Federal-level bureaucrats, the Secretariat was concerned primarily with provincial-scale projects and was expected to work closely with the Provincial Premier’s office. For nearly four years the Secretariat played a major role in the political life of Halifax. One of its foremost ambitions, as we will see, was to implement a new form of urban development in Halifax. It was a form of development that would entail a new conception of how urban space ought to be managed, as

70 “In the Panthers’ Wake.”
71 “Black Power.”
well as a new structure of political-decision making. In terms of the latter, crucially, part of the Secretariat’s vision was to involve the public more directly in planning decisions. It saw a role, in particular, for a more vocal and well-organized citizenry, and it was ultimately in the Secretariat’s attempt to mould and channel existing activism in Halifax into this particular, prescribed role that it would have its most significant effects in the city.

The Secretariat brought a new approach to a decades-old problem: the underdevelopment of the Atlantic Provinces. The latter had been recognized as a serious problem by the Federal government as early as 1935, and had been targeted by a succession of Federal programs thereafter. The general strategy, especially for the 1969-founded Department of Regional Economic Expansion, was to channel Federal development spending into a few choice locations with the hope of creating scale-based efficiencies (or “agglomeration economies”) in these locations and bringing indirect benefits (or “spread effects”) to the surrounding region. This strategy, usually called a “growth centre” or “growth pole” approach, was flatly rejected by the Secretariat. For the Secretariat’s head planner, Leonard Poetschke, the idea of growth centres was a fantasy and a distraction; it was a “theoretical abstraction,” in his words, with “no basis in reality.” Rather than growth centres, the new institution sought to identity and support the province’s foremost economic opportunities, wherever they were located. This turned most eyes toward Halifax. “Halifax was the opportunity,” Poetschke recalls. “It was far enough away from New York and Boston ... far enough away from Montreal” that it could develop independently (rather than serving a larger city); and, unlike smaller cities in Nova Scotia (that might also be distant from Boston), Halifax was big enough “to generate the economic activity that makes a city: [corporate] headquarters and business services.” The strategy, then, was to turn Halifax into a hub for headquarters and services, to make it a “human resource economy,” as one of the institution’s advisors described it.

Making Halifax into a human resource economy was clearly an ambitious project. It would require, most dauntingly, the promotion of a kind of prolonged, self-reinforcing cycle of population and

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73 Interview with Leonard Poetschke, 22 July 2009.
74 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.
employment growth. Through the culmination of such a cycle, the Secretariat reasoned, Halifax could eventually reach a population of 500,000 residents: the minimum size for a human resource economy (in the Secretariat’s calculation), and a three-fold increase from the city’s 1970 situation. Some of this population would be drawn from the region’s economically depressed small towns and fishing villages; Halifax, Poetschke told the local press, was to become “a magnet” for “the thousands of people leaving Atlantic Canada’s rural areas each year.” It was also considered important, however, that Halifax attract a high proportion of “highly educated” residents. It was the latter that would ostensibly entice “sophisticated enterprises” to locate in Halifax. As a magnet for elite workers and firms, Halifax was thought to have many assets. It had a collection of strong educational institutions, an existing, relatively large community of skilled managers and professionals, and an attractive coastal environment. What the city now needed, the Secretariat concluded, was a form of urban planning that would capitalize on its existing assets, that would make the city yet more attractive to elite workers and firms.

The most important change that the Secretariat hoped to introduce was a new form of decision-making on planning issues. Part of this change involved the creation of a new, regional-level administrative body called the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC). Formed in 1969, and funded by the Secretariat, MAPC was overseen by a pair of elected officials (each) from Halifax and two neighbouring municipalities, and was tasked with carrying out planning and policy-making at this wider scale. When, in 1970, the Federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion earmarked $200 million for infrastructure projects in the Halifax area, it was MAPC that was expected to channel this money into the appropriate places. Paired with MAPC, in the Secretariat’s vision, was the creation of a more vocal and well-organized “community” that would formulate planning-related demands, communicate these de-

75 “Dull jargon kills enthusiasm,” no date, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (hereafter cited as MAPC) Records, HRMA, RG 102 (S2.3).
77 Ibid.
79 “Major role for metro area planning group,” 19 June 1970, MAPC Records, HRMA, RG 102 (S2.3).
mands to MAPC (and other state institutions), and thereby provide “a strong, permanent feed-in to the planning process.” As the Secretariat-produced diagram in Figure 5.11 indicates, the two parts of the new decision-making structure were meant to fit together neatly and synergistically: the community would make its interests known from “the bottom,” while MAPC would devise appropriate planning and policy solutions at “the top.”

For the Secretariat, this two-part change in decision-making structure was sought for many reasons. As the urban region continued to grow, Poetschke believed, planning programs undertaken by individual municipalities would become increasingly inefficient and inadequate. Poetschke’s interest in community engagement, meanwhile, was stoked by the participatory processes that he had recently been involved with in Australia, and was consistent with the larger turn toward participation that was occurring in North American cities at the time. Based on what he had seen elsewhere, Poetschke was convinced that real, long-term change in a city only occurs when the community demands it. Another, related rationale for the changes stemmed from the Secretariat’s assessment that the existing political establishment in Halifax would cling to the planning status quo, rather than rework planning practices to attract elite workers and shift toward a human resource economy. A political shakeup, especially one emanating from “the bottom,” was seen as means to an end: a basic, fundamental condition of broad social and economic changes. Through the actions of organized citizens, planning priorities and practices would shift, a larger and more skilled population would be created, and significant economic development would ensue.

An important moment in the reconfiguration of planning practices in Halifax was a week-long public event convened by the Secretariat in January 1971. The event, dubbed Encounter on the Urban Environment, took urban planning into the public domain as never before in Halifax. At the forefront of Encounter Week were twelve “urban experts” – the “twelve apostles,” they were sometimes called – who were hand-picked by the Secretariat and flown in from across North America to advise the Halifax community. Among the dozen, the most significant were Ed Logue (former mayor of Boston), Lucius Walker (director of the New York-based Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization), and Benjamin

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80 “Kentville Huddle Huge Success,” 4 March 1971, MAPC Records, HRMA, RG 102 (S2.3).
81 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.
82 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.
Figure 5.11 The Secretariat’s model of public participation. MAPC at top, proto-MOVE organization at bottom. MAPC Records, 1970-1972, HRMA, RG 35-102-52-2. Image courtesy of HRMA.
Higgins (professor of economics at University of Montreal). While the experts were expected to speak and advise, they were also expected to listen, to hear what the community believed its major problems to be. Aiming to secure such a match between experts ideas and community-level demands, the event was divided into two main parts. Each day, during the day, the experts would discuss the city’s major issues with Halifax community organizations – the latter being organized, for the event, into 35 issue-specific groups – while each night, the experts would present their thoughts (and solutions) to the broader community at a public forum. The nightly forums were attended by hundreds of residents, while thousands of others followed the event on live television, in the extensive coverage of the print media, or watched the National Film Board documentary produced later on.

The central theme of the event was the city’s development path, and how it needed to be altered. While reiterating the Secretariat’s belief that the city needed to transition toward a human resource economy, the invited experts also elaborated on the planning practices that would help to achieve this transition. At least three of the experts emphasized the need to create a new kind of downtown in Halifax: a “strong, dense core,” in which office towers would co-exist with a range of cultural venues, preserved heritage buildings, and an overall “experience” that would draw people downtown and keep them there longer. In this vision, perambulists of the new downtown could expect to encounter a landscape where “a wide variety of enjoyable experiences, from work to theatres and from shopping to simply strolling [could] be enjoyed in close juxtaposition to each other, with no need to waste great amounts of time and energy in traveling from place to place.”

83 The twelve experts were: Ed Logue (Chief of the New York Urban Development Corporation); Martin Rein (Centre for Environmental Studies, University of London); Wilbur Thompson (Urban Economist, Wayne State University); Benjamin Higgins (Economist, Université de Montréal); Lucius Walker (Interreligious Foundation); Clare Gunn (expert on tourism, Texas A&M); David Kirkbride (Vice President of Canadian Industries Ltd); TJ (Joe) Scanlon (journalist and professor at Carleton University); Frank Steggart (specialist in governmental structure, Atlanta); Konrad Studnicki-Gizbert (Transport Economist, York University); Dennis McDermott (head of Canadian Auto Workers); Scott Greer (Sociologist, Northwestern University). See Voluntary Planning, Encounter on Urban Environment, Vol. 3: Historian’s Report (Halifax, NS: Voluntary Planning Board, 1971).

84 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.

86 “New Directions for Development,” MAPC Records.
ceived, could help to create a more pleasant, attractive spatial experience. For the experts, more than the locals, however, the main purpose of enhancing the downtown experience was to attract a new kind of population: the skilled managers and professionals that would make Halifax a human resource economy.\footnote{Voluntary Planning, *Encounter on Urban Environment, Vol. 1: Transcript of Final Session*, 3-5.}

A second and more fundamental change discussed during Encounter Week pertained to the structure of political decision-making. What was urgently needed in Halifax, one expert explained, was a two-fold “reorganization of the public.”

The reorganization of the public and other systems today really revolve around the dilemma, the dilemma of trying to concurrently centralize certain kinds of functions in authority and decentralize others ... You are likely to have more planning, programming, advisory bodies at the sublocal community or neighbourhood levels, I think at the same time, that you are moving towards various forms of centralization within the governmental structure.\footnote{Voluntary Planning, *Encounter on Urban Environment, Vol. 12: Structure of Decision-Making*, 30-31.}

The first part of this reorganization had, by the time of Encounter Week, already been implemented in the formation of MAPC. The second, “decentralizing” element, however, remained to be created. It was this role that MOVE would be expected to fulfill, and part of the purpose of Encounter Week was to summon and stimulate public interest in planning issues, and thereby entice people to organize themselves in such a way that they could provide an ongoing, community-level “feed-in” to the planning process.\footnote{Interview with Leonard Poetschke.}

The community-level “feed-in,” though it was sometimes described by the experts as a “massive revolt” or “grass-root outcry,” was certainly not expected to emerge spontaneously, nor haphazardly.\footnote{Voluntary Planning, *Encounter on Urban Environment, Vol. 12: Structure of Decision-Making*, 29.}

Rather, the community and its demands would have to be produced or organized through a very specific model. The model in question has often been called “interest group liberalism,” or “Alinskyism” (in reference to its most famous expositor, the Chicago-based organizer Saul Alinsky).\footnote{See Saul Alinsky, *Rules of Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, Vintage, 1972); Douglas Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Lawrence Engel, “Saul Alinsky and the Chicago School,” *Speculative Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2002): 50-66; David Finks, *The Radical Vision of Saul Alinsky* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).} Poetschke was indeed impressed by Alinsky. The first person he hired at the Secretariat was a former collaborator of Alinsky’s
from Chicago named Fred Lennarson, and three of the experts flown-in for Encounter Week espoused the same, or very similar, views.92

At the core of the espoused model, as Alinsky famously expounded (and as the invited experts affirmed), is the idea of “self-interest.” The latter is assumed to be the possession of every individual, the fundamental driver of human behaviour, and thus the sole realistic basis for sustained political involvement or activism.93 This self-interested core, while it undoubtedly orients the individual inward (toward narrow, “selfish” desires), also entails a certain kind of opening toward others. Self-interests can overlap, the model suggests, and it is in zones of overlap or “complementarity” that individuals are genuinely linked together as a community. “A community,” Alinsky explains, “is a community of interests.”94 The task of organizing a community, it follows, is to enable individuals to recognize their self-interest, to illuminate the zones of overlap among the interests of different individuals (and, at a higher level, those of different communities), and to encourage individuals (and communities) to work together to advance their overlapping, shared interests. This task, this binding-together of interests, is what the Secretariat believed to be most lacking in Halifax. If the community could be organized in this way, it would deliver the still-missing “participatory” part of the new structure of political decision-making, and thus provide a catalyst for everything else that the Secretariat wanted to see occur in the city.95

The espoused political model was, as intended, a frequent point of reference for some Encounter Week experts, and the manner in which it was invoked reveals something of the limitations of the model. For it is clear that not all interests expressed during Encounter Week were considered acceptable, and the model was most often invoked as a lesson, or corrective, to the residents who failed to present themselves and their interests in accordance with the terms of the model. One failure observed by the experts was the expression of too particular an interest, an interest that could pertain only to a small group, and could not, therefore, become a widely shared “community” interest. As one expert explained:

We’ve heard this evening a French concern, we’ve heard a black concern, we’ve heard an artist concern. We’ve heard an Indian complaint about the interesting and medieval pro-

92 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.
94 Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 120.
95 Interview with Leonard Poetschke.
hibition laws you have here. It seems to me clear that if you go on the way you are functioning, with each at his [sic] own concern and without aligning yourselves with other people who wish to change the system, you are not going to change anything. Until you do get together with one another over common objectives, I don’t think you are going to change this society very much, whether you are French, female, black, or Indian.96

A second, related failure was the expression of an interest that seemed to conflict with those of others. As one expert explained, social change was about “improv[ing] the lot of those who do not have enough while not penalizing those who are comfortable with the system as it exists,” and certain participants were castigated for expressing conflictual, “revolutionary” interests, rather than “pragmatic” ones.97 While the expert’s view might be pragmatic, it certainly consigns “those who do not have enough” to a difficult position. On the one hand, marginalized individuals are castigated if they express too particular an interest, or if they fail to participate properly in the political process. On the other hand, their participation in the process seems to mean accepting, even defending, the privileges that others have accumulated at their expense. More concretely, a black resident could not properly oppose white supremacy from within the political process (since it would pose a challenge to, rather than honour, the interests of white residents in “the system”). Advancing such a position outside the process, however, would mean appearing as a non-participant, a non-subject, a expositor of “indignation without strategy.”98 As critics of Alinsky would later point out, the model provides little room for inter-community divisions like racial, gender, or even class hierarchies to be addressed.99 In the search for “complementarity,” people on the oppressed side of these divisions are encouraged to put aside their interests in transforming the situation. Indeed, it seems to have been black residents of Halifax who were most frequently and insistently criticized by the Encounter Week experts, with vague references to “angry black men.”100 The non-recognition of black and working-class interests would also affect the activities of MOVE in ways that I document in the next section.

The form of urban planning that was envisioned by the Secretariat, and that was expressed and implemented in the course of Encounter Week, entailed a significant break with certain elements of the prevailing, post-war planning regime, along with a continuation of others. Most immediately, the new configuration continued to be deeply concerned with the condition of the local population. The primary purpose of planning, for the Secretariat and the Encounter Week experts, was to achieve certain effects at the level of the population: to create a positive, attractive spatial experience; to entice new residents, and particularly “skilled” residents, to relocate to Halifax; to increase, dramatically, the overall size of the local population; and to increase, in particular, the prevalence of educated, highly skilled workers. It was through planning, above all, that Halifax would ostensibly be constituted as a “magnet” for new residents, and would gradually achieve the population size and characteristics that would support the development of a post-industrial, “human resource” economy. Admittedly, the specific effects that planning was meant to achieve in the population had changed. Rather than simply improving human health of productivity, planning would now be used to create enjoyment, a more satisfying “way of life,” and attract a larger, more skilled population on this basis. Moreover, the specific mechanisms envisioned as achieving these effects, from the creation of “lively, vibrant” spaces to the soliciting of public participation, also differed from the post-war planning regime. These differences, however, were clearly advanced as a reformulation of biopolitical power, rather than a departure from it. Amid these differences, and through them, planning would continue to be concerned with the management of the population. As before, it would aim to arrange spatial conditions in such a way that desired effects would be achieved at the level of the population.

The most significant modification in planning practices was clearly the new emphasis on public participation, and it is especially important, therefore, to recognize how this new element fits within a reformulated biopolitics. The immediate target of participation, to begin with, is a new, essentially political rendering of the population: the population as a domain of individual and collective “interests.” It is precisely the “interests” of individuals and groups that the Secretariat and the Encounter Week experts expected participatory practices to solicit and render intelligible to planning. This conception of the popula-

tion as a domain of interests is central to Foucault’s account of biopolitics. Beginning in the eighteenth century, he suggests, existing biological and demographic understandings of the population were joined by a political counterpart. In this conception, the population is understood as an array of individual interests that exist independently of state action, and that intertwine or overlap “spontaneously” in the formation of a broader, “collective” or “public” interest. “A spontaneous bond” is posited to exist, Foucault explains, between “the individual and the others” such that a collective interest is produced at an apparent remove from the state: “a general will” is produced “that is not [seen as] the state’s will.” The political “surface” of the population, initially disclosed in the eighteenth century, was later elaborated in a series of institutional contexts, including the Chicago School of sociology where Saul Alinsky developed his approach to community organizing. As others have documented, Alinsky’s conviction that “a community is a community of interests” was learned from his professors at the University of Chicago in the 1930s. It was also, as Foucault would point out, a particular elaboration of an older conception of individual and collective “interests.”

As Foucault suggests, the appearance of the population as a domain of “interests” tends to reshape the possible field of state interventions, including (but not only) biopolitical ones. On the one hand, state interventions may need to find their justification in the realm of “interests,” and certain interventions may be ruled out on the grounds that they appear to violate, or otherwise fail to serve, the ostensible interests of the population. On the other hand, a whole range of new interventions in the lives of individuals or populations may be called for precisely to enable “interests” to be expressed, or to ensure that individuals are able to find their shared interests with others. In other words, the idea that state practices should be calibrated in accordance with people’s “interests” may impose certain limits on state action, but may also lead to new interventions in people’s lives – interventions that, paradoxically, seek to ensure that people’s

102 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 44-45, 311-312.
conduct leads toward the expression and fulfilment of their interests.\textsuperscript{106} Foucault gives the name “liberal government” to the array of potential state practices that take their guidance from the domain of “interests” and that seek to regulate or guide the conduct of subjects in accordance with their own ostensible interests.\textsuperscript{107} While Foucault does not specifically examine practices of public “participation,” his work on liberal government has been applied to the latter by many others. As Huxley suggests, the increasing emphasis on participation since the late 1960s has put the techniques of liberal government at the service of urban planning and municipal state. Through public forums and “charrettes,” techniques of facilitation, and community outreach, planning frequently seeks to guide the conduct of city residents toward the expression of collective interests that can inform (or justify) planning proposals.\textsuperscript{108}

The aims of liberal government may certainly exceed the domain of biopolitics (as the aims of liberalism and the state tend to do), and may even come into conflict with certain biopolitical objectives on the grounds that they are considered to conflict with the “interests” of the population. As the activities of the Planning Secretariat indicate, however, guiding the conduct of citizens toward the expression of their “interests” can become an important mechanism for achieving desired effects upon the population. Consistent with this example, Foucault suggests that liberal government is the most “general” way of acting upon individuals to achieve biopolitical objectives.\textsuperscript{109} (Illiberal practices like “state racism” are obviously applied more selectively, among certain segments of the population; as such, they represent a more “particular” way of acting upon individuals.)\textsuperscript{110} The turn to “participation” in Halifax, these insights suggest, does not represent a departure from biopolitics, but rather a modification within its general operation, a reworking of the planning practices through which it is exercised.

As with earlier forms of biopolitics, finally, practices of participation would be profoundly shaped by the circulation of certain norms. Participation would occur, after all, according to a particular model.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[106]{Foucault, \textit{Security, Territory, Population}, 346.}
\footnotetext[107]{Ibid.; Foucault, \textit{Birth of Biopolitics}, 319.}
\footnotetext[109]{Foucault, \textit{Birth of Biopolitics}, 44-45.}
\footnotetext[110]{See Mariana Valverde, “‘Despotism’ and ethical liberal governance,” \textit{Economy and Society} 25, no. 3 (1996): 357-373.}
\end{footnotes}
Individuals would be compelled not just to express their interests, but to express *widely shared* interests – interests, above all, that overlapped rather than conflicted with those of others. As the proceedings of Encounter Week demonstrate, the assumption that all individuals have interests does not imply that all individuals and their interests will be recognized. Some participants in the event, evidently, failed to express their interests in accordance with the model and its norms; theirs were too narrow, or too divisive. Rather than being recognized as having something to contribute, they were perceived as irrelevant or disruptive to the process: “angry black men,” rather than citizens. The role of norms in organizing the intelligibility of individuals and populations is clearly central to biopolitical power, even when it operates through “liberal government.” As Rose suggests, liberal techniques of government, while they conceive of subjects in “universalistic form,” also “specify subjects in terms of certain norms of civilization, and effect a division between the civilized members of society and those lacking the capacities to exercise their citizenship responsibly.”

Participation, like other mechanisms of biopolitics, would render the population intelligible in divided, bifurcated terms. Those who expressed their interests in accordance with Alinskyian norms would be recognized and would have an opportunity to influence planning practices, while others would be ignored or castigated. To go astray from assumed norms is to be unrecognizable as a political subject, and to have ones interests in the management of urban space unheard.

In the formation of the Secretariat, and the convening of a high-profile event, a new form of planning was introduced to Halifax. Rather than grasping the city as a machine-like system to bulldoze-and-redevelop into an optimal condition, planning would now be encouraged to consider how people *felt* in space, what they enjoyed about space, and how planning could make them enjoy it more. More importantly, planning decisions would now be reached differently: a new regional-level administrative body (MAPC) was created, and a mobilized citizenry (not yet fully created) was expected to provide a “strong, permanent feed-in to the [regional] planning process.” Rather than taking guidance from tables of data, planning would now be compelled to listen directly to city residents. Without dismissing these changes, it

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is important to recognize how they carried forward, rather than interrupted, the operation of planning as a
technology of biopower. The purpose of planning would remain the achievement of desired effects upon
the population (e.g., an experience of pleasure, an increase in population size and overall skill level), and
“participation” would be used to make the dynamics of the population intelligible in a new way. In effect,
the “community” and its “interests” would become another dimension of the population for the state to
know, and indeed to manage. While Encounter Week was an important moment in the reconfiguration of
planning in Halifax, moreover, it was, for the Secretariat, just the first step. The next step, to which we
now turn, was to extend the espoused political model through society: to organize the community such
that its interests could inform planning practices on an ongoing basis.

5.4 MOVE and Harbour Drive

Aiming to capitalize on the public enthusiasm roused (partly) by Encounter Week, Poetscke and his staff
moved to organize a weekend retreat in January 1971 in rural Kentville, Nova Scotia, for eighty Halifax-
area activists and community leaders. The attendees of the event included representatives from the Downtown
Business Association, Heritage Trust, Africville Action Committee, Halifax Welfare Rights, and
many others.\(^{112}\) It was a diverse group, and intentionally so. Only by bringing together “colour [sic], pov-
erty, heritage, and so on,” one MOVE activist recalls, could a sufficiently broad (and therefore legitimate)
citizens’ voice be constituted.\(^{113}\) Ably presided over by the Alinskyian community organizer, Lucius
Walker, the retreat was reportedly able to progress from attendees’ initial (ethico-political) differences,
through vocalized disagreements and at least one major “blow up,” and finally settle upon a group-wide
“consensus.”\(^{114}\) At the conclusion of the retreat, most attendees had agreed to work together to make Hali-
fax a better place to live and to fight for “a say in the decision making ... traditionally done by [a mere] 20
percent of the area’s citizens.”\(^{115}\) They agreed to form an alliance, initially called Citizens Inc., but event-
ually called Movement for Citizens’ Voice and Action (or MOVE). The alliance would eventually com-

\(^{112}\) “Kentville Huddle a Success,” MAPC Records.
\(^{113}\) Interview with Allan Ruffman, 27 July 2009.
\(^{114}\) “Kentville Huddle a Success,” MAPC Records.
\(^{115}\) _MOVE Magazine_ 1, no. 1 (1971), Dalhousie University Archives (hereafter cited as DUA), MOVE
Collection, MS 11-1, box 9, 3.
prise over 40 Halifax community organizations, including the three groups that I introduced earlier (i.e., the HDBA, Heritage Trust, and BUF). The new alliance might seem simply to fill in the missing piece of the political structured envisioned by the Secretariat: a “feed-in” vehicle that could express a relatively united community voice. MOVE activists, however, had their own ideas about the kind of changes they wanted to see.

Returning to Halifax after the Kentville meeting, the new alliance got down to work. With a small start-up budget, MOVE activists rented an office in the downtown, procured office supplies and equipment (including a much-used reproduction machine), and hired a small staff (composed of activists). As its activities over the next three years would demonstrate, MOVE was undeniably shaped by state imperatives. The Secretariat provided its initial budget, while a Federal “local initiatives program” grant in 1972-73 would significantly bolster it. The Secretariat also gave MOVE a purpose and a political model that many activists would generally accept. MOVE would indeed formulate a citizens’ “voice” on urban planning issues in Halifax, and it would do so largely on the basis of the proffered Alinsky model of community organizing.

And yet, the Secretariat’s hoped-for political reorganization would never quite be instituted. For one thing, as I detail below, MOVE ended up opposing a major infrastructure project (Harbour Drive) that the Secretariat regarded as essential to the future of Halifax and (therefore) the broader region. Rather than enabling the state to achieve its objectives, as the Secretariat intended, MOVE would become an obstacle – for at least a moment, on at least one issue. Furthermore, the Alinsky model of forging alliances and constructing a common interest would never be fully embraced. Indeed, the adherence to this model by some MOVE activists ultimately caused frustration for other activists, and the withdrawal of several member groups from the alliance after the Harbour Drive campaign stemmed partly from these groups’ conclusion that their interests could not be advanced in a common-ground affiliation with more privileged

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116 On staff levels, see “MOVE Progress Report,” 21 March 1972, DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 2.
117 “Presentation,” no date, DUA, MOVE Collection, box 10. “MOVE Core funding proposal to the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs,” September 1974, DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 1, 6.
Halifax residents. It is MOVE’s formation, its struggles with an emerging planning paradigm, and its eventual dissolution that I seek to recount in this final section.

From the outset, MOVE was premised on the idea of communities making decisions for themselves – and ensuring that politicians and bureaucrats were forced to acknowledge and abide by these decisions. As an early manifesto explained:

MOVE is an [alliance] of groups deeply concerned with rumored developments in the Metro Area which would vitally affect the [local] quality of life ... and many of us, the 80% of the population, [want] a say in the decision making, traditionally done by 20% of the area’s citizens ... Whatever [planners] are doing or not doing, they are doing it to our community: affecting our future; influencing how much money we will make; and what kind of environment we will live in. Whatever a merchant in downtown Halifax, a Black in Preston, a resident in the north or south end of Halifax or a builder in Dartmouth, we should not have our future set out for us in newspaper headlines.118

Seeking to represent such a vast constituency – 80 percent of the population! – was certainly ambitious, and it resulted in an unusually diverse collection of member groups. The Halifax Downtown Business Association was expected to sit at the same table with various public housing tenant associations, while concerns about heritage preservation expected to be discussed alongside the concerns of Blacks United for More Money, Welfare Rights, and the Africville Action Committee. These were perhaps unusual times in this respect, as MOVE was just one of many “citizens” movements at work in North American cities in the early 1970s that sought to bridge wide differences in social position – with modestly positive, though certainly mixed, long-term results.119

If the member groups were meant to affiliate and collaborate, it was not always necessary that they agree with each other (either on particular issues, or on what constituted “the issues”). For one of MOVE’s main purposes was simply to provide resources and training for its members that would enable them to operate more effectively within their specific fields of concern and action. Resources made available to member organizations included access to MOVE’s office and equipment; a vibrant monthly news-

118 MOVE Magazine 1, no. 1 (1971), 3.
letter, *MOVE Bulletin*, in which groups would inform each other of their current concerns and upcoming actions (see Figure 5.12); and, eventually, a common research team that would study emerging urban issues and produce briefings that would allow members to develop timely and informed positions on issues that concerned them. MOVE-provided training, meanwhile, focused on “the development of competent community organizers,” and aimed thereby to improve the organizational dynamics of existing groups, as well as to “encourage and support the creation [over time] of the broadest possible variety of citizens’ organizations representing the greatest possible number of citizen interests.”

The training of organizers was one of the main activist practices that was shaped by the Alinsky model and that helped to insinuate the latter within the Halifax political culture. From 1971 until April 1973, one of the key MOVE trainers was the Secretariat-employed and Alinsky-trained organizer, Fred Lennarson. Several member groups had also received training directly from Alinsky during a weekend workshop at the Maritime School of Social Work in 1971. And the training resources held at the downtown office included *Rules for Radicals*, a two-part National Film Board documentary called *Encounter with Alinsky*, and MOVE-authored booklets that seem to have drawn on his approach. In accordance with this model, unaffiliated individuals were specifically instructed to organized and create new groups on the basis of their self-interests (rather than, say, their altruistic support for other people’s interests), and existing groups were provided instruction on how to sustain inclusive, democratic processes that would allow genuinely shard interests and political positions to be articulated.

While committed to supporting to the more narrow work of its members, MOVE also expected that it would be possible, on occasion, to develop alliance-wide political positions and campaigns with respect to “over-all metro development.” This was MOVE’s second purpose, and it too drew upon Alinskyan ideas. Hence, alliance-wide interests were expected to be articulated in the same way as those of individual groups, only at a higher scale: common interest would now be sought, not so much among in-

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120 Jackie Barkley, “MOVE: An Analysis,” DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 14, 15.
121 Interview with Leonard Poetschke; Interview with Fred Lennarson, 14 September 2009.
122 “History of the Organization,” no date, DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 14, 1.
123 “What Happens in Groups: An Analysis to Help you Organize,” DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 14.
124 Interview with Norma Scott, 15 July 2009.
individuals, as among the *groups* that individuals had formed. As one MOVE activist recalls, there was at least *some* confidence that common interests could indeed be identified, even among a very diverse collection of groups. “If nothing else, we all needed the training,” the activist explains. “But when we look at the issues for which we need training, they’re not so different. The downtown business-people want a nice streetscape without people begging and so on. Well, guess what, poor people don’t want to beg!” The prospect of undertaking alliance-wide campaigns was always contentious, however. Intense and never-resolved debate existed around the question of whether common interests actually existed among MOVE members, as well as how such interests should be advanced (if they did exist). While Lennarson (among others) thought MOVE should politely communicate its views to state institutions – thereby establishing itself as a “resource” for “politicians, planners, businessmen [sic], and others concerned with making de-

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126 “What we talked about,” 1976, DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 1.
127 Interview with Michael Bradfield, 4 August 2009.
cisions consistent with a coordinated point of view” – other activists favoured a more confrontational, disruptive approach.\(^{128}\)

It was generally the latter approach that characterized MOVE’s most high-profile and controversial project: its campaign against the construction of the Harbour Drive expressway. The expressway had, as I noted above, been an explicit part of the City’s grand vision since as early as 1957, and an attempt to construct its southern portion had already been launched and then put on hold after opposition arose and funding prospects evaporated. However, the northern portion of the expressway – from the northern edge of downtown to the MacDonald bridge (see Figure 5.7) – had never been officially scrapped, and there were rumours circulating in mid-1972 that the City was quietly seeking to secure DREE funding to move forward with the plan. The expressway was known to have many influential supporters in the city. Halifax Developments Inc, the developer and owner of Scotia Square, had been promised a high-volume roadway to carry customers and workers into its mega-complex and cars into the 4-story mega-garage it had constructed.\(^{129}\) The city’s foremost business organizations, the Board of Trade and Urban Development Inc, were believed to be supporters of the expressway and would soon be public in this regard.\(^{130}\) Politically, the project had the vocal support of mayor Allan O’Brien until he left office in 1971 and was replaced by Walter Fitzgerald, who also supported the project, calling it a necessary measure to prevent the downtown from “dry[ing] up” and “disappear[ing] entirely.”\(^{131}\) And MAPC, finally, saw the expressway as an essential element of the integrated metropolitan region that it was mandated to create.\(^{132}\) In opposing Harbour Drive, then, MOVE would be confronting not only the city’s old political establishment, but also

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\(^{130}\) Urban Development Institute, “Brief submitted to Public Hearing, January 10, 1973, Municipal Development Plan,” HRMA, RG 102-1B.

\(^{131}\) On Fitzgerald’s support for Harbour Drive, see Halifax, “What Kind of City Do We Want? A draft report intended to generate discussion about community values and to achieve decisions about corporate objectives,” July 1971, HRMA, Town Planning Board Records, RG 35-102 (40 D.1), 8; Don Tremaine, “Information Morning – An interview with Mayor Walter Fitzgerald,” 12 September 1970, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (hereafter cited as NSARM), Harbour Drive Records, MG 1, vol. 2437, #5c.

\(^{132}\) MAPC, “New Directions for Development.”
the new institution that it had been created precisely in order to support. Rather providing than a “permanent feed-in to the planning process,” MOVE was about to become a major obstacle to that process (as MAPC and other state institutions imagined it). If this was “participation,” then it was a redefinition of what this element of the new planning regime entailed.

Looking closely, MOVE’s conflict with MAPC over Harbour Drive was not as deep as it might initially appear. By the time of Harbour Drive campaign, MAPC had become one of the city’s most insistent and imaginative proponents of a new approach to the arrangement of space. In series of reports, the new institution had issued a manifesto-like call for greater attention to the aesthetics and experience of space, especially in the downtown core. MOVE, for its part, not only seems to have shared this view of how space ought to be managed, it was partly in allegiance to this view that it sought to halt the construction of Harbour Drive.

One of MOVE’s major arguments against the expressway, in other words, was that the experience of downtown space would be undermined by Harbour Drive. The expressway would, for example, result in the elimination of several downtown heritage buildings that stood in its path, and it would further clog downtown streets with automobile traffic. For MOVE, Harbour Drive was antithetical to the vision of the city that it held dear:

In the past, the [downtown] was conceived of as only a commercial and financial centre, while the residential areas of the city were removed to the suburbs. However, in the 1970s we have radically changed our ideas of what a city is all about. The downtown area is not thought of as a place to live, work and enjoy ourselves on a 24-hour basis. Does the dumber expressway idea, which has remained basically unchanged over 27 years, still have any relevance for the kind of city we now want to live in?

MOVE’s conflict with MAPC, then, was the role of building demolitions and high-volume, automobile-focused transportation routes in the emerging planning regime. Whereas MAPC saw Harbour Drive as consistent with the production of an attractive downtown, MOVE saw it as a vector of heritage destruction, auto-clogged streets, proliferating parking lots, and an overall threat to the 24-hour “enjoyment” of downtown space. For MOVE, Harbour Drive was bound up with the configuration of planning that it was seeking to discredit and leave behind.

133 MAPC, “New Directions for Development.”
134 “What Kind of City Do We Want?,” 3.
An interest in defending the existing and potential downtown spatial experience certainly figured prominently in MOVE campaign materials and submissions to City Council, and it was likely this rather narrow focus that led *The 4th Estate*, a local alternative newspaper, to claim in 1973 that the alliance had drifted toward an emphasis on more privileged, “middle-class” concerns.\(^{135}\) But it was not only the downtown that was at stake in the campaign, nor were all member groups expected to consider the fate of the downtown *their* stake, or their self-interest. What signaled to MOVE activists that “everyone had something at stake” in Harbour Drive was its multiple, diverse implications – and these, like the proposed expressway itself, tended to traverse a socio-economically disparate terrain. In addition to its effects on the downtown core, the expressway would also blast directly through a low-income neighbourhood just north of the downtown (displacing perhaps 80-100 families in the context of a continuing housing shortage) and, yet further north, require the demolition of a much-used playground at the Uniacke Square public housing facility (where many displacees from earlier urban planning initiatives had taken shelter).\(^{136}\)

These latter impacts were central to MOVE’s opposition to Harbour Drive as well. And, indeed, just as MOVE highlighted what really mattered about the downtown (but could not be recognized by the City’s planners), it also pointed to the meaning and importance of the areas north of the downtown. The low-income housing and the playground that the expressway would casually destroy, MOVE asserted, were part of a functioning neighbourhood, with an unreproducible network of social ties; “social amenities” like churches, public spaces, and drop-in centres; and “shopping facilities responsive to [area residents’] income levels.”\(^{137}\) In raising these concerns, the Harbour Drive campaign could be seen as a rare instance of inter-class solidarity on urban planning issues. For a brief time, low-income communities would not have to stand on their own. They would have defenders among more privileged residents, many of whom had never been involved in anti-poverty activism and who might never have taken an interest in the fate of poor communities without the creation of the MOVE alliance.

\(^{135}\) *The 4th Estate*, 7 February 1974.
\(^{136}\) “What Kind of City Do We Want?”
\(^{137}\) “What Kind of City Do We Want?”
The idea of opposing Harbour Drive was formally raised at a September 1972 meeting of the Board, and was approved unanimously. For the first time, MOVE had its first alliance-wide concern to address. The group was then at its peak in terms of staff levels and public profile. It quickly established a committee to deal specifically with Harbour Drive, and hired one of its volunteer Board members to work on the issue full time. In the next five months, MOVE activists organized potentially affected neighbourhoods, held meetings and public events, prepared and circulated anti-expressway propaganda (see Figure 13), lobbied higher levels of government, and pressured the City to engage the public in a meaningful dialogue before proceeding any further with its plan. In addition to formulating arguments against the expressway, MOVE worked to understand and meticulously undermine the City’s argument for it. To that end, three MOVE activists showed up at City Hall one day and demanded to see all Council minutes and City reports relating to the expressway. The relevant material turned out to be substantial. The activists spent the next month within the walls of its opponents’ headquarters, reading through reports, making notes, and gradually pulling apart the City’s loosely formulated plan. The results of this work were evident in MOVE’s later campaign materials and written submissions to the City. In addition to its claims about North End neighbourhoods potentially destroyed, and a downtown spatial experience potentially ruined, MOVE challenged the numbers on which the Harbour Drive plan seemed to be based. Plans for Harbour Drive, MOVE asserted, had overestimated the expressway’s effects on circulation between several areas of the city, had underestimated the amount of land that would be required for infrastructure like onramps, and had failed to consider various alternatives (e.g., a ferry crossing from Dartmouth). The City, it seems, was not calculating properly.

In November 1972, the City convened a public forum for the purpose of discussing its drafted municipal development strategy (which included, on its final page, a diagram that seemed to indicate an intention to move forward with Harbour Drive). MOVE activists were among the 400 residents who attended, and they pressured City officials to discuss Harbour Drive. They urged the City to respond to its

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138 Interview with Alan Ruffman.
139 Halifax, “Municipal Development Plan,” 16 November 1972, HRMA, RG 102-1B.
criticisms of the maligned expressway as well as to provide more details about its road-building priorities. The City officials appear to have been surprised by the show of opposition. The development strategy was a 15-page document, with modest and early-stage goals. As the City’s head planner later remarked, the aim of the brief plan was merely to provide “a basic policy document dealing with those factors affecting the city on a wide scale,” and it had only been presented to the public because the Planning Act required it.\footnote{Halifax, “Letter from Henderson to Mayor and City Planning Committee,” 13 March 1973, HRMA, Town Planning Board Records, RG 35-102 (40 D.1).} It was not, in other words, a plan of action, and it offered few details on specific items because few had been worked out. MOVE, convinced that a plan to build the expressway was being furthered behind closed doors, chastised the City for creating the illusion of public consultation while in fact proceeding as

**Figure 5.13** MOVE satirical image of Harbour Drive, 1971. *MOVE Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1971). DUA, MOVE Collection, MS 11-1, box 9. Image courtesy of DUA.
unaccountably as it always had. The group demanded that a public forum be held in which the issue of Harbour Drive could be seriously discussed. The City complied and set a date for January 1973.

The January 1973 public forum proved to be one of the defining moments in the history of planning in Halifax. Attended by perhaps 500 residents, the forum saw the City bend its ear to the assembled, in-person population with uncharacteristic consideration. Indeed, Council had ventured to discuss (prior to the event) how it might demonstrate its receptiveness to public input, with one Councillor suggesting that he and his colleagues not ascend to a raised podium as usual, but instead sit “down with the people,” ideally on chairs laid out “in a semi-circular arrangement.” State authority now seemed to depend on listening to the population (or at least seeming to, convincingly).

MOVE, in contrast to City councillors, came to the event to speak. The group had arrived with a list of eighty questions that it claimed had yet to be addressed in the planning for Harbour Drive (and that MOVE believed could not be addressed). The questions ranged widely, and were meant to undermine the rationale for expressway building, bit by bit. “For whom is Harbour Drive being built? Has Council considered that the public favours public transit?” “What compensation [is] Council making to those persons displaced for the Harbour Drive roadway? Where have these persons been placed?” “Has [City] staff ever presented other alternatives to Council?” “Does the dumper expressway idea, which has remained unchanged over 27 years, still have any relevance for the kind of city we now want to live in?” Circulating through this collection of questions, each provocative in itself, was a striking, paradigm-ending proposition. Perhaps a better city could be created without crashing destructively through neighbourhood after neighbourhood, and without taking land from marginalized residents in order to give it ostensibly to the city in general. Perhaps, with respect to the downtown, the potentially unending project of rendering it reachable by private automobile would end up producing a traffic-clogged downtown that would hardly be worth reaching at all. Perhaps, MOVE suggested, things could be otherwise.

After the forum, the City quietly shelved its plan for Harbour Drive, and the idea would never come up again. Hence, just two years after the Kentville meeting at which it was formed, MOVE had

141 MOVE, “Submission of Harbour Drive North Committee to the Public Hearing on Draft Halifax Municipal Development Plan,” HRMA, RG 102-1B.
142 Halifax, Minutes, 26 October 1972, 483.
achieved a significant victory. Not only did it halt a project that would surely have added to the damage already wrought by post-war planning in Halifax, it also organized a broad challenge to the conception of planning that underpinned such projects. Against planners’ calculation that the vitality of the downtown depended on ensuring a certain quantity of car traffic into its vicinity, MOVE highlighted the foreseeable but unconsidered consequences of such an endeavour: a degraded downtown experience, another block of low-income housing destroyed, and a trampling of the apparent desires of the Halifax population. While opposing a specific project, crucially, MOVE could be seen as accepting and reworking the elements of the emerging planning regime. MOVE accepted the emerging conception of the downtown as space of valued experiences, but asserted that car-filled streets and proliferating parking garages were an impediment to this conception. MOVE also took up the conception of participation in planning practices, but showed that participation did not necessarily mean passively “voicing” community-level interests so that the state could listen; it could also mean, in some cases, actively opposing the state, disrupting the planning processes, and forcing the state to listen to views that it would rather not hear.

Indeed, what is perhaps most interesting about MOVE is its complex relationship to state objectives. It had, in one sense, fulfilled the vision of the Secretariat to a tee. It brought together a broad section of the city’s activists and community organizations, and it organized these groups according to the Secretariat’s espoused political model. As a result of this work, the population would no longer be simply a discordant collection of interests, but could at least sometimes express a common “community interest.” The missing piece of the hoped-for “reorganization of the public” had thus been constituted, and it was during the Harbour Drive campaign that MOVE came closest to expressing the broad-based community interest that the new political structure seemed to require. But the campaign also took MOVE outside its prescribed role. It involved the expression of an interest that the state did not want to receive. Rather than enabling state planning to function, MOVE arrested its operation. In this instance, for a short time, the state could not achieve its objectives. Its control over space, and over life, was held at bay.

Harbour Drive, in the end, would be the last major campaign for MOVE. While the effects of the alliance on the built form and political culture of Halifax would be long lasting, the alliance ceased to be a major force in urban politics around this time. Its decline arrived for reasons that were partly beyond its
control. In October 1970, just as MOVE was being formed, the Conservative provincial government of Ike Smith fell to Gerry Regan’s Liberals. Regan had no interest in the “reorganized public” that had been put in place (allegedly because Regan preferred old-style patronage politics to the new logic of public participation) and he succeeded in pressuring the Federal government to eliminate the Secretariat. With the Secretariat gone, MOVE was left without its major source of funding. The group pressed forward for a time, and eventually secured a $300,000 Federal grant under the Local Initiatives Program (LIP) that allowed it to carry on and even expand its operations. But, here, the municipal-level state stepped in. Angered by MOVE’s opposition to Harbour Drive, mayor Walter Fitzgerald pressured the Federal government to cut off LIP funding to MOVE as well as its member groups. Fitzgerald is also alleged to have met with the low-income members of MOVE and directed them to drop out of the alliance or risk having their municipal funding terminated. The major’s intervention was effective. Federal funding to MOVE ceased in May 1973, and the low-income groups were compelled to consider, more earnestly, whether their interests were really served by working with activists and organizations whose viability was less precarious, and less tied to the state, than theirs.

Ultimately, the mayor’s divide-and-rule tactics had the effect of exacerbating certain cleavages within the MOVE alliance that were in the process of being exposed, and aggravated, for other reasons. For it had never quite been settled whether there were indeed shared interests among MOVE members, nor whether there could be agreed-upon tactics for advancing such interests. The Harbour Drive campaign, while it seemed to address a diversity of interests in tandem, was viewed by some MOVE members as the project of a sealed-off, unaccountable activist “in-group” – an action taken on behalf of all members, without the consent of all members.\(^\text{143}\) As some members would explain in the aftermath of the campaign, the MOVE Board had come to operate in severe isolation from the general membership of the alliance, and few members had any idea what was being decided and acted upon in their name. The absence of any genuine agreement upon shared interests and acceptable tactics, in this situation, did not cre-

\[^{143}\text{Internal discussion of the alliance’s divisions appears in Ecology Action Centre, \textquote{Position re: MOVE adopted in principle February 26 and in detail March 21,\textquote{, March 1973, DUA, MOVE Records, MS 11-1, box 14, 1; Barkley, \textquote{MOVE: An Analysis\textquot;; Mollie Gallagher, \textquote{Another bit of paper\textquot; DUA, MOVE Records, MS 11-1, box 14.}\]

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ate an obstacle to collective action; those who might disagree were simply left out of the conversation, and actions were taken on their behalf. A collective campaign could thus be launched on the assumption that it would benefit everyone, but that, in the end, was seen as detrimental to the interests of at least some members groups. Following the Harbour Drive campaign, several groups concluded that their interests were not well served by their involvement with the alliance and withdrew their involvement. The departed groups included the two public housing tenants associations, Black United Front, and a community media organization.

The departures led to a moratorium on further MOVE campaigns, as well as major soul-searching on the part of remaining activists to determine whether the alliance had betrayed its designated purpose. While some post-hoc diagnoses focused on the lack of communication (and lack of unity) between the Board and membership, others questioned whether unity could in fact be achieved among such a diverse group under any circumstances. This questioning of the prospect of unity obviously contravenes the political model on the basis of which MOVE was formed. One diagnosis, in fact, raised this question quite explicitly.\footnote{Barkley, “MOVE: An Analysis.”} According to this perspective, MOVE’s problem was not just that an “in-group” had tended to dominate discussions and decision-making; the deeper problem was that the concerns of low-income activists tended to be irresolvable and even unrecognizable within the terms the alliance’s composition. Whereas MOVE assumed that members could “overcome their problems together,” problems like racism, lack of housing, and lack of employment were not shared by the alliance’s more privileged members – and, in many cases, could be addressed only be challenging the interests of the better-off. With the accumulated privileges of some members effectively placed beyond challenge, enshrined as an ostensibly neutral baseline for political collaboration, “it is very difficult for [more marginalized] groups to make specific demands for action and support [within the structure of MOVE].”\footnote{Barkley, “MOVE: An Analysis,” 20.} Unable to advance their interests within MOVE (and, thus, within the recognized participatory planning process), these groups were “essentially non-participants” even as they remained official members. Their withdrawal from the alliance only made this non-participation apparent. With their withdrawal, these groups were now observably on

144 Barkley, “MOVE: An Analysis.”
their own, outside the political process in which participation was understood to mean joining with others on “issues of common concern.” They were, in this sense, back where they started: confined to their particular interests, “indignant without a strategy.”

5.5 Conclusion

Urban planning, in the quarter-century after World War II, was ambitious in scope and astonishingly destructive in its effects. The unleashing of “post-war” planning in Halifax eviscerated thousands of homes, destroyed large sections of the historic downtown, and strew the city with concrete office towers and wide, high-volume roadways that many local residents found unfamiliar, imposing, and unwanted. This destruction of prevailing social and physical character of the city was, as I showed, meticulously planned, logically conceived, and devoted, perversely, to the safeguarding and nurturing of life. For many Halifax residents, however, urban life seemed to be imperiled by planning, not improved by it. Adopting this critical perspective were a range of new groups that, from the mid-1960s onward, launched an organized and incisive challenge to the post-war planning regime. The form and content of opposition to planning was eventually influenced significantly by Federal-level planners, who saw a role for community-level activism in bringing about ostensibly necessary changes in metropolitan development. Central to this influence was a specific political model, “interest group liberalism” or Alinskyism, that Federal planners hoped to insinuate within the political culture of Halifax and thereby enable a unified community “interest” to be composed (and “fed in” to the planning process). The linking of activist struggles in the formation of the MOVE alliance indeed relied on this model. It was central to its organizing work and to its eventual development of an alliance-wide campaign against the construction of Harbour Drive.

It is fair to say that MOVE, and its campaign, had an important and lasting effect on the built form and political culture of the city. In particular, it mobilized a broad constituency behind the idea that urban space (especially in the downtown core) ought to be disposed toward producing a valued, attractive experience for the population, an idea that has only become more mainstream in the years since. It also demonstrated how community organizations could be involved in the planning process, how they could

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participate in decisions in some way (either collaboratively or disruptively). This, too, has since become an accepted part of the planning process, and, since 1979, legally required.

Amid the changes or shifts brought about in the early 1970s, however, certain aspects of urban planning remained intact. For one thing, planning continued to operate as a means of strategically managing the population, as a technology of biopolitical power. With the introduction of certain changes, planning would now seek to create a more skilled and knowledgeable population through the provision and development of urban spaces that would appeal to such a population segment. Also persisting in this configuration of planning is the earlier period’s bifurcated conception of the population (or collective life), though this bifurcation occurs in new and often more subtle ways. One of the ways that the population is now grasped, and its needs discerned, is in the form of “interests.” Planning now needs to know the population’s interests, to listen to its voice, and this entails a form of management or organization. It is significant, in this case, that certain norms make it possible for the public and its interests to be recognized and that certain already-marginalized subjects were often seen as betraying these political norms. The idea that one’s “self-interest” had to be brought together with others, and could not conflict with others, made it very difficult for an interest in ending racism (or other major social divisions) to appear as a legitimate interest. This idea may not be racist or exclusionary in itself – it might be a quite reasonable basis for politics in an equal society – but, implemented in a vastly unequal society, it has the effect of enshrining the status quo as an ostensibly neutral baseline and thus disqualifying any challenge to it. Maintaining racial or class privileges is a legitimate interest; overturning such privileges is not. And, of course, this would have implications not just for the composition of the public, but also for the production of urban space.

Indeed, it is imperative to consider the potential affiliations between the production of an enjoyable spatial experience, on the one hand, and the espousal of a political model that exteriorizes any substantial challenge to racial and class privilege, on the other. For the area most often identified as a space of enjoyment in Halifax (the downtown core) was also an area that the Black United Front had clearly identified as a white, middle class space: a highly exclusive space brought into being through the demolition of the downtown slum, as well as the ongoing racism of downtown businesses and landlords (who
would, as BUF maintained, neither hire as employees, nor serve as customers, nor rent as tenants to black Haligonians). There is, to be clear, no indication that BUF – briefly a member of MOVE – put forward the exclusivity of the downtown as a concern in MOVE meetings; nor is it likely that, had BUF put forward such a concern, a large number (white and/or middle-class) MOVE activists would suddenly have wanted to take action on the matter.

But it is clear, at the same time, that a concern like the exclusivity of the downtown could have been taken up as part of an articulated collective interest or campaign only at the expense of the alliance’s espoused political model. To challenge the whiteness and middle-classness of the downtown would be to upset, rather than to honour, the accumulated privileges of race and class – and to wipe away the inscription of such privileges in the urban landscape. In practical terms, it would likely mean challenging the racism of downtown businesses, who, as part of the DHBA, were members of MOVE. So long as “self-interests” are taken to be the starting point for politics, the imperturbable building blocks from which a common interest or “public” is constructed, the only sanctioned way to address the exclusivity, inequality, and violence that support dominant interests is outside the political process: outside of coalition or alliance politics, and outside the boundaries of the public (as it was conceived in this context). People whose situation is marred by major social divisions, and who seek to address the consequences of these divisions through political action, are thus presented with a pair of fairly dismal options: to have one’s aspirations excluded from the political process, or within it. This bears remembering, I think, when the spaces of the present come up for discussion, and when the people who have been historically and presently excluded from such spaces are not present to participate in the discussion. Enlarging the discussion, in this case, would mean more than adding or “including” other people. It would mean also mean changing the parameters of the discussion itself.
Chapter 6

“Still Here”

6.1 Halifax by Design

One morning, soon after arriving in Halifax to begin my preliminary research, I walked out of my home on North Street and witnessed a bus passing by with an interesting banner on its side. The banner was brightly coloured, showing a city skyline from a distance, and it foregrounded the message: “design your city.” The banner, as a small part of a much larger promotional campaign, was intended to draw city residents to the opening gala of a new, 30-month urban planning project called “Halifax by Design.” Interested to see what a public discussion of planning would look like at this point in the city’s history, I decided to attend the event. Held in a large ballroom at the harbour-side Pier 21 complex – a kind of monument and museum to the history of immigration that coursed through the Halifax port between 1928 and 1971 – the gala drew a crowd of perhaps 600 residents, who settled themselves in rows in front of a wide stage and a projection video screen. Many of the attendees apparently knew each other, and hands were shaken and conversations struck up across aisles and over chair backs. Many political representatives, at all levels of government, were present, as were the leaders of the city’s major business organizations, non-profit organizations, and property development companies. Observing the room, and talking with people who were seated near me, I had the feeling of being in the presence of the near-entirety of the city’s active, influential civil society.

Halifax by Design was a complex project, and a full analysis of it would require its own chapter. A few details from the project, however, can help to retrace some of the main themes of this dissertation, as well as point toward some potential future research endeavours. In this concluding chapter, therefore, I begin by reviewing three major themes that emerged in the Halifax by Design project that I believe were also present in each of the planning initiatives that I examined earlier in this dissertation. In the next section, I provide a more comprehensive summary of the dissertation. I consolidate the substantive issues addressed in the preceding chapters; I explain what I believe these chapters collectively conclude about
modern urban planning in Halifax; and I describe how a historical analysis of urban planning can help to disrupt and reorient planning discussions in the present (taking Halifax by Design as a prime example of such discussions). In the final section, I suggest how future research might pick up and address concerns that the present work has left unexplored. One project that I will suggest needs to be undertaken is an exploration of possible alternatives to the present configuration of urban planning. Any reasonable planning alternative, I argue, would need to take its bearings partly from a recognition of the limitations and potential consequences of Halifax by Design, and it important therefore to provide a sketch of the latter project at the forefront of this concluding chapter.

The first theme of this dissertation is revealed in the purpose of Halifax by Design. The latter, like all of the modern planning initiatives that I examined earlier, was clearly devoted to achieving certain effects upon the condition of human life through the rearrangement of space. At the opening gala at Pier 21, a team of planning consultants flown in from Toronto were the primary speakers. Standing centre stage with local planning staff at their flanks, the consultants offered an uplifting description of the city that Halifax could one day become, and they projected an array of compelling images on the video screen. Scenes from Toronto, Vancouver, Chicago, and Boston appeared on the screen in succession, and the consultants explained that we were looking at some of the world’s most successful urban spaces: densely built, diverse in their uses, and well-disposed to the ambling of pedestrians. Images were also presented of a (hypothetically) transformed Halifax downtown: the old Cogswell Interchange (a remnant of the never-completed Harbour Drive expressway) was replaced with an attractive neighbourhood reminiscent of Toronto’s Saint Lawrence Market (Figure 6.1); George Street became a pedestrianized streetscape, offering a pleasant environment to walk and shop with the Halifax Clock Tower on the horizon (Figure 6.2); and old Cornwallis Park became a built-up and bustling enclave that reminded me of New York’s Washington Square Park (Figure 6.3).

Though enticing in their own right, the images on display were to be appreciated, the consultants emphasized, for the effects that they would achieve on the overall city. Above all, the new urban spaces were meant to draw thousands of people to the Halifax downtown to live, work, and shop. The consultants proposed a vast, design-led “reurbanization” of the central city, with 10,000 new residents drawn to
Figure 6.1 Hypothetical future for the Cogswell Interchange, 2007. HRM, *Downtown Halifax: Urban Design Strategy* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax), 82. Image courtesy of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Figure 6.2 Hypothetical pedestrianized George Street, 2007. HRM, *Downtown Halifax: Urban Design Strategy* (Halifax, NS: City of Halifax), 73. Image courtesy of Halifax Regional Municipality.
the downtown alone (a figure that was later boosted to 16,000). Especially significant, for reasons that I explain below, was the potential for a redesigned downtown to attract and retain a “young, well-educated workforce.” The young and talented, explained a planning report circulated later on, “looks for quality of lifestyle when making location choices, and more and more that means a quality downtown. Excitement, vibrancy, and a full suite of cultural, social, and recreational amenities, choices in housing and diversity in all things will define successful cities moving forward.” Although aspects of the consultants’ proposition differed somewhat from planning initiatives of the past, its overall orientation could fit comfortably in any of the periods that I examined in this dissertation. As in other periods, urban space would serve as a relay for strategies meant to affect the population: to move it from one place to another, to alter its public and private activities, and to modify some of its characteristics. Like mayor MacIllreith in 1908, the consult-

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A second familiar theme in the design project was the role of particular modes of knowledge in rendering the condition and (potential) improvement human life intelligible. As in other cases, importantly, life would be intelligible in divided, bifurcated terms. The enlisted planning knowledge, in this case, was largely a mixture of past forms. Like the “twelve apostles” of the 1971 Encounter Week event, the Halifax by Design consultants continually stressed their will to *listen* to the assembled public. Time and time again, they emphasized that the public needed to tell *them* what they desired; they would simply help to fulfill these desires. At the same time, the consultants often expounded relatively technical conceptions of the needs of the local population that *could* seem to contradict their commitment to listening to the (entire) public. One of the needs of the population, they suggested, was to stimulate property development in the downtown core. New development was needed not for its own sake, but rather because of the widely beneficial “upward spiral” that it would help to catalyze (see Figure 6.4). With more development downtown, the prevailing shortage of office space would be alleviated, and new places for people to live and shop would be created. With more people living, shopping, and working downtown, stores and restaurants would do more business, and the historic buildings in which they were located could be operated profitably enough to be maintained by their owners. With a more diverse, heritage-rich, and vibrant downtown, an increased number of “young, well-educated” people would have a reason to choose Halifax as their lifelong home. With a more talented workforce, finally, the city would be able to attract more of the high-growth, knowledge-based industries on which today’s prosperous urban economies are ostensibly built.

The consultants’ conception of urban viability in the age of “knowledge” industries clearly draws on ideas that I examined in Chapter 4, as well as some relatively new ideas that I cannot adequately examine in a concluding chapter. What is most important to highlight at this point, I would suggest, is a now-familiar characteristic of planning knowledges: namely, the subtle bifurcation or “caesura” that it effectively induces between the “overall” population and certain population segments. The presence of a bifurcation became apparent when the consultants and collaborating city officials moved to describe precisely
what would bring the touted “upward spiral” into motion in the future, or rather what was obstructing its motion in the present. A study prepared for the purpose of the design project, and persistently invoked toward its later stages, purported to reveal that the development approval process in Halifax was abnormally lengthy and difficult. Based on recent evidence, an application in Halifax was found to take three times longer to be approved than in other, similarly sized cities, and in some cases applications were rejected by the City that would have been approved elsewhere. The length and difficulty of the approval process was shown to have severe consequences. Most immediately, it had resulted in an estimated $2 billion in lost development in Halifax – development that had instead occurred elsewhere. This lost development harmed much more than the developers and other businesses. It was, the report suggested, a weight hung upon the “upward spiral” whose operation would have benefitted the whole city.

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The identification of a “normal” approval process, and Halifax’s departure from this norm, need not have enacted a bifurcation in the population. However, this ostensible abnormality, like so many others that I have examined in this dissertation, was ultimately attributed to particular segments of the population. Culpability was linked, in particular, to the activities of Heritage Trust and its associates. Between 2001 and 2007, a total of nine large-scale downtown developments had been proposed in Halifax, and nearly all of them had been challenged by Heritage Trust. In a particularly high-profile case, a two-tower $150 million harbour-side development was challenged at the municipal level, and then, after the challenge failed, at the Provincial level (where it also failed). The opposition of heritage activists, though unsuccessful, reportedly cost the developer over $300 thousand in legal fees, and delayed the project to such an extent that it was eventually judged unviable. While Heritage Trust would tend to claim that it was not opposed to development, but rather supportive of a form of development that matched the city’s distinctive history and architectural character, it was frequently described during the Halifax by Design process as an obstacle to development of any kind and a stubborn impediment to the prosperity of the overall population. From the identification of a normal approval process, therefore, an obstructing, abnormal group of people was defined; on the basis of an established norm, a bifurcation in the population was established. And so, despite the project’s ostensible concern with listening to the public, certain voices would have to be ignored. Despite the project’s concern with the overall population, or rather because of it, certain individuals would have to be sidelined.

As the design project proceeded, it became clear that the public was being asked for its input in order to inform the creation of a new, streamlined development approval process. The new process would filter applications through a pair of new procedures, neither of which would allow input from the public or vest decision-making power in the hands of elected officials. The first procedure would involve an assessment of proposed developments in relation to pre-established “form based codes.” The latter would set out, for every block of the downtown, the quantifiable criteria that would developments be required to meet (i.e., building heights, lot set-backs, and so on). The second procedure would focus on the

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proposed development’s qualitative or aesthetic characteristics. A detailed “design manual” would be pro-
duced, and an unelected “design review committee” would be chosen from among the local development
community to assess the compatibility of proposed developments with the standards of the manual. The
new, two-step process was billed as providing the clarity and efficiency required by property developers,
while ensuring that the form and style of emerging downtown landscape conformed with the desires of
the public. The Halifax by Design project would ultimately be devoted to soliciting the public’s input on
building heights and aesthetics so that the latter could be plugged into a standard “form based code” and
“design manual.” After the project, the public would not need to weigh in planning issues again. And, in-
deed, there would no longer be any forum in which to do so. Once the desires of participating city resi-
dents were locked-in to the new process, everyone but the “design review committee” would be locked-
out of future development decision-making.

The final theme of this dissertation is the violence of planning. I have focused, in particular, on a
form of violence that occurs alongside and through efforts to protect and improve human life. The vio-
lence of Halifax by Design could be said to include the casting of heritage activists as a kind of parasite
upon normal processes of development, but more severe expressions of violence seem to be presaged in
the end results of the project. By the final public hearing, potential changes to the approval process had
been formulated, and participating residents were effectively compelled to speak in favour of the pro-
posed changes or against them. The public debate, as a result, tended to transpire between a binary set of
positions, and those who spoke against the changes tended to be described by their opponents as standing
in the way of development in general (and, thus, the future prosperity of the city). The latter position was
attributed, above all, to Heritage Trust. The Trust, for its part, tended to reinforce others’ assertions about
the narrowness of its vision by focusing its opposition on the threat of regulatory changes to the prevail-
ing views from atop Citadel Hill. The much broader consequences of forfeiting popular democratic con-
trol over the development process were ignored in favour of presenting an intentionally shocking vision
of the view-blocking downtown developments that would be allowed under the new regulations (see Fig-
ure 6.5).
Only one participant in the final hearing pointed out what I felt was the most severe danger of the proposed changes: namely that, in locking out all future public input to the approval process, there would be no formal way to stop development projects that might be foreseen to bring about devastating social, rather than just aesthetic, consequences. In a reprisal of post-WWII urban renewal, for example, a developer could easily buy up and bulldoze an extensive tract of low-income housing, as long as the new development meshed with approved rules around height and design. The violence of the Halifax by Design project was best expressed here: in the actions that it would allow and in its rationale for allowing them. In a familiar formulation, an improvement in the lives of the overall population would be sought through planning initiatives that would render certain lives much more vulnerable. A damaged city, I have suggested in this dissertation, is made of initiatives like these.

The most striking and significant performance at the final public hearing was provided by the youthful members of Fusion Halifax. The group was a recent arrival on the Halifax scene. Formed in 2007, and comprised largely of young professionals and mid-level corporate managers, Fusion had managed to position itself in public debates as the voice of the city’s “young and talented.” As the group an-

**Figure 6.5** Heritage Trust’s image of possible “view blockers,” 2008. Image courtesy of Save the View Coalition.
ounced in a 2008 editorial in the Chronicle-Herald: “To attract and retain the best and the brightest of generations X and Y, leaders must begin listening to what young residents have to say and must make tangible and sincere efforts to understand what we want for our future.” At the public hearing, Fusion members stepped into the role that the whole Halifax by Design process had constituted for them, providing the public with a clear answer to the question: “What do young, talented people want?” The group’s answer, unanimously, was more development and whatever was needed to promote it. Expressing the general message of the group, one member told the assembled public: “I’ve chosen to stay here. If the [career] opportunities don’t arrive, I might have to go somewhere else.” Opportunities would emerge, he suggested, through changes to the approvals process; the status quo would freight his departure for Calgary or Toronto. Here, in effect, was the catalyst of a “spiral” that could move upward or downward. With more development, the young and talented would be attracted and retained, and businesses would arrive to hire them. Without development, this valued demographic would be forced to depart or stay away. The member’s aspirations for the city would need to be recognized for the sake of everyone. Planning practices that seek to improve the condition of the overall population could find important guidance in his words.

In June 2009, City Council voted 22-1 to accept the changes proposed by the Halifax by Design project. Future development proposals would thus be channeled through the ratified “form based code” and the unelected “design review committee.” Popular democratic involvement in the development process would no longer be necessary. Nor would it be allowed. While a more thorough analysis of Halifax by Design would clearly exceed the scope of a concluding chapter, I have attempted to illuminate some of the project’s major themes and consequences. The elimination of public input to the development process is a deeply worrying outcome, and any acceptable alternative to the prevailing configuration of planning would clearly need to ensure that the potential effects of these changes upon already vulnerable populations are recognized and obstructed. I return briefly to Halifax by Design in the final section of this chapter, therefore, in order to provide some direction to the exploration of planning alternatives (a future re-

6 Rutland, “Designs on Downtown.”
search project that I advocate pursuing). My next task, however, is to provide a summary of this dissertation that elaborates upon the themes that I have highlighted above. While taking some distance from Halifax by Design, this section will also seek to show how the historical analysis that I have pursued in this dissertation might help to disrupt and reorient public discussions like the one I have just reviewed.

6.2 Summary of Dissertation

This dissertation has examined the affiliations between planning and biopower in the modern history of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Focusing on particular urban planning proposals and initiatives over a roughly 130 year period (from 1880 to the present), I have sought to show how planning has been used to achieve certain effects on the condition of human life, and how efforts to protect and improve life have tended to be conjoined with certain forms of violence. In a context in which planning expresses its concern for life, its violent underside tends to emerge through the suspension of this role in certain circumstances – that is, in relation to certain lives. As planning endeavours to improve life in general, the lives of certain groups are often omitted from these endeavours, while others are subjected to degraded or otherwise worsened living conditions. The peculiarity of modern planning, I have suggested, is that its violence is enacted in tandem with the pursuit of seemingly contrasting objectives, and often as a means of fulfilling the latter. In the episodes that I examined, the making of a damaged city was the correlate and condition of efforts to produce a better city and a better form of life: a life of greater health, welfare, and prosperity. It was this apparent contradiction, above all, that this dissertation has attempted to understand.

In recognizing planning’s devotion to improving the condition of life, this dissertation parallels a wealth of scholarly and practical analyses. As I have suggested, the improvement of life is precisely the role that early planning practitioners ascribed to their young profession, and it is the role that progressive critics of planning, ever since, have tended to assert that it should occupy. This dissertation is consistent with other accounts, as well, in its recognition of the violence that planning sometimes entails. Forced displacement, degraded living conditions, and political exclusion are just some of the well-documented perversities of modern planning. Where I have departed from the planning literature is primarily in bringing the improvement and degradation of life into the same analytical frame. Whereas other accounts have
described the violent side of planning as a deviation from its proper, safeguarding role – a deviation most often attributed to the malignant influence of profit-driven groups or the adherence to a limited, “modernist” epistemology – I have sought to interrogate the ostensibly positive vocation of planning. Drawing primarily on Foucault’s account of biopower, I have suggested that the domain of “life” that planning seeks to manage is consistently understood in divided, “bipolar” terms: it becomes intelligible and manageable, that is, in relation to certain norms that not all individuals are perceived to honour. Those who ostensibly betray the norms through which life is understood may not seem to qualify for planning’s protection or improvement, and they may indeed be seen as an obstacle to the improvement of “overall” health, welfare, or prosperity. Within the prevailing configuration of knowledge and biopower, omitting or damaging certain lives is less a deviation from planning’s devotion to life than an integral part of its fulfillment.

My analysis of modern planning in Halifax unfolded across four substantive chapters, each of which focused on a particular planning initiative and proposal. In the first chapter, I examined a proposal to demolish and rebuild a significant area of “slum” housing in the downtown core. Promoted by a small group of local reformers, the “model tenements” plan would involve a strategic reordering of built space that would ostensibly achieve an “uplifting” effect on the moral and physical health of the building’s inhabitants. In Chapter 3, I examined the emergence of a relatively different conception of urban space and its relationship to human life. In the course of debates about taxation and property assessment, I argued, the urban terrain came to be intelligible and potentially manageable as an expanse of property value; a relatively “unimproved” condition of property, moreover, came to be perceivable as an impediment to the health, wealth, and welfare of the overall population. In Chapter 4, I examined how this new conception of property came to be entangled with an emerging conception of “race.” The community of Africville, I showed, came to be defined as “pathological” in a double sense: its land was identified as underimproved, while its inhabitants were regarded as a biologically inferior “sub-race” within the local population. The violence of planning in relation to Africville, I concluded, can be attributed to this double pathologization. In Chapter 5, I examined the new, “participatory” form of urban planning that was introduced in the aftermath of post-WWII urban renewal. Through the creation of new participatory venues and processes, I
showed, the local population was compelled to express its planning-related desires and “interests,” and thereby enable planning to recognize and improve the condition of the population in a new way – provided that residents expressed their interests in accordance with the established model.

Among these relatively distinct planning initiatives, I sought to identify certain commonalities or themes that could be attributed to modern planning in Halifax in general. The first theme was planning’s consistent focus on the management of human life – its efforts to achieve certain effects on the condition of life through the medium of space. The “model tenements,” for example, aimed to reformat the domestic space of working-class individuals as a means of “educating them” into a higher form of life: a healthier life, a more moral life, and therefore a more productive life. Whereas this initiative focused on individual bodies and their alterable capacities (a “disciplinary” mode of biopower), other initiatives tended to be concerned with human beings insofar as they comprised a “population” or “community” (a “biopolitical” mode of biopower). The short-lived “land tax,” for example, was intended partly to increase the cost of holding land and decrease the cost of owning improvements. In this way, the tax was expected to curtail speculation in bare land and stimulate ongoing improvements to land and buildings; both of these outcomes were conceived to be essential to the “overall” progress and prosperity of the community. Other biopolitical initiatives mirrored the land tax in their concern with the population, but sought to achieve somewhat different effects. The construction of sewers and water mains was intended to eliminate waterborne “dangers” to the community’s health, while the installation of surface paving and street lighting was thought to create a “more agreeable” home for the existing population and encourage continued population growth. The creation of “participatory” venues and processes, finally, was seen as a means of refocusing planning practices on the genuine “interests” of the Halifax community; more pleasant, vibrant urban spaces could thereby be produced, and a skilled workforce would be attracted to the city.

A second major theme was planning’s consistent reliance on modes of knowledge that rendered the condition and improvement of life intelligible in selective, differentiated ways. The domain of “life,” as Foucault would suggest, made its appearance in relation to certain norms that not everyone could seem to embody. The early twentieth-century inhabitants of the downtown “slum,” for example, were perceived to be exceptionally unhealthy and immoral; the residents of Africville, around the same period, were per-
ceived to have similar failings, though their cause was attributed in this case to the residents’ membership in a biologically inferior “sub-race”; certain early 1970s activists, finally, were ostensibly unable to express their “interests” in accordance with political norms, and tended, as a result, to disrupt political processes rather than contribute to them. In all of these cases, certain norms helped to make life both intelligible and manageable. The inhabitants of the downtown slum were understood as pathological, physically and morally; from this assessment, it was then possible to conceive of an improvement in the lives of these individuals through a program of “normalization” (i.e., by bringing their lives in line with dominant physical and moral norms). In the case of biopolitical planning initiatives, norms are sought out within the population, as well as amid a range of processes and conditions that are perceived to affect the population. Sub-normal “races” are identified within the population, and their existence is curtailed; less than “best” land uses are assessed, and redevelopment is promoted; sub-standard, unsanitary housing is observed, and promptly condemned. The management of life, as Foucault suggests, is a practice of differentiating between “normal” and “pathological,” and developing appropriate “normalizing” interventions. The major planning initiatives that I examined were each an expression of this practice.

The final theme of this dissertation was planning’s recurrent affiliation with certain forms of violence. The violence that I have attempted to trace varies in its form and extent. In some cases, it involved the conscious degradation of people’s living conditions or the forced displacement of communities. In other cases, it involved the exclusion of political viewpoints from planning discussions or the exposure of certain lives to the unaccountable calculations of others (even if the latter, like the model tenements proponents, were well-intended). As epistemic violence of defining certain groups as immoral, unproductive, and therefore incapable of having anything relevant to say about the operation of planning, even when it pertains to their own homes. In all of these cases, the violence committed was seen as furthering the objectives of planning. It was not seen as contradictory that the improvement of life would ostensibly occur alongside the deprivation or degradation of certain lives. As I suggested, it is across the boundary between “normal” and “pathological” that violence is likely to transpire. Those cast outside the domain of normal life may be omitted from the objectives of modern planning, may be forced to bear its costs, or may be subjected to interventions that aim to impart someone’s else’s vision of improvement. It is a divided, bi-
furcated conception of life that planning attempts to improve, and planning interventions are devised and implemented in relation to these bifurcations. A major consequence of this is planning’s propensity to treat certain lives in ways that it could not conceivably treat the broader, norm-embodying domain of life. A damaged city comes into being, therefore, was the painful underside of the thriving, healthy terrain that planning seeks to produce.

Tracking the making of a damaged city across more than a century of urban history helps to elicit a somewhat different perspective on the present. It becomes possible, as George Elliott Clarke implores, to “remember the damage” – or at least a portion of it. As Clarke would suggest, the damage that must be remembered may have occurred in the past, but also persists into the present. It consists of the easily overlooked “pain and tragedy” that was enacted in tandem with the making of the city’s “great beautiful landscape.” It is, in fact, a major condition of this landscape’s existence. During the recent Halifax by Design project, the images that were projected onto video screens had the characteristic of depicting the great beauty of the city’s present, while showing nothing of the pain and tragedy that brought these spaces into being. The Scotia Square complex, for example, was frequently depicted during the event in its present state, and scenarios of change took this present as their starting point. Eluded and unmentioned was the complex’s downside: the low-income neighbourhood that had existed in this space until the 1950s, and that had long been subjected to planning proposals and interventions of marked brutality in the name of improving the lives of the residents or the city overall.

The entire urban terrain, moreover, has been significantly shaped and upheld by a long history in which great attention and money have been expended to improve material conditions in selective ways. Straining to remember the damage, the history of Africville can been seen in nearly every inch of the urban terrain. For at least eighty years, the City worked to upgrade living conditions in the downtown, the South End, and eventually the North End, while continuing to let Africville languish or make its conditions worse. The money saved by ignoring Africville, the noxious facilities that could be located in Africville rather than elsewhere, and the land that was gradually expropriated to enable further urban development certainly had material effects across the terrain of the city. To remember the damage, in this case, is to see its history as an irreducible part of the present, and to reject or rework representations of the city.
that cleave the past from the present: that attempt to “bury” history, as Denise Allen would suggest, rather than deal with it.

An ability to approach the present in this way would clearly disrupt and reorient many conventional planning practices. Recalling the Halifax by Design process, the words of the young member of Fusion Halifax keep returning to me: “I’ve chosen to stay here,” he said. “If the [career] opportunities don’t arrive, I might have to go somewhere else.” Hearing these words during my investigation of the history of urban planning in Halifax, I could not help interpreting them as arrogant, ignorant, and epistemically violent. There is, to begin with, the arrogance of calling for the city to be remade according to the desires of a few people on the *ulta matim* that they will otherwise be forced to depart for other cities. Perhaps more infuriating is the ignorance of the statement: the apparent unawareness of the long history of such statements, and the history a form of planning that has almost *always* identified a particular population that it wanted to serve, and ignored or sacrificed the rest.

There is a form of epistemic violence, finally, in failing to remember the damage enacted in the production of an urban terrain that the Fusion representative took merely as a present, physical starting point for further, more extensive development. The practical consequences of this failure to remember, I should emphasize, include the promotion of a process of urban development that not only privileges the aspirations of the already-privileged (i.e., “young, smart people”), but also induces greater vulnerability for the already-vulnerable. As I noted above, the changes to the approval process that were supported by Fusion, and that were ultimately accepted by City Council, effectively eliminate all restrictions of future development, except for those pertaining to building height and aesthetics. The kind of bulldozer-led development that deeply damaged the city in the 1950s and 60s, while not currently on the agenda of any local developer, could certainly reappear. If it does, there will be no formal mechanism to stop it.

In addition to eliciting a new perspective on prevailing representations of urban space, this dissertation also raises questions about a broader range of current planning ideas and practices. These ideas and practices have been shaped by the extended history that I have examined. Planning practices clearly continue, for example, to apprehend and manage the condition of the population in bifurcated terms, drawing a practical distinction between the aspirations of the public and aspirations that, like those of heritage ac-
tivists, would seem to impair the fulfillment of the former. One is compelled to ask, in this case, how cer-
tain norms help to divide up the population, rendering certain lives less recognizable to the objectives of
planning, and how the making of these divisions might itself become a subject of planning discussions.

More broadly, it should be possible to ask how today’s planning practices have been shaped by
the longstanding exclusion of many people from their historical formulation. Planning, in tending to ex-
clude certain groups from its consideration over many years, may have become very good at improving
the lives of the majority, while remaining terribly ill-equipped to offer anything beneficial to the various
marginalized populations that it has never aspired to benefit. As a result of past exclusions, we do not
know precisely what kind of planning initiatives would have responded to the needs of the Orton family
(discussed in Chapter 2), the residents of Africville (Chapter 4), or the Black United Front (Chapter 5).
We can assume, however, that planning would presently be configured very differently if it had been de-
developed through a broader discussion in the past. Given that it did not, it might reasonably be taken as an
insult for marginalized groups to now be invited to participate in projects like Halifax by Design (as cer-
tain participants in the project, in their concern for “inclusivity,” seemed to want to do.) While I concur
that it would have been better to have a more diverse and socially inclusive discussion during Halifax by
Design – while I think it would have been preferable, in particular, to have more leaders and activists
from the African Nova Scotian community present – I also feel that the discussion was constituted in such
a way that the contributions of marginalized groups would have been rather difficult for others to recog-
nize. In addition to working to hold more inclusive planning discussions in Halifax, therefore, I would
suggest that it is also important to have different discussions, and I will suggest one way that this kind of
discussion might be begun, below.

6.3 Reflections and New Directions

My aim in this dissertation was to track the making of a damaged city. In doing so, I focused on the initia-
tives and proposals that seemed to best demonstrate planning’s peculiar modern configuration: its simul-
taneous devotion to improving life and ability to overlook and damage certain lives. Each of these initia-
tives, I should note, pertained to the terrain of peninsular Halifax, to the city of Halifax proper. Excluded,
consequently, were the city’s various suburban settlements. Reflecting on ways to extend the present research, I am compelled to suggest a move beyond the peninsula, a move to examine the affiliations between biopower and planning in the suburbs. Research of this kind would, I think, be especially productive in the context of Halifax, where the central city is outlined by four significant and longstanding African Nova Scotian communities: Beechville, North Preston, East Preston, and Hammonds Plains. While none of these communities have been wiped off the map, as Africville was, the operation of planning in their vicinity has nevertheless had a similar character. As the Black United Front pointed out in the early 1970s, amenities like sewers, running water, and surface paving were absent in many outlying African Nova Scotian communities, and the seizure of land by the state or private interests sometimes occurred in these locations as well. Today, as Halifax continues to sprawl, these communities face various kinds of threats, from the buying-up of homes by white residents and businesses (which, black residents sometimes claim, undermines the prevailing sense of community) to the prospect of expropriation for property developments or infrastructure projects. The operation of planning in these areas needs much more attention, and I would suggest that a form of inquiry that foregrounds the relationship between biopower and racism could be particularly well adapted to this future research.

Another way to extend the present research would be to explore alternatives to the prevailing configuration of urban planning. While this dissertation has certainly attempted to show that planning needs to change, its interventions have been confined to the realm of critique and (attempted) disruption, rather than concrete reformulation. In the end, this dissertation leaves off in much the same way as Foucault’s 1975-76 lectures on biopolitics. After detailing the rise of biopolitics among European countries and the brutality that was enacted in the name of improving overall life, Foucault concludes with the somewhat cryptic claim that the enduring political “problem” is to disaffiliate racism and social struggle, to conceive and practice a form of struggle that does not, like so many earlier struggles, “becom[e] racist.”7 (It is important to recall that Foucault is speaking about racism – and, thus, non-racism – in a broad and unconventional sense: as a “biological-type relationship” in which distinctions are drawn between the positive,

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healthy, or productive elements of the population and the ostensibly negative, pathological elements. It is the conception of social struggle in these terms, whether it occurs between conventional “races” or not, that Foucault wants to problematize here.) It is not part of Foucault’s project, of course, to say much more than this; he does not, and would not, outline a concrete course of social transformation. While the exploration of alternatives is not part of my project in this dissertation either, I would suggest that work of this kind is profoundly necessary. It is a project that could build off the present research, and I would like to conclude with a suggestion about how this work might begin.

One obvious place to begin a new kind of discussion is Africville. More than any other place in Halifax, it is Africville that could not exist, that had no place, within the dominant configuration of planning knowledge and power. The planning-related demands of Africville residents were never recognized, even their desire to stay put, to be left alone by planning, could not ultimately be allowed.

Today, on the former site of Africville, an annual Reunion Weekend continues to be held. The Reunion brings together former Africville residents and their descendents from around the world, and serves as a community building event – a celebration of the community, as well as a mulling-over the challenges that it faces – for many African Nova Scotians, whether they have formal ties to Africville or not. On one of my last days in Halifax, I went out to the far-north end site of the reunion with a friend, and joined the gathering formed under the event-sized tent that shielded the Reunion from the steady, drowning Halifax downpour. Among the speakers at the event was Eddie Carvery, a former resident of Africville whose life and thinking I have always found compelling. For over forty years, Carvery has been protesting the City’s treatment of Africville, primarily by physically occupying the former site of his home. Recently described in a documentary film as “the hermit of Africville,” Carvery’s seldom-interrupted occupation of his old land was inspired, he says, by the devastation experienced by his own community, as well as by the militant “black power” movement that was just emerging at the time he began his protest. At the Reunion that year, Carvery expressed what he has long made clear: that “moving forward” as a community is impossible so long as the past has not been dealt with. When asked why he continues to protest, to continue to occupy the site of Africville, Carvery often provides a short but incisive answer: “I’m still here. Why am I here? I’m fighting racism.”
Carvery’s expressed connection between being “here” and “fighting racism” may be more profound, and more instructive, than it first appears. It is a connection, for one thing, that African Nova Scotian activists and artists have quite frequently drawn. Maxine Tynes, a Halifax-based writer, concludes a poem called “Black Song Nova Scotia” with the lines: “We are the Black and invisible / We are here and not here / We are gone but never leave / We have voice and heart and wisdom / We are here / We are here / We are here.”

George Elliott Clarke, as I have noted, regards the predominant situation of “Africadians” to be one of longstanding exile, while the ceaseless “betrayal” that his writing attempts to enact is focused primarily on creating a place in which to “be” – a never-finished overcoming of exile. Consistent with these insights, this dissertation has demonstrates how modern urban planning establishes itself upon the terrain that people inhabit, and often renders the continued inhabitation of certain people (the city’s ostensibly lesser lives) a question of others’ calculations. One of the most vivid expressions of the violence of modern planning, in fact, is its habitual suspension of the ability of certain groups, especially African Nova Scotians, to be “here” for any sustained, unimpeded length of time.

In Carvery’s enduring refusal to be displaced, in sum, some of the major limitations and dangers of planning as it is presently configured come to the foreground. His refusal, his determined “still here” in the face of countervailing planning objectives, seems to reveal something very basic that planning somehow cannot allow. It is not that planning cannot ever recognize a desire to stay put – it was, after all, this desire that was effectively expressed in the Fusion representative’s contribution to the Halifax by Design public hearing – but rather that it cannot recognize this desire extensively. Planning cannot recognize this desire as one that might be shared among an Africville resident and a young professional, alike. At a time when the planning process in Halifax has left behind its popular democratic component and seems more potentially violent than it has for decades, new ideas and stronger social movements are profoundly necessary. To recognize Carvery’s desire to be “here,” and to demand or develop a form of planning that can fulfill this desire, might begin to fight a certain kind of racism in prevailing planning practices and help to

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constitute a more acceptable alternative. It would, at least, provide a reasonable place to begin to begin a much-needed discussion.
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