SERIALITY AND INVITATION:

KNOWING AND STRUGGLE IN VANCOUVER CHINATOWN'S HISTORIC AREA HEIGHT REVIEW

by

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Abstract

In this project, I explore the 2011 Historic Area Height Review (HAHR) public hearings in light of questions of knowing-in-struggle. At issue in the hearings, were proposals to increase building heights in Vancouver's Chinatown neighbourhood. As a participant, I perceived that this site of public debate also reflected broader tensions that recur within discursive dynamics of social struggle, especially in relation to meanings of *development*.

Here, I develop an activist approach to thinking through such encounters. Participants on all sides of the HAHR debate conveyed Chinatown as a neighbourhood in crisis. However, when it came to interpreting neighbourhood changes and questions of how to save Chinatown, speakers expressed divergent understandings and even contradicting realities. My inquiry treats these disjunctures as entry points for a series of analytical movements towards the material, social, existential and historical dynamics through which these clashing public knowledges have emerged and are sustained. To do so, I especially draw on the Marxist-existentialist work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Paula Allman's elaboration of Freire's dialogical pedagogy, Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography and David Harvey's work.

Through this exploration, I find that divergent reports of neighbourhood change make sense when explored as accounts of complex, speculative capitalist urban development. My analysis further underscores disjunctures wherein institutional texts and policies ostensibly represent but largely misrepresent and overwrite residents' lived experiences of (un)affordability. I trace an existential dimension of hearing debate which evokes the reversal of subject and object and relations of hostile dehumanization apparent in Sartre's theorization of seriality. My historicized reading of discourses of Chinatown as *distinct*, as *Chinese* and as *neglected potential*

highlights their historical instrumentality within a recurring conceptual-material dialectic of colonization-marginalization and resistance. I reconsider HAHR process to explore how, given mounting development pressure and a narrow planning focus on “height,” the social welfare concerns—and the involvement—of low-income residents were gradually rendered external to the HAHR decision. My analysis thus suggests how relations of colonization-marginalization and resistance are ongoing in the context of the HAHR, and makes a contribution towards elucidating the terrain upon which local practices of justice-oriented pedagogy, organizing and “invitation” must be pursued.

Lay Summary

In this project, I explore the 2011 Historic Area Height Review (HAHR) public hearings in light of questions of knowing-in-struggle. At issue in the hearings, were proposals to increase building heights in Vancouver's Chinatown neighbourhood. As a participant, I perceived that this site of public debate also reflected broader tensions that recur within discursive dynamics of social struggle, especially in relation to meanings of *development*.

I develop an activist approach to thinking through such encounters, using the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Paula Allman, Dorothy Smith and David Harvey. Participants on all sides of the HAHR debate conveyed Chinatown as a neighbourhood in crisis. However, when it came to interpreting neighbourhood changes and questions of how to save Chinatown, speakers expressed divergent understandings and even contradicting realities. My inquiry shows how this array of clashing truths can be unpacked in layers of material and economic dynamics, history, experience and creative practice.

Preface

This dissertation reflects the original intellectual work of the author, Kate. M. Murray. Some aspects of the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this project have been published as Murray, K. (2013). "They Were Aware": Activist 'Invitation' and Knowing as Praxis. In C. Kawalilak, & J. Groen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education (CASAE-ACÉÉA) National Conference* (pp. 406-414). Victoria, BC: CASAE. I conducted all of the writing and analysis for this paper.

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List of Abbreviations

ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
BIA	Business Improvement Association
CAC	Community Amenity Contribution
CBA	Chinese Benevolent Association
CCAP	Carnegie Community Action Project
CSHBA	Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association
DERA	Downtown Eastside Residents' Association
DNC	Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council
DEOD	Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District
DTES	Downtown Eastside
HAHR	Historic Area Height Review
HPHS	Historic Precinct Height Study
SIS	Social Impact Study
SPOTA	Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants' Association
SRO	Single Resident Occupancy
SRA	Single Resident Accommodation
UDI	Urban Development Institute
VA	Vancouver Agreement
VANDU	Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
VCRC	Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee
VTS	Vancouver Transportation Study

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Dedication

For Jane, who was fierce in her love of social justice.

Chapter 1: "Fight the Height!" The Historic Area Height Review and Knowing in Social Struggle

Every research project has a story, which is the story of an arrival.
(Sara Ahmed, On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life, p. 2)

1.1 Fight the Height!

On the evening of March 17, 2011, around 7:30 p.m., I stepped off an elevator onto the crowded third floor of Vancouver City Hall. The large foyer outside Council Chambers was buzzing with activity; some 200 people had turned out for the evening's proceedings, a City Council meeting that was to be the first in a series of public hearings about a planning study: The Historic Area Height Review (HAHR).

Earlier that evening, some residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood, along with allies, held a rally outside City Hall to express opposition to the HAHR policy proposals. The rally featured speakers and drumming; members of the crowd had hand-painted signs with phrases such as "No Condos in Chinatown," "Fight the Height" and "Social Housing Not Condos." Later, the DTES contingent arrived to find the public seating in Council Chambers occupied by delegates who had come, instead, to express support for the Height Review proposals. Many of these HAHR supporters wore matching red t-shirts and were accompanied by a giant panda mascot. Accounts of the meeting describe some tense interactions over seating for neighbourhood elders. After negotiations, some City staff members and HAHR supporters gave up their places so that individuals on both sides of the issue could be seated in Council Chambers.

Later, as I entered the crowded foyer, I was struck by the visible lines of division in the room. Because there were many more attendees than could be accommodated in Council

Chambers, many attendees from both groups were now seated in overflow seating; rows of chairs that had been set up in the foyer. One side of a centre aisle appeared as a sea of red t-shirts worn by HAHR supporters, while across the aisle was an array of DTES residents and allies with their backpacks and protest signs.

1.1.1 The HAHR hearings: A story of arrival

I had come to City Hall that evening not to study the proceedings as a researcher but to participate as a speaker; and this way I arrived at the HAHR hearings shaped how I have approached and presented this inquiry. In this project, I treat the HAHR hearings as a specific moment within a much longer and broader context of local social justice organizing and advocacy. I return to explore the hearings in light of my theorized and practical engagements with questions of "knowing-in-struggle." I develop a philosophical, practical and conceptual orientation to working through such encounters of knowing. My analysis explores whether this approach helps to elucidate possibilities associated with what I describe in terms of justice-oriented "invitation." In this chapter, I locate my project in relation to a broader field of practical and theoretical tensions that can be read across multiple contexts of justice-oriented knowing-in-struggle. In the second half of the chapter, I provide more detail about the HAHR hearings.

The focus of the HAHR hearings was a series of bylaw amendments and policy changes laid out in a City of Vancouver report entitled *Historic Area Height Review: Policy Implementation.* The report, prepared by the City of Vancouver's Planning Department and published in December of 2010, recommended allowing increased building heights in the

historic neighbourhood of Chinatown.[1] At the time of the 2011 HAHR hearings, the permitted building height in Chinatown was set at 65 to 70 feet (approximately six or seven storeys). The zoning bylaw changes proposed in the HAHR Implementation report would, among other things, increase outright allowable heights in Chinatown to 75 feet in the northern (HA1) sub-district, and 90 feet in the southern (HA1A) sub-district. The changes would also provide for the possibility for rezoning up to 120 or 150 feet (approximately 12 or 15 storeys) on specific sites in the Chinatown South (HA1A) sub-district.[2]

Additional proposed recommendations related to the City of Vancouver's Transfer of Density program. This allows landowners to transfer or sell unused density[3] from one (donor) site or builder to another (receiving or "landing") site, in exchange for the donor landowner providing certain public goods, usually, the preservation of heritage buildings located on that property. While existing City policy allowed this "bonus" density to be transferred out of—but not into—the heritage district of Chinatown, recommendations contained in the HAHR Implementation report would permit this bonus density to be transferred into or within the Chinatown sub-district HA1A (Chinatown South). An earlier January 2010 HAHR report offered rationale for these proposed changes: "The HAHR explores the need for an intricate balance between providing opportunities for additional growth and necessary public benefits, while also

[1] In Canadian law, land use control is a provincial responsibility generally delegated to municipalities; through zoning policy, building uses and forms are subject to municipal regulation.
[2] Through rezoning provisions, developers can apply to the City on a project-by-project basis to be allowed to exceed the outright permitted heights and to build instead to the taller rezoning height. In the event of a rezoning, the applicant must pay *Community Amenity Contributions* (CACs): monetary or in-kind resources used by the City to fund community infrastructure such as parks, libraries, childcare centres, community and cultural facilities, and transportation services (see City of Vancouver, n.d.-a).
[3] Put simply: the difference between the most space-intensive (or, dense) development permitted on a given site and what is actually built on that site.

maintaining and preserving the historical and cultural values that we, as Vancouverites, have maintained over time" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 18).

I first learned about the HAHR hearings from the Carnegie Community Action Committee (CCAP), a neighbourhood organization that undertakes research, organizing and advocacy activities centred on the aspirations of low-income residents in the Downtown Eastside (DTES). The DTES is a neighbourhood well-known and politicized as Canada's "poorest [urban] postal code." Much of CCAP's work focuses on issues of housing, income, healthcare, involuntary displacement, community control over development, rights to dignity and autonomy and recognition of the national, territorial and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples. Although I did not live in Chinatown or a surrounding part of the Downtown Eastside, my own neighbourhood was not far away. In the years leading up to the hearings I had become increasingly aware of visible changes in the DTES and reports of escalating rents that threatened housing affordability in this extremely vulnerable neighbourhood.

Beginning in December 2010, I had received a series of emails from CCAP requesting that supporters attend a meeting at City Hall, to speak in opposition to the HAHR study's proposals. Among other activities, CCAP undertakes yearly *Hotel Report* research to monitor rents in the Downtown Eastside's many run-down Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings whose tiny rooming house and hotel-style rooms are often described as the last stop before homelessness. For years, this research had shown a steady decline in the number of DTES rooms renting at welfare rates. CCAP had been one of the community groups included in the City's HAHR consultation process, and had thus received an advanced copy of the study's recommendations. In the emails I received, CCAP highlighted concerns that the HAHR proposals would accelerate the kinds of development activities (especially high-end

condominium development) that were displacing low-income residents from neighbourhood housing and public spaces.

On January 20, 2011, City Council voted to refer Chinatown-related portions of the HAHR proposals to a series of public hearings that would begin in March. Within public hearings processes, members of the public can present comments and concerns relating to the merits of a proposed zoning bylaw change and councillors are expected to enact quasi-judicial practices of procedural fairness and impartiality.[4] Such hearings are among the final steps required to enact the zoning and bylaw amendments as law. I was aware of the historical patterns of vulnerability and displacement experienced by many residents of the Downtown Eastside and shared the social justice concerns expressed by CCAP. I registered to speak at the HAHR hearings as a neighbour and supporter of these low-income community concerns.

In this thesis, I explore the HAHR public hearings as a clash of knowing constituted by this local moment of social struggle. In expressing opposition to the HAHR proposals, Downtown Eastside residents, activists and allies put forward justice-oriented assertions and analyses, drawing on experiences and research, formal and informal knowledge. These practices of knowing were met with counterpoints put forward in the course of arguments that the HAHR should be approved. HAHR supporters often presented different facts, perspectives and conclusions about what was going on in the neighbourhood and what needed to be done. Presentations by both groups also met with questions and/or responses from councillors. Sometimes, City planners added clarifications or comments, adding a further dimension to the multifaceted interchange about questions of *development*.

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[4] Per British Columbia's Local Government Act (see Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), 2014).

Hearing presentations ranged from formal to informal and reflected an array of knowledges that seemed variously technical, expert, personal and/or emotional. They ranged in scope, often grappling with difficult issues including poverty, racialization and violence. Many shared intergenerational and childhood memories. While some had prepared presentations, some spoke spontaneously—as one put it, "from the heart" (Opp 62[5]). Some shared poetry and one stood in silence. In many cases, the same presenters spoke multiple times, developing their analysis and responding to other speakers. All told, the hearings constituted a rich and dynamic conversation, but one I found difficult to follow.

1.2 Activist Knowing-in-Struggle as Invitation: Recurring Tensions

At the time of the hearings, I had been attempting to formulate a project of collaborative, activist inquiry into practical tensions of social justice work. I had engaged with the theorizing of French Marxist-existentialist author, playwright and activist Jean-Paul Sartre and with the critical pedagogical approach of British adult educator, Paula Allman. The ideas of these two thinkers meet not only through Marx's dialectical philosophy of praxis, but also through the work of Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire, whose literacy work led him to develop a well-known philosophy and approach to conscientização, or consciousness-raising, called dialogical praxis. These conceptual sensibilities—together with my practical engagement in the hearings and in other contexts of justice-oriented community work—shaped my experience of the hearings in light of questions I had begun to conceptualize in terms of pedagogical dynamics of "invitation."

[5] I have used the prefixes "Supp," "Opp," "Oth," "Coun" and "Staff" to identify different groups of speakers at the hearings. My labeling procedure is described in Chapter 3.

Occurring over five evenings in a single room, within the constraints posed by institutional procedure, the 2011 HAHR hearings were a specific and limited site of social struggle. But for all the ways in which the HAHR hearings were particular, I am interested in how they also reflected broader tensions that seem to recur across multiple contexts of social justice work. In the discussion that follows, I open up consideration of this broader field by briefly reflecting on the hearings in relation to a wider landscape of local activist knowing and practice; specifically, two high profile moments of local activism that are likely to be familiar to the reader: the February 2010 Olympic Winter games and the October 2011 Occupy Movement.

1.2.1 Analysis and awareness-raising: Activism as public pedagogy

In the years prior to the HAHR hearings, Vancouver's successful bid to host the 2010 *Olympic Winter Games* brought a flurry of activity among governments and corporations eager to benefit from the impending multi-billion dollar spectacle of athleticism and internationalism. As the games drew nearer in February 2010, activists organized to highlight more troubling aspects of *Vancouver 2010* as a local site of the Olympic industry. Like other mega-events, Olympics produce social, environmental and economic impacts such as eviction, displacement and arrest of vulnerable persons; unsustainable land-use development; damage to ecologically sensitive land; increased pollution and waste; and rapid gentrification (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2007; Lenskyj, 2000, 2002). Later, in the months after the hearings, the Occupy protest movement surged in a Global Day of Action, as "Occupy Together" events were held in 950 cities across the world, including Vancouver.

As in organizing efforts related to HAHR hearings, integral to both movements were practices of public awareness-raising. These included use of public events, pamphlets, online

materials, press releases, petitions, creative campaigns, social media, publication of research and analysis, newsletters and protest signs. These activities can be explored in terms of their teaching and learning—or, pedagogical—qualities, as sites of popular education, social movement learning and/or public pedagogy (e.g., Cadena, 1991; Hall, 2006; Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). Much activist dissent also seeks to educate: Grassroots organizations, neighbourhood groups, and art collectives act as public pedagogues who enact "critical public engagement" to collectively interrupt inequality and "hegemonic forms of discrimination" (Brady, 2006 as cited in Sandlin et al., 2011). In such contexts, dynamics of teaching and learning can be inseparable from practices of analysis and research; many groups "combine grassroots work with various forms of research, publication and knowledge generation" (Bazán et al., 2008 as cited in Choudry, 2014a, p. 98). Further, movement organizers, participants and publics can learn in and through activism through "interrogation of knowledge from the perspective of struggle" (Scandrette, 2012 as cited in Choudry2014a). Learning occurs in complex and contradictory ways that are shaped "by intrapersonal, interpersonal and broader social forces" (Newman, 2000 as cited in in Choudry, 2014a). During the 2011 Occupy movement, Vancouver protest participants not only set up an encampment, but also engaged in daily public general assemblies and a variety of pedagogical (teaching and learning) activities. They formed education, outreach and media working groups, assembled books in a Peoples' Library and co-hosted speaking events and marches with other groups.

1.2.2 Dominant discourses and counter-narratives: Discursive dynamics of struggle

Via this public educational and opinion-building work, activists signal how social struggles entail struggles of knowing. Political clashes are also clashes of popular understanding

wherein critical and/or oppositional forms of consciousness push up against status quo versions of the world. Activist pedagogies thus frequently entail attention to public discourse—the collective text, talk and negotiated meanings of a society (Doane, 2003). Through discourse, "individual and collective… understandings are continuously being contested, disrupted and redefined through everyday experience, cultural images and political struggle": "Code words, labels, claims, and mental models" can be used to legitimate privilege, to express positions in "politically palatable" terms, or to challenge existing social arrangements and conditions (Doane, 2003, pp. 555-556). Even minor changes in discourses can "actually represent major shifts in belief structures and value assumptions" (Cannella & Lincoln, 2004, p. 166). Discourse can thus be understood as both a *product* and an *instrument* of struggle: "a reciprocal relationship exists between discourse and power so that power necessarily manifests itself in discourse and discourse plays a key role in the production and reproduction of power" (Farkas, 2013, p. 401, after Fairclough and Van Dijk). Writing about urban struggle in Vancouver, Pell describes how public discursive practices "work to configure and enact the political" (Pell, 2014, p. 30). They enable "some types of statements about urban redevelopment to be made, and not others, encouraging some forms of political engagement, and not others" (Pell, 2014, p. 39, after Foucault).

In response to dominant discourses, activist pedagogies often entail the development of "counternarratives" (Rogers, 2012, p. 927). These alternative assertions can work to "question dominant knowledge and provide context to understand and transform established belief systems"; to build community by "putting a face to social issues and helping people realize they are not alone"; and to teach how new understandings can, over time, play a role in creating new realities (Rogers, 2012, p. 927, after Solórzano & Yosso). Often, such practices entail presenting

underreported information and perspectives. During the Olympics, slogans such as "Homes not Games" and "End Poverty: It's Not a Game" highlighted how significant public funds were being allocated to this spectacle for relatively wealthy visitors, while for the city's most vulnerable residents (especially indigenous people, women, seniors, mental health survivors and people with disabilities) the daily realities of grinding poverty remained significantly unaddressed. Likewise, Vancouver Occupyers issued a public statement outlining concerns, including an acknowledgement that they were camped on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples who never ceded their rights and title to the British Crown.[6]

The myriad ways of being and knowing within social justice work frequently entails differences and debate, however many local efforts can be said to share a commitment to challenge contemporary relations of domination in the most fundamental way possible. This is pursued, in part, by drawing on a range of critical, radical and indigenous traditions of knowledge and practice that grasp local injustices as connected with global, historical and material relations of, *inter alia*, racialized colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and hetero-patriarchy.

1.2.3 "Understand… and act with us": Invitational pedagogy

Taken together, the philosophical and theoretical work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Paula Allman and Paulo Freire put forward a compelling model of collective activist pedagogy (see Chapter 2). Their combined thinking suggests practices through which a series of actors might work from within contemporary conditions of capitalism to critically investigate dynamics of injustice

[6] For an analysis in the context of the Olympics, see Peterson (2010).

and—on the basis of recognizing some shared needs and goals—work together toward transformative, justice-oriented social change. In this project, I think through how this ensemble of philosophical and pedagogical theories might work to strengthen communicative practices of activism in relation to discursive dimensions of struggle. These theorized emphases on collective action formed the conceptual basis from which I began to consider activist pedagogies in terms of dynamics of "invitation." Through awareness-raising and education, advocates seek to facilitate popular critical learning and broader participation in justice-oriented social change. These pedagogical practices resemble public invitations to "understand things the way we do" and based on this, "act with us."

The familiar idea of invitation helps to think through pedagogical tensions of autonomy-and-reciprocity that play out in contexts of activist education. In such contexts, advocates are often not invited or sanctioned as teachers or experts. Instead, activist teaching is often offered autonomously, in relation to various interlocuters or publics who are not necessarily oriented towards learning in or from the encounter. Practices of activism and advocacy are often construed as inappropriate interruptions of accepted social (e.g., government or corporate) processes.

As with the oppositional understandings put forward in activism, everyday practices of invitation are rooted in the location and sensibilities of the initiating subject. A future-oriented practice, invitation reflects the inviter's practical pursuit of a possible, envisioned and desired, intersubjective future that is not yet realized. Further, invitation entails everyday navigation of the tensions of commitment and partiality. Although an invitation can be extended autonomously—and is thus rooted in the committed agency of the initiating subject—to be fulfilled it must be actively acknowledged and received via the reciprocal action of the invitee.

The invitation is also a kind of inquiry: it is oriented to learning, to hearing and understanding another's response and to acting in light of this reply. Invitation is inherently an open-ended (versus predetermined) practice; an invitation cannot be imposed or bestowed (otherwise, it is some kind of command rooted in authority). Reciprocity is not guaranteed and is often subject to negotiation: "I can't do that with you today," "could we do something else," or "can I take a rain check?"

Along these lines, the public pedagogies of activism differ both from usual ideas of pedagogy (in schools) and from collective approaches such as Freirean dialogical pedagogy wherein participants in a group are committed to teaching and learning from one another. Instead, these activist pedagogies are often particularly incomplete, unrealized and open-ended. They are invitational pedagogies that nevertheless pursue reciprocity in the form of shared, justice-oriented learning and action. The idea of invitation provides a touchstone for the political and practical concerns in which this project is rooted and to which I return in Chapter 9.

1.2.4 Tensions of invitation: Connection and disconnect, possibility and implausibility

As I observed the hearings, contemplating my turn to speak, I was aware of seemingly contradictory discursive dynamics of connection and disconnection. I wondered how this might relate to the problems and possibilities of collective action. These perceived tensions are striking because of how they resembled dynamics within other local struggles which also contested status quo versions of "development."

If, like the HAHR hearings, the Olympics and the Occupy movements are read in terms of invitation to collective understanding and action, it seems that many members of local publics reciprocated. Together with other significant mobilizations that occurred in Canada around the

same time—including the massive Quebec student strikes in the spring of 2012 and the ongoing *Idle No More* indigenous rights movement—anti-Olympics organizing and the Occupy movement had heightened critical popular debate about issues such as inequality, climate change, corporate influence, colonialism and democracy. In October 2011, the call to "Occupy Together" inspired some 5,000 people to converge on the downtown lawn of the Vancouver Art Gallery, based on a shared understanding of themselves as members of "the 99%."[7] Likewise, prior to the HAHR hearings, various influential civic leaders had rallied behind the appeal for solidarity put forward by DTES anti-poverty and housing advocates.

The hearings themselves also reflected discursive dynamics of connection. As the hearings wore on, numerous speakers began to highlight areas of shared understanding and common concern about topics such as heritage, culture, housing and inclusivity. There were many moments of friendly laughter and frank reflection. Further, council was comprised almost entirely of councillors who considered themselves progressives, with the Mayor and majority Vision Party councillors having been elected predominantly on a platform to end homelessness (Vision Vancouver, 2008).

I was also attuned to discursive moments that suggested qualities of contingency—the possibilities for common ground or shared action amongst members of the hearings' opposed groups. One HAHR supporter described an HAHR opponent as someone they "admire[d] and respect[ed] and consider[ed] a friend" (Supp 4x2). Likewise, although many of Chinatown's benevolent and family associations had announced support for the current HAHR proposals,

[7] "We are the 99%" was the Occupy Movement's well-known slogan and critique of the increasing proportion of global wealth controlled by the top one percent of the world's population.

many opponents spoke glowingly of these organizations' important historic contributions and ongoing community work. This sense of contingency was often marked by dynamics of invitation, for instance, as speaker after speaker suggested that all those present could "sit down," "come to an agreement" and find ways to "work together" towards "common" interests and goals (e.g., Supp 2; Supp 6; Supp 8; Supp 11; Oth 1; Opp 19; Opp 27; Opp 38; Opp 31; Opp 53; Oth 8).

But in each of these sites of struggle, discursive dynamics of connection and shared understanding seemed to only go so far. As in the Occupy and anti-Olympics movements, the hearings' milieu of opposition was linked to dynamics of confrontation. Certainly, as many remarked, the hearings began with a polarized tenor. And, within each of these struggles, confusing tensions of connection and disconnection seemed to reflect not only different opinions, but even directly conflicting truths. While Occupyers and supporters highlighted compelling accounts of poverty and inequality, media pundits concluded that with capitalism, "life… has never been better" (McInnes as cited in Gutstein, 2011, p. 5). Likewise, in February of 2010, the arrival of the Olympic Games was met with numerous protests and rallies critiquing Canada's ongoing history of colonialism, but also a sudden proliferation of patriotism: flag-waving, red and white clothing and shop windows full of Canadiana. Likewise, while speakers in the hearings underscored common concerns, many understandings were expressed in direct contradiction to each other. This was apparent, for example, in descriptions of Chinatown as both "dying" and "vital" and in characterizations of the HAHR proposals as a "win win situation" but also as "class war" (see Chapter 6).

Other qualities of disconnection related to the hearings' confusing interplay of knowledges that were simultaneously social, intersubjective and personal. In presentations, well-

known ideas and social facts were frequently intertwined with accounts of personal experience, collective histories and technical or specialized analysis. As I observed the hearings, I was especially aware of these dynamics as presenting practical challenges in relation to my own discursive interventions. Prior to speaking, I felt clear about my concern to critique predominant versions of development that would threaten neighbourhood affordability and displace vulnerable residents. But within the hearings' dynamic exchange, these problematic status quo discourses of development were entangled with kinds of knowledge I did not wish, or feel qualified to dispute. For one, I was not an urban planner or architect. Further, I had not read or understood in full, the 99 bright pink pages—distributed at the beginning of the hearings—of jargon-heavy and often technical meeting minutes, report, policy guidelines and appendices relating to the HAHR decision. Nor had I participated in earlier phases of HAHR consultation. This awareness of limited understanding was also linked to my sense of being an outsider in relation to the communities at the centre of this struggle. I was not a resident of Chinatown or the Downtown Eastside, nor did I consider Chinatown integral to my heritage, social group or everyday activities. These practical tensions of knowing-in-struggle hint at a series of puzzles I would later revisit as research.

Thinking about the hearings in relation to multiple local contexts of social struggle signals recurring tensions that can be posed as questions for exploration in the context of the HAHR hearings' contested discourses of development: How might advocate-knowers critically unpack "clashes of truth" as these emerge in particular contexts of struggle? How to explore discursive practices in relation to the complexities of concrete and material circumstance? How to make sense of multiple and divergent forms of public, collective and personal meaning? How to work through conflicting experiences and inclinations with respect to practice? How to

navigate accounts of vastly different realities? How could these critical explorations inform the invitational pedagogies of activism?

1.3 *Invitation* as Inquiry: Working-out an Approach to Critical Learning-in-Struggle

In returning to the hearings as research, I am not only concerned to theorize the hearings' discursive dynamics of struggle, but also to develop a philosophical, practical and conceptual approach to critically unpacking such encounters. I convey my inquiry as a process of working out a dialogical approach to justice-oriented *struggle knowledge* (Choudry, 2014b), exploring conceptual tools that could continue to be used in other contexts of activist knowing-in-struggle. In this way, my project pursues an empirical-conceptual dialectic. As in usual modes of research, I use a conceptual approach to explore the hearings as a specific discursive encounter. However, I also reverse this trajectory of inquiry and use my study of the hearings to explore and develop a conceptual approach. This orientation to inquiry is inspired by critical traditions that blur perceived boundaries between theorizing, activism, pedagogy and inquiry.

I especially work from a line of thinking that can be traced through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (e.g., 1960a, 1960b) and through Paula Allman's (e.g., 1999; 2001) elaboration of Freire's (e.g., 1970) dialogical pedagogy and Marx's dialectical method. Both Sartre's and Allman's work can be placed within what Allman (2001, pp. 4–6) describes as a dialectical tradition within Marxism. While many approaches to scientific inquiry attempt to understand society one part at a time, "isolating and separating it from the rest, and treating it as static," dialectical or relational modes of theorizing assume we cannot adequately understand our world without recognizing "how the 'bigger picture,' both spatially and temporally (past and future), enters into and affects whatever we perceive directly and immediately" (Ollman, 1998, pp. 339, 338). Via his notion of

the *project*, Sartre especially emphasizes the human capacity for "going beyond a situation," that is, our abilities to make something out of what we have "been made" (Sartre, 1960b, p. 91).

Allman's work is significantly influenced by Gramsci in addition to Marx and Freire and focuses on advancing revolutionary social change through critical education rooted in a rigorous, experiential understanding of capitalism. Sartre's intellectual project is grounded in the philosophical tradition of existentialism and thus centres on explicating possibilities for conscious choice and moral responsibility within Marx's emphasis on collective and structural relations (Flynn, 2004). As I will describe (Chapter 2), there is much congruence in the work of these two authors, not only pertaining to their respective engagements with Marx, but also because Allman draws on Freire who was influenced by Sartre.

Sartre and Allman share with myriad critical thinkers, concern to emphasize the embeddedness of domination within all realms of human (embodied, social and psychological) experience. However, despite their respective concerns to grasp deeply affecting relations of injustice, both thinkers arguably place more emphasis (than many) on "historicity": "the impermanence of domination" (Agger, 2006, p. 7). For Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek (2006, following both Marx and D. Smith), this entails the understanding that "'we' as individuals and as groups of people, who, through our own practices, coordinate and produce the social world … can also collectively change it" (p. 5). As I detail in Chapter 2, both Sartre and Allman have developed dialectical ways of conceptualizing human agency-in-circumstance that help to hold a knower's attention to the "twin possibilities" (Cruickshank, 1999, p. 2) that individual and collective modes of praxis might be routine and uncritical—serving to reproduce existing relations of domination—but that they might also be critical, creative and liberating. In developing my approach to inquiry, I also draw on dialectical methods described by Harvey

(1996) and Ollman (1998) together with Dorothy Smith's (e.g., 1987) Institutional Ethnography and elaborations of her work as Political Activist Ethnography (G. Smith, 1990; see also Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, & Tilleczek, 2006).

1.3.1 Research problematic and research questions

Following D. Smith (e.g., 1987), the recurring tensions I have described (of connection and disconnection, possibility and implausibility) can be treated as a research problematic. For Smith, inquiry begins from what the research-writer makes problematic in a given setting. This set of puzzles is not (objectively) 'there.' They arise for someone (see Campbell & Gregor, 2002), in this case for me and (prospectively) for others who are concerned to navigate the complex clashes of knowing often encountered in discursive practices of struggle and advocacy.

From my standpoint[8] as an activist, participant and learner, in this thesis I explore the HAHR hearings in terms of two interrelated thrusts. These reflect what Allman (1999, 2001) describes as the two fundamental dimensions of Freire's dialogical pedagogy: a transformed, critical, relation to knowledge and transformed, cooperative relations between knowers. First, I am interested to unpack tensions of connection and disconnection by exploring how the hearings' clashing truths offer insight into geographically broader and historically longer social relations of knowing. This concern is reflected in the following research question:

1. Within the HAHR hearings, how do speakers' public testimonies help to elucidate the political meanings of development within the material and social relations of capitalism, as these have developed historically in relation to intersecting practices of colonization, racialization, hetero-patriarchy and other modes of social domination?

[8] I draw on D. Smith's (e.g. 1987) particular use of this term (see Chapter 3).

Here, I am not concerned to develop a descriptive account of what speakers think or believe. Instead, my analysis is aimed at critically unpacking certain social (historical, material and political) dimensions of hearing discourse, especially as these relate to predominant market-oriented development approaches which are linked to dispossession and displacement.

The second key thrust of my project is anchored in my concern to explore the hearings from the perspective of transformative possibility:

> 2. How does a close reading of hearing discourse help to elucidate the apparent potentials, or not, for justice-oriented working-together which are signaled by the hearings' qualities of invitation?

In the course of the thesis, I theorize the HAHR hearings as a site of practical inquiry in which myriad local actors were engaged in important knowledge production (see Frampton et al., 2006; G. Smith, 1990). My own analytic work can thus be grasped as a response to, continuation or component of, this broader ongoing project of critical intersubjective learning-in-struggle, or what Choudry (2014b) terms "struggle knowledge."

1.3.2 Inquiry as a theorized return to the hearings

As months passed, the HAHR hearings increasingly stood out in my memory as an encounter in which I could fruitfully explore the recurring discursive tensions I had perceived across multiple contexts of social struggle. The hearings offered an opportunity to explore a dynamic and sustained public conversation about the contested meanings of development as these related to Chinatown. Unlike many public moments of activist communication, the structure of the hearings produced an opportunity for interchange that was particularly prolonged and responsive. When activists articulate social justice analyses and invitations to engagement via protests, public statements or media interviews, these often become truncated as slogans and

soundbites. Though detailed analyses may be shared in print and/or web-based material, these fora often do not lend themselves to dialogic interchange. While social justice work involves personal conversations that are often both dialogic and prolonged, these are rarely of a public nature and rarely include the diverse range of differently located individuals who spoke during the hearings.

In contrast, the hearings featured an array of local actors assembled, face-to-face, in a single room to express myriad experiences, perspectives and insights. Although the procedural rules of the hearings certainly limited many kinds of interchange, they also enabled each presenter to speak repeatedly. Most spoke for a full five minutes, and many—because of guidelines that enabled additional time to respond to questions from Council—offered dynamic clarifications that meant their time at the mic lasted much longer. Further, because it was difficult to know ahead of time how many speakers would be heard each evening, and because of the political message that could be communicated to Council by simply being present, many speakers had observed a large portion of the hearings and thus responded in turn to understandings expressed earlier on. The qualities and diversity of people present—many with long historical ties and personal or civic connections to each other (including to councillors) and to the neighbourhood—culminated in analyses that were remarkable in their detail, scope and depth of insight. The discussion moved from the general to the specific, and from the technical to the material, cultural, and political. In contrast to many formal contexts of public dialogue, the familiarity and sense of community amongst many of those present seemed to inspire the sharing of firsthand stories, reflecting how public discourse can be taken-up, interpreted and/or expressed in very personal ways.

The discursive encounter of the HAHR hearings is also an important site of inquiry more generally because of how public hearings are linked to ideals of liberal pluralism and deliberative democracy. Kemp (1985) traces the origins of public hearings to the enclosures of open and common land in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. These early land use planning processes entailed a series of public meetings; at the last of these, between three and fifteen publicly appointed commissioners would hear disputes and make awards. Between 1760 and 1774, enclosure commissioners became bound by an oath of impartiality and were required to render accounts to parliament. Subsequent requirements stipulated adequate publicity of the enclosure proposals throughout the local parish. In 1845, increased state control over the process led to increasing uniformity of this public local inquiry-based political process. Kemp observes that in contemporary Western political culture, public hearings have become a widely accepted practice for rectifying a wide variety of sociopolitical issues, with their qualities of public and local accessibility linked to democratic ideals. "The public inquiry or hearing," he states,

> is generally held to provide an open, objective and rational, that is, a truly democratic form of practical decision making. Furthermore this lends justificatory force to government decisions and policies that are reached subject to the public inquiry process; public inquiries are seen to legitimize controversial decisions taken in several important areas of governmental planning activity. (1985, p. 179)

But while public hearings are widely accepted as legitimate forums of decision-making, there exist serious doubts about the democratic nature of the relations that exist between governments and participants in such processes. Much research about citizen interactions with government officials reflects ambiguity and contradiction (Farkas, 2013). Van Dijk has argued that control and restriction of access to discourse and communicative events is a key instrument of power wherein certain actors "control the occasion, time, place, setting, and the presence or absence of participants in such events" (1996 as cited in Farkas, 2013, p. 402). Other dynamics

of power in public hearings and council meetings relate to agenda-setting, chairing or facilitation, turn-taking, topic changes, use of jargon and the configuration of material objects such as chairs and microphones (Farkas, 2013; Forester, 1985; D. E. Smith, 1990). In her account of public discourse in the struggle over the Woodward's development in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Pell describes how public hearings on the issue "did not allow for meaningful introduction of issues, dialogue or co-construction of decisions" (2014, p. 35). Pell contrasts those hearings' formal appearance of democracy with effects of democratic circumscription: "Participation was a public ritual (re)producing a certain sort of order (i.e. consent of pre-conceived actions), where competing perspectives were made visible (voiced, publicized), but did not impact the decisions under discussion" (2014, p. 35). Farkas calls for more study in contexts of government-citizen interaction and decision-making so that individuals "can be clearer about the values, opportunities, strategies, and tactics associated with their interactions and participation in political deliberations" (2013, p. 400). My study of discursive dynamics within the HAHR hearings makes a contribution in this regard.

Literatures also signal how public hearings entail important limitations as sites of inquiry into practices of knowing. Numerous practitioner-authors caution against tendencies to regard knowledges put forward in such contexts as "authentic" versions of individual or collective beliefs, interests or capacities. Instead, public and official forums such as public hearings have frequently been critiqued because of their tendencies to reinforce dominant understandings and interests. Not only is participation often restricted according to authority, power and status (Farkas, 2013) but as Ellsworth states, "in a racist society and its institutions… debate has not and cannot be 'public' or 'democratic' in the sense of including the voices of all affected parties and affording them equal weight and legitimacy" (1989, p. 302).

Many such critiques relate to the ways in which public forums of knowing can veil complex and "offstage" intra- or inter-individual dynamics that determine what is publicly said or left unsaid. Forums of public and/or participatory deliberation are associated with the treatment and representation of diverse actors in terms of social categories (such as "elderly," "ethnic" or "poor"). Cornwall (2000) highlights how this tends to mask difference and can also obscure relationships (whether exploitative or enabling) across such groups, overlooking potentially important coercions and alliances. Francis details how this frequently plays out in requirements for public articulation of "community priorities" (2001, p. 79) which collapse the differences in needs and goals that exist between community members. In this way, critics have pointed to how a focus on public conversations may offer little insight into the informal or private, assumed, negotiated, exploitative and/or empowering relations of intersubjective knowing, choosing and representation through which important discussions and decisions may occur "elsewhere" (Cleaver, 2001, p. 44).

Other critical assessments highlight the need to treat public talk as a product of the particular context and relations in and through which it emerges (Mosse, 2001, after Villareal). Atkinson and Silverman caution that researchers "take at face value the image of the self-revealing speaking subject at our peril" (1997, as cited in Baker & Edwards, n.d., p. 12). Rather, *whether* people talk, how, and to whom, should be grasped as strategic and relational choice-in-context (Ellsworth, 1989). The presence of dominant actors, and/or the highly visible nature of public fora can restrict freedom of discursive choices in both perceptible and unseen ways (Farkas, 2013, following VanDijk). Many author-practitioners especially highlight risks for less powerful individuals and groups who might be made subject to repercussions on the basis of what they publicly support or reveal (Cornwall, 2000, following Mukasa, 2000).

But even in favourable conditions, public accounts are unlikely to reveal a transparent or full account of complex influences on talk. These can include the weighing of vulnerabilities, costs and benefits, motivations, intentions or beliefs and individual or subjective factors such as a sense of reciprocity, recognition, or respect (Cleaver, 2001). In her account of a collective effort at democratic dialogue, Ellsworth describes how "things were left unsaid, or they were encoded" on the basis of participants' conscious or unconscious navigation of elements such as "trust, risk… fear and desire" (1989, p. 313). In another account of what was widely deemed a successful example of public participation, Mosse (2001) details the subtle and multiple ways in which expression of so-called "community needs" was shaped by local perceptions of the funding agency's priorities and capacities. To paraphrase Mosse, actors' ideas about development are unlikely to be the same as those employed for action in public sites or interactions with external agents (2001, p. 21).

Taken together, such analyses underscore how my inquiry into the HAHR hearings as a public, discursive exchange must foreground the partial and relational nature of knowing in this context. It should not be taken as offering an authentic "picture" of speakers' minds, attitudes, or opinions (ten Have, as cited in Baker & Edwards, n.d.). Instead, my study of hearing discourse is necessarily limited by who was present, and what those people were willing and able to say in that highly visible and politically loaded site. At the same time the public, intersubjective and relational qualities of the hearings' discursive interchange can be taken up to explore the social and material arrangements in which this public talk "holds" and "works". Inquiry into discursive dynamics of public hearings, argues Doane, enables exploring "the nature and use of symbols and rhetorical strategies as well as their incorporation into more complex explanatory models" (2003, p. 556). Hearing debate offers a view of individual testimonies, but also insight into how

these are presented—in this official "on-stage" setting—in relation to familiar "interpretive frames," and further how these public "'common sense' understandings are employed in debates over social issues" (Doane, 2003, p. 556). Because the HAHR hearings were public texts, available as online audio-visual recordings on the City of Vancouver website, there was an opportunity for me to return to this discursive encounter. While they had not captured international attention like the anti-Olympic or Occupy movements, complex tensions of social struggle were nonetheless playing out through debate over the seemingly mundane details of building heights, setbacks and zoning bylaws.

1.4 Vancouver Chinatown and the Historic Area Height Review (HAHR)

Located on the Pacific West Coast, in the traditional territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and Sə̓lílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) nations—collectively, the Coast Salish peoples—the city of Vancouver (Canada) is often described as city of neighbourhoods. Vancouver is widely celebrated for its innovative community planning processes and for being an early adopter of densification policies. It is also a city that faces a crisis of housing affordability (see, e.g., Quastel, Moos, & Lynch, 2012).

1.4.1 Background and context

City planning reports overview the rationale for the multi-year Historic Area Height Review (HAHR) initiative and convey predominant policy discourses about the area. The HAHR, originally called the Historic Precinct Height Study (HPHS), is described as originating through the City of Vancouver's 2006-2008 *EcoDensity* initiative with a council directive entitled Action B-1:

> Staff be directed to include consideration of policies for additional density and corresponding height in suitable locations in Gastown, Hastings, Chinatown and Victory Square, as part of the Historic Precinct Height Study. The intent of this direction is to support heritage conservation projects, to provide replacement low-income housing, and/or to support other public benefits and amenities … (EcoDensity Initial Action B-1, June 2008, as cited in Director of Planning, 2010a)

Vancouver's historic area is located just east of its current central business district and includes the neighbourhoods of Gastown, Victory Square, Chinatown and Hastings and Main. Each is situated within Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods.
Source: Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 5. Used with permission.

Various HAHR reports overview the existing urban character of the Historic precinct. Chinatown, along with Gastown, is described as a special historic district; Vancouver's

Chinatown, notes one report, is "one of the last remaining, large historic Chinatown's in North America. It is a distinctive market providing speciality Asian goods and services, as well as an important cultural and tourist destination." Other noted features of the historic district include "a unique scale of low-to mid-rise developments on smaller frontage lots" (Director of Planning, 2010a, pp. 8, 3).

Vancouver's historic area is described as having a high concentration of designated heritage buildings, with most constructed between 1886 and 1920 (Spaxman Consulting Group Limited & Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture Inc., 2008). While HAHR reports do not offer detail about this period of neighbourhood history, other sources provide some historical context for this built landscape which would come to be at the centre of the HAHR hearings. Through the years 1886-1920, Vancouver was a burgeoning British colony. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 enabled an influx of European settlers who would increase the pace with which both the area's original indigenous inhabitants, as well as other "non-white" residents, could be displaced from favoured tracts of land. Among these undesired groups was a significant population of Chinese migrants, many of whom had travelled from California during the gold rush (Roy & Thompson, 2005). The early Vancouver town site (then called Granville) became a provincial hub of production and trade in natural resources (for instance gold, lumber and fish), as well as property investment (Blomley, 2004; Gutstein, 1975; Roy & Thompson, 2005). As the young city grew, the nearby port and Gastown's sawmills helped spawn a commercial zone along Hastings Street, with theatres, banks, hotels, offices, civic buildings and department stores. Beginning around 1906, the city's central business district began to shift westward. The historic east end became home to a working class community of resource economy labourers—disproportionately single men—who worked on the waterfront (e.g. in

canneries, sawmills, meat packing plants and metal working shops) or stayed in one of the neighbourhood's many hotels between tours in logging camps (Ley, 1994).

In this same period, white supremacist property regimes punctuated with episodes of anti-Asian violence meant that Vancouver's Chinese inhabitants became increasingly concentrated around Dupont Street (now West Pender). In the mid-1890s, City Council formally designated the Dupont settlement as "Chinatown." At the turn of the century, the population of the settlement was 2,053 men (143 merchants and the rest workers) as well as 27 women (mostly wives of merchants) and 26 children. Writing about these early days of Vancouver's Chinatown, Anderson describes how "family life was the preserve of a small economic and political elite, some members of which established a property base in the area from the 1890s" (1987, p. 583).

In the face of civic hostility and economic discrimination, Chinatown's business owners formed assorted self-help and benevolent associations, often organized along lines of clan or locality affiliation, to provide various kinds of business and social supports including rotating access to mutual credit, cheap lodging for single labourers and welfare for sick and/or destitute workers (Anderson, 1991). A number of these benevolent and/or family societies purchased or constructed buildings in which to locate their headquarters and conduct their activities, with many of these located on current-day Pender Street. These society buildings, states the City's urban design guidelines for Chinatown, "define the area's distinctive building scale, development pattern and picturesque streetscape. These buildings have become the architectural and cultural anchors of the area's identity and are essential components of Chinatown character" (Director of Planning, 2010b, Appendix C, p. 4).

The HAHR study boundary encompassed four of the seven neighbourhoods that comprise the Downtown Eastside. Excluded, were the adjacent areas of Thornton Park

(commercial-residential) to the south, Strathcona (residential) to the south and east, Hastings Corridor (commercial) to the east, or the industrial area (port and rail yards) to the northeast (see figure 1.2).

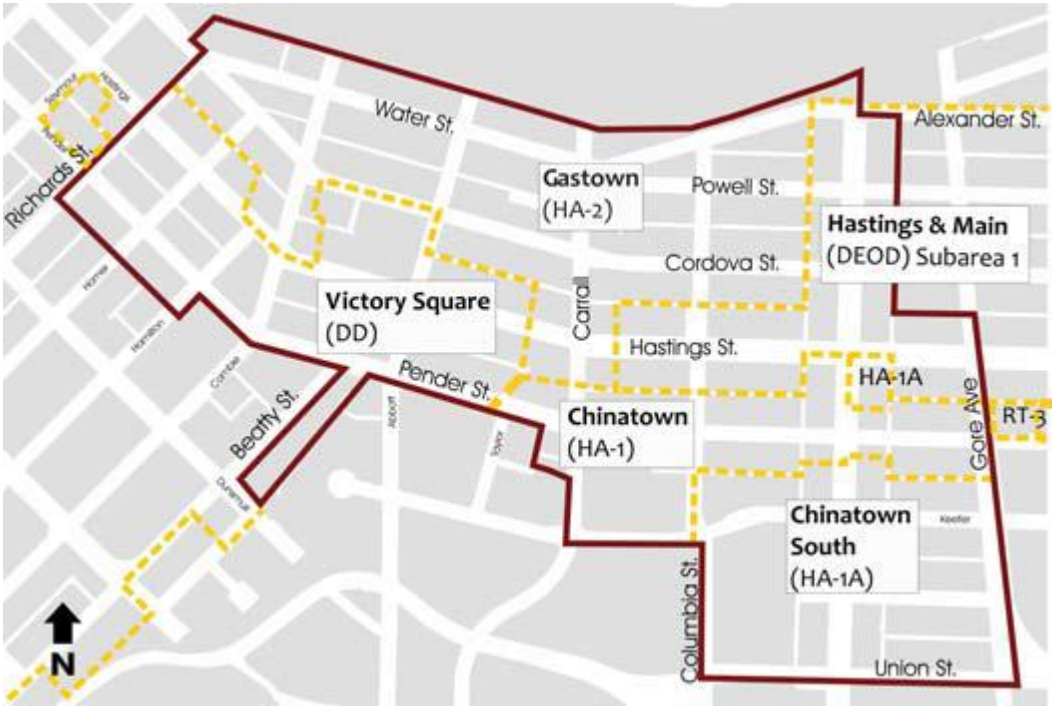

Figure 1.2 Historic Area Height Review study boundary with planning sub-areas.
Source: Director of Planning, 2010b, p. 5. Used with permission.

The HAHR policy report provides background for the Height Study and describes how several factors produced the impetus for the review. Vancouver's historic area, it states, "has undergone decline with similar social and economic challenges as faced by many other North American cities' inner-city neighbourhoods" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 5). Further detail about the nature and history of these challenges is provided in a background report attached as Appendix A:

> From an early date, the DTES was the primary low-income neighbourhood in the city and region… However, it was not until the 90's [that] structural changes in

> the region and the retail industry, as well as the demographic change in the community, culminated in the closing of Woodward's department store and high vacancy levels in storefronts in the area generally. (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, pp. 5–6)
>
> The challenges now facing the area have their origins in some significant more recent changes affecting the country, the province and the region as a whole: the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill in the 80s; the change in the drug situation in the late 80s… and development of a large open drug market in the DTES; The loss of inexpensive housing in other neighbourhoods in the City and region, and increasing costs of housing in the City, generally. (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 7)

The same backgrounder provides a brief demographic portrait of the area:

> Overall, 59% of the DTES population is Canadian-born, compared with 51% Vancouver-wide. The proportion of Canadian-born is lower in Chinatown and Strathcona subareas (less than 47%) than in the others. For just over 64% of DTES residents, English is the home language. Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) is next, and with these residents focussed in Chinatown and Strathcona. About 10% of the DTES population identify themselves as Aboriginal, compared with 2% for Vancouver as a whole. Approximately 15% of the total Aboriginal-identified population of Vancouver lives in the DTES. (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p.67)

The backgrounder also states that, consistent with historic patterns of residency, there are more males (60%) than females; with 70% of households consisting of a single person living alone. While unemployment in the area had declined since 1996, 64% of residents could be classified as low-income, in comparison to 27% of residents in Vancouver overall (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 6). A January 2010 Fact Sheet prepared by CCAP emphasizes that many of the area's low-income residents "depend on welfare ($610 per month for a single person) disability ($906 per month) or basic old age pension (about $1100 per month)." CCAP's fact sheet further stresses that "the average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment in Vancouver is $919 a month" (CCAP, 2010, p. 2). The HAHR Conclusions report describes the historic area as "a neighbourhood with a rooted community infrastructure for a low-income population" (Director

of Planning, 2010a, p. 3). CCAP has also highlighted the area's tremendous community spirit of empathy and acceptance and strong history of human rights advocacy (CCAP, 2010).

The HAHR Conclusions report explains that, in response to the historic area's decades-long decline, the City has implemented a Downtown Eastside planning philosophy of "Revitalization without Displacement" which "emphasises the importance of balancing the pace of improving infrastructure with quality of life, and supports ongoing community engagement in planning processes" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 5). Further, notes the report, policies such as the Downtown Eastside Housing Plan (City of Vancouver, 2005) and the Chinatown Vision (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002) had been developed to address sub-areas and topics. Both the Housing Plan and Chinatown Vision were frequently mentioned in hearing debate. Part of a broader Chinatown Revitalization program, the 2002 Vision had been followed up by a Chinatown Market Housing Study (City of Vancouver Central Area Planning, 2005) and three-year action program to begin development of a Chinatown Community Plan. In this context, note report authors, more research was needed to address and evaluate questions about how the City should proceed:

> With interest in and pressure for new development and building rehabilitation increasing in the Historic Area, many have asked how development activities in this neighbourhood can be done in a way that benefits the whole community and brings about change that is inclusive and respectful…. It is with these questions and many people's varying responses that Council directed staff to undertake the Historic Area Height Review. (Director of Planning, 2010a, pp. 3-4)

In excerpts such as this one, the height study (and EcoDensity initiative from which it originally emerged) is characterized as a policy response to a range of planning challenges—including economic and commercial viability, housing affordability, heritage preservation, democratic participation and quality of life. At the same time City documents consistently

describe these initiatives as one component within an array of policies that provide direction for City initiatives in Vancouver's historic area and in the Downtown Eastside as a whole.

1.4.2 Phases of the HAHR

The multi-year HAHR initiative began in earnest in 2008. Initial phases of the HAHR (then called the HPHS) included a technical analysis by external consultants of area architecture, urban design, height and density. In addition, the consultant's report suggests sites and areas where building heights could be increased without significant adverse effect on built character. Based on certain criteria, this report affirms staff proposals about the appropriateness of taller buildings in a number of "special sites" as well as sub-areas in the southern part of Chinatown, along Main Street (Spaxman Consulting Group Limited & Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture Inc., 2008).

In the spring of 2009, City planners presented emerging policy options in a public consultation process which involved meetings with advisory bodies and community groups as well as open houses and public workshops. The 2009 HAHR *Public Feedback Summary* report also describes outreach efforts undertaken to ensure the participation of specific groups, including the Chinese and low-income communities (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B). In a summary of key consultation findings, City staff note public support for maintaining the area's heritage character and scale; "overwhelming opposition" to towers above 150 feet (approximately 15 storeys); and "some tolerance for moderate height increases in certain sub-areas, including… Chinatown South (HA1A)" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 4).

On January 4th, 2010, City Planners published the report entitled *Historic Area Height Review: Conclusions and Recommendations*. In addition to recommendations that generally

echoed the themes identified through the public consultation summary (above), the January 2010 proposals reflected a revised series of "special sites," with the contentious proposal for a taller building at the Chinese Cultural Centre removed from this list. Preparation and release of this January 4 report sparked considerable additional public debate and comment by advisory committees, community groups and individuals. On January 22, 2010, at a Special Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, 50 speakers turned out to speak to the issue (City of Vancouver, 2010b).

On January 26, 2010 councillors voted to adopt the policy directions outlined in the Conclusions and Recommendations report. These included, first, that heights in the HA-1 area of Chinatown would increase from 65 to 75 feet and heights in the HA-1A area of Chinatown would increase from 70 to 90 feet outright, with the possibility for *rezoning* up to 120 feet. Rezoning could occur at the discretion of council "in order to consider innovative heritage, cultural and affordable housing projects in Chinatown" (recommendations C.1.i and C.1.ii) (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 2). Second, councillors initiated changes to the City's Transfer of Density policy, such that "bonus" density would be permitted to transfer into or within the HA1A area and identified higher building sites (recommendation C.1.iii). In addition to these items emerging from staff analysis and proposals, councillors introduced and passed motions instructing staff to report back on options for additional 150-foot building sites in Chinatown South (HA1A) (motion D); to conduct a social impact study to assess impacts of new development on the local low-income community (motion C.3); and, to report back on strategies for undertaking an integrated community strategy planning process for the DTES (motion F) (City of Vancouver, 2010a).

On December 17, 2010, City planning staff released their final report detailing the zoning and policy changes required to implement Council's HAHR decisions. It was the recommendations contained within this *Historic Area Height Review: Policy Implementation* report that would later become the focus of the HAHR public hearings. The report's Draft Rezoning Policy for Higher Buildings in the Historic Area provides urban design guidelines and, as per Council's request for additional 150-foot building sites, the report identifies approximate locations in HA1A with sufficient frontage to accommodate such buildings (see Figure 1.3).

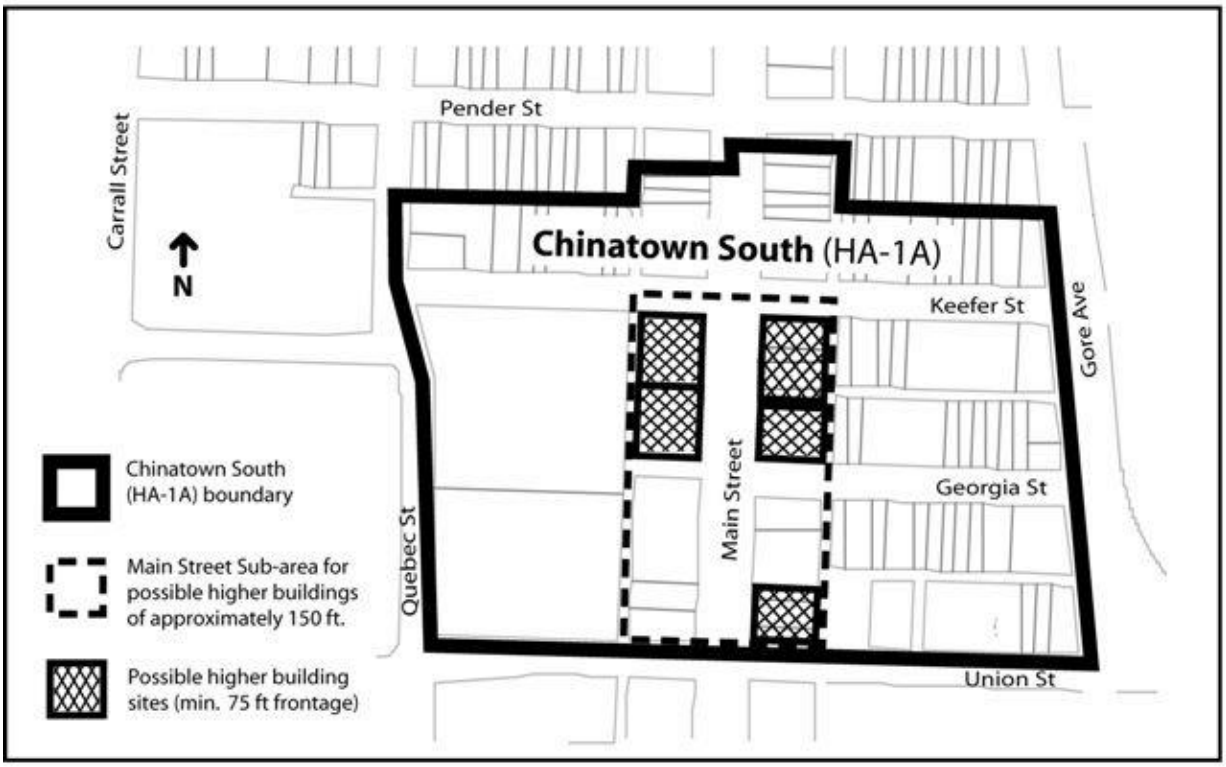

Figure 1.3 Recommended Main Street sub-area for additional higher building sites in HA1A (Chinatown South) and possible higher building sites for approximately 150 feet.
Source: Director of Planning, 2010b, p. 10. Used with permission.

In the same document, staff members also report back on other work stemming from Council's January 26, 2010 decisions. The Social Impact Assessment (SIS) and integrated

community strategy are described as underway. The report notes that while additional public consultation was not required to implement most of Council's decisions, staff undertook additional meetings with advisory and community groups. Chinatown and Gastown Historic Area Planning (Advisory) Committees are described as supportive of the proposed actions, with concerns expressed by Vancouver Heritage Commission having been addressed through subsequent amendments to rezoning policy. While community groups are in general support, notes the report, CCAP "remains concerned about the impact of new development on the low-income community" (Director of Planning, 2010b, p. 15).

Councillors were due to consider the HAHR Implementation report and its associated recommendations at a council meeting on January 20, 2011. On that evening, as many as 80 people had signed up to speak at City Hall. However, prospective speakers arrived to find that Council had passed a last-minute motion that effectively cancelled the opportunity for public input at the meeting. Noting that "the items relating to HA-1 and HA-1A (Chinatown Historic areas) have a high degree of agreement" and that "more time is needed for City staff to complete a social impact study on low-income residents in the DTES," the motion "severed" the HAHR report, referring the Chinatown-related items to public hearing and deferring the remainder of the study recommendations to be considered in a broader Downtown Eastside Local Area Planning (LAP) process (City of Vancouver, 2011b, p. 1). One journalist provides an account of the evening's unusual proceedings:

> By late Wednesday night, the pressure from opponents had worn down the Vision Vancouver councillors, and in a late-night meeting they began to formulate a plan to split the staff report in two. It led to what critics are saying was an unusual circumvention of city process in which the Vision Vancouver councillors led by Mayor Gregor Robertson decided to cancel the public [speaking portion of the meeting]. Instead, in what Robertson termed an "urgent motion" … they decided to strike a community committee to help draft a new local area plan for the

> Downtown Eastside … At the same time, however, the Vision Vancouver councillors sent to public hearing … parts of the original report that recommend as many as five towers of up to 15 storeys in the heritage areas of Chinatown. (J. Lee, 2011)

The public hearings on the HAHR's Chinatown-related items would finally begin nearly two months later. The hearings reflected an impressive degree of political organizing by groups on both sides of the issue. Not only did approximately 150 people register to speak, but hundreds turned out in a show of solidarity for one side or the other. Additional comments were provided by email. The Chinatown Business Improvement Association had organized busloads of HAHR supporters to be present during the first evening of hearings. CCAP had prepared and translated posters and flyers, as well as a 28-page report documenting their analysis, concerns and position (CCAP, 2011). CCAP also organized various community meetings and workshops in which those who wished to speak at the hearings could learn about the HAHR (particularly its more technical elements such as proposed amendments to the Transfer of Density policy) and support one another in developing their presentations. Both groups had prepared and circulated petitions, collecting more than a thousand signatures in the months and weeks leading up to Council's decision. Letters of support or opposition to the HAHR were prepared by various influential local actors, including local Members of Parliament and Provincial Parliament; a group of well-known civic leaders that included urban professionals, two former Premiers and several members of the Order of Canada; a list of 30 academics; and various local civic and business associations, among others. The hearings also garnered a rare degree of media coverage. Taken together, this flurry of activity demonstrates the extent to which local actors understood the hearings as an important local moment which would have significant future implications for Chinatown and the entire Downtown Eastside.

1.5 The Hearings Begin

Around 8 o'clock on March 17, 2011, the official HAHR public hearing proceedings got underway in Council Chambers. From behind his large, elevated desk at the front and centre of the wood-paneled room, the Mayor called the meeting to order. Vancouver's nine City councillors were fanned out on the mayor's left and right. Across from councillors, to the left and right of the speaker's podium was a row of desks with microphones that could be used by City staff members who might be called upon to provide information during the meetings. Behind this row of desks and the speakers' podium were several rows of benches for observers. Above this public seating area (and above the speakers' podium) were additional rows of seating in a balcony that overlooked the room facing the mayor and council. After arriving, I settled in to watch and listen, sitting in the overflow seating in the foyer just outside. Someone had brought food—fruit and cookies to share among DTES speakers and allies; these were being passed around the room.

After a brief welcome from the Mayor and a few words about procedure, the hearings began with a presentation from City planners who, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, reviewed the HAHR study context, process and proposals. Following these presentations, councillors had the opportunity to ask questions of staff. One councillor was concerned to know how many heritage buildings were owned by Chinatown family societies, two asked questions about the study's consultation process and others wished to confirm the heights being proposed and whether this would result in an attractive streetscape. An additional councillor wanted to know if the rezoning provisions would be economically viable for developers and several asked questions about how the recommendations might impact various low-income buildings in the

area. In response to each question, staff members provided a response or promised to get more information. Among other things, staff confirmed that the guidelines had been tested for economic viability and appropriateness of urban form and that, overall, uptake of the extra height provisions was expected to be a slow process "because of the smaller lots that are there, the ability to develop at the higher height is limited" (Staff 1 to Coun 3).

Following this interchange, the Mayor began to call speakers based on the order in which they had registered. As speakers began their presentations, they often introduced their affiliation and/or relationship to the neighbourhood and the issues being discussed. On each evening of hearings, the meeting followed a similar procedural pattern: Speakers made their presentations from the podium, speaking into the mic with the mayor acting as facilitator from the front of the room. Each presenter could speak for up to five minutes; the mayor kept time and warned people when their time was nearly through. After each five minute presentation, Council had the opportunity to ask questions to which the speaker could respond—up to an additional five minutes per councillor. If a speaker had more to say, they could sign up to speak again, and their name would be added to the bottom of the speakers' list. The hearings continued in this way over five evenings from March 17 to April 14, 2011. Throughout the first several evenings, the hearings proceedings were broadcast in the foyer outside of Council Chambers on televisions mounted at the front of the room. The several-second delay between the actual and televised proceedings produced a strange echo effect; audience reactions to speakers could be heard in two distinct waves of clapping and/or shouting as presentations were transmitted from chamber to foyer.

Many of those speaking in opposition to the HAHR identified as low-income residents currently living in affordable units; some had grown up in the area. Many were representatives of

local organizations including the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council (DNC), CCAP, Vancouver Network of Drug Users (VANDU) as well as other faith-based and non-profit groups. Some were affiliated with local businesses and several were active with city-wide sustainability and housing groups. A number identified themselves as having professional expertise in planning, architecture, or urbanism. Many others, including me, identified as neighbours or allies of low-income residents. Opponents often stressed that Chinatown-related items could not be considered in isolation from the Downtown Eastside as a whole. Many argued that what the neighbourhood really needed was not more condos, but more good quality affordable housing for its vulnerable, majority low-income residents. Further, numerous presenters complained that local low-income residents had not been informed or consulted about the HAHR.

Presenters who spoke in support of the HAHR proposals predominantly identified as representatives of Chinatown organizations, including the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee (VCRC), the Business Improvement Association (BIA), the Merchants Association, the Chinese Cultural Centre, a youth group and local benevolent associations. A number emphasized their historical familial connections with Chinatown. Others were affiliated with planning and heritage committees, had architectural or planning expertise, or lived and/or worked in the vicinity.

HAHR supporters often emphasized that Chinatown had indeed suffered a multi-decade decline. Historic buildings owned by benevolent societies were of particular concern. The buildings—central to the neighbourhood's history and culture—were in desperate need of upgrading; but societies' commitment to offering affordable rents meant they lacked the necessary resources. Many argued the proposed amendments to the City's Transfer of Density policies would provide a mechanism for heritage property owners, including benevolent

societies, to raise funds for renovations. Finally, supporters stressed that the HAHR should be passed because it reflected more than 10 years of community planning process and a consensus on the part of the Chinatown community.

According to the official count contained in the Minutes of the HAHR public hearings' Special Meeting of Council, 22 speakers made presentations in general support of HAHR, while 82 individuals spoke in opposition. An additional eight individuals are described as speaking on related matters "neither in support of, nor in opposition to" the application. In addition to spoken input, the minutes reflect how—over the course of the hearings—Council also received 18 letters or emails in support, 14 letters or emails in opposition and 8 letters or emails related to other aspects of the application (City of Vancouver, 2011e). Two days later, at a council meeting on April 16, 2011, councillors enacted their decision on the matter, with 9 of 11 councillors voting to pass the Chinatown-related items of the HAHR (City of Vancouver, 2011d).

1.5.1 Addendum to a struggle

The HAHR hearings can be understood as a "cruces" or a time of transition and uncertainty that "provides a window into understanding how important decisions… are made" (Rogers, p. 917, after Fairclough). This encounter is given further significance through the present-day Chinatown activism which marks the unsettled nature of development in Chinatown and throughout the city. In the years since the HAHR hearings, Vancouver's housing crisis has only intensified and accompanying policy debates, marked by the implementation of a provincial *Foreign Buyers' Tax*, have stoked our city's long history of anti-Asian sentiment. An April 2017 analysis conducted by the Georgia Straight paper found that one in five emails received by the provincial government on the topic of "foreign buyers, foreign owners, foreign money and/or

foreign investment and Vancouver real estate" were "overtly racist" (Lupick, 2017, para. 3, para. 1). In Chinatown, the implementation of the HAHR policies has enabled a series of new developments including, most visibly, three large 11-17 storey condominium buildings near the intersection of Main and Keefer streets in Chinatown South. Such developments, however, have coincided with mounting debate over development. Citing community concern about "the character and impacts of new buildings allowed under development policies adopted in 2011," a review of Chinatown development policy is now underway (*Chinatown Development Policy Changes - progress update from staff to community*, 2017, p. 1). Proposed recommendations include reducing allowable building heights and widths, and reevaluating existing mechanisms for community review of new development.

In particular, community concern and debate has been catalyzed by a proposed new development at 105 Keefer street—a site which is surrounded by numerous community landmarks including Chinatown Memorial Square and monument, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Garden, Andy Livingston Park and historic East Pender Street. An array of youth-activist, resident, culture and heritage groups and civic leaders have rallied in opposition, arguing that the proposed new condo building will tower over culturally significant places and exacerbate the displacement of low-income locals, especially vulnerable seniors. Beginning in May of 2017, a massive public hearing on the issue attracted some 180 registered speakers in a discursive exchange reminiscent of the HAHR hearings' opposing discourses of revitalization and affordability, yet which entailed different configurations of actors and issues.

On June 13, 2017, Vancouver City Council voted to deny the project's rezoning application on the basis of "overwhelming opposition from several generations of Vancouver residents" (C. Smith, 2017, para. 4). As I write, this struggle is ongoing; the developer has

submitted a fifth, revised, development proposal, with a decision by the City forthcoming. While a detailed analysis of this contemporary neighbourhood movement is beyond the scope of my inquiry, it offers a useful vantage point from which to consider the historical, shifting and contingent nature of the struggle reflected and enacted through HAHR hearing discourse. In chapter 9, I briefly consider these more recent dynamics as I return to questions of pedagogical invitation.

1.6 What Follows

In Chapter 2, I lay out the approach to justice-oriented knowing-in-struggle which forms the conceptual basis of this thesis. I elaborate the theoretical tools apparent in the writing of Jean-Paul Sartre and Paula Allman to offer considerations that might help to elucidate possibilities marked by critical pedagogical practices of *invitation*-in-struggle.

In Chapter 3, I lay out my practices of inquiry into the public discursive dynamics of the HAHR hearings. I convey my analytical strategies in a series of analytical movements, movements towards materiality, towards subjective practice, towards history and towards future-oriented projects.

In Chapter 4, my analysis begins in speakers' accounts of neighbourhood life and entails a movement towards materiality. I examine how highly divergent and often directly contradicting accounts of life in Chinatown can be helpfully explored in relation to dynamics and logics of capitalist urban development.

In Chapter 5, I begin to address what Sartre refers to as the *progressive* element of his method; I explore the hearings in terms of how speakers act creatively in relation to

circumstances and facts to make meaning. In Chapter 6, I continue my progressive exploration of speakers' creative praxes, with a focus on questions of *being*.

In Chapter 7, my analysis begins in the hearings' disjunctures of knowing and entails a movement towards history. I explore various understandings and tensions that appear rooted in past, considering the long history of social, material and political relations through which they have emerged and been sustained.

In Chapter 8, the final layer of my analysis draws especially on Sartre's notion of *the project*, by considering the trajectories and/or goals which particular practices of knowing could be said to pursue. In doing so, I suggest how community can be explored as a project of knowing.

In Chapter 9, I return to questions and tensions of knowing-in-struggle as *invitation*. I consider the extent to which my analysis elucidates potentials, or not, for justice-oriented solidarities, and I briefly reflect on what this might mean for activist practices of teaching and learning in struggle.

Chapter 2: Towards Knowing-in-Struggle as Invitation: A Historical, Material, Dialectical and Dialogical Approach

I need you so that I can know more. For me to know more, I need another subject of knowing.
(Freire as cited in Allman, Critical Education Against Global Capitalism, p. 174)

In this chapter, I lay out a theoretical approach to knowing-in-struggle which forms the conceptual basis of this thesis. I suggest how, taken together, the Marxist and existentialist thinking of Jean-Paul Sartre and the Freirean pedagogical approach of Paula Allman offer valuable conceptual tools for working-through the hearings' complex discursive dynamics of connection and disconnection. Following an introduction to foundational theorizations of praxis and being-in-materiality, I focus on practices and forms of knowing that (drawing on Sartre) I call serial knowing, and which resonate with what Allman characterizes as uncritical or reproductive praxis. Next, I outline how Sartre's notion of the praxis group together with Allman's account of Freirean dialogical praxis offers considerations that might help to elucidate the possibilities for collective learning and action that are pursued in critical pedagogical practices of invitation. The conceptual framework laid out in this chapter provides the basis for the research practices and modes of analysis I describe in Chapter 3.

2.1 The 'Is' and the 'Ought': Critical, Dialectical Theories of Knowing-in-Struggle

Understandings associated with knowing in social struggle are woven through many bodies of theory and practice. Within political science literature on social change and social movements, attention has variously been paid to motives, influences and opportunities for individual involvement, as well as to the theory and practice of organization and mobilization (Benford & Snow, 2000; Diani & McAdam, 2003; Fernandez & McAdam, 1988; McCarthy &

Zald, 1973; Snow & Benford, 1988; Tilly, 1988). However, in elaborating their activist approaches to inquiry, Frampton et al. draw attention to the location from which knowledge about social struggle is produced:

> Despite their differences, the various social movement theories all construct social movements as objects of analysis and focus their attention on social movements themselves rather than on explicating the social relations of struggle in which these movements are engaged… Consequently, the knowledge created by social movement theory is often of little use to activists inside social movements. (2006, p. 11)

While clear delineation between the "inside" and outside of a given movement is (as these authors stress elsewhere) rarely possible, such critiques raise important questions about the nature of knowing in relation to questions of social change. For Frampton et al., (2006; following Marx) the point of analysis is not merely to understand change but to participate in making it. Likewise, Kemmis cites the engaged participatory work of Orlando Fals-Borda to emphasize that "research investigates reality in order to transform it… and, equally… transforms reality in order to investigate it" (2008, p. 132; see also Harvey, 1996). These engaged approaches extend beyond positivist efforts to account for the world as it is, to foreground the terrain and tensions that constitute the gap between "what is," and projects grounded in claims of "what ought to be" (Adams & Horton, 1975, p. 214).

Such lines of argument signal an alternative, critical epistemology in which—in contrast to commonplace ideas that truth should be objective—knowledge is grasped as a historical and political instrument, articulated by situated knowers in response to the interrelated questions of how to understand the world and also how to intervene.[9] In this project, I especially work from a

[9] While critical theory in the narrow sense refers to the work of the German theorists and philosophers known as the Frankfurt School, I am using the term more broadly in reference to a range of thinkers whose work has emerged

specific line of conceptual, methodological and pedagogical thinking that can be traced through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (e.g., 1960a, 1960b) and through Paula Allman's (e.g., 1999, 2001) elaboration of Freire's (e.g., 1970) dialogical pedagogy and Marx's dialectical method.

2.2 Philosophical Foundations: Grasping Praxis and the Twin Possibilities of *Being*

Working from their respective locations and concerns, Sartre and Allman each endeavour to elaborate Marx's dialectical conceptualization of consciousness as *praxis*. The term praxis, clarifies Barnes, refers to any human act which is not merely random, undirected, motion (Barnes, in Sartre, 1960b, p. xvi). For Sartre, positivist versions of social inquiry (including Marxism) were "appropriate for objects of [natural] science and not for the free process which is [humankind]" (Barnes, in Sartre, 1960b, p. xxviii). Allman (e.g. 1999, 2001) points to Marx's early writing to illustrate that his theory of consciousness—derived from his dialectical mode of theorizing—actually predated the completion of his study of capitalism. Thus, she notes, Marx's "critique of capitalism was equally a critique of the way that people thought about it" (2001, p. 163). Marx's theory of consciousness as praxis, she explains, is "a theory of the unity of thought and action." Allman clarifies how this "inner connection… is not a deterministic relation but, rather, a dialectical one… wherein each of the components in the relation mutually shapes and is shaped by the other" (2001, p. 6). "In other words," she later writes, "we do not stop thinking when we act, and thinking itself is a form of action" (2001, p. 167). The concept of praxis underscores how our "life activity takes place within definite forms of social relations between

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within—and is informed by—various geo-historical contexts of, inter alia, anti-colonial, anti-racist, (dis)ability, indigenous, feminist, workers' and leftist movements (on this, see Agger, 2006; Bohman, 2013).

people and between people and the objects of their world. And it is the nature of these relations that conditions the nature or quality of our thought" (Allman & Wallis, 1990, para. 12).

Based on Marx's thought, both Sartre and Allman devote attention to the praxis of *being* and *knowing* in relation to concrete and material elements of the world. For Sartre, Marx's dialectical notion of praxis entails an understanding of the human condition as agency-in-circumstance, containing both passive (or objective) and active (or subjective) aspects. The passive elements relate to the facts, or givens, of one's *being* (for example, our bodies, our language and our previous choices), as well as our historical circumstances formed by our environment and the choices of others before us (Sartre, 1943; see also Flynn, 2004).

Nonetheless, these dialectical conceptualizations of consciousness underscore how, as we actively and sensuously experience the social, material and natural world, we are at the same time actively producing our consciousness (Allman, 1999, following Marx). Sartre articulated this active and creative dimension of praxis via his emphasis on choice. Sartre viewed human existence as defined via choices and actions which can be conceptualized in terms of future-oriented life projects to which we devote ourselves either completely or for a period of time. One's project is not pre-planned, but interpreted through time, with this interpretation "constantly open to revision" (Onof, 2010, section 6a, para. 2). For Sartre, our subjectivity—or consciousness—allows us to be self-aware, to reflect on and thus transcend our current situation, for instance, by desiring an alternative future. Sartre's theorization of authentic action is integrally linked to a feeling of apprehension he called *anguish*, which stems from one's full appreciation of the ethical, intersubjective responsibilities associated with individual choice (Sartre, 1957).

This dialectical conceptualization thus seeks to grasp how each of us is both constrained and free (Hayim, 1980). Human freedom and creativity means that the nature and meaning of our lives is never preordained, yet also underscores how subjectivity must always occur in relation to the particular facts or givens of one's situation. "Social reality," states Carroll, "is always in the process of being created through the practices of people whose human capacities, material technologies, and social relations have been shaped in the past" (Carroll, 2004, p. 110).

Following Marx, both Sartre and Allman have devoted their work to elaborating human agency and freedom, nonetheless they were equally aware that the extent to which praxis is critical and self-reflexive varies. Allman asserts that Marx's theory of consciousness implies two "very different types of praxis" (2001, p. 167). The first type, she notes, is an uncritical or reproductive praxis which consists of simply participating in "the relations and conditions that we find already existing in the world and assum[ing] that these are natural and inevitable." Further, "these material relations become integrated into our thinking" (Allman, 2001, p. 72). In this mode of being, our praxis—though conscious and vital—is aimed at reproducing existing relations instead of critically choosing them or some alternative (Allman, 1999, p. 34). However, Allman (2001) goes on to elaborate how Marx's dialectical theory of consciousness implies a second, very different type of praxis. She describes how praxis can become critical or revolutionary when, instead of uncritically accepting and participating in unjust social relations, we focus on and direct our energies towards abolishing or transforming both the relation and the conditions it maintains. In this way, her analysis dovetail's with Sartre's (1943) emphasis on individuals' capacity to transcend the "facts" or *givens* of their situation by recognizing objective circumstances as historically contingent. As I hope to show in the course of this thesis, I think Allman's notions of critical and uncritical/reproductive praxis are useful—not as reifying

categories through which to designate particular actors or groups—but rather to indicate a set of critical questions that can be posed in relation to specific discursive practices-in-context.

2.2.1 Sartre and being-in-scarcity: The materiality of domination

Sartre was concerned with elucidating human agency, freedom and responsibility, but over the course of his life he became increasingly concerned with how human action could not be free and intended all the time "because it is inextricably bound to materiality and necessity" (Hayim, 1980, p. 76). As people act upon matter, explains Hayim, "our material environment absorbs a great deal of our human powers and becomes laden with human values"; things begin to "live in communion" with people and become "inseparable from human sociality" (1980, p. 77, 79). In his 1960 *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (written in response to rigid versions of Marxism that saw human subjectivity as a mere reflection of material dynamics) Sartre developed theoretical categories through which to grasp the reciprocal influence between people and things. Poster describes how Sartre's formulations fall into two broad groups:

> the first … is devoted to the relation between "[people] and things" in which things present the great force and meaning. The second … is devoted to those situations in which human beings have the determining force in establishing the intelligibility of the situation. In both cases, there is a mixture of human beings and things; only the emphasis is different. (Poster, 1979, p. 49)

Sartre is careful to insist that matter by itself cannot produce a relation between individuals; the significance of materiality is defined through its relevance to human projects.

Sartre (1960a) used the term *practico-inert* to highlight how humans freely create or modify objects, systems, organizations, conventions and so forth, and then these meanings which have been created tend to harden through time (see also Detmer, 2008). Sartre's practico-inert, as previously 'worked' matter, thus reflects the sedimentation and "massification of disparate

individual actions" (Hayim, 1980, p. 81). But while matter is shaped by human activity, the practico-inert product that results is not necessarily in line with the intent of the original actor(s). Sartre theorized how practico-inert objects, structures and systems in our environment could function as what he called *anti-praxis*; these things could "absorb the labour power of others and turn it back against everyone" (Poster, 1979, p. 59), bringing "results which condition and limit the freedom of future praxis" (Hayim, 1980, pp. 79–80).

For Sartre, human sociality has historically been characterized by the "ethics of scarcity" (Hayim, 1980, p. 78). While some needs (for instance, food and water) and some forms of scarcity are concrete, Sartre characterized the contemporary social world as conditioned by a more pervasive milieu of scarcity in which, through historical praxis, humans have interiorized scarcity as structuring our relations with the world and with others (Hayim, 1980). Sartre's conceptualization of scarcity refers to an underlying, shared awareness of lack of both "the most immediate things which enable [humans] to stay alive and lack of those other things which are necessary to make people's lives satisfying" (Barnes, in Sartre, 1960b, p. xiv). For Sartre, scarcity did not relate to human nature, or a particular individual's interpretation of their situation. Rather, Sartre understood scarcity as the product of entire societies "totalis[ing] the social field as one in which there is not enough" (Poster, 1979, p. 55).

Nonetheless while Sartre understood scarcity as an omnipresent and central feature of human sociality, he did not view it as a natural or external quality of the world. Scarcity, for him, was not a fact, but a particular and contingent human project (see Sartre, 1960a, p. 123).[10]

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[10] Hayim explains: "The fact that scarcity is a basic human relation to nature is not denied by Sartre, however, he feels that beyond a primary dependence on nature, additional and new forms of scarcity have been unnecessarily produced" (Hayim, p. 78). Whatever 'natural' scarcity may have existed historically, states Poster, advances in technology leave little doubt that today, scarcity is socially produced: "The locus of scarcity in the advanced

Sartre's point, Hayim explains, is that ubiquitous relations of scarcity are a "*chosen relationship* between humanity and its environment" (Hayim, 1980, p. 78; emphasis in original), meaning that they need not continue into the future.

To articulate the human implications of scarcity, Sartre developed the concept of *seriality*, in which scarcity conditions human relations such that we relate to the world and to others through things. Within scarcity, common forms of human sociality rest on a bond with materiality; individuals' self-definition and sense of purpose are predominantly determined by their position among and in relation to objects (Hayim, 1980). Sartre (1960a) describes how any unorganized group of people can be understood as a serial collective; their togetherness is defined purely by a common product or external object, as in the case of a group of individuals waiting at a red light. The experience of seriality is routine, since our day-to-day encounters are constantly mediated by objects (such as the products we consume or the infrastructure of our cities).

Sartre used his idea of seriality to theorize how human relatedness is regularly characterized by hostility and conflict. Hayim describes how, in accepting scarcity as our way of relating to the world, each individual becomes understood as "a threat to the Other. Each person understands that every other person is a consumer of something they need: "The recognition that the Other is a threat, materially, promotes a network of relations based on fear and violence" (1980, p. 78). Of course, this violence is not necessarily overt. Instead, seriality can be marked by routine dynamics of competition (e.g., for seats on a bus), comparison and Othering in which

societies today is not the struggle against nature, but the struggle against forms of domination generated within the context of the struggle against nature" (Poster, 1979, pp. 55–56, following Sartre).

individuals “assume for [themselves] and for others a dimension which is non-human” (Barnes, in Sartre, 1960b, p. xv).

At the root of Sartre’s theorizing was his interest in how experiences of seriality were also characterized by individuals’ alienation from their own (individual and collective) capacities for agency. Via his theorizations (e.g., of seriality and anti-praxis), Sartre (1960a) develops an analysis of how materiality can not only come between people, but can also come between people and their own freedom. At the same time, his formulations maintain a focus on these dynamics as historical and contingent.

To advance the project of fundamental social change, both Allman and Sartre have devoted their scholarship to developing Marx’s theorization of the possibility for class-conscious collective action which does not entail the sacrifice of freedom. In Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960a) after starting with a focus on the individual, Sartre builds outward on this understanding to conceptualize relations with others and within collectivities. Sartre thus outlines how when a serial collective experiences a common deprivation, there exists a common objective for praxis. Sartre’s *praxis group*, begins to be formed when ‘I realize that an Other shares my need and that I share the need of the Other’; this awareness of a common purpose leads to mutual engagement in concerned action. In the praxis group, suddenly humans and not commodities have become the centre of this group formation (see Hayim, 1980, pp. 88–93). It is this idea of the praxis group that, as I will discuss (below), re-emerges in the context of Freire’s dialogical praxis.

2.2.2 The materiality of place: Attention to space, time and flow

In the context of the HAHR hearings, Sartre’s analysis helps to focus attention to how Chinatown’s qualities of materiality lay at the centre of hearing dynamics of struggle. At the

same time, neither Sartre nor Allman (to my knowledge) deal in a focused way with the particular material qualities of urban development that, as I will detail, are so significantly reflected in hearing debate.[11] To develop my approach to the materiality of Chinatown as place, I have looked to the work of particular urban geographers and especially analyses offered by David Harvey, whose work (see, e.g., 1989; 2009, 2012) has devoted hundreds of pages to investigating urban development in relation to globalized capitalism.

In articulating the foundational dialectical principles of his work, Harvey emphasizes attention to dynamics of flow, space and time. Dialectical approaches, notes Harvey, accept "the general argument that process, flux, and flow should be given a certain ontological priority in understanding the world … [and] that this is precisely the reason why we should pay so much more careful attention to … 'permanences'": a term used by Whitehead (1985; as cited in Harvey, 1996) to mean those things which surround us (such as institutions, systems and discourses), which we construct to solidify certain aspects of our lives and which have considerable significance, power and (often literal) concreteness (Harvey, 1996, pp. 7–8). Together with Ollman, Harvey emphasizes how dialectical conceptualizations of inner, or internal, relations are understood to have "temporal as well as spatial dimensions" (Ollman, 1998, p. 349). Harvey describes how "values inhere in socio-spatial processes" such that "the struggle to change the former is simultaneously a struggle to change the latter (and vice versa)" (1996, p. 12). Ollman describes how this focus on spatial and historical flux is integral to critical

[11] Poster suggests that one inadequacy within Sartre's conceptualization of matter is that it is "much too flat and undifferentiated. It does not account for the difference between machines and buildings on the one hand and social institutions, patterned ways of behaviour, laws, norms and rules on the other" (1979, p. 75).

inquiries that seek to interrogate contemporary social arrangements in light of possibilities for future change:

> Investigating potential is taking the longer view, not only forward to what something can develop into but also backward to how it has developed up to now. This longer view, however, must be preceded by taking a broader view, since nothing and no one changes on its or [their] own but only in close relationship with other people and things, that is, as part of an interactive system. (Ollman, 1998, p. 344)

For Harvey, this relational understanding underscores how "setting boundaries with respect to space, time, scale, and environment then becomes a major strategic consideration in the development of concepts, abstractions, and theories … any substantial change in these boundaries [may] radically change the nature of the concepts …" (1996, p. 53). As I show in subsequent chapters, these orientations which are enlisted by Harvey and others help to elaborate questions of matter in terms of spacialized and historical social-material process. Harvey's thinking, together with structural theorizations of neighbourhood change (e.g., Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; N. Smith, 2002) and local histories of the area (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Blomley, 2004; Ley, 1994; Quastel et al., 2012), make possible a richer and more nuanced grasp of the dynamics and logics through which relations of seriality play out vis a vis the materiality of place in contexts of Chinatown and the HAHR hearings.

2.3 Pursuing Invitation: Conceptualizing the Twin Possibilities of Knowing-in-Struggle

Understanding human consciousness as praxis has implications for grasping relations of knowing and for notions of truth. This conceptualization holds that knowing—as praxis—is both conditioned and creative. The pre-existing circumstances of peoples' lives (both material and conceptual) can become integrated into our thinking through our lived, sensual engagement with

them (see Allman, 2007). Nonetheless, knowing also entails a creative, future-oriented element; in Sartre's (1943) formulation, we transcend, engage with and make meaning of, our situations in light of our needs and projects.

Grasping knowing in relation to both pre-existing circumstances and future projects suggests the need to understand truths—the products of knowing—as historical. This dialectical theorization denotes continuous movement in which our circumstances influence our goals and projects, and our projects influence our praxes of knowing. What we know, in turn, influences how we engage in the world, acting back upon our circumstances to construct—collectively and over time—the world in which we live. Likewise, Allman's work is focused on conveying how the creative praxis of knowing entails the twin possibilities of reproducing the current social order or, on the contrary, revolution. Thus, in contrast to other understandings of praxis which envision sequences of action and thought, or of practice and theory (Allman, 2001), Marx's dialectical formulation forms the basis of Sartre's (and also Allman's) attempt to explore history as "a double movement of the 'internalisation of the external and the externalization of the internal'" (Sartre, 1960b as cited in Poster, 1979, p. 22). In the sections that follow, I work from Sartre's and Allman's thinking to lay out the two-sided theorizations of praxis (i.e., as serial / reproductive and dialectical / dialogical) that I have found most useful as tools of analysis.

2.3.1 Serial knowing: Sartre's analytic reason and Allman's reproductive praxis

In her critique of "uncritical / reproductive praxis" Allman emphasizes how, within the historically specific relations of capitalism, individuals tend to experience the world through various forms of separation, which Marx referred to as the violence of abstraction. For instance, notes Allman (2007), social relations of capital routinely require practices of alienation in which

individuals surrender their capacities to other people and/or to things, as in when workers alienate their labour to produce profit for corporations, or when voters alienate their political power to politicians who make decisions on their behalf.

Allman stresses how, in the contemporary and globalized world, opposing aspects and results of social relations are often separated in both time and space. Through practico-inert arrangements of globalized production and exchange, we have largely alienated our powers to know and control how the objects and infrastructures of our everyday lives are made and used. Further, it is future generations who will experience the full environmental and social implications of these contemporary practices. Because being and knowing are internally related, states Allman (2007), these experiences of geographic and temporal fragmentation are taken up in practices of knowing, such that our thoughts tend to divide that which should be understood as a relation. In the course of my analysis, I draw on Allman's work to seek out and examine particular conceptual logics—for instance, idealism, reification, dichotomization and/or conflation—through which certain public arguments and discourses seem to miss the relational and historical-material dynamics of the social world.

Helpful conceptual tools pertaining to questions of public knowing in capitalism are also offered via Dorothy Smith's (e.g., 1984; 1990) analysis of textually-mediated social organization. Smith's work explores the situated practices and multi-site relations through which engagement with institutional texts (like memos and reports) arranges subjective praxis (see Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Smith explores how routine uses of texts mediate and organize practices of thinking just like an agenda shapes a meeting. Smith describes how, in the creation of textual representations of lived experience, the interests of "extra-local" institutional actors

and "trans-local"[12] relations influence particular uses of language and social facts to build organizational versions of what people say, do, or know (see e.g., 1990, pp. 120-158). For Smith, as local settings are penetrated and organized according to institutional categories and functions, ruling takes place; power is exercised in local settings to accomplish "trans-local" interests (Smith, 1987).

2.3.1.1 Ideology as practice: Ideological knowing

Both Allman and Smith offer useful elaborations through which to interrogate tensions of knowing-in-struggle in terms of ideology. In contrast to common uses of ideology to mean a given set of beliefs (e.g., conservativism or socialism), both Allman and Smith treat ideology as social practice. Drawing on Larrain's (1983 in Allman 2001) elaboration of Marx's theory of negative ideology, Allman clarifies that ideology disrupts understandings of reality not by presenting mythical falsities, but by framing our thinking within certain horizons or parameters (Allman, 2001, following Hall, 1982). This theorization, she emphasizes, is different from the notion of "false consciousness" that is often incorrectly attributed to Marx (Allman, 2001, p. 6). Allman describes how ideological public discourses are often convincing because of how they are, to some degree, real:

> The ideological forms of consciousness/praxis that arise from capitalist reality actually reflect and thus seem to connect with and make sense of the fragmented way in which we tend to experience capitalist reality... This is why they are able to work so powerfully, yet often subtly, as justifications that legitimate the capitalist form of existence. Ideological thinking arises quite naturally from capitalist reality and therefore does not necessarily require a perpetrator. (Allman, 2001, p. 7)

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[12] Smith (e.g., 1987, 1990) uses "extralocal" to refer to settings that are outside the boundaries of everyday experience, and "translocal" to emphasize how social relations occur across and thus connect, these local settings.

Smith uses “ideological knowing” to refer more specifically to partial or fragmented truths generated and used according to the priorities of governing entities. For Smith, as individuals “activate,” or engage with and take up institutional texts and protocols, they bring into being (and make real) something that otherwise seems to exist only in the virtual form of words, ideas, directives and policy (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Smith further highlights how, as ideological versions of knowledge are produced and activated, the official, objectified version is routinely taken for granted to describe the actual (D. E. Smith, 1990). In the context of my project, these approaches help to centre practice—addressing concepts, beliefs, ideology and other categories of public knowing or talk as activities that occur in local settings (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987).

2.3.1.2 Reification and alterity: Analytic thinking and double learning

Both Sartre and Allman have sought to underscore that, while pre-existing forms of consciousness (knowledges and concepts) were produced by the life activity of people who came before us, it is common to communicate via words or labels that cast them as static things and obscure their relational origins (Allman, 1999; Allman & Wallis, 1990). Allman explains how common epistemologies (approaches to knowing) tend to assume a dualism, or dichotomy, between thought and reality. Once thought and reality are viewed as separate, one or the other is assigned priority such that knowledge is seen to result from either “the correct philosophical thinking about reality” (idealism) or “the empirical / scientific observation of reality” (mechanical, ahistorical materialism) (Allman, 2007, p. 60). For Marx, these “bourgeois” modes of knowing were a product of life in capitalism (see Allman, 2007). Following Marx’s critique, Allman describes how the implication of either form of dualism is that knowledge is no longer

grasped as relational—where knowing occurs in relation to being—but is abstracted and reified (as a thing). Seen to be objective and unchangeable, such concepts are then used to understand the past, present and future—constituting "transhistorical" truths about the nature of the reality to which they refer (Allman, 1999, p. 37). Likewise, Barnes explains that for Sartre, "our language" does not recognize "the reality of the dialectical movement in history" (Barnes, in Sartre, 1960b, pp. xxviii–xxix).

Via this line of critique, both Allman and Sartre offer distinctions that are useful in interrogating routine practices of public discourse, audible in the hearings, in which pre-existing social categories and 'facts' are enlisted in problematic and influential ways. Sartre contrasted his dialectical mode of thinking with *analytic* reason in which "pluralists, empiricists and positivists…. chopped the social field into discrete pieces" (Poster, 1979, p. 27). Poster recounts Sartre's assessment of how (while analytic reason was sometimes useful) such conceptualizations atomized individuals and couldn't grasp the social world in terms of dynamic movement, for instance, towards social transformation. Sartre was critical of his sociological contemporaries who, for instance, studied crime by studying traits in criminals; for Sartre, this reduced people to thing-like essences instead of illuminating how living people actively make choices (and reject others) in a given context. Further, this mode of thinking both precluded critical thought on the part of the knower—confining their practices of knowing to pre-established categories or variables—and legitimized the status quo by isolating individuals from the moving and conflictual totality in which each act is undertaken (Poster, 1979, pp. 27–28). Further Allman and Wallis highlight Marx's grasp of how, when people are born into such arrangements, abstracted concepts seem to have "no history, [and] no development"; they just are (Marx as cited in Allman & Wallis, 1990, p. 42). Understanding knowing as praxis suggests

that as each of us engages with these such knowledges, we are simultaneously learning to integrate—often uncritically—the array of complex and often fraught historical relations upon which these notions implicitly depend.

Both Sartre and Allman are further concerned to elucidate internal relations between knowing and being. When knowledge is understood as a thing, notes Allman (2007), the only possible way of relating to it is acquisitive: Knowledge is to be possessed or obtained. The ontology—or idea of being—that that follows is that some people (e.g., researchers, teachers, experts and other leaders) discover, collect and accumulate knowledge which they subsequently impart to others (e.g., students, or a lay public) who are recipients. In this view, states Allman, *being* is a state of either transmitting or acquiring pre-existing knowledge, while *becoming* is an additive process of accumulating more knowledge or skill.

Grasping knowing as praxis thus entails recognizing a dynamic of double-learning. The routine take-up of everyday ideas can not only entail an abstracted experience of the world, but can also entail abstracted experiences of what it means to know. Allman stresses how routine engagement with capitalism's reifying ontology and acquisitive epistemology coincides with a sense of alienation from one's creative powers of knowing. The perception that a given fact is produced somewhere else, by someone else—and is consequently 'fixed'—obscures each subsequent knower's agency in choosing whether and how they engage with this knowledge, for example, by critically scrutinizing its historical and material origins, or using, testing and developing it in light of a practical project. Similarly, D. E. Smith's (e.g., 1987) work on textually mediated knowing explores how routine engagements with institutional texts frequently entail such dynamics of alienation.

Sartre likewise explores how these modes of knowing not only tend to instill alterity (sub-human difference) in other people by objectifying them via analytic reason, but also instills alterity in the knower, who alienates their own powers of knowing to pre-existing 'experts' or other sources of 'fact.' In the *Critique*, Sartre uses the example of the Great Fear[13] to illustrate how, in seriality, individuals routinely take-up opinions and beliefs that confirm their already-existing experience of Otherness and threat. For Sartre, our routine experiences of alienation and impotence render us likely to accept analyses that resonate with the sense of being acted-upon by Others. The sense that history is made "elsewhere" is bolstered by capitalism's geographical, structural-material and social distance from other people and events which renders people unable to scrutinize, question or confirm for ourselves whether a particular claim is true. Via this formulation, Sartre is concerned to outline how many common practices of knowing are not critical or authentic—in the sense of fully acknowledging the freedom and responsibility that the praxis of knowing entails—but instead entail the passive acceptance of a pre-established "Idea" (see Sartre, 1960a, pp. 297–300; Poster, 1979, pp. 71–72). In these serial modes of being and knowing, individuals thus interiorise a relation to the world "in which things form the active element" (Poster, 1979, p. 73). As in Allman's elaboration of reproductive praxis, Sartre refers to such practices as "the free praxis of passivity" (Poster, 1979, p. 74).

[13] A period of general panic and unrest at the start of the French Revolution in the summer of 1789, when various rumours about the cause of grain shortages circulated in rural areas. In some areas, rumours reported gangs of roving bandits spurring local peasants to arm themselves in self-defense (see e.g., Llewellyn & Thompson, n.d.).

2.3.2 From serial knowing to critical intersubjective learning-in-struggle

Sartre's and Allman's theorizing can be placed within a much broader field of critical theorizations that pose important challenges to forms of social analysis that entail the forgetting of history; that is, the awareness that social, cultural and political-economic 'facts' (e.g., markets, states and borders, family formations and ideas of race and gender, among others) do not objectively exist, but have been created and/or perpetuated through the situated activities of embodied actors. However in attending to dynamics of power, many critical analyses risk limiting a knower's gaze to dynamics of individual and collective praxis that Allman characterizes as uncritical and reproductive and which Poster places within the first of Sartre's two broad categories, the one in which "things present the greater force and meaning" (above, on page 49). Likewise, citing the work of Foucault (e.g., 1979), Frampton et al. state that those who pay meticulous attention to the intricacies of how power operates "are often in danger of becoming mesmerized by its splendour" (2006, p. 251). A fixation on ruling can produce analyses which are "trapped" within the existing terrain of negotiation and unable to imagine any alternative, thus confining and obscuring possibilities for resistance and transformation (Frampton et al., 2006; Kinsman, 2006). This concern with *possibility* is not simply about epistemological correctness, but rather pertains to ethico-practical questions of commitment and utility in effecting change.

For both Sartre and Allman, articulation of reproductive and thing-centred modes of life could only be grasped in relation to modes of being and knowing that are free, creative and/or critical. Allman emphasizes that "individuals only integrate these external [forms] of consciousness by actively engaging with them" (2007, p. 32). Likewise, Sartre's elaboration of seriality underscores how, when individuals interiorise "relations in which matter predominates

over human beings" it is because of their own action (Poster, 1979, p. 74). The point here, as I understand it, is not to assign blame for the reproductive modes of interiorization, but rather to underscore the possibility for practices of being and knowing through which existing relations can critically scrutinized and changed. What I find useful is how the formulations of both authors are designed to hold in view human capacities for what Allman refers to as critical/revolutionary praxis: those thoughtful courses of action through which relations of domination can be resisted and transformed. Writing about Sartre's approach, Poster describes how an emphasis on freedom and agency should be grasped as ethical commitment: "There are no epistemological grounds upon which to sanctify absolutely the theoretical decision to conceptualize history from the perspective of revolution or creativity" (1979, p. 21). In the final section of the chapter, I consider how the formulations elaborated by Sartre and Allman connect with other critical approaches to offer considerations for exploring the HAHR hearings in terms of the latent possibilities for justice-oriented knowing and acting together which are suggested by dynamics of invitation.

2.3.2.1 Theorizing transformed being and knowing: Collective and dialogical praxis

It is in response to these serial modes of relating to ourselves, to others and to the world, that Sartre theorized possibilities for transformative group praxis and Freire developed his dialogical conceptualization of *conscientização*, or dialogical praxis. Clarifying Gramsci's theorization of hegemony and drawing especially on Freire's approach, Allman (1999; 2001) provides a theoretical and experiential analysis of how historical, material and dialectical modes of critique can be applied within intersubjective relations of knowing; her account emphasizes what she describes as the two fundamental dimensions of Freire's dialogical pedagogy: a

transformed, critical, relation to knowledge, and transformed cooperative relations between knowers.

To illustrate, Allman contrasts Freire's dialogism with common forms of discussion into which people enter in order to articulate what they already know or think. As a method of learning, notes Allman, discussion "also helps people to learn the skill of arguing their interpretation or their knowledge against that which is expressed by others" (1999, p. 99). She contrasts this mode of knowing with Freirean *dialogue:*

> Dialogue, in contrast and complete opposition, involves the critical investigation of knowledge or thinking. Rather than focusing only on what we think, dialogue requires us to ask of ourselves and each other why we think what we do. In other words, it requires us to "problematize" knowledge. (Allman, 1999, p. 100)

Allman emphasizes Freire's use of dialectical thinking in developing his pedagogical challenge to conventional, reifying, modes of knowing which he critiqued as banking pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1970, pp. 71–74). Freire's approach, notes Allman, requires knowers to move from bourgeois notions of knowledge as a static thing which we do or do not possess and to view it instead as something we *use* rather than acquire, a "mediation or tool between people and the world which either helps or hinders a critical perception of reality" (1999, pp. 97–98).

In this way, at the centre of the transformed relations of both Sartre's and Freire's versions of the praxis group, are interrelated individual and collective processes of humanization. As in Sartre's praxis group (or, group-in-fusion) wherein awareness of a common purpose leads to mutual engagement in concerned action, Freire's dialogical praxis entails transformed relations to the world and to others. Akin to Sartre's emphasis on our human capacities for reflexive negation, Allman outlines how Freire's approach enables a transformed relation to

knowledge which enables knowers to "treat knowledge as an object that can be subjected to collective, critical scrutiny" (Allman, 2001, p. 173).

In her account of dialogical learning, Allman describes how each person enters the learning experience with different types of knowledge (practical, experiential and theoretical) which they place before the group so that it can be tested and, as appropriate, "refined, rejected, or changed and developed into a deeper and richer or more complex version" (2001, p. 174). Thus, as in the "moral du nous" of Sartre's praxis group—wherein capacity originates in the presence of group members and the group is an 'instrument' through which to carry out shared and concrete projects (Hayim, 1980)—dialogical learning "enables people to dialectically conceptualize their reality" as "each participant helps the other, and all are helped to explore the historical and material origins of their thought" (Allman, 1999, p. 101). In the course of this exploration, Allman states that, rather than a final or conclusive interpretation, "what we need are tools of analysis that we can employ in understanding capitalism as it moves and develops in a dialectic process of progress and regress." This, she asserts, "is what Marx offers us" (2001, p. 31).

2.3.2.2 A historical, material orientation to dialectical critique and future possibility

A central focus of Allman's work is to elaborate conceptual tools offered in the work of Marx and developed by Freire and Gramsci. Marx's distinctive philosophy of internal—or inner—relations understands entities or phenomena as connected, not just in the sense that there is a feedback loop between them, but such that they "mutually and reciprocally shape and determine one another" (Allman, 2007, p. 77). Allman outlines the *leitmotivs* within Marx's writings—including the ideas of historical specificity and the relationship between preconditions

and results—as well as the building blocks of his open-ended dialectical thinking. It is these dialectical principles of analysis that undergird the critical, yet possibility-oriented, formulations of Sartre and Allman that I have described throughout this chapter.

Carroll emphasizes how dialectics as critical method amounts to a set of—not answers—but questions that guide social inquiry by "directing our gaze towards the historical, relational, and emergent" qualities of reality (2004, p. 110, following Sherman). Of every thing or event we encounter, dialectics invites us to consider "by what process[es] [it was] constituted and how is it sustained" (Harvey, 1996, p. 50), "what had to happen in the past for the present to become what it did" (Ollman, 1998, p. 349) and "what kind of architecture (in the broadest sense of that term) … we collectively want to create for the socio-ecological world in which we have our being." "Not to pose that question," states Harvey, "is to evade the most crucial task confronting all forms of human action" (Harvey, 1996, p. 14).

When this relational, historical and practical understanding is missing, notes Carroll (2004, following Ollman), the present is viewed as "walled off" from either the past or the future and the current form of something—e.g., "the family," or "the economy,"—is mistaken for "what it is in full, and what it could only be" (Ollman as cited in Carroll, 2004, p. 112). Ollman contrasts these modes of knowing with dialectical methods that—in exploring phenomena in terms of their present, past and future (potentials)—seek to grasp the "internal relation between actuality and potentiality" (1998, p. 343). To this end, he conveys a method of working back and forth along temporal as well as spatial dimensions. Ollman has described dialectical analysis as a kind of dance wherein the knower engages in steps that move from the world as it is, through relational and historical processes of inquiry, to practices of exposition—communicating one's analysis to others—and finally to testing this knowledge through praxis. He contrasts these

dialectical movements with “futurological” attempts to peer from the present directly to the future and “utopian efforts, that go directly to the future, dispensing with the present altogether” (Ollman, 1998, p. 352).

In the context of my project, I have found both Harvey’s (1996) and Ollman’s (1998) accounts of dialectical analysis helpful in exploring the hearing’s many clashes of truth and also in developing my practices of inquiry (see Chapter 3). But while both Harvey and Ollman are well aware of the transformative potential associated with critical and creative modes of human praxis, in some cases I think that their emphasis on relational *process* and *tendencies* entails potential for losing sight of the *actors* who experience and respond to these logics in a range of (reproductive, creative and/or critical) ways. For instance, Ollman describes how grasping capitalism’s relational contradictions points to “the likely changes up ahead” (1998, p. 350); meanwhile, Harvey asserts:

> Transformative behaviour—”creativity”—arises out of the contradictions which attach both to the internalized heterogeneity of “things” and out of the more obvious heterogeneity present within systems … Out of these oppositions, themselves constituted out of the flow of process, creative tensions and transformative behaviours arise … (Harvey, 2004, p. 128)

These insights contribute much to understandings of historical, geo-spatial events, processes and phenomena, however I look to the work of both Allman and Sartre for their detailed attention to developing a dialectical grasp of the human condition. While Allman shares Harvey’s concern to lay out how Marx’s understanding “pertains to the movement and development of the material reality of capitalism” she is careful to continually emphasize how these movements and developments “result from human beings actively producing their material world and with it their consciousness as well” (2001, p. 4). Her work (following Marx, Freire and Gramsci) elaborates pedagogical approaches through which knowers might move from

abstracting, alienating practices of knowing towards critical dialogical praxis within transformed relations of recognition and mutuality.

Sartre articulates his historical and future-oriented approach to investigation via his Progressive-Regressive method. This procedure endeavours to uncover historical and socioeconomic conditions in a "regressive" logic moving from biographical and social facts to the conditions of their possibility, followed by a "progressive" investigation of subjects' creative practice (Flynn, 2004). Sartre's approach thus seeks to render intelligible human praxis "as an organising project which transcends material conditions towards an end and inscribes itself, through labour, in… matter" (Sartre, 1960a, p. 734). Put simply, praxis is explored in terms of where it is coming from and where it is endeavouring to go. Further in his elaborations of anguish and of scarcity—with its milieu of hostility and threat—Sartre's theorizing invites knowers to consider not only rational and intellectual but also experiential and emotional levels of human experience.

2.3.2.3 Knowing together in difference and struggle

The hearings' milieu of confrontation and struggle clearly differs from Allman's articulation of dialogical learning which is characterized by transformed relations of recognition and cooperation. At the same time, my task in this thesis is explore how the hearing's dynamics of hostility, opposition and injustice were not without contingencies and fissures that might signal intersubjective potentials for justice-oriented change. To explore the hearing's relations of knowing in light of these dynamics of implausibility, yet possibility, I also draw from a cluster of critical, engaged approaches that help to blur perceived lines between struggle, learning and inquiry.

In particular, I draw on a line of thinking that is rooted in the feminist sociological thinking of Dorothy Smith. Smith is concerned to articulate how critical analysis can begin in the tensions and contradictions experienced in the everyday world, treating these as a "ground in experience" from which to explore how routine modes of being and knowing are coordinated by projects with which actors may be uncomfortable (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 8; see also Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Smith (1987, 1992) grasps the social world as ontologically present through the "coordinated activities of people located historically" (Griffith, 1998, p. 370), and thus characterizes different locations and perspectives as different positionings from which the social can be mapped:

> Grappling with actualities of extensive social relations is best taken up by inquiries opening up a number of different windows, disclosing a number of different viewpoints from which the workings of a whole (though "open-ended") complex of relational processes come into view. (Smith, 1987, p. 177)

Drawing on her experiences in women's movements, Smith conveys knowing as project that is both social and continual, stating that it "must be a work of cooperation" (1987, p. 154): "Since knowledge is essentially socially organized, it can never be an act or an attribute of individual consciousness" (Smith, 1992, p. 91). In this respect, Smith's thinking offers a means of grasping how collective and/or cooperative relations of learning are not rooted in sameness. For Allman, the power of Freire's dialogical learning lies in transformed relations between group members such that each recognizes the contributions of the other: "I need you so that I can know more. For me to know more, I need another subject of knowing" (Freire, 1974 as cited in Allman, 2001). Like both Allman's and Freire's, Smith's work helps to envision a systematic means of working from particular, everyday, experiences to explore generalized and generalizing relations of ruling (Griffith, 1998, p. 370). For Carroll, this entails a commitment to understand

the systemic dimensions of human experience and the way in which seemingly separate issues are interconnected (2006, p. 234).

This trajectory of thinking has been further developed in the work of activist-scholar George Smith, Dorothy Smith's student and collaborator who took up her ontology of social relations within activist sites of inquiry and struggle. In his extension of Dorothy Smith's thinking as Political Activist Ethnography, George Smith (1990) sought to elucidate the daily challenges and confrontations of social struggle as a means of investigating the social organization of power. In their elaboration of George Smith's approach, Frampton et al. state: "The direction G. Smith's research took was established by the course of confrontation, which in turn was determined by analyzing what he had learned in research that was reflexively organized in relation to movement activism" (2006, p. 35).

When such practices of opposition are understood to have pedagogical qualities (as I've suggested in Chapter 1), they might also be read in terms of the internally related, and potentially reciprocal, relations of teaching and learning conveyed by Freire (see Allman, 1999, p. 96). Further, Frampton et. al suggest the need to move beyond binary understandings of "activist" and "researcher," stating "this must be done in the very process of doing activist research and knowledge production" (2006, p. 258). Along these lines, drawing on his involvement in Asia-Pacific and global anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles, Choudry has used the term "struggle knowledge" to make visible how engagements in social struggle are also "important—albeit contested and contradictory—terrains of learning, knowledge production and research" (2014a, p. 88; see also 2014b). Such approaches—together with the thinking of Sartre and Allman—offer formulations through which to begin envisioning potential for justice-oriented

intersubjective learning, even from within everyday encounters characterized by conditions and practices of injustice, difference and struggle.

Chapter 3: Projecting Possibility: Working out Critical, Dialectical, Dialogical Inquiry-in-Struggle

The order of the moves is: present, past, future … in the same way our present provides the key for understanding the past, the [possible] future provides the key for understanding the present.
(Bertell Ollman, Why Dialectics? Why Now? *pp. 352–353)*

In this chapter, I lay out my practices of examining and theorizing the discursive dynamics of the HAHR hearings. I articulate these strategies as a process that began with how I oriented myself to the project, that is, how I drew on conceptual-practical traditions described in chapters one and two to formulate my line of inquiry and research questions. This conceptual orienting was followed by my practices of documentation, exploration and analysis and writing. In my discussion, I signal how these strategies of inquiry flow from the conceptual approaches in which my project is rooted. As I describe towards the end of this chapter, my analytical practices can be understood in terms of several interrelated dimensions, or analytical movements: movements towards materiality, towards creativity, towards history and towards future possibility. In subsequent chapters, I present these dimensions of analysis in sequence, to foreground how I put theory to work in exploring the hearings' tensions of knowing.

3.1 Orientations to Inquiry: Standpoint, Problematic, Struggle Knowledge and Possibility

The cluster of conceptual approaches I've outlined in Chapter 2 has pivotally informed my line of inquiry and research questions. These key, orienting dynamics include the notions of standpoint, problematic, struggle knowledge and rootedness in a possibility-oriented project.

3.1.1 Inquiry as grounded in standpoint

My concern to grasp the hearings as an encounter of public knowing-in-struggle has been shaped not only by my preliminary conceptual thinking but also by my embodied, practical engagement in the hearings and in other contexts of justice-oriented community work. This rooting of inquiry in my own location and sensibilities draws on Smith's notion of standpoint, which means "a ground in experience" from which inquiry can begin. (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 8) This idea is positioned in contrast to conventional forms of sociology which treat a knower's location as a problem of bias, and which assume it is possible for a knower to somehow stand outside the social world that is being investigated.

For Smith, it is from this rooting in experience that a research-writer constructs a research problematic. Smith's grasp of standpoint as a point of entry shares similarities with Sartre's awareness that each act of knowing comes from somewhere (i.e., it originates in a knowers' embodied location) and is simultaneously going somewhere (it is undertaken in light of a particular question or goal, which is itself reflective of one's circumstances). This thesis has been shaped through my social positioning as white, cis, straight, able-bodied and middle class—as these are mediated by privileges of Anglo-European settler heritage—together with my previous work in the worlds of urban planning and local government. While I arrived at the hearings without technical expertise in planning or property market dynamics, the hearings' predominant pro-revitalization discourses were familiar to me. My return to the hearings through research was inspired by my desire to critically unpack the pro-development understandings that are in many ways reflective of my own Eurocentric, colonial and classed cultural heritages. These sensibilities are also reflected in my conceptual framework: I have gravitated towards those authors who have shared my concern to work from a place of embeddedness within Western

liberal, capitalist, colonial and white supremacist cultural sensibilities, in order to suggest how these might be dismantled and critically transformed. However, alongside these efforts to scrutinize the familiar, has been an awareness of my unfamiliarity and outside-ness vis a vis the "offstage" personal and collective histories, understandings and experiences of hearing speakers—especially as these have been shaped by, *inter alia*, white supremacist racialization and/or classed, ageist, heteronormative and health-related experiences of oppression.

3.1.2 Taking sides: The problematic as a recurring puzzle for someone

For Smith, a research problematic often emerges through as sense of discomfort and/or as a "bifurcated consciousness," in which a knower senses a "disjuncture … between different versions of reality—knowing something from a ruling versus an experiential perspective" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 48). Based on her own experience of double knowing, Smith developed the term "problematic" to highlight a "possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are 'latent' in the actualities of the experienced world" (D. E. Smith, 1987, p. 91). Smith's method, institutional ethnography, thus suggests an approach through which to explore how such puzzles are often not simply a matter of differences in individual perspective. Instead, these tensions can be taken to signal how everyday knowing is organized via historically longer and geographically broader social and material relations. Smith's line of thinking has especially informed my first research question.[14]

[14] Within the HAHR hearings, how do speakers' public testimonies help to elucidate the political meanings of development within the material and social relations of capitalism, as these have developed historically in relation to intersecting practices of colonization, racism, hetero-patriarchy and other modes of social domination?

Integral to Smith's notion of the problematic and to her approach more generally is her insistence that the practice of inquiry is also a practice of "taking sides" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 48). This is not to say that the products of my analysis are predetermined in accordance with the claims of certain actors, but rather that the structure of my inquiry is necessarily rooted in relation to particular concerns (and not others); it is "framed from the perspective of those who need to know" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 48). The hearings' confusing mix of understandings—which reflected dramatic opposition but also many connections—arose for me and, perhaps, for others who were also concerned to better understand and intervene in that discursive encounter from the perspective of advancing potentials for justice-oriented understanding and action.

My line of inquiry also sides with a broader set of concerns to navigate challenges of activist knowing as *invitation* more generally as these recur across myriad contexts wherein justice-oriented assertions are met with counternarratives shaped by status quo arrangements and forms of expertise. This broader research problematic is evident within the questions (introduced in Chapter 1) I have posed about tensions which seem to recur across multiple local moments of social struggle.[15] Campbell and Gregor (2002) describe how this awareness of recurrence or repetition can signal how everyday practices (including practices of knowing) are significantly shaped by social and material relations that extend beyond a given local site.

[15] How might advocate-knowers critically unpack "clashes of truth" as these emerge in particular contexts of struggle? How to explore discursive practices in relation to the complexities of concrete and material circumstance? How to make sense of multiple and divergent forms of public, collective and personal meaning? How to work through conflicting experiences and inclinations with respect to practice? How to navigate accounts of vastly different realities? How could these critical explorations inform the invitational pedagogies of activism?

3.1.3 The hearings as a moment in the ongoing local production of struggle knowledge

My approach to inquiry is also rooted in my concern to theorize the HAHR hearings as an important and potentially transformative site of activist inquiry and/or struggle knowledge. In doing so, I wish to disrupt conventional understandings of research in which data generation and analysis are grasped as separate practices, undertaken by different actors. Instead, in the course of my inquiry I want to make visible how the hearings themselves reflected practices of rich and rigorous analysis and to characterize my own analytical work as a response to, component of and/or extension of pre-existing and ongoing social processes of local learning-in-struggle. This concern to locate my project in relation to broader, organic, processes of justice-oriented inquiry and/or struggle knowledge draws inspiration from the cluster of epistemological approaches I have described (chapters 1 and 2). It also connects with feminist and participatory ways of knowing that have developed in the context of concrete political exigencies and that attend to practices within localized bodily, personal, interpersonal and collective spheres, grasping how these relate to broader relations of domination (Agger, 2006; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Likewise, George Smith's articulation of Political Activist Ethnography was grounded in his sense that institutional ethnography's focus on concrete practice and its investigation of the "social world that movements aim to unsettle" produced the same type of knowledge generated by activists in the course of struggle (Frampton et al., 2006, p. 11; D. E. Smith, 2006).

These various lines of thought are also apparent in Choudry's articulation of struggle knowledge. Within my project, I treat the HAHR hearings as a crystallized moment within broader, intersubjective processes of critical inquiry and learning through struggle. While my analysis is a product of my own praxis, my inquiry also seeks to emphasize how this praxis has

been shaped through my engagement in and with the intersubjective and/or dialogical relations of the hearings. This is not to claim an absence of subjectivity, as in the sociological claim to discovery that Sorokin (as cited in Walby, 2007, p. 1017) called the "Columbus complex," but rather to disrupt binary understandings of researcher and researched, to situate my own agency in social context and to emphasize important modes of knowledge production that often go unrecognized. Later, I describe how my practices of writing might be helpfully conceptualized in terms of curation.

3.1.4 Possibility: Inquiry as a future-oriented project

A final orienting aspect of my project relates to how the structure of my inquiry is rooted in possibility. My line of inquiry seeks to explore the terrain and tensions that constitute a gap between "what is" and possibilities associated with ideas of "what ought to be" (Adams & Horton, 1975, p. 214; see Chapter 1). My analysis reflects a concern to grasp the hearings—as a situated clash of knowing—in terms of tension between the relations of competition and antagonism that Sartre (1960a) terms "seriality" and the relations of humanization and cooperation evident in both Sartre's and Freire's theorization of collective praxis. Put another way, I project in relation to the hearings, the possibility of dialogical praxis. And, keeping the dynamics of this collective praxis in mind, I consider hearing dynamics in terms of why and how they *are not* (collective praxis). In the course of my analysis, I seek to elucidate both the challenges and the potentials of transformative modes of knowing, in the hopes that such insights might be rendered useful in the course of mine and others' ongoing praxis of justice-oriented invitation.

3.2 Practices of Inquiry: Documenting, Explicating, Excavating and Curating

McIntyre (2008, following McTaggart) underscores that theory and practice should not be seen as residing in different places. From the time I attended the hearings, through my listening, transcription and subsequent readings of the text document, to the write-up of my analysis, I have been engaged with the theoretical ideas and practical possibilities I explore within the hearings. These sensibilities shaped the way I documented and engaged with the hearings as the substantive focus of my analytical work.

3.2.1 Documenting: Representing the hearings in text

The HAHR hearings occurred over the course of five evenings, from March 17 to April 14, 2011. Because I had attended the hearings without intending to study them in-depth, I often arrived late and only attended three out of the five evening sessions. I did not attend the additional (April 19, 2011) portion of the council meeting where councillors voted to pass the HAHR report and recommendations.

On each evening I was present, I observed the hearings as I waited to speak. On the first two evenings, I sat in the large third floor foyer which served as the overflow seating for Council Chambers; on these nights, I watched the hearings on television screens mounted at the sides of the room. Especially on the first evening, it was noisy in this space and I could not always hear what was said. At some points, I chatted with people sitting nearby.

I took notes as I listened, in large part to inform the presentation that I would make when it was my turn to speak, but also because I was journaling about questions of activist dialogue as part of my efforts to formulate a research project on the topic. Most of my notes document interesting things that speakers had said: insightful or seemingly contradictory analyses and

information, uses of language to emphasize or minimize certain aspects of issues, or interesting metaphors and ways of understanding the issue(s). When relevant, I noted my own observations, responses and analyses in brackets. These reflective notes often related to moments when certain ways of making sense of neighbourhood changes seemed to me to be disconnected from the experiences and changes being reported by low-income residents. I also made notes about the tone used by certain speakers and/or the overall mood at particular moments—for instance, of heightened antagonism or hostility, or shared humour and practices of recognition—as I saw this playing out in exchanges between presenters, councillors and observers. Other notes related to my own feelings, for example, of nervousness and discomfort prior to and during my presentation.

Later, upon returning to the HAHR hearings to examine them in more depth, I decided to produce a version of the hearings in text. To do so, I worked from the online video versions of the hearings available via the City of Vancouver's website (City of Vancouver, 2011c). I listened to the hearings in full and undertook a rough or partial transcription to capture for myself, the substance of each speaker's comments. When audible, I also noted any significant audience response, such as clapping or shouting. As I watched these online recordings, I documented my own reactions and reflections in relation to certain comments. In some cases—especially during narratives that were particularly detailed, technical, or contentious—my transcription was verbatim. I then reviewed my rough transcription to edit for clarity of meaning and typing errors. I also used coloured text to visually distinguish various speakers, including comments made by councillors and staff members. Because the online recordings of the hearings reflect only what was picked up by the microphones in the room, certain comments are inaudible; these include comments and reactions made by audience members, as well as those of some presenters who

spoke while their microphones were off. In some cases, because I had been present at the hearings, I could refer to my notes to determine what had been said. However, in many cases these comments are simply absent from my records. I used this initial rough transcription to begin my analysis. As I continued my writing and analysis, I returned to the recordings of the hearings to undertake a full transcription of all the audible proceedings. Part of this full transcription was undertaken by me and part by a paid transcriber. As I wrote, I used this full transcription to check for accuracy in my partial transcription, to further develop my analysis and to reproduce quotes.

In reviewing my transcriptions, I assigned each speaker a unique label, according to how they were categorized within hearing minutes. I used the prefix "Supp" for those listed in the minutes as speaking in support of the HAHR recommendations, "Opp" for those listed as speaking in opposition and "Oth" for those listed as speaking "neither in support of, nor in opposition to, the application" (City of Vancouver, 2011e). In addition, I assigned each speaker a number according to the order in which they spoke (not necessarily the order in which they are listed in the minutes). Finally, I added the suffix "x2," "x3," or "x4," to denote a given speaker's second, third or (in rare cases) fourth presentation. In the text of my thesis, "Supp 4" thus refers to the fourth speaker who spoke in favour of the HAHR proposals and "Opp 35" indicates the thirty-fifth speaker who spoke in opposition and so on. Likewise, City councillors (including the Mayor) are labelled with the prefix "Coun," and City staff members (including planners and others) are labelled with the prefix "Staff," and are each assigned numbers to create a unique label. In the case of councillors or others who speak throughout the hearings and/or in the course of an exchange, their comments are also labelled in relation to the individual whom they are addressing, for instance Coun 9 to Opp 55, or Coun 1 to Staff 4.

There are benefits and disadvantages to this practice of labelling however my rationale for settling on this approach is threefold. My first line of reasoning is pragmatic. Given the number of different speakers—including various groups of presenters, city staff members and also councillors—the use of labels rather than full names enables readers to trace multiple comments to particular speakers and also to easily grasp the general temporal flow of comments without having to remember over 120 individual names and affiliations, etc. I include details about a presenter's affiliation, professional training, or basis of experience as shared by that speaker when this seems to me to be useful in contextualizing their particular comments.

Although these categories (e.g., in support [Supp] and in opposition [Opp]) are not unproblematic, in many respects they provide a convenient way to signal the overall thrust and direction of a given speaker's intervention in the hearings. Many presenters explicitly positioned themselves as advocating for either the adoption or rejection of the HAHR policies; so, many comments can be helpfully understood in light of these objectives. Although the administrative categorizations (in support, in opposition, or neither in support or opposition) are very broad and undifferentiated—failing to reflect the many nuances contained within each individual's contribution—and although it can be argued that some presentations were miscategorized via these bureaucratic practices, I have chosen to defer to the administrative representation for the purposes of consistency in labelling. I deal with particular discrepancies or problems of categorization in the course of my analysis. As I discuss (below) my decision to represent speakers as, for the most part, either supporters or opponents also has some basis in the structure of my inquiry; that is, of working from the hearings as I initially encountered and/or understood them, towards a deeper understanding through which such categories could be unsettled.

Third, although the recordings of the hearings are publicly available online and all speakers' names are listed in the hearing minutes as part of the public record of the hearing process, I have opted to use a labelling system in place of speakers' names in order to add a thin veil of anonymity vis a vis the identities of particular speakers. My hope is that this degree of ambiguity regarding exactly *who said what* will assist those readers who are familiar with some hearing participants to focus attention on speakers'particular "on-stage" practices of knowing as I represent them here and as they occurred in the context of the hearings rather than based on some other impression of their position, qualifications, or reputation (as portrayed in media, etc.). Further in some cases, speakers shared personal details or histories that are relevant to my analysis but which I don't see the need to repeat alongside identifying information. Following my review, transcription, annotation and labelling of the hearing proceedings, I undertook to deepen my understanding of the hearings via practices of exploration and analysis that I describe as explication, excavation and curation.

3.2.2 Explicating: Unfolding the hearings' praxes of knowing

Within institutional ethnography, there is no prescription for a particular set of research activities (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). However, Campbell and Gregor (2002) describe two "levels" of inquiry and this was a way of thinking that I also adopted. Institutional Ethnography's first level of inquiry is focused on the local setting being explored and the lived experiences of participants in that situated context. Likewise, because I was concerned to work out and reflexively document a practical method of thinking through tensions of knowing in the course of social struggle, I began my analysis by focusing on practices and tensions of knowing as these were apparent in the local context of the hearings. Starting with my own journal notes and a first

reading of my transcription, I noted recurring themes, as well as phrases, information, analyses, or patterns that seemed in some way significant, contradictory or puzzling—even if I could not at that moment grasp their meaning in a detailed way. During a second, detailed, reading of the text, I documented both narrative themes (i.e., the substantive issues and topics addressed by presenters) and a broader range of analytic themes, noting new themes, topics and problems as these emerged. As I've mentioned in Chapter 1, issues that recurred throughout hearing debate included discussion of neighbourhood change (often characterized as revitalization or gentrification), building form, planning and municipal process, neighbourhood qualities and accounts of problems and proposed solutions.

Campbell and Gregor suggest that inquiry can be helpfully begun by writing an account of one's "own knowledge—but one that preserves the voices and actual interactions of those involved—of what happens that contains a puzzling event" (2002, p. 46). Focusing on the narratives of speakers, I prepared a descriptive summary of what I considered to be the most common and/or central assertions of each grouping of presenters. This initial stage of exploring the hearings' discursive encounter also required me to have a general understanding of the Chinatown and DTES neighbourhoods, the HAHR process and the proposals under consideration at the hearings. I began with an understanding of these topics as I encountered them (as a relative outsider) within the local context the hearings, that is, as they were described by presenters and City planners during presentations and as represented in City documents made available (as handouts or online) to hearing attendees. A summarized version of this preliminary account of the hearings is offered in Chapter 1.

My first stage (or level) of inquiry simultaneously entailed an analytical component; as I examined hearing discussion in text, I was concerned to more clearly explicate how tensions of

connection and disconnection, possibility and implausibility were playing out within the hearings' discursive dynamics of struggle. In early readings, I began by focusing very broadly on expressions of being and knowing—including accounts of individual, intersubjective and collective being and knowing—taking note of how these were articulated by speakers within the hearings in relation to the historical, material and local context of Chinatown and the hearings. Working from the conceptual sensibilities I have described in previous chapters, I especially documented expressed knowledges and experiences relating to agency and responsibility, market dynamics and materiality, history, humanity and dehumanization, as well as the HAHR planning and hearing processes.

3.2.2.1 Holding my attention to practice

As I immersed myself in exploring hearing discussion and debate, I sought to focus on how knowledges expressed during the hearings could be examined as social practice. Here, I was once again taking methodological inspiration from the bodies of work I've described (Chapter 2). Dorothy Smith's ethnomethodological interest in accomplishment and practice meant, for her, that "at every point we attempt to view our topic or subject matter, the object of our inquiry, as practices, methods, procedures—as activity, rather than as an entity" (D. E. Smith, 1990, p. 70). This is not to say that concepts are not important, but rather that they are most usefully grasped in terms of situated activity (see also Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Likewise, Ahmed emphasizes that, while categories (such as black or white) do not have any ontological ground, they remain an important focus of inquiry because it is valuable to understand "how what is ungrounded can become a social ground" (2012, p. 182).

This line of thought led me to seek out different approaches to grasping knowledge in terms of relations and practices. Drawing on Allman (see Chapter 2), I considered how certain understandings could be helpfully unpacked in terms of the (e.g., abstracted or relational) methods of thinking they reflected (e.g., Chapter 5); in other cases, I examined significant storylines and facts in terms of their material and relational origins (e.g., Chapter 7). Harvey's (1996) thinking also directed my attention to discursive patterns such as drawing boundaries of scale and/or relevance and emphasizing part versus whole (e.g., chapters 5 and 8). I also worked from Dorothy Smith's attention to what she calls the "activation" of knowledge; that is, the situated practices through which concepts and understandings are used to certain effect. Along these lines, I further drew on an approach used by Ahmed in her study of diversity work within post-secondary institutions. Describing her approach as an "ethnography of texts," Ahmed aimed to "follow diversity around" and be attentive to "where diversity goes (and where it does not), as well as in whom and in what diversity is deposited (as well as in whom or in what it is not)" (2012, p. 12; see also Chapter 8).

In taking up Allman's line of thinking—in which she defines and characterizes certain practices of knowing in terms of *distortion*—it's important to distinguish my procedure (and Allman's) from potential connotations of assigning false consciousness. In the course of my analysis, I do not characterize certain speakers as "uncritical" (as if that was a fixed attribute of their personalities); instead, my exploration of speakers' praxes should be grasped as partial—limited to selected expressions of knowing, as they are articulated in particular moments of the hearings. In this way, I am attempting to advance an ethic of intersubjective knowing which is committed and critical, yet holds open what Regan (2010) terms a "space of not knowing," and Rossiter (2006) conveys as recognition of "infinite incomprehensibility." For both Allman and

Dorothy Smith, attention to creative practice is rooted in a concern to underscore the social, material, and political dimensions of discourse. Dorothy Smith states:

> Preserving the presence of actual individuals does not necessarily commit us to reducing discourse to individual "utterances" or "speech acts."… Members of discourse orient to the order of the discourse in talk, writing, creating images… producing and determined by the ongoing order which is their concerted accomplishment and arises in the concerting. (1990, pp. 161-162)

My inquiry into the hearings also pursues this line of thinking. I am not concerned to offer a descriptive account of speakers' beliefs or intentions, but rather to elucidate certain, public and social qualities of speakers' creative individual testimonies.

In doing so, my intent is to suggest that we *all* have the ability (and even the responsibility) to critically examine knowledges—expressed by ourselves, by others and by our social and material circumstances—in order to assess what aspects of the world they make visible, what aspects they obscure and whether this is desirable. As I elaborate throughout my analysis, such practices of critical examination are taken up by many speakers throughout the hearings. In this chapter, I attempt both to elucidate these intersubjective practices of critique and to offer an additional assessment based on my own (necessarily situated) perspective, via clear elaboration of my own practices of knowing which should in turn be made subject to critique.

3.2.2.2 Elucidating disjunctures as a point of entry

My initial, open-ended approach to exploring the hearings' clashing truths in terms of discursive practice helped to bring my research problematics into relief. Across multiple contexts of local social justice work, I had perceived recurring dynamics in which possibilities for knowing and acting together to transform contemporary conditions of injustice, appeared to be disrupted by divergent experiences, meanings, sensibilities and practicalities. As I engaged more

deeply with speakers' narratives, I sought to unpack more specifically how these recurring tensions took shape in the hearings: What were the topics, accounts, challenges and dynamics through which my awareness of these tensions was brought to the fore?

In developing a way to comb through the array of issues, accounts and analyses shared by speakers, I eventually organized my thinking in terms of the situated problems, or sticking points, that marked particularly muddy disjunctures or apparently intractable divisions between groups of speakers. I began to focus in on these contradictory *sticking points* as entry points for critical inquiry. Often, these disconnects took the form of focal points and clashing truths, but sometimes they emerged as gaps or silences—points of information or analysis that seemed to me to be striking and/or significant, but which seemed to be ignored or missed by subsequent speakers.

3.2.3 Excavation: Many viewpoints as windows into a complex of relations

Focusing in on these sticky disjunctures, following Campbell and Gregor, I "dug more deeply and excavated the problematic setting from various angles" (2002, p. 92). I especially looked for signals or recurrences in speakers' accounts that might indicate how these divergent understandings had emerged. For Campbell and Gregor (2002, p. 49), this includes listening for experiences and/or discourses that informed speakers' practices of knowing and considering how other settings were implicated. For instance, I noticed that a few speakers referenced something called "Community Directions" while several others made a series of references to Chinatown "one hundred years ago." While I was unable to adequately understand the political meanings of these references based on hearing debate alone, I later worked from these references to explore important aspects of neighbourhood history and process (see chapters 7 and 8).

3.2.3.1 Problematics as rooted in intersubjectivity

My attention to sticking points meant that I especially noted, disconnects, synergies and other intersubjective and relational dynamics of hearing debate. This approach entailed attending to how participants speaking from various locations and experiences articulated a range of perspectives and knowledges through which these tensions might be explored (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, pp. 92–93). In this way, although my inquiry cannot be considered participatory or co-operative *per se*, it nonetheless entails an important dialogical dimension in that the disjunctures I perceived and which form the basis of my analysis are rooted in the dynamic interchanges of those present at the hearings.

3.2.3.2 Something underneath: Digging from local to translocal

Further, although my thesis is grounded in the specificities of the hearings, following George Smith and Dorothy Smith, I treat the hearings as a moment of confrontation which offers a point of entry for investigating the organizing relations and conceptual practices through which broader arrangements of ruling and oppression are held in place. Campbell and Gregor characterize this focus on social relations in terms of a "something underneath" (2002, p. 16). Following Dorothy Smith, Campbell and Gregor talk about institutional ethnography's procedures of excavation in terms of moving to a second level of inquiry that goes beyond exploration of observable, local practice. As the research problematic begins to emerge, the research-writer seeks out further information—often not readily or fully apparent in the local site itself—that can be used to more fully grasp how problematic tensions are "socially organized" (see Smith, 1987). Dorothy Smith characterizes both her own and George Smith's approaches in

terms of practices of mapping that move from local to "trans-local": "The ruling relations themselves generalize; politico-administrative regimes aren't just local affairs—they connect and organize trans-locally" (D. E. Smith, 2006, p. 24). In this way, hearing debate can be explored as a "place where social forms are staged" rather than a resource which simply captures or reveals "the world out there" (Skeggs, Wood & Thumim, 2008, as cited in Baker & Edwards, n.d., p. 13). Drawing on this line of thinking, I sought to examine speakers' testimonies in terms of how these were tied to activities and dynamics that occurred within and across other (historically and geo-spatially situated) settings.

While these methods can generally be understood as entailing a sequence of analytical activities (i.e., from local to extra-local), in practice, engagement with various levels of inquiry are not mutually exclusive stages. Campbell and Gregor describe how in institutional ethnography there is no predetermined focus or "set procedure" for inquiry; instead "as one aspect of the problematic is explored, the researcher gains new insights that point to … how all this works. Her task is to follow that lead" (2002, p. 56). Likewise, my own analytic process entailed a series of iterative movements wherein I worked from an exploration of hearing testimonies to look for supplemental information and then back to reconsider hearing debate in relation to what I had learned.

3.2.4 Curating: Articulating a multi-dimensional analysis

Based on my concern to theorize the HAHR hearings as a poignant moment in the ongoing local co-production of struggle knowledge, as I worked through the analytic moments that Ollman (1998, p. 341) has referred to as "self-clarification" and "exposition," I also came to grasp the writing-up of my analysis as a process of curating. From the Latin *cura*, meaning

“care,” practices of curation are commonly associated with selecting, preserving, interpreting and exhibition of knowledge, heritage and cultural products. This concept of curation helps to hold attention to how, as inquiry-writer, I claim responsibility for my creative and selective practices of representation, interpretation and argument; of, effectively, packaging speakers’ testimonies in relation to my own sensibilities and objectives. However a curatorial role is, of course, pivotally rooted in and shaped by the social and historical praxes through which the subjects of curation have been produced. Further, practices of curation entail recognition of the subjectivity of those to whom this work is articulated.

I am using the idea of curation to underscore how my own analytical work can be grasped as a component and/or extension of the practices of rich and rigorous analysis undertaken by speakers in the course the hearings. Related to this, while my inquiry can be understood in terms of usual practices of analysis, wherein hearing debate is interpreted as data according to a method or framework to yield a theorized insight (roughly, a movement from data through method to theorization), in many cases it moved in a different direction. Having encountered a compelling analytical insight offered by a particular speaker or speakers, I would often work back to try to elucidate the situated practices, forms and/or modes of knowing that these testimonies had entailed (more like a movement from data-as-theorization to method). Put another way, I would frequently treat speakers’ knowledges as the analysis and view my own contribution as a practice of elucidating the method(s) of knowing that certain accounts or arguments seem to suggest. In this way, my approach seeks to recognize hearing participants as subjects of inquiry, while recognizing the limits of what can be seen within this very public site of inquiry.

3.2.4.1 A layered exposition

Inspired by the cluster of methodological approaches I have described, my practices of excavating the local setting of the hearings opened up different types of puzzles which called for examination via different modes and/or dimensions of inquiry. As I worked, I found that in some cases hearing tensions and sticking points were rooted 'out there'—that is, in speakers' conflicting experiences and accounts of *what was going on* at particular neighbourhood sites vis a vis the property market. In other cases, disjunctures seemed situated 'in here'—that is, they could be traced to certain recurring discursive practices as these were observable in the local "on-stage" setting of the hearings. Later, I discerned a third set of tensions that inspired me to dig for additional information and analysis, not only across geo-spatial settings, but also across time. Finally, an overarching set of puzzles and tensions were evoked through my concern to explore the hearings in relation to questions of possibility; this last analytical dimension entailed consideration of group praxis and Sartre's future-oriented notion of the project.

In his elaboration of dialectical inquiry, Ollman (1998) underscores how practices of "exposition"—of communicating the products of inquiry to others—can be understood as a continuation of the analysis itself (see also Walby, 2007). With this in mind, and thinking especially about Sartre's (1960b) progressive-regressive method and Ollman's (1998) elaboration of "dialectical dance," I eventually organized the write-up of my analysis in terms of a series of analytical layers or movements. Each of the following chapters (chapters 4 to 8) begins in the hearings' disjunctures of knowing and then moves in a particular analytical direction. In Chapter 4 my analysis moves towards materiality, while chapters 5 and 6 drive at discursive practices of meaning-making. Chapter 7 pursues a historical analysis and Chapter 8 draws these first three dimensions together in an analytic movement that considers public

discourse in relation to future-oriented projects. Though these dimensions of analysis have been predominantly inspired by the cluster of conceptual approaches I've referenced, I treat the work of these thinkers as open-ended cues to look towards other critical investigations of particular kinds of relations (including, for instance, those of urban property markets, neighbourhood history and racialization).

I hope that this layered approach helps to maintain a focus on analytical process, consistent with my concern to not only explore the hearings' complex discursive encounter, but also to work out and articulate an approach to activist inquiry-in-struggle. At the same time, this articulation of my analysis in layers is not without problems; to some extent this layered approach conveys broken-up versions of material, subjective, historical and future-oriented dynamics which should be grasped as interrelated. With this in mind, I have tried to construe each dimension as a matter, not of distinctness, but of emphasis and/or focus.

As the analysis builds from Chapter 4 through to Chapter 8, it increasingly draws together these various dimensions within a complex of integrated themes. In this way, the story of my analysis also illustrates my own process of learning, beginning in the hearings as I encountered them. Initial layers of my analysis reflect more foundational aspects of my exploration, which needed to be developed before broader themes and/or recurrences could subsequently become visible. This process-oriented structure is consistent with Allman's concern to direct critical attention to not only what, but also *how*, we know and reflects my efforts (following Kirby & McKenna, 1989; and D. E. Smith, 1987) to write myself into the inquiry, making visible my subjectivity as research-writer. As such, the chapters that follow reflect my own journey of developing understanding. Where I ended up entails a shift from where I began.

Chapter 4: What's Going on in Chinatown? Material Contradictions of Place

Encourage the redevelopment of the area and encourage entrepreneurs to take the chance. Not speculation! But to take a chance.

(Oth 7)

We always experience material reality as a threat to our lives, as resistance to our labour, as a limit to our knowledge and also as actual or possible instrumentality.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p. 180)

In this chapter, my analysis begins in speakers' accounts of neighbourhood life and moves towards materiality. In a broad sense, this entails thinking about Chinatown (e.g., its buildings, sidewalks and properties) in terms of what Sartre calls "worked matter": the products of previous human labour that now mediate and impose limits on contemporary praxis. This initial dimension of analysis is based on my reading of the regressive movement within Sartre's analytic approach.

Working from hearing debate, I undertake a situated reading of selected critical, dialectical analyses of urban property markets. I unpack how highly divergent (and often directly contradicting) accounts of neighbourhood dynamics *make sense* when explored as accounts of complex, disjointed and speculative processes of capitalist urban development. Speakers' accounts suggest widespread awareness of how questions of heritage and built character are mixed up with particular capitalist tensions of place and offer considerable insight into how these were playing out in Chinatown at the time of the hearings.

4.1 "The Same Facts … Polar Opposite Outlooks": Contradictory Truths

During the HAHR hearings, many obvious disjunctures centred on assessments of neighbourhood dynamics and divergent predictions about how Chinatown would be impacted by

the HAHR proposals. Many who came to speak in support of the HAHR proposals linked Chinatown's decline to insufficient residents and shoppers in the area. As a result of these factors, said presenters, stores were closing and professional offices were relocating. Those businesses that remained were "at the end of their rope" (Supp 8). Consequently, owners of historical buildings could not find tenants and had no money for upkeep of their buildings. The moderate height increases, many argued, would inspire redevelopment, providing jobs and business opportunities (e.g., Supp 18; Supp 20). New development would attract more people to "live, work and play in the area" (Supp 1), attract tourists and thus support local businesses (Supp 8; Supp 10). One speaker offered a summary:

> [The] Height Review is good and important to developers and investors. As incentives for … property developments increase, new residential development will also increase; more affordable housing projects can be implemented. On the other hand, if [there is] no new development in the area, [the] supply of affordable housing will be decreased. (Supp 18; see also Supp 12)

But in contrast to accounts of Chinatown's decline, those speaking in opposition to the HAHR instead conveyed Chinatown as a "busy, robust" shopping district, "a place to shop for everything one needs, and can afford … food, clothing, medicine" (Opp 11, Opp 13). Chinatown was at risk, argued HAHR opponents, not because of insufficient shoppers but because the new developments enabled by the HAHR would bring cycles of increased property values, raising rents and taxes for low-income residents and small businesses. Many detailed how gentrification and displacement were already increasing throughout the area. Affordable housing was being lost through a combination of "rent increases, conversions of the hotels to higher income rentals, and outright closures" (Opp 64). The nearby mixed use (market and social residential, institutional and commercial) redevelopment of the historic Woodward's building on Hastings

street was frequently cited as having caused ripples of speculation, high property values, rent increases and property tax increases nearby:

> I lived in an SRO and … when Woodward's was built and finished … the rents in that hotel went up by 75 dollars and we had to start paying for cable, where cable was free before. [In] that whole area—two hotels basically kicked everybody out of the hotel and jacked up the [rent]—now … when you move in, it's like five or six hundred dollars. Just because of what happened [at] Woodward's. (Opp 51)

A volunteer from a local non-profit bookstore described how that longstanding independent business had survived in the same Hastings street location—even rebuilding after a fire—until the recent influx of condo buildings and associated property tax and rent increases forced them to move: "We couldn't do business in the neighbourhood where we'd been for almost 40 years, not because our building got knocked down, but because of things getting more expensive around us" (Opp 12). Another speaker stated that "The Chinese barber … situated next to the new *V68* condo development is packing up—after providing Chinese seniors with affordable haircuts for decades—because of increasing costs" (Opp 74).

As the hearings wore on, speakers increasingly responded to comments made earlier in the proceedings and the question of *speculation* emerged as a point of contention. HAHR proponents argued that empty lots, lack of upkeep and unreasonably low commercial rents stemmed from lack of clarity about Chinatown's future and investors' resulting reluctance to buy in. Passing the HAHR, many argued, would bring certainty—clarity for businesses, residents and investors about future land use—while failure to implement the proposed zoning and policy changes would cause increased decline, uncertainty and speculation (e.g., Supp 2, Supp 5, Supp 7, Supp 16, Supp 22, Oth 4). However, those opposed to HAHR recommendations claimed that the HAHR was, rather than decreasing speculation in the neighbourhood, serving to escalate it. Empty storefronts were not caused by lack of shoppers, but by owners who were clearing their

buildings of tenants and holding spaces empty in anticipation of the HAHR's redevelopment incentives (e.g. Opp 4; Opp 44; Opp 64; Opp 68; Opp 3).

As they presented arguments, several speakers shared detailed and/or first-hand accounts about empty storefronts on specific properties. One HAHR opponent shared an anecdote:

> A member of the DNC was chatting with someone at Keefer and Gore, an owner of a clothing store in Fan Tower … He serves low-income Chinese customers primarily … . The owner … , his rent has gone up and he's going to shut down. (Opp 48)

During an exchange with a councillor, another HAHR opponent described:

> We met with [several] Chinatown leaders just before the hearings began, and [one] told us that [they] tried to rent out … a number of places along Pender street and … couldn't do it because … they were being held for speculation until this is over. (Opp 64 to Coun 5)

Examples such as these would seem to confirm that speculation and rent increases were driving out low-income businesses. However, at the following hearing two days later, an HAHR supporter and representative of the Chinatown BIA who was also a real estate agent shared a different understanding of the same cases:

> One of the speakers … spoke about a little shop that was closing on the corner of Keefer and Gore Avenue due to a rent increase … the reason that she is closing … she had two sons that were working with her in the business. They're now grown … they're doing their own things … The owner had given her a rent reduction previously but wasn't prepared to do a further one. So, it wasn't because of a rent increase and also there's other extenuating circumstances … . I've been told that … 200 block Pender street looks like there's a consolidation of ownerships starting to happen in preparation for what happens with HAHR…[But] I can tell you for a fact that …[there's] diverse ownership … So, the speculation … those are the speculations! (Supp 8)

In this way, while those opposed to the HAHR offered accounts of rent increases, HAHR supporters shared contrasting examples to illustrate that building owners were not forcing local shops out. Another HAHR supporter and heritage building owner summarized the problem:

> The unfortunate truth is many properties have been [offering a] six-month rent-

> free period, … inclusive of property taxes, during the entire lease. And yet, no one is interested because nobody sees any business viability in the community. In reality, the property owners are not evicting the tenants, but the tenants are abandoning the shops and the owners. (Supp 4)

On the fifth and final evening of presentations, several speakers noted the confusing nature of the seemingly contradictory realities being presented (Supp 8; Opp 68; Opp 3; Coun 9). One councillor questioned:

> There were those who came to us who said, about rents being very rock bottom and leases being month to month … , you pointed to that as evidence of the crisis in small business in Chinatown. But others said it was evidence instead of landlords preparing for upzoning and getting ready for demolition. So I wonder if you could respond to that perspective? [It's] the same facts … [yet] polar opposite outlooks. (Coun 5 to Supp 8)

4.2 Grasping Chinatown's Contradicting Truths: Space, Time and Singularity

To investigate the material dynamics suggested by this confusing array of understandings, I undertook a situated reading of particular authors who offer critical, dialectical and historical accounts of neighbourhood change. In encountering this body of literature through hearing debate, I sometimes had a distinct sense of familiarity; certain speakers had seemed to give voice to the dynamics I was reading about. Indeed, many disjunctures in understanding about 'what was going on in Chinatown' are helpfully unpacked when they are read in light of the irregular, moving, speculative nature of property market dynamics, alongside the unpredictability of the motives and activities of the actors involved.

4.2.1 A situated reading: The speculative dynamics of urban development

Harvey (1989, 2007, 2008) has described how, since the 1960s, the reduction of spatial barriers (to movement of goods, people, money and information) between regions, and the

associated globalized flow of capital is linked to increasing intensity of inter-urban competition for capitalist development—for instance, investment, tourism and jobs. Among the many implications of this trend, notes Harvey, has been a change in forms and roles of urban governance that seems to hold across national boundaries and even across political ideologies. While the 1960s saw a predominately "managerial" approach to urban governance—wherein the primary role of city governments was to deliver services, facilities and benefits to urban populations—starting in the 1970s, this has steadily given way to "entrepreneurial" forms of action. "Urban governance," states Harvey, "has thus become much more oriented to the provision of a 'good business climate' and to the construction of all sorts of lures to bring capital into town" (1989, p. 11).

In addition to the lowering of corporate tax rates[16] and various other business incentives, Harvey and others (e.g., Peck, 2005; N. Smith, 2002) describe how urban entrepreneurism relates to increasing investment in the construction of *place*. In a world where consumerism, tourism, spectacle and cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major elements of urban political economies, quality of urban life—and cities themselves—have become commodities for those with money (see Harvey, 2012; N. Smith, 2002; Walks & Maaranen, 2008b). Investments to attract the consumer dollar have increasingly focused on physical up-grading of the urban environment (including urban design and heritage restoration) and consumer attractions (e.g., sports stadia, markets and cultural innovation) as marketable ingredients of place. But Harvey emphasizes that such investments are highly speculative:

The task of urban governance is, in short, to lure highly mobile and flexible

[16] Incidentally, a 2012 report by the international accounting firm KPMG named Vancouver as the city with the second lowest global corporate tax "burden" (KPMG, 2012).

> production, financial and consumption flows into its space. The speculative qualities of urban investments simply derive from the inability to predict exactly which package will succeed and which will not, in a world of considerable economic instability and volatility. (Harvey, 1989, p. 11)

Further, Harvey elaborates that investment in property and place is particularly prone to volatility because of how it is tied up with what Marx referred to as fictitious capital: an interest-bearing investment, or, claims on future production of value (Allman, 2001, p. 111; Harvey, 1982).[17] For one, title to land can be seen as a pure financial asset (albeit with certain qualities of security and illiquidity), with the price of land in the present affected by anticipated future excess profits emanating from future capital flows or future labour (Harvey, 1982, p. 21; see also Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008, p. 51). The effect, notes Harvey, is to tie land markets and land uses into the general circulation process of capital and potentially into pyramids of debt claims (2012; see also Harvey, 1982, p. 22).

Harvey (2012) further explains how land can also be used by developers as an element of production wherein—through the labour of construction workers, architects (and others such as marketing agents)—value is produced in the form of commodities such as housing and commercial units which can be sold for profit. However, the time lag between production and circulation for built property is very long relative to most other commodities and the existing stock of properties that can be traded is large relative to what can be produced. Thus, the supply-demand relationship in this sector is lopsided: construction is financed long before sales can

[17] Fictitious capital is so-named because, in contrast to productive or real capital, it is not actually used in concert with human labour to produce new value (surplus value and profit). The interest paid on fictitious capital comes from value produced somewhere else, for example, through levies on revenues (wages or profits) (Harvey, 2012 p. 40).

begin and total housing supply is relatively inelastic relative to more volatile demand shifts. Further, as Lees, Slater and Wyly describe,

> once these investments are committed and quite literally put in place, capital cannot be quickly or easily shifted to newer, more profitable opportunities elsewhere. Technological change and expanding networks of trade, migration, and settlement—in short every element of economic development—can threaten and undermine the profitability of previous investments. (2008, p. 50)

During the hearings, some speakers described how Chinatown was increasingly competing for investment and consumption with other nearby Asian shopping districts in Richmond or on Victoria street (e.g., Supp 10, Supp 20, Opp 73). These analyses are supported by research on demographic and economic regional trends conducted during preparation of the 2002 Chinatown Vision. This research highlights how federal immigration policy such as the Business Immigrant Program has "reshaped what kinds of Chinese immigrant[s] settle in Vancouver," such that "by 1996, after an influx of wealthier, skilled Chinese immigrants to the region, the residential geography of the Chinese in Vancouver has dramatically changed" (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, Appendix E, pp. 9-10). While the Chinese population near Chinatown had not significantly decreased throughout the 1990s, new immigration had led to the growth of multiple inner suburban and suburban Chinese residential areas. These shifting residential patterns have been accompanied by the rise of businesses oriented to Chinese clientele in the same areas, meaning that Chinese Canadians no longer need to travel to Chinatown to purchase Chinese goods and services. In particular, the suburb of Richmond has seen the development of a number of Asian-themed malls built by developers from Hong Kong in response to the investment requirements of the Canadian immigration system (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, Apendix E, p. 10).

In this way, the ability to identify a specific cause for empty storefronts or vacant properties becomes all the more difficult to discern because of how such multifaceted dynamics occur across of a variety of market sectors and geographic scales. In addition to its suburban competition, Vancouver Chinatown may also compete for tourism dollars with attractions such as the seaside galleries and markets of the nearby Gulf islands. Further, Vancouver real estate may compete for investment, not only with other locations in Canada, but also with condominiums in Barcelona, apartments in New York and assets ranging from gold bullion to contemporary art (see e.g., Burgos & Ismail, 2015).

Hearing accounts also suggest how processes of property development are further complicated by how various changes overlap and interact through time and space. In their comparative multi-decade analysis of the timing, patterning and forms of neighbourhood change in major Canadian cities, Walks and Maaranen (2008b) outline how gentrification and upgrading typically occur in stages: Early changes in a given neighbourhood become the preconditions for subsequent waves of change. Earlier stages often involve pioneer groups of residents, such as artists and counter-culture types, who fix up local housing, patronize local establishments and help cultivate an interesting local aesthetic. These activities increase neighbourhood *cachet* and demand to rent in the area. As tenants with higher income are increasingly attracted to the neighbourhood, they influence further upgrades and retail changes, such as development of commercial strips. Land values rise and prompt further speculation and investment, with later stages of change involving the most risk-averse groups of residents, retailers and developers who buy up property in the neighbourhood now that it has become seen as a safe investment.

While this general characterization in terms of stages is possible, changes also fluctuate considerably in duration and nature due to various local particularities. Proximity to elite areas,

amenities (central business districts, transit, waterfront, universities and galleries), or nuisance uses (such as noisy or smelly industrial areas); the nature of existing housing stock and tenureship (market or non-market); political and policy dynamics (e.g. zoning or community resistance); and local architecture—in addition to broader economic factors such as recessions—have all been found to influence the rate, degree and qualities of neighbourhood change that occur in a given area (Ley & Dobson, 2008; Newman & Wyly, 2006; Walks & August, 2008; Walks & Maaranen, 2008a). Walks and Maaranen (2008a) found that processes of gentrification took anywhere from one to four decades. In some places gentrification remained incomplete at the end of their study period in 2001, while in gentrification frontiers—here, they point to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside—they appeared imminent but had not yet begun. At the same time, note the authors, an increase in active, entrepreneurial forms of urban governance and investment are making changes harder to predict; areas previously seen as ungentrifiable are now beginning to be transformed.

This uneven, overlapping and long-term (with supply-demand lag) nature of investment in land and place helps account for the HAHR's seemingly contradicting reports of property values increasing and rents rising in some buildings, while only a few blocks over owners could not seem to attract commercial tenants. Anecdotal evidence of the Woodward's development's impact on neighbouring blocks and the bookstore volunteer's account of displacement through storefront rent and tax increases is consistent with Walks and Maaranen's (2008b) observations that new-build forms of gentrification tend to spur higher rents and new waves of investment, such that "new-build developments act as beachheads from which the tentacles of gentrification can spread into the surrounding neighbourhoods" (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2007, p. 141).

Hearing debate also reflects how the uneven timing and geography of such investments in Vancouver neighbourhoods can be further complicated by site-to-site irregularity and uncertainty related to Vancouver's Transfer of Density policy, which allows property owners to transfer density between sites (see Chapter 1). However, as one speaker explained, the policy enhances uncertainty because of the site-to-site, ad hoc, way in which these density 'bonuses' are determined. The calculation, explained the speaker, who had a background in property economics, involves two parts: the residual (unused) density, and then a "pro forma" aspect:

> They're based on a pro forma which is basically the costs … and expenses against profit, and it's based on the difference between the heritage-encumbered site and the unencumbered development. And then … that dollar value is converted into density … . it's quite a complex issue … and it really is … project-to-project. There is no template as such … and the pro forma part can be substantial. (Opp 68)

The hearings also make audible how this policy further complicates local property dynamics because—like property purchased based on the prospect of upzoning—the transfer of density is highly speculative. As in Marx's concept of fictitious capital, a heritage building owner's investment (through building preservation and forgone revenue) in creation of bonus density represents a claim on the future production of value—that is, a claim on the profits derived from future production of bonus units by whoever purchases the bonus density. But this transaction is risky for both "donors" (sellers) and "recipients" (buyers), because the policy stipulates that the heritage rehabilitation must be completed before the sale of residual density and that this sale must be completed before development permits or rezonings can be enacted on the receiving site.[18] The process thus requires advance investment on the part of both donor and

[18] The transfer of density policy states that "that before a development permit can be issued, or a rezoning bylaw enacted [on a receiver site], the City requires confirmation that the sale of density has been completed." Or, the

recipient developers, with no guarantee that the created density can be sold or that purchase and use of bonus density will yield the anticipated returns. Concern about these uncertain dynamics was apparent as one HAHR supporter suggested that this risky advance payment aspect of the density transfer program should be changed "to enable Chinatown heritage buildings to earn and sell transferable bonus density … before [construction] actually happens" (Supp 7).

Although the transfer of density becomes an element in value creation, the problem with such fictitious investments, Harvey (2012, p. 42) explains, is that given the supply-demand lag inherent in urban development, it is difficult to determine when an overaccumulation of investment in urban development will occur, as well as how to value such investments when there is no market for them (a problem demonstrated poignantly by the 2008 US housing market crash). In fact, extensive use of Vancouver's heritage density transfer program to finance many projects, including the Woodward's development, had caused the City's density bank to become flooded by an overaccumulation of saleable density, resulting in Council's 2007 decision to freeze the addition of new density to the existing bank (see Matas, 2008). All of this adds additional uncertainty and particularly within Chinatown's development and redevelopment activities.

Further, Harvey's work suggests how this uneven, property-by-property pattern of change is made even more difficult to grasp because of how each market actor "will adapt … in the face of market competition" and will seek their own path in an attempt to navigate this shifting context without "prior understanding of what will or will not succeed" (1989, p. 15). First, one

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policy allows for the restoration to be substantially in progress and guaranteed to be completed via a letter of credit to the City worth 120% of the value of the density to be transferred (see City of Vancouver, n.d.-c).

cannot see into the future to know ahead what consumers will purchase. Marx characterized consumption as a singularity—those unique instances that together make up a common mode of life which is chaotic, unpredictable, uncontrollable and thus outside the field of political economy. But while consumption can't be predicted, noted Marx, it can nonetheless exert influence on subsequent processes of production (as cited in Harvey 2012, pp. 36–38).

And neither is it possible to predict the choices of other market actors. During the hearings, one former city planner described how, during 1990s planning for redevelopment in Vancouver's Downtown South neighbourhood, developers not only had trouble anticipating consumer demand, but also couldn't predict their own future actions:

> I could have gotten [developers] passing every lie detector test … —and these were credible people—that said, "We have to have [more density] or nothing will happen in Downtown South." Well, it [developed] twice as fast as we thought. Sometimes, it's hard for the development community to know exactly what they'll do. (Oth 1)

These insights suggest how—depending on their own circumstances, priorities and guesswork—each business or property owner may respond differently to changing conditions in Chinatown. While some may try to wait out hard times in expectation of an upturn, some may choose to sell or close, and others may take advantage of decreasing internal competition in commercial rents and move to a cheaper location. Similarly, some historic building owners may opt to sell to a developer who plans to demolish old buildings and erect new-build development; others may choose to preserve these structures in anticipation of benefiting from future heritage incentives, or for charitable, cultural or personal reasons.

Further, Harvey describes how the right of private ownership—foundational to all capitalist activity—necessarily contains the option of non-trading, such that "hoarding, withholding [and] miserly behaviour [are] an important problem in capitalist markets" (2012, p.

94). Indeed, speakers on all sides of the HAHR debate decried the existence of vacant lots and deteriorating buildings which had been held empty, in some cases, for years (Opp 11; Opp 64 Apr 12; Supp 7; Opp 38). Such observations suggest that certain landholders were sitting idle, withholding use of their property until various factors (such as zoning, consolidation, financing and demand) combined to create the most profitable mix of conditions for selling or development. But despite wide agreement that this was a problem, opponents suggested the HAHR had caused such practices, while supporters conveyed the HAHR as the solution, to "calm speculation and … inspire the vacant lot holders to move on and get going" (Supp 7).

Read in light of these complex development dynamics, hearing debate suggests how change in Chinatown was likely occurring in different forms, at different times, on a property-by-property basis, according to the particular circumstances, strategies and/or goals of various groups of renters, owners or buyers and also as one set of changes fostered the preconditions for subsequent and/or adjacent stages of change. As one community advocate and opponent of the HAHR proposals asserted,

> one need only look at the new condos in Chinatown South, and numerous towers within a few minutes' walk of Chinatown that have been built over the past decade, to see that insufficient density is not a problem. Residential development planned for North East False Creek will put additional residents within walking distance … . In an area undergoing rapid demographic and cultural change, it takes time for the business mix to adapt … but this is clearly beginning to happen. (Opp 66)

In highlighting connections between development in adjacent communities and changes in Chinatown, as well the lag that can occur as commercial sectors respond to residential shifts, this analysis reflects an appreciation of neighbourhood change as incremental and uneven. Further, the speaker's historical, spatial conceptualization suggests how cause and effect can be difficult to grasp: While empty storefronts appear to many as a cause or rationale for change—

indicating the need for more density—if the speaker is correct, they are instead a result of increases in density which have already occurred nearby. A similar dynamic can be read in relation to speakers' disagreement about whether the HAHR is actually a cause or a response to speculation. When urban development is grasped historically and relationally, it becomes possible to discern how the HAHR might well be both.

4.3 Tensions of Chinatown as Place: Monopoly, Pressure, Uniqueness and Tradability

As I turned to the critical urban analyses of Harvey and others to explore more precisely what these dynamics entailed, in searching for problems rooted in understandings of material development, I also began to recognize tensions rooted within the material dynamics themselves. That is, I began to sense how what I had at first supposed might be largely a problem of knowing (a conceptual conundrum of how to understand such relations) might be equally a material conundrum of how to navigate these contradictory dynamics—a material conundrum felt most acutely by those with property in Chinatown and/or a stake in Chinatown's monopoly of place.

Those speaking in opposition to the HAHR emphasized that an influx of new development within the neighbourhood would serve (and was already serving) to significantly harm Chinatown's unique heritage character. Speakers described how the proposed height increases were vastly out of scale with respect to existing historic buildings, most of which were four storeys or less (e.g., Opp 34; Opp 66; Opp 68; Opp 69; Opp 72). Taller buildings, others stressed, would significantly impact Chinatown's outdoor market character by decreasing access to sky and light along Main street, producing a "canyon" effect (Opp 13; Opp 28; Opp 34; Opp 55; Opp 62; Opp 52).

HAHR opponents detailed how the proposed height changes and the resulting influx of new condo towers were not only compromising the neighbourhood's built character but were also eroding Chinatown's distinct retail culture of small local merchants. Many speakers especially praised the neighbourhood's array of small Asian groceries where one could purchase affordable fruits, vegetables and Chinese speciality items. Those opposed to the HAHR predicted that, rather than supporting Chinatown's existing independent retailers, the middle class residents who would move into the new tower developments would be less likely to "buy their groceries in a place that sells beef tripe and ginko nuts … in the open air," and more likely to prefer "stores like Nester's, that sell their favourite artisan brands" (Opp 32; also Opp 5; Opp 21; Opp 67).

Many of those opposed to the HAHR described how the combination of "highrise condos and upscale and major chain stores" was serving to destroy what was "unique and personal and real" about the neighbourhood in favour of a "wasteland of towers," "faux heritage" or a "structural monoculture" (Opp 55; Opp 75; Opp 13; Opp 16; Opp 8). Speakers used terms such as "monolithic" and "boring" to describe new condo developments and warned against "clean WASP[19] middle class monotony" (Oth 3; Opp 76; Opp 75). Another speaker—perhaps the only Chinatown building owner speaking in opposition to the HAHR—described in detail how an influx of new development would destroy what they felt was something "special" and "different" about the neighbourhood:

> I think the architecture of Chinatown, and the way it is, almost acts as a filter and keeps out … the more boring retailers. And my concern is that that if you add density and it creates new buildings, whether these new buildings are eight storeys or 15 storeys, the problem is that they've got new materials: new brick, new aluminium and glass storefront. And you can see down the street at

[19] Meaning: White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant.

> Tinseltown[20] what happens when you put up those storefronts: you get sun tan salons, dog-washing parlours, this kind of thing. And I'd hate to see that happen in Chinatown. (Opp 61)

As many speakers were well aware, such disagreements about Chinatown's character and heritage—such as advocating for old versus new forms of development—reflect tensions that are not merely about aesthetics or taste. Instead, such debates point to social histories and material conundrums that are significantly shaped by the competitive realities of capitalist markets.

4.3.1 "We need help for sure": The competitive pressures of highest and best use

As HAHR opponents warn against the onset of a "boring" "structural monoculture," (above), they were not simply expressing architectural or shopping preferences; instead, these and other speakers could be heard to offer cautionary descriptions of market tendencies towards commodified homogeneity, which occurs through mass production and other competitive strategies aimed at lowering costs and broadening appeal. Allman (2001) describes how, in contradiction to capitalism's popular association with "diversity," the general tendency of global capitalism has in fact been to promote a "pseudo-universalism" characterized by the spread of "those aspects of Western civilization—such as values, life-styles and other aspects of culture, including habituated social practices—that favourably serve the interest of capitalism" (2001, p. 231). Speakers' comments and warnings thus signal their awareness of certain logics in how urban development tends to happen within competitive capitalist markets.

Development dynamics in the Downtown Eastside suggests how this trend towards uniformity can occur through the competitive strategies of market actors, as a kind of dialectic of

[20] The former name of International Village shopping mall, located on Pender Street at the edge of Chinatown.

differentiation and sameness. As firms compete to develop profitable built commodities, there are rewards for successful innovation in financing, construction, or marketing, for instance: pre-sales of condo units which decrease the time lag between developers' expenditures and returns, or the design of tiny (291-square-foot) micro-lofts as a new housing product that enables increased rental or sales revenue for the same building footprint (see "Vancouver 'micro-lofts' billed as smallest in Canada," 2011). The "coercive laws of competition," notes Harvey, force capitalists to reinvest in production, and further, "force new technologies and organizational forms to come on line … since capitalists with higher productivity can out-compete those using inferior methods. Innovations define new wants and needs, and reduce the turnover time of capital and the friction of distance" (2012, p. 6).

However, these market advantages are relatively temporary, lasting only until other firms are compelled to adapt in order to compete, often by adopting similar techniques (see Allman, 2001; Harvey, 1989). As one former City planner described during the hearings, "One thing I've learned over time is that if … one developer figures it out, others will follow … when you get a good building that's [selling] well, the system seems to simplify itself around that" (Oth 1). Of course, this does not mean every new condominium or restaurant developed in Chinatown will look precisely the same, but rather that successful formulas are likely to be noticed and mimicked. This formulaic approach to development makes it possible for HAHR presenters to simply refer to "stainless steel appliances and granite countertops" (Opp 14), "hipster bistros" (Opp 10), or dog spas (Opp 10; Opp 25; Opp 61; Opp 74), knowing that others present will be familiar with the type of development they are talking about.

Meanwhile, as Harvey describes, there is a commercial advantage for firms who can "persuade consumers of the unique and non-replicable qualities of their commodities (hence

name brands, advertising, and the like)" (Harvey, 2012, p. 93). Marketing materials for recent condo developments in the area—Ginger in Chinatown and Woodward's District on Hastings—describe these development products as "spicy," "zesty," "authentic" and "rare." Purchasers of Ginger condo units could choose from "one of five bright colour schemes" and prospective Woodward's owners were promised the chance to "select a signature private entry door from a group of 10 artists' works in limited release" (Lees et al., 2008; *Vancouver Ginger Chinatown Condos Relaunch Fall 2009*, 2009; *W: This Is Your Neighbourhood*, n.d.). Woodward's infamous advertising slogan challenged potential buyers to "Be Bold or Move to Suburbia" (see Lees et al., 2008, p. 269). Even claims of distinction such as these can be understood in terms of a market formula of differentiation. Many accounts of Chinatown's uniqueness (in the hearings and elsewhere) also signal problematic dynamics of racialization; I return to explore this topic more thoroughly in chapters 7 and 8.

In tracing accounts of material tensions through hearing debate, what thus becomes audible is how (as Allman, 2001, notes) competitive urban development dynamics threaten to impose, not arbitrary sameness, but particular forms of sameness that are fundamentally shaped by the logic of profit. The proliferation of "chain stores" and "favourite … brands" described by speakers (on page 108, above) occurs in part because, as Harvey (2012, after Marx) emphasizes, capital's competitive dynamics tends to produce a concentration of market power in the hands of fewer and fewer large corporations.

But in addition to the overt kinds of homogenization that occur through the dominance of particular corporations (think Nike, Microsoft, or McDonald's), less obvious dimensions of sameness relate to the dominance of a particular, formulaic development logic. During the hearings, this logic is apparent as speakers describe—with differing degrees of explicitness or

detail—various market incentives (and coercions) to develop and use land in the most lucrative way possible, towards the most economically optimal highest and best use. Marx (as cited in Allman, 2007, pp. 17–18) describes how complex capitalist economies not only entail competition between sellers in the same sphere of production (e.g., different developers selling different housing or condominium units), but also involve competition amongst all capitalists for a finite amount of investment capital. As in Harvey's description of inter-urban competition, Allman describes how this results in the "constant inflow and outflow of capital, into firms with higher profit rates and out of those with lower ones" (2001, p. 85). Accordingly, Lees, Slater and Wyly describe how

> in a competitive market economy, new urban development is geared to maximize profit: landowners, developers, and everyone else involved in the development process all have incentives to use a particular land parcel for the most profitable function possible, given the available construction technologies, prevailing regulations, building styles and fashions, nearby competitors, and local urban context. (2008, p. 51)

But in theorizing cycles of urban disinvestment and development, Neil Smith (e.g., 1979 as cited in Lees et al., 2008) has illustrated how—while new landed capital developments do tend to maximize the economic potential, or highest and best use, of a given site—over time, the value of a given built development begins to fall out-of-step with the potential highest and best use of the property upon which it is anchored. While a built structure on a given site ages and deteriorates over time, changes in technology, design, consumer expectations and allowable density tends to increase the prospect that the same site could be developed in a more profitable (often higher and denser) way. The value of the current built structure "is constrained by the terms and conditions of previous investments and commitments of labour, and is undermined by the mounting costs of repair and maintenance." In contrast, the potential value or profitability of

its site "almost always increases steadily over time: so long as an urban region enjoys some combination of population growth, employment expansion and technological innovation, any particular location will become more highly valued" (Lees et al., 2008, p. 53, after N. Smith). As Engels put it; "the buildings erected on these areas depress this value instead of increasing it, because they no longer belong to the changed circumstances" (1872, as cited in Harvey, 2012, p. 17). In development lingo, sites that feature protected buildings are referred to as "heritage-*encumbered*." Lees, Slater and Wyly describe how, for owners of ageing buildings, it can thus become "logical, rational, and attractive" to simply refrain from any further investment in the property:

> Landlords in poorer inner-city neighbourhoods, for example, are holding investments in buildings that may have represented the highest and best use of a century ago; spending money to maintain these assets as low-cost rental units becomes ever more difficult to justify, since the investments will be difficult to recover from low-income tenants. It becomes rational and logical for landlords to "milk" the property, extracting capitalized ground rent from the tenants, spending the absolute minimum to maintain the structure, and waiting as potential ground rent increases in the hopes of eventually capturing a windfall through redevelopment. (Lees at al., 2008, p. 53)

Hearing debate makes audible how, with investments tied up in built developments, property owners in Chinatown necessarily find themselves immersed in these competitive land market dynamics. Indeed, during the HAHR hearings, various descriptions of neighbourhood housing suggest that many owners of the neighbourhood's ageing SRO hotels were pursing the "logical, rational" (and—in the cases of some, perhaps—necessary) path of "milking" and/or disinvestment in their ageing buildings; low-income community members described conditions within several of the neighbourhood's existing SRO buildings as "deplorable," "harsh" and "a shame" (Opp 27; Opp 40; Opp 15). Another stated, "Recently I took a walk through the New

Sun Ah hotel, and the place made my stomach turn … I told myself, if I [had] a pet dog, … my dog would actually have better living conditions" (Opp 35).

The accounts of other speakers give voice to how such dynamics were playing out from the perspectives of heritage building owners and particularly for benevolent associations. In the past, family societies had been able to make ends meet through efficient use of existing structures—for instance, maximizing potential rental income by accommodating many low-income tenants in small units (with shared washrooms and no cooking facilities); locating society administrative offices within their own buildings (effectively paying rent to themselves); and charging market-rate commercial rents to gain maximum financial benefit from high demand for local storefronts. Some received housing subsidies from the province (Supp 8; Supp 13; Supp 14; Supp 6; see also Vancouver Heritage Foundation, 2009). But many speakers emphasized that, in recent years, the same associations were struggling economically with increasing property taxes, deteriorating buildings and insufficient funds to undertake basic repairs, seismic upgrading, or necessary renovations. Commercial rents were decreasing (Supp 2; Supp 10; Supp 12; Supp 13; Supp 14; Supp 19; Supp 4; Oth 2). And nor was it thinkable that associations could hope to squeeze more revenue out of elderly and low-income tenants. With revenues stagnant and expenses increasing, explained society representatives, the pressure was mounting. One explained,

> [The society owns] a senior's housing building on 628 East Hastings Street, that's about 72 units. We also have 45 self-contained affordable units, just above our headquarters at Jackson and Hastings. And of course we own the May Wah Hotel building, at 200 block East Pender; this one has 123 SRO units. The building also has five commercial spaces on the ground floor … . If you look into the rent … depending on the space, we're looking at about … one third of what we charged 15 years ago. And even with that, we've had units emptying out for almost two years. And during those two years, we've had little or no enquiry on that unit …With the low rents, we can't have [a] change in use either, because that would

> require upgrades to current standards and so on … [In order to do renovations beyond just the building façade,] it requires millions of dollars, and we don't have the resources now to do that … We need help from the senior levels of government for sure. (Supp 14)

Another speaker, representing a different family association, shared how that society's nearly 100-year old building was also deteriorating. While major structural and seismic renovations were required, the speaker stated, "undertaking this work with very limited financial resources is impossible for us, as there are standards and codes to be met which will increase costs. Adding to these pressures, are offers from developers seeking to purchase our building" (Supp 13).

Smith (1979 as cited in Lees et al., 2008) has theorized how this economic pressure, which serves as an incentive to redevelop, heightens as the *rent gap* between a site's current and potential value increases. The potential highest and best use for a given property will vary according to location and numerous other factors; in some cases it may be high-end retail, while in others, it will be upper middle class residential. But because of the continual (and generally upwards) change in the prospective profitability of a land parcel, note Lees, Slater and Wyly, landowners "are always forced to choose between investing to maintain the viability of previous capital commitments or exploiting new opportunities (and neglecting or abandoning the old)" (2008, p. 50).

In the context of these competitive market dynamics, several speakers explained how the changes proposed within the HAHR could facilitate a dramatic transformation in Chinatown's built form. These speakers outlined in detail how the proposed increased heights would mean that a property's highest and best use could only be realized through consolidation of multiple sites; Chinatown's historic pattern of narrow, 25 foot lots could simply not accommodate buildings of the scale proposed under the new zoning bylaws. As one speaker explained,

> Part of the concern was height, but I was more concerned about width; that developers would buy up properties and gentrification would take place a half a block at a time, and that no one would invest in older buildings. (Oth 1)

In this way, speakers can be heard to warn how market inducements to develop property to highest and best use constituted a compelling material logic which favoured new building forms over existing low-rise buildings and uses. Increasing heights, they emphasized, would "multiply the incentives to demolish heritage rather than encouraging rejuvenation" (Opp 68). While speakers on all sides of the debate agreed in principle that Chinatown's heritage buildings should be preserved and protected, several HAHR opponents attempted to underline how this stated policy goal could simply not hold up in the face of competitive material pressures. For instance,

> according to the report, "character" buildings are "encouraged to be rehabilitated." These are empty words. Allowing an additional storey on a low-rise rental building cannot compete with demolishing and replacing it with a nine-storey outright condo development. (Opp 66)

Further, noted another presenter, the incentivization of tower-scale developments gives advantage to large development companies who are the only firms capable of amassing sufficient capital for the huge property and construction expenses associated with projects of this magnitude. As in Harvey's (2012) reminder about the tendency of capitalist competition to produce monopolies, this speaker warned how the proposed increases in allowable height and density could raise the stakes to the point that smaller actors would simply not be able to "play that game" (Opp 34).[21]

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[21] And, if hearing participants could have travelled forward in time, they would learn that the developers waiting to build on the HAHR's proposed 150-foot "special sites" were among the largest in the city. By November 2013, the companies proposing to build at 611 and 633 Main Street were WestBank and Blue Sky Properties (Bosa Family). These rank among the eight largest new home developers in B.C, having built, respectively, 2000 and 1711 housing units between 2007 and 2011 ("Biggest New-Home Developers in BC," 2012; City of Vancouver, n.d.-d, n.d.-e).

4.3.2 "Irony of capitalist interests": Managing uniqueness and tradability

While presenters speaking both for and against the HAHR recommendations emphasized cultural, personal and affordability-related arguments as to why Chinatown's built character should be preserved, many speakers also noted that Chinatown's distinct character constituted a special advantage when it came to attracting tourists (e.g., Opp 8; Supp 10; Supp 20; Opp 66; Opp 76). Chinatown is "part of the crown jewellery of Vancouver and a tourist destination" noted one (Supp 5). Another stated, "It is one of the most historic Chinatowns in North America that attracts many visitors from all over the world" (Opp 41). "Our heritage buildings," stated a third "are [among] the first visible elements for local visitors" (Supp 8).

In this way, many presenters can be heard to describe—implicitly if not explicitly—what Harvey (following Marx) has described as a monopoly of place. Given Chinatown's unique physical, heritage and cultural features, together with its proximity to rapid transit and downtown attractions, the entire neighbourhood can be understood as a scarce "quality resource" controlled by actors with property rights there (Harvey, 2012, p. 91). Harvey (2012) describes how this monopoly advantage can be (indirectly) traded upon for an enhanced income stream by (for instance, tourism or entertainment) businesses that rely on these unique features of the neighbourhood. Or, this monopoly quality can be directly traded upon, as in the boutique rents that can be charged in a restored character building (see Harvey, 2012). While this special (or, monopoly) feature can bring advantages for property and business owners in Chinatown, Harvey describes how monopoly dynamics entail certain contradictions.

HAHR speakers' relatively widespread sense of the competitive pressures of highest and best use provides the backdrop against which certain presenters can be heard to articulate what

Harvey describes as the tension, within built monopolies of place, between uniqueness and tradability: “The contradiction here is that the more easily marketable such items become, the less unique and special they appear” (Harvey, 2012, p. 92). The narratives of many HAHR opponents highlighted this threat directly, for instance, in warnings that tall buildings would “be counterproductive in terms of attracting visitors and repeat shoppers because it would detract from the cheery, colourful street scene that is a vital ingredient of the Chinatown experience” (Opp 66). “Building out … in this area,” stated another, will entail loss of “a historical district and tourism asset that could never be recovered” (Opp 8).

While globalized flows of production, finance and consumption are flexible and mobile, those with material (and related political and/or social) investments in place cannot so easily take advantage of opportunities elsewhere. It is for this reason that maximization of a locational edge in the capacity to attract, generate and retain wealth has such economic importance for particular, invested, actors (see Harvey, 1989; Harvey, 2012). If the neighbourhood’s monopolistic edge—especially, its historic built character—was to be maintained, those who rely on this advantage would have to somehow manage or intervene in the development logics which favour more profitable, modern, highrise building forms. The problem for place-invested actors, explains Harvey, is the contradictory nature of this development tension wherein “the bland homogeneity that goes with pure commodification erases monopoly advantages” (2012, p. 92). That is, with each new generic-looking (yet profitable) tower, pub, or chain store, an element of the neighbourhood’s special features of place—its scarce quality resource—is compromised. Chinatown’s character thus runs the risk of becoming (in terms of market value) “no different from commodities in general” (Harvey, 2012, pp. 92–93). One HAHR opponent detailed how this was precisely what was going on:

> So what I am going to talk about is the irony of the capitalist interests in this area and what I mean by that is that Soho syndrome sort of thing, where a neighbourhood is really interesting and really unique and really wonderful and so people are drawn to it. And then those people, in immersing themselves in that neighbourhood, change that neighbourhood and eventually that neighbourhood gets whitewashed and westernized and it's no longer interesting anymore. And I think that's what's happening in Chinatown. I walk through there everyday, and there's a set of buildings or a building that has just been refinished. And inside of it there are these hair salons and art studios and … there's women sitting there having blonde highlights … . It could be a hair salon anywhere in the city and it's boring and its bleak and it has nothing to do with Chinatown. And then on the outside of these buildings there's these historic images of Chinatown [which suggest] "look at our wonderful heritage" but the life inside of it is gone. (Opp 76)

In this account, the speaker goes on to lay out how the "irony" of market contradictions between Chinatown's "interesting" "historic … grit" and its transition to "bleak … boring … condo city" poses a distinct problem, not only of affordability for low-income residents, but even "from the interest of people who want revitalization in that area." In doing so, they highlight how the contradictory development tensions of uniqueness and tradability can play out as a kind of material trap—as in Sartre's *anti-praxis* (Chapter 2)—wherein the best competitive, profit-maximizing, strategy of individual actors has the effect of ruining the extra monopoly benefit for all. Harvey goes on to describe how this trap places certain demands on entrepreneurial coalitions of government, civil society and private actors, who must actively manage this problem if a given place is to retain its monopoly advantages in the context of global, inter-urban competition for capital (investment, tourism and jobs) (see 2012, pp. 92–109).

While it's not possible to predict how a given actor will respond in the face of such entrepreneurial challenges, Harvey (2012) has described certain common strategies for preserving monopolistic uniqueness—including market branding based on claims of "distinction," as in the Ginger and Woodwards developments (on page 111, above). This logic is likewise apparent in an early Chinatown Revitalization report which highlights how the

neighbourhood's small-lot patterning "will provide Chinatown with a strong economic distinctiveness in the housing market" (Director of Current Planning, 2005, p. 6).

Indeed, at various points in the hearings, particular speakers can be heard to explicitly discuss this task of managing Chinatown's monopoly of place, discussing development strategies that would both enable new development *and* protect the area's historic character, or, as one speaker put it (below), "having a cake and eating it." One presenter suggested,

> [We should do] anything to make sure that the uniqueness of the architecture of the area be well preserved, and history and culture protected and enhanced. Of course that does not mean turning Chinatown into a museum. Architects are artists who help create changes while preserving the old. (Supp 5; see also Supp 24)

Another offered,

> In Chinatown we have street walls … they're varied from two to four or five storeys, and if we can keep the character of that and set back any kind of increase further back in the site, we may have a way of having a cake and eating it. (Oth 2)

Observing that the "the key to retail and commercial success in Chinatown … rests with its unique character," a third presenter cautioned,

> The jewel of it is the historic character and the historic heights. Every time we go above those heights, it's at a cost. If the payment of that cost is to help save some of the heritage buildings, then I support it; but every time you're … increasing those heights, you're … affecting what's really special about Chinatown. (Oth 1)

This latter speaker went on to observe how the HAHR proposals nonetheless reflected successful navigation of these difficult waters:

> People in Chinatown have spent many hours over the last three years and worked out what I believe is an *honourable compromise* … It allows for modest increases in base heights and provides some opportunity for density to help pay for heritage conservation. (Oth 1; my emphasis)

Within these accounts, the speakers—an architect, an urban planner and members of local civil society and business association groups—can be heard to grapple with the entrepreneurial challenge that Harvey describes, namely how to retain or construct something special amidst

economic relations that favour both large corporations and the economically optimal formula of tall, dense development commodities.

In this way, while many speakers were primarily concerned about issues of affordability, attention to dynamics of capitalist materiality brings into view how a considerable proportion of hearing debate also reads as an assessment of the HAHR's merits as a uniqueness-tradability fix. What speakers generally did not debate, but often acknowledged or assumed, was that the unchecked tendencies of mainstream urban development did in fact pose a serious threat to Chinatown's unique built qualities. Accordingly, many were looking to the HAHR (and more generally, the City) to play a limiting and/or mediating role in the face of these dynamics. Support for the HAHR was often linked to its protective qualities (see, for instance comments by Oth 1, Supp 12, Supp 19, Supp 7, Coun 6, Oth 2). Speakers emphasized how the HAHR's proposed zoning and policy changes reflected only "moderate" height increases and were accompanied by "stringent," "strong," and "clear" design guidelines, as well as geographical restrictions (Supp 2; Supp 7; Supp 18). Additional comments reflected general support for municipal "control" (e.g., Oth 1; Supp 12; Opp 64) and "checks and balances" (Supp 7) within development processes. In one interesting exchange, a presenter and councillor agreed the HAHR's height increases were in fact "height limits" (Coun 6 to Supp 1). The hearings thus reflect a widespread sense that government invention was needed if Chinatown was to maintain its "delicate mix" of heritage and redevelopment and prevent its historic architecture from getting, as one speaker put it, "mucked up" (Opp 61).

4.4 "Spotlight on Civic Leadership": Creative Destruction and the Entrepreneurial We

But even as many speakers expressed support for municipal restrictions and protections against the tower-oriented aspirations of large developers, discussions of these interventions make it clear that achieving control over development processes is not so simple. Restriction of height was clearly necessary to prevent very tall towers, however some also expressed concern about over-regulation. One urban design professional warned,

> We can achieve high density with [built form] that is in keeping with the historic two- and four-storey building tradition of Chinatown … [But] my concern is that in an effort to stop gentrification, we tighten the screws too hard, and we cut all economic flow into neighbourhood, and that's bad too. (Opp 34)

Comments like this one make audible how certain actors perceive the need for Chinatown (despite its valuable historic qualities) to remain competitive and tradeable. Further, comments made by several councillors throughout the hearings illustrate how they were likewise concerned to ensure, not only that developers would build in the neighbourhood, but that they would build to maximum allowable heights; these councillors expressed worry that the requirement to rezone would deter developers from maximizing height potential. One councillor asked, "Is [the moderate height increase] enough of an incentive … for someone to actually go through the whole long process of getting those extra floors" (Coun 9 to Supp 12)? In response to the same question posed by a different councillor, a member of the City's planning department affirmed that requirements of developers had indeed been taken into account: "We did an economic analysis, had a consultant help … and they identified that there is viability in projects above 75 feet in Chinatown …" (Staff 1 to Coun 11). This latter councillor went on to ask at least four other times over the course of the hearings whether developers would go through "the trouble" or

"the effort" of a rezoning application to build to 120 or 150 feet (Coun 11). Their rationale for this line of questioning is made clear in the following statements:

> We're putting rezoning policy in place for a reason. We're putting it in place so that people will bring rezonings forward and if they're made too complicated … I'm worried that people [will] build the 90-foot buildings but they won't bring forward the bigger buildings that could have been produced through this rezoning policy (Coun 11; see also Coun 6).

These bigger buildings (of 12 or 15 storeys) were obviously not optimal from the perspective of preserving Chinatown's low-rise historic character, however building to these heights would require developers to apply for rezoning. Within rezoning processes, in exchange for granting additional development rights (usually extra height and density) to builders, City Hall could negotiate developers' payment of Community Amenities Contributions (CACs)—cash or in-kind contributions to public goods (such as park space, facilities, transportation infrastructure or affordable housing) (see City of Vancouver, n.d.-a).

At numerous other points throughout the hearings, each of these same councillors acknowledges the need to protect Chinatown's built heritage character. Nonetheless the above accounts demonstrate how such commitments to protecting character can be tempered by efforts to derive benefits from growth. In this way, as they contemplate the regulatory protection of Chinatown's character, councillors and others can be heard, collectively, to wrestle with an entrepreneurial double bind in which the City must simultaneously restrict and encourage new highrise developments. Such comments begin to make apparent how the City's role in Chinatown's redevelopment is not limited to that of protector or regulator in the face of market forces, but that the state is also an active player within these speculative dynamics of place; municipal powers of zoning are used not only to restrict, but also to facilitate and induce

particular kinds of (re)development in the hopes of gaining associated economic and social benefits.

The City's active and/or speculative role appeared to be widely recognized and supported by myriad speakers. In addition to many requests for investment in housing and resources to benefit local residents, presenters often called for the City to subsidize the kinds of heritage and commercial endeavours that would enhance Chinatown's special qualities of place, for instance heritage and rehabilitation incentives (Oth 1; Supp 19; Opp 38), concessions for small-lot development (Supp 22) and "Tax exemptions—all kinds" (Opp 68; see also Oth 1). This type of entrepreneurial negotiation is apparent throughout the hearings, as speakers appealed to Council for various forms of economic and/or revitalization investment and incentives, for instance, to "bring more people to live, work and play in the area" (Supp 1); "to make it attractive … for people to revitalize the area, for people to invest in … the area" (Oth 7); to attract "development projects [that] can also provide job… as well as business opportunities" (Supp 18) and generally, to let markets know they "mean business" (Opp 34, below).

Such calls are consistent with Harvey's observation of how the "laws of competition function as the enforcer rather than the determinant of the laws of motion of capital" (2012, p. 36); an array of speakers at the hearings (including city councillors, landowners and civic organizations) are already invested in Chinatown and/or its monopoly of place and thus cannot afford for these investments to be insolvent. Even representatives of the neighbourhood's cultural organizations, benevolent associations and affordable small businesses—who undoubtedly have personal, often altruistic ties to the neighbourhood and whose motives cannot be reduced to the pursuit of profit—nonetheless experience the pressures of competitive property

and consumer markets and thus (at least publicly) agree that some revitalization is necessary. As one representative of a Chinatown cultural institution put it,

> [Our organization] cannot afford to have Chinatown slip into deeper physical decay, we're obliged to support City policy that will allow the upgrading and renewal of the heritage buildings [and] streetscape. We're obliged to support a level of redevelopment that will make Chinatown welcoming to all Vancouver citizens and visitors. (Supp 15)

Other conversations make audible the significant ways in which the City was actively investing in the construction of Chinatown as a particular kind of place:

> [Opp 34:] When we say "Chinatown Revitalization" the markets want to know that we mean business. … Public investment in infrastructure and transportation will trigger incremental redevelopment by the private sector. … Revitalization puts the spotlight on civic leadership; the private sector is ill-equipped to meet this process.
>
> [Coun 5:] Are you aware of—I'm guessing—the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been spent on façade replacement … , street beautification? Carrall Street Greenway has been about a million dollars.

A second exchange—this one between the upscale heritage-designated Keefer Suites building owner and a councillor—is also telling:

> [Opp 61:] Keep this low-rise area with the existing character, and don't muck with it; don't wreck it.
>
> [Coun 6:] You received the $50,000 worth of facade grants and a heritage designation tax exemption for 10 years … $500,000 worth of tax exemption … that's an investment the City's made into your building.
>
> [Opp 61:] I was given those incentives to retain the building … I could have torn it down, I could have gone higher, I could have ripped down the wood windows … It was an uneconomic project and the only reason that building looks the way it does today is because I was given financial incentives to [preserve it].
>
> [Coun 6:] I've seen your building; it's quite nice. You know, the swimming pool on top and all that. It's quite fancy … You're the beneficiary of what some would say is gentrification.

As is reflected in the above exchanges, the creation of the built urban environment that must exist for profits to be made requires long-term and often massive financial outlays (Lees et al., 2008, p. 50). Further, the need to preserve Chinatown's historic character despite development dynamics which make heritage preservation, as the speaker above (and many others) indicated, "uneconomic" could only serve to exacerbate these investment demands. In these situations, as the first speaker notes "the private sector is ill-equipped to meet this process" (Opp 34). Lees, Slater and Wyly concur; in such cases, they state, the rent gap between a site's current and potential (economically optimal) value is

> often closed with heavy assistance and subsidy by government action—clearing old land uses through various forms of urban renewal, upgrading streets and other public infrastructure, and providing incentives for developers, new businesses or new middle-class residents … One common element across all of these variations is the fundamental structure of incentives in the capitalist city. (Lees et al., 2008, p. 54)

As these various speakers discuss strategies to navigate development pressures, they also make audible an entrepreneurial 'we' that does not fall neatly along lines of support or opposition for the HAHR; in the exchanges above, a variety of actors who are privy and/or subject to the demands of development weigh in on these discussions of strategy. This, states Harvey, is what urban growth [coalitions] are often all about: "the orchestration of investment process dynamics and the provision of key public investments at the right place and time to promote success in inter-urban and inter-regional competition" (2012, p. 102).

4.4.1 Creative destruction

However, while some speakers at the hearings saw promise in various kinds of development and place-centred civic investment, Harvey describes how such "innovative and

competitive responses" on the part of entrepreneurial urban actors has tended to make urban systems "more rather than less vulnerable to the uncertainties of rapid change" (1989, p. 11). The development logics that inspire and/or compel actors to pursue these entrepreneurial incentives and innovations often mean that each of these advantages lasts only until competing jurisdictions are also compelled to adapt, frequently by adopting similar strategies.

The comments of several speakers are illustrative of these warnings about the uncertain and/or short-term nature of such entrepreneurial initiatives. Vancouver's Chinatown, these speakers recalled, had been down this road before. Describing how previous 1995 revitalization incentives had produced the current zoning of 90 feet—an initiative they deemed "pretty much a failure"—one former business owner stated,

> Over the many years … city councillors have tried urban design consultation and redesign … so many times … So what do you do? You need to revise it [again]. So now we have 120 feet, 150 feet, etcetera … During the past, we already saw that 90 feet, it's not good enough; 120 to 150 feet is an experiment at this moment. (Oth 7)

Another speaker noted,

> Despite similar attempts in the past to revitalize Chinatown … attempts like the parkade construction … and the Millennium Gate, the Silk Road, the panda mascot initiative and the Memorial Square. The results … have not prevented the current belief that Chinatown needs revitalization. So the newest fix is … to entice people to buy a condo in Chinatown … But, will those new condo residents shop in those local stores? People who can buy a new condo in Chinatown certainly have … other options for shopping and they may well simply travel elsewhere. (Opp 5; see also Coun 5 to Oth 7)

The circular nature of capitalist urban development is thus apparent within the HAHR hearings as calls for investments and initiatives are revisited again … and again.

The effect, argues Harvey (1990, 2012) is one of "creative destruction": an ongoing cycle of depreciation, disinvestment, innovation, accumulation and overaccumulation, entailing

repeated bouts of urban restructuring. Such processes, he states, serve to further exacerbate instability and insecurity, compelling in part the kinds of repetitious waves of place-focused innovation, incentives and entrepreneurial activities that various speakers described. In this way, the hearings are suggestive of Harvey's description of the seemingly endless competitive pressures and demands placed on local coalitions as they attempt to attract highly flexible and mobile flows of capital within the global dynamics of interurban competition.

Attention to this material dimension of hearing debate thus reflects how (as many speakers stressed) common disagreements about Chinatown's heritage and "unique" character are inextricably mixed up with the pressures and contradictory requirements of capitalist materiality. The reading I have laid out in this chapter gives expression to Allman's (2007, p. 36) analysis of how the complex, spatially and temporarily disjointed and changing or moving nature of capitalist market relations renders divergent understandings plausible and reasonable; even seemingly contradicting accounts can be taken to reflect how neighbourhood changes were occurring in different forms, at different times, according to the site-by-site conditions and via the unique choices of various actors.

At the same time, myriad observations also suggest how the material logics that shape and mediate such changes are—while disjointed and confusing—far from arbitrary. Speakers on all sides of the debate conveyed understanding of how the competitive dynamics of Vancouver's urban land market entail various inducements which encourage (and sometimes require) actors' treatment of property in accordance with the formulaic logic of highest, best use. Further as speakers grappled with the widespread awareness of threats posed by the profit-maximizing tendencies of mainstream development to Chinatown's special qualities of place, they make audible the material contradiction between uniqueness and marketability. Taken together, this

array of knowledges offers considerable insight into the local, particular ways in which material logics of capitalist urban development seemed to be playing out in Vancouver's Chinatown at the time of the hearings.

Chapter 5: Bordering, Labelling, Bridging: Interrogating Knowing as Practice

Reading did not change me … it was not the idea which unsettled us; nor was it the condition of the worker, which we knew abstractly but which we had not experienced. No, it was the two joined together.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, p. 18)

While much of what is said offers insight into material dynamics and logics, the hearings also reflect speakers' *in vivo* discursive practices of meaning-making which occur relationally, as they react to comments made earlier. In this chapter, I begin to address what Sartre refers to as the progressive element of his method. In doing so, I draw especially from the formulations of Allman and Smith to critically examine recurring tensions in speakers' creative acts of public knowing.

Working from critiques offered by myriad speakers, I explore how certain portrayals of Chinatown as a distinct space or series of spaces (conceived in terms of planning boundaries, properties and businesses) that will remain affordable, obscure dynamics through which many places and people were in fact at risk. Hearing debate further underscores disjunctures wherein institutional texts and policies ostensibly represent but in fact largely misrepresent and overwrite residents' lived experiences of (un)affordability. Attention to tensions between accounts of Chinatown *in the world* and *in text* signals how institutional knowledges not only miss, but are also connected to, neighbourhood dynamics of insecurity and displacement.

5.1 "Where Those Lines are Currently": Chinatown as Protected Space

As I have noted (see Chapter 1), one of the central lines of tension in the HAHR hearings pertained to Council's January 2011 decision to "sever" the HAHR's Chinatown-related

proposals, referring these for consideration in the public hearings which are the focus of my study. This decision elicited contrasting responses from speakers, with debate hinging on dramatically different predictions about how this would play out in terms of affordability and displacement. Speakers on all sides acknowledged that Chinatown contained many affordable shops and was home to many vulnerable people; a range of presenters and councillors seemed in general agreement that such residents—particularly low-income seniors—should not be displaced. However, those opposed to the HAHR emphasized that this was precisely "where the proposed rezoning policy would lead" (Opp 66). Chinatown, stressed opponents, was an integral part of the broader neighbourhood that should never have been "chopp[ed] out" (Opp 2) or "carve[d] out" (Opp 10; Opp 38; Opp 45) for consideration in a separate planning process (see also Opp 44; Opp 18; Opp 8). In contrast, many HAHR supporters and several councillors expressed assurances that the neighbourhood's small businesses would remain and that the zoning changes could proceed because Chinatown's affordable housing was protected.

Exploring these opposing lines of argument as public discursive practice helps bring into relief how such assertions differ noticeably in their respective emphases on qualities of connection or separateness. In contrast to narratives of Chinatown as "integral" to the DTES, connotations of separateness were apparent, for instance, in common characterizations of the neighbourhood as a distinct space (or series of spaces). In reports and in hearing debate, Chinatown was often conveyed in terms of its zoned sub-areas or properties and associated lines, edges and boundaries (e.g., Staff 1; Coun 6; Supp 22; Opp 53; Opp 66); spatial terminology was often used to distinguish those from "within" Chinatown and those who were "neighbours," from "outside" and/or "from the Downtown Eastside." Myriad accounts of Chinatown's unique

qualities of place—its historic buildings, narrow lots and open-air grocers (see Chapter 4)—further conveyed the neighbourhood in terms of particular, differentiated space(s).

One variation of this spatialized thinking is apparent as certain councillors assessed Chinatown's supply of affordable housing on a property-by-property basis, designating particular places or buildings as protected. In an exchange with City planning staff, one councillor mused: "The West Hotel, 408 Carrall street. That's not in HA1A is it? … I think it's in HA1 so that … would only be an extra 10 feet [of allowable height increase] and so [it's] unlikely … to have a change" (Coun 6 to Staff 2). Later, the same councillor considered a different property, coming to a similar conclusion: "The Sun Ah Rooms, that's the old [Foo's] Ho Ho [restaurant]? … I don't think that building is going anywhere. For one thing, it's only a 25-foot lot" (Coun 6 to Supp 2). Another sought to confirm the protected status of the society-owned housing at the May Wah Hotel: "I just want to confirm that Shon Yee has no plans of ever reducing the number of rooms or selling the properties" (Coun 9 to Supp 14)? Later, a third councillor listed a series of predictions about certain historic buildings that could be considered safe from potential demolition:

> Foo's Ho Ho…, that building belongs to a Chinatown association, so it will be there. And the next building of course is the Chinese Benevolent Association built in 1909 and it will also be there. So, the next building is the Chinese Freemason building; it will also be there… And the next one… was bought by … an association and it will also be there. Now, the next building is the Chan Association and it will also be there. So, I can assure you that the whole street will be there. (Coun 2 to Opp 73)

At other points, this protected status is applied to the neighbourhood in general. One speaker stated, "There will be affordable and social housing [maintained in] present numbers. The Chinese community has always supported non-market and affordable housing within its community and will continue to do so" (Supp 6x2). Beginning on the first night of the hearings,

one councillor took note of City reports summarizing ownership and rent data on affordable housing in the area: "Just following up on the SRO stock in the affected area: So, there's … 470 some odd SRO spaces … I know a lot of them are various family associations" (Coun 9). Likewise, many speaking in support of the HAHR emphasized how societies' longstanding practice of providing affordable housing would ensure continued availability of affordable units:

> Chinatown is proud of its history of providing affordable housing and employment and food for members of its community, through the work of our benevolent and family associations … That's the mandate of these organizations and they intend to continue… that mandate for [the] membership. (Supp 1; see also Supp 2; Supp 12; Supp 13; Supp 14)

An April 8, 2011, memorandum produced and distributed by the City's Housing Policy staff on the fourth evening of hearings specified how some 45% of Chinatown's 465 SRO rooms were owned and operated by Chinese benevolent societies (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011). This statistic was, in turn, highlighted by several councillors (see Coun 6 to Supp 2; Coun 2 to Oth 1; Coun 9 to Opp 79). These society-owned SROs, presumed one, though old and run down, are "not likely for sale; this is a peculiarity of the Chinatown associations" (Coun 2 to Oth 1). Another councillor repeatedly responded to speakers' concerns about affordable housing by suggesting and eventually concluding that the presence of benevolent associations more or less exempted Chinatown from concerns about displacement:

> Ordinarily I would wonder about gentrification as people have laid it out, but do you think that one of the differences [from] other parts of the city, is the fact that we do have these associations? (Coun 9 to Opp 49)

> We've also heard from the Chinatown community, which owns at least 50% of the social housing, that they have no intention of changing [this number of units]. (Coun 9 to Opp 79)

> Yeah, [there are] lots of international examples of when you start to build taller buildings and all that, there is certainly a problem of gentrification … But the *one big difference* ... the one thing that wasn't in any of those studies or any other example that I could find, was the willingness, one, of the Chinese community to

> include everybody in their future. And secondly …, the *unique* situation here is the family associations own roughly half of the social housing and they said very clearly they want to keep it … So, I'm very happy to support the staff recommendations. (Coun 9 decision statement; my emphasis)

Taken together, such narratives reflect various ways in which Chinatown was grasped and conveyed in terms of distinct kinds of space(s) which could be treated independently and/or differently relative to the broader area. In several of the cases above, this distinction was linked to the (potentially racialized) differentness of the "Chinese community" (see also chapters 7 and 8). Though many speaking in support of the HAHR proposals undoubtedly valued linkages with neighbouring areas—a sentiment reflected in the 2002 Chinatown Vision—in the context of the hearings, support for the HAHR had become linked to an emphasis on Chinatown's separateness. On the final evening of hearings, one City planner stated: "Each of the areas in the Downtown Eastside has its own unique planning issues and policies that will be considered as that planning process evolves" (Staff 4). In response to repeated concerns about the separate consideration of Chinatown, one councillor countered, "Even within that map [of the entire historic district], there are sub-lines that draw the line distinctly around Chinatown … and that's where those lines are currently" (Coun 6 to Opp 31).

5.1.1 "What about the other 4,498?" Relational critiques

While references to Chinatown's many affordable units highlight the important commitments and accomplishments of Chinatown organizations, in many cases they also suggest patterns of conceptual practice through which significant considerations are missed. During the hearings, critiques expressed by HAHR opponents elucidate how, as various spatialized divisions and distinctions were enlisted in public support of the HAHR, they often implied divisions in

thinking about the relational dynamics within which neighbourhood change in Chinatown is embedded. Through repeated designation of certain properties as protected and the take-up of neighbourhood boundaries as kind of horizon beyond which other places are not grasped as "affected" (Coun 9, above), the public narratives of councillors and others both assume and obscure broader dynamics within which many places and people in the area were, in fact, at risk.

5.1.1.1 Absent spaces

In response to characterizations of Chinatown's housing as protected, speakers shared analyses and examples to highlight how the material effects of taller buildings would not stop at particular property lines, or at the edges of Chinatown. Many stressed how "changes to any part of the Downtown Eastside affects the whole community" (Opp 18; see also Opp 19; Opp 36; Opp 38; Opp 39). One speaker pointed to development effects that were already underway nearby, for instance wherein "condo development in the Victory Square area has shown that as new condo market developments are built, they put upward pressure on rental rates which displaces low-income tenants" (Opp 66).

In particular, like the low-income resident who described having their rent "jacked up" "because of Woodward's" (Chapter 4), many speakers emphasized how that recent (2010) development was acting as a "beach head" (as Davidson and Lees (2005) have put it) from which gentrifying changes were spreading throughout the area. Its impacts, speakers stressed, were moving outwards from Woodward's Hastings street location in a "ripple effect" (Opp 30; Opp 64). Rent increases (both commercial and residential), retail changes, conversions of cheap hotels to higher end rentals (or, "renovictions") and hotel closures were all described as happening "around" and "because of" Woodward's (Opp 4; Opp 51; Opp 64; see also Opp 16;

Opp 34). Citing literature on rising rents and displacement in New York City, one low-income resident predicted "that is what is happening around the Woodward's building and that is what the HAHR will promote, I believe" (Opp 30, citing Newman & Wyly, 2005).

Based on this appreciation of how market impacts tend to spill over across properties and through neighbourhoods (see Chapter 4) several speakers went on to highlight places and people that were conspicuously absent within councillors' public assessments of protected space. One speaker pointed to a string of privately owned low-income and SRO buildings which—though most were outside the planning boundaries for Chinatown—were all situated within three blocks of the proposed HA1A Main Street sites for taller towers. Deliberations on the HAHR proposals, emphasized the speaker, should consider

> not just Chinatown—within the arbitrary borders that are drawn—but the spaces that are going to be impacted by the gentrification of Chinatown, including … the Station Street Hotel and the Thornton Park Hotel and the Cobalt Hotel and the Ivanhoe Hotel [and] also including the Pacific Rooms and the Keefer Rooms. (Opp 3x2)

In response to one councillor's repeated focus on social housing projects and especially on society-owned units, another speaker drew on personal experience to emphasize, "We're not just talking about social housing, we're also talking about the private market housing that's affordable for people, like the kind of housing that I landed in" (Opp 79 to Coun 9). Others drew on the oft-quoted statistic on society ownership to instead draw attention to its unacknowledged mirror image. One noted,

> My understanding is that only about half of the SROs in Chinatown are run by the great people at the societies. The question is what happens—as opportunities [come] for selling land at higher prices—what happens to all the people in the other SROs that may be sold out from under them? (Opp 31)

"Consider," stated another, "that … only half of the privately-owned hotel rooms are owned by societies. Half" (Opp 64). Such analyses shift the emphasis of discussion from those neighbourhood places which could be written-off as "protected" to those that were vulnerable:

> So, what's going to happen to the rents in the SROs, especially if there's hundreds of units that aren't owned by societies …? Some say that heritage buildings will keep developers from assembling big lots [for] the condo towers. I've got this map here of the heritage buildings. [*Speaker unfolds and displays map.*] There's a lot of them on Pender, but there's only one on Keefer and one on East Georgia. It's not enough to keep big land assemblies from happening. (Opp 4)

In this way, various presenters sought to disrupt patterns of selective logic through which certain pro-revitalization arguments appeared to miss consideration of hundreds of housing units that did not fit the unifying designation of affordable housing in Chinatown as protected; namely, those units which were owned by private individuals or companies who had no charitable mandate to keep them affordable. Referring to an earlier exchange between a councillor and two speakers who lived in social housing, another low-income area resident stated: "It's great for those two ladies to have guaranteed [housing]. But what about the other 4998?[22] … Those people need housing [too]" (Opp 51). Via such comments, presenters repeatedly emphasized how seemingly selective assessments of Chinatown's affordable housing stock in part form the basis from which it becomes possible to effect the conceptual trade-off of some buildings—and some people—for others. In doing so, they also draw attention to the unmentioned-but-assumed economic backdrop against which only particular properties, buildings and people could be conveyed as protected.

[22] Here, the speaker is presumably referring to the oft-quoted statistic that approximately 5,000 of the Downtown Eastside's 10,000 affordable housing units were (at the time of hearing) market-rate SROs.

5.1.1.2 Markets as shifting ground

Other critical exchanges highlight how not even these apparently protected spaces could be unproblematically reified as safe. As the hearings wore on, several speakers clarified how even rents in certain kinds of protected units could increase based on the rising market value of other housing in the neighbourhood. One Chinatown resident stated,

> I just wanted to make sure that people know that even though our subsidies are provided through BC Housing, that's in no way rent controlled because our rents are actually set to local economic rents, which is assessed every three years. So, in the Lore Krill Housing Co-op, if prices go up in the neighbourhood, our rents stand also to go up. (Opp 44)

Others reinforced this point, stressing how social housing and co-op tenancies were impacted by area dynamics as well as fluctuations in tenants' incomes: "Co-op housing charges are dependent on area market rents. Those go up, property taxes go up, so do our co-op's expenses" (Opp 75; see also Opp 20; Opp 28; Opp 51; Oth 5).

Other speakers emphasized how even those units owned by benevolent societies or other community-minded owners could not be guaranteed to remain affordable in the face of changing neighbourhood conditions. Though it is not possible to predict the conditions within which societies and other owners might find themselves acting in the future, there were many reasons to expect that, as one speaker put it, the HAHR proposals "would see the ground change under [organizations'] feet": "Even if [a society] maintains … [its SRO building], the cost of renovating it are going to continue to climb. It is an increasingly expensive endeavour" (Opp 3).

In this way, some speakers underscored how the frequent designation of society-owned units as protected failed to acknowledge the pervasive market dynamics within which benevolent societies and other actors are subject to the uncertainties and pressures of urban property markets. Recurring tendencies to disregard such dynamics are especially surprising given the

regularity with which market pressures were discussed throughout the hearings, for instance, as society representatives detailed deteriorating condition of buildings, a dearth of government funding, difficulty attracting commercial tenants and "offers from developers seeking to purchase" (Supp 13; see Chapter 4). One society representative agreed that such dynamics amounted to an uncertain future:

> Would relaxation of height revitalize Chinatown? … There's no guarantee. … We have no plan, of course, to reduce the 123 units. Even if we go ahead and … make the building more livable … we don't know … We need help … we're looking at a few million dollars and it's a bit of a roadblock right now. (Supp 14)

As the bookstore volunteer described in their account of how that small, non-profit, business had been forced to move—despite wanting to remain in the neighbourhood and despite having the support of community networks (see Chapter 4)—increasing costs could make the situation for such organizations untenable:

> We had to move from the block … where the store started … because … the speculation increased the property taxes that our landlord was paying. And like most commercial leases you pay a chunk of the property taxes as part of your commercial lease; you pay the expenses on the building as part of your commercial lease. So, even though your actual rent might not go up, the cost of your lease goes up. (Opp 12)

Based on this example, the same speaker stressed how it was problematic for councillors to assume that "just because the SRO buildings are owned by family associations … somehow that isn't going to affect people" (Opp 12).

5.1.2 "More people, more business": The questionable promise of commercial mix

The account offered by the bookstore volunteer signals how debates about the continued viability of Chinatown's small businesses can also be explored in terms of discursive practice and problematic notions of differentiated space(s). This is particularly apparent in a series of

comments in which presenters offered assurances of affordability that were rooted in predictions of an ongoing retail mix. In response to concerns about the loss of Chinatown's existing affordable shops, several speakers argued neighbourhood stores would "continue to serve all of Chinatown's residents of all backgrounds" (Supp 2x2; see also Supp 8; Supp 15; Supp 20). In response to the question, "Do you still think that shops of all different price ranges would still be able to be established [and] co-exist … despite with the height change?" one speaker replied,

> I do. Chinatown, I guess is what, six square blocks? … I think there's room for stores of all kinds… [T]he residential population in Chinatown is diverse and [there is a] share of low income, working poor as well as … market condos, so I think there will be stores always to support that segment of the population. (Supp 7 to Coun 9)

In other accounts, speakers expressed similar understandings of how this commercial mix was likely to play out in Chinatown and its environs. A representative of Chinatown's Business Improvement Association (BIA) stated that "a broader group of residents ultimately means a wider diversity of goods and services for local and regional consumers," and offered a simple summary of what this would mean for local merchants: "More people, more business" (Supp 8). Another presenter offered a similar outlook:

> [Chinatown will include] a variety of businesses; it'll be able to include old and new. … [The HAHR] shouldn't, it wouldn't [affect the adjacent Downtown Eastside]. I'm sure if there's business to be done, there will be businesses to serve them. (Supp 7x2)

Taken together, these accounts convey neighbourhood retail mix in terms of a general logic of supply and-demand, wherein the continued presence of low-income residents would constitute an ongoing source of demand for affordable shops. However, as in characterizations of Chinatown's affordable housing as protected, these accounts of commercial *mix* reflect discursive logics of abstraction in which neighbourhood businesses are divorced from the

complex material and social relations in which they are embedded. First, grasped in relation to the previous chapter's exploration of market dynamics (and particularly the competitive logic of highest, best use), a narrow focus on consumer demand can be understood to miss a myriad of dynamics related to increasing costs of doing business in the neighbourhood. As the bookstore volunteer indicates (above) and as one local commentator penned at the time of the hearings, small businesses in Chinatown "often have a triple net lease arrangement, meaning that they have to pay the property tax as part of their lease cost" (Yiu, 2011). Based on his interviews with B.C. Assessment officials, the same author speculates about the HAHR's potential implications for Chinatown property owners and merchants:

> Although … many of the properties collect low rents and the merchants' business was slow, such difficulties had little effect on their property assessment … because… properties [nearby] were sold at high prices … Once the city relaxes the building height limitation, even if there are no immediate transactions, the assessed property value of buildings in Chinatown would still go up. As a result, so will property tax. Those who would be affected are not only property owners, but their tenants, as well. The impact of this affects both small business operators and community associations who might have their clubhouses in Chinatown. (Yiu, 2011)

Second, oppositional perspectives signal how general notions of commercial mix fail to convey how old and new businesses do not simply "co-exist" (Coun 9, above), but interact within competitive relations of place. With the arrival of entrepreneurs, boutiques, galleries, tourists and other elements of heightening neighbourhood cachet, existing small businesses can suddenly find themselves competing in a different league. Read together with Chinatown's attractive locational and built qualities, the dramatic changes conveyed at the hearings are consistent with an impending heightening of demand for Chinatown storefronts, which would enable building owners to increase rates and award leases to the highest bidder. In fact, this was

precisely how some hoped to improve their difficult financial circumstances, as one manager of a society-owned heritage building explained:

> More residents in the area … means… more business for the shops that we have below, and in turn, hopefully then we can slowly charge higher rents than we do now. And with the higher rents from a commercial unit, then we can have more money to upkeep the residential units upstairs. That's our plan. (Supp 14; see also Supp 2)

These foreseeable competitive increases in rent, agreed a councillor and another presenter, would be nonetheless be agreeable to small businesses because "if businesses made more money they'd be happy to pay more rent I guess" (Coun 9 to Supp 8).

But in the context of such changes, not all enterprises can compete equally. An influx of wealthier shoppers is associated with commercial turnover to shops catering to new consumers' tastes, tastes which (as Bourdieu (e.g., 1979) has long ago demonstrated) cannot be dissociated from class. While the competitive dynamics of capital can favour monopolies and national chains, individualized rather than mass consumption can also be implicated in waves of retail change. In their study of four inner city neighbourhoods in Sydney, Bridge and Dowling (2001, as cited in Lees et al.) observed restaurant eating as a key commercial change. Likewise, Ley notes that "hippy" retailing played a role in the gentrification of Vancouver's Kitsilano "as pioneer gentrifiers sought craft shops that were anti-mass merchandise" (1996, as cited in Lees et al., 2008, p. 131).

As new condos developed, low-end grocery and retailers would be not just mixed together with—but would be *competing* for customers and for space against—more lucrative businesses geared (whether through "favourite … brands" or boutique claims of distinction) towards the incomes and tastes of much wealthier shoppers. As in the case of SRO landlords, owners of existing low-end shops could hardly expect to mark up prices in order to squeeze more

revenue out of elderly and/or poor customers whose meagre pension, disability and welfare benefits had been (with some minor fluctuations) steadily declining for decades (see, e.g., Tweddle, Battle, & Torjman, 2014). Where they may have once benefited from an absence of demand for retail space, small businesses selling food and necessities at welfare rates were now increasingly in competition with businesses that could "sell haircuts for $50 and up, the stores that sell a bar of soap for $15 … the cafes where tea is over $3 a cup" (Opp 4). With examples such as these, numerous speakers repeatedly critiqued assertions of affordability that seemed reliant on atomized and decontextualized versions of neighbourhood space. One speaker warned that "the small businesses in small cheap buildings in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside are likely to be the first victims of gentrification" (Opp 31). These businesses, the same speaker later explained, "have already very small margins in their operations." This myriad of dynamics through which small businesses would be forced to not simply co-exist, but *compete*, were emphasized by numerous speakers throughout the hearings (see, e.g., Opp 20; Opp 21; Opp 25; Opp 32; Opp 48; Opp 66; Opp 67; Opp 75.)

5.2 "Empty Words": Chinatown on Paper and on the Ground

Many challenges to narratives of Chinatown's space(s) as separate and/or disconnected also entailed a recurring theme of critique wherein speakers highlighted discrepancies between the neighbourhood as it is represented in City policies and as it was experienced within their day-to-day lives. This criticism is especially apparent, for instance, as certain speakers reference the HAHR's "arbitrary borders" and "artificial lines" (Opp 3x2; Opp 3x4). Another stated, "Just because you draw lines on a map, it doesn't mean that Chinatown is magically no longer part of the Downtown Eastside. It is" (Opp 12). Several drew on personal histories to illustrate how

labels and borders could be imposed in ways that bolstered problematic truths and false divisions. One speaker recounted,

> When I first got involved … [in community issues] in 1980 in the Downtown Eastside… there was no Downtown Eastside, really. Planners and past councils called it the "Central Business District" and people who didn't like it and had stereotypical views called it "skid road". And there were many years that I was involved that we tried to rename [it] … so that it would be seen as a place where actual *people* lived … We saw… the continual erosion of hundreds and then thousands of … SROs … I saw the area carved up and bogus boundaries drawn, with the promises that there would be no impact on the Downtown Eastside. And we all have seen what has happened … We didn't have boundaries between who we were; there was no South Chinatown. We were all in this together. (Opp 72; speaker's emphasis)

A second speaker, who had grown up in and around Chinatown, stated to councillors,

> We're a community, we're a whole community … Not the Chinatown [community] and not the Oppenheimer Park [community]. I was born across the street from Oppenheimer Park, you know … We are one big community. Not just Chinatown. Not just Maclean Park … [*speaker motions side to side to depict separate locations*] I know the docks; I used to live on Kaslo and Pandora [streets]. I've lived all over the place … and I don't understand why we have to be segregated … You guys are kinda making Chinatown "over there." [*motions to side*] I don't like that. It hurts me … I want you to listen to us, please. We want to be a community. We don't want Chinatown "here" and we don't want Oppenheimer "here." We want a community, a good community. So we can all be one. (Opp 54)

Another presenter, speaking immediately after two elderly Chinatown residents, rose to the microphone and stated, "Those are my neighbours. I live in Strathcona and I consider those people my neighbours" (Opp 43).

Through such accounts, speakers illustrate how the borders and categories that define the area as a series of discrete spaces do not simply exist as fact, but have been produced through praxis. In doing so, they argue against practices of knowing that Allman (2001, p. 52, following Marx) calls mechanical materialism, wherein knowledge is taken to be objective and simply acquired through empirical observation. Further, these accounts emphasize how such

designations do not necessarily correspond to embodied knowledges, meanings and uses that are formed, for instance, as local people go about their daily lives: shopping on an adjacent street, volunteering at nearby organizations, moving apartments, or meeting friends at a local park. As in speakers' emphases on the affordable units rendered absent within City accounts, such descriptions convey how these lived realities (may exist in relation to, but) are not defined by the kinds of official neighbourhood boundaries that are reflected in City policies.

As speakers highlight the disjuncture between idea-based, administrative versions of the neighbourhood (e.g., as "artificial"), and their everyday understandings of the Downtown Eastside (e.g., as "one"), they evoke Smith's theorization of textually mediated social organization (see Chapter 2) wherein engagement with institutional texts arranges practices of knowing and being according to the relevancies of institutions and other power-bearing bodies. Likewise, Blomley (2004) discusses mapping as a form of (textual) knowing through which particular narratives of space are privileged and produced. In mapping, states Blomley, "cartographic space is emptied of the complexities and particularities that give it meaning on the ground" (2004, p. 68). In describing their everyday ties to Chinatown's people and places, speakers called into question the text-based representations of the neighbourhood "on a map" which are taken up in discourse to convey some parts—and some members—of their personal, relational community as "affected" and others as outside and/or irrelevant—as not "where those lines are currently" (on page 134, above).

5.2.1 "There are conversion controls… in place": Policy-based promises and critiques

This emphasis on the difference between conceptual (often text-based) and lived understandings of the neighbourhood is particularly evident within another aspect of debate

about affordability: While many characterizations of Chinatown's affordable housing as protected were rooted in the charitable commitments of Chinatown societies, many also had their basis in various City policies, in particular the 2005 Downtown Eastside Housing Plan (City of Vancouver, 2005), the Single Room Accommodation (SRA) By-Law[23] and the goal of "1 for 1 replacement of SRO units with better quality non-profit housing," which generally fall within the City's adopted Downtown Eastside planning philosophy of "Revitalization without Displacement" (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, pp. 10, 2). These policies were frequently cited as rationale that the HAHR proposals could proceed without adverse effects to low-income housing units. Various speakers emphasized how the "the current City housing policy protects the existing housing stock in Chinatown" (Supp 5; see also Oth 1). "There are conversion controls clearly in place," stated one councillor (Coun 9 to Opp 34). On the final night of the hearings, a staff member reminded those present that "we do have the SRA Bylaw still … it doesn't preclude landlords just deciding to not rent out those units, but [we have] some control … to make sure that, [for] any units that are redeveloped, the SRA units are replaced" (Staff 4). One speaker summed up the situation as follows:

> The protection of SRA housing is entrenched in our City polity and protected by various initiatives by all the three levels of government … [In] the … planning department report dated March 2009 … it was reported on page 10 … , under "Accomplishments," that between 2003 and early 2008 the one-for-one SRO replacement goal is very close to being achieved. (Supp 5)

This latter speaker is referencing a City of Vancouver backgrounder, entitled 10 Years of Revitalization in the DTES, which is appended to the January 2010 HAHR Conclusions and Recommendations report (as Appendix A). As the speaker indicates, excerpts from the report

[23] Vancouver's SRA Bylaw prevents owners of designated SRO buildings from demolishing these low-rent rooms or converting them to another use without approval from the City (see City of Vancouver, n.d.-f).

affirm that the City is on track to accomplish various affordability objectives, such as maintaining a stable number of low-income units in the DTES through acquiring and upgrading hotels, among other actions.[24]

The April 8, 2011, Housing Policy Memorandum provided further information and an update on Housing Plan objectives as these related to Chinatown in the context of the HAHR. Excerpts from this memo state,

> The intent of the [DTES Housing] plan is to maintain 10,000 units of low-income housing, increasing the quality of these units over time through 1-for-1 replacement of SROs with social housing. … Recent data from mid-2010 shows that market housing completions have occurred at a faster rate than projected by the Plan, we are only 200 units away from the 2014 projection level. Non-market unit completions have also occurred at a faster rate than expected, we are nearly 600 units ahead of the 2014 projection level. (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011, pp. 1, 2)

Taken together, these various documents—while noting caveats—give the impression that, overall, affordable housing in the area is being maintained at the steady level of approximately 10,000 units. But in contrast to these claims, many other speakers asserted that the apparent protection of units, as represented on paper, failed to acknowledge the actual[25] dynamics through

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[24] The backgrounder states, for instance, "In terms of low-incomehousing, contrary to what many believe, the number of low-incomeunits in the DTES has not changed significantly." (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 6)
• Between 2003 and early 2008, the 1 for 1 SRO replacement goal is very close to being achieved, and looking forward to the end of 2010 will be more than met …
• The City is meeting its target of acquiring at least 1 affordable housing site per year.
• The City is contributing $5 million to the Province to assist with the upgrading of 10 SRO hotels. Since 2007 the Province has purchased 17 SRO hotels and the City has purchased 2 hotels, securing close to 1,100 units. Renovations are underway.
• The SRA Bylaw was adopted in 2003 to control the rate of loss of SRO rooms. (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 10)

[25] D. E. Smith (1999) uses the term "actual" to direct the reader's attention towards activities and experiences that exist outside of texts, as opposed to the "textual representation" of peoples' practices.

which affordability was threatened. In particular, one CCAP member provided a clear and detailed critique:

> The staff memo that you have is an attempt, from our point of view, to basically say that "social housing is gonna be okay so you don't need mechanisms that control the rate of [neighbourhood] change and it's okay to encourage market housing." We disagree with that and think that the facts are on our side. The… memo says, quote, "To date we have maintained a higher number of SROs than anticipated and have achieved a greater number of non-market units in the area than originally projected" … But the only way this can be claimed is if the provincially owned SROs are counted as replacement housing and if rent increases in the privately-owned hotels are ignored. At CCAP and the DNC we don't count the provincially owned SROs as SRO replacements because they *are* SROs. They aren't self-contained as the *Housing Plan* calls for, or earthquake proofed, and they are still lousy housing. CCAP's last hotel report showed that only 12% of privately owned SROs rent for the welfare shelter rate and hundreds are renting for over $500 a month. Now if you'd look, even the chart in the April memo has rents on it for 6 hotels and 5 out of 6 of them—some of which are societies—have rents increasing just in the last year. And one of them for which you don't have rent, 228 Pender, is advertising on *Craigslist*… for students, at $650 to $700 a month. (Opp 4; speakers' emphasis. See also Opp 64)

5.2.1.1 "Replacement," rent increases and renoviction

In this detailed account, this speaker points out numerous discrepancies between administrative and experienced versions of housing availability which are also echoed by other speakers at the hearings. One of these disconnects relates to the City's apparent characterization of publicly purchased SROs as "replacement" low-income housing. As this speaker points out, the area's SRO units were not only often poorly maintained but were incredibly small—e.g., 10 feet by 10 feet—with no kitchen or bathroom, meaning that residents had to share cooking facilities and use common bathrooms. These cramped living conditions are widely recognized by the City, residents and advocacy groups as failing to meet basic standards of dignity and safety. Not only does lack of access to cooking facilities impede residents' abilities to prepare affordable

and healthy food, but as CCAP has noted in its 2012 SRO Hotel Report, these conditions can be unsafe for women. By way of example, the report quotes one woman resident of a local SRO who stated,

> When women leave their rooms at night to [use] the common bathroom we wonder if there is a man behind our door. We wonder if there is a man in the bathroom. And when we come back we wonder if there is a man waiting for us in our rooms. We feel locked up in our own rooms. (Cited in Swanson & Drury, 2013, p. 20; see also Ravn, 2015, pp. 108-109)

In recognition of these conditions, City policy states that the City's intent is not only to "maintain 10,000 units of low-income housing in the Downtown Eastside" but also "to increase its quality over time. SROs are to be replaced with new self-contained social housing for singles" (City of Vancouver, 2005, p. 5). As an interim measure, the Province of British Columbia with funds from the City, had announced the purchase of a number of SRO hotels which were being improved through renovation. However, as speakers emphasized, the purchase of existing SROs was a stop-gap measure and did not constitute the replacement of these units with self-contained social housing units that met safety standards relating to earthquake-resistance, among other things. Speakers' critiques illustrate how this overlooked and seemingly inconsequential question of definitions—the meaning of the word "replacement" as it is written into city policies and reports—translated, on the ground, to significant discrepancies in the conditions of health and safety experienced by differing groups of tenants.

Further, many speakers stressed how the City's policy-based characterizations of SRO units as protected failed to account for the actual practices through which low-income units were being lost. Housing advocates had for years been raising concerns about how the City's SRA Bylaw was failing to prevent significant rent increases in SROs throughout the area, in part because of numerous loopholes which rendered it ineffective:

> Rather than applying to council for a permit, and possibly paying the $15,000.00 per room conversion fee, some landlords buy out their low-income tenants, issue illegal eviction notices, intimidate tenants into leaving and/or refuse to rent to anyone other than students or working professionals. Because rooms are not being rented at a nightly or weekly rate, and are not being demolished, these conversion[s] are not covered by the *[SRA] Conversion By-Law*. Having removed low-income tenants, landlords can then raise the rental rates of the rooms to above what most low-income individuals can afford, often charging upwards of $800-$900 for SRO style accommodations. (Pivot, n.d., p. 2)

Many of those speaking in opposition to the HAHR referenced well-known instances of renoviction or soft conversion to affirm and detail how these various loopholes were impacting tenants in particular buildings. "We already know," emphasized one CCAP volunteer, "that the rents in hundreds of housing units around Woodward's are escalating [from] three, to four, to five, to six hundred dollars a month" (Opp 4). These increases, stated a representative of the DNC, speak to "the absolute dismal failure of the SRA Bylaw and the 1 for 1 [replacement policy]" (Opp 3). Similar observations were repeated:

> Condo towers will increase property values and push up rents in hotels that are adjacent—but not in—Chinatown, like the Cobalt or the Lotus that's now just brought by Mr. Lippman[26] who owns the American [hotel]; now it's under threat. (Opp 64)

> One of the councillors suggested that Pender street would be safe from gentrification forces because they wouldn't build up, but building up is not the only thing that causes evictions. The overall improvement of the area and the draw [for] people who have higher incomes and are willing to live in small places [while] paying more, is enough—as we've seen—to drive low-income people out and replace them with students or workers. (Opp 3)

Further, CCAP's SRO hotel survey data, collected a few months following the hearings during the summer of 2011, provides a stark confirmation of the kinds of blatant discrimination

[26] Local developer Stephen Lippman is well known for the purchase and upscaling of Downtown Eastside SROs (see, e.g., Bula, 2013; Sasagawa, 2014).

faced by low-income tenants. The report describes how, at the newly purchased Lotus Hotel (referenced by a speaker, above),

> a low-income Aboriginal DTES resident was told rent was $800 a month, and that there were no vacancies. A white university student was told by the same manager on the same day that rent was $675, and that a room would be available at the end of the month. (Drury & Swanson, 2011, p. 6)

The same report describes how at another SRO, the New Columbia,

> a low-income DTES resident was told that there was no space available, and that rent was $800 a month anyhow. If he wanted to share a room then it would cost another $200. A student researcher was told by the same desk clerk on the same day that he could get on a "student waitlist," and that students get "a special student rate" of $600 that isn't offered to "neighbourhood people." (Drury & Swanson, 2011, p. 6)

In addition to recurring racist and discriminatory practices favouring students, CCAP's volunteer researchers found "at least four hotels where … surveyors were told they do not rent to women" (Drury & Swanson, 2011, p. 6).

Based on these illegal but nonetheless ongoing practices through which the actual accessibility of units was eroded despite the existence of official protections, speakers repeatedly challenged policy-based guarantees that housing was protected and would be into the future. The DNC speaker emphasized how the city's SRA Bylaw only applied to designated buildings; omitted from this policy's gaze were the 120-odd residents of "places like the Fan Tower and the East Hotel which are not recognized by the City as low-income housing projects, but are places where low-income families, almost exclusively, live" (Opp 3x2). Another speaker pointed to the practical inadequacies of the City's now-stalled density transfer program: "I'd suggest [the Chinatown societies] investigate how well the Transfer of Density policy worked for the historic Pantages Theatre on Hastings; the demolition permit was issued last week" (Opp 38x2). A similar point was emphasized by the speaker who underscored how the HAHR's failure to

account for material pressures rendered its policy statements about heritage rehabilitation a set of meaningless "empty words" (Opp 66, Chapter 4). Two other speakers conveyed this disjuncture between envisioned and actual dynamics by distinguishing between the City's "models," "promise[s]" and "aims" versus the "evidence" and/or what had actually been "achieved" (Opp 16, Opp 79). "[T]he Golden Crown [Hotel]," stated one Chinatown resident, "was promised to be women and children's housing and now is 280-square-foot units on Craigslist for 650 bucks" (Opp 16).

In this way, critiques expressed at the hearings highlight a range of ways in which existing City policies were woefully inadequate in protecting low-income housing and community spaces. Further, as speakers detail how policy-based protections fail to address residents' lived experiences of insecurity, they can also be heard to critique policy discourses which are idealist and abstracted from the embodied understandings of low-income people. Taken together, these various critiques thus reflect how what appears on one level to be a clash of facts, experiences, or interests is also a clash of different (e.g., experiential versus official or policy-based) modes of knowing.

5.2.2 "That's the displacement you label revitalization": The politics of knowing

5.2.2.1 Misrepresentation

Read in terms of this tension, these and other critiques further highlight how administrative plans and policies not only failed to result in intended safeguards but also failed to convey reality as experienced by the area's low-income residents. As they detail this disjuncture, speakers offer insights which are consistent with Smith's critique of ideological knowing (see Chapter 2). Official policies and concerns, articulated in terms of units of neighbourhood

space—for instance, tallies of SRO rooms or storefront vacancies—reflected abstract, general categories that missed the particular and relational dynamics that were central to residents' everyday lives.

In one illustration, a speaker referenced the case of Chinatown's historic Wing Sang building which had recently been purchased and restored by wealthy condo marketer Bob Rennie and accorded heritage status. While the restoration of the Wing Sang—reportedly the neighbourhood's oldest building—could be officially and publicly heralded as a heritage preservation and revitalization success, for the area's majority low-income residents, the building's protection was lived out as exclusion:

> It's not just about raising heights. Bob Rennie was… able to rob [the Wing Sang building] from the community [and prevent] the community from having access … creating it as a Zone of Exclusion without raising the height. He was able to do it just by turning it into a private art gallery that he alone owns. (Opp 3)

As in this speaker's account, numerous speakers emphasized how many new businesses that had cropped up in the area could be understood as *Zones of Exclusion*: spaces both economically and socially inaccessible to low-income residents.[27] Understood in terms of the City's policy concerns, such changes could be documented as neighbourhood improvements, as contributing to established municipal planning objectives such as "increasing new business opportunities and filling vacant storefronts" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 13). But, when neighbourhood changes are grasped and described specifically (versus in general terms of business opportunities and storefronts), the question—and the characteristics—of who will and

27 The term "Zones of Exclusion" reflects the analysis of a Downtown Eastside group who have documented such spaces throughout the neighbourhood (DNC Action Committee, n.d.). I discuss this further in the next chapter.

will not have access to these places is made quite clear. Existing new-build developments in the area, observed one speaker, feature

> retail components such as… *Toujours Boutique and Gallery*, *Bling Sculptured Nails*, *Wagababa Pet Shop* and—my personal favourite—an emporium called the *Dog Republic Grooming and Self Service Dog Wash*. These are [the kinds of stores that] may soon emerge … In the 600-block of Main Street where one of these [15 storey] proposals has been suggested, are a number of hair salons—fixtures for many years—patronized mainly by Chinese customers with low to moderate incomes. Nearby is *Tosi Italian Foods* which … has existed there for 100 years …These are but a few of the enterprises that will be at risk of being supplanted by hipster bistros selling $9 crantinis. Right now, you [can] get a $9 haircut. (Opp 10; see also Opp 74; Opp 25)

Speaking directly to how such changes were portrayed in official planning policies, one speaker stated, "That's the displacement you label revitalization" (Opp 74).

Other critiques signal how administrative documentation of the area's low-income units obscures the contradictory and (for many residents) lived nature of SRO units as simultaneously appalling and necessary. As in the April 8 Housing Policy memo, official accounts of the area's housing stock and mix—construed in terms of tables and columns depicting numbers of low-income units—fail to convey drastic differences in the quality of housing experienced by residents, for instance, in buildings where "neighbours keep their doors open" (Opp 70; see Chapter 6) versus other buildings described as a "cesspool" or "slum" (Opp 62) or where "the rooms are 10 by 10 [feet] and have more than one, two, three people living in them" (Opp 27). With these particularities obscured, even these barely inhabitable situations could be counted as evidence that the City was on track in its efforts to maintain and protect low-income housing.

Further many speakers stressed how these administrative versions of affordability—expressed as a stable quantity of residential units—missed the relational interconnections through which residents' experiences of affordability and livability was tied to myriad other

neighbourhood qualities: “Yes, some are secure in social housing,” stressed one speaker, “but the cheap food they rely on is vulnerable and a sense of community is at risk from more Zones of Exclusion caused by the gentrification” (Opp 4). Another resident described how they were able to “get through my toughest times and with great thanks to the support from the community’s amenities, which include payphones, cheap and affordable fresh food in Chinatown [and] the lovely and free computers of the Carnegie centre” (Opp 79). A third speaker stated, “Kent’s Kitchen and those small stores that I and others like me—extremely low-income people—[depend on]; if they’re gone, we’re going to be gone” (Opp 62). “SRO units, emphasized a DNC organizer who had been canvassing local residents, were “not just a room”:

> What’s distinct about Chinese seniors, [based on] my experience in the hotels, is that the independence they have is really tied to affordability; and the affordability of being able to shop at the grocery stores in Chinatown is as important as the affordability of the rooms. And the language rights[28] that the people have in Chinatown is something that they don’t have anywhere else in this city. (Opp 3)

These observations are echoed in a series of 2013 investigative articles that documented the escalating service needs of Chinatown’s low-income seniors who are most often women. Less than one percent of inner-city Chinese seniors are believed to speak any English, with many having faced poverty and gender-related barriers to education which mean they are also unable to read or write in their mother tongue. These language barriers, coupled with inadequate services, discrimination and racism mean that the social networks formed among Chinatown’s population

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[28] This term is explained in CCAP’s Chinatown is People, Not Just Buildings Report:

> We want to the city to preserve and protect the living heritage of Chinese culture and Chinese language rights in Chinatown. Cantonese and Mandarin speaking seniors’ sense of community depends upon the visibility of Chinese language business signs, menus, and store clerks who speak Mandarin and Cantonese.” (CCAP, 2011, p. 14)

of low-income Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking elders are crucial supports for these vulnerable residents (Wong, 2013a, 2013b).

Other comments reflect how institutional representations of affordability-as-housing-stock failed to grasp the dynamics of tension and exclusion that were occurring, for instance, in mixed buildings such as the Woodward's development where "low-income residents go up separate elevators" (Opp 16; see also 65). Likewise, another warned, "As prices, evictions and—unfortunately—judgements go up, my neighbours will be no longer welcome in a neighbourhood that they have found to be Vancouver's most, and perhaps only, hospitable space" (Opp 78). I return to these recurring accounts of social tension in Chapter 6.

In this way, various speakers emphasized that administrative tallies frequently failed to convey how affordable housing units—though crucial—were only one part of much broader array of relational and often intangible neighbourhood qualities and dynamics (including low cost amenities, social networks, familiar languages, a culture of acceptance and access to public space) that were integral to poor residents' wellbeing and continued ability to remain in the area. Conveyed in terms of quantifiable units of housing stock, the documentation of affordability within City texts reflected a limited and fragmented view; emptied of the particularities which constituted the area as accessible and welcoming (or as increasingly inaccessible and hostile) to poor and racialized residents. In this way, the critiques of low-income residents and allies evoke awareness of disjunctures wherein institutional texts and policies ostensibly represent but in fact largely *mis*represent residents' everyday truths. As in Smith's bifurcated consciousness, these accounts reflect many residents' awareness of two parallel and conflicting realities that did not match up: an official, text-based count of affordability, and the lived—and in local, grassroots accounts well-known—realities of increasing rent, insecurity and displacement.

5.2.2.2 Ideological bridging

While for low-income residents, housing activists and allies, the divide between these parallel neighbourhood realities (one on the ground, and one in text) is conveyed as a frustrating disjuncture, others do not seem to experience these clashing truths as problematic. Throughout the hearings, it was apparent that not only HAHR opponents, but also City planners, councillors and others were aware that SRO rents were increasing beyond the means of many poor residents, especially those who relied on welfare with its shelter allowance of only $375 per month. In addition to one staff member's acknowledgement that the SRA Bylaw "doesn't preclude landlords just deciding to not rent" (Staff 4 on page 146, above), the April 8th Housing Policy memo conceded that "just 36% of units for the entire DTES area" "were renting at or below the shelter allowance of $375/month." Further, the memo states: "A spot check of some of the buildings in the area shows rents continue to increase" (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011, p. 3). In addition, the methodical and well-publicized annual SRO Hotel Studies undertaken by CCAP were well known to City Planners, councillors and likely to many HAHR opponents; this sequence of studies shows a clear increase in area rents since 2008. Further, CCAP was in regular communication with City planners. In the course of these interactions, one CCAP volunteer recounted, City actors had demonstrated awareness of threats to the area's affordable units:

> your staff has written to us, quote "we agree that without replacement, continued loss of an ageing SRO stock together with rent increases, may lead to increased homelessness" and also, "we share your concern that no new social housing is planned for after 2013." And also in February, the Director of Planning sent a memo to you [Council] saying, quote, "additional projects are needed to replace the 3777 remaining SRO rooms," and he also said that the hotels the [provincial government] bought need to be replaced eventually. The DTES Housing Plan says

> some other important things. On page six, it says "the pace of development of new market and low-income housing should be similar." … "If there's a quick upswing in market development," it says, "extra efforts may be required on the low-income housing side." … Staff has told us that [upswing]'s already happening. (Opp 4x2)

In the course of the hearings, speakers' accounts of renoviction and increasing SRO rents rarely met disagreement from City officials. But in contrast to this tacit official acknowledgement of increasing rents, throughout the hearings, the arguments of several councillors and HAHR supporters continued to convey the area's low-income housing stock as protected.

As I have laid it out here, the contradictory nature of these parallel realities is hard to ignore. But as various speakers point out, this contradictory disjuncture which does not jive *in the world*, is reconciled and smoothed over *in text* via administrative categories that determine how affordability is counted. "The City," stated a CCAP representative, "continues to *call* upgraded hotels 'new social housing.'" Later, the same speaker stressed, "We are not on track for one-to-one [replacement] because the City is not *including* rent increases in their analysis" (Opp 64; my emphasis). Another local organizer stated, "The rent increases in 28 West Pender [Street], which is still *categorized* by the city as an SRA—as a low-income hotel—the rent there is $700 a month for singles." These kinds of increases, they later stated, "drive low-income people out and replace them with students or workers. The City—to the shame of this city I think—still *recognizes* those spaces as low-income units" (Opp 3).

Via comments such as these, advocates highlight how institutional practices of documenting (i.e., "calling," "including," "categoriz[ing]" and "recogni[zing]") particular units as "low-income housing" not only miss residents' accounts and experiences, but effect a kind of translation, like a conceptual "bridge" that enables institutional actors and others to move comfortably between one reality and the other. Such practices resemble a word game in which

the administrative definition of "low-income" becomes abstracted from the lived material question of *rent.* As in Allman's articulation of ideological knowing (see Chapter 2), these textual practices coherently link partial aspects of these worlds with the effect of masking their contradictory nature. The nature of this administrative re-definition of low-income housing is elucidated by a local legal society:

> While the City has defined what the low-income housing stock includes (SROs, non-market or social housing, Community Care Facilities and Group Residences), low-income is not defined by how much a unit is rented for. *In other worlds, price has nothing to do with the definition of low-income housing*. (Pivot, n.d., pp. 1-2; my emphasis)[29]

As this passage makes clear, the effect is a kind of Orwellian doublespeak in which low-income housing is (re)defined as unrelated to income. Consistent with this dual reality apparent during the hearings, the City's 2009 Survey of Low-Income Housing in the Downtown Core does not dispute and in fact clearly acknowledges the affordability challenges described by low-income residents and allies. In section 2.5, entitled *Changes in Rents & Renters*, the report affirms the problems of increasing rents, tight vacancy rates and student-only policies (Housing Policy, 2010). But elsewhere, the report explains how these dynamics are ultimately excluded from consideration within official tallies of low-income housing stock. For one, SRO units are so-designated based on their size (less than 320 feet^2) and /or the fact that they do not have self-contained bathroom or kitchen facilities, not—as the legal society backgrounder (above) indicates—by the cost of rent. The report authors explain why the City's survey "does not use rent levels to define the low-income stock":

> First… the SRO stock remains the lowest-cost market-rental stock in the city, and the housing needs of other low-income groups are a policy concern.

[29] The backgrounder references the City's 2009 Survey of Low-Income Housing in the Downtown Core which states that the survey "does not use rent levels to define the low-income stock" (Housing Policy, 2010, p. 8).

> Secondly, in a market economy, each income group gets the housing that groups with higher incomes do not want. Lack of sufficient housing supply for those with the lowest incomes is a problem that is expressed at the municipal level, but the factors affecting affordability are related more to changes in incomes, social policies, and the economy than to changes in the physical stock. The City has powers to regulate some of the physical aspects of the low-income stock. The Province has the responsibility for providing adequate income support and affordable housing. The Province is also the level of government with the responsibility for regulating rent levels and defining what constitutes unreasonable landlord discrimination …
>
> Lastly, and more pragmatically, accurate rent data is the hardest element to collect in the survey … the time series on individual room rents only goes back to 2003. (Housing Policy, 2010, p. 8)

Taken together, these passages reflect conceptual practices through which institutional accounts not only fail to convey, but even function to erase and overwrite what is arguably the most fundamental meaning of affordability as experienced by poor local residents—namely, the question of rent. The report's assertion that such units are still relatively affordable vis a vis other units in the City is of little help to the many current tenants whose fixed welfare or pension-based incomes render them unable to compete with other groups whom the report reminds readers (above) are "also a policy concern." Instead of actually problematizing the material and social relations within which these various marginalized groups are forced to compete for the dismal, SRO "crumbs"[30] of the private housing market, the report's reminder that "[s]tudents, low-wage service workers, and seniors all have low incomes" (Housing Policy, 2010, p. 8) functions as a red herring: It distracts the reader from the experiences of the neighbourhood's existing poor residents who, increasingly, can no longer afford a place to live. As in councillors' selective emphasis on particular protected buildings and units, this administrative rationale effects the conceptual trade-off of some low-income individuals for others.

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[30] To borrow phrasing often used by CCAP.

In the second portion of the excerpt, the report's trickle-down account of housing markets skirts over its own considerable powers of land use regulation to depict the problem of increasing rent as located in incomes, the economy and other factors for which the City was not responsible. As the report takes up and re-deploys this delimitation of municipal jurisdiction to questions of "physical aspects of … stock" it naturalizes the disconnect between questions of housing (and questions of urban development more broadly) and questions of human well-being, including the human right to adequate shelter. In the third section and elsewhere in the report, this division of concern for low-income *stock* and low-income *people* is articulated matter-of-factly as a methodological and/or administrative parameter: "The survey covers the physical stock of housing and not who lives in SROs. There have been other surveys covering SRO residents" (Housing Policy, 2010, p. 4). This routine consideration of low-income units in isolation from the question of *who can afford to live there* helps to mask and normalize a contradictory dual reality in which rent was known to be increasing, but was depicted—in line with the City's housing policy—as somehow occurring "without displacement."[31] In these excerpts, it is possible to discern an ideological administrative logic—rooted in abstracted practices of knowing and audible in hearing discourse—in which the reality of deteriorating neighbourhood affordability is simultaneously known and not known, or more precisely, is known but does not count.

[31] As in the policy narrative of "Revitalization without Displacement" (see Chapter 1) and as one councillor continued to assert following the hearings, in 2013: "no one is being displaced" (see Ward, 2013).

5.2.2.3 Trumping: Ideology as lived

Speakers' recurring scrutiny of City practices of naming (e.g., "calling" and "recogni[zing]") are part of a broader theme of critique in which official truths are grasped, not as objective or arbitrary, but as contextual and political. As Darville (1995, as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2002) following Smith (1984) emphasizes, the construction of knowledge is anchored in particular places and uses; there is meaning in the way that things get written up for organizational action. At the hearings, the insights of many speakers drew attention to how institutional accounts of neighbourhood boundaries, dynamics, policy options and jurisdictional responsibilities are *used* in ways that enable particular actions and which obscure or foreclose the possibilities of others. One CCAP member emphasized how, as in the case of the Woodward's project, the HAHR was "a case of income mix language *being used to justify* a neighbourhood with fewer and fewer low-income people" (Opp 4; my emphasis. See also Opp 64).

Such critiques evoke Smith's analysis of how the construction of knowledge according to institutional priorities entails conceptual practices of power—ruling knowledges—which systematically fail to construct the actual as based in the perspectives, interests and concerns of the people whose experiences are portrayed (Hick, 1991; D. E. Smith, 1990). This sense of the organized omission of residents' lived experience is likewise conveyed in CCAP's 2011 Hotel Report: "Gentrification, the pushing out of poor people by the invasion of people with more money and social power, is invisible in government reports and policies" (Drury & Swanson, 2011, p. 3). Blomley offers a similar insight with respect to practices of Cartesian mapping. Maps, he notes, do not "'work' independently of their social and political contexts." Instead, they are clearly "put to work." Practices of planning are normative and should be grasped as the "shorthand of unstated rules governing the social order" (Blomley, 2004, pp. 66, 77). In

conveying Chinatown as “chopped[ed]” and/or “carve[d]” out (above), speakers similarly characterize Council’s decision to consider only Chinatown-related items, not in terms of the objective fact of neighbourhood boundaries, but as political intervention: “The acts of this council will [function] to drive a wedge between [communities]” asserted one speaker (Opp 3). This is “wedge politics,” stated another (Opp 38; see also Opp 22; Opp 16). Via such comments, presenters repeatedly signal how the representation of particular heritage buildings, housing units—and sometimes, the neighbourhood as a whole—as protected, the designation of other places as not “affected” and charts with categories depicting stable numbers of “low-income” units, enables state institutions and actors to overlook the problem of rent increases and displacement at the level of *ideas* without confronting them *in practice*; that is, without undertaking more difficult, expensive and politically unworkable interventions that would require redistribution of resources and infringe on property-related expectations and entitlements.

In characterizing institutional knowledges as interested and implicated in concrete impacts, speakers call attention to what Smith calls the “activation” of texts (see Chapter 3). Smith emphasizes how, as knowledge is constructed in ways that allow for institutional utility, local and lived experiences of the corresponding phenomena are no longer recognized as relevant or valid. Instead, the official, objectified version is routinely taken for granted to describe the ‘actual’; the text replaces and *trumps* competing versions (D. E. Smith, 1990). Here, Smith’s analysis connects to Lefebvre’s description of the significance of represented space, the “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers … all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (as cited in Blomley, p. 67).

The *trumping* that D. E. Smith describes can be discerned in the hearings when, in their decision statement, following some 21-odd hours of testimonials and evidence, one councillor concluded,

> We really had speakers about Chinatown [*motions to side*] and speakers on housing [*motions to front*]. I am very confident in the City's housing policies for the Downtown Eastside; there's a very strong commitment to replace 10,000 units of low-income housing. The City has, up till now, replaced about seven of those ten thousand; there's 3,000 or so more to go… And so I do not share the concerns that were expressed here that people will be pushed out of the Downtown Eastside and the low-income housing, because there will be 10,000 units of low-income housing … So, I'm not so worried about that. (Coun 11)

As the councillor categorizes speakers and their presentations as being "about Chinatown" or "on housing," they narrate their practice of dichotomizing questions of "Chinatown" and questions of "housing" in a kind of either/or distinction. In doing so, they articulate an implicit process of defining what issues *do* and *do not* count in the context of the HAHR decision. In this statement, made after hours and hours of listening to what were (as I've argued) compelling, nuanced accounts of decreasing affordability and mounting insecurity, together with critiques of the inadequacies of City documentation, the councillor concludes that they do not "share the concerns … that people will be pushed out." In this pronouncement, the institutional version *wins out* and renders inconsequential the myriad first hand knowledges of local residents.

Accordingly, even as they sought to delegitimize text-based versions of the neighbourhood, several speakers emphasized how such institutional truths—however ideological, fragmented, abstract and, in the case of administrative definitions of low income housing stock, downright absurd—nonetheless entailed very *real* implications for low-income residents. While various HAHR opponents critiqued City planning area boundaries as "arbitrary" and "artificial," one speaker added a clarification:

> Lines on a map are not completely artificial. Lines on a map are political designations that are drawn by power-bearing bodies like this council. And those lines on a map have tremendous material impact on the lives of people who live within those lines … political borders determine the way peoples' lives must be lived out. (Opp 3x2)

Likewise, two other speakers emphasized the need for councillors to acknowledge the "real," *lived* implications of institutional texts and terminology:

> Call it "gentrification light," "revitalization," a "healthy balance," "neighbourhoood improvement" … . These terms, no matter how benign and masked, don't take away the real meaning for the community already living there and that is gentrification, economic violence and displacement. (Opp 74)

> Whatever it says on paper that it won't happen—that the businesses that serve low-income people won't disappear—they *will* disappear … It's already happening … I don't imagine that folks on Council come down to the Downtown Eastside very much … so I just wanted to share some of those stories with you. Because … this decision is going to affect peoples' lives. So, whatever it says on paper and whatever studies you have and maps … You guys have lots of numbers and information and stuff but there's also people's real lives. And I encourage you to remember that. (Opp 12; speaker's emphasis)

In contrast then, to institutional texts which reassuringly smooth and/or bridge the disjuncture between affordability on the ground and in text, many speakers instead put forward alternative versions of neighbourhood dynamics which, as Blomley has put it, "are consciously grounded in locally lived experience." In these oppositional understandings, he notes, "the divide between abstract representations and grounded materiality collapses" (Blomley, 2004, p. 55). Likewise, during the hearings, the accounts of low-income residents and allies underscore how institutional knowledges not only overlook and/or misrepresent—but are also *implicated in*—ongoing neighbourhood dynamics of displacement.

Chapter 6: Dead? Or Alive? Social Mix, Seriality and Mixing-Up People and Things[32]

So I think tonight has been intense and I think there's a reason that it's been intense and it's because the stakes are high … On both sides there's a sense that the future of Chinatown is in question … People are upset. There's going to be a fight. It's not going to be nice … Chinatown is about to become a site of social struggle.

(Opp 48x2)

In this chapter, I continue my progressive exploration of public discursive practice, with a focus on ideas of subjectivity that are suggested by Sartre's and Allman's dialectical treatments of the human condition. Within explicit discussions of neighbourhood change, it is possible to trace implicit social discourses about the nature of *being* within these dynamics—storylines of wellbeing, capacity, agency and (in)humanity of self and others. Attention to this existential dimension of hearing debate evokes the reversal of subject and object and associated relations of Othering, hostility, alienation and threat that are apparent in Sartre's theorization of seriality. Such dynamics signal how relations of property entail social and political relations of exclusion, with differentiated benefits and harms that play out as violence. Mirror image accounts of revitalization suggest how, within thing-centred relations of capitalist seriality, experiences of violence are simultaneously pervasive and obscured.

6.1 Dead? Or Alive? Chinatown as People and Things

Among the hearings' striking discursive dynamics of connection and disconnection were recurring themes of debate in which speakers on different sides of the issue nonetheless voiced like-sounding priorities. Many described deep, personal, attachments to the area; Chinatown was

[32] Cautionary note: this chapter contains an illustration depicting death by hanging (on page 202, below).

commonly linked to experiences of home, identity and mutual support. Concerns about neighbourhood conditions were likewise conveyed in very human terms; opposed groups of speakers voiced priorities relating to, for instance, Chinatown as a "healthy communit[y]" (e.g., Supp 1, Opp 2x2), as a "vibrant … neighbourhood" (e.g., Supp 5, Opp 10), as "inclusive" (e.g., Supp 2, Opp 75) and as having important "culture and heritage" (e.g., Supp 1, Opp 10). But even as they seemed to be voicing common aspirations, many drew attention to how these apparent commonalities broke down when it came to the question of practice. In doing so, speakers draw critical attention to a recurring discursive reversal in which much of the conversation that seems to reference very human aspects of Chinatown is—in the limiting, official context of the HAHR—a discussion centred on *things*.

This effect of reversal was especially apparent as pro-revitalization arguments were expressed in dramatic, life-or-death terms, evoking understandings of the neighbourhood as a living, breathing organism. HAHR proponents warned how the neighbourhood was "depressed"; in urgent danger of "dying" or being "kill[ed]" (Supp 2; Supp 3; Supp 4; Supp 20). Chinatown, one speaker emphasized, "has been deteriorating. It is really sick, to the point that it is a matter of survival" (Supp 20). The HAHR proposals were thus "opportunity to bring new life," "restore energy" and "revive the vibrancy of the Chinatown that once was" (Supp 3; Supp 12; Supp 5; see also Supp 2). But at least one interchange clarifies how the language of human welfare is routinely used to denote very material concerns:

> [Supp 5:] If there's no incentive for anybody to invest in Chinatown, then Chinatown is dead.
>
> [Coun 6:] When you say "dead," what does that mean?
>
> [Supp 5:] That there's no business activity, there's no more investments; there will be no new funds coming in and it will be stagnant.

Critique of the HAHR's thing-centred logic is made explicit in material prepared by CCAP in which one of the central points is made in the title: Chinatown is People, Not Just Buildings. The phrase "People not Buildings" is explained on the third page where, referencing the many affordable small grocers near the proposed sites for taller towers in Chinatown South, the publication states,

> The living part of Chinatown that has the cheap stores is where the city wants to drop the towers. This deal will sacrifice the living heritage of Chinatown South for the heritage buildings of Chinatown North. They've got their priorities backwards: people should be more important than buildings. (CCAP, 2011, p. 3)

Reference to "living heritage" and reframing of Chinatown as "people not buildings" was repeated by various speakers as they sought to distinguish Chinatown's human-centred qualities from its built qualities (see Opp 3, Opp 16, Opp 49). This contrast between Chinatown's material and living qualities is repeated by many throughout the hearings, for instance as one local low-income resident stated,

> There's a community in the Downtown Eastside—which includes Chinatown—which is at risk. And the thing that you would lose, if you lose that community, includes a lot of intangibles that … will never come back … . You may have noticed that the leadership in the Downtown Eastside—there's more women than you might expect to see. And there's more senior women than you might expect to see. I see a pattern there where grandmothers and mothers hold together whole families … You have a very unique community, maybe in all of Canada, that we need to preserve because the heritage that's in there is the heritage that's in the voices of the members of the community. If you disrupt it and send them to other places you break those links. And when you break those links you lose those stories. (Opp 65)

"I agree with the previous speaker" stated another. "The matter is not just about building height; I see it in terms of human stories. And all of them, I think, have to be taken into account" (Opp 70). In stressing these distinctions, these speakers highlight public processes of discourse and policy-making through which the preservation of a neighbourhood which is widely valued in

terms of human and social qualities was frequently conveyed and pursued in terms of material elements, including historic facades, developer investment and storefront businesses. In doing so, they signal how such formulations suggest an, often multi-layered and confusing, mixing-up of people and things.

6.1.1 Vitality and the money-go-round flow of social mix: A "win-win situation"

The mixing up of people and things was perhaps most apparent in accounts of the "real problem" facing Chinatown, and the associated solution:

> [There are] not enough spending consumers shopping in Chinatown to support the businesses … The killer is during winter time; when there's snow [and] no tourists, [stores] do not have business … So, the economy of Chinatown is dying … We should create a local spending consumer population to support Chinatown. At the same time, we should attract outside visitors … (Supp 20; see also Supp 3)

Concern over lack of "spending consumers" (Supp 5) was often euphemistically conveyed in terms of the need for more "balance" (Supp 7), or as one speaker put it, "a really living community with diversity" (Supp 1). More residents "of all income groups … ultimately means a wider diversity of goods and services" (Supp 8) and "a mix of private residential, affordable housing as well as commercial" redevelopment (Supp 18).

As calls for "spending consumer[s]" make clear, narratives calling for balance, diversity and mix attribute Chinatown's perceived shortcomings to a relative absence of wealthy residents in comparison with the number of low-income people in the neighbourhood. These expressions echo the planning discourse of *social mix*, a set of ideas which, notes Slater, are "underpinned by… normative principles on neighbourhood 'health,' often drawn up in contrast to ghettoisation in the United States" (Slater, 2005, pp. 45-46). In her 2008 review of literature on the subject, Lees describes how the benefits of mixed urban communities "have become something of an

unquestioned gospel in policy discourse" and "a major urban policy and planning goal in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Australia, Canada and the United States" (Lees, 2008, pp. 2450, 2451).[33] Blomley recounts how such ideas were instrumental in advancing the housing mix at Woodward's; local housing activists' calls to develop exclusively non-market housing at Woodward's were "derided as a 'warehousing' of the poor, or as creating a 'ghetto'" (2004, p. 88).

Within policy debates on social mixing, Schoon has identified three distinct rationales for the approach. The "defending the neighbourhood" argument claims that middle class people will benefit poor neighbourhoods because they are stronger advocates for public resources. The "networks and contacts" argument uses Putnam's notion of social capital to assert that social mix will provide "bridging" and "bonding" to generate, respectively, economic opportunity and social cohesion (Schoon, 2001 as cited in Lees, 2008, p. 2451). This optimistic assumption that interaction between classes will be positive, adds Blomley, "perhaps echoes the widespread agreement … that urban social pathologies are related to the spatial concentration of the poor" (2004, p. 89). The third pro-mix claim identified by Schoon, the "money-go-round" argument, advocates tenurially and socioeconomically mixed neighbourhoods on the basis that they improve the local economy.

During the HAHR hearings, although references to others of Schoon's rationales are perhaps implicitly invoked—for instance, in suggestions that Chinatown should not become an

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[33] Rose and others (e.g., Peck, 2005; Walks & August, 2008) have described how this desire to cultivate the image of the livable city is connected to the desire to attract what urbanist Richard Florida (2002) has termed the "creative class" in the context of a globalized, knowledge-based, post-industrial economy. Inclusive communities—those capable of "harmoniously supporting a blend of incomes, cultures, age-groups and lifestyles"—are seen as a key attraction in this regard (Rose, 2004 as cited in Lees, 2008, p. 2451).

“exclusive compound for affordable and social housing” (Supp 8)—for the most part debate was focused on social mix and street activity (or, in planning lingo, “body heat”) as a means of accomplishing “money-go-round” local economic development. This public logic was audible, for instance, as one presenter described how a revitalized Chinatown “will attract a lot of overseas tourists and immigrants to Vancouver and Canada, create jobs [and] generate lots of tax revenue from three levels of government to support housing and social programs [for] all Vancouverites and Canadians” (Supp 20; see also Supp 18, Chapter 4). As in this account, the HAHR proposals were often conveyed as benefitting even poor residents by enabling protection or generation of affordable housing. One speaker summarized this line of argument, “I believe that the entire Chinatown [and] East Side can also benefit … Improvements to the heritage buildings will help to protect [the] safety of the residents living inside them. That’s a win win situation” (Supp 12; see also Supp 13, Supp 14). Chinatown, stated another presenter, would become a neighbourhood “whose business can support itself and its surroundings” (Supp 2; see also Supp 15). These various discourses of economic flow were not only pervasive within the hearings themselves, but also invoked in City planning documents—for instance the Draft Rezoning Policy for Higher Buildings in the Historic Area, which states,

> Future growth in Chinatown South resulting from this policy is expected to contribute to the overall economic revitalization and residential intensification of Chinatown (HA-1 and HA-1A), as well as to support innovative heritage, cultural and affordable housing projects in the Chinatown area. (Director of Planning, 2010b, Appendix A, p. 8)

In the money-go-round revitalization public narrative of social mix it is possible to discern two contradictory conceptual logics. On the surface, the discourse of residential intensification as body heat—or “more people, more business” (Supp 8 to Coun 9, Chapter 5)—invokes a generalizing sense of equivalence. However, in the context of the predominately low-income

Downtown Eastside, calls for body heat (or "balance" and "diversity") are obviously calls for a very particular *kind* of bodies: the kind with credit cards.

6.2 *Being* in Social Mix: Reversals and Reification

Within the hearings' discursive interchange, calls for mix, "new life" and "new residents" are euphemisms for economic investment and/or consumption. This reading suggests how speakers' conflicting accounts of Chinatown as "alive" (e.g., Opp 75) and as "dying" (e.g., Supp 10; Supp 3, above) do not merely reflect divergent individual understandings of market dynamics. They also relate, I think, to pervasive social meanings and experiences of *being*—of self, Other and self-in-relation-to-Other.

6.2.1 Neighbourhood "vitality": reversals

Read with attention to narratives of being, hearing debate makes audible the reversal of subject and object that, for Sartre, was routine within pervasive relations of seriality (see Chapter 2). In discourses of residential intensification, the unique, human qualities, contributions and practices of these potential new residents are unimportant. Reduced to their capacity for consumption, what matters is these new residents' purchasing power. What are their skills and capacities? Will they put down roots in Chinatown, or will they move on in a couple years? Will they volunteer or participate in local activities? How do they make a living? Are they passionate, creative, caring or respectful? What are their hopes and dreams for the future? These and a thousand other human sensibilities, practices and commitments do not count within generalizing and atomizing discourses of body heat.

Such calls for intensification-as-revitalization are well in keeping with dominant property discourses in Vancouver and elsewhere; in response to a draft version of the HAHR conclusions, the Vancouver-based Urban Development Institute—an industry think tank—wrote, "Our hope is that the vibrancy of the District will improve through the 'body heat' of new development as new businesses and people move into the area" (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix C, pp. 5, 6; see also p. 16 of the main report). Indeed, our experiences as consumers are so routine, it seems impractical to hold this aspect of life out for critique. As with the limiting portrayal of neighbourhood health in terms of "business activity," the zombie-like characterization of prospective residents as "body heat" is so banal it hardly qualifies as shocking. Yet both types of narratives are suggestive of Sartre's milieu of seriality within which individuals routinely "assume for [themselves] and for others a dimension which is non-human" (Sartre, 1960b, p. xv).

Perhaps more dramatic, is how the discursive logics of revitalization distort public recognition of the human—and humanizing—practices of mutual care described by countless low-income residents within the hearings. As in assertions that Chinatown should be grasped as "people, not just buildings" numerous presenters responded to assertions of neighbourhood deficiency to share accounts of human caring. One speaker stated, "[I came] to the Downtown Eastside because it was the cheapest place to live at that time. I've never felt more welcomed or more empathy from any community … in my life. I consider it now my home" (Opp 51). Another presenter recounted how, in some Chinatown SROs, "you will see that sometimes neighbours keep their doors open. You'll smell cooking food and see elders looking out for one another and caring … It is quite an experience to walk into the hallway of one of these hotels" (Opp 70).

Such accounts illustrate a stark contrast between discursive portrayals of the area as dead or alive. In light of such insights, one speaker stressed: "'Revitalize' is a way of talking about, really it's an economic framework … but it's a very vital neighbourhood when we listen to the people who live there" (Opp 33; see also Opp 75). Certainly, it is difficult to overstate the irony apparent in the discourse of neighbourhood revitalization in which the terminology of decay, death and dying, sickness, depression, new life and vitality—the language of sentient, living and breathing, human bodies—is used to characterize market relations which are centred on things. Such narratives seem to invert humans and objects; wealth is fetishized (see, e.g., Allman, 2007) and attributed with human characteristics, while people are reified as units of wealth.

6.2.2 Neighbourhood 'balance': Reifying discourses

Hearing debate and critique further elucidates how the technique of social mix entails essentializing conceptual logics which, in designating individuals as "rich" or "poor" perpetuate reified, (analytic) versions of phenomena which should be grasped historically and relationally. In the discourse of mix, the categories of "low-income" and "spending consumer" are—instead of being conveyed as structural and relational—inscribed in individuals or peoples, as though they are personal traits or attributes. The (external) 'fact' of poverty is instead grasped as an (internal) aspect of being and imbued with more than a hint of moralism. Lees describes how the reifying categories of social mix:

> socially construct the middle class or middle-income groups as a natural category in contrast to a demonised working class or low-income groups (and this is done spatially) … [These categories] are about social engineering (social cleansing) and all the problematic connotations that go with that. (Lees, 2008 pp. 2463–2464)

In the hearings, while low-income residents made no bones about their status as poor, many shared personal stories and experiences which disrupted essentializing understandings of this status as personal fact. Instead, many narratives conveyed speakers' experiences of poverty as historical and relational—often via stories of struggle in the context of difficult conditions. Some described circumstances that limited their income and/or ability to work full-time. One resident of Chinatown stated, "I'm a single mom, I'm on disability, with a 14-year-old son who has some special needs" (Opp 75; see also Opp 19). Another presenter recounted,

> Only in 2009, [I] was an English tutor who was hit by the recession and gradually found myself without a job. [I] lost my income—I was making pretty good money—and went in and out of the mental health system for a couple of years. I'm also a former social services and corrections worker and I'm educated at [Simon Fraser University]. It was a pretty big shock. (Opp 30)

Often, speakers narrated their personal experiences, not only of difficulty and disadvantage, but also of growth, healing and capacity:

> I am the founding creative director of the Downtown Eastside centre for the arts, member of the Women's Memorial March committee, playwright, vocalist and a community activist in the DTES. I am also celebrating being in the midst of my seventh year free from alcohol and drugs, homelessness and from being subjected to living in the slovenly SROs passed off as homes to the poor. (Opp 18; see also Oth 3)

In accounts such as this, speakers' experiences of poverty, as well as health conditions including mental illness, physical disability and addiction are conveyed—not as internal qualities or defining traits—but as external or bodily conditions, arrangements and/or labels against which they have had to struggle. Here, these speakers disrupt common objectifying social logics through which individuals (whether wealthy or poor) are defined almost exclusively—as in the discourse of social mix and as in Sartre's articulation of seriality—in terms of the *things* that they (do not) possess.

Further, as Downtown Eastside residents describe their experiences, capacities and what they value about the community, they also call into question the political, material and cultural arrangements within which these qualities are neither valued nor recognized. At least three such accounts warrant prolonged quotes:

> At thirty-three I became an addict and lost everything: lost hope, desire to live … I didn't care about [myself]. But I did care about everyone else and that is one thing I haven't lost, my humanity towards other people. I fit in well in the Downtown Eastside; I understand the issue that we were facing. Growing up in the [United] States, you also face issues; I had to fight being black … I realized I was fighting for my human rights … I go to Woodward's and I am being discriminated against because I live in the Downtown Eastside; I know discrimination when I see it.. I'm tired of seeing young ones on the street, dying—needles and all that—because there's no hope; because people that we rely on, that we vote for, tell a little white lie, or they give us some kind of hope, saying, "Soon to come, soon to come." I'm tired of "soon," I'm tired of "but." We need action now. … Treat us like human beings. We are smart, we can handle the truth … . Now that we're getting *more* issues, such as people fighting over the Downtown Eastside … I'm not putting up with it. My life is too valuable to [fall through] the cracks. (Opp 15)

> I'm extremely low, low, low income; I get about $280 from social assistance on a medical thing … $280 a month to live on, for groceries … I don't get a bus pass and I shop extensively in the small stores and markets in Chinatown … I know a lot of elderly people and middle aged people who are friends and acquaintances of mine over the four years [I've lived in Chinatown]. And I couldn't exist without this culture … I've worked very, very, very, very hard the last 20 years, to publish my poetry … and other kinds of writing—and much of it is political … And I'm not a bum … I'm very proud of myself; and the last couple years I've become a social and political activist … Some people in the Downtown Eastside have called me the "People's Poet" … I'm involved in writing workshops at Carnegie [Centre] and I'm involved with CCAP and the DNC, trying help people—marginalized, low-income people—like myself. And I'm very, very poor materially … but I consider myself to be *rich* in terms of my mind, my spirit, my intellect and my emotions… And I've got a lot to teach some of these people who, you know, live in the very ritzy, large, 'high' places … And so I very much agree … that the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown should be about … people learning from one another and coming together. (Opp 62; speaker's emphasis)

> I am a mother of six children, a grandmother of 11 grandchildren. I currently live in an SRO that, to my disappointment, has not even my own bathroom or kitchen … I am here as a VANDU member … We ask for decent social housing instead,

> with all Downtown Eastside residents having the jobs to renovate the rundowns; and the small businesses will actually benefit too. I see in the future, [potential to] turn around in the eyes of all Vancouver citizens and the world … [potential] that this Mayor and Council do listen and hear the poor, the homeless and the poor working people … All we ask is that you would give us the opportunity to—how do you say it? revitalize?—the Downtown Eastside through our community. We can show the council [and] the City Mayor that *we too* need jobs. And when we use our community to rebuild the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown for low-income housing … it will show the world [and] the City that we too are *people*. We have the same colour of blood under each of our skins no matter *where* we're from. (Opp 50; speaker's emphasis)

In each of these accounts (not to mention myriad others) speakers make audible the profound inadequacy of existing social and material supports such as welfare and disability benefits, access to decent affordable housing and other basic requirements of social inclusion including transportation and political participation. As they narrate their own histories, speakers describe how they have had to struggle—against racism, classism, ableism and related experiences of hopelessness—for access to community spaces, opportunities to work and even for recognition of their basic dignity as human beings. However, these narratives of struggle are also narratives of growth, change and healing. They reflect how such damaging circumstances can be altered and transcended via (often collective) struggle.

In the course of the hearings, these and other presenters also reveal themselves as creative, passionate and compassionate, generous individuals who make myriad community contributions through volunteer work, advocacy, mutual support, parenting, art and teaching, among other things. However according to the planning discourse of social mix, these are some of the very same low-income people who contribute to the Downtown Eastside's status as decaying and unbalanced, and whose presence in the neighbourhood needs to be *diluted*[34]

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[34] A term used in CCAP critiques of social mix.

through the addition of wealthier shoppers. Read in this light, such accounts bring into sharp relief how the public discourse of mix not only treats poverty as an individual fact but also takes for granted the social and material arrangements through which existing residents' dignity, capacities and unpaid contributions go unvalued. The fact of these unrecognized contributions is emphasized by another presenter who introduced a subsequent speaker as their "hero": "She's a true community builder. She has no children of her own, yet many kids in the neighbourhood call her mother, or grandmother. She applies for grants to buy craft supplies for these kids, and she makes a mean stew" (Opp 49). Like the speakers' assertions (above) that they "are smart" or "not a bum," and like the appeal for the opportunity to "turn around in the eyes of all Vancouver citizens and the world," this speaker's comments emphasize that essentialising people as simply "poor" is a practice of fundamental misunderstanding and misrepresentation, a failure to perceive residents' capacities and myriad contributions.

Further, as speakers assert that they "can handle the truth"; have "a lot to teach"; and that they "too need jobs," they reframe as contingent and thus politicize, commonsense relations through which low-income residents are denied the right to earn a livelihood and to create an improved future for themselves and their neighbours via their own priorities and considerable capacities. But in the discourse of social mix, with its calls to revitalize the neighbourhood via the purchasing "heat" of wealthy bodies, these alternative possibilities are foreclosed and the potentialities of current residents are obscured. Via categorical, ahistorical thinking, poor people come to be seen as having no history, no agency and no alternative future; they just are (poor). As one speaker put it: "People need to take a more compassionate approach … and not see the most vulnerable people as the problem. Because we're not the problem; the problem is around us, and there is no support" (Opp 39).

Another speaker is more explicit in challenging common beliefs that conditions such as poverty and addiction result from individual behaviour and/or acts of free choice:

> When I hear people railing about drug addicts making bad lifestyle choices, I have to ask what the other choices were: $10-an-hour call-in, casual, two hour-minimum [shift work], enabling one to do little more than exist in medieval squalor… Who chooses being a victim of child abuse? Mental illness? Disability? Or isolation in old age? (Opp 26)

In this critique, this speaker shifts the focus of attention away from individuals and towards the relations of insecurity and trauma within which some people supposedly choose to use drugs and alcohol or be unemployed. Here, commonplace disdain for people who are poor or use drugs is reframed and the critique directed towards the everyday, legal and accepted practices of proprietorship through which wealthier classes enjoy considerable material comfort at the expense of poorly paid workers, or—as another speaker emphasized—poorly housed tenants: "A bunch [of the owners of Downtown Eastside SROs] live in West Point Grey[35] and I think they're incredibly invested in the lives of poor people" (Opp 3x2). Taken together, these various comments highlight how what are commonly seen as problems of Downtown Eastside residents are shaped by broader, exploitative economic social and political arrangements through which particular people benefit from the impoverishment of others.

6.3 Missing / in Action: Narratives of Subjectivity

Within the hearings, the reifying discourse of mix can be seen as part of a broader storyline of *absent subjectivity* in which human capacities, actions, impacts—and even people themselves—seem to go missing.

[35] Widely recognized as of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Vancouver.

6.3.1 "Times change" and "the streets are quiet": Agentless change, lifeless inaction

This effect of agentlessness is apparent, for one, as some speakers offered accounts of neighbourhood dynamics that seemed devoid of subjectivity, in which events and phenomena were construed in terms of social facts. Accounts of agentless change are apparent as speakers referenced the naturalness of progress, development and migration (Supp 21; Oth 7; Coun 9 to Opp 33). One speaker explained, "As our population increases, our land mass decreases [and] the only way to handle that is to [build] up" (Oth 3). Another stated, "The argument of progress is just unbeatable … we developed over time" (Supp 24). "Like it or not," states Blomley in his discussion of property relations in the Downtown Eastside, "such 'natural urban evolution' appears as inevitable as Vancouver's winter rains, or the spawning of the salmon"[36] (2004, p. 84).

Effects of disappeared agency are also noticeable in a series of speakers' exchanges with one councillor, who, when challenged about apparent inconsistencies in the HAHR process, explained these shifts in the City's approach by drawing on the matter-of-fact idea that *times change*: "Do times change? Do circumstances and the world change in your opinion? … Times have changed and things do change … you know, you've got to keep up to date" (Coun 9 to Opp 9). Later, the same councillor applied this narrative of arbitrary and/or inevitable change ("times change") to minimize the potential loss of the neighbourhood's oldest Chinese restaurant—Foo's Ho Ho:

> Foo's Ho Ho, for example … tastes have changed … times are changing a bit;

[36] Of course, Blomley's symbolic images of inevitability are increasingly loaded with irony in the context of contemporary ecological damages including degradation of spawning habitat and pervasive climate change-related drought.

> nobody likes to eat that because it's very heavy and greasy, it's old style cooking … this is why I'm talking about understanding a bit of shift and change. (Coun 9 to Opp 16)

But impressions of subjectlessness emerge through other storylines too, for one, as the deterioration of Chinatown's businesses, retail and economy are frequently characterized in terms of an absence of agency. As speakers portray Chinatown's current condition as one of vacancy, lifelessness, "decline" and "decay" (Supp 1; Supp 10; Supp 14; Supp 6; Supp 15; Supp 6x2) and describe how "there are many vacant stores in Chinatown and the streets are quiet at night" (Supp 3), they repeatedly convey images of lifeless inaction. One speaker explained "Chinatown has been deteriorating … . Today if you go to Chinatown, you will see [on] every block just empty stores, closed up" (Supp 20). If things continued this way, cautioned another, Chinatown would become a "ghost town" (Supp 10).

Accounts of inaction were also repeatedly taken up in descriptions of Chinatown as almost frozen in time. One speaker stated: "All community evolves over time … . So, why is it not evolving" (Oth 7)? In another version of this narrative, a councillor summed up HAHR opponents' calls to protect affordability as the suggestion to "do nothing" (Coun 11; see also Supp 4x2). Several other presenters characterized Chinataown as "waiting," being held "down," held "up" and/or held "in check" (Supp 2; Oth 1; Supp 5; Supp 11; Supp 13; Supp 15; Supp 23). Many of these latter comments likely referenced the status of Chinatown Revitalization planning—a City-led process that began in the late 1990s and had produced the 2002 Vision, but seemed to have become stalled sometime after 2006 (see Ip, 2011).

While the councillor's assertion that "times change" is on one hand consistent with relational and dialectical emphases on process, flux and flow (see Chapter 2), in discursive exchanges with speakers this truism is not used to facilitate understanding of complex dynamics.

Instead, this social logic is deployed at certain points as a mystifying pronouncement of ineluctability, a means of deflecting presenters' claims that councillors or others could or should intervene differently in neighbourhood dynamics. Indeed, times do change. But such changes are *made* through the cumulative historical practices of conscious subjects acting creatively within these times. Gotham has coined the term "tourism gentrification" to emphasize the intentional practices through which neighbourhoods are transformed in accordance with specific objectives:

> One particular myth is the claim that consumer desires are forces to which capital merely reacts. Consumer taste for gentrified spaces is, instead, created and marketed, and depends on the alternatives offered by powerful capitalists who are primarily interested in producing the built environment from which they can extract the highest profit. (Gotham, 2005 as cited in Lees et al, 2008, p. 132)

Gotham's analysis emphasizes how, although the dynamics of neighbourhood change are complex and are not reducible to the intent or practices of a single actor or group, they do not (as the councillor seems to imply) just happen arbitrarily and without agency. But, as some speakers assert—explicitly or implicitly—that height increases and densification reflect an inevitable evolution or "progress," the conscious human choices through which these policies are implemented is obscured and alternatives rendered invisible.

Subjectless accounts of Chinatown's decline do not fully convey how such effects emerge through—not simply inaction, but—strategic choices or action on the part of state, commercial and development entities. Characterizations of Chinatown as "on hold" can be read to signal an *active* refocusing of City priorities and/or policies—a topic I take up more fully in chapter 8. Further, in discussing "leakages" of Chinese-Canadian investment and commercial activity to suburban neighbourhoods, research conducted for the 2002 Chinatown Vision links Chinatown's vacant storefronts to active, competitive commercial strategies on the part of large supermarket and mall developers. For instance, the recent emergence of the full-service Asian

supermarket chain, T&T had entailed strategic locational choices, with stores opening "near almost every major Chinese residential area in the Greater Vancouver region," thus greatly reducing trips to Chinatown (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, p. 10). The 1998 opening of a T&T location in a new condominium development beside Chinatown likely created further, local, competition for Chinatown's struggling small shops. The same research study outlines competitive strategies on the part of suburban Asian-themed malls:

> A recent development within these malls has been the attempt on the part of mall management to establish themselves as centre[s] of the Chinese community in Richmond through Chinese New Year festivals, talent contests, and beauty pageants. From these events, the emerging role of these malls in moving beyond just a commercial function and into larger sociocultural institution can be seen—a role that was once the sole domain for Chinatown. (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, p. 10)

As I've described (see Chapter 4), this kind of active commercial strategizing is a routine part of doing business in the context of capitalism's competitive markets.

During the hearings, some speakers also sought to highlight how the neighbourhood's apparent decay might relate to speculative actions on the part of large developers: "I suspect some of the developers that are pushing for this height increase in fact have bought up buildings and boarded them up" (Opp 11; see also Opp 34 to Coun 9). Another exchange went as follows:

> [Opp 64: One shopping centre] has about 12 to 15 stores in it and they're all empty … they were all strata [ownership], the different stores in it. But it looks like [the ownership]'s all been consolidated.
>
> [Coun 5:] So, the commercial strata titles are concentrating so they can be redeveloped? … What's causing the collapse of the shops on Hastings street …?
>
> [Opp 64:] Well, there's a lot of speculation there too. For years and years [the owner], the president of the Gastown BIA, owned Burns Block[37] and held it

[37] A well-known heritage building at 18 West Hastings Street.

empty.

Harvey describes how the withholding of property to create artificial scarcity is a common strategy for ensuring return on investment. In this approach, a part of capital (including money, land and built real estate) "is withdrawn from circulation and in effect goes on strike. Restricting the supply of capital to new investment … ensures a high rate of return on that capital which is in circulation" (Harvey, 2014, para. 11). Tacit awareness of these speculative market strategies was also apparent, for instance, as one HAHR supporter hoped that vacant lot owners would "move on and get going" (Supp 7) and in the acknowledgements of one councillor who stated, "The market is there to make money. [Developers] control the supply [of housing]" (Coun 2).

This reading of hearing debate thus brings into relief how, instead of the seeming association of Chinatown's decline with a lack of agency, visible qualities of emptiness and stagnancy can instead be grasped as relating to the choices of state, development and property-holding subjects who act strategically to navigate speculative market dynamics. In opposition to assertions that the neighbourhood was "not evolving" or that *times* simply *changed*, critical narratives scrutinize mystifying images of subjectlessness to emphasize how these phenomena are produced through market actors' creative agency-in-circumstance.

6.3.2 Subjectivity gone missing

While public discourses of inevitable progress and "changing times" mask subjectivity by conveying *change without agency*, subjectivity is also obscured within narratives that take up the inverse formulation of *agency without change*. As in narratives of money-go-round flow, revitalization was, in hearing discourse, often publicly envisioned as a flurry of market-based

practices: shopping and nightlife, working and playing, development and investment. But, when it came to questions of harm for low-income residents, this subjectivity frequently seemed to go missing as these activities were predicted to have no impact on the assets and tenure of low-income residents.

In some cases, this played out as a confusing, selective acknowledgement of potential revitalization benefits and harms that seemed to occur along geographic lines. On one hand, property dynamics (e.g., 'nuisance' uses, commercial decline, appearance and cleanliness, etc.) in adjacent areas of the Downtown Eastside were understood to impact commercial activities in Chinatown:

> Two years ago Chinatown [BIA], along with Gastown BIA, did a perception report. The … report basically says the hotel concierges do not recommend tourists to go to the Chinatown area; the area is not safe. Unless you want to be very adventurous and see the world's first safe injection site and all the needles in the alley… Some day I would like to bring my kids to Chinatown where it is safe and drug free. (Supp 10)

The City, stated another speaker, should focus on improving "not just Chinatown, [but] the Downtown Eastside as a whole, so that people do not have negative concerns about coming down to the Downtown Eastside" (Supp 4; see also Oth 7). These comments are consistent with 2002 telephone survey findings in which "a sense of personal endangerment" and "the presence of drugs and drug addicts…" were sometimes cited as reasons for not visiting Chinatown (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, p. 8).

In these accounts, speakers convey an understanding of social and economic dynamics in the broader area as interconnected, traversing the geographical boundaries of Chinatown. However, when it came to discussions about how such relations moved in the other direction—i.e., wherein investments in Chinatown properties might raise prices in other areas of the

Downtown Eastside—the potential for related harms often went unacknowledged, as though such dynamics only move one way.

Instead, the HAHR proposals were often conveyed in terms of self-sufficiency and autonomy (Supp 2; Supp 5; Supp 10; Supp 20; Supp 2x2). The HAHR would enable Chinatown to be a self-supporting, "sustainable and complete community" (Supp 7x2). Although calls for local autonomy often entail important political demands, in this context they also support the impression that the market activities of Chinatown actors are somehow cut-off and thus not implicated in or affected by development pressures in the broader area. "Allow us to proceed on the HAHR proposal without interference please," stated a representative of the Chinatown Revitalization Committee. "We had already considered all impacts and circumstances to our neighbours and concluded that all of us from the DTES will benefit" (Supp 2).

Taken together with other assurances that affordable units and shops would not be adversely affected (see Chapter 5), such storylines culminate in a confusing, selective portrayal of impacts bolstered by public discourses in which revitalization activities are portrayed as a series of private transactions centred on things: shoppers buying products, developers starting construction, buyers purchasing condos, owners improving buildings and businesses leasing storefronts. In many speakers' predictions of money-go-round flow, this market-based agency is acknowledged and even emphasized, but seemed to go missing in relation to gentrification-associated losses. For the owner of the redeveloped boutique Keefer Suites apartments, the recent proliferation of new restaurants, bars and clubs were "not harming anything" (Opp 61). On the last night of hearings, a City planner provided the following summary: "Our conclusion is that the proposed height changes are a fair balance of interests coming from all directions and that they could proceed without significant impact" (Staff 4).

6.3.3 Ghosting

This cluster of understandings is consistent with Sartre's elaboration of seriality in which common forms of human life are structured by the core experience of "doing unto things" (Hayim, 1980, p. 87). Such narratives are also linked to what one speaker described as *ghosting*:

> [In] policy debate, the human aspect of gentrification often gets ghosted, or goes unseen. But what [gentrification] really does outside of the built environment is to tear apart … the very things that make cities livable, the very relationships that make a human, sustainable city. (Opp 71)

This thing-centred ghosting can be read into the hearing's various narratives of subjectlessness. Within calls for body heat and in descriptions of Chinatown as vacant, dead and in danger of becoming a "ghost town," the practices, dignity and even the existence of some people appear to be denied. In one somewhat unusual narrative, one presenter stressed that the area was really "only buildings":

> The Downtown Eastside is really not that bad; only humans make it that bad. I mean, if you take a look at it, they just have buildings. Buildings are only buildings. How can buildings [become] bad? It's us. If we can make it bad, we can make it good … . If you have an overall design … I'm pretty sure we can make it the most liveable area, the most beautiful area of Vancouver again. (Oth 7)

While the exact intended meaning of this assertion is unclear (and inspired some combination of booing and laughter from others present) this speaker's phrasing nonetheless reduces the Downtown Eastside to its buildings and to conveys humans and/or human activities as obstacles to livability which could be overcome through better urban design. (Whether or not the speaker includes themselves as one of these human obstacles is unclear.) This apparent characterization of human practices and even people as obstacles to development hints at relations of seriality wherein individuals are "subjects who regard themselves and others as

objects" (Poster, 1979, p. 67). It further signals the extent of dehumanization that seriality entails, wherein the individual "exists as a mere 'thing,' an objective fact, and Other, to be manipulated or even annihilated in the name of scarcity" (Hayim, 1980, p. 78).

6.4 Scarcity, Seriality, Hostility

Indeed, throughout the HAHR hearings, many presentations can be read as striking accounts of the kinds of thing-centred, competitive and even hostile dynamics that Sartre's milieu of scarcity entails. Not only do the HAHR hearings and reports reflect an extensive preoccupation with neighbourhood materiality, but, as speakers describe conditions in Chinatown, they also repeatedly describe a situation in which there is "not enough to go around" (see Chapter 2). HAHR supporters stress that there are not enough businesses to fill storefronts, not enough shoppers to support businesses and not enough capital for renovations and upgrades. Opponents, meanwhile, describe how there is not enough affordable housing, income and social supports. In response to calls for affordable housing, councillors protest that there are not enough resources in the municipal budget: "Everybody comes to the City to resolve that issue and we appreciate that, but of course our pocket is only so deep and is very limited" (Coun 2 to Opp 31).

Many narratives further suggest a climate of bitter struggle over these scarce resources; dynamics of tension were playing out across Chinatown's changing landscape. Such relations could be particularly vicious for poor Chinese seniors. Many of these elderly residents report pervasive racist hostility from English-speaking service users who perceive them through racial stereotypes as wealthy (and thus undeserving) in the context of competition for access to food programs and other services (Wong, 2013a). Low-income presenters described an increase in private security guards, surveillance and discriminatory treatment in or around middle-class

establishments (Opp 15, Opp 18, Opp 74). One anecdote revealed how the residents of one social housing building and the condominium development next door "basically … ignore each other" (Opp 49). Another presenter had witnessed the ridicule of an elderly panhandler by patrons of a newly opened nightclub (Opp 74).

These latter accounts are consistent with a series of Dutch studies in which contact between middle-class and low-income households in newly restructured[38] neighbourhoods tended to be "superficial at best and downright hostile at worst" (Lees, 2008, p. 2456, after Uitermark et al.). Indeed, some presenters stressed how neighbourhood changes were characterized by subtle and overt forms of violence. These speakers described an increase in homophobic slurs, discrimination, racist remarks and instances of low-income kids being bullied by their new, wealthier schoolmates (Opp 3; Opp 15; Opp 18; Opp 74). Another presenter recalled a struggle that had played out over a section of sidewalk:

> There was a guy trying to sell a drawing … the bouncer comes out right away and tells the guy to move on. Now it's a public space; it's a sidewalk. There's no reason why just because I—a middle-class person—am in that neighbourhood, that the bouncer should feel he should move people out. I'm a big guy, I can handle myself. And it's not about whether the bouncer is a bad person or not. These are structural issues. … These have to do with, the more people go into the neighbourhood, they demand the standard of lifestyle that they would enjoy in Dunbar or in West Van.[39] (Opp 56[40])

As this speaker points out, the bouncer's actions are not simply an individual act, but occur in the context of broader relations of competition and dehumanization, which Sartre ascribes to individuals relating through things. Indeed, the accounts of many low-income

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[38] Restructured through the City of Rotterdam's attraction of so-called "desired households" to "problem areas" (Uitermark et al. as cited in Lees, 2008 pp. 2455).
[39] Wealthy areas of Greater Vancouver.
[40] A different speaker (Opp 74) describes a similar situation outside the Keefer Suites bar in which a homeless resident who is "politely" asking patrons for change is displaced by police after the bar hostess calls 911.

residents and advocates reflect deeply affecting relations of dehumanization of both self and others. As in the cases of low-income speakers who stressed they were "not a bum" and who appealed to Council for the opportunity to "show the world [and] the City, that we too are people" (Opp 62; Opp 50; on page 176, above), some poor residents can actually be heard to ask for recognition of their humanity. Those living outside of our community, stated one low-income Chinatown resident, prefer to think of our reality

> as useless, and [that] it's up to them to destroy and/or change it as they wish … they peer at us as if we are strange animals in a zoo instead of people who are often far wiser from hard experiences … People living [in our neighbourhood] are not expendable pieces of dirt. (Opp 75)

Accounts such as this one reflect how, for many low-income residents, ongoing neighbourhood changes were associated with a heightened sense of precarity and threat sparked by an influx of powerful and sometimes hostile Others. In presentations, current residents and housing activists referred to those coming to the neighbourhood as "rich," "profiteering," "speculators" or "yuppies." These terms are generally not meant as complimentary and suggest that what matters most about incoming owners and/or residents is their economic status. One speaker seemed seemed to racialize this threat as stemming from "rich folks from Hong Kong" (Opp 49). A resident described the pace of change in the neighbourhood and the experience of becoming homeless as "terrifying." The speaker went on, "We can't call this home if we're subject to the whims of those who have more than we do." (Opp 30)

Impressions of victimization and hostility were especially conveyed as numerous presenters characterized neighbourhood dynamics in terms of violence and military conquest (Opp 47; Opp 55; Opp 45). One low-income Chinatown resident stated "ordinary people don't fight back … [but] vicious hungry people like developers do fight, very, very hard and very

dirty" (Opp 13). One described the march of tall buildings up the street (Opp 74); others expressed the sense of being preyed upon, tasered, bullied and "invaded" (Opp 2; Opp 35; Opp 52). Several characterized the situation as a "class war" (Opp 13; Opp 16; Opp 74). Promises of "vitality," stressed one speaker, were akin to Homer's Trojan horse: "Hidden within those luring promises of revitalization and community benefits are the shock troops of gentrification, that threaten the majority low-income residents and small businesses of Chinatown with massive displacement" (Opp 23).

Meanwhile, those speaking in support of the HAHR did not characterize Chinatown's incoming condo residents or developers as threatening or hostile—one stated, for instance, "More people are nice … what's the problem with more people" (Supp 21)?—many nonetheless conveyed ongoing neighbourhood dynamics in terms of threat. This is to some extent audible in descriptions of the area as "not safe" for children or tourists (Supp 10, above) or as presenter and real estate agent noted that new businesses took "a big risk in investing in *foreign territory*" (Supp 8; my emphasis). However, by far the most prevalent pro-HAHR accounts of antagonism were those in which Downtown Eastside housing and anti-poverty activists were grasped as hostile Others. Some HAHR supporters suggested that Chinatown was being held "hostage" (Supp 8) and that Downtown Eastside residents and allies had "declar[ed] war" (Supp 4). Opponents of the HAHR, stated one speaker, had "opportunistically" "provoke[d]" "division and fear that has been caused by misunderstanding" (Supp 2x2). They had "targeted" and "coerced" "non-English speaking [seniors] and shopkeepers" (Supp 4x2; see also Coun 9 to Supp 8; Supp 8x2; Supp 6; Supp 2x2). The use of such language—replete with metaphors of combat and violation—suggests that both HAHR supporters and opponents were experiencing the hearings in terms of a deeply affecting sense of struggle.

6.5 Property Relations and the (Re)production of Space

These myriad expressions of mutual hostility lay bare an important insight which in many ways lies at the root of hearing debate about the merits of revitalization. While predominant public narratives of vitality, mix, and money-go-round flow treat the neighbourhood as a series of built elements and convey the impression of acting in relation to things, as Blomley recounts, the basis of *property* is not simply a private matter between a person and their possessions. Instead, property relies on a set of social and political relations that are enacted (albeit through things) *between people*. Blomley cites Morris Cohen to underscore how scholars of legal realism have long recognized that property relations should be grasped in terms of intersubjectivity:

> Whatever technical definition of property we may prefer, we must recognize that a property right is a relation not between an owner and a thing, but between the owner and other individuals in reference to things…. [T]he essence of private property is always the right to exclude others. (Cohen as cited in Blomley, 2004, p. 98)[41]

Blomley emphasizes that what follows from this awareness of property as social and intersubjective is that property relations are political; they "must be seen as contextual and potentially inequitable" (2004, p. 97). The accounts of Downtown Eastside residents and activists who describe being viewed as "animals," as "disposable" and as prey makes clear how ongoing relations of neighbourhood change are experienced as—not merely private transactions

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[41] In fact, this same point is made at the HAHR hearings in a rather unusual presentation wherein the speaker (who did not offer an affiliation) quoted at length from the circa 1765 musings of British jurist and professor William Blackstone:

> There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination and engages the affections of mankind as the right of property. Or, that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, *in total exclusion of the right of any other individual* in the universe. (Supp 21, citing Blackstone, 1765-1768, Book 2, Chapter 1; my emphasis)

and/or ‘natural’ evolution—but social relations characterized by the hostile exercise of economic power.

6.5.1 “Revitalization for who?” Zones of Exclusion

This critical grasp of the social and political dynamics of revitalization is perhaps most incisively captured in analyses of what neighbourhood advocates had begun to name as *Zones of Exclusion.* One presenter and activist explained,

> Now, gentrification not only forces people out of the neighbourhood through increasing land values and higher rents, it also produces a kind of internal displacement for low-income residents by creating Zones of Exclusion. Zones of Exclusion are spaces where people are unable to enter because they lack the necessary economic means for participation. As wealthier people move into the neighbourhood, more spaces are devoted to offering amenities that cater to them. Grocery stores, banks, coffee shops, restaurants, salons, various retail stores, night clubs, stylish pubs, etc., begin to appear throughout the neighbourhood and are priced beyond what people on fixed low-income can afford … And Zones of Exclusion also become sites that are marked by increased surveillance and policing, strategies of control and punishment are implemented at these sites in order to protect them from the presence of the unwanted people and from potential disruption. Only those with status, privilege and wealth can enter. All others are watched, carefully monitored, interrogated and criminalized. So, as gentrification produces more and more Zones of Exclusion, low-income residents become alienated from their own community. It’s the experience of internal displacement—the feeling of being out of place in one’s own neighbourhood. (Opp 23)

As in the refrain of “people not buildings” this re-casting of revitalization as exclusion underscores how, as the seemingly benevolent logics of vitality and mix are pursued through built property, they both mask and enable a zero-sum re-organization of urban space in which efforts to entice certain groups effects the displacement of others. When buildings, storefronts and empty lots are ‘improved,’ if owners and investors (including the City) are to recoup the costs of redevelopment, these places must be oriented towards at least some minimum of revenue

generation, for instance through profits, rents and taxes. Property by property, the neighbourhood becomes re-made in accordance with the incentives and exigencies of highest, best use. Low-income uses and spaces—and residents themselves—are increasingly in competition for space with the more lucrative consumption practices of affluent visitors and/or resident-consumers. Blomley cites Mitchell who suggests that for actors implicated in these dynamics, a "central motivation has been to enhance 'the exchangeability of the urban landscape in a global economy of largely equivalent places'" (in Blomley, 2004, p. 77). Such efforts to reorganize urban space, Blomley further describes, are also aesthetic interventions: When "the goal is to ensure that the homeless population does not threaten the exchange values concretized in the material landscape," corresponding narratives render these spaces in "morally charged ways [for instance,] as dangerous [and] threatening" (Blomley, 2004, p. 77). In the hearings, reverberations of these public storylines are audible at certain points, for instance, in complaints about "needles in the alley" and in calls for more people who will keep the area "clean," "under order" and safe for tourists and children (Supp 10, Oth 7).

The hearings are replete with accounts of the reproduction of space. The gentrifying effect of the HAHR, explained one low-income resident, will be "class transformation": "a remaking of working class space to serve the needs of middle and upper class people" (Opp 30, citing Newman & Wyly, 2005). As in critiques of commercial mix (see Chapter 5), presenters detailed how access to neighbourhood spaces was becoming increasingly restricted on the basis of wealth, especially as nightclubs, concert venues and galleries charged admission to even set foot in these buildings. One Chinatown resident specified the considerable costs that accessing such spaces could entail:

> The Ginger, V6A[42], London Pub cafe, Keefer bar, Bao Bei, they're all simply middle class islands in one of Vancouver's founding neighbourhoods. Low-income people are unwelcome … The Keefer [Suites] condo building features 100 dollar penthouse swimming parties for an exclusive clientele and the Bao Bei [restaurant] … caters exclusively to a monied crowd, $50 a dinner. (Opp 16)

Another speaker and low-income resident stated,

> Development is changing the neighbourhood. I mean that's good if you've got a lot of money, but if you're in a low-income household it's not so good … The increase in rents are pushing out affordable eateries; I think of somewhere like Blake's … That's gone …. Just on that same block there's a place now, it's called Bonita's. Now, there's no chance that I'm going to be going in there soon. It might be affordable if you sit on Council. (Opp 19)

These and other detailed and insightful descriptions of neighbourhood change can equally be read as critiques of capitalist cultures of knowing. In sharing specific, often personal, accounts, speakers significantly disrupt abstract supply-demand narratives of mix wherein the equation of "more residents" (in general), to economic activity or demand (in general) enables the conflation of people with units of wealth. These vague equivalencies obscure extreme inequalities in the way purchasing power is actually distributed. Being a person (or household) can have relatively little to do with one's part in the general field of consumer demand; individuals—irrespective of their human need for housing, food, or other necessities—do not count as part of demand unless they have the financial resources to purchase these as commodities. Predominant discourses of money-go-round flow obscure how much of this flow can be concentrated within a small proportion of people in an area while others are left out. The significance of grasping revitalization as uneven and differentiated is likewise stressed by Williams and Smith:

> It is often argued that the benefits of gentrification are far greater than the costs (Schill & Nathan, 1983). Whether this is true is doubtful, but more important it is

[42] *Like Ginger, V6A* is a relatively new Chinatown condo development.

> beside the point. The benefits and costs are so unevenly distributed that one has to look not at some overall equation but at different segments of the population. There are distinct losers as well as winners, and the consistent losers are the poor and the working class who will be displaced as gentrification proceeds, and who will confront higher housing costs in tight markets (Williams & Smith, 1986, as cited in Lees, 2008, p. 2457).

Based on her more recent review of studies on social mixing, Lees concurs that "the evidence … suggests that over the longer-term poor people suffer more from the loss of benefits of living in a poor neighbourhood, than they gain from living in a more affluent one" (2008, p. 2463). Together with accounts offered by hearing speakers, such analyses underscore how general promises of benefits (e.g., through busy storefronts, development activity and investment) break down when attention is focused to the specific, property-centred relations through which only particular people can participate in and benefit from these flows of wealth.[43] In discourses of "urban regeneration," states urban geographer Neil Smith,

> it is not "people" in general who are to be brought "back into our cities"; this appeal is not aimed at Welsh coal miners, Bavarian farm workers, or Breton fisherfolk. Rather, the appeal to bring people back into the city is always a self-interested appeal that the white middle and upper-middle classes retake control of the political and cultural economies as well as the geography of the largest cities. Probing the symptomatic silence of *who* is to be invited back into the city begins to reveal the class politics involved. (2002, p. 445; my emphasis)

This recognition is repeatedly audible during the hearings as speakers demanded, "Revitalize *for who*" (Opp 21)? "Who benefits in the long run?" stated one Downtown Eastside resident: "[We] … see no value in high rises …. If these high rises go up, we—Downtown Eastside residents and

[43] In an article published around the time of the hearing, local commentator Gabriel Yiu likewise sought to underscore the differentiated ways in which the purported benefits of Chinatown's revitalization were likely to play out: "The appreciation of property value sounds like good news, but it really depends on your standpoint. If you're a property owner who is going to sell or re-develop your property, this would bring you quick and impressive profits. But for those who are not planning to sell at this time, or those who want to sell but are unable to, or for those who lease the space, this is not good news. It's because they would have to pay more property tax. Those who would be affected are not only property owners, but their tenants, as well" (Yiu, 2011).

the Chinatown residents—lose. And you [who have] power will not look back at the devastation" (Opp 50; see also Opp 39; Opp 46 to Coun 9; Opp 49).

6.5.2 Preserved buildings as lost community

Related critiques make apparent how popular understandings in which the praxis of revitalization was limited to *thing*s could form the conceptual basis through which it was possible to effect the trade-off of some people for others. In marked contrast to subjectless accounts of the neighbourhood as empty, one low-income resident emphasized how the HAHR process had been

> disrespectful to the *existing* community. Why not want to know from *us* what's going on and … what's good and what's not … I don't want to undermine all of the work that's been done with the… associations and businesses in Chinatown … But when you're [helping] one section of a community at the expense of others, that's not right. (Opp 39; my emphasis. See also Opp 80)

With redevelopment, another explained, "you … have a whole bunch of people that move into the community … effectively supplanting the people that are there" (Opp 65). "It's not just [that] you're dressing up the buildings" stressed a third speaker "you're … replacing some … people [with] some other community coming in." (Opp 37x2)

Despite these repeated efforts to refocus attention in terms of impacts on people, such interventions should not be taken to indicate that poor residents and allies did not view the neighbourhood's material elements as important. Many clearly grasped how human qualities of health and wellbeing were affected in fundamental ways by Chinatown's built characteristics. Not only thing-centred interests in economy and investment, but fundamental human needs are, as Sartre stressed, inextricably linked to materiality. Local small businesses were valued for providing affordable goods and amenities, but were also recognized as a means of livelihood for

business owners and employees. One speaker stated, “I can’t even imagine what it must be like for people who … are trying to feed their families… [with] a business where they’re looking at new buildings going up around them, where it’s [becoming] more expensive to do business” (Opp 12). Likewise, as speakers highlighted the “deplorable,” poorly lit and cramped living conditions within many of the area’s run-down SROs (see Chapter 5), or report seeing “people defecating in public because [there aren’t] enough public washrooms” (Opp 37), they highlight the obvious relation between materiality and human need. People, emphasized one speaker, need “proper housing that includes a bathroom and kitchen [to have] some kind of dignity back. People will change their lives too, they’ll be worth living” (Opp 15). Another declared, “You don’t have to do 3000 studies and spend millions of dollars to tell you that if someone has a home they have a better life” (Opp 39). These expressions of concern call attention to the fundamental way in which conditions of health and basic dignity were understood as tied to built elements of Chinatown.

But while these descriptions convey the relatedness between wellbeing and neighbourhood materiality, many other times this relation seemed to be conceptualized via practices of conflation. Via the discursive mixing-up of people and things, human and social qualities such as health, community and culture were not only conveyed as connected to—but sometimes seemed to be actually equated with—economic practices of investment and preservation of historic streetscapes. As a practice of knowing, notes Allman (2007), conflation serves to simplify complexity by ignoring specificity; in this case, the specific ways in which preservation of built spaces would not necessarily bring security for low-income community members. Existing policy measures had not prevented poor people from being displaced from their homes and other local spaces; like the Wing Sang building (see Chapter 5), other restored

(often publicly subsidized) heritage buildings and projects—such as the Keefer Suites and the Bao Bei restaurant—were lived out as Zones of Exclusion. One Chinatown resident offered a dramatic account of the shifts that had accompanied restoration of the historic Pacific Hotel:

> On the corner, for example, the Pacific Pub has been removed and replaced with the London pub … The Pacific Pub was always filled with local residents, mostly seniors who lived in the housing above there … What's gone in, in its place, there's just nothing left of what was there before. It's a completely different community … what we saw was just a complete *wiping*. And the older people there, the low-income people there, I don't know where they are now. It was a very stable crowd of people… maybe they're in their rooms alone now. (Opp 57; speaker's emphasis)

These characterizations of preserved buildings as *lost community* stand in marked contrast to other narratives—apparent throughout the HAHR hearings and reports—in which improving Chinatown was envisioned in terms of architecture, setbacks, frontages and facades. The difference between these built improvements and the underlying relations of displacement that they can entail was made clear when one speaker poignantly contrasted these lines of thinking:

> You know, I'm in favour of revitalization. I'm in favour of the middle class presence in the neighbourhood. But I think that can be accomplished by raising the standard of living of people who *live* in the neighbourhood, not by bringing [other people in]." (Opp 56; speaker's emphasis)

The logic illustrated in this quote is vastly different from reifying discourses in which poverty is inscribed as a personal trait of individuals. Instead, this speaker conveys poverty (and middle class being) as contingent: an external condition that can be altered via collective praxis and structural change.

In this way, many hearing tensions can be read to reflect the specific and everyday ways in which the materiality of place structures (and is structured by) competitive and dehumanizing social relations of scarcity. Neighbourhood space, as Blomley describes, is not simply a

“backdrop” to struggle, “but is itself created through that contest, serving in turn to become a vital symbolic and practical component in future contestations” (2004, p. 53). Each transformed space becomes part of the impetus and instrument for subsequent rounds of change. The hearings make audible how, in market conditions of scarce urban space, actors complete for access to housing, for jobs and income, for use of sidewalks and—as in one of Sartre’s examples—for seats on the bus. In these spatialized classed encounters, all manner of neighbourhood interactions are significantly mediated by what one possesses. In the transformation of the physical environment through neighbourhood “improvement,” poor individuals are increasingly excluded in favour of those better equipped to consume. Within Sartre’s pervasive milieu of scarcity, explains Poster, “some will be designated as expendables. Some people will be designated as non-human in relation to scarce resources” (1979, p. 56). Indeed, several referred to these ongoing dynamics as “social,” “low income,” or “class” cleansing” (Opp 16; Opp 26; Opp 55).

As Cohen’s explanation (on page 192, above) makes clear, capitalist property rights are premised on the right to exclude others. And, as many speakers at the hearings emphasized, this exercise of economic power to exclude others from access or use can correspond to devastating impacts on bodies and lives. Those on the losing side of this relation may not only experience the obvious physiological impacts of inadequate nutrition and shelter, but also less obvious, long-term physical and psycho-social-emotional impacts of pervasive stress associated with precarity and insecurity. Conditions of poverty can also increase individuals’ vulnerability to other forms of violent exploitation, for instance, volatile living situations and unsafe and/or exploitative forms of labour. Economic power is enforced through sanctioned forms of violence as businesses hire security guards to intimidate and physically remove unwanted persons and through the

culturally sanctioned verbal abuse of poor people (poor bashing) by those who are wealthy in comparison. Each of these commonplace dynamics can—and, I think, should—be understood as violence, as the imposition of damaging forces and/or conditions on bodies and on persons. [44]

6.6 "Condos are Killing Us": Representing Violence

This grasp of neighbourhood change in terms of economic violence is perhaps most dramatically conveyed on a poster that was displayed around the Downtown Eastside, inviting residents to attend the January 20, 2011 council meeting where the HAHR was to be discussed. On the poster, was a cascading series of images of cranes, each with a figure hanging from a noose (see Figure 6.1). Each figure wore a sweatshirt with the slogan "I [heart] Downtown Eastside Community." The title across the bottom read "FIGHT THE HEIGHT." A caption beneath indicated it was advertising a "DNC Action Against the Condo Towers Plan" and invited viewers to meet at the Carnegie Centre, presumably in order to travel together to City Hall. The subtitle "Condos are killing us" was adjacent to smaller print which stated, "The City wants to lift building height limits in the DTES for even more condos—speeding displacement and the destruction of our community. Come make your voice count: Thursday, Jan. 20, City Hall, 2 pm."

[44] Further, in light of such dynamics, even symbolic displays of wealth (as in expensive cars and jewellery) can be grasped in terms of the threatening display of economic power.

Figure 6.1 DNC Fight the Height poster.
Credit: Murray Bush (Flux Design). Used with permission.

On the last night of the hearings, after one speaker mentioned this poster in their presentation, at least three councillors began to question two Downtown Eastside organizers about their role in its production:

> [Coun 2:] Are you aware of this kind of poster being distributed? … I mean, it seems to me it's a misrepresentation. It's almost …
>
> [Opp 64x2:] [*interrupts*] It is an exaggeration … but our actual crisis is not an

> exaggeration; so, it's an expression of the crisis.
>
> …
>
> [Coun 2:] It's the same kind of tactic [used] … in the Fraserview riding, right? It's gone to court.[45]

Near the end of this exchange, the voice of another councillor (unknown; likely Coun 5 or Coun 9)[46] can be heard to interrupt the speaker, asking, "Do you regret it?" A moment later, a councillor (Coun 6) addressed the same speaker, pursuing the same line of questioning:

> It sounds as if that you're not regretting what went up. Is that what I heard you say? … I'm trying to understand … whether or not it's an all-or-none proposition for you. That the ends justify the means, is what it sounds like I'm hearing. (Coun 6 to Opp 64x2; see also Coun 9 to Opp 3x3)

As the DTES organizer indicates (above) the shocking imagery of the *Fight the Height!* poster can be understood as a dramatization of the housing crisis experienced by poor Downtown Eastside residents. The poster's portrayal of death by development was no doubt intended to provoke emotion and political action on the part of community members who might be motivated to speak out against gentrifying policies. However, on this last night of the hearings, the poster's graphic image had also clearly provoked responses from councillors and some speaking in support of the HAHR. In the series of exchanges about the poster, councillors' allegations of misrepresentation, illegality and characterizations of the poster as an "all-or-none" tactic wherein the "ends justify the means" suggest they viewed the DNC's production of the *Fight the Height!* poster as a serious misdeed. This sense of the poster as a grave offence is

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[45] Here, the councillor is referring to a series of ads and pamphlets distributed in Vancouver's Fraserview riding during 2005 and 2009 provincial elections. The materials targeted Chinese language households, contained inflammatory and misleading information about Party platforms and candidates, and did not identify a registered third-party advertiser which is a requirement under the Election Act.

[46] Based on where the speaker was looking in response to the questioner and my own familiarity with councillors' voices. The speaker was off mic and off camera and I was not in the room at the time of this exchange.

further emphasized by councillors' tone of inquisition as challenges pertaining to this poster were posed as part of a longer sequence of questions undertaken in the style of a courtroom cross-examination. One councillor also asked an HAHR supporter for comment; this speaker confirmed "people were quite upset by the images that it conveyed and people were not pleased with the entity … that crafted such posters" (Supp 4x2).

Indeed, the image depicted on the poster is disturbing and potentially upsetting, particularly for anyone who may have had a family member, friend, or ancestor die by hanging and/or suicide. While images of violence and violation are pervasive in the public realm—especially in news media and many forms of entertainment—many would nonetheless argue that use of such illustrations should be avoided. Leaving this debate aside, for my purposes what is striking about the interchange above is the stark contrast between these councillors' prolonged focus and tone of righteous indignation vis a vis the *Fight the Height!* poster graphics, alongside their relative lack of emphasis or even acknowledgement of the multiple real-life accounts of violence raised repeatedly throughout the hearings.

Aside from the two councillors who eventually voted against the proposal, the hearings reflect very little sense that the myriad gentrification-related harms described by speakers are recognized by councillors as significant or problematic. As I have described throughout this chapter, accounts of poverty-related stress, harm and even violence were pervasive throughout the hearings.[47] However, after presentations in which speakers described, for instance, facing discrimination; being denied work; becoming homeless and terrified; losing everything because

[47] My count finds that roughly 25 speakers indicated some (if not extensive) first hand experiences or accounts of struggle, hardship and/or violence due to poverty.

of addiction and living in slum-like conditions, none of these speakers was questioned or asked to provide more detail about their experiences. Instead, each of these speakers' accounts was answered by silence from councillors, followed by a dismissal from the Mayor, typically via an upbeat refrain: "Thanks for coming to speak!"

There were very few exceptions to this rule. Following one speaker's account of struggling through poverty from childhood, one councillor stated, "I know what it's like to grow up hungry," before proceeding to challenge the speaker's claims (Coun 9 to Opp 79). The same councillor's approach with a different speaker was much the same (Coun 9 to Opp 54). Further, following several speakers' assertions that local low-income kids were increasingly facing bullying by their new wealthier peers, one councillor subsequently mused in an exchange with a totally different speaker, "obviously they are from a different economic strata and that created a bit of a problem, but it's not a problem that can be resolved" (Coun 2 to Supp 16). Later, when a low-income resident described being excluded from a Chinatown family association building because she "looked native," the same councillor responded with an odd, joking dismissal-cum-justification, stating (in reference to family association leaders), "They're old guys, they'll die soon" (Coun 2 to Opp 54; see Chapter 8). In no other case—apart from the two councillors who later voted against the HAHR—did councillors respond with concerted expressions of empathy, concern or even acknowledgement following testimonies of economic harm. councillors' striking inattention to issues of rising rents, feelings of insecurity and experiences of hostile exclusion was highlighted by one speaker who stated "you've heard many references to class war in the last few hearings and none of you seem to flinch or even register what that means. [E]ither that's total lack of respect and inconsideration on your part, or just pure ignorance" (Opp 74).

While various councillors and HAHR supporters did recognize housing affordability as an important neighbourhood issue, this was often mentioned in the context of public assurances that Chinatown's low-income units would be "protected" (see Chapter 5). In line with this logic, following the presentation of one Downtown Eastside organizer, one councillor stated, "No one is denying [the need for housing], you know, you're preaching to the converted; you're just repeating over and over again" (Coun 9 to Opp 64x2). A second councillor added, "You don't have to badger us. I think we do what we can do" (Coun 2 to Opp 64x2). Read in this context, the *Fight the Height!* poster exchange (above) highlights a broader pattern of public meaning-making wherein resident-activist efforts to restrict the height of local buildings are treated and condemned in terms of violence that surpasses—in seriousness, alleged illegality and provocation of concern—the lived, flesh-and-blood violences experienced daily by low-income residents.

6.7 Inversions and Ironies

Crystallized in this exchange about the *Fight the Height!* poster are many of the problematic relations and inversions that I've discussed throughout this chapter. The juxtaposition of councillors' critical focus on the poster alongside their seeming inattention to pervasive concerns about resident wellbeing can be read to illustrate a broader pattern wherein the thing-centred relations of capitalist seriality not only structure relations of hostility, but also obscure the dynamics through which violences occur. The complex, fragmented and unpredictable relations of economic displacement are such that, as several speakers noted, even the repercussions of one's own actions can be obscured:

I'm … part of a large social network in Vancouver that is comprised of low

> income, artistic and generally hip individuals … There are many of my peers as well as a whole plethora of Vancouver residents that do not see the negative impacts of gentrification and are … in that subset of the population that is first to capitalize on the burgeoning business development that is the first wave of gentrification … Many of these people do not understand the prospect of gentrification and therefore accelerate all of its processes. (Opp 47)

Another speaker and resident of Chinatown noted,

> I don't think [the displacement of local residents] was deliberate. I'm not going to talk about conspiracies of social cleansing. What I'm going to say is that when you unleash these processes, it's really easy for them to roll over what was there in the past. (Opp 57)

The confusing and alienating nature of these dynamics is especially suggested by the hearing's narratives of subjectlessness: of lifeless decline, of development that is inevitable and natural, or, of market activities that take place without impacting affordability. Such understandings can be read to illustrate Sartre's theorization of how materiality can not only c*ome between* people, but can also *come between* people and their own subjectivity. While neighbourhood dynamics are shaped by human activity, the products that result do not necessarily reflect the intent of the original actor(s). Once absorbed by matter, "free praxis can lose its original intended meaning and take on new ones" (Poster, 1979, p. 59).

Likewise, while I have argued that dynamics of revitalization and social mix entail significant harms for low-income residents, hearing discourse does not convey the impression that pro-HAHR speakers wish to purposefully enact harm towards existing low-income residents. In fact, the hearings' pro-revitalization arguments reflect very little impression of action directed towards current residents at all. Instead, revitalization activities are more often portrayed as acting on buildings and/or towards spaces that are significantly empty. From this perspective, even the bouncer who—by threat of physical force—displaces the man with the drawing (on

page 189, above) can be understood as acting in relation to things. His action is likely not personal, but rather directed at "improving" that portion of sidewalk.

Taken together, the abstracted and mixed-up revitalization discourses which are audible in hearing debate combine to direct attention towards practices of *acting on things* while masking harmful impacts *on people*. During the hearings, changes proposed within the HAHR were commonly conveyed in terms of self-determination and thus as having little to do with low-income residents. As such, they were championed in terms of mutual non-interference; as one HAHR proponent put it, "Chinatown is unique as much as Gastown and other neighbouring areas. We should respect each other as neighbours … instead of saying … 'You cannot do this'" (Supp 11). But these narratives of autonomy also help to mask how relations of property are political relations of exclusion which are enacted between people; they seem to miss the dynamics through which harms and benefits accumulate to groups who are very differently positioned in Chinatown's material relations of place.

Read in this light, the poster's graphic portrayal of death-by-development reflects an attempt to refocus attention to the very human harms that the HAHR's ostensibly thing-centred proposals were likely to entail. As speakers repeatedly emphasized, flesh-and-blood violence would almost certainly occur as rising rents and prices meant that low-income residents were pushed onto the street, only to be subsequently forced off the street by bouncers, police and private security guards. As one Downtown Eastside organizer put it,

> Gentrification *is* violent and economic displacement of low-income people is *violence*. And it is the same. It is violent and it's just normalized. It is normalized to the extent that it's absurd to people and shocking to people [who] think that people being hung off of cranes is an exaggeration. But you know what? When you're talking about people being displaced out of their homes onto the street … it is violence and it is not an exaggeration for low-income people. (Opp 3x3 to Coun 9; speaker's emphasis)

Meanwhile in a near-complete inversion of the understandings expressed by many low-income residents and allies, several of those speaking in support of the proposals were emphatic that revitalization activities were not only not effecting harms, but that the opposite was true: Development activities were instead bringing regeneration and activity to lifeless space. Within some pro-revitalization narratives it was not problematic study boundaries that had "carve[d] out" Chinatown (Opp 10, see Chapter 5), but HAHR opponents who were responsible for practices of separation: "[These] people seem to think that the Downtown Eastside only belongs to the Downtown Eastside. I think the Downtown Eastside is also part of [the] whole [of] Vancouver" (Oth 7).

In this way, revitalization activities were often conveyed in terms of—not exclusion—but inclusion. As one speaker described, the proposed changes were part of making Chinatown "enticing" and "fun" so that people would come to the area:

> Chinatown is open to business for all. You do not have to be Chinese, you do not have to be Asian, to open a business in Chinatown. And you do not have to be Chinese [or] Asian to patronize Chinatown; you know, we welcome our neighbours. (Supp 4x2)

In contrast to poor residents' assertions that new developments were bringing an increase in social tension, pro-revitalization arguments more often envisioned a decrease in hostility, as new residents, visitors and businesses helped to bring order, cleanliness and safety to "foreign territory" (Supp 8, above).

The exchange about the poster highlights a further reversal in understanding wherein—while myriad property-based forms and relations of flesh-and-blood harms are missed—attempts to prevent gentrification are experienced in terms of antagonism and even violence. With revitalization activities grasped in terms of thing-centred actions and transactions, or in terms of

autonomy and self-determination, it is a short leap to understanding activists' political opposition as inappropriate meddlesomeness and even hostile interference. Blomley describes how, according to "the logic and telos of the property market,"

> developer[s] … and other likeminded entrepreneurs are welcomed as ushering in improvement and revitalization … Interventions by the state or local antrigentrification activists are thus imagined as just that—"public" incursions in a "private" process with its own objective momentum that can be explained only as wrongheaded and politically driven. (2004, p. 83)

Likewise, speaking about HAHR opponents, one prominent Chinatown businessperson stated,

> I can't end this presentation without saying a few words of concern about our neighbours that have waged a full assault not only on the City but on the Chinatown community, with a media and public relations campaign based on misinformation. These groups and their supporters [are advocating] an exclusive compound for affordable and social housing within the Downtown Eastside and also Chinatown. (Supp 8)

Narratives such as this suggest understandings in which the subjects of neighbourhood decline are not affluent and/or property-holding actors, speculators, powerful developers or elected decision-makers, but poor Downtown Eastside residents. In various pro-revitalization storylines, drug users pose threats to tourists and families and low-income residents' calls for housing are war-like and threatening an "exclusive compound." It is the poor who seem powerful and who are threatening to exclude the wealthy from the neighbourhood. This social logic was questioned by one local resident and advocate who stated, "I can assure you that it was not drug addicts or poor people that bought those storefronts and boarded them up" (Opp 11).

In this way, speakers on many sides of the HAHR debate conveyed ongoing neighbourhood dynamics in terms of highly charged, even military, language of tactics, coercion, criminality, invasion, interrogation, hostage-taking and targeting or preying upon vulnerable people. Such accounts make audible how it is not only vulnerable residents, but also relatively

wealthy and influential actors (including business and civil society leaders and government officials) who express narratives of agentlessness and victimization. However, while the violences described by low-income residents and activists centred on threats to housing, lack of access to food and displacement of low-income community networks and practices, the accusations of hostility and threat expressed by some councillors and pro-revitalization speakers usually related to political activities of mobilizing opposition. Activities conveyed as "declar[ing] war" and/or waging "assault" largely consisted of holding meetings, forming resident groups, collecting signatures for petitions, organizing low-income residents to speak at City Hall and especially, the display of a shocking graphic that dramatized the potentially violent implications of new development. The poster debate poignantly demonstrates an ironic public discursive logic wherein economic violence against people is missed, normalized and even valourized as development, and a cartoon representation of this same violence is perceived and condemned as a violent attack.

Chapter 7: Historicizing Place: Reading Colonization-Marginalization and Resistance

I, not knowing much about the history of Chinatown, … I do believe this: that it was considered as a neighbourhood [that] didn't have much in the way of infrastructure, and it was a place where immigrants, particularly Chinese [people], could live without [feeling] to be not wanted in other neighbourhoods. And what always happens in the Downtown Eastside? (The whole Downtown Eastside was pretty much like that: no one else wanted to live there, it was considered a dump, and people who were either immigrants and/or very poor tended to live there.) As soon as developers discovered what a gold mine that land was, it was too good for those low-income people: "Let's build condos! People can pay a million dollars for a condo and we'll make a fortune!"

(Opp 1)

In my analysis of discursive practices of meaning-making (see chapters 5 and 6), I became increasingly aware of tensions and disjunctures that seemed rooted in history. Accounts of Chinatown often referenced historical details and phenomena, signaling how contemporary understandings were connected to the past. In this chapter I take up the methodological thinking of Sartre and Ollman, together with Allman's call to grasp concepts and discourses in terms of their relational origins, to pursue an analysis that begins in the hearings' discursive dynamics of struggle and moves towards history.

To do so, I draw on analyses offered by critical geographers whose spatialized readings of local history emphasize the conceptual and material production of place; in addition to Blomley's (2004) work, I especially use Kay Anderson's (1987, 1991) detailed study of the intersection between race and place in what she describes as the "making" of Vancouver's Chinatown. Read in light of these critical histories, the hearings can be understood to contain echoes of old, familiar and problematic storylines which raise complex questions and should be made subject to critique. An historicized tracing of these narratives brings into view their

instrumentality within dynamics I read in terms of a recurring *conceptual-material dialectic of colonization and marginalization*.

7.1 Narratives of Place: Chinatown as Distinct, as Chinese and as Neglected

Woven through hearing debate were recurring narratives about the nature and qualities of Chinatown as place. As I've conveyed in earlier chapters, common assertions related to ideas of Chinatown as *distinct*—meaning both separate and unique. Frequent references to Chinatown's borders, buildings and properties conveyed the neighbourhood in terms of a *distinct space* or *series of spaces* (Chapter 5) with unique built character and special qualities of place (Chapter 4). During the hearings and in City documents, Chinatown was often described as having a special architectural and commercial look and feel that rendered it legible as a particular "six square blocks" (Supp 7; see Chapter 5). This legible space was marked by the decorative Millennium gate framing a distinctive street wall on its west side and "a noticeable edge to the east where … the Chinatown commercial district meets the lower scale residential areas of Strathcona" (Spaxman Consulting Group Limited & Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture Inc., 2008, p. 5). "Chinatown," remarked one speaker, "has an urbanism like no other in our city" (Opp 34).

Accounts of the neighbourhood's distinctive built and architectural qualities were commonly linked to its historic role as a settlement of the area's early Chinese migrants. At the time of the hearings, Vancouver's Chinatown was in the process of being designated as a National Historic Site of Canada and various speakers, including councillors, expressed concern that proposed rezoning changes might threaten this designation (Staff 1; Coun 8 to Supp 7x2; Coun 2 to Supp 7x2; Supp 1; Supp 9; Supp 15; Supp 19; Opp 34; Opp 73; Opp 68; Opp 68x2). The federal government's National Historic Site website states that the neighbourhood was

designated as a Historic Site because of its nature as a "self-segregated enclave, due in part to racially motivated hostility elsewhere in the city" and its historical and ongoing significance for Chinese Canadians and for Vancouver. The heritage character of Chinatown, notes the website, is also comprised of its "clearly defined boundaries" and unique "recessed balcony" hybrid style of architecture, which "blends aspects of Chinese regional architecture with western styles and building methods" (Parks Canada, 2010). The revised Chinatown Design Guidelines in the HAHR Implementation report also note the significance of Chinatown's "hybrid architectural style" (Director of Planning, 2010b, Appendix C, p. 12) and participants in the hearings often mentioned this special architecture. For instance, one local architect highlighted the significance of historic buildings owned by local benevolent societies:

> Their architecture, a fusion between the Asian shop house you will find in South China but here adopted to the specific needs for the communal events and the daily routines of the societies. It's blended here with some local Victorian styles of the time. As a result it's an architecture truly unique to Vancouver and not found anywhere else. (Supp 22)

More generally, speakers on all sides of the debate recognized Chinatown as an "important cultural, national, historical space of Chinese Canadians or of Chinese people" (Opp 3x2). Accounts of the neighbourhood's distinctive retail landscape often conveyed the prevalence of Asian grocery items, Chinese entertainment and Chinese languages (Opp 4, Opp 21, Supp 11, Coun 9 to Opp 16). "At one time Chinatown was the epicentre of the Chinese community," said one speaker (Supp 8). Another stated, "As a Chinese Canadian … what defines Chinatown is the history and culture" (Supp 25). Others drew connections between neighbourhood history and Vancouver's or Canada's racist anti-Chinese "shameful past" (Opp 33; see also Opp 13), calling particular attention to exploitation during railway construction (Opp 30) and the head tax that came after (Opp 6).

Yet another place-related narrative of Chinatown characterized the neighbourhood in terms of lifelessness and decline (see Chapter 6); such ideas formed the backdrop against which Chinatown was frequently conveyed in terms of unrealized, *or neglected potential*. With the neighbourhood represented as vacant, redevelopment was construed in terms of filling 'empty' space; the owner of the historic Vancouver Gas Company Warehouse—now the boutique Keefer Suites apartments—explained,

> I purchased an old warehouse on Keefer and Columbia about four years ago, a four storey derelict building that was unoccupied [with] pigeons flying around in it … I restored this building and I put a retail space in the bottom which has become a little bar. (Opp 61)
>
> I'm not taking away housing from anyone … if you go down there on a weekend now you'll see life in Chinatown and eight months ago there wasn't any. (Opp 61 to Coun 6)

This speaker, in contrasting vacancy with new "life," repeats common accounts in which emptiness and decay are juxtaposed with ideas of a Chinatown characterized by a healthy, harmonious *mix* (see Chapter 6). Likewise, HAHR proponent, when asked what would happen if the proposals passed, replied,

> I see it much like the way I grew up with it. It had people walking in the streets of all sorts—rich, poor, black, yellow, white. It had families; it had lots of shops, lots of people in the Society buildings… It's just a busy, busy place. (Supp 7x2)

Another account of *mix* also entails assertions of Chinatown as *distinct*:

> Chinatown is not just part of the Downtown Eastside; Chinatown is Chinatown. It is not just the low-income housing neighbourhood, it is a vital mixed-use neighbourhood. Traditionally, it has held a great mix of housing, commercial and institutional activities. The Yip Sang[48] building was workplace, home and school to a wealthy merchant and his family. The clan and village societies provided room and houses for bachelor labourers. Through the years, the mixture of uses has adjusted to the restrictions and opportunities available, but always has been

[48] Yip Sang was the original owner of the Wing Sang building, Chinatown's oldest (and first brick) building built in 1889 and referenced in earlier chapters.

entrepreneurial and vital. (Supp 15)

In their comparison of city discourses, Lees and Demeritt note "images of decay … and images of civility are not simply contrasting; they are mutually constitutive. As a binary opposition, the meaning of one depends on the other" (1998 as cited in Slater, p. 45). Likewise, in several presentations, Chinatown's current state of emptiness was contrasted with both historic and future "life on the streets" (Supp 7x2):

> Chinatown businesses have fallen on hard times as evidenced by the number of vacant storefronts … Of key importance has been that Chinatown remains an inclusive community… Chinatown—fifty, one hundred years ago—had the rich, had the poor, all living together. (Supp 8; see also Supp 3)

"Residents," stated another presenter, "want to see Chinatown go back to its glory days" (Supp 4x2).

My analysis in this chapter explores how these recurring public understandings of Chinatown—as distinct, as Chinese and as neglected potential—do not simply exist as objective fact, but nor are they merely made up by speakers in the moment of the hearings. Instead, as speakers make references to area history—citing, for instance "Yip Sang" and Canada's "shameful past"—they signal how common narratives of place can be explored as practico-inert truths—versions of reality grounded in concepts, materialities and arrangements that have been historically formed, becoming sedimented and real through time.

7.2 Making Chinatown Distinct, Chinese and Neglected: Tracing Colonization-Marginalization and Resistance

In the discussion that follows, I draw on critical histories of local place to explore these contemporary discourses in terms of a long sequence of social, material and political relations

through which they have emerged and been taken up. My analysis in this chapter thus seeks to historicize hearing narratives of place. Following Ollman (Chapter 2 on page 66) I ask: What had to happen in the *past* for Chinatown's *present* to be known as it is? In tracing these prominent discourses into the past, I came to consider how this longer local history of place reflects a recurring *conceptual-material dialectic of colonization and marginalization*. As territories became relevant to the projects of powerful state and capitalist actors, they were also re-imagined and re-arranged in accordance with these interests. Integral to material practices of dispossession were conceptual practices through which local people and local uses could be overwritten and rendered marginal to colonized spaces. At the same time, such dynamics have repeatedly been met with community resistance.

7.2.1 Mapping "empty" potential and distinctly white space: Making property

The lands where Vancouver is now located have, since time immemorial, been shared by the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Squamish nations, who are collectively known as the Coast Salish peoples. Since long before the arrival of both Asian migrants and European colonizers, these territories featured longstanding networks of indigenous villages as well as hunting and fishing grounds. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation website offers a brief account of local pre-colonial history, describing how Tsleil-Waututh peoples engaged in a "seasonal round"—cycles of hunting, harvesting and preserving foods, spiritual and cultural activities. Trade and use of land and water transportation networks were established based on protocols and alliances with neighbouring nations (Tsleil-Waututh Nation, n.d.).

Since the late 1700s, these same territories have been shaped via practices of conquest and commodification through colonial projects including those of Russia, Spain, France and

particularly Britain. Early colonial interests related especially to fur and after 1821, much of this trade in the area flowed through the Hudson's Bay Company. Integral to these material projects of accessing territory were conceptual projects through which land was reconceived in terms of its *neglected potential*: Eurocentric, capitalist storylines conveyed local lands as unowned, unused and thus available for colonial appropriation, or "improvement."

In 17th-century Britain, the ideas of Enlightenment intellectuals such as John Locke had been crucial in formulating the legal and theoretical justification for private seizure of common property—practices integral in enabling new, capitalist modes of organizing work and production. Further, notes Keefer, "early capitalist thinkers like John Locke developed their theories of private property in no small part to justify the colonization of "unimproved" Indigenous lands" (2010, p. 105). Alongside such conceptual developments, practices of colonial mapping rendered local territory empty and full of potential; Blomley recounts Johnson's reading of "colonial cartography" as, in part, "an instrument through which a space of imagined emptiness is sequentially filled with European entitlements." Blomley further stresses how such practices entailed overwriting local meanings and uses: "Absent from these maps, of course, are prior entitlements" (2004, p. 112).

By the 1850s, when gold was discovered in BC's interior, the pacific coast was also home to a significant number of Chinese migrants (Anderson, 1987). Historian Henry Yu clarifies that while dominant historical narratives often convey how Canada was settled from east to west, by European migrants arriving on the Atlantic coast and travelling west by train, in fact many of the earliest settlers arrived via the more common trans-Pacific migration and trade routes, on ships that included passengers from both Europe and Asia. Following the 1885 completion of the western portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway by some 15,000 Chinese

workers, he states, “What newly arriving Atlantic migrants… saw when they stepped off the train in Vancouver was a province that already had Chinese migrants engaging in marriage alliances and trade relations all across British Columbia” (Yu, 2009, p. 1015).

Early Chinese and European settlers and native communities lived “cordially” in and around the Granville townsite (Anderson, 1991, p. 63). Like those from Europe, Chinese migrants in the region were mostly men. Many Chinese settlers lived and worked various industries around Burrard inlet and throughout the Old Granville townsite; in particular, a number lived in wooden shacks around the shore of False creek near Hastings and others lived on Dupont Street (now Pender Street) near Carrall, where Chinatown would come to be located (Anderson, 1991).

Blomley describes how early colonial towns were important for their role as nodes within broader colonial, economic and political networks, “directing flows of capital and command that opened up resource frontiers.” However, he notes, they also “quickly emerged as speculative spaces”: “Boosterist publications marveled at the leapfrogging of prices, and the fact that areas of ‘wild land’ could become ‘first-class property’ in a matter of months” (2004, p. 110).

Early Canadian cities, as scattered “outposts of empire” (McCann and Smith, 1991 as cited in Blomley, p. 110), were frequently (if not always) located on lands already occupied by native peoples—often, notes Blomley, on sites of special significance to the indigenous inhabitants. However, this inconvenient reality had little impact on the period’s dominant “charter ideology” (Porter, 1965, as cited in Anderson 1991) wherein migrants from Britain viewed themselves as “founding people,” with others as “immigrants.” As Anderson notes, “In flat defiance of the fact that British Columbia was almost 75 per cent ‘Indian’ in 1870, British immigrants confidently claimed, and began to rule, the territory as their own” (1991, p. 47).

Kain and Baigent emphasize how this "imposition of a new economic and spatial order on 'new territory,' entailed either erasing [non]capitalist indigenous settlement or confining it to particular areas" (1992 as cited in Blomley, 2004, p. 112). Blomley explains how colonial land policy and the mapping subdivision work by the Royal Engineers divided land into "alienable sections, to be distributed, through sale or preemption, to white settlers." Meanwhile, only "small, scattered reserves were set aside for native people in the area that became Vancouver" (Blomley, 2004, p. 112).

Likewise, the presence of Chinese-origin pioneers in the newly developing city did not fit with state authorities' white supremacist colonial vision. Anderson states, "Certainly by the time immigrants from China arrived in British Columbia, the leap from colour to a fundamental difference of 'race' had been solidly made by the scientific community of Britain, North America, and Western Europe" (1987, p. 585).[49] Yu describes how the completion of the CP railway marked the rise of a highly organized and contrived national colonial project that was self-consciously termed "White Canada" and which continued in various forms into the post-war period. The growing population of European migrants "pushed for aggressive legislation designed to clear aboriginal peoples from their lands and strict anti-Asian immigration laws that curtailed further trans-Pacific migration to Canada." "White supremacy in Canada," Yu stresses, "was universal and racial apartheid akin to the forms in other British settler colonies" and was

[49] During the 19th century, major theoretical efforts in the new biological sciences took inspiration from practices of British Imperialism to transform well-established Eurocentric we/they ideologies—relating to skin colour but also, for instance, ideas of Christian and heathen, civilized and uncivilized—towards a radical biological determinism. These conceptual practices of white supremacy constructed a hierarchy of ideological racial types, organized around those particular visible characteristics of skin, hair, and bone by which we have been socialized to "see" race, and to miss the considerably greater number of genetic variances *within* populations, of say, Asia, Europe and Africa (Anderson, 1987).

instituted by “legislated discrimination in multiple forms, including disenfranchisement and legal segregation in housing and employment” (Yu, 2009, p. 1015; see also Yu, 2010).

Anderson details how the “growth and turbulence” associated with the completion of the railway (in 1885) made the relatively amiable and “paternalistic” relations around Burrard Inlet increasingly competitive and hostile (1991, p. 64). In addition to an influx of European settlers, completion of the railway brought many discharged railway workers. Chinese workers were paid a half to two thirds the wages of other workers, were known to accept long hours and seasonal work and were openly used by employers to break strikes. The years 1886–87 saw a noticeable rise in violent opposition from white workers who saw Chinese labourers as threats; racial stereotypes were used to claim that the ‘innate’ Chinese ability to endure work long hours and crowded living conditions constituted “unfair competition” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 35–37). For the next several decades, white labour and commerce organizations would be at the forefront of successive campaigns for the exclusion of “Asiatics.”

Politicians, too, were powerful drivers of white supremacy. Anderson notes that “the idea of a ‘Chinese’ race was a most convenient concept for political manipulation … used (not necessarily consciously) to win electoral support and inspire a collective sense of identification among a ‘white’ in-group” (1991, p. 63). Anderson (1987, 1991) describes how, despite some business and political actors who saw benefits in ongoing economic relationships with Asia, differences in attitudes towards Chinese immigration were increasingly resolved in favour of exclusion:

> In 1885, after the completion of the trans-Canada railway, the federal government in Ottawa took a decisive step by imposing a head tax on Chinese entrants, and in 1903 Wilfrid Laurier’s administration raised it to an almost prohibitive level of $500. (Anderson, 1987, pp. 581–582)

As in settler-indigenous relations, integral to this milieu of anti-Chinese praxis was persistent struggle over access to land. By February 1887, states Anderson, “an anti-Chinese league had been formed with the specific intention of preventing Chinese [people] from relocating within the city limits” (1991, p. 67). Later the same month, following a raucous town hall meeting on February 24, white settlers attacked a small settlement of Chinese pioneers who were employed clearing land on the Brighouse Estate in Vancouver’s West End. “Unimpeded by local police,” she notes, some 300 rioters “raided and destroyed the camps of Chinese labourers: they then attacked the washhouses, stores, shacks, and other structures in the vicinity of [the larger settlement at] Dupont Street.” It was in the context of such hostility that early Chinese Vancouverites established “a highly concentrated pattern of residence” (Anderson, 1987, p. 582).

7.2.2 Distinguishing Chinese space: Marginalization and collective resilience

Chinese settlers had been permitted a 160 acre lease in the vicinity of Dupont Street where it intersected with Carrall, and by 1889 most Chinese settlers moved to this location (Anderson, 1991). Apart from Chinese laundries, which remained scattered throughout the old Granville townsite, almost all other Chinese companies and merchant premises (including those of grocers, storeowners and a shoemaker) were located in this area. Ley, Anderson and Konrad describe how the Dupont site “while only three blocks south of the Vancouver townsite, was a poorly drained area on the edge of the False Creek tidal flats” (1994, p. 113). The authors note that the site’s proximity to industrial uses such as the Royal City Mill, the city gas words, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the depot of the Great Northern Railway, while improving access to work, also reflected the settlement’s marginalized and stigmatized status. Within this growing Chinese district, workers made up the majority of residents, together with a significant minority

of small businessmen and a small elite of merchants. In the mid-1890s, City Council formally designated the Dupont settlement as *Chinatown*.

Over the next half dozen decades, residents of Vancouver's Chinatown continued to forge their livelihoods and community amidst pervasive informal and formal relations of white supremacy. Ley, Anderson and Konrad describe how government orientations towards residents of Chinatown cohered in a policy of "minimal entitlement" in which the state's objective was not absorption but exclusion. In addition to the head tax and other immigration restrictions, note the authors, Chinese settlers faced "occupational restrictions, electoral disenfranchisement, selective harassment, minimal services, restrictive covenants."[50] Further, residents of Chinatown were subjected to "anti-Asian riots (in 1887 and 1907) in which people and property were attacked while the authorities (in 1887) refrained from intervention" (Ley et al., 1994, p. 113). Family life was made impossible for all but the "minuscule proportion" of merchants who could afford the weighty head tax. The majority of impoverished workers lived … in conditions that one visiting statesman from China described as "distressed and cramped" and "pitiable beyond description" (Anderson, 1991, p. 79).

Ley, Anderson and Konrad describe how, as a relatively small and politically and culturally marginal community, Chinatown was "typically ignored by municipal and provincial government, aside from the police and the health department" (1994, p. 115). For these latter authorities however, the settlement was a consistent preoccupation. Anderson describes how, for decades, health officials persistently targeted the "Chinese quarter" with indiscriminate raids,

[50] The 1871 provincial *Act to Amend the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act,* which precluded both Chinese and indigenous residents from voting, also restricted access to many professions including pharmacy, law and political office. Further, as of 1883, only registered voters were eligible to serve as jurors (Anderson, 1991, p. 47).

fines and orders to condemn buildings—thus sanctioning its perceived status as a polluted, unsanitary "propagating ground for disease" (Anderson, 1987, p. 589, citing Vancouver City Council Minutes, May 19, 1919). In 1895, rows of shacks and cottages occupied by poor Chinese labourers were deemed a "standing menace to public health" and destroyed by the city (as cited in Anderson, 1987, p. 587). In 1896 and again in 1905-06, groups of Chinatown merchants became so frustrated with the City's lack of concern for area infrastructure that they petitioned the city to improve street sprinkling, paving and sidewalks, with one firm applying to conduct its own street cleaning work (Anderson, 1987).

In the context of state practices that swung between abandonment and repressive harassment, neighbourhood residents "turned inwards" (Ley et al., 1994, p. 115), building a sub-economy that was "self-sufficient to the degree that it provided its inhabitants with a full range of services including restaurants, lodgings, employment contractors, barbers and clothing" (Anderson, 91, p. 78). Merchants formed a Chinese Board of Trade and often used their knowledge of civic politics to improve conditions in the neighbourhood and contest municipal practices of harassment. They also amassed capital for new enterprises through various kinds of partnership, including rotating credit associations (Anderson, 1991). These community self-help efforts, as I've noted (Chapter 1) also included the formation of the various family and benevolent associations so often mentioned during the HAHR hearings. Ley, Anderson and Konrad (1994) describe the formation of some 80 such fraternal and mutual-aid associations, half of them organized around clan groupings and regions of origin. One of the most enduring of these was the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA).

In this way, as Anderson's critical history demonstrates, the *practical* accomplishment of Chinatown's *de jure* minimal entitlements clearly required ongoing resistance and vigilance on

the part of its residents. Around the turn of the century, various Chinatown merchants made use of provincial courts to successfully challenge unwarranted municipal interventions, for instance, locational restrictions on Chinese-operated wash houses and the destruction of buildings and property. For Anderson, such dynamics are illustrative of how "within the meagre confines of a few sodden streets, Chinese people would be afforded the minimal right to a livelihood and property" (1991, p. 70). This principle was also affirmed, she argues, when the Dominion government compensated Chinatown residents for property damaged during a major riot in 1907. At the same time, Anderson explains, such acts of official recognition and/or protection should nonetheless be grasped as tenuous. "There was no recourse for residents," for example, in 1911,

> when the city served notice on "two to three dozen buildings … occupied by a large number of Chinamen" to make way for the trackage required by the Great Northern Railway Co. at the unit block East Pender Street and southward on Carrell Street. This was an early sign of the city's readiness to encourage non-residential functions in the Chinatown area. (Anderson, 1991, p. 89)

Concerted efforts towards the political, economic and spatial marginalization of Chinese-origin residents continued through World War I and were punctuated by periods of increased hostility. The early 1920s saw the formation of a Vancouver-based Asiatic Exclusion League and appeals by City officials and other groups to Ottawa to end immigration from Asia (Anderson, 1991). A 1921 statement by the Vancouver Board of Trade Special Oriental Immigration Committee declared,

> The Oriental is no longer content to seclude himself in the Chinese or Japanese quarters of the towns in the Province, but is … occupying land in advantageous localities …. We strongly feel that we should retain British Columbia for our own people. (As cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 112)

Finally, in 1923 the federal minister of immigration brought down a bill that would massively restrict Chinese immigration.

As Yu argues, critical readings of local history pose serious challenges to the pervasive national idea of an original, white, bi-cultural (English and French) Canada that subsequently welcomed racialized immigrants arriving in search of a multicultural haven. Instead these accounts of early settlement make clear how Canadian 'whiteness' entailed concerted political efforts and institutional regimes through which a White Canada was invented, imposed and harshly enforced. Further, Anderson (1991) argues that Chinatown's racialized, enforced separateness was carefully managed to play the role of Other: a distinct exception to the rule of Whiteness that could hold the idea of an 'otherwise' White Canada intact.

Anderson's (1991; see also Ley et al., 1994) discussion of minimal entitlement helps bring into focus a spatialized flip side of colonizing dynamics: as investments flow towards particular profitable uses and spaces, they miss and/or abandon others, leaving behind spaces of marginality. As I noted in Chapter 1, over this same period in which white municipal, business and labour actors were working to restrict Chinese-origin residents to the boundaries of Dupont/Pender street, development interest was shifting gradually away from the eastern part of downtown. Beginning around 1906, the construction of a new courthouse on Georgia street, followed by the 1930s relocation of the City's administrative offices to Cambie street, shifted the focus westward (City of Vancouver, n.d.-b). The Gastown district, located at Vancouver's original townsite on the western edge of what is now the Downtown Eastside, had originally been one of the city's earliest warehouse and wholesaling districts. However with the advent of roadway transportation, these enterprises shifted to more cost-effective suburban locations (H. A. Smith, 2002). As the central business district and middle-class residences moved westward, the Downtown Eastside increasingly became home to a working class community of primarily single men who were employed in the resource economy, either in local industries or were between

tours in logging camps. During the Depression of the 1930s, the DTES became a "hotbed of political mobilization" with local union halls and public square serving as meeting places for union meetings, demonstrations and labour marches (Ley, 1994, p. 174).

In Chinatown, despite the community's considerable social infrastructure for collective self-help, ongoing white supremacist policies, barriers and state practices of abandonment resulted in negative, sometimes devastating effects for inhabitants. Anderson describes how, while Chinatown's benevolent associations had traditionally provided for residents who were poor and/or sick, the Depression "exerted enormous pressure" on these internal networks and welfare structures (1991, p. 142). The closure of shingle mills and service industries, and mechanized replacement of unskilled labour had been especially hard on the Chinese workers who depended on these employment roles. Further, a civic provision excluded Chinese restaurants from the right to redeem meal coupons, and the provincial relief administrator advised the Vancouver officer to pay relief to Chinese people at "a lower scale" (as cited in Anderson 1991, p. 143). Anderson emphasizes that these Depression-era experiences particularly demonstrate that "there should be no doubt about the degree to which the process of racialization materially affected the lives of the people of Vancouver's Chinatown": "The Canadian state, particularly the local government, quite simply abdicated responsibility for an unprotected bloc of workers" (1991, p. 143).

7.2.3 Race and space in flux

The 1930s marked a time of flux wherein ideas of race were challenged and unsettled, but also re-constituted and re-deployed; once again, these dynamics were playing out in and through a local politics of land. Anderson describes how May of 1936 had seen a "notable reversal" in

Vancouver attitudes towards Chinatown (1991, p. 156). That month, the City supported a series of applications put forward by the Chinese Benevolent Association and Chinatown merchants who proposed to erect buildings and contribute $40,000 towards a "Chinese Village" project in conjunction with the City's Golden Jubilee celebrations. Anderson (following Light) describes how this can be understood as part of a strategy, employed in various North American Chinatowns, of "purposeful Orientalizing" (1991, p. 176). She states,

> Council was captivated by the appeal to opulent Old Cathay, and Chinatown merchants, eager to find ways of alleviating the rigours of the Depression, set about implementing the route to profit and status that had already proved effective for their counterparts in San Francisco and New York City. (Anderson, 1991, p. 156)

The local press responded with eager endorsement, heralding the "wonders and mysteries of the Orient"; the Chinese Village proved so popular as a public spectacle that the City's Jubilee Management Board arranged its continuation for two weeks after the other celebrations had closed (Anderson, 1991, pp. 155–157).

By the 1940s, Vancouver's ethnic Chinese residents had been increasingly able to move beyond the boundaries of Chinatown, especially spilling into the adjacent neighbourhood of Strathcona as well as further east to Grandview-Woodland despite earlier white supremacist opposition there. Strathcona was already home to an immigrant population that included Italians, Jews and Eastern Europeans; following the relaxation of Chinese immigration exclusion measures in 1947, the proportion of Strathcona residents of Chinese heritage increased from a quarter to a half in 1957, and as high as 70% near Gore Street (Ley et al., 1994; Anderson, 1991, p. 189). In this immediate postwar period, Chinatown and surrounding areas of the Downtown Eastside enjoyed the status of a busy working and commercial district.

But through the 1960s, the broader Downtown Eastside underwent a noticeable economic shift. Not only had city's central business district, development interests and administrative centres shifted westward, but also,

> in 1958 street car service was discontinued and the interurban station was closed, the following year the North Shore ferries ceased operation. These two events took the thousands of people per day away from the streets and the area never fully recovered. (City of Vancouver, n.d.-b, History of the area, para. 7)

This was also a period of automobile-centred urban development and change wherein middle and high-income North American families were moving to the suburbs. Canada's inner cities, notes Anderson, were thus left to "poor families, single persons, new immigrants with meagre resources and people who faced discrimination in their housing choices" (1991, p. 187). Two major downtown department stores—Hudson's Bay Company and Woodward Stores—opted to open locations in nearby suburban shopping malls rather than to expand their downtown locations (Gutstein, 1975).

Ley's (1994) account of Downtown Eastside history outlines associated shifts in area dynamics during this time. In the 1940s, he states, there was a still high proportion of retired resource sector workers living in local rooming houses and SROS—including a high percentage who had been injured and/or experienced disability due to industrial accidents. During the 1960s, the many pensioners living in area rooming houses and SROs were joined by a transient population of middle aged and elderly men, some with alcohol addictions, as well as increasing numbers of transient youth. Further, as in other North American cities at the time, the Downtown Eastside began to see an increase in people of aboriginal ancestry—a dynamic which, as Blomley emphasizes, should be understood in terms of Canada's legacy of nationwide colonial dispossession, wherein "endemic poverty and a lack of a land base on the reserve compel the

relocation of many native people to the city" (2004, p. 113). A 1970 survey of area residents reflects a neighbourhood population that faced significant health challenges. At the same time, Ley (1994) emphasizes, aside from the minority of recent incomers who led more transient lives, the community was highly stable—in fact, the second most stable neighbourhood in the city.

The housing conditions in the community were abysmal. "Rent increases and summary evictions," states Ley, "were a daily fact of life" (1994, p. 194). Although a residential tenancy act was passed in the early 1970s, SRO rooms fell outside its jurisdiction and would remain unprotected until 1989. Further, by the 1970s, bylaw standards were "lax and irregularly enforced." Over the course of 1973, "no fewer than 107 skid-road fires occurred; the Cobalt Hotel was in flames on seven separate occasions." SRO owners were permitted to wrack up a "staggering" number of penalties before City authorities and courts were willing to issue fines and/or closure notices (Ley, 1994, pp. 192, 193).

7.2.4 Constructing neglect and potential: Slumming, renewal and the freeway struggle

While development and investment activity shifted westward and to the suburbs, Chinatown and adjoining Strathcona, along with other Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods, increasingly began to figure in the plans of development and state actors. In the 1940s, Ottawa had announced a cost-sharing program for urban renewal projects; municipalities could apply for federal funding to acquire, clear and redevelop large tracts of land that had succumbed to urban 'blight.' By 1964, states Chow, the federal government increased its contribution from 50% to 75% of the total costs of acquiring the land in question; slum clearance, she emphasizes, was thus "big business," amounting to a significant proportion of federal spending and the potential of large revenues for selected municipalities (Chow, 2007, p. 63).

To access the funding, city officials required a *slum*, and the Strathcona neighbourhood was targeted for the program. In 1931, the City had downzoned the neighbourhood, changing its zoning designation from "Residential" to "Light Industrial" thus restricting new construction to factories and warehouses up to six stories high. As a result, banks were no longer willing to provide Strathcona's (largely Chinese) property owners access to mortgage funds and/or loans for housing repairs; by the early 1960s, much of the neighbourhood's 70-year old housing stock was aging and in disrepair (Anderson, 1991, p. 188; Chow, 2007). Both media and bureaucratic assessments of Strathcona took up old, racialized, ideas of "crime, delinquency and vice," of an infectious "blight" and of the neighbourhood as overcrowded (extended family and relatives often lived together in Strathcona's large manorial homes to share resources and split living costs) (Anderson, 1991, p. 189; Chow, 2007).

In 1948, Dr. Leonard Marsh visited the neighbourhood of Strathcona and in conjunction with officials from Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission, authored a report entitled *Rebuilding a Neighbourhood*. Anderson summarizes Marsh's most pertinent observations:

> According to Marsh, the area was in a state of "chronic deterioration." It was not the worst slum area in the city, he noted—"there are worse pockets of derelict, unhealthy or overcrowded housing blocks"—but the area had become "a kind of zoning ganglion of mixed uses, badly in need of rationalization." The main impetus for identifying Strathcona, however, was its "critical town planning importance" the report stated, the area being "well located in relation to the industrial waterfront and the downtown commercial and business districts." Furthermore, the area was costing the city in public services nearly twice the tax revenue derived from it, Marsh calculated. (As cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 188)

Here, as Anderson emphasizes, Marsh's reasoning reflects not only the period's prevailing planning logic that environmental conditions were linked to social ills, but also the strategic goals of civic bureaucracies which were related to "rationalization" of urban land uses—for instance, the reorganization of areas defined as "revenue sinks" and improved transportation

access to central business districts. Based on these various assessments, in the late 1950s, Strathcona was Vancouver's first neighbourhood to be declared a "redevelopment area" and slated for urban renewal. In 1958, the City ceased street repairs and cleaning, infrastructure maintenance, or any other public works; property prices were frozen and private property owners were refused building permits (Gutstein, 1975; Ley et al., 1994).

But renewal plans, slated to occur in three phases, were advancing without the support of area residents. Starting in 1957, the City began to purchase wide areas of the neighbourhood; its plan was to maintain institutional buildings (such as schools, churches and halls) but to demolish private residences and to replace these with multi-level residential towers (Chow, 2007). While Strathcona homeowners were initially open to the idea of renewal insofar as this suggested improved public services, when the City revealed in April 1958 that "renewal" entailed demolition of their homes and their re-location to high-density public housing, they quickly organized in opposition with the Chinese Benevolant Association playing a key role (Anderson, 1991). Almost immediately, residents formed the Chinatown Property Owners Association (CTPOA) and sent a delegation to city council to oppose the plan. Upon hearing these community protests, Council assured residents the plan was only preliminary. However eight days later, it proceeded to rezone about 90 acres from industrial to residential, thus taking the first step in plan implementation. The CTPOA raised concerns again the following year but was once again assured the plans were "not complete" (Anderson 1991, p. 192; see also Gutstein, 1975). The final plan was announced in 1960 with little fanfare. This time, the multiple delegations who spoke in opposition (including societies, churches, schools and the CTPOA) were told by council that the plan had been finalized and the city was already committed (Gutstein, 1975).

Urban Renewal Project Number 1 was carried out between 1961 and 1967, entailing the construction of two high-density public housing projects with 535 units; a further 234 units were built five miles away and land was also cleared for industrial and park use. Project Number 2 occurred almost concurrently, with Council voting to begin work on this second renewal plan almost as soon as it had begun work on the first (Ley et al., 1994). This second phase was even more objectionable to Chinatown locals; because it entailed redevelopment of the land immediately east of Chinatown, it would permanently limit the expansion of Chinatown's commercial district at Gore street. Further, in a brief to Council, CTPOA argued that leaving intact the adjacent residential community of predominantly Chinese residents was vital to Chinatown's continued commercial success (Chow, p. 68).

However once again these community pleas were ignored; instead, states Chow "civic officials and media reports villainized the Chinese community as a self-serving opponent to progress that would benefit the greater community" (2007, p. 69). A 1961 *Province* editorial remarked "Slum clearance is going ahead … and the Chinese community should be cooperating in the process … Chinatown can be preserved. But only if the Chinese themselves help to make it a better, more modern and finer Chinatown" (as cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 195).

Together with these earlier examples in which Chinatown was persistently targeted by police and health authorities, these planning efforts of the 1950s and 60s especially make visible how—as in the classical colonial theorizing of Locke—ideas of uncivilized space have repeatedly functioned in relation to narratives of *potential* for *improvement*. Sedimented associations of Chinese-ness with blight and decline once again became useful in the context of Strathcona Renewal efforts, as both state and popular commentators took up pre-existing racial tropes to justify the reconfiguration of now-desirable territory in accordance with state and

development interests. As Marsh's influential assessment (on page 231, above) makes clear, Strathcona was targeted for slum clearance not because it was the worst "pocke[t] of derelict," but because of its prime location; it was the neighbourhood's *potential* that rendered its condition worthy of such intensive attention and intervention. It is in relation to Eurocentric and classist discourses of incivility, neglect and *improvement* that, as Chow (2007) notes, Strathcona property owners' refusal to forfeit their family homes could be conveyed in the media in terms of the Chinese community's opposition to development and progress.

With urban renewal underway in neighbouring Strathcona, City officials simultaneously turned their attention to redevelopment of Chinatown's commercial district. In 1964, the City presented a *Design Proposal for Improvement* which, as Chow explains, "described Chinatown as having two distinct parts, one located east of Main (catering directly to the Chinese community) and the other west of Main (the tourist's Chinatown)" (2007, p. 77). The *Design Proposal* would target only this latter portion, and was limited to streetscaping considerations.

The proposal had been developed with no public consultation and was strongly opposed by many Chinatown residents and business owners. Residents, states Chow, criticized the proposal as "designed to make Chinatown an object for 'foreign' travel, not a community for existing Chinese residents. Chinatown was going to become the next 'Stanley Park Zoo' complete with a limited-traffic mall for tour buses to gawk at the Chinese" (Chow, 2007, citing Anderson, 1991). Further, Chow emphasizes the questionable nature of the plan which purported to address tourism but which had as its first and second steps, major traffic re-routing and land clearance compatible with a controversial freeway plan that had yet to be announced.

City plans to build a freeway network around and through downtown Vancouver were finally announced in June of 1967, in a consultant report entitled the *Vancouver Transportation*

Study (VTS). The proposed freeway was envisioned as an integral part of a regional transportation network and twenty-year downtown plan which included a third bridge over Burrard Inlet to the North Shore, and a waterfront redevelopment called *Project 200*, in which much of Gastown was to be razed to construct a massive modernist commercial-residential complex (see Gutstein, 1975). The VTS freeway proposal that went before Council recommended an eight-lane, 200-foot-wide, 30-foot-high freeway connection along Carrall Street; it would cut across the western portion of Chinatown. Ley et al. describes how discourses of *neglected* and/or *inadequately productive* territory were once again apparent as development actors sought to justify the razing of Gastown for the freeway and mega-renewal *Project 200*:

> When municipal government began to attend to the area in the mid 1960s it was in the discourse of skid row, and with the language of "tax sinks"—the city's planning director noted that municipal expenditures in the district were twenty to twenty-five times greater than municipal tax revenues—a language which has repeatedly preceded state-driven redevelopment in many Canadian and U.S. cities. (Ley, 1994, p. 172)

Upon hearing news of the Freeway proposal, Chinatown community members, under the leadership of the CBA, swiftly organized a campaign. Following this initial outcry, Council backed down, requesting further study of alternative options. Several months later, in October 1967, consultants submitted the results of this further work. This time, in addition to the original proposed route cutting through Chinatown, a second option had the freeway connection running along Gore Street—thus erecting a concrete barrier between commercial Chinatown and its companion residential district of Strathcona.[51]

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[51] Chow states that while some Chinatown community members might have been open to a freeway connection running *east* of Gore Street (which would leave Chinatown's commercial centre intact) this option was never considered because a freeway in that location would jeopardize the valuable federal funding for Strathcona renewal (Chow, 2007, pp. 94–95).

On October 17, 1967, with no public consultation, City Council voted to approve the consultants' original proposal. This decision, states Gutstein, "sparked the strongest public protest Vancouver had ever experienced" (1975, p. 155). Subsequent public meetings numbered at 500 and 800 attendees, with even traditional supporters such as the Board of Trade, the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Architectural Institute of B.C. and the Downtown Business Association speaking against the proposal. Though heavily invested freeway advocates continued to press for the freeway for some years to follow, this impressive community mobilization ultimately prevented freeway construction—albeit not before Vancouver's only substantially black neighbourhood, Hogan's Alley, was demolished to make way for the Georgia Viaduct which was built on the premise that the freeway would eventually come to fruition (Gutstein, 1975).

No sooner had the freeway been halted than the Chinatown and Strathcona communities faced newly announced plans for the final and largest stage of the City's "slum" clearance efforts. Residents' experiences with the first two phases of renewal had already produced much disillusionment; displaced residents had not received adequate compensation, had not been informed of their rights of appeal, and had not been adequately re-housed (see Chow, 2007). Building on the success of anti-freeway organizing, Strathcona residents organized quickly and effectively; in December 1968, 600 residents voted to establish the bilingual Chinese-English Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants' Association (SPOTA). Members of SPOTA organized their neighbours on a block-by-block basis and lobbied key actors within the new federal government. Following their participation in a walking tour of Strathcona that was organized by the protesting residents, federal officials informed the City of their intent to limit the urban renewal program (Ley et al., 1994, pp. 121–122). In 1969 it was announced that—not only in

Strathcona but also across Canada—federal funding would henceforth be available only for repair and rehabilitation, not for demolition (Gutstein, 1975; Ley et al., 1994).

7.2.5 Distinguishing potentials: Designation, devolution and abandonment

In the wake of these massive threats to the historic district posed by schemes such as Project 200, renewal and the freeway extension, various neighbourhood actors (including both preservation interests and local businesses) sought instead to re-imagine the city's historic precincts as heritage and tourism districts. In Gastown, "local business owners, hotels and rooming houses began small-scale renovations and were soon joined by a growing number of restaurants, boutiques, curio shops and nightclubs" (H. A. Smith, 2002, p. 497, following Ley).

Chinatown's tourism potential was already well-known to the City (as the 1964 *Design Proposals* had demonstrated) and this quality was again highlighted in a 1969 Planning Department report entitled *Restoration Report: A Case for Renewed Life in the Old City.* The report identifies the Chinese community as "the only truly ethnic group within the study area" (Ley et al., 1994, p. 128) and called for Vancouver's "very special and attractive human heritage" to be "revealed and cultivated" (as cited in Chow, 2007, p. 106). At the urging of Vancouver's City Council, in 1971 the Provincial government designated both Gastown and Chinatown as protected historic sites under the *Archaeological and Historic Sites Protection Act* (H. A. Smith, 2002). Ley, Anderson and Konrad describe how these various local shifts in planning sensibility should be understood in the context of a broader cultural shift that was occurring across Canada in the late 60s and 70s, as the Trudeau government and other influential actors proclaimed "enthusiasm for the distinctiveness of Canada's 'ethnic groups'" and officially promoted Canada's "cultural mosaic" through policies of multiculturalism (1994, p. 127).

Among Ottawa's multicultural programs were initiatives to promote "ethnic neighbourhoods" (Ley et al., 1994, p. 128) and such efforts dovetailed comfortably with the City's ongoing attention to enhancement and beautification of Chinatown's distinctive streetscapes. Chinatown's 1971 Historic Site designation had given the province authority over all major changes to Chinatown's buildings, and in 1974 the City Charter was amended to give City Council its own power to designate heritage buildings or areas. In accordance with these powers of regulation and definition, City Planners developed zoning legislation and design guidelines that would "recognize the area's unique ethnic quality and ensure the protection, restoration and maintenance of Chinatown's historical, architectural and cultural character" (City of Vancouver Planning Department, 1974, as cited in Ley et al., 1994, p. 129).

Chinatown was now regarded with praise instead of stigma (Ley et al., 1994). However, critical analyses emphasize how such designations nonetheless help to hold intact ideas of the neighbourhood as a bounded and regulated space of racialized difference. Chow describes how City Planners "wanted to demarcate an already distinct character of Chinatown by using distinguishing features that were stereotypically Chinese to the occidental viewer" (2007, p. 104). While these beautification plans proposed the use of cliché elements such as gold dragons and red lamp posts, such details were contrary to the traditional architecture of Vancouver's Chinatown, where buildings had been constructed in a mix of various (for example, Victorian and Portuguese) styles, referencing architecture common in the colonized provinces of China from which many Chinese settlers had migrated. City guidelines, states Chow, thus functioned to define "Chineseness" in terms of a "singular dimension as observed at the time of first colonial contact, in contrast to the lengthy and complex geographical, social and political history of a diversity of Chinese people" (Chow, 2007, p. 105). Ley, Anderson and Konrad describe how

responses by Chinatown's local property and business owners entailed complicated dynamics of both resistance and accommodation:

> Indeed, enabling legislation to preserve Chinatown, while a victory for the city's planning department, was not considered such a triumph by those who were expected to bear (in taxes) a large part of the cost. Government targeting of this kind was met with suspicion from Chinese property owners who even "burst into laughter" at a Chinatown beautification proposal presented by the planning director at a meeting in November 1972. In time, however, the economic opportunity afforded by the city's vision became clear to some property owners, and early in 1973 they formed the Chinatown Property Owners' and Merchants' Association (CTPOMA) to try to steer government resources to purposes of their own choosing. (Ley et al., 1994, p. 128)

While Chinatown property owners and merchants were interested in elements such as parking space and sidewalk canopies, which they believed could help to improve business in the neighbourhood, City planners repeatedly insisted that neighbourhood improvements be tied to beautification.

The construction of Chinatown as "ethnic turf," state Ley, Anderson and Konrad (1994), was further consolidated in the late 1970s with the construction of the Chinese Cultural Centre and the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden at the corner of Pender and Carrall streets. They describe how, upon receiving the winning architectural submission for the Chinese Cultural Centre, the director of planning was concerned to ensure the inclusion of what were, from his perspective, distinctly "Chinese" features.

However this intensive planning attention to cultivating the distinctive look and feel of Chinatown (along with that of neighbouring areas such as Gastown and Victory Square) occurred in stark contrast to dynamics in surrounding areas of the Downtown Eastside. In particular, states H. A. Smith, "Hastings Street which lay between the designated districts of Gastown and Chinatown was almost entirely overlooked … This very clearly set it apart as a

neighbourhood space not worthy of sustained protection or heritage support" (2002, p. 501). In 1993, this distinct space of abandonment was made even more pronounced as the closure of the flagship Woodward's department store marked the apex of the decades-long of trend of disinvestment in the once-busy commercial high street of Hastings.

A related dynamic of abandonment is reflected in a 2002 Chinatown Vision document which describes how the 1990s "leakage" of immigration and investment to Vancouver's suburban Chinese neighbourhoods has significantly impacted Chinatown's economy. With this shift, states the report, "Chinatown no longer becomes the neighbourhood of first settlement nor first investment for Chinese immigrants to Vancouver—a major break from its historic role." (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, Apendix E, p. 10). The resulting dynamic is characterized in terms of "drought": "…conceptualized as the lack of investment and human capital for a neighbourhood, this shortage is often a complex mix of larger urban economic trends with the activities of external neighbourhood actors such as financial institutions and investors" (Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002, Apendix E, p. 11).

The burgeoning era of neoliberal cuts to social goods (for instance, funding for housing, health and education) and the accompanying "devolution of service provision from the state to community and not-for-profit groups" (Roe, 2010, p. 98) exerted further pressure on the various communities of the Downtown Eastside. Beginning in 1985, the province's largest residential mental health hospital, Riverview, began moving patients from its large institutional facility in Coquitlam into "community-based" facilities and programs. However, this cost-saving move was marked by an "abysmal failure on the part of governments to provide community-based supports to people leaving institutions, including adequate housing and sources of income" (Morrow &

Jamer, 2007, para. 6). Many former Riverview residents moved to the Downtown Eastside because of its access to cheap housing and social services, relative to other areas of the city.

Roe describes how, in this period, "because of the loss of alternative, affordable accommodation elsewhere in the city, more and more of the abject poor found their way to, or were forced into, the [DTES]. The poverty of the area deepened significantly" (2010, p. 86). In 1997, the Downtown Eastside was declared by health and state officials to be in the midst of a "health emergency." Roe explains that "this small area and population accounted for 20 percent of the city's mental health patients, 80 percent of its drug arrests, and 23 percent of its sudden deaths" (2010, p. 86).

This local health emergency entailed an additional, horrific dimension for the neighbourhood's many vulnerable women who not only faced dramatic rates of everyday gendered violence, but who were also—for decades—systematically disappeared and murdered in the face of police and government inaction (see Dhillon & Bailey, 2012). The fact that over half of the "murdered and missing women," as they are commonly known, are Indigenous, testifies to the white supremacist and colonial dynamics of this recurring violence (see Blomley, 2004; Oppal, 2012).

In the context of these mounting spatialized and structural dynamics which for decades, states Roe, "ensured that poverty flowed into the [DTES] while opportunity flowed out of it" (2010, p. 95), locals continued the neighbourhood's rich tradition of political advocacy. In 1973, residents and organizers formed the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) which, like SPOTA, included both English and Chinese-speaking members and drew on various approaches reflecting escalation in tactics from information to public pressure. DERA explicitly organized according to principles of social justice (versus charity), advocating principles of local

and grassroots empowerment versus "expert intervention"—an approach underpinned by the logic of "community control for community change" (Ley, 1994 p. 184). Authors such as Ley and Roe describe how a recurring theme in DERA's work was the battle for recognition of the DTES as a community of residents versus as a decrepit, immoral, industrial "skid road" and/or a "social dumping ground" (Roe, 2010, p. 82).

Among the most enduring issues faced by area residents was the declining availability and condition of affordable housing—particularly the neighbourhood's stock of ageing SROs. As Vancouver prepared to host the influx of visitors who would attend the 1986 World Fair, Expo '86, SRO hotel owners began upgrading their buildings, converting them from residential uses to tourist accommodations. Provincial law finally extended tenant protections to SRO residents in 1989, but not before massive numbers of evictions had occurred in the lead up to Expo (Ley, 1994). "Indeed," states Ley, "in a radio interview, [then-Premier] Bennett declared that the exposition had achieved what the city had been unable to, to 'get rid of the slums'" (1994, p. 200). The result, states H. A. Smith, "was the displacement of several hundred long-term tenants many of whom were elderly, impoverished and in frail health, and the loss of approximately 2,000 low-income housing units" (2002, p. 499).

7.3 Complicating Truths of Chinatown as Place

This longer view of neighbourhood history, which is alluded to by speakers during the hearings, offers important perspective through which to reconsider hearing discourses of place; ideas and storylines about Chinatown that figure prominently in the hearings can be explored as practico-inert truths that rely on a long, complex and ongoing history of sedimented understanding and practice. Considered in light of the recurring dynamics of colonization and

marginalization that emerge through this historicized reading, common narratives of Chinatown can be understood to assume and/or take up problematic relations that should instead be critically challenged.

7.3.1 Exclusion and designation: The twin edges of *distinct* space

Historical analyses illuminate how use of planning technologies—including mapping, "slum" clearance, beautification and heritage designation—has shaped not just understandings of Chinatown, but also the material qualities of the neighbourhood which can be subsequently treated as objective truth. Conceptual distinctions and designations—including representations of territory as *empty*, *neglected* and *Chinese*—have been repeatedly put to material effect, such that these inscribed truths act back, creating new circumstances within and to which actors must respond. I have already discussed how ideas of Chinatown as distinct space, or spaces, suggest divisions in thinking about the extent to which neighbourhood housing is "protected" (Chapter 5). Critical histories further complicate contemporary treatment of the neighbourhood in terms of distinct space(s). Such analyses underscore how the making of these truths has occurred through layers of racialized historical praxis that entailed the dispossession of indigenous communities and the political, economic and spatial marginalization of Chinese migrants.

Routine treatment (by hearing speakers, in City documents and generally, in settler-colonial regimes) of the neighbourhood in terms of a series of distinct and tradeable parcels of property is fundamentally rooted in historical practices of colonial dispossession. Early practices of surveying made visible—and thus to some extent, tangible and real—the capitalist concept of property that otherwise existed primarily at the level of ideas. Blomley describes how the reproduction of land as property is not simply the result but is an integral means through which

colonial power was exercised; he describes how, "once inaugurated, the land system itself 'became the most powerful single agent of disciplinary power.' It mapped out rights, and their denials, and sustained them with sovereign power." Blomley thus underscores how "despite the centrality of law and property to the Western imagination, dispossession occurred under the sign of both" (Blomley, 2004, p. 111, citing Harris, 1993).

This longer view of place suggests how, as Blomley (2004) argues, dynamics of property are not absolute, but are political and contested. In some cases, property rights have been wielded to make gains by resisting actors—for instance, as Chinese migrants obtained their contested "minimal entitlement" of territory for the Dupont Street settlement and later, as they diverted racist campaigns (such as municipal efforts to confine the locations of Chinese-owned businesses) via use of the courts (see Anderson, 1991). But more often, it seems, these same political and contested qualities of property have been made to serve dominant and colonial interests.

As in Stanford's reminder that "there is no 'natural' order to the economy" (2008, p. 335), alternative historical, present and future modes of relating to land are possible; these possibilities are signaled by contemporary practices of not-for-profit land trusts, communal forms of ownership and Indigenous peoples' access and rights to their traditional territories, to name a few examples. However, the hearings' commonplace treatments of land in terms of speculative capitalist property logics as an asset or as an element of production reinforces colonial and classed injustices in important and commonplace ways, enabling the continuation of social relations which are fundamentally grounded in relations of exclusion (Chapter 6). As Blomley asserts, "the ownership model enacts property … in ways that militate against

recognition of …alternative possibilities, such as the collective entitlement of poor renters to inner-city space, or the claims of indigenous people to "improved" urban land" (2004, p. 146).

Building on mapped representations of land as property, together with early formal and informal practices of anti-Asian racism through which Chinese settlers and businesses were repeatedly pushed to the vicinity of Dupont street, Chinatown's status as a distinct from its environs has been repeatedly established and reinforced. Chinatown's unique architecture, as Chow describes, arose in these conditions of imposed separateness, as merchant-residents creatively responded to the day-to-day requirements of the small, necessarily self-reliant and mixed-use (residential, commercial and communal) settlement. Subsequently, this built environment has been shaped via state practices through which property owners were required and/or enticed to construct, emphasize, (or, as one historical commentator put it, "museumize") certain exotic features and not others (as cited in Ley et al., 1994, p. 130).

One particularly notable act of separation occurred during phase two of the Strathcona urban renewal initiative, as Chinatown's commercial expansion was halted at Gore Street via the expropriation, clearance and residential redevelopment of the east side of the street. Chow (2007) emphasizes how this act entailed the conceptual and material denial of local uses as expressed by business owners and nearby residents for whom Chinatown was centred on commerce and services catering to everyday needs (e.g., for shoe repair, key cutting, laundry facilities and grocery items). These perimeters were re-asserted in 1971 and 1974, with Chinatown's designation as a protected historic site, enabling the Province and subsequently the City, to assure and regulate the area's "unique ethnic quality" in accordance with colonial definitions and projects (City of Vancouver Planning Department; see above, on page 238).

HAHR consultants' characterizations of Chinatown's streetscape in terms of a "noticeable edge" which divides commercial Chinatown from residential Strathcona (on page 213, above), together with the "clearly defined boundaries" that, according to the Canadian Register of Historic Places "contribute to the heritage character of the site" (Parks Canada, 2010) advocate the ongoing preservation and promotion of these visible boundaries. But such discourses entail little mention and/or scrutiny of the dynamics of marginalization and imposition upon which these contemporary truths of *distinctness* depend.

H. A. Smith's discussion of Chinatown's heritage designation further signals how, as one DNC organizer put it, even "arbitrary" "lines on a map have tremendous material impact on the lives of people who live within those lines" (Opp 3x2; see Chapter 5). Smith cites a former City planner's account of the process:

> Well, at that time there were not three communities … there were no distinctions in people's minds in the late 1960s … The designation was a technique that the city used as a trick, if you will, to stop the freeway …the City of Vancouver … sent an evaluation over to Victoria with a line drawn around an area and said please designate this area … one of the first reactions was you have just drawn a square around a part of town, make the line squiggly so it will look like we actually know what we are doing … so one of [the] things that fell to (the planning department) was to draw a reasonable line around the heritage buildings … there was no major analysis or anything about the buildings. (1998 interview with former city planner, cited in H. A. Smith, 2002, p. 501)

This interesting account helps to elucidate how municipal practices of heritage preservation have functioned in contrasting ways: as a "trick" or tool that enabled protection and recognition of particular local meanings and objectives, even as it produced effects of imposition and control. Further, the planner's account signals how this double-sided dynamic is not only social and political but quite material in nature. Spurred by the considerable political efforts of local groups (for instance, SPOTA, DERA and the CBA) the City's 1970s practices of heritage designation

were likely part of the historical dynamics that functioned to protect not only commercial Chinatown but also many of the neighbourhood's older buildings which continue to function as vital affordable housing for so many of the area's most vulnerable residents. In altering or "encumbering" a property's redevelopment potential, heritage designation limits the options of owners who are no longer permitted to demolish the building for redevelopment or sale, or to alter it in unapproved ways. The considerable expense of authorized restoration can prompt owners to simply "milk" (Lees et al., 2008; see Chapter 4) a rundown heritage property for low-end rents until financial circumstances improve.

However, the flip side of such designation, as H. A. Smith (2002) points out in relation to Gastown, has been to spark gentrification in the form of architectural rehabilitation and commercial growth which was, in turn, reinforced by additional public revitalization initiatives. In his account of DERA's housing activism of the 1970s, Ley has described a similar phenomenon wherein following demands for stricter bylaw enforcement: "The carrying out of improvements has … proven a two-edged sword, accompanied as it often has been by rent increases and evictions" (1994, p. 194). The hearings make audible how practices of renovation and "renoviction" remain a significant problem, for instance, as speakers describe how upscaling of character buildings such as the Golden Crown, American, New Columbia and Lotus hotels was effecting the displacement of low-income tenants (see Chapter 5).

Further, the planner's quote (above) can be read to illustrate historical efforts to navigate and mediate tensions of uniqueness and tradability (see Chapter 4). While municipal councillors and planners had originally backed the freeway proposal and its associated development schemes (e.g., Strathcona renewal and Project 200), political push-back from locals in concert with some planners and the federal government propelled a shift towards preservation. However this

municipal act of protection can also be read as a change in strategy. Rather than enable major developers' aspirations of realizing large-scale *tradability*, the City would instead be forced to capture as many benefits as possible from the area's historic *uniqueness*. In this way, while the late 1960s municipal shift in which Chinatown became concertedly distinguished as a heritage district is in many ways a local, grassroots win, it is also a shift that can to some extent remain on the terms of capitalist development logics, entailing pursuit of one mode of commodification versus another.

7.3.2 Unpacking preservation: Chinese space as commodity, as Other, as erasure?

As Ley, Anderson and Konrad observed in 1994, "Chinatown has become one of the city's key 'ethnic neighbourhoods,' a civic asset to be courted for its distinctive contribution to Canadian multiculturalism" (p. 127). However, an historicized reading of Chinatown's *Chineseness* as produced and managed serves to complicate widespread (among both those in support and opposed to the HAHR) assertions of the need to, for instance, "make sure that the uniqueness of the architecture of the area be well preserved and history and culture protected" (Supp 5). Critical historical analyses illuminate how many of the ways in which Chinatown is currently conveyed as distinct (as both separate and unique) rely on historical practices of white supremacy through which neighbourhood has been racialized as Chinese. Chinatown's legible boundaries and unique architecture have been profoundly shaped via historical dynamics through which "racial ideology had been materially embedded in space … become a social fact, and aided its own reproduction" (Anderson, 1987, p. 584).

Anderson's and Chow's accounts emphasize how many elements of Chinatown's *look* and *feel* are not simply aesthetically pleasing by-products of residents' architectural tastes, but

have been persistently managed according to municipal projects of beautification and "Orientalization" in order to "visually define and reinforce the area as Chinese for the tourist" (Chow, 2007, p. 116). Drawing together insights from the cases of Vancouver's Stanley Park, Chinatown-Strathcona and the dispossessed black community of Halifax's Africville, Chow argues that "the struggle for control over territory by Canada's white settler society was achieved by the racialization of space, legal dispossession and commemorative erasure" (2007, p. 8).

These complicated, racialized dynamics inspire critical questions about the City of Vancouver's ongoing concern to define and manage the neighbourhood's legible "Chinese" features. On one hand, the HAHR's proposed revised Chinatown HA-1 Design Guidelines illustrate how contemporary planning approaches to the neighbourhood are considerably more nuanced than the 1960s beautification interventions described by Chow, Ley, Anderson and Konrad and others. For instance, the Guidelines counsel against design of new buildings in a "pseudo-historic style" and call for architecture that is "harmonious" with—versus that which "mimics"—heritage features (Director of Planning, 2010b, Appendix C, pp. 4, 18). However the same policy document goes on to advise that "A wide range of colours are appropriate to Chinatown; reds, oranges, and gold are colours traditionally associated with the Chinese presence in Vancouver and other west coast Chinatown areas" (Director of Planning, 2010b, Appendix C, p. 23). In both in its imagery and instructions, this document encourages visible features (for instance, dragon motifs and neon signage) that both Chow (2007) and Anderson connect with the "purposeful Orientalizing" of Chinatowns in accordance with the exotic and glamourous "image that Europeans sought to discover" (Anderson, 1991, p. 176).

Taken together, this attention to dynamics of legible *Chineseness*, together with the hearings' frequent narratives linking Chinatown's built heritage and money-go-round "flows" of

consumption (see Chapter 6) suggest continuation of historical dynamics through which Chinatown's Chinese heritage is valued insofar as it can be commodified. Likewise, widespread concern to achieve Chinatown's designation as a National Historic Site can be read in terms of calls to attract tourism dollars. Blomley emphasizes how, following the violent dispossession and displacement of indigenous communities from Stanley Park, invocation of historic indigeneity was soon recognized to contain certain aesthetic and social benefits. With the park now "imagined as a place of nature and visual contemplation," a native presence (in the form of a "model Indian village") "could be reinserted on the terms of the dominant society" (Blomley, 2004, p. 121).

Read in light of such analyses, aspects of hearing debate thus evoke Agger's critique of American multiculturalism as a simplistic affirmation of capitalist consumption (Agger, 2006, p. 69). Similarly, Ahmed (2012, following hooks) critiques approaches that treat difference as a feel-good politics of consumption. In an unusual variation of this logic of commodifiable, multicultural *difference*, one speaker at the hearings further suggested the encouragement of a new shopping district known as "Totemtown—which is to try to bring in natives and businesses and develop it along Hastings Street" (Supp 17).

Likewise Chinatown's designation as a National Historic Site—based on the area's "development as a self-segregated enclave," "colourful paintwork," "Chinese characters," and "visual cohesiveness" that produce its "clearly defined boundaries" (Parks Canada, 2010)—bears comparison to Anderson's historical critique of how "without needing the acknowledgement or acceptance of the residents, Chinatown's representers constructed in their own minds a boundary between 'their' territory and 'our' territory" (1987, p. 583). Throughout the hearings, repeated expressions of concern that the proposed zoning changes might threaten Chinatown's National

Historic Site application reflect how this application's external and officially sanctioned definition of historic Chineseness acts as significant arbiter of preservation priorities. While Chinatown is no longer racialized as, for instance, a "den of iniquity" (see Anderson, 1987), Ley, Anderson and Konrad emphasize that "it is the deeper process of racial classification that warrants … attention, both in the past and the apparently more 'tolerant' present" (1994, p. 127).

Hearing narratives that seem to conflate race and place do little to disrupt the historically constructed and imposed material-conceptual project of a White Canada (or White Vancouver) against which Chinatown can be exoticized as a racialized aberration. Indeed, numerous speakers on all sides of the hearing debate, including councillors, seemed to use the terms "Chinatown community" and "Chinese Community" interchangeably, a practice that perhaps all too closely resembles practico-inert understandings in which place is conflated with a "homogenous racial identity" (Anderson, 1991, p. 94).

Though I critique speakers' emphasis on built features of the neighbourhood (see Chapter 6), this is not to discount the important relation between Chinatown's built heritage elements and the wellbeing of local residents. An understanding of the historical and contemporary practices of Chinatown's family and benevolent associations makes clear how these society buildings have been of pivotal importance to the wellbeing of hundreds of community members who rely on them for housing, cultural and gathering space and other supports. At the same time, the preservation of these structures cannot be equated with the protection of vulnerable local residents. In the case of the society-owned May Wah Hotel, for instance, the City had given tax exemptions and resources for an architectural study of restoration options. However as a society representative noted during the hearings, the resources provided had only been enough to pay for façade upgrades, such that the building's 123 SRO rooms had remained in poor condition (Supp

14). While such interventions undoubtedly improve the appearance of society buildings as viewed from the street, they are, as the speaker notes, not sufficient to improve the quality of housing for the low-income residents who live within the buildings.

This potential effect of *preserved buildings* and *lost community* (see Chapter 6) evokes Baudrillard's (1985) theorization of simulacra wherein the "dressing-up" of tourist destinations in accordance with romantic cultural images functions to mask the actual cultural change and/or degradation occurring underneath. This effect is critiqued by the speaker who describes their experience of walking by a building decorated with "historic images of Chinatown," while the scene in the salon inside "could be… anywhere" and "has nothing to do with Chinatown" (Opp 76; see Chapter 4). Further, as Harvey stresses, aesthetic interventions have "real effects on the ways in which these worlds get ordered" (Harvey, 1990, p. 301). Several speakers read these ongoing neighbourhood changes in terms of dynamics of Eurocentricism and race. For instance, in the speaker's critique of how Chinatown was becoming "whitewashed" and "westernized" (Opp 76). Another was particularly direct in naming this dimension of ongoing neighbourhood change: "You call it … revitalization, healthy balance, neighbourhood improvement. [One prominent Chinatown leader] calls it 'the new Chinatown, the Chinatown that works,' referring to the two blocks surrounding the Bob Rennie gallery, which … [are] predominantly Caucasian-owned" (Opp 74). These speakers make audible how the changes in Chinatown at the time of the hearings may entail problematic dimensions conveyed in historicizing critiques wherein "improvement" of these local spaces was simultaneously a process of "whitening" (see Blomley, 2004).

My point is not to assert that Chinatown should remain "Chinese-inhabited or Chinese-owned"; the suggestion is *not*, as one speaker put it, to "'keep the Chinese people there, being

Chinese, for the amusements of other non-Chinese people' or whatever" (Opp 33; see Chapter 8)! Nor do I wish to make a specific argument about whether or how Chinatown should be treated as a place of Chinese culture. Instead, my concern here is less to make a point about the objective truth of what Chinatown *is* than to underscore how common understandings of Chinatown should be understood in relation to historical and contemporary practices of *making place* which are formed and used in the context of concrete relations and projects. Critical and historical perspectives suggest how—as many speakers noted—a narrow policy focus on *built* versions of neighbourhood heritage and culture can, ironically, preserve the form or appearance of a community heritage founded in relations of resilience and mutual support, while at the same time undermining these relations in practice. City actors' and others' apparent concern to secure and display visible evidence of Chinatown's 'Chinese-ness' (and/or Vancouver's muliticulturalism) call to mind Ahmed's discussion of institutionally managed *diversity* which, states Ahmed, "participates in the creation of an illusion of equality, fitting in with [a] social mission: the idea the [institution] has of itself as doing good ('the great benefactor'). Diversity can allow organizations to retain their good idea of themselves." In this way, states Ahmed, diversity can function as "a narrative of repair, as what allows us to 'recover' from racism by re-covering the very signs of injury" (2012, p. 17).

Ahmed's critique (together with the work of Blomley, Chow and Anderson) thus raises complex and difficult questions about the difference between commemoration as the recognition and continuation of historical struggle and commemoration as forgetting and/or erasure. While Chinatown's distinctive architectural heritage has been produced in the context of the neighbourhood's important and complex history of struggle and is thus integrally related to this history, these buildings should not be mistaken for this history in itself. Instead, neighbourhood

history is better grasped, I think, in terms of the historical, human praxis of which these buildings are both an instrument and a product. In this way, while Chinatown's complex history of imposition and resistance, struggle and negotiation, has meant that the neighbourhood can indeed be understood as both distinct and Chinese, critical readings of the hearings raise a key question about how these historically formed truths are being used in the present: Are they functioning to disrupt, or continue, the problematic aspects of the relations upon which they depend?

7.3.3 Masking marginalization: Emptying, mix and neglected potential

Exploration of hearing discourse in light of longer, critical histories of place also raises questions regarding narratives of Chinatown as a place of neglected potential—for instance, as "vacant," "deteriorating" or lifeless (e.g., Supp 8, Supp 20; see Chapter 6) in relation to its history and possible future of "a vibrant street life and a mix of residents" (Supp 3; also Supp 15, above, on page 215). Read historically, such narratives function to obscure important relations and dynamics that should instead be held out for critical scrutiny. In the previous chapter, I argued that the hearings' common storylines of subjectlessness obscure how vacant lots and empty storefronts reflect the choices and practices of property market actors. Such narratives are further complicated when read in light of a critical history of place that makes visible the racist and violent colonial practices of dispossession upon which the property rights of these contemporary actors fundamentally depend. When accounts of *emptiness* are reconnected to a longer history of place, they become visible as political and unsettled.

The owner of the exclusive Keefer Suites's assertation (above, on page 215)—that they are "not taking away housing from anyone" because they purchased a "derelict" building "with pigeons flying around in it"—is not exactly untrue. But at the same time this evocative assertion

of emptiness obscures a much longer sequence of investment, industrialization, disinvestment and designation through which many state and private actors have made (potentially very profitable) use of the historical practices through which indigenous territories were violently produced as empty real estate. In this way, the hearings make audible how "the enactment of property entails, in part, story telling":

> Scholars have … pointed to the importance of settler stories, characterizing them as "self-justifying accounts, told by a colonial people." Yet "ongoing doubts and insecurities about the moral legitimacy of their occupation of Indigenous lands … require that these stories be told, and retold." (Culhane, 1998, as cited in Blomley, 2004, pp. 114–115)

When the contemporary 'fact' of the emptiness of Chinatown buildings and properties is instead grasped in terms of historical, racist, colonial and capitalist *practices of emptying*, a range of contemporary claims and truths are rendered subject to critique and challenge.

Critical histories of place also unsettle some hearing speakers' calls for a return to Chinatown's historic 'happy mix.' As I've described throughout this chapter, Anderson's work in particular makes visible how, while Chinatown was indeed a community in which rich and poor residents lived in close proximity; this historic mix did not occur simply because Vancouver's earliest Chinese residents preferred to settle in an ethnic enclave. Instead it arose through complex dynamics of choice-within-conditions of structural, white supremacist exclusion among other factors. Anderson argues that

> sharing a district with fellow countrymen would probably have been an attractive option in the circumstances for some. But it seems unlikely that the majority of merchants, at least, chose to live beneath their often substantial means in a waterlogged district…We have seen that the emergence of this enclave in Vancouver resulted from a complex set of factors. While the protection afforded by the state partly enabled formation of the district, state action also constrained Chinese people to live together. (1991, p. 69)

Anderson's analysis also makes clear how the historical fact of neighbourhood "mix" was grounded in ideologies of sameness that masked important realities of difference and stratification. Distinctions within Chinatown's community, she explains, were not often encountered by white settlers and when such encounters occurred, they tended not to alter "the more comforting conflations of homogenous racial identity and place" (Anderson, 1991, p. 94). But, as I've noted, these historical practices of essentialism masked striking differences in the lives and experiences of community members. While labourers mostly resided in "distressed and cramped" wooden shacks, merchants typically lived in elevated brick structures which set them widely apart from the less privileged "bachelors" (Anderson, 1991, p.79). Further, the repressive 1885 head tax was waived for diplomatic and consular representatives, tourists, merchants and students—each of whom were deemed valuable to Canada's financial and/or trade interests (Anderson, 1991, p. 58). Such details reflect how historic Chinatown was characterized by the kinds of drastic polarity and difference in privilege that were no doubt present in Vancouver on a broader scale; the fact that this considerable disparity was compressed within the enforced geo-spatial boundaries of the Dupont Street settlement does not render this mix "happy" from the perspective of poor Chinese labourers, nor desirable as the basis of future neighbourhood change. This historical reading suggests how invocations of Chinatown's historic "mix" thus have potential to smooth over and mask important historically formed realities of difference and stratification.

Storylines of Chinatown as "empty," together with selective versions of an historic *mix* are not only problem of historical (in)accuracy; a historical reading also calls into question hearing narratives where references to both "emptiness" and "mix" function in relation to each other within discourses of Chinatown's *potential*. As in historical discourses of territory as

empty, underdeveloped (and thus in need of "improvement"), while hearing narratives that convey Chinatown in terms of *neglected potential* are most obviously storylines of *place*, they also suggest predictable (if implicit) readings of local people—or more precisely, of local people in relation to place.

Blomley emphasizes how "Western notions of property are deeply invested in a colonial geography, a white mythology, in which the racialized figure of the savage plays an anchoring role" (Blomley, 2004, p. 115); historically, the mapping of savage space as "devoid of law and property" corresponded to "the mapping of the colonial subject as purely negative ('ni foi, ni loi, ni roi')" (Blomley, 2004, p. 115, citing Fitzpatrick). Such images, notes Blomley, were prevalent in early colonial technologies of local place-making:

> Vancouver's first archivist, J.S. Mathews, portrayed the place that would become Vancouver prior to European contact as "a vast amphitheatre of virgin solitude," "sleeping away the silent centuries" in a "primeval paradise of stillness." "Our" Indians, he assures us, were then "a scattered few in an empty land." (Blomley, 2004, p. 117)

As in boosterist real estate marketing of Granville's "wild land" (on page 108, above), this colonial "white myth" conveyed how, at the time British Columbia was 'discovered,' it "had been in essence an empty land, devoid of society, government, or laws" (Tennant as cited in Blomley, 2004, p. 107); white supremacist racial categories through which all "non-whites" could be imagined in opposition to European civilization enabled understandings of local indigenous peoples as a primitive, ancient race (see Blomley, 2004; Roy & Thompson, 2005). Likewise, while early European stereotypes of The Orient entailed images of opulence and grandeur, by the mid-1800s, notions of "China" and "Oriental" had become defined (in opposition to Europe's self-image) in terms of backwardness and vice associated with despotism and a "civilization in decline" (Anderson, 1987, p. 591). In variations of the same logic,

narratives of a racialized, unruly, territory in need of civilizing can be traced through subsequent understandings in which Chinatown was persistently targeted as a dangerous, disease-ridden, substandard space requiring control and taming by police and health authorities.

This historical reading thus reflects how integral to the "improvement" of local territories have been storylines through which an array of structural practices and dynamics could be inscribed in (often racialized) Others. The settlement conditions faced by Vancouver's racialized Chinese (and Japanese) communities—including constraints on family settlement, job and pay discrimination, inferior land, overcrowding, dispossession and minimal services—were themselves "seen as further proof of the undeniable alienness of 'Orientals'" (Blomley, 2004, p. 147). These discourses could then be used as rationale for subsequent rounds of anti-Asian violence and exclusion.

In this way, historical discourses of *neglect* and *potential for improvement* have also been marginalizing discourses that simultaneously enable and obscure the material, cultural and structural dynamics through which local peoples are produced as problems. DERA's 1970s advocacy work exposed how treatment of the Downtown Eastside as a "second class neighbourhood" (Green, 1983, as cited in Ley 1994, p. 189) —a kind of dumping ground for uses and facilities not tolerated elsewhere—was both enabled and obscured by the widespread Othering of neighbourhood residents within the discourse of Skid Road. As one speaker recounted during the hearings, "We tried to rename [the neighbourhood]… so that it would be seen as a place where actual *people* lived" (Opp 72, speaker's emphasis; see Chapter 5).

These individualizing narratives help mask the historical, material and structural nature of neighbourhood decline. In his 2004 account of property dynamics in Gastown and throughout the Downtown Eastside, Blomley recounts how Woodward's was remembered as a "productive,"

“happy,” “familial” place. Meanwhile, the presence of “poor people, drug dealers, addicts, prostitutes, and social agencies” was seen as not just a signal of neighbourhood decline, but was implied to be the cause (Blomley 2004, pp. 82–83). Lees, Slater and Wyly describe how such discourses reflect thinking that (in focusing solely on the appearance of things, *here* and *now*) is cut off both in space and in time, producing mixed-up versions of *cause* and *effect*. “In any society where class inequities are bound up with racial-ethnic divisions or other sociocultural polarization,” they explain, neighbourhood turnover from moderate- to low-income residents and businesses

> almost invariably unleashes racist and xenophobic arguments that a particular group is ‘causing’ neighborhood decline. But poorer residents and businesses can only afford to move in after a neighbourhood has been devalorized—after capital disinvestment and the departure of wealthy and middle classes. (Lees et al., pp. 53–54)

7.3.4 Alternative histories of place: Sanctuary and capacity

This relational grasp of disinvestment offers insight into how, from the perspective of many poor and vulnerable residents, the Downtown Eastside is perhaps no more a space of marginality than of *sanctuary*. The outward flow of capital renders such spaces accessible to those displaced from elsewhere—whether other cities and countries, dispossessed northern reserve communities, or the former Riverview mental health hospital. As one hearing presenter, an historian, described, “many of the residents of Chinatown live there—perched on the social and economic margins—precisely because of our history of racism. And because they have built a neighbourhood where the economically marginalized can survive, others live there too” (Opp 33).

Indeed, various speakers (Opp 51; Opp 65; Opp 14) at the hearings described how their move to the Downtown Eastside had been one of last resort, echoing one Chinatown resident's sentiment that "If we're displaced from Chinatown, we have no place else to go. For many of us, we've come to the Downtown Eastside because we've been displaced for a variety of reasons from other neighbourhoods" (Opp 44). The heritage of Chinatown, stated another, is "the heritage of the place where historically those who felt excluded from everywhere else were welcomed and found a home" (Opp 49). Later, in acknowledging Vancouver's location on unceded Coast Salish territories, a CCAP organizer described how they were

> learning over the years how important it is to acknowledge the struggles people have gone through and the horrible consequences of forced displacement from traditional communities, which triggers people. I see it all the time in people as we talk about more homelessness and people losing their housing in the DTES. (Opp 64)

Through such relational accounts, speakers signal how storylines of Chinatown as a place of *unrealized potential* do little to disrupt historical logics through which future-oriented narratives of improvement naturalize development practices in which local people (along with local practices of mutual aid) are rendered marginal to the speculative projects of powerful capitalist and state actors. A historical grasp of the relations through which many commonsense ideas of the neighbourhood have been formed suggests the need for critical questions about the nature and basis of the Chinatown that is being preserved and promoted—and perhaps more to the point—*for whom*?

Further, attention to these alternatives narratives of place makes apparent how in the hearings—as throughout history—local people act creatively to unsettle dominant and problematic practico-inert truths, at the same time disrupting and/or challenging the practices of knowing and doing upon which they depend. Local residents' efforts to make and defend

alternate community histories of sanctuary and collective capacity continue to pose compelling challenges to predominant storylines of deficit, decay and decline:

> We include First Nations people from all over Canada that have a connection to the DTES, [and] you have refugees like me who became homeless in New West, and despite … fairly concerted effort was not able to find adequate shelter in New Westminster, and so I landed here. And by choice I'm still here. And now (I'm) part of the community that doesn't first see an economic impact, but sees the impact through families—through places where community can take the place of family temporarily; and a community where all of us are encouraged to share. I wouldn't be speaking here at this meeting if it weren't for other people in the community that set a precedent, that here we do have a voice. But the only way that we have a voice is by having the community; you take away the community and you take away the voice. (Opp 65)

Chapter 8: Doing Community: Crisis, Consultation and the Not

Preservation of this young city has never been about freezing us in a place in time, but rather always looking to the future in a way that strengthens the things we hold dear.
(Historic Area Height Review: Conclusions and Recommendations, p. 5)

This final layer of analysis is inspired by Sartre's future-oriented notion of *the project*, in that it considers the trajectories and/or goals which particular discursive practices could be said to pursue. In this chapter, I tease apart an apparent parallel reality in which extensive community consultation simultaneously did and did not occur. To do so, I explore how much of what were overtly debates about process hinge on contrasting versions of Chinatown *as community*. Treating accounts and assertions of community as praxis-in-circumstance, I consider how Chinatown as community does not simply exist (as objective fact) but is done, both historically and in certain moments of the hearings. I draw on Ahmed's thinking to "follow" the concept of community "around" the hearings, considering how "community" can be explored as a situated project of knowing. This critical re-reading of HAHR process makes visible how, in the context of mounting development pressure and narrowed planning attention to questions of height, the social welfare concerns—and the involvement—of low-income residents were gradually rendered external to the HAHR decision. My analysis in this chapter thus traces how recurring relations of colonization-marginalization and resistance are not only historical but continue in the context of the HAHR.

8.1 Dual Realities: "The Chinatown Community has Spoken" | "I Was Not Consulted"

Important disagreements in the hearings related to the HAHR process; not only the question of severing Chinatown related items, but also whether sufficient community

consultation had taken place. Many speaking in support of the HAHR (Supp 2; Supp 8; Supp 17; Supp 19) emphasized how the proposals currently under consideration marked a "pivotal stage" (Supp 6x2) within a decade of community planning activities. "The HAHR," stated one, "is a culmination of a planning and visioning process within the community that has taken 10 years, starting with the Chinatown Vision in 2002" (Supp 5). Echoing City planners' emphasis on "extensive public consultation" (Staff 1), supporters described these processes as, for instance, "carefully researched … with … a lot of meetings, a lot of surveys, a lot of discussions" (Supp 17) and "inclusive … crossing cultural, socio-economic, geographic and generational boundaries" (Supp 2; see also Supp 19; Supp 13). While some referenced earlier "differences" (Supp 4), many conveyed the HAHR in terms of consensus. A representative of the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association summarized,

> Our members have worked hard over the last ten years to help develop the Chinatown Plan, the Chinatown Vision and the Historic Area Height Review. The process has been very difficult and divisive in Chinatown. Now… there's a broad consensus among the residents, businesses, benevolent societies and cultural organizations in support of the policy. (Supp 7)

But in striking contrast to such accounts, many opponents were emphatic that HAHR consultation had been inadequate. "I was not consulted" asserted one Chinatown resident:

> I was never consulted about Chinatown. And when I did say that, at a Carnegie meeting, a woman who was sitting next to me who lives in my building said, "And nor was I!" And then, some elderly Chinese women, who also live in Chinatown but not in my building, through a translator said, "Certainly they were not consulted." (Opp 1)

"I live a half a block from the epicentre of where this big development's gonna take place" stated another resident, "but nobody seems to think I'm a stakeholder; that I have a long-term stake in the community" (Opp 20). Other presenters recounted how they had assisted with outreach and a petition drive organized by the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council (DNC.) These

volunteers (Opp 3, Opp 5, Opp 6, Opp 21) described walking Chinatown's streets, knocking on doors and spending days speaking with "not just residents but businesses too" (Opp 12). Each was emphatic that locals had not been informed:

> We've been setting up the little booth in Chinatown, we've been talking to residents and seniors in line … Not one of them knew what was going on … We were trying to explain to them … and were pointing to the building right across the street … There's going to be a 15-storey building there, I said. And they were like, "No." (Opp 17)

The City, many asserted, should hold off on implementing the HAHR and instead implement the social and economic impact study that—in the wake of Woodward's—had been promised but never undertaken (Opp 3; Opp 22; Opp 30; Opp 38; Opp 39; Opp 44; Opp 45; Opp 53; Opp 57; Coun 3). The HAHR seemed to be happening in a "rush" (Opp 64 to Coun 8; Opp 31).

As I sought to unravel these clashing accounts of consultation, I began to notice how accounts of process often entailed assertions about Chinatown as community. Alongside recurring narratives about Chinatown as *place* (see Chapter 7), Chinatown was frequently conveyed in terms of a distinct *group of people*, who were variously referred to as the "Chinatown community," "the Chinese community," or simply, "Chinatown." Others referred to Chinatown's "community leaders" (Coun 5; see also Coun 3) or "traditional leadership" (Supp 8x2). References to Chinatown as people were often expressed in opposition to those who *were not* part of this collectivity. Certain speakers seemed particularly clear who should or should not be involved in determining the future of neighbourhood: "The people who have not participated in Chinatown's Vision, or who have not worked here for a lot of years, or who have not had family who was born here, I don't think really understand Chinatown" (Supp 17; see also Supp 4x2 on page 303, below). Another stated,

> I've been asked by many in our community why these people from the Downtown

> Eastside and others are interfering in our decision when we are at a such pivotal stage in the revitalization of Chinatown. They are not part of our community and never have tried to help us over the last 10 years while Chinatown was decaying and now they are speaking and telling us what is good for us. (Supp 6x2; see also Supp 8x2)

As in the latter quote, the "two communities" of "Chinatown" and "Downtown Eastside" were widely seen (Coun 8; see also Oth 2; Opp 3x2; Supp 8x2; Staff 4; Coun 7) to constitute the opposed groups of the HAHR hearings.

In the course of these assertions, some (Supp 1; Supp 8; Supp 2x2) spoke quite explicitly as members of the Chinatown *We*. For instance: "The Chinatown community has spoken. We want the HAHR to be implemented" (Supp 6). One organizational representative stated that "it was shocking to many organizations that Chinatown's plan should be opened up and by organizations from outside Chinatown" (Supp 15). A representative of the VCRC emphasized that the Chinatown community "already [has] a plan," and was "united today in our desire to move forward" (Supp 2).

Together, these accounts of Chinatown as people make audible broadly held understandings of a unified Chinatown that had forged a consensus now encapsulated in the HAHR and that deserved the right to "define its own destiny" (Supp 2). This idea is particularly important because of its prevalence and apparent influence. At Council's final meeting on the hearings, the unity of Chinatown was referenced as a basis for decision-making by many councillors, as all but two ultimately voted to pass the HAHR proposals (see Coun 1, Coun 6, Coun 7, Coun 8, Coun 9, Coun 11).

This noticeable parallel reality (in which consultation simultaneously did and did not occur) led me to explore these conflicting claims. Despite the clarity with which the "Chinatown community" was consistently *know*n, I realized that—especially as an outsider to the

neighbourhood(s) in question—I felt increasingly unclear as to who and/or what was meant by this designation. In this chapter, I unpack the hearings' interrelated accounts of consultation and community; especially the nature and basis of the *unified Chinatown* that seemed so influential in many councillors' decisions to pass the HAHR.

8.2 Alternate Histories: Reading Colonizing Logic

To explore this poignant disjuncture, I first revisited points in hearing debate wherein Chinatown's decade-long process was detailed. As I've described in Chapter 1, HAHR reports link the origins of the Height Review to the City's EcoDensity Initiative. However, EcoDensity was only rarely mentioned in hearing debate. Instead, speakers commonly referenced the Chinatown Vision and Plan and occasionally, "Community Directions." Focusing on this early process, I increasingly sensed the significance of certain accounts which disrupted common narratives of the HAHR as flowing from earlier Chinatown planning processes. One speaker, a local activist and writer, had been "researching this condo plan for over two years." The speaker stated,

> This developer-driven plan in fact derailed and hijacked the community planning process that began over 10 years ago … [Within] the DTES community development program …, the low-income community engaged City Hall to form Community Directions, which produced many resident-driven plans 10 years ago, including [plans] on housing, addiction, etc. At the same time, *in parallel*, the City engaged Chinatown to form the Chinatown Revitalization Committee which produced the Chinatown Vision Directions… Those were supposed to form a foundation for a holistic community planning process… Then came developers like MacDonald … they came in [and] derailed this whole planning process. (Opp 58; emphasis mine)

Another presenter who had participated in earlier phases of the HAHR process, stressed "discontinuities between Action B-1 from the *EcoDensity Initial Actions* and what came before

and after that action" (Opp 9). Together, these and other dissenting accounts reference a more complicated series of multiple planning and policy processes underway during the years preceding the HAHR. These included the 1999-2004 DTES Community Development Project (of which Community Directions and Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee [VCRC] were sub-components), the subsequent Chinatown Revitalization planning program and *EcoDensity*. As I detail later, the first speaker's reference to engagement that occurred "in parallel" signals how earlier initiatives can be understood in terms of a series of "parallel" processes which entailed differing memberships and differing trajectories of engagement.

8.2.1 Derailment: "Discontinuities"

These alternate histories of derailment, hijacking and discontinuity unsettle predominant hearing narratives of the HAHR as emerging through a decade of community planning, offering cues to explore how the HAHR instead breaks from earlier processes in important ways. First, while documents detailing these earlier Downtown Eastside planning processes call for residential intensification—including "attracting more residents," and "encourag[ing] market housing"—as a key ingredient of Chinatown's revitalization (Director of Current Planning, 2005, pp. 4,6), intensification is positioned in these documents, not as a stand-alone consideration, but as part of a more holistic "comprehensive community plan" which also entails social and affordability concerns (Director of Current Planning, 2005, p. 4; see also Community Project Manager of Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program, 2002). Low-income priorities like health and housing had been especially prominent within the resident-driven *Community*

Directions component of the 1999-2004 DTES Community Development Project.[52] Both 2005 and 2006 reports on the emerging Chinatown Plan process further call for non-market and affordable housing and "a social and community development plan" (Director of Current Planning, 2005, p. 4; Director of Planning, 2006, p. 12). Housing affordability is also repeatedly described as one of the three key impetuses (along with environmental sustainability and liveability) for *EcoDensity* (see Director of Planning, 2008; Director of Planning, Director of the Housing Centre, & Manager of the Sustainability Group, 2006).

Second, key reports on these processes do not give any clear indication that this intensification should occur via height increases. On the contrary, these documents imply that additional housing will be accommodated within Chinatown's existing heritage scale and form. Earlier Chinatown revitalization work had sought to, for instance, "encourage conservation of many of the area's heritage buildings by re-occupying vacant upper storeys" and noted concern about "larger aggregations that are not in character with the area's fine-grained historic fabric" (Director of Current Planning, 2005, pp. 6, 7; see also City of Vancouver Central Area Planning, 2005). Further, the 2006 Chinatown Plan report conveys repeatedly (and in rather enthusiastic terms) how residential intensification, investment and other types of revitalization were well underway within the existing zoning framework:

> Chinatown has seen increased development interest since 2005. There is a wide range of project types, including market and non-market housing, new commercial uses, proposals on both narrow 25'-50' lots and larger consolidated lots. There have also been a number of heritage conservation projects. (Director of

[52] A City report describes how this initiative sought to "mobilize and build leadership among the low-income community by bringing together residents and community organizations in a comprehensive planning process aimed at developing community-based solutions to … neighbourhood issues … This work took place through issue-specific Working Groups … [including]: Alcohol and Drug, Housing, First Nations Caucus, Latinos En Accion, Chinese Seniors, Child and Family, and Community Economic Development" (Community Project Manager, 2004, Discussion section).

Planning, 2006, p. 3; see also p. 5)

Later, the same report states, "There has also been increased interest from Vancouverites to invest in and move back into the area… Decreasing storefront vacancy rate on Pender Street also reflects that economic activities are increasing on the street level" (Director of Planning, 2006, p. 12). Read against the hearing's frequent pro-revitalization narratives of decline, inaction and decay, these 2006 accounts of increased investment appear as a striking contrast.

Even key *EcoDensity* policy documents bear little indication of the forthcoming initiative to increase building heights in the City's historic districts. The October 2006 *EcoDensity* Administrative Report and Terms of Reference scarcely address issues of height or scale, instead recommending that "EcoDensity respect and build on existing City policies … including *CityPlan*," which outlines retention of Vancouver's "traditional look and feel [including] heritage buildings and areas" (Director of Planning et al., 2006, pp. 1, 17).

In this way, official accounts of preceding processes do little to signal the introduction of the HAHR through Council's November 2007 motion to "consider … policies to relax building height restrictions… in the Gastown, Hastings and Chinatown districts" (see City of Vancouver, 2007b, p. 3). This alternate reading of the HAHR as interruption and discontinuity raises the question posed by one speaker at the hearings: "What happened to that process in the mid-2000s …? What was it that changed between 2004 and 2010" (Opp 9 to Coun 9)?

8.2.2 Hijacking: A "new normal"

One response to this question is offered in the activist's account of the community development process as "derailed" by "developers like MacDonald" (Opp 58, above, on page 266). Together with other accounts (e.g., Oth 1; Opp 66) this critical assessment characterizes the

HAHR as developing, not only in relation to a series of local planning initiatives and/or dischord amongst various local actors, but also in relation to city-wide development dynamics and the interventions of large Vancouver developers. These speakers describe a sudden change around 2007 when developers—in particular, MacDonald Development Corporation—began making enquiries about building 30-40 storey towers in Chinatown and other parts the DTES.

Apart from a few references to increasing "interest in and pressure for new development and building rehabilitation" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 3), the assertion that developer inquiries inspired the HAHR is not readily apparent in relevant sections of the HAHR reports. Likewise, the PowerPoint presentation delivered by planning staff on the first evening of hearings stated,

> Why did Council consider more height in Chinatown?
>
> 1. To support innovative heritage, cultural and affordable housing projects
> 2. To increase the number of residents in order to support local business and street vitality
> 3. To stimulate economic revitalization (City of Vancouver, 2011a)

Nonetheless, insight into the role of development industry dynamics can be gleaned from other sources, including an appendix to the 2010 HAHR Conclusions and Recommendations report in an August 2009 submission from the development industry think tank Urban Development Institute (UDI). The UDI letter, which is addressed to City planners, enlists the logic of "body heat" and cites the benefits of Woodward's, arguing new, dense developments are needed to "generate economic activity in the area, and sustain the growth that has already been stimulated by the heritage programs" (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix C, p. 5). Further, asserts the developer group:

> Increasing densification in the Heritage Area is *required* to compensate for the loss of residential capacity in the downtown peninsula… *there was a commitment*

> that residential capacity would be expanded through the Downtown South Residential Capacity Study, North East False Creek Higher Level Review and the HAHR. As a result, the industry *was expecting* more densification opportunities in the Heritage Area. (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix C, p. 1; my emphases)

This characterization of the HAHR as a requirement, "commitment" or expectation on the part of the development industry offers a glimpse into an array of policy-making dynamics not immediately visible or explained in the local context of the hearings. In contrast to hearing and policy narratives of the HAHR as an outcome of neighbourhood processes, this account instead positions the HAHR as a kind of obligation in which the City is accountable to certain industry expectations and/or construction targets for downtown heritage neighbourhoods.

In their review of Vancouver planning dynamics, Quastel, Moos and Lynch show how such industry-driven pressures for downtown densification had in fact been mounting over several decades. The 1972 creation of an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to protect nearby farmland had served to direct pressure downtown by functioning as an urban growth boundary (Quastel et al., 2012). By the mid-2000s, they state, there were few remaining brownfield sites near the downtown core, such that "powerful development interests lamented shrinking land supplies and pushed densification planning into existing neighborhoods" (Quastel et al., 2012, after Hutton). By the 1990s, such developments could increasingly be situated within a "complex web of esthetic, political, and eco-social concepts and planning principles, such as 'New Urbanism' and 'liveability,'" together with a set of planning principles known as *Smart Growth*, which "emphasize mixed-use and dense neighborhoods that are walkable, transit accessible, and combine work, living, and recreation" (Quastel, 2009, p. 703). These trending, feel-good discourses that support the densification of urban core neighbourhoods are well understood by Vancouver Real Estate marketers who increasingly sell condominiums "through the appeal of

living close to where one works, combining environmental altruism, reduced commuting time, and central city distinction" (Quastel, 2009, p. 707).

In the period leading up to the hearings, alongside an increasingly globalized real estate market (see Chapter 4; see also Punter, 2005, as cited in Quastel 2009), this array of local planning and policy dynamics had dramatically impacted access to housing in Vancouver:

> From 2001 through 2007 the Vancouver market faced dramatic shifts, with prices roughly doubling, a standard two-bedroom condominium in the downtown or west side moving up from an average of $260,000 to $650,000, and rentals in the same areas more than doubling from $1,000 to $2,200 per month. This period also saw a building boom, but new housing stock was predominantly high-end condominiums. (Quastel, 2009, p. 710)

Noting how "by 2006, housing affordability had become a significant political issue" in Vancouver, Quastel describes how the City's *EcoDensity* initiative emerged as a "potential solution to affordability issues" through attempts to "distribute intensification in Smart Growth–inspired urban development" (2009, p. 717). While EcoDensity was ostensibly intended to expand "Smart Growth–and New Urbanist–style density increases into areas beyond downtown to address problems of housing affordability" (Quastel, 2009, p. 710), the initiative had been, for the most part, "quietly dropped" with the election of the Vision Vancouver Council in 2008 (Quastel et al., 2012). For Quastel, the likely reason was EcoDensity's lack of popularity among wealthy homeowners who raised concerns that higher buildings throughout Vancouver would "put into jeopardy the existing heritage values and streetscape (read selling price) in the city's well-off Westside single family neighborhoods" (Quastel, 2009, after C. Smith, 2008).[53]

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[53] Further, with residential condominium development clearly emerging as the highest and best use for downtown land, City planners had forecasted insufficient commercial and/or industrial developments required to maintain sufficient jobs in the downtown core. Through the 2007-2009 Metropolitan Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan, the City had enacted various policy and zoning changes to protect adequate land for commercial uses. The UDI

But perhaps the most detailed account of these development dynamics in relation to the HAHR can be found buried in the comments section of a local urban affairs blog. Among the 36 responses to a brief January 27, 2010 post, is one comment that appears to have been written by the City of Vancouver's then Director of Planning.[54] In a lengthy note, the commenter offers considerable insight into dynamics which are largely uncaptured in official accounts of the HAHR. Noting that "the work was based on Council direction,' the writer also explains,

> At the time we were being presented with several proposals for very tall towers (350–400 ft) in the DTES, with many other properties possibly changing hands with land values that assumed such tall buildings … The Woodwards project had some assuming that a 400 ft height was the "new normal" for projects in the area, rather than seeing the Woodwards height as a unique case in the community … Those with smaller project aspirations made passionate arguments for more density and height to facilitate population growth in the area, for economic revitalization reasons (especially in Chinatown) and to contribute to the "body heat" in the area. [All] this was creating much uncertainty, debate and speculation in the area… .
>
> … As tall buildings were the key question in Council's direction, we also floated the idea of various tall tower building sites (with heights in the range of 250-300 ft) … We included for discussion all building sites that were the subject of inquiries or discussions, official or unofficial, as we felt this was the time to put everything on the table for public comment. (See Bula, 2010)

In this interesting account, the commenter affirms the significance of the tall tower proposals mentioned by speakers and echoes assertions (heard throughout the hearings) about the significant role of Woodward's. The success of that project for developers—units sold out in under 12 hours—had heightened property speculation in the area.

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submission (above) cites this land use plan as further rationale for why more height and density should be permitted in downtown heritage areas.

[54] The author uses a full name and writes using a degree of detail and a voice and that is consistent with this role, e.g., "My sincere compliments to *our* DTES senior planner … and her team, for their great work on this challenging exercise." (my emphasis)

Finally, the UDI letter to Vancouver Planners highlights another source of pressure that was rarely a focus of HAHR documents or hearing debate. Following its characterization of the HAHR as requirement, a "commitment" and an expectation, the submission states,

> Finally, we need increased densities in the Area to resolve much of the imbalance in the Heritage Density Bank. As we have stated in previous correspondences, the industry is very concerned that the City, as a whole, has received $100 million in benefits from heritage renewal projects in the Historic Precinct that have not been paid for through density transfers. It is our understanding that some of this density is supposed to "land" on sites within the Heritage Area through this review process. (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix C, p. 1)

Here, the UDI submission offers a striking example of Harvey's (2012, p. 42) reminder that landed capital investments are always highly speculative and prone to crisis through overaccumulation. In the previous 15 years, not only had City Hall and civic organizations already—as speakers described—spent millions on a veritable revitalization "checklist" (Coun 5) consisting of heritage preservation, street beautification, the Carrall Street Greenway, facade grants, design studies, tax exemptions, parkades, the millennium gate, the Silk Road historical route and a panda mascot (see Chapter 4), but Council had also engaged in complicated negotiations to facilitate the innovative financial modelling of the Woodward's project, with its 536 market condos, university facilities, retail space and 200 units of below-market housing (125 of which rent at a welfare rate). As one councillor noted during the hearings,

> part of that modelling in Woodward's … part of those 200 units [of below-market housing] and the creation of that facility—that education facility, that arts community facility, the housing—came as a result of that [private-public] partnership… We gave extra density; there was some heritage transfer density in order to preserve even that one building, significant density. (Coun 6)

In the course of these negotiations, two large middle-class retail chains (*Nesters* and *London Drugs*) had been awarded a ten-year tax exemption (see Hutchinson, 2009). Further, one local resident and CCAP organizer explained that the City had made additional unanticipated zoning

concessions to bring the project to fruition: “I was involved in the Woodward’s advisory committee and with the rezoning, the heights went from 20 to 40 storeys and a second tower was added too, nobody expected that” (Opp 64; see also Opp 15).

In awarding “significant density” (Coun 6, above) to the Woodward’s project, Council had facilitated heritage property owners’ considerable investment in the fictitious asset of transferable (bonus) density; the subsequent flooding of the bank and resulting moratorium on creation of new density had left many downtown heritage building owners with no way to finance planned heritage restorations. Many others who had already undertaken this work were now sitting on significant amounts of bonus density for which they could not find buyers. As the UDI submission shows, Council was now facing pressure from heritage building owners and developers to, as one presenter put it, “find places where some of that density could land and get that tap running again” (Oth 1). The HAHR’s proposed changes to the City’s density policy would expand areas of city designated as potential “receiver” sites; this, it was hoped, would “get that tap running” by channeling some of this accumulated density into new developments in Chinatown South.

In this way, the public incentives and investments that were originally undertaken to facilitate heritage preservation and construction of the mixed-use Woodward’s development now required additional incentives and investments to “land” the overaccumulated density. While density bank problems are not highlighted in HAHR reports and planners’ presentations as a significant driver of the HAHR, one journalist’s account suggests it might have been a key consideration:

> The [HAHR’s] main proponent was Coun. Suzanne Anton, who argues there is a lack of “receiver sites” for heritage density transfer the city has already approved… Anton said there is 1.4 million square feet of unused heritage density

> transfers … "The idea is [to find] sites around Chinatown, Gastown or Victory Square… which could take some of this density." (Mackie, 2009)

Taken together, these various accounts suggest how the decade of process leading up to the hearings had also been a decade of mounting pressure for development in and around Chinatown.

8.2.3 Colonization by crisis

Hearing accounts of the HAHR as discontinuity, derailment and hijacking can thus inspire a critical re-reading that significantly unsettles predominant hearing and policy narratives of the HAHR as rooted in local planning priorities. Instead, these alternate histories bring into view a *colonizing* dynamic that is not immediately apparent in the local setting of the hearings. Through the policy and development concerns of the City—shaped in conjunction with and/or in response to the interests of large developers—development pressures from all over Vancouver were channeled towards the heritage and low-income neighbourhoods in and around Chinatown. While EcoDensity was limited and/or dropped in the wealthy neighbourhoods of the west and south of the city—where densities (of, for instance, only nine people per acre in Kerrisdale) are among the lowest in the entire Metro Vancouver region—through the HAHR, this policy continued to be pursued in the already highly dense neighbourhoods of the Downtown Eastside (see M. Lee, Villagomez, Gurstein, Eby, & Wyly, 2008). For Quastel, "this suggests a city strategy of steering densification into poorer neighborhoods both to facilitate pre-existing drives toward gentrification and because residents are largely powerless to oppose it" (2009, p. 718).

The combined effect of these dynamics seems to have been a reorganization of local planning objectives. This effect of a speculative *new normal* had redefined the terrain upon

which local priorities could be imagined and pursued; Council's introduction of Action B-1 meant that the previously inconspicuous question of "height" suddenly became the most urgent matter to resolve. A statement from the Alliance for the Conservation of Historic Chinatown—signed by eight Chinatown organizations including five prominent benevolent associations, the Chinatown Society Heritage Buildings Association (CSHBA) and two cultural organizations—conveys how the draft HAHR proposals

> were greeted with shock, anxiety, and disbelief from the vast majority of the participants. Public outrage centred on the inclusion … of proposals for three 300 ft. Towers on specific sites … [These proposals] diverged completely from the City's policies on Chinatown that have been developed through hundreds of hours [of] public consultation and committee work in recent years … It is obvious that 30-storey towers would dwarf the existing Chinatown architecture … (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix C, p. 9)

With the introduction of the HAHR, questions of neighbourhood planning had suddenly, it seems, become reduced to the threatening prospect of towers. Earlier priorities (e.g., heritage preservation, social development and protection/generation of low-income housing) became relegated as secondary objectives to be pursued through the more primary Council direction to consider "policies to relax building height restrictions" (see City of Vancouver, 2007b, above, on page 269).

8.3 Incremental Deferral: Marginalization as Not Doing

This critical re-reading inspired by alternative histories of the HAHR suggests how the decade of process up to and including the HAHR also reflects the flip side of the historical dialectic I've described in the previous chapter: Integral to the colonizing movements that entail the re-organization of neighbourhood spaces are practices through which local concerns (and local people) can be rendered marginal to these re-invented places. My analysis suggests how

such practices of marginalization are not necessarily intentional and/or overt, but instead are effected via a series of incremental practices of *deferral* through which low-income priorities and concerns are put off in time and/or in space.

8.3.1 "Height, not use": Deferral in time

Critiques expressed in the course of the hearings signal a recurring dynamic wherein, over the same period in which a narrow focus on height was becoming an increasingly urgent planning priority in the area, the social welfare needs and priorities—together with the involvement—of local low-income residents seemed to gradually fall away or be pushed aside. As in the series of earlier reports that consistently conveyed housing, health and other issues of wellbeing as central considerations, the consultant authors of the 2008 Historic Precinct Height Study report "stress the importance of including the broader social, economic and environmental implications of higher densities and higher buildings when planning the future of this especially complex and sensitive area of the city." Later in this technical report, the authors highlight the limitations of their focus on height and indicate their understanding that "social and economic implications [and] the impact on… the rate of change[55] that can be expected to result from easing the height regulations… will be dealt with by staff in the next phase of the HPHS" (Spaxman Consulting Group Limited & Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture Inc., 2008, pp. 5, 12).

However, by time these subsequent phases of the HAHR occurred, commitments to address these broader social concerns had fallen away. Instead, the 2009 consultations limited

[55] A term used (or previously used) by the City of Vancouver to mean "the percentage net loss of [a given type of] housing units in a zoning district" in the previous year (City of Vancouver, 2007a, p. 3).

requests for feedback to specific questions of built form; people were asked to comment on pre-established study objectives, as well as "General Height options, and the concept of Special Sites, including the role, height, and number of taller buildings appropriate for the Historic Area" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 4). In a written statement prepared during the spring 2009 HAHR public consultations, frustrated CCAP members stated,

> We have told the planners for months that it's not fair for the city to decide what height DTES buildings should be if there is no plan for the area and if we don't know what the buildings are going to be used for. (CCAP, 2009)

Here, CCAP stresses relatedness between building *height* and *use*, signaling an important conceptual debate that would be echoed during the hearings.

By 2010, the HAHR Conclusions and Recommendations report reflects how socio-economic considerations had become overtly represented as outside the scope of the HAHR decision. Instead, affordability and other contextual concerns are conveyed as occurring elsewhere, in sub-area planning policies and the DTES Housing Plan which are the policies that "outline the broader planning issues—other than built form—that affect the social, cultural and economic future of these founding neighbourhoods" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 9). Further, the appended 10 Years of Revitalization backgrounder supports the impression that there already exist many other policies through which low-income issues of health and housing are addressed (Appendix A; see also Chapter 5).

This recurring deferral of social welfare concerns would continue in the council meeting of January 26, 2010, as councillors voted on the HAHR Conclusions and Recommendations report. On this date—in addition to approving in principle the height increases proposed by planners, councillors directed planning staff to "report back on options for … additional higher building sites generally in the range of 150 feet … specifically in Chinatown South (HA1A)"

(City of Vancouver, 2010a, p. 3; see also Chapter 1). At the same time, councillors introduced and approved recommendations "that a social impact study be conducted" by the City "to assess the effect on the existing low-income community of new developments in the historic area" and further that staff report back on methods and budget for a facilitated planning process for an integrated community strategy for the DTES (City of Vancouver, 2010a, p. 7). With these planned Social Impact Study (SIS) and integrated community strategy (or local area plan (LAP)) commitments in place, councillors could express their policy-based intent to consider low-income concerns in the *future*, while prioritizing development-oriented height increases in the *present.*

In this way, low-income concerns are repeatedly dealt with via promises they would be addressed elsewhere, through policies and decisions to be considered at another time or place. The subsequent December 2010 Implementation Report states,

> The rezonings and developments that may result from the HAHR will adhere to applicable Council-approved plans, policies, and guidelines, including the DTES Housing Plan, and will provide public benefits as deemed appropriate by Council after consideration of proposals at a public hearing. In addition, it is noted that staff are proceeding with the Social Impact Study and the Downtown Eastside Community Strategy and will be consulting further with community groups, including CCAP …" (Director of Planning, 2010b, pp. 15–16; see also Appendix A, pp. 2, 10)

Yet despite these earlier assurances, the critiques of hearing speakers (Opp 8, Opp 38) highlight how, in the year preceding the HAHR hearings, the promised SIS seemed to have gone missing:

> What happened to the Social Impact Study? … I am a member of the Social Impact Study [advisory committee] and we've heard nothing about it; it's been on hold for months now and the members of the community were very [much] looking forward to having a say [about] what goes on. (Opp 22)

In the hearing discussion sparked by this latter question, the question of the unfinished SIS begins to resemble a kind of political hot potato for which no one wants to bear responsibility.

While one councillor seems puzzled by this information and promised to "follow up with the City Manager … and find out …" about the unfinished SIS (Coun 1), a city planner subsequently reminded councillors, "you concluded that implementation of the HAHR policy decisions need not wait until the completion of [the SIS and LAP strategy]" (Staff 4). On the next evening of hearings, the same councillor appears concerned to rebut the planner's suggestion that councillors had approved this delay:

> It's on the factual record that there was a decision to get the local area plan revved up, and the Social Impact Study … it was directed to come back—some piece of it by the time this Chinatown piece came back—and it didn't. (Coun 1)

This multi-day exchange in which neither councillors nor planners seem responsible for the delay of the SIS makes audible yet another storyline of agentlessness, wherein the omission of this low-income priority is *done* via collective practices of not doing. By December 2010, this multi-year sequence of delay, deferral and eventually, exclusion of low-income concerns is summarized matter-of-factly in the HAHR Policy Implementation report which explains that the "HAHR purposefully did not address other aspects of development such as use, public benefits, or building performance, as it was anticipated these aspects would be addressed through future policy review and site specific rezonings" (Director of Planning, 2010b, p. 15).

Here, the report's casual distinction between the HAHR's focus on height and "other aspects of development, such as use …" foreshadows a pattern of dichotomization audible throughout the hearings as councillors write off affordability concerns on the basis that they are beyond the scope of the HAHR's focus on *height*, versus *use*. This discursive logic is audible, for instance, as two different councillors attempt to recast speakers as 'not opposed' to the HAHR, on the basis that their concerns were about *use* (i.e., about "condos" versus "social housing"):

> [Coun 9:] … The word "height" immediately triggers in some people's mind

> [that] it's all going to be expensive condos. But what if that 150 [foot] height was social housing; would you be opposed?
>
> [Opp 79:] … I haven't heard that that's what's being proposed with this 150-foot height …
>
> [Coun 9:] So then you wouldn't be opposed to the height is what I'm getting at. (See also Coun 1 to Opp 43; Coun 1 to Opp 46)

On the final night of the hearings, this pattern is repeated as two planners (Staff 1 to Coun 1; Staff 2 to Coun 1) affirm councillors' suggestions that questions of "use" would indeed be considered later and/or elsewhere:

> The rezoning policy doesn't speak to the type of use or tenure for that height, so in terms of it being a condo or a social housing unit or an office building, those will be determined through [each] proposal; it's not defined by this policy. (Staff 1 to Coun 1)

In contrast to these repeated distinctions, as I've argued throughout this thesis, a material and relational grasp of neighbourhood dynamics makes clear how the *height* (and more broadly, physical form, vintage and appearance) of neighbourhood buildings is integrally connected to economic and social issues of *use*. Allowable height is a key determinate of a site's potential value, or highest and best use, fundamentally shaping what can profitably be built there. As Woodward's had demonstrated, questions of building height were integral to the changing land economics that were already threatening low-income uses throughout the Downtown Eastside. In fact, as one planner reminded councillors during the hearings, "the 150-foot direction [to find] opportunities for some additional height in HA1A was for *economic revitalization*, that was part of the direction for that piece of work" (Staff 1; my emphasis; see also Chapter 1).

The fact that "economic revitalization" was a key rationale for the proposed special site heights of 150 feet suggests councillors were aware of the connection between height and use, i.e., that the increased profitability of taller buildings would attract investment in residential

development and bring new consumer-residents to the neighbourhood. This logic would further suggest that any new 150-foot buildings were *not* envisioned to be towers full of social housing, rendering the councillor's suggestion (above) either ill-conceived or disingenuous. However, these very same understandings (i.e., the likelihood of more condos and an influx of consumer-residents) were—when raised in opposition to the HAHR—persistently written-off as irrelevant comments about *use*.

In this way, while chances for public comment—and efforts at low-income participation—had ostensibly occurred at each stage of the EcoDensity and HAHR processes, such opportunities to share concerns are rendered meaningless when institutional parameters simultaneously define these same concerns as outside the scope of consideration. Drawing attention to these recurring dichotomizing logics through which low-income issues had been consistently marginalized, one CCAP organizer stated,

> For three years, planners have avoided talking about the Height Study in terms of gentrification. They wanted to talk about the heights in terms of physical appearances at first … And the Chinatown business and society leaders want to talk about this plan in terms of stimulating new business. We want to talk about [it] in terms of the social impact, but there's been no room for that discussion in the last three years and [in] this hearing. (Opp 64; see also Opp 76)

8.3.2 Mediating uniqueness and tradability: Deferral in space

A further dimension of this pattern of delay and deferral is apparent as speakers predict the effects that were likely to occur as issues of affordability were dealt with by not only by putting them off in time, but also by putting them off in space. As in historical practices of, for instance, mapping, beautification, 'slum clearance' and heritage designation, central to municipal planning are practices of spatialized division and designation (see chapters 5 and 7). In the

hearings, as in one councillor's affirmation that protection of the historic Foo's Ho Ho building was "a good undertaking" (Coun 2 to Opp 73), spatial divisions were used to designate certain buildings and areas—not only as "affected" or unaffected (see Chapter 5)—but also according to whether they constituted "important" heritage (Supp 18). Often, assessments of the relative importance of Chinatown sub-areas were audibly linked to the criteria that govern Chinatown's recognition as National Historic Site (see Chapter 7). One councillor stated, "As far as the [Historic Site] nomination, I guess it really is just in the HA1 area … on Pender street mainly … that's… the most historical area" (Coun 2). Likewise, another speaker affirmed how the National Historic Site plan "is to do with HA1 only, not necessarily all of Chinatown, because that's in a way the most essential structure of the Chinatown character" (Oth 2; see also Supp 7 to Coun 8).

Read in light of material tensions which require flows of investment and consumption to be facilitated and sometimes carefully managed (see Chapter 4), the designation of particular spaces as either "important" or (by logical extension) "unimportant" can be read in terms of differentiated strategies of commodification: While the preservation of lower heights in the more historic sub-area (HA1) along Pender street pursues highest and best uses that are centred on *uniqueness* (i.e., heritage-related distinction), the more significant height increases proposed to spur redevelopment in Chinatown South (HA1A) would enable benefits associated with *tradability*.

But while some councillors, HAHR supporters and technicians can be heard to suggest that the HAHR proposals balance this tension, enabling Chinatown to simultaneously "have" and "eat" its cake (Chapter 4), other speakers stressed how the same areas which had been zoned HA1A because their heritage character was less important included some of the *most important* streets from the perspective of low-income resident-shoppers. In particular, the analysis prepared

by CCAP offers a very different version of the parts of Chinatown which should be considered important:

> Chinatown is divided between the tourist part with most of the heritage buildings, which are mostly on Pender St., and the part where local residents and people from all over the city come to shop at outdoor markets for cheap, healthy and fresh produce and traditional Chinese foods and herbs. (CCAP, 2011, p. 3)

One CCAP organizer recounted, "It took us a while to realize that we shouldn't just focus on the [HAHR proposals for] 15-storey towers, that actually the 12-storey towers could be just as devastating." They explained,

> If you're standing on Main and Keefer at the [bank] and you're looking up Keefer towards May Wah [hotel] and Kent's Kitchen … These little streets … Keefer, Georgia and Gore; these are the low-income community's shopping streets. And they could be wiped out by 12 storey towers. (Opp 64)

These resident critiques thus signal how entrepreneurial efforts aimed at negotiating development pressures and tensions can—as throughout Chinatown's long history of place—simultaneously entail overwriting meanings and uses which are integral to the wellbeing of local residents. Read in this way, the hearings reflect an implicit entrepreneurial logic which bears a striking resemblance to the more explicit assessments of planners nearly 60 years prior:

> that part of Pender Street between Carrall Street and Main Street forms the most important part of Chinatown … This particular part of the whole Chinese quarter is the only one which can be said to be a tourist attraction. The remainder of the Chinese quarter to the east of Main Street is at present of significance only to the people who live there. (Cited in Anderson, 1991, p. 188)

8.3.3 'Deferral' as trade-off

During the hearings, speakers highlighted how the HAHR's contemporary renditions of this logic were likely to effect a trade-off between heritage and liveability that would play out in

terms of spatialized advantages and disadvantages for area residents. One representative of an advocacy group stressed the significant human harms that this could entail:

> The changes to Transfer of Density policies would remove or reduce options for Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) or other public benefits in the HA1A area because the heritage density transfer *becomes* the amenity … This proposal divides Chinatown in two: the north that is subject to relatively modest impacts and social disruption while receiving the [heritage preservation] amenity; and the south, whose scale and livability are severely compromised—residents dislocated and businesses lost—to provide those meager benefits. Similarly, residents who are fortunate to live in Family Society buildings may get their rooms upgraded, while their less lucky neighbours have no comparable protection, and may be relegated to shelters or the street. (Opp 66; see also Opp 68 to Coun 3)

Such critical assessments highlight how efforts to negotiate development tensions via differentiated zoning was likely to jeapordize those uses that were neither unique nor tradeable, namely, the unprofitable, unprotected affordable units and businesses required for poor people to remain in the neighbourhood. While the HAHR promised some uncertain benefits for heritage building owners (e.g., the distant possibility of an unfrozen density bank, potential amenity contributions and hopes of increased commercial rent), it did not actually include any affordability requirements or protections. Although support of affordable housing was named as a key purpose of Action B-1, this directive simultaneously positions affordable housing as merely one possibility in a series of optional benefits alongside heritage preservation and other amenities (such as parks and daycare space). As was noted by a multi-disciplinary group of housing experts in their 2008 submission to the City's EcoDensity consultations, this sets up an either/or trade-off in benefits that has all too frequently resulted in prioritizing built heritage over social needs like affordable housing:

> The City has other competing objectives in addition to affordable housing—such as provision of parks, daycares, schools and heritage preservation—that may take precedence in any given case. For example, in the Paris Block redevelopment in the Downtown Eastside, the 20% affordable housing rule that ostensibly applies

> was waived in exchange for heritage considerations. This is an ominous development given that the city's cheapest rental units tend to be in older buildings where redevelopment may involve heritage considerations. (M. Lee et al., 2008, p. 8)

A further problematic dimension of spatialized deferral can be traced through the City's own analyses, beginning with the April 8, 2011 Housing Policy memo distributed on the fourth evening of the HAHR hearings (see Chapter 5). The memo, which recaps Housing Plan commitments to maintain and/or replace "10,000 units of low-income housing" in the DTES, also notes that "the Plan provides direction on monitoring the pace of development of market housing, to ensure it keeps pace with the development of social housing" (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011, p. 1). However, this same document also clarifies how these DTES-wide housing commitments are envisioned to occur differently across neighbourhoods:

> Highlights of the Plan—Chinatown Sub Area
>
> The focus for this area as outlined in the Plan is market housing (both ownership and rental). Due to the small lot sizes and heritage constraints, the Plan did not anticipate the ability to meet the 1-for-one replacement policy within Chinatown. (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011, p. 2)

Later, the memo conveys the City's expectation that this shortfall in replacement of Chinatown units would be made up in "areas… such as the DEOD [Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District] and M-1 Hastings Corridor" (Assistant Director of Housing Policy, 2011, p. 4). Thus, in contrast to repeated assurances that low-income housing in Chinatown can be considered protected (Chapter 5), the memo makes visible how the question of SRO replacement is in fact slated to be addressed *elsewhere* in the Downtown Eastside.

At the same time, other policy documents acknowledge that the likelihood of making up units in other areas was increasingly uncertain. The City's 2005 Downtown Eastside Housing Plan warns,

> As developable land becomes scarce elsewhere in the Downtown core … If land values get to a point where market development is attractive despite [existing DEOD zoning requirements] to incorporate a 20% social housing component, it is unlikely that 1-for-1 replacement of the existing 2,000 SRO units will be possible in the DEOD. Moreover, given that sites are scarce and expensive in the historic areas west of the DEOD (Chinatown and Gastown), it is likely that the area will have to accommodate more than 2,000 social housing units… in order to achieve 1-for-1 in the Downtown Eastside. (City of Vancouver, 2005, p. 58)

Based on these dynamics, a consultant review of the Housing Plan had produced the recommendation "that the City be proactive in purchasing sites for social housing under current favourable market conditions, and that available sites and land prices be closely monitored and the City's strategy adjusted accordingly" (see City of Vancouver, 2005, Appendix A, p. 84). However, the subsequent 2010 DTES policy backgrounder flags that these affordability-oriented tasks had not yet occurred: "Some parts of the DTES Housing Plan have not yet been implemented: the investigation of a mechanism to manag[e] the pace of development; updating of estimated housing capacity; and review of the DEOD/M-1 zoning areas" (see Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix A, p. 11).

Taken together, hearing critiques thus signal a pattern of institutional praxis wherein the problems of poverty and affordability seem, repeatedly, to be addressed through practices of not addressing them. Instead, these issues are repeatedly put off in time and in space, even resembling a pattern observed by Engels in 1872:

> The bourgeoisie has only one method of solving the housing question [which is] solving it in such a way that the solution perpetually renews the question anew … I mean the practice that has now become general of making breaches in the working class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in areas which are centrally situated, quite apart from whether this is done from considerations of public health or for beautifying the town … No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is always the same; the scandalous alleys disappear … but they appear again immediately somewhere else … The [dismal housing conditions of the poor], are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! The same economic necessity that produced them in the first place, produces them in the

next place. (Cited in Harvey, 2012, pp. 16–17)

Critiques put forward in the hearings underscore how recurring practices of deferral play out in a series of trade-offs through which local, low-income priorities and spaces are subordinated to entrepreneurial ones. Despite repeated promises of addressing socio-economic issues, these concerns were repeatedly dealt with through conceptual-material practices of *not doing*, of putting off the problem of affordability to another time and/or place. As in the councillor's distinction between "speakers on housing, and speakers on Chinatown" (Chapter 5), the policy-based abstraction of height from 'use' was enlisted by councillors to rule out myriad dynamics that—while they would be crucially affected by HAHR proposals—fell outside a limiting focus on built form. In this pattern of institutional logic, low-income concerns can be simultaneously known, but left unaddressed as they are imagined not to count. Further, if imagined as a decision only about height, the HAHR decision can be grasped as acting in relation to things versus in relation to people. But while municipal and entrepreneurial actors devote considerable attention to navigating material dynamics of place, low-income residents are increasingly put at risk as their concerns are repeatedly delayed and displaced.

8.4 Doing Community: A Decade of Process

8.4.1 Engagement "in parallel"

Alternate histories of HAHR process also signal a further dimension of this marginalizing dynamic: In the decade preceding the hearings, not only low-income concerns, but also low-income people seemed to fall out out of planning processes. Hearing references to "Community Directions" together with the suggestion that engagement had occurred "in parallel" (Opp 58

above, on page 266) inspire further re-reading of earlier processes. A series of 2004 reports on the 1999-2004 Downtown Eastside Community Development Project reflect how that project's two main component groups were characterized by different priorities, memberships and different trajectories of engagement (Coyne, 2004; Riaño-Alcalá, Au, Chen-Adams, Hui, & Kitchen, 2004). While the business, heritage and organizational members of the VCRC established robust, partnership-style structures (see Bishop & Davis, 2002) for ongoing involvement in local planning processes, this component "did not make as much progress in involving residents as might be expected in a comprehensive community initiative" (Coyne, 2004, Outcome Findings section). The VCRC's 2002 Chinatown Vision process had indeed entailed a variety of research and consultation efforts with residents; however, as the Chair of the VCRC acknowledged during the HAHR hearings, it seems this degree of resident engagement not been sustained: "I think the wide consultation with the residents … happened early on in the Chinatown visioning process … [that was] before my time on the VCRC" (Supp 7x2 to Coun 4).

In contrast, the resident-driven Community Directions component focused on tangible projects, but did not establish a mechanism for ongoing planning influence. The City's report on the project (Community Project Manager, 2004) describes how Community Directions' planning and visioning work was instead restructured to occur via policy mechanisms such as the multi-government Vancouver Agreement (VA)—a policy process that has been criticized for its failure to deliver on promises of community participation. Mason highlights advocacy groups and aboriginal residents as among those most noticeably unengaged, "sidestep[ped]" and/or "shut out from VA agreement decision structures" (Mason, 2007, p. 2377; see also Macleod Institute, 2004, in Bradford, 2008). Further, Mason's (2007) account indicates how this widely acknowledged insufficiency could be overlooked based on claims that meaningful involvement

of local residents had occurred elsewhere. Based on interviews with VA administrators, Mason states that "from the perspective of city officials, the Downtown Eastside Community Development Project … has obviated the need for further broad-based community input" (2007, pp. 2376–2377). In this way, accounts of each processes each point to the other as the space where low-income resident participation had occurred.

8.4.2 Consultation in the HAHR

Accounts offered during the hearings convey how these differing groups and trajectories of engagement among constituencies were both developed and complicated within the HAHR. The HAHR Conclusions and Recommendations report describes how the HAHR's public consultation activities which were conducted during April and May of 2009 included "meetings with City advisory bodies, community committees and groups, as well as public workshops and open houses" (Director of Planning, 2010a, p. 10). Alongside this brief overview, the Public Feedback summary (Appendix B of the same report) illustrates how much of the HAHR consultation continued in the trajectory of the partnership modes of engagement that had already been established with the VCRC and with other groups. Among the most common types of partnership-style consultation are Advisory boards (OECD, 1994, as cited in Bishop & Davis, 2002) and this format for engagement had played a significant role. Most of the meetings referenced in the report (9 of 16) were held with City advisory bodies[56] and another three

[56] These included the Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC); the Urban Design Panel (UDP), the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS), Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC), Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) and the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee (GHAPC); with the latter three groups participating in two meetings each.

community group meetings had involved cultural and heritage-oriented organizations.[57] Only two of the 16 consultation meetings listed had involved organizations which could be said to resident-driven, or to place significant emphasis on participation of the area's majority low-income residents.[58] In this way, despite predominant City narratives of "extensive" consultation (e.g., Director of Planning, 2010a), the City's Public Feedback Summary report begins to make visible the diminished involvement of low-income residents.

At the same time, this is not to say that that the City had overlooked low-income residents in the HAHR consultation process. Alongside a meeting with the resident-oriented Second Mile Society and a town hall arranged by CCAP and DERA, efforts to engage residents had especially occurred in the context of public workshops and open houses. The consultation report describes how "in addition to the Chinese community, special effort was also made to outreach to the low-income community" with notification of workshops and open houses undertaken through "multiple advertisements in community newspapers, including two Chinese language papers, as well as through community group information networks" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 3). The report further describes how bilingual staff were present at all meetings, with some meeting discussions conducted entirely in Cantonese or Mandarin. "As a result," states the consultation report, "there was a good representation of the Chinese community at the community group meetings, public workshops and open houses" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 3). Additionally, planning staff had clearly made efforts to hold

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[57] These included the Chinatown Heritage Buildings Association (CSHBA); Heritage Vancouver Society; and the Board of the Chinese Cultural Centre. A further meeting had involved the industry think tank Urban Development Institute (UDI) and one had occurred with the VCRC.

[58] These included an April 27th meeting with CCAP who (together with DERA) organized a Downtown Eastside town hall; and a May 20th meeting with Second Mile Society, which is a non-profit coordinating community networks and peer support amongst downtown low-income seniors.

meetings at neighbourhood locations that were familiar and accessible to low-income residents; in addition to the town hall hosted at Carnegie Centre, workshops and open houses had occurred at the Chinese Cultural Centre, at the affordable Jenny Pentland Place and at the Downtown Eastside community art space Interurban Gallery.

Further, the Public Feedback Summary report describes how public input into the process occurred at each of these venues and in a variety of ways, including "61 feedback forms which were distributed to the public at the workshops and open houses, facilitator notes from round table discussions held at workshops, meeting minutes, formal statements and 22 written comments submitted by email" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 4). And, as I noted in my early outline of the HAHR process (see Chapter 1), public feedback had clearly impacted the recommendations on the table at the 2011 hearings; serving, for instance, to quash earlier proposals for buildings higher than 150 feet. Further, the consultation summary describes how "due to the interest in the process and the subject, the consultation process was extended to summer of 2009 and staff have received further feedback after the April/May consultation" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 4).

But despite these practices of outreach and responsiveness, other aspects of the same report, together with accounts of consultation offered at the hearings, suggest the meaningful involvement of the area's majority low-income residents had been constrained in important ways. On the fourth evening of hearings, an extended exchange between one councillor and a CCAP organizer offers insight into additional dynamics through which low-income residents seem to have fallen out of area planning processes. In response to one councillor's hinted suggestion that CCAP bore some responsibility for inadequate low-income involvement, a CCAP organizer explained,

> The city planners hosted, I think, two to three public workshops in the DTES… and I tried to get people to go there … —it's hard for people to understand zoning too, it's really theoretical—but there weren't many people that showed up. It takes a lot of long-term … work to get people out and we didn't have the capacity at the time. And the City relies on CCAP to get the word out, and they don't pay us…
> …
> Actually… when we first heard about this… I didn't actually understand the significance of it; I thought "oh well, here it is." I thought the decision had already been made. So, it took us, like, a month or two to realize … "holy, this is it! This is the decision!" And it's part of the lack of literacy that we all have, that we don't get these things so quickly. And then when we find out about it, it's almost too late. (Opp 64 to Coun 6)

In this interesting exchange, the CCAP organizer gives voice to an array of often invisible and likely unintended dynamics that help to further unpack the hearings' parallel reality in which consultation simultaneously did and did not occur. The organizer's reference to a "lack of literacy" and their corresponding (mis)understanding that "the decision had already been made" signals how the technical and temporal dynamics of policy processes like the HAHR can render such processes opaque and highly inaccessible. For one, a "lack of literacy" is hardly surprising in the face of the decade-long series of multiple and disjointed processes related to the HAHR. As I've described, the origins and impetus of the study are difficult to trace—seeming to interrupt (versus flow from) earlier processes—and perhaps, to have been inspired by a particular series of developer inquiries that are largely invisible within official accounts. Findlay (1993) argues that participation mechanisms such as advisory groups and councils shift public involvement from the political to the bureaucratic level; the incorporation of concerns within these less visible, administrative processes, she suggests, renders them more easily contained and overlooked.

Municipal actors (including planners and councillors) and development industry professionals (such as architects, builders and realtors) benefit from considerable organizational

infrastructure—including multi-disciplinary technical teams, administrative support, early access to specialized information and (perhaps most importantly) salaried time—through which to engage in such processes. However, community groups, let alone vulnerable individuals and families, typically lack access these such supports. To have engaged in the HAHR's numerous processes as they developed and intersected with other dynamics through time would have entailed wading through hundreds of pages of jargon-heavy reports, memos, policies and bylaws, let alone myriad rounds of meetings associated with each. Multiply these factors by the number of City policies relating to the Downtown Eastside and the enormous advocacy challenges faced by volunteer-run groups—such as CCAP and many Chinatown societies—becomes apparent.

Further, the speaker's reference to zoning as "really theoretical" underscores how the language of zoning (and related planning and development concepts) reflects forms of knowledge and consciousness developed and oriented specifically to state and capitalist projects of coordinating land use and development. For Darville, "anybody can be rendered illiterate and powerless when they face writing that is constructed for purposes that are mysterious to the reader" (as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 12). Like municipal practices of mapping (see Chapter 5), topics such as zoning, design guidelines and transferable density relate to what Lefebvre (1974) termed the *conceived* spaces of planners, technocrats and developers. These modes of thinking may have little obvious relevance —and may even entirely contradict—the everyday meanings and relevancies of residents. The inaccessibility of the HAHR proposals is further complicated by the situations of local residents who may face language barriers, difficulty accessing transportation for meetings, low literacy and lack of access to or familiarity with computers, let alone the cumbersome search engine on the City website.

Finally, the CCAP organizer's comment that "it takes a lot of long-term … work to get people out" signals a myriad of other structural barriers that are well known to constrain the civic involvement of particular groups. Cornwall observes that such initiatives regularly "count out people who work, people who have small children to put to bed or feed, people who are unable to justify spending hours outside the household. These people are more often than not women" (2008, p. 279). Further, Eliasoph's (1998) study of political engagement in the United States found it was common for non-professional community members to believe they had insufficient technical knowledge or did not understand the system well enough to propose solutions; many felt that such a task was better left to experts (see also Bowen, 2008). Such trends are echoed in Canada, where membership in advisory committees frequently consists of professionals and other members of the upper-middle class; participants are characterized by advanced education, high income, professional occupations and higher-than-average age, as well a sense of empowerment and extensive community networks (Wharf Higgins, Cossom, & Wharf, 2003; see also Buccus, 2008). Further, on the basis of their work with low-income residents in Canada, Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat state "the trauma of poverty constitutes a huge barrier to citizen participation of people living with low income," particularly when it comes to speaking in invited spaces:

> The stigmatization and prejudice faced by people living in poverty is widespread and extremely painful… They feel that speaking out about poverty and injustice leads to being stigmatized … They feel blamed for their poverty in face of a prevailing belief in 'meritocracy' (you get what you deserve). (2009, p. 8; see also Dinham, 2005)

For many Chinatown residents, this poverty-related stigmatization occurs on top of their daily encounters with racist and able-ist modes of dehumanization (Chapter 6). Bishop and Davis

further describe how partnership approaches to participation "risk supporting organized interest groups at the expense of those who have little voice" (2002, p. 23).

Awareness of these myriad structural barriers and inequities makes apparent how the large turnout of vulnerable residents at the hearings required an immense degree of awareness-raising and community-building work on the part of the CCAP and DNC organizers and volunteers, as one speaker would detail subsequently in the hearings (Opp 3 below, on page 316). But despite the efforts made by community groups and the City, shortcomings in low-income residents' participation are noticeable in excerpts of the HAHR Feedback Summary report:

> Approximately 250 participants attended the workshops and open houses, representing a diverse mix of the population that lives and works in the Downtown Eastside, as well as interested residents from elsewhere in Vancouver…71% (40 of 56) of individuals who indicated their place of residence on the feedback form were from other Vancouver communities outside of the Downtown Eastside. (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 3)

Interestingly, the report goes on to frame this mix of residents and non-residents in terms of inclusivity, stating that "this diversity of opinion was intentionally sought by staff to achieve a well-rounded understanding of the multiple voices and views of the future of the historic heart of Vancouver" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 3). However, the authors' acknowledgement that only 16 form respondents identified themselves as living in the DTES makes apparent how the City's efforts at outreach had likely fallen far short of achieving the actual participation of low-income residents.

The residency figure is made even more significant when read in light of the forms' apparent influence. Despite the various modes of input described in the HAHR Public Feedback Summary, the vast majority of this document is structured in terms of the input collected via

these 60 or so written feedback forms. Under each section of the findings, the report first notes the percentages of form respondents who supported or opposed a given proposal and then offers a discussion of frequently-voiced concerns and/or the positions expressed by particular groups. Under the heading "Chinatown HA-1A," the report states "The second sub-area of Chinatown, the HA-1A zone, was one of two sub-areas where a preference (54.3%, 25 of 46) was shown for moderate increases" (Director of Planning, 2010a, Appendix B, p. 3).

While this report format makes visible a number of different issues and viewpoints, what is important for my purposes is how the presentation of the percentages at the start of each section functions to organize readers' interpretation of the subsequent discussion such that the comments that follow appear to be an elaboration of the figures up front. In actuality, this discussion content is likely drawn from feedback received in number of formats and/or contexts, from an unknown number of respondents. However, the report offers no way of ascertaining the prevalence of various concerns and thus the weight that should rightly be accorded to each. Instead the document's structure functions to subsume discussion of concerns within the initial, percentage-based, assessment of support or opposition; it is only the numbers in brackets beside the percentages (e.g. "25 of 46") that betrays how the report's quantified claim of "support" for or "opposition" to certain options is in fact based on quite a small fraction of those counted[59] as participants in the consultation process. Following these several pages of discussion, the remaining 30 or so pages of the report are comprised of verbatim compilations of comments from these same 61 feedback forms, along with charts depicting percentages of feedback form

[59] An unknown number, but at least several hundred: 250 at workshops and open houses (as noted above) in addition to those present at the downtown eastside town hall and the various other committee and community group meetings.

respondents who strongly supported / supported / opposed (etc.) the options presented. Read in this way, the Public Feedback Summary is suggestive of the inordinate influence of a relatively small group of consultation participants from outside the neighbourhood. Moreover, it is likely these were participants who were relatively privileged in terms of time, language, empowerment and literacy, especially the particular forms of institutional literacy required to participate in these official invited spaces and to engage with what D. E. Smith might describe as the "ruling technologies" of urban planning.

8.4.3 "In times of crisis": Community as *driven*

All told, this critical unpacking of the HAHR's multiple histories helps to complicate understandings of the two, opposed, groups so apparent at the hearings, suggesting how these collectivities can be grasped in terms of complicated historical practico-conceptual dynamics of *doing community*. Those speaking in favour of the HAHR rarely shared detail about earlier experiences of disunity or ongoing concerns about the HAHR proposals and process. In this way, there is likely much that the "on-stage" testimonies offered during the hearings do not reveal about speakers' individual or collective experiences of coming-to-support the HAHR in the particular historical moment of the hearings. However, attention to historical dynamics of derailment and "hijacking" offer perspectives from which to grasp how the particular, *unified*, Chinatown so frequently referenced in the hearings should not be assumed (i.e., as a given or natural version of community) but instead likely developed through time and in relation to an array of broader material and political dynamics surrounding the HAHR. Understood in the context of City-wide development dynamics and a speculative "new normal" of increased pressure (or, from some perspectives, opportunity) for Chinatown's various organizations and

property-holding actors, the hearings' *unified Chinatown* can be read to indicate a historically specific strategy-in-context: a collective position adopted as a means of re-asserting local influence in the face of powerful industry and state agendas.

As in the account of "shock, anxiety and disbelief" (on page 277, above) experienced by local benevolent, heritage and cultural organizations, several hearing accounts also suggest an understanding of supporters' consensus as not "given" but *driven* in relation to the HAHR-as-*crisis*; unified support for the HAHR, stated one speaker "shows that in times of crisis, Chinatown can unite, much like it did when the neighbourhood was threatened to be wiped out by the great freeway project in the late 60s and early 70s" (Supp 8; see Supp 19 for a similar comparison). This impression of unity as driven by crisis was echoed by a presenter and local urban commentator who asserted that neighbourhood actors had not "been offered something else": "The people of Chinatown that came together … to support the HAHR … I think they realize that given no other opportunity, it was down to every[one] for themselves; it was a last resort decision" (Opp 34; see also Opp 64).

In the decade preceding the hearings, there clearly had been a decade of extensive process entailing research, outreach and "hundreds" (Staff 1) of meetings in which many of those present had participated. However, as one Chinatown resident summarized, a narrowing of attention to investment-oriented interests in height had gradually coincided with the marginalization of other local priorities and even local people:

> I've looked at the material that the City provided during those 2009 consultations and Chinatown is consistently presented as an integral part of the Downtown Eastside and as such would be covered by the city's overall "Revitalization Without Displacement" policy. Now, we're hearing that Chinatown is a little different; that the only real consideration is economic revitalization; and those that even raise the issue of displacement are being called outsiders … So, what's clear is that Chinatown residents didn't get to participate in the 2009 public

> consultation and if this policy goes through, we won't be included in the Local Area Planning process in the Downtown Eastside either. (Opp 44)

Here, the speaker highlights how a geo-spatial narrowing of study boundaries (the severing of Chinatown-related items) corresponded to a narrowing of policy focus such that "Chinatown's" issues of, for instance, heritage streetscapes, shopping and tourism, had become seen as distinct from "Downtown Eastside" issues of housing affordability and displacement. In doing so (as I detail below), the speaker highlights how the boundaries and meanings of *community* can be examined as social practice.

What is further interesting about this presentation is the response it garnered from one councillor who questioned the speaker's account of exclusion, countering that the speaker would have the opportunity to participate ("elsewhere,") in the upcoming LAP process. In doing so, the councillor clearly locates the speaker within one of the hearings' two opposed groups: the Downtown Eastside community that had been awarded its own upcoming process. When, a moment later, the speaker re-asserts that—as a low-income person *and* a resident of Chinatown—they had been disenfranchised despite apparent membership in *both* groups, they embody a striking disconnect in assumed categories of membership and representation: through incremental shifts in focus, the HAHR had come to omit the concerns of low-income Chinatown residents whose affordability claims rendered them beyond the study's narrowed scope of focus on "height" and whose place of residence rendered them beyond the geographical scope of the upcoming LAP. Moreover, this brief, tense, exchange signals how assertions of the unified Chinatown were contested and political, a dynamic apparent in a further series of moments wherein community continued to be *done* in course of the hearings themselves.

8.5 Doing Community in the HAHR Hearings: Outsiders and Misinformation

This exchange between the councillor and low-income Chinatown resident indicates a pattern that repeats in other moments of the hearings wherein ostensibly shared understandings of Chinatown's community are asserted and/or ignored in confusing ways. In the remainder of the chapter, I explore the elusive nature of the *unified Chinatown community* so frequently cited as councillors voted to pass the HAHR. This analytic effort was initially rooted in my own sense that—as an outsider to both the Chinatown and Downtown Eastside communities—I lacked some bit of information or insight about how the "Chinatown community" was being defined. In what follows, my approach to some extent reflects a discursive version of what Ahmed describes as an "ethnography of texts" in that it is aimed (to paraphrase Ahmed) at *following "community" around*: asking what "community" means in particular moments of hearing discourse, in whom and in what "community" is deposited and to whom and to what "community" sticks (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 12–14).

8.5.1 Following "community" around: Narratives of Chinatown as people

While the ways that Chinatown's community is conveyed within the hearings are not universal, as in accounts of Chinatown as place, narratives of Chinatown as people often drew on certain recurring themes. At first glance, assertions and questions of the *unified Chinatown* appeared to be defined and debated predominantly along lines of geography. Geo-spatial terminology was often used to distinguish those from "within" Chinatown or "the area," and those who were "neighbours," from "outside" and/or from the "Downtown Eastside." Further, involvement of those who live and/or work within neighbourhood boundaries is a usual approach to consultation in community planning.

Related to this, membership in the Chinatown community was widely conveyed along lines of neighbourhood involvement. Many who spoke or were treated as part of the Chinatown community conveyed their connection in terms of (often many years of) civic or volunteer engagement in neighborhood organizations, as illustrated by this remark:

> I was a former trustee and president of the Sun Yet Sen Garden Society, a former United Way fundraising co-chair of Vancouver East and co-chair of the annual Vancouver Chinatown Festival. I also served on the board of the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association … (Supp 5; see also Supp 17; Supp 6; Supp 8; Supp 10; Supp 11; Supp 17).

Notions of Chinatown as a geographical community also entailed historical dimensions. As in the assertions of the speaker (above, on page 264) who connected "really" understanding Chinatown with having a long family history in the area, several of those who spoke as members of Chinatown described historical and/or ancestral connections to the area. One had a grandfather who'd run a family business on Pender street (Supp 7); several noted they had grown up in the area (Supp 1; Supp 8) another described how their father had been involved in neighbourhood organizing in the 60s (Supp 6x2). "Chinatown," stated another "is our roots" (Supp 4). Others referred to the early inhabitants of Chinatown as their "forefathers" (Supp 3, Supp 19).

Threaded through accounts of Chinatown as a geo-spatial community were lines drawn in relation to knowing; those who described a history of membership and involvement in Chinatown often claimed, or were understood, to *know* what was going on in the neighbourhood, in contrast to non-members who did not "understand." One BIA representative and building owner asked, "Which party is more convincing? … Those who have [had] direct exposure and experience of the community since childhood and are still here? Or those who have criticism and cynicism" (Supp 4x2)?

Further, in line with understandings of Chinatown as an "important cultural, national, historical space of Chinese Canadians or of Chinese people" (Opp 3x2), Chinese Canadians and/or a broadly defined "Chinese community" appeared to be commonly understood as members and/or stakeholders. In introducing themselves, some HAHR supporters (Supp 4, Supp 5) described themselves and others as speaking "on behalf of … the Chinese community" (Supp 6). One councillor asked a speaker if they could comment on behalf of the "Chinese community widely" (Coun 5 to Oth 7; see also Supp 11; Coun 8 to Opp 73 for similar comments). The question of whether Chinese people and/or Chinese language speakers in the neighbourhood and also the broader "Chinese community" had been adequately involved in planning processes was a recurring debate over the course of the hearings. In particular, much debate centred on whether low-income Chinese seniors and Chinese merchants had been adequately informed about the HAHR proposals (e.g., Coun 3; Opp 13; Opp 18; Opp 27; Opp 30; Supp 4x2; Opp 75; Coun 4 to Supp 7x2; Coun 9).

However, as in the case of the speaker (above) who was presumed empowered by the LAPP despite living in Chinatown (and thus beyond the geo-spatial boundaries of the LAPP process), the hearings also entailed a series of moments in which these widely held understandings break down in confusing ways. For instance, references to "neighbours" or those from "outside" Chinatown often denoted organizations (such as the Carnegie Centre) that were active, or actually located inside Chinatown's mapped boundaries. At another point, councillors responded to presentations made by members of the Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Area Society Youth Group who spoke in support of the HAHR. Following this presentation by the youths whom I took to have Asian ancestry, one councillor declared "I think

it's really exciting to see young people talking about Chinatown" (Coun 9 to Supp 3 and Supp 24). Another stated,

> Obviously, a lot of you are not raised in Chinatown and only go there because you wanted to renew the cultural roots and identity. But I guess the practical aspect of Chinatown and also the Downtown Eastside, is that [the] Downtown Eastside has [a] thirty percent Aboriginal population, so if you actually go around Chinatown you see not just Chinese [people], there's a lot of Aboriginal people. So as a youth group, do you plan to have any activities [or] interaction with outside of Chinatown, with say, Aboriginal [*sic*], or the Aboriginal friendship centre or some of the organizations? (Coun 2 to Supp 3, Supp 24)

In this interesting, gentle challenge to the group of youths who had come to speak, the councillor simultaneously unsettles and reinforces various understandings of the Chinatown community. First, both councillors speak approvingly of this involvement of youths from outside of Chinatown in the renewal of "cultural roots and identity"; however, the second councillor also stresses how Chinatown is comprised of a significant Aboriginal population, suggesting this latter resident group deserves both recognition and involvement in community affairs. Immediately following this statement, the same councillor refers to Aboriginal groups as "outside of Chinatown." While it is possible that the councillor's use of "outside" simply refers to the location of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre further east on Hastings Street, it may also suggest an understanding in which those from outside Chinatown are grasped as insiders while those known to be inside are outsiders whose lack of recognition or involvement up to this point does not seem to unsettle assurances of inclusive process and/or claims of a *unified* Chinatown community.

Recognizing how "various meanings and practices of community … are constructed through and desired in specific communicative systems and actual flesh and body relationships" (Ibanez-Carrasco & Riaño-Alcalá, 2009, p. 2), my point here is not to challenge claims to

membership put forward by these or other speakers. Instead I wish to suggest how the kinds of porous, shifting and sometimes contradictory versions of *community* which I have just described can be explored as a situated discursive project. What is significant from my perspective is how neither this, nor other such moments of disjuncture appear to significantly unsettle or disrupt recurring (sometimes vehement) assertions of a *Chinatown community* that was *unified* in its support of the HAHR. This mysterious nature and basis of membership in the Chinatown community was perhaps most apparent when "who counts" was, literally, counted:

> Coun 9: The clear statement … barring one or two people from the Chinatown community … is that we're a part of [the Downtown Eastside, but] we have some of our own destiny to look after.
>
> Opp 49: I think with a speakers list of over 140 people, there's been more than one or two people against it.
>
> Coun 9: I counted two so far. From the Chinatown community.

Here, while the councillor reasserts an obviously clear-cut sense of who counts as "from the Chinatown community," their logic is puzzling. Upon re-examining the list of those presenters who had spoken "so far" and could thus have been included in the councillor's count, I found at least 10 of those who expressed opposition to the HAHR proposals identified themselves as current residents of Chinatown.[60] Another was a former resident of the area who travelled to Chinatown several times a week to visit their mother who lived "three blocks east of the high rise proposal" (Opp 37). Ten prior opposed speakers introduced themselves as members of organizations that were located or active within the boundaries of Chinatown and six might reasonably be presumed to have Asian or Chinese heritage based their appearances, names, or

[60] In addition to these 10 resident HAHR opponents, two more current Chinatown residents expressed opposition and concerns, but were recorded in the meeting minutes as "neither in support or in opposition." I discuss this further below.

use of Cantonese. One HAHR opponent who spoke prior to the councillor's count was a well-known Chinese seniors' human rights advocate who previously lived in Chinatown and had very public ongoing involvement in the area. In this way, the councillor's confident assessment seemed to disrupt almost all of the narratives or qualities with which membership in Chinatown's community was repeatedly associated.

In unpacking the hearings' myriad references to community, I began to reconsider my assumption that these repeated mentions denoted a certain group of people whose shared quality I was somehow missing. Instead, I contemplated how perhaps the importance of community, as expressed in particular interchanges, had less to do with what that community *was* (in terms of certain criteria of relatedness to the neighbourhood, 'out there,') and more to do with what community was *for*, 'in here,' in the hearings. At this point, I read Ahmed's account of working in a Women's Studies department that was repeatedly denied institutional support on the basis that it was "not viable":

> This judgement of being "not" viable might be more about the "not" than the "viable." This "not" seemed to float quite freely, becoming attached to whatever criteria for viability could be exercised. When we could establish our viability in terms of one set of criteria (student numbers, research activity and income), the criteria changed, so that we were not. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 184)

Working from Ahmed's formulation, I began to focus on the idea of the "not"; I noticed some councillors could be heard to emphasize and/or overlook certain meanings of community as they expressed assessments of who *counted* as members of the Chinatown community or alternatively, wrote-off the concerns of those who did *not*.

8.5.2 "The boundaries of community": Outsider knowledge

The kind of floating "not" described by Ahmed is especially apparent in one series of exchanges with a presenter who was a geographer and one the 29 academics who had signed a letter opposing the HAHR (see Chapter 1). Following this speaker's presentation, two councillors posed a series of questions:

> Coun 9: one of the reasons why I decided to go off the academic road is because it's a bit of an ivory tower … For example, we've heard now about the Chinatown process … That's sort of the reality on the street versus … academic journals… or in [a] library.
>
> Opp 31: I certainly don't feel that I can speak for Chinatown … I'm speaking to what I'm hearing… through people who have contacted me … And that's about the thousand or more people who signed the petition opposing [the HAHR], many of whom … are Chinatown residents.
>
> Coun 9: … If you take [those petitions] away, how much contact or work have you done with the various Chinatown communities..?
>
> …
>
> Coun 6: [So, this is] your point of view. You're not representing the community. … I want you to explain to me why, given 10 years and there's a contingent in Chinatown saying, "We've done it," that you are now still saying, "No, there's not enough consultation."
>
> Opp 31: I am basing that on … the thousand or more people who have signed a petition against it …
>
> Coun 6: So your test is a thousand?
>
> …
>
> Coun 6: I just need to know where you would draw the boundaries of community … There are [planning] sub-lines that draw the line distinctly around Chinatown … and that's where those lines are currently.

While this geographer's presentation did not entail any claim to membership in either the Chinatown or Downtown Eastside communities, the two councillors nonetheless enlist common narratives of community to challenge the speaker by repeatedly establishing their outsider status.

The first councillor (Coun 9)'s comments work to reframe the speaker's academic knowledge as abstract and out-of-touch with the "reality on the street." When the geographer notes that this concern is grounded in the opposition of many residents, the councillor takes another tack—first dismissing the credibility of the petitions and then working to re-establish the speaker's outsider status by questioning the speaker's *involvement*. (A similar line of challenge is addressed to an HAHR opponent whose Chinatown childhood home had been expropriated and razed during Viaduct construction (Coun 2 to Opp 73).)

The second councillor (Coun 6) begins by amplifying the presenter's acknowledgement of outsideness—repeating that the presenter is not "representing the community"—and then contrasts the speaker's outsider arguments with the arguments of those "from Chinatown" and "in Chinatown." At the end of the exchange, the councillor draws on geo-spatial notions of community to imply that those voicing concerns (including the speaker) could be disregarded based on their location outside the mapped boundaries of Chinatown. This latter councillor also takes up an additional line of challenge which is ostensibly about the statistical significance of the 1000 individuals who signed the DNC petition in opposition to the HAHR. This challenge is rendered somewhat absurd given the City's consultation-based claims of support for additional height in Chinatown South which (as I've noted above, on page 298) appear to centre on the 54.3% majority of feedback form respondents, or 25 people.

The public discursive work of *doing community* is also audible in a series of exchanges wherein one of the same councillors questioned two different speakers on subsequent evenings. The evening of April 5 featured a presentation by one speaker who identified as a "cultural planner" and 24-year resident of Chinatown. After describing considerable involvement and networks in Chinatown, this speaker stated, "I am concerned about my neighbourhood's

economy as well as low-income displacement and cultural cleansing … I'm afraid council is advancing cleansing of low-income people" (Opp 16). The councillor subsequently made a series of inquiries:

> Coun 9: You referred to heritage cleansing … It's a term I've not heard before, so enlighten me.
>
> Opp 16: Brick is heritage; it's an aesthetic heritage, but we want living heritage in Chinatown … Last summer [my] doors were open … I remember hearing, wafting through the air, these [loud] dance beats … I realized that the music was actually coming a block and a half away from the rooftop at The Keefer [Suites]; these parties that they have there. And that is an example of … a physical space that is exclusive to middle class people. So that space, The Keefer, is no longer accessible for a mixed community …
>
> Coun 9: So we have a vibrant Cantonese opera …the family societies … So, does that count as cultural living heritage?
>
> Opp 16: Yeah and Foo's Ho Ho which is very vulnerable …
>
> Coun 9: … Foo's Ho Ho, for example … that's the old-style cooking, but tastes have changed … Do you see change in a culture's tastes as bad? …
>
> Opp 16: My daughter and I, one of our favourite things… is to walk down to the Chinatown night market and there's a bunch of totally non-Chinese crap there …
> …
> my *point* is, it's culturally appropriate. The night market is the celebration that we all share in Chinatown; the tourists share it as much as the residents share it. And that's inclusive economic development …
>
> Coun 9: … So how much of what you are staying is sort of an idealized cultural heritage? …

Two evenings later, the same councillor continued this line of questioning about "idealized heritage" with a different presenter, one of the 29 academics who had signed the letter in opposition to the HAHR:

> Coun 9: I asked this question of someone … who was trying to talk about cultural cleansing or something—changes to the area—because of the Keefer [Suites], and it's, you know, [they] "can hear rock music as opposed to Chinese opera." It raised the question for me … "OK, … do you have an idealized version of what Chinese culture is, you know, sort of the Caucasian version of what it should be

> …?" … I'm trying to reconcile your idealized view, versus … the lived actual history…
>
> Opp 33: … I don't think my view is idealized at all … I'm not stuck in some kind of idea of Chinatown of the past … Why do new immigrants come in there? It's because … the rents are cheap … So, I have no idea that, "let's keep the Chinese people there being Chinese for the amusement of other non-Chinese people" or whatever …?!
>
> Coun 9: [*laughing*] Yeah, I didn't want to say that, but that's what I was kind of weighing with [where] some of the submissions I've heard over the last couple days were going.

In this dual series of exchanges with speakers I would describe as white, the councillor, who identifies as Chinese and as part of Chinatown's "social history," references important critiques (which I have touched on in the previous chapter) relating to Orientalism and the problematic conflation of race and place. Interestingly, these critiques of "idealized heritage" which are mentioned by the councillor are in many ways consistent with those raised by the first speaker who draws a distinction between "faux," "aesthetic" heritage oriented towards wealthy visitors and tourists and "living heritage" as everyday, "inclusive," and shared by residents and tourists alike.

However, as the councillor reiterates the first speaker's argument, (s)he seems to miss the presenter's repeated references to practices and cultures of class-based exclusion and instead conveys the earlier submission in terms of an apparent concern to keep Chinatown Chinese. In the cases of both speakers, the councillor can be heard to write-off and recast concerns about inclusion, commodification and displacement as misguided and "idealized," for instance, by framing concern about exclusive parties as a problem of non-Chinese music and concern for the affordable Foo's Ho Ho as a desire to preserve an archetypal version of Chinese cuisine. Here, my point is not only that the councillor misunderstands and/or misconstrues the first speaker's argument—for example, by suggesting the speaker would be less critical of the Keefer Hotel's

rooftop pool parties if the music they blasted was Chinese opera—but that these discursive practices can be understood as (intentional or unintentional) situated practices of *doing community*. The selective line of questioning seems aimed at discrediting both speakers on the basis of their "Caucasian" outsider status.

Another variation of this pattern occurred as councillors responded a speaker who described her long history in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside:

> [I was] born and raised on the Downtown Eastside. My dad was born in China… My mom was white and native…. It was really hard being brought up part Chinese, part white and part native … I was never really welcome in the Chinese part and never really welcome [as] white and never really welcome in native [parts] … Right now I wake up really early and I work at the shelters for the women and Thursdays I go to the First United Church and I do volunteer work there … You know, these societies they never welcomed *me* into them, because I look native … I even go and volunteer for the Chinese elders and they *love* me and I love them … My dad used to take me to Chinatown … And he taught me how to cook Chinese; he taught me how to cook white … And you know the First United Church has got this adult education thing, and if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have ever gone to UBC …
>
> Coun 2: … You're a woman … I don't purport to speak on behalf of the societies, but basically the Chinese societies even now are male-dominated and you don't find many [women] who are on the executive or the board.
> …
> that's a problem and still is. And do you speak Chinese languages?
> Opp 54: I don't speak [Chinese languages] but I can understand.
>
> Coun 2: Well that's another problem …
> …
> But don't mind too much of the societies; they're old guys anyways, they'll die soon.

Following this joking comment (made by a councillor who also had roots in Chinatown), a second councillor began a similar line of inquiry:

> Coun 9: So … your dad was Chinese; was he a member of [his family] association?
>
> Opp 54: No, he never went; he was always on the boats cooking. We had seven in our family. He had to, you know, *feed* us [*laughs*].

> Coun 9: One of the barriers of course, is [you have to be] of a specific family name …
> …
> I guess you know—I reference some of the staff reports and this [Housing Policy] memo…—and we all know this, that many family associations have actually kept their rents low … I guess maybe because you don't have much experience with them you don't know, but certainly the data is pretty clear …
>
> Opp 54: I don't even know about that … No one even told me anything till [a CCAP organizer] talked to me.

This speaker's presentation is interesting because of how it unsettles so many of the narratives that are commonly taken up in asserting the unified Chinatown community. The speaker conveys her myriad historic and contemporary connections to the area, including her mixed heritage; the childhood shopping and cooking experiences through which she learned to cook both "Chinese" and "white"; as well as her ongoing volunteer work with vulnerable local women and seniors. In doing so, she both embodies and articulates unsettling challenges to assertions of a distinct but inclusive Chinatown community that is now unified in support of the HAHR. Despite this speaker's myriad important links to Chinatown, her account makes clear that she has not been included in Chinatown's decade of process, that she does not support the HAHR and further, how ostensibly outside organizations such as the First United Church may be very much *inside* the supportive networks that are important to vulnerable locals. Her description of having multiple, racialized, social identities challenges sedimented discourses through which Chinatown is commonly treated as a distinctly Chinese space; in recounting her varied engagements in the area, she gives voice to historic and contemporary experiences of traversing boundaries of geography, nationality, ethnicity and culture upon which many public treatments of Chinatown continue to depend.

The councillors' questions reflect interesting variations of the recurring discursive practices of doing community that I've described. As in Ahmed's account of being "not viable," following the speaker's presentation in which her numerous Chinatown affiliations are made clear, the relevant criteria seem to change. The conversation that ensues is no longer about the speaker's experiences or concerns, but instead becomes focused on laying out the specific, gendered, criteria for involvement in family society decisions and spaces. While the first councillor acknowledges that such barriers to inclusion are problematic, instead of pursuing the unsettling question of how these issues of leadership and representation may have played out in the context of the HAHR, they ultimately dismiss these issues by joking ("They're old guys, they'll die soon"). The second councillor (Coun 9) pursues a similar approach, adding that criteria for society membership was not only about gender and language abilities, but also depends on one's family name. In this way, the councillors can be heard to resume discursive practices of constructing a kind of outsideness that render the speaker inadequately informed about the issue(s). This impression is further developed as the councillor treats the speaker's concerns as an issue of misunderstanding. In contrast to the speaker who doesn't "have much experience" with family societies, the councillor cites evidence of societies' low rents, adding, "We all know this … The data is pretty clear." While the information provided by the councillor is not inaccurate, it reflects a certain kind of discursive work; that of selective engagement with speakers' concerns in ways that construct and discredit these knowledges as outsider. What is also interesting in the second exchange is how the speaker's response that her father "was always on the boats cooking" because "he had to … *feed* us" offers a further glimpse into the historical and continuing dynamics through which low-income people may face barriers to engagement in assumed spaces of community representation and decision-making.

8.5.3 Misunderstanding and misinformation: Fixations and silences

This latter exchange makes audible other recurring practices of *doing community*. Following some supporters' accounts of how Chinese-speaking seniors and merchants had been "mislead" and "coerced to sign the [DNC] petition" (Supp 4x2; see also Supp 8), allegations of *misinformation* became a focus for the same triad of councillors who repeatedly amplified and pursued this version of events (e.g., Coun 9 to Supp 8; Coun 6 to Supp 4x2; Coun 9 to Opp 4x2; Coun 9 to Opp 31). This was noticeable, for instance, in interrogation-style questioning of DNC volunteers who had canvassed local businesses and residents (Coun 9 to Opp 21; Coun 9 to Opp 3; Coun 2 to Opp 64x2). The councillors' repeated efforts to discover the circulation of unreliable information are strange in light of myriad other hearing accounts in which the information circulated by DNC and CCAP volunteers is openly laid out for their review (e.g., Opp 5; Opp 3x3, below.) Together with the emphasis and tone of councillors' questions about the *Fight the Height!* poster (see Chapter 6), this pattern of persistent scrutiny functions to overshadow alternative experiences.

This discursive work undertaken by certain councillors is perhaps most noticeable when considered—not in terms of what was *said* but rather—what was left *unsaid*. The councillors' noticeable fixation on misinformation is brought into distinct relief when read in juxtaposition to their near-complete absence of effort to delve into the array of compelling testimony that low-income residents may not have been adequately included in the HAHR decision. While many speaking in support of the HAHR offered detailed accounts of Chinatown's decade of planning process, on the whole councillors failed to explore the degree to which this had included low-income residents. One exception to this rule occurred on the fifth evening of hearings when,

acknowledging “I keep hearing … there’s been no consultation,” one councillor (Coun 4) asked the Chair of the VCRC “can you just tell me a little bit about the consultation that has gone on?” As I’ve described, the speaker’s response makes audible how “wide consultation with the residents” on the part of the VCRC may not have occurred since prior to 2002, “early on in the Chinatown visioning process” (Supp 7x2 above, on page 290). However, this seemingly significant insight is met with an absence of further inquiry: “OK, thanks; that’s it” (Coun 4 to Supp 7x2).

A similar pattern of silence can be traced through councillors’ failure to query most of the residents and organizers who described how they and their neighbours “had not been consulted.” Apart from the efforts of one councillor who would later vote against the HAHR proposals, most of these (often detailed) accounts were simply met with the silence of councillors’ non-response (Opp 1; Opp 3; Opp 6; Opp 11; Opp 12; Opp 17; Opp 18; Opp 20; Opp 25; Opp 27; Opp 32; Opp 35; Opp 48; Opp 5x2). A similar pattern was apparent in councillors’ failure to substantively address the question of low-income participation with planning staff. Rather than acknowledging these myriad accounts of grassroots canvassing, councillors’ selective practices of silence instead function to foreclose this important line of enquiry, obscuring the real possibility that a significant proportion of local residents had not been adequately involved. This conspicuous pattern of silence is made especially clear when one DNC organizer provided an extended description of the outreach efforts that councillors seemed to ignore. Even a portion of this account makes visible an impressive degree of volunteer labour:

> We printed and distributed more than 2000 brochures that… inside explained directly what the proposal is to the best of our ability in simple language for a low literacy community and [we] had translations done in Chinese and distributed those under the doors of every single hotel room and social housing project in and around Chinatown. We designed and printed more than 2000 separate hand bills

> advertising community meetings that we organized and distributed those under the doors of people's homes in Chinatown. We printed more than 1000 other posters … Over the course of two months we organized 12 separate petition times [when] we set up tables on the streets of Chinatown…You've all received a copy of [the Chinatown is People, Not Just Buildings publication]; that's also been digitized and put online on a website where articles that are in favour of the HAHR are archived alongside articles that are against it. We have put up on that site, also, numerous articles in the Chinese language as well as English language… And we've organized meetings … About half of those meetings were done in partnership with… Chinese language organizer[s] … And people in the community are not stupid; the implication of … this smear … is that people don't have the capacity to do further investigation … (Opp 3x3)

In the course of this detailed testimony, the organizer brings into relief conceptual practices through which particular councillors seem to work to discount considerable local opposition to the HAHR. In contrast to their apparent disinterest in these considerable outreach efforts, these councillors instead co-construct and amplify storylines in which opposition to the HAHR—particularly on the part of Cantonese or Manderin-speaking locals—could be attributed to the predatory and coercive practices of activists.

8.5.3.1 Representing community

Indeed, the hearings reflect a noticeable subtext which can be read as a struggle of representation; a struggle relating to which of the hearings' two opposed groups could be understood to be speaking for Chinatown's Chinese-speaking, often elderly, residents and small merchants who seemed to be widely considered among the neighbourhood's most legitimate and vulnerable constituents. In this context, perhaps the most memorable moment in which councillors could be heard to undertake the complicated discursive work of *doing community* occurred during the third evening of hearings, when a group of low-income Cantonese-speaking Chinatown residents arrived at the podium to voice concerns about the HAHR. These three

speakers—two of whom were visibly seniors—were accompanied by a CCAP volunteer translator who introduced the three presenters as residents of a subsidized housing building called Solheim Place. After each presenter spoke in Cantonese, the volunteer translated their presentation to English. Following the first translated presentation in which the speaker described difficulty finding housing and called for more social housing in Chinatown, a second speaker expressed similar concerns, which were summarized by the volunteer translator:

> She hopes that Chinatown will have more of this social housing, because that's what's in need … the reason why [s]he says [s]he lives in Chinatown is because it's affordable for low-income people. And [s]he listed … those streets, where there's a lot of low-income people that might be put at threat because of the proposal that's being put forward. And that's what [s]he's most worried about, because if they get kicked out and there's no plans for social housing, where are those people going to go live? (Oth 5, via translator)

Following this elderly speaker's presentation, two councillors who also spoke Cantonese initiated a series of challenges to the translator:

> What I heard was that [they're] not in opposition. [They're] concerned about the price of goods going up… [(S)]he did say, where would the people go if we were to tear down these houses… . So … for clarity then … what is it that [they're] opposed to, other than the disruption of social housing? Because, the plan before us is not for the destruction of social housing. (Coun 6)

Following the Cantonese translation of the councillor's request, one elderly speaker responded to the councillor in Cantonese. The translator and councillor then proceeded to discuss the speaker's argument:

> Coun 6: What I heard was [(s)he] said, "Build as high as you want, but protect the low income … If you're going to redevelop, give them space to live … bring them back. The businesses should be protected. I'm concerned that if they move, that if you redevelop, the prices of the rents will be too high; no one can rent the space anymore and we'll lose those businesses."
>
> Translator: Yes, that's correct.

A second councillor directed more questions to the same group of presenters. Following each question, the translator communicated the presenters' response:

> Coun 9: And do they understand that Solheim Place is a BC Housing building now?
>
> Translator: [*asks speakers, then responds*] Yup, they know.
>
> Coun 9: And do they understand that their building is not in any danger of being torn down?
>
> Translator: [*asks speaker, then responds*] She says of course it's not going to be.
>
> Coun 9: This is good …do they realize because it's a BC Housing building, they have rent controls?
>
> Translator: [*asks speakers, then responds*] She says she understands that, but … it depends on your income.
>
> Coun 9: That's correct yeah … right … It's a government building now and … they're safe. I just want to make sure they are aware of that, that their social housing is not under any threat.
>
> Translator: [*asks speakers, then responds*] … Yes, they do know that and they keep repeating that it depends on … income level.

The dynamics of this exchange once again reflect how two of the same councillors can be heard to *do community* in problematic ways. In their responses, both councillors can be heard to treat these speakers' concerns as though they are not legitimate critiques, but problems of misunderstanding. While the speakers communicate an array of concerns about inadequate social housing, threats to affordability and insufficient protections for vulnerable local residents—concerns also highlighted by the vast majority of those speaking in opposition to the HAHR—the first councillor (Coun 6) reacts as though these various critiques are irrelevant and/or nonsensical: "For clarity … what is it that [they're] opposed to?" This impression that speakers' concerns are somehow illogical or incorrect is further advanced as both councillors suggest these speakers believe that neighbourhood social housing is about to be torn down, an interpretation

that at least one speaker seemed to find puzzling as they stated via translator: "*Of course* it's not going to be" (my emphasis). As the conversation with the second councillor proceeds, the residents make clear that they understand precisely (perhaps more precisely than the councillor) how their rents are determined; however, the councillor continues to respond as though these speakers believe that their own social housing is under threat of destruction.

What is further striking about this interchange is how the first councillor's response obscures and even seems to overwrite these presenters' important expressions of critique. In the official Minutes of the hearings, while the first of the three Cantonese-speaking presenters is listed among those speaking "in opposition" to the HAHR, the two presenters who speak following the councillor's declaration that they are "not in opposition," are instead listed among those who spoke "neither in support of, nor in opposition to, the application …" Though I can only speculate as to the reasoning associated with this administrative practice of categorization, it seems that the councillor's pronouncement may have effected a redefinition that is noteworthy in large part because of its singularity. Numerous speakers at the hearings (including me) explicitly clarified that our concerns about the HAHR did "not … relate to questions of height" per se, but were rooted in concerns about affordability and displacement (Opp 46; see also Opp 31; Opp 49[61]). However, none of us were subsequently (re)categorized in the Minutes as not in opposition to the proposals.

The effect of this overwriting is further realized in one of the final moments of the hearings as a different councillor explains the line of reasoning through which they came to the

[61] One speaker clarified, "If you can guarantee me a 15-storey tower reserved for … low-income kids … , go for it" (Opp 49).

decision to pass the HAHR. Describing how they hold "the values of community self-determination pretty strongly," the councillor then went on to state,

> I also am mindful of the fact that the people who did come, who were brought to us as examples of people who wanted to participate but weren't enfranchised, I didn't hear a single one of *those* people—I certainly heard people speak against height which was the subject of the hearing, but—I didn't hear *those* people speak against height. I heard them speak in favour of social housing and against condos; but *use* was not the subject of this public hearing. (Coun 1; emphasis speaker's)

In the course of this explanation, the councillor makes audible how the hearings' complex practices of doing community hang together in a discursive project of *keeping intact the unified Chinatown community whose self-determination was so often cited as the basis for passing the HAHR*. As the councillor narrates their concern about enfranchisement, their seemingly limited focus on the three Cantonese-speaking residents occurs in the course of drawing unexplained but nonetheless clear distinctions between those who *do* and *do not count* as members in Chinatown's community. As in a different councillor's earlier count of "who counts" (above, on page 306), such practices suggest unexamined and troubling discursive practices of *doing community* as denial and exclusion. As this councillor identifies who *counts*, their narrative simultaneously writes off the positions and concerns of myriad other presenters who also have important connections to the neighbourhood, including many who identified themselves as currently living in Chinatown.

Further, even as the agency of the Cantonese-speaking residents appears to be prioritized in the councillors' audible consideration of "self-determination," the presenters' subjectivity is nonetheless overwritten in the councillor's portrayal of them as passive bystanders (they were "*brought* to us as *examples*" [my emphasis]; and as their concerns are ultimately discounted as off topic, beyond the scope of the HAHR's narrow focus on height (versus "use"). In this way,

while these speakers are obviously seen to count as members of Chinatown's community, their concerns are nonetheless written off as they are not counted amongst those opposed. Taken together, the discursive work of these councillors thus plays out in inverse versions of the floating "not" that Ahmed describes. On one hand, the councillors work to demonstrate that those in opposition are not community; on the other hand, they work to demonstrate that those in the community are not opposed. In doing so, they act to shore up a particular version of community that is confusing and rarely made explicit, yet hangs together as a discursive project of conveying unified community support for the HAHR proposals.

This chapter has traced how hearing debate reflects the ongoing nature of historical relations of colonization-marginalization and resistance, and further how these dynamics are linked to practical and discursive configuration[s] of community made audible in recurring hearing references to a *unified Chinatown*. Alternate histories of the HAHR (e.g, as discontinuity, and derailment), bring into view a colonizing movement wherein an array of policy and economic interventions had, collectively, channeled development pressures from all over the city towards Chinatown and other neighbourhoods in the Downtown Eastside. This critical re-reading further suggests how apparent widespread support for the current version of the HAHR proposals amongst the diverse local actors of the *unified Chinatown* emerged as a complicated, negotiated, local response in the face of the HAHR as a "crisis" of state-facilitated development pressure. In this way, while any disunity among these groups is not overtly detailed in hearing presentations, various speakers' public expressions of support for the HAHR in the "on-stage" site of the hearings should not be assumed to indicate their full or ongoing support for these policies.

Unpacking the hearing's conflicting accounts of consultation further brings into relief how the decade of process up to and including the HAHR can be read in terms of the marginalizing flip side of the dialectic. With the introduction of the HAHR, earlier neighbourhood planning concerns (including socio-economic issues and the protection and generation of low-income housing) became secondary priorities, to be addressed only upon the resolution of the suddenly more urgent question of towers. Over the same period in which planning processes reflected a narrowing of attention to matters of height, the social welfare concerns—together with the involvement of low-income residents—were gradually rendered external to the HAHR decision.

Finally, hearing debate makes audible how such marginalizing dynamics are not necessarily intentional and/or overt, but can play out as incremental practices of *deferral* in which low-income priorities and concerns are repeatedly put off in time and/or in space. But despite an imagined separation between aesthetic questions of form ("height") and social / economic considerations (of "use"), critiques recounted in this chapter and throughout the thesis signal how these recurring practices of deferral—of not doing and/or not choosing—enable a series of trade-offs in which low-income uses and spaces are subordinated to entrepreneurial ones. This effect of displacement is reflected in a conceptual project of community that can be followed around through hearing debate. As certain councillors enlist common narratives of community to bolster the version of a Chinatown that is unified in supporting the HAHR, they simultaneously shore up a version of community in which low-income residents do not count.

Chapter 9: A Return to Invitation

What needs to be changed above all is the current mix of what can be changed and what cannot be changed.

Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook, The Revolt Against Change, p. 4

In this chapter, I return to questions and tensions of invitation. I offer a reconfigured reading of the hearings' tensions of connection and disconnection, implausibility and possibility to suggest emergent considerations for the invitational pedagogies of social justice work. During the hearings, despite myriad calls to "work together" (Chapter 1) towards a neighbourhood future that was widely envisioned in terms of health, heritage and inclusivity, apparent possibility for common ground repeatedly broke down to produce what one speaker conveyed as two Chinatowns (Opp 3x2). In the hearings, these twin realities were passionately asserted and seemed equally real: There was one Chinatown in which a decade of extensive consultation produced an honourable compromise and there was another Chinatown in which consultation did not occur. There was one Chinatown which was distinct and warranted separate planning consideration; and there was another Chinatown that was part of the DTES and should never have been cut out. There was one Chinatown in which the HAHR was a height limit and end to speculation. There was another Chinatown in which the HAHR was a height increase and a speculative incentive. One Chinatown was dying, while the other was vital.

In this project, I have developed an approach and reading of how the hearings' public discursive interchange offers insight into the broader social relations of which it is both a product and instrument. My analysis has explored layerings of materiality, history, experience and practice, to unpack how hearing debate offers insight into relations of injustice that pose considerable challenges for collective action. What has emerged is a reading of interrelated

dynamics of alienation from the world, from others and from self. At the same time, this reading may help to clarify some promising directions for teaching, learning and organizing work in Vancouver and elsewhere. Recent community-building work in Chinatown provides a useful context for this discussion.

9.1 From Parallel Worlds to Knowing Together

My exploration of hearing debate makes visible how the hearings' many contrasting understandings are not simply a matter of individual opinion or creative human difference, but are significantly shaped by what could be termed the circumstances of knowing. Taken together, the accounts of speakers bring into view a complex of social and material relations that can take vastly different forms, producing divergent appearances and experiences for differently-located actors depending on the time, place, circumstances and objectives through which these dynamics are encountered. Hearing debate also reflects how, conversely, appearances of sameness can result from very different modes of change; while the empty storefronts of 1990s Hastings street marked decades of state and private disinvestment, the empty storefronts of 2011 Chinatown suggest the opposite trajectory of reinvestment and turnover to enterprises serving wealthier clientele.

This effect of parallel truths is further complicated as interventions in one place function as preconditions for changes elsewhere, producing chicken-and-egg confusion between cause-and-effect, or solution and problem. Innovative development and marketing of micro-lofts can be equally grasped as a result of increasing downtown redevelopment costs and as a cause of subsequent increases in which increased property values reflected the success of that new model.

Meanwhile, in assessing existing SROs as both appalling and necessary, residents make audible how these units exist, simultaneously, as solution and problem.

Other aspects of my analysis suggest how the hearing's array of parallel truths are also significantly mediated by a range of technical and official knowledges which are organized by and articulated to political-administrative relations of governance. Assertions that Chinatown's affordable housing is protected are not made up during the hearings, but reflect accurate (reasonable and/or intended) readings of City reports, memos and policy statements. Meanwhile, low-income residents highlight the multiple ways in which such knowledges systematically miss, misrepresent and overwrite their relational knowledges of capacity and community despite increasing threats of displacement.

Despite their disconnectedness vis a vis low-income experiences, these conceived realities are to some degree lived by myriad City and development actors whose everyday work entails collecting and representing data, analysis, negotiation and decision-making in accordance with these categories. They are further rendered real because of how they build on and bolster a range of pre-existing or practico-inert concepts, narratives and/or planning techniques as "spatial technologies of power" (Blomley, 2004, p. 114). Through discourses of Social Mix, New Urbanism, Liveability, Smart Growth and Body Heat, the competitive and speculative logics of capitalist urban development are embedded in the prevailing frameworks of land use administration and sanctioned by professional education. Each of these understandings is further undergirded by the myriad legal and political relations that make real the more fundamental construct of property.

My reading of these myriad knowledges brings into view how many divergent truths are not simply problems of understanding but also reflect material conundrums through which actors

are pushed and/or pulled in different directions. Conflicting assessments of the HAHR's impact on neighbourhood character are not simply matters of taste, but are significantly structured by material contradictions of place. The speculative nature of material tensions positions market actors against each one other, in a sort of guessing game wherein the correct combination of incentives and regulations cannot be known ahead of time and in which advantage for some amounts to grievous consequences for others.

Further, alternate histories, together with insiders' accounts offered by the UDI submission and blog comment, make visible an array of material and policy-making dynamics through which neighbourhood planning is significantly structured by the projects of powerful state and development actors as these are formed in relation to the speculative dynamics of global capital. Such accounts suggest how, for a range of property owners and development actors engaged in these spaces and relations, the HAHR proposals connect to a familiar and relevant world of guidelines and considerations which are of crucial importance in navigating development dynamics of place. The truth of the HAHR's speculative "new normal" is made and felt through a range of practices: property transactions, (re)development applications, purchase of bonus density, design decisions, developer enquiries, Council briefings, negotiations and political contributions. However, for those who do not relate to Chinatown as property, such practices are largely hidden: Occurring in the trans-local correspondences and office spaces of development firms and City Hall, speculative transactions, development negotiations and proposals are generally not the subject of press releases or town hall meetings and often have little immediate or obvious effect. Within speculative contexts and relations, pressures and opportunities are weighed, decisions taken and investments made often long before they are visible as changes in Chinatown's built landscape.

The hearings' divergent characterizations of the HAHR as both a height increase and a height limit suggest how differing orientations to Chinatown produce divergent temporal realities, reflecting Sartre's analysis of how, as Barnes puts it, solidarity can be thwarted by "the sheer weight of space and time" (in Sartre, 1960b, p. xvii). Grasped in relation to a speculative decade of stalled planning process, uncertain opportunities, constraints and/or pressures, the HAHR is felt, for some, as a necessary and even "urgent" process of adjustment and clarification. Relative to the speculative "new normal," with its expected future of 30-40 stories, the HAHR is grasped as a height limit. However for residents and others not privy to these speculative dynamics (and whose decade-long experiences of waiting instead relate to social housing availability), the HAHR proposals are felt as a sudden "rush" (Opp 64 to Coun 8, see Chapter 8). Imagined from the street corner in juxtaposition to Chinatown's tangible built present of predominately three to four storeys, proposed heights of 12-15 storeys constitute a significant increase. Meanwhile, read at City Hall in relation to a conceived zoned present of 7-9 storeys, this increase is relatively "modest" (Staff 2). These multiple inverse understandings relate to the staggered way in which different groups of actors encounter dynamics of neighbourhood change. An end to speculative uncertainty coincides with the beginning of new development and the concrete re-making of neighbourhood space.

These differing material-conceptual worlds of understanding further help to make sense of the hearings' parallel realities in which consultation simultaneously did and did not occur. Hearing debate makes audible how the timing and relevancies of planning process bear little resemblance to many residents' unpropertied everyday encounters with neighbourhood change. Further, even when property-oriented policy decisions are made the subject of public process via exercises like the HAHR, their presentation in terms of, for instance, district schedules, floor

square ratios and bonus density, renders them—as the CCAP organizer emphasized—"really theoretical" (Opp 64, Chapter 8), unrelatable and inaccessible for those who do navigate the neighbourhood as property. In this way, hearing debate makes audible the difficulty of finding common ground amidst a sea of high-stakes dynamics within which opposite observations, strategies, problems and even present realities can be known as true.

9.1.1 Towards knowing together in struggle

The hearings' many divergent realities can be read to indicate how differing groups of actors are immersed in different worlds of understanding that are organized by and articulated to material dynamics at play, not only 'out there' in the neighbourhood, but which also extend 'in here,' that is, within democratic process. This effect of parallel realities poses considerable challenges to the pursuit of common ground. As Thompson puts it, 'multiple readings'—though acceptable in literary theory—are insufficient as a basis for meaningful social change which requires conscious, collective action on the basis of knowing "something" (2006, p. 109). This reading of parallel worlds connects with my earlier discussion (Chapter 2) of contemporary global conditions wherein routine experiences of, *inter alia*, capitalist, white supremacist and colonial conditions of exploitation both reflect and perpetuate reified, spatially and temporally disconnected versions of these relational phenomena. Allman emphasizes that, globally, "we find not a more highly integrated world but one in which the life experiences of a relatively small percentage of the world's population become further and further removed from the life experiences of the vast majority" (2001, p. 19). My reading of hearing debate both affirms and complicates this sense of divided worlds. As differing actors narrate divergent experiences and logics in the course of publicly positioning themselves as "in support" or "opposed" to the

HAHR policies, they make audible how the hearings' two Chinatowns are also a multiplicity of Chinatowns; both pro- and anti-HAHR understandings are expressed in relation to a range of personal and collective experiences (of opportunity but also pressure), reflecting much difference within each group.

Thompson recounts how, in the context of divisive social relations, simply sharing accounts of personal experience can, instead of contributing to relational understandings of injustice, "often go to the opposite extreme and take personal experience as [objective] truth." This would often "produce a situation where knowledge-objects would stand in sharp contradiction with one another" (2006, p. 109). This effect is apparent during the Hearings; in many ways, the format of the hearings coordinated a milieu of serial knowing, consistent with the dynamics of debate and banking knowledge that, for Freire, directly contrast conditions and qualities of dialogue. More subtly, hearing debate reflects the considerable limiting and polarizing effects of state processes that set the terms (for instance, the topics and timing) within which community conversations about development occur.

At the same time, the invitation taken up and extended by my analysis entails a refusal to write-off this array of disconnects as a dischordant cacophony of individual perspectives and instead, to pursue Freire's assertion that, through efforts at intersubjective knowing, it is possible to "know more" (Chapter 2). Even as I have emphasized the hearings' dynamics of contrasting understandings, I have treated these as a means of more fully grasping the complex of social, material and historical relations which undergird each necessarily situated and partial practice of knowing. In doing so, I have sought to recognize and extend the relational and/or dialogical qualities already manifest in the practices of speakers. As presenters shared information, experiences and reasoning in response to earlier arguments, they acted to test those

understandings, better enabling them to be refined, developed, or rejected by other knowers. In foregrounding these relational and collective qualities of my analysis, my project makes a contribution towards efforts at democratizing intellectual projects of social change.

These intersubjective insights that have emerged constitute important *struggle knowledge*. As in Dorothy Smith's (1987) suggestion that diverse locations offer different positionings from which the social can be mapped, speakers' dynamic articulation of their varying experiences can be taken to convey a compelling and useful articulation of neighbourhood dynamics. Many apparently contradictory observations and assessments make sense when explored as accounts of complex processes of capitalist urban development—with relations that are inherently speculative, spatially and temporarily disjointed, that differ according to local, property-by-property particularities and involve actors whose precise responses and practices of consumption cannot be predicted. This multi-dimensional and relational reading of hearing discourse brings into relief a complex of political-economic relations that come "in-between" various individuals and groups, to structure the parallel realities so apparent in hearing discourse. It thus makes a contribution towards exploring, expanding and/or clarifing the terrain upon which local practices of justice-oriented pedagogy, organizing and collective action must be pursued.

My research also suggests the need for groups of local actors to forge spaces and networks for generating communal modes of teaching, learning and inquiry that are less subject to state and corporate control and mediation. CCAP's annual hotel reports (along with more recent community-led research on mental health, community assets, and retail gentrification) have proved to be valuable instruments of collective learning and advocacy (see *Carnegie Community Action Project* n.d.). Recent community-building efforts in Chinatown have also

entailed various forms of learning, information-sharing, and knowledge generation through petitions, meetings, visioning, email, speaking events and websites; many of the latter contain collections of media articles and short films on topics such as Chinatown's culture and heritage (see, e.g., *#SaveChinatownYVR*, n.d.; *Youth Collaborative for Chinatown*, n.d.). Following the HAHR hearings, CCAP has hired a Cantonese-speaking community organizer who has supported the formation of the Chinese-speaking residents-based Chinatown Concern Group. The work of this resident-led group has also frequently been supported by the Chinatown Action Group, which is largely comprised of Asian youth from across Vancouver.

In her account of a collective effort at dialogical knowing, Ellsworth (1989) states that participants later agreed the initiative would have required higher levels of mutual trust and commitment, based on informal social interactions (such as potlucks, outings and other gatherings) that could take place without the expectation of agreement or political unity. Participants had needed "opportunities to know the motivations, histories, and stakes" of those with whom they were in political negotiations (1989, p. 316). Such insights are reflected in recent community-building and activism in Chinatown. Alongside political meetings and rallies, have been a variety of arts, sports and social activities oriented towards buiding relationships and cultural connections. In the summer of 2015, the Youth Collaborative for Chinatown began organizing monthly outdoor mahjong socials, creating a space for intercultural and intergenerational conversation over the popular board game. Young organizers have also spearheaded Cantonese workshops for non-Chinese speakers and other intiatives to support Chinatown's traditional businesses. A block party organized in opposition to the proposed condo development at 105 Keefer Street advertised family-friendly music, games and tai chi. These and other efforts have especially forged connections connections between Chinatown seniors and

youth from around the city, building networks of conversation and engagement on the question of Chinatown's future.

9.2 Knowing as Erasure and Smoothing

Attention to the hearings as a struggle of knowing thus underscores how, as Sartre put it, "every philosophy is practical" (1960b, p. 5). Divergent understandings of community and change are not simply opinions or abstractions but are instrumental in organizing spaces, enabling certain practices and obscuring the possibility of others. My analysis suggests how dynamics of knowing not only advance ongoing relations of injustice, but also erase and smooth tensions of colonization-and-marginalization by masking dynamics of choice and responsibility.

This smoothing-over effect can be traced through the hearings' patterns of abstracted knowing. The recurring deferral of affordability concerns is enabled by *fragmented thinking* that divides what should be understood as related. Through designation of particular properties as protected and the take-up of neighbourhood boundaries as kind of horizon beyond which other places are conveyed as not "affected," practices of delineation both assume and obscure broader dynamics within which many places and people in the area were, in fact, at risk. Via recurring discursive practices of dichotomization, affordability concerns were written off on the basis that they were beyond the scope of the HAHR's focus on height, versus use.

In other cases, effects of erasure are produced through discursive logics of *overwriting* in which concepts and appearances mask the relational dynamics through which injustices occur. Administrative versions of affordability—expressed as a stable quantity of residential units—reassuringly bridge the disjuncture between affordability on the ground and in text. With particularities obscured, even unaffordable or barely inhabitable SRO rooms could be counted as

evidence that the City was on track in its efforts to maintain and protect low-income housing. Recurring conflation of neighbourhood heritage and vitality with the preservation of historic streetscapes functions akin to Baudrillard's (1985) simulacra wherein architectural versions of neighborhood culture both mimic and mask the actual cultural change occurring underneath. Evocative storylines of the neighbourhood as stagnant, quiet and empty obscure a long history of racist, colonial and capitalist practices of emptying as well as the contemporary choices of property-holding actors.

Injustice and conquest is further masked through social practices of knowing in which an array of structural dynamics is *inscribed* in Others. Within discourses of social mix, categories of "poor" and "wealthy" (or, "low income" and "spending consumers") are treated as personal attributes. As in Eurocentric narratives of an indigenous "disappearing race," and an Oriental society "in decline" (Chapter 7), reifying practices of inscription enable colonizing practices to be rewritten in terms of naturalness and evolutionary progress. An historical reading of hearing debate especially highlights how discourses of neglect and potential for improvement have historically functioned as marginalizing discourses that simultaneously enable and obscure the social and material dynamics through which certain peoples are produced as problems. This latter pattern in thinking seems particularly important to name and challenge given contemporary milieus in which millions in Europe and North America are rallying behind policies and leaders who invoke a nationalistic, conservative, White, Christian 'We' in opposition to 'illegal aliens,' Muslims, 'radical environmentalists' and 'extremist Aboriginals' (see, e.g., Livesey, 2017). In the context of praxis as "double learning" (Chapter 2) this is relevant, I think, even to justice-oriented discourses that rely on a villainous elite Other. My analysis of the hearings suggests how such narratives can unhelpfully mystify relations of domination (e.g., by individualizing

structural dynamics as “greed”) and further do not disrupt routine conceptual practices of categorization which have all too frequently been directed and/or redirected away from structural practices of power and towards vulnerable, often racialized, people and groups.

Common to each of these three modes of thinking are practices of abstraction through which colonizing logics and practices are disconnected from their marginalizing effects. Each pattern of discursive logic (historically and in the hearings) works to account for both colonizing and marginalizing aspects of so-called development, yet construes these—as in the impression of “parallel worlds”—as somehow unrelated. Especially when read against accounts of complex material dynamics and pressures, many of the hearings’ confusing practices of serial knowing hang together in ideological understanding(s) that, perhaps, stem from and help to reconcile a contradictory awareness of benefits, coercions and injustices.

In particular the narrative of an honourable compromise, a money-go-round ‘flow’ of benefits in which, as one councillor put it “everybody gets a bit” (Coun 9 to Oth 1)—seemed particularly instrumental as a means of conceptually smoothing-over the contradictory truths that were so pervasive throughout the Hearings. The comfortable notion of ‘compromise’ takes up the practico-inert belief—prevalent in the Western world—about “how to resolve disputes between groups over perceived conflicts of interest, aspirations, or access to resources: let each side make its case before a neutral third party, who will objectively decide on a just settlement” (Regan, 2012, p. 89, citing Kahane).

But this storyline functions ideologically to mask or misrepresent the nature of this compromise, which is perhaps best described as a compromise between the material tensions of uniqueness and tradability. The assertion that “everybody gets a bit” in this context requires a limited definition of “everybody,” one that is more or less consistent with a diverse, complicated

collectivity of actors who in some way have a stake in Chinatown's monopoly of place. The idea that "everybody" can participate in this flow of wealth misses how the benefits of revitalization accumulate unevenly to certain place-invested actors, to the City, and to some extent to those (such as middle class condo purchasers) that can afford to buy in. As one speaker stated: "… there is no consensus and no honourable compromise; the low-income community is being asked to make 100 percent of the concessions" (Opp 20). The elusive, entrepreneurial, nature of the HAHR's compromise suggests how democratic and pluralist ideals—e.g., of liberty, egalitarianism and deliberative public debate—can function ideologically to frame thinking within certain horizons that obscure important particularities and derail the pursuit of more structural and/or radical kinds of social change.

This critical attention to relational questions of knowing, choice and responsibility seems particularly important because of how these aspects of struggle are perhaps most likely to be assumed and/or unexamined. In the hearings, pro-revitalization arguments do not convey the impression of willful displacement; there is rather the sense that such effects are enabled more through omission than intent. My reading suggests how injustice is accomplished incrementally, through historical sequences of choices made by an array of differently located actors. Preceding planning dynamics—the creation of the ALR, the new model offered by Woodward's, Metro Core Jobs and Economy land use planning, the flooding of the density bank, the quashing of EcoDensity in wealthy Westside neighbourhoods and an increasing global appetite for Vancouver real estate that was boosted by the 2010 Olympics—combined to produce the seeming requirement for more density in and around Chinatown. This sequential dynamic of the new normal bears a striking resemblance to Gutstein's account of 1950s and 60s freeway planning: Each successive highway proposal, states Gutstein, built on the previous ones, with

“the number and location of freeways becoming more and more fixed in the minds of the City and its hired consultants” (1975, p. 154). Such dynamics evoke Sartre’s account of a thing-centred centred milieu of “technification” in which institutions, professional roles and the requirements of production dictate certain actions, ethics and techniques which do not seem like choices but rather seem, simply, necessary. As praxis becomes richer—involving more and more individuals, more things and more acts through time—the resulting complicated ensemble “gradually reduces the number of possibilities to one” (Hayim, 1980, p. 80).

Attention to the hearings’ implicit narratives of *being* likewise makes audible the pervasive and routine ways in which everyday understandings (e.g., of community and neighbourhood change) can entail dehumanizing impressions of choicelessness. The HAHR’s recurring dynamics of delay and deferral suggest how effects of displacement do not seem to be chosen but are accomplished through state practices of *not doing*—of repeatedly putting off the problem of affordability to later (i.e., to other policies or decisions) or to elsewhere in the city. This pattern further plays out as the issue is deferred to other actors: in City texts that position affordability as an area of provincial jurisdiction (Chapter 5) and (as I describe below) in ongoing dynamics of minimal entitlement through which the challenge of providing affordable units is left to Chinatown’s benevolent organizations. Taken together, policy discourses made visible through the hearings thus resemble Sartre’s characterization of seriality in terms of a field of impersonal “occurrences” in which everyone’s action disappears and is replaced instead by what he termed “process”: sequences of events comprised of “acts with no author” and “ends which no longer belong to anybody” (Sartre, 1960b, pp. 163-164; see also Flynn, 1984, p. 96). For Sartre, these alienating dynamics preserve the status quo by masking our sense of both agency and responsibility and producing, as Wood puts it, “a world in which our actions seem to

come to us from elsewhere—already half made-up and requiring no more than inconsequential additional touches—then to be whisked away to some end either unknown or even reprehensible to ourselves" (1985, p. 41). This reading of injustice-through-deferral suggests how routine processes of development and governance frequently mystify dynamics in the world by mystifying actors' sense of involvement.

Indeed, my analysis emphasized pervasive recurring narratives of subjectlessness as one of the most striking features of Hearing debate. For Sartre, "if material forces appear to be objective or alien to [people]… it is because they have not yet learned to identify the human acts which constitute them" (Hayim, 1980, p. 73). Sartre's thinking further suggests how this learning might not simply be conceptual but also existential. His concept of anguish conveys how full appreciation of the ethical, intersubjective responsibilities associated with ones' choices is accompanied by an often-overwhelming impulse to flee from responsibility. Together with Sartre, de Beauvoir described how this sensation is linked to the uncritical acceptance of authority, or common sense, or ignoring the implications of our choices (de Beauvoir, 1947; Sartre, 1957). In light of the hearings' myriad narratives of subjectless praxis, the concept of anguish is perhaps useful in contexts of activist invitation—underscoring how overwhelming and often deeply painful it is to acknowledge one's own role in pervasive injustices.

What is further interesting is how near-completely opposite accounts of neighbourhood change share in common narratives of powerlessness and alienated knowing much like that expressed within Sartre's theorization of seriality and which is especially illustrated in his account of the Great Fear (see Chapter 2). In Sartre's account of these serial dynamics, everyday experiences of impotence can render actors likely to accept analyses that confirm routine experiences of alterity and threat and which resonate with the sense of being acted upon by

Others. My analysis suggests how the complicated, unpredictable and global nature of urban development renders it difficult to fully grasp, confirm and/or predict how one's actions will play out, as in Sartre's account of the alienating sense that history is being made elsewhere. Estranged from our own freedom, we identify and objectify ourselves as victim—the powerless target of a dangerous unknown being (often a criminal or foreigner) (Sartre, 1960a). In a milieu of scarcity, the sense that one's assets and/or resources are under siege by hostile Others can mean that the construction of gates and fences and the hiring of private security guards are experienced, not as acts of power and antagonism, but as "self-defense." In a world defined by what we possess, Butterfield explains, throwing oneself into one's property can appear as the "preservation of life" (2004, p. 32). This theme within my analysis suggests considerable challenges for justice-oriented solidarity in light of pervasive conditions and practices that culminate in lived knowledges of victimhood, incapacity, inaction and/or uninvolvement. At the same time, historical and ongoing community movements (in Vancouver and elsewhere) have repeatedly demonstrated how such dynamics can be transcended via collective struggle.

9.3 An Ongoing Dialectic: Colonization, Marginalization and Resistance

Confusing dynamics of opposition and connection can further be traced to how what appeared as shared concerns, understandings and aspirations for the neighbourhood repeatedly broke down within questions of practice. My reading of hearing debate makes apparent how the pursuit of human qualities and objectives via routine modes of planning and governance repeatedly played out in a series of complicated and likely unintended trade-offs: Accomplishing some versions of vibrancy, heritage and inclusivity, would entail the erosion of others. Through prevailing logics of revitalization, efforts to achieve such qualities focused on improvements to

buildings, storefronts and streetscapes as a means of attracting tourists and new resident-consumers as "body heat." However, accounts of *preserved buildings as lost community* reflect how these, often publicly-subsidized, improvements to places like the Keefer Suites, Bao Bei restaurant, and the London Pub were instrumental in reproducing neighbourhood space(s) as Zones of Exclusion. As ideals of vibrancy and inclusivity were pursued in accordance with the canonical planning discourse of social mix, existing small businesses offering low income amenities were now competing unsuccessfully with higher-end shops. Via ongoing practices of (re)development and residential intensification, feel-good notions of inclusive balance and diversity were playing out as economic violence.

During the hearings, even as myriad speakers expressed nuanced understanding and appreciation of Chinatown's ongoing history of resilience, enterprise and mutual aid, the policy questions at stake in the hearings meant that discussion of these qualities repeatedly centered on versions of heritage that had value as marketable ingredients of place. The conceptual-material separateness of Chinatown—as reflected in the neighbourhood's mapped borders and built features including its unique architecture and "noticeable" edge—continued to be represented in ways that affirm the neighbourhood's distinctiveness as a tourism-oriented space of consumption. Ongoing efforts to manage Chinatown's legibility as a place of Chinese heritage are not only predicated on problematic relations of racialized dispossession, marginalization and regulation, but also to some extent make use of exotic Otherness as a value-enhancing feature of place. Meanwhile, the hearings' myriad accounts of renoviction, societies' financial hardships, increasing social tension and the closure of low income businesses and gathering spaces suggests how consumption-oriented versions of neighbourhood culture increasingly threaten Chinatown's living culture of mutual aid and collective struggle.

Attention to the lived and material implications of divergent claims thus reveals linkages through which these contrasting realities are not separate but should be grasped in relation. Apparent possibilities for solidarity are thwarted because of how differing policy proposals advance projects of Chinatown that are not only divergent but mutually exclusive. While the HAHR proposals were commonly characterized in terms of the win-win-win promises of vibrancy, heritage and inclusive affordability, hearing debate enables tracing of complex historical and material dynamics through which these hoped-for objectives repeatedly prove incompatible. The entrepreneurial strategizing apparent throughout the hearings indicates how the simultaneous achievement of heritage, vitality and affordability was envisioned to occur through the HAHR's merits as a uniqueness-tradability fix. However, audible assessments of Chinatown's "important" and "unimportant" spaces betray how this entrepreneurial compromise was likely to jeopardize those uses that were neither unique or tradeable—namely, the unprotected affordable units and businesses required by low income residents. Myriad accounts of renoviction and rising rent, together with the City's own policy assessments suggest how deferring the problem of affordability to be dealt with later (in other policies and decisions) and elsewhere in the Downtown Eastside was—in the context of increasing land values and scarcity—rendering the achievement of this policy goal increasingly uncertain.

Earlier efforts to actualize heritage, affordability and vitality via the mixed public-private model of Woodward's had helped to propel a speculative new normal that was now eroding neighbourhood affordability. The innovative mechanism of the density bank had successfully enabled preservation of historic buildings throughout Vancouver, however the subsequent flooding of this bank was now implicated in developers' efforts to assemble Chinatown's historic narrow lots and land the overaccumulated density in tall, dense condominiums. Certain

councillors' repeated concerns to ensure developers would build to maximum heights signal how the uncertain strategy of delivering much-needed amenities through community benefit agreements is predicated on delivering extra profits to developers. This pursuit of social goods through rezoning and associated CACs sets up a further trade-off between heritage and liveability; affordable housing is positioned as merely one possibility in a series of sought-after benefits. Via each of these commonplace strategies, planning efforts to realize the "uneconomic" (Opp 61, Chapter 4) objectives of affordability and heritage preservation *act back* in the form of increased pressure for economically optimal, taller and denser, uses which erode the subsequent likelihood of achieving communal goods.

In the room at City Hall, not visible are the practices of large developers whose concerns are already reflected in the Smart Growth / EcoDensity / HAHR policy process within which this local struggle can be seen to play out. This complex of City-developer praxis is apparent in the hearings mostly as an opaque backdrop of development pressure (or for some, opportunity); yet these extra-local, invisible dynamics had fundamentally structured the conditions of crisis that hearing participants—predominantly local actors—were now required to navigate. With the introduction of the HAHR, earlier, holistic, efforts to address social issues and secure affordable housing became subsumed and deferred in relation to the urgent question of height. In the decade preceding the Hearings, this narrowing of focus coincided with a narrowing of participation: not only low-income concerns, but also low-income people, fell out of planning processes. In the hearings, as particular Councillors work to keep the *unified Chinatown* intact, their practices of *doing community* betray how the entrepreneurial project of Chinatown advanced in the HAHR enacts a project of community from which many low-income residents are excluded.

In my project, the tension between the local *use* versus colonial and entrepreneurial / *exchange* orientation of state praxis becomes especially apparent when traced through the longer critical histories of place which are referenced in hearing debate. A historicized reading signals the continuation of historical, racialized, state and capitalist projects through which Chinatown has continued to be rearranged and re-oriented as a space of investment and consumption. The HAHR's practices of delineation and designation, as spatialized pronouncements of *what counts*, enabled a complex series of deferrals through which local, low-income priorities and spaces were subordinated to entrepreneurial ones. Such dynamics, my reading suggests, entail trade-offs: between material gains for some and deprivation for others, and between qualities of neighbourhood life that could be commodified and those which could not.

In this way, Hearing debate can be read to explore how the twin logics of colonization-marginalization are not only historical but an ongoing dynamic which is underwritten by discursive practices apparent during the Hearings. The policies that emerged through the HAHR's decade of process offer uncertain amenities and/or resources for heritage preservation, but fail to include any substantive affordability protections. In the context of the hearings, the important truths of Chinatown's historical, compelled, 'self-sufficiency' are thus ironically taken up by certain Councillors and HAHR supporters to legitimize the continuation of a pattern that Anderson (1991) has termed "minimal entitlement": Chinatown's benevolent societies and associations are once again expected to provide for the housing needs of the neighbourhood's most vulnerable residents and to somehow continue these unprofitable endeavours within conditions of rising costs and development pressure. Read in this light, dynamics audible within the Hearings begin to suggest how the line between the important recognition and problematic exploitation of neighbourhood history is perhaps very thin.

9.3.1 Forging resistance through shared projects

The reading that emerges through my analysis thus extends many presenters' compelling invitations to acknowledge how routine modes of pursuing human needs through the market are utterly inadequate as a means of achieving collective social wellbeing. This suggests that pursuit of socially just forms of development must more fundamentally challenge capitalist development logics, and must be collective endeavors if this is to be realized. As a measure of public discourse, the hearings reflect a need to build popular awareness and social pressure to prevent and dismantle processes through which social uses and goods have been eroded in favour of those oriented to profit. This raises the question: What approaches to pedagogy and organizing might be required to realize conditions in which non-profit and social uses might expand or gain ground—even literally—in relation to private, speculative uses?

Broadly, the hearings' recurring dynamic of trade-off suggest activist pedagogies should invite scrutiny of routine modes of praxis through which pursuit of human qualities and values is hemmed in by what seems practicable within the market. Much hearing discourse evokes critical theorizations of the *common sense* through which capitalist logics together with other modes of domination, are uncritically absorbed, appearing as 'natural' courses of action (see Carroll, 1997, after Gramsci). Montgomery underscores the often-overlooked ways in which capitalism "penetrates into subjectivity, ensuring that affects and habits are channelled into circuits of capitalist production and consumption" (2010, p. 165). Sartre likewise stressed how status quo circumstances prescribe limits to one's field of action, restricting the choices which lie open to people and producing exigencies that even condition one's thoughts: "our attitude toward the possible and the impossible... the real and the imaginary, what is and what should be, space and

time...” (Sartre, 1952 as cited in Flynn, 1984, p. 79). One presenter’s critical assertion that “middle class presence in the neighbourhood” could “be accomplished by raising the standard of living of people who *live* in the neighbourhood” (Opp 56, Chapter 6) was so striking because it made visible political possibilities that are unseen within techniques of body heat and social mix that fail to transcend capital’s reductive versions of human capacity. Further, accounts of earlier “difference” and one speaker’s characterization of support for the HAHR as a “last resort decision” (Supp 4, Opp 34; in Chapter 8) strengthen impressions of the hearings’ character as a field of restricted choice.

While specific policy prescriptions are outside the purview of this project, my study of hearing discourse has nonetheless enabled tracing of certain political-economic logics that seem particularly important to discern and disrupt. These include, for instance, recurring practices of deferral and minimal entitlement. Significantly, my study suggests the value of scrutinizing dynamics of colonization and marginalization through which questions of local *use* are repeatedly supordinated to entrepreneurial *exchange*. This pattern of historical tension has contemporary relevance, I think, in the context of contemporary local and national debates regarding housing affordability. There is need for justice-oriented pedagogies to challenge narratives of ‘invasion’ by wealthy foreign (usually racialized Chinese) investor-Others. Instead, scrutiny of the state-facilitated orientation of housing production as a commodity for global exchange—versus a good for local use—seems like an important line of analysis to pursue.

Present-day struggles over Chinatown’s redevelopment seem to be playing out along these lines. Coalitions of youth activists, heritage groups, seniors, residents and family socieities are building analyses, demands, and projects that (as in the refrain of “living heritage”) are clearly oriented towards the protection and enhancement of local uses in the face of pressures for

commodification. Central to these efforts has been a focus on the needs of low-income Chinese-speaking seniors. Following extensive, participatory efforts at developing a *People's Vision* for Chinatown (see Chinatown Action Group & Chinatown Concern Group, 2017), local resident and youth-led groups are pushing for 105 Keefer to be redeveloped for low-income seniors' housing and community gathering space. Low-income businesses and family associations are publicly speaking out about the economic pressures accompanying new development. Community campaigns and initiatives reflect concern for loss of traditional businesses, as well as calls to reinstate the affordable Chinatown's night market. These community efforts have succeded in pressing the City to begin investigating strategies for rentention of Chinatown's traditional stores. The City's Chinatown development policy review is also recommending to rescind the use of CACs to achieve community benefits, citing public feedback about the benefits received being "not worth" the impacts on local character (*Chinatown Development Policy Changes - progress update from staff to community*, 2017, p. 1). These initiatives reflect concerted grassroots efforts to reject money-go-round versions of revitalization in favour of a clear analysis of, and work towards, inclusive and local use-oriented versions of community development and culture.

Related to this, are critical questions about the state as a field of praxis and politics. Alternate histories offered during the hearings especially complicate impressions of the HAHR as a democratic exercise in mediating between local groups with differing ideas about how to address neighbourhood conditions. The logics of public hearings shape expectations that Councillors would ultimately decide either for or against the HAHR proposals, ostensibly by weighing the different sides of the issue put forward by speakers. But as my analysis developed, I increasingly grasped how this weighing was more concrete—there was a *weightier* weighing—

than I had initially imagined. The more I explored the interplay between historical and material dynamics together with the subjective interventions of various councillors, the more I grasped how not only certain speakers but also the municipal state were heavily invested—both materially and politically—in the "compromise" laid out within the HAHR.

In contrast to widespread poplar associations between democratic institutions and ideals of liberty, pluralism, fairness and equality (see Environics Institute & Institute on Governance, 2014), this thread of my analysis thus begins to probe the complicated qualities of the municipal state as political, cultural and social terrain that is not simply a backdrop to struggle, but also a product and instrument of injustice. It underscores the need to ask: What does public process *do* in a given context of struggle? What does it make possible, obscure, deny and for whom? Through hearing debate, the City can be understood to play myriad and sometimes contradictory roles that are not limited to consultation and representation of local citizens, or the provision of public goods. Municipal planners indeed acted to inform, solicit and respond to community feedback in ways that may have significantly compromised the high-density aspirations of large developers—for example, in the case of planners' choice to "put everything on the table for public comment" (Chapter 8). However, my analysis highlights how such practices are limited by the state's character as a corporate entity and speculative development actor.

The broader questions sparked by these insights pose challenges to those who would argue against popular and direct modes of resistance such as protest, (re)occupation of community spaces, blockades and other forms of land defense, based on the idea that justice is best meted out via existing arrangements of 'due process' and respect for rule of law. At the same time, while my analysis draws attention to the limiting qualities of the hearings (and the HAHR process more broadly), it also underscores the significance of municipal politics as a field

of praxis. The historical dimensions of my analysis especially make visible the considerable power and influence of local authorities with respect to the arrangement and making of local spaces, with concomitant implications for local people. This suggests that neither can the terrain of state praxis be simply avoided or ignored. At the very least, what seems possible and important are activist invitations to critical awareness and (un)learning regarding the assumptions, practices and functions of liberal democracy, particularly as these have played out in relation to relations of, *inter alia*, colonialism, white supremacy and capital. The building of communal projects and alliances—as in contemporary Chinatown organizing—seems like an important corrective in this regard.

This dynamic of the HAHR struggle makes audible how concepts and ideals can become disconnected from the human-oriented experiences and projects through which they were envisioned, interpreted through the constraints of the market and—as in Sartre's thinking and Day's (2004) discussion of "empty signifiers"—can even be deployed in service of projects which thwart the human ends in which they were originally rooted. This dynamic underscores how questions of solidarity cannot be resolved in the realm of ideas and/or through practices of dialogue or recognition in the context of ongoing dispossession and injustice (see Coulthard, 2014). For Martin Luther King Jr., such practices were symptomatic of a "negative peace," which was "more devoted to 'order' than to justice" (1963, p. 8). In the end, my reading of hearing debate likewise suggests there was little room to work together in the context of policy projects that were—despite being conveyed in similar terms, e.g., of heritage, community and health—in practice mutually exclusive. This aspect of my analysis suggests the value of activist pedagogies that invite critical, reflexive attention to disconnects between ideas and practice, as in

Ahmed's (2012) efforts to 'follow" discourses and concepts "around." Chinatown's ongoing community movement offers a hopeful view of this kind of critical and practical analysis.

Magnussen observes how social struggle is often conveyed and/or conceptualized as occurring in relation to "a fixed point, surface, or object": When we talk of "'social' movements, we are apparently assuming that they occur in relation to a comparatively stable frame, environment, or structure" (1997, p. 77). The trajectory of my analysis has been to destablize this status quo surface, rendering the background dynamics of historical, social, material and structural relations as the subject of my analysis. This relational reading repeatedly functioned to shift the focus of my critique away from the momentary positions (ie., of in support, or opposed) adopted in the limited context of the hearings and towards the relational conditions in and through which these opposed positions could be said to have been made. This focus on circumstance has also offered insight into subjectivity and contingency. While my initial perception was of the hearings as primarily about differently-located actors in struggle with one another, this increasingly shifted to consider how these dynamics of opposition might have emerged in the course of multiple struggles against circumstances of unfulfilled need, as marked by widely-shared experiences of scarcity, uncertainty and minimal entitlement.

This grasp of neighbourhood conflict as, not natural, but *made*, suggests that it can also be unmade. The invitation taken up and extended through this work resembles a shift in gaze away from looking with suspicion at Others and towards looking critically at the world together. Particularly for those of us whose experiences of the world are mediated by conditions of considerable privilege, this looking-outward requires readiness to face the anguish of encountering ourselves.

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