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Urban Planning and Capitalist Power Dynamics:

A Canadian Perspective

by

Nicole Sharma

B.A. Carleton University 1992

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Canadian Studies

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A Canadian Perspective"

submitted by Nicole P. Sharma, B.A. Hons., Q. Yr.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the role played by capitalist power dynamics in the planning of Canadian cities and is therefore focused on urban social relationships. To maintain manageability, one segment was chosen to represent each of three groups which influence urban development: the middle class was chosen for the public, developers for the private sector, and urban planners for the public sector. The power relationships among the three segments was studied subsequent to an analysis of the history of capitalist power seeking for each.

The effect of a capitalist drive for power on urban morphology is significant and a research methodology which explores urban power relationships is a valuable tool which, when combined with conventional hermeneutical inquiries can provide a more holistic understanding of the processes at play in urban development. It is argued that such a broadening of urban scholarship is necessary because it shows that there is little real support, on any level, for community planning - currently the popular solution to urban problems.

It is noted that power seeking, while largely ignored in urban power research, has a significant effect on urban morphology as much by an absence of development as by development itself. It is inaccurate to solely blame elites for Canada's urban problems since the capitalist power dynamic guides everyone to seek power and to exert power to their own ends. Non-elites often influence urban development. The study of the interplay of power relationships provides a clue as to how and why urban development

takes place by allowing an understanding of the social and political forces competing for individual and group self interests.

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INTRODUCTION

The built environment, despite its solid appearance, is dynamic rather than static. It is in a constant state of change. But the main point is that changes in the built environment are initiated only after much forethought and careful calculation about the costs involved and the benefits to be derived - whether these are expected to be in terms of financial accumulation, personal utility or possible 'public benefit'.

[E]ven the most cursory examination of a 'socialist' city, say East Berlin before 1989, reveals mixed land uses in the central areas, with a strong presence of residential use. In other words the pattern regarded as 'natural' in the West is no such thing - it is polemically and financially fashioned by the interplay of largely profit-seeking forces in the land market.²

This thesis adds to the body of literature on Canadian urban planning by suggesting a new framework for analyzing the city. It is about the impact of capitalist power dynamics impact on the planning process and on urban development. The intention is to create an awareness and understanding of particular forces working within urban environments; it does not extend to exploring interventions which may alleviate such forces.

Urban environments can be viewed from a variety of perspectives depending on the issues of interest and the hermeneutical questions asked. In this work, the city is conceived as an arena for social relationships and it is the nature of these relationships and their effect on the urban environment which is studied.

The physical evidence left by these relationships is examined but is not focused upon in great detail because the implications of social relationships hinge on a process by which urban residents promote, remain ambivalent about, or resist development. Much of this process leaves no physical trace in the built environment but the absence of

¹ Peter Ambrose, *Urban Process and Power* (London: Routledge, 1994), 5-6.

² Ibid., 7

development has a significant impact on the nature of a city. A research study which focuses on the tie between social relationships and urban environments can be complicated but it also confirms that cities are complex and warrant a multiplicity of research methodologies if a more complete story is to be told.

Since they take place within a corporate capitalist system, the social relationships in question are based on power dynamics. The foundation of capitalist society on a power dynamic of inequality has always been paradoxical to the modern practice of urban planning which, since its inception in the nineteenth century, has had the mandate to improve the social environment of urbanites.

In recent decades, the trend towards community planning has made the uneasy marriage between capitalist power relationships and urban development especially problematic. While there has recently been a plethora of criticism of modern planning practices including reform planning, most critical reformers remain staunchly convinced that community planning is viable. They tend to lament the collusion of urban planners with private interests as a major reason for the lack of real support for empowerment. But the extent of and real reason behind the lack of support and the collusion has, for the most part, been ignored.

This thesis shows that there is little real support, on any level, for empowerment efforts since the system which so strongly affects Canadian ideology, corporate capitalism, has an inherent power-over logic which forces a drive for power on Canadians. A focus on the search for power among all urban sectors, rather than just on power held by elites, can illuminate not only why development takes place but why

development doesn't take place or why there may be resistance to development providing a more complete understanding of urban morphology.

The methodology of such a focus is complicated and the sources of information are varied but there are numerous illustrations of the impact of power relationships on the tangible form of a city. Urban renewal projects of the 1960s are rife with examples of development occurring despite resistance or of development being blocked by resistance. The location of public housing and other urban necessities often perceived as undesirable by the middle class is an ongoing area of resistance to proposed planning.

The practice of 'block-busting' where developers deliberately run-down their properties to make an area undesirable and force remaining owners to sell (to them) rarely leaves any physical trace of the phenomenon after the fact despite the significant struggle for power which occurs in the process. Like gentrification, which is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3, block-busting is not addressed by urban planning controls such as zoning. An understanding of the multitude of phenomena at play in an urban environment is necessary to making effective changes and for this reason, the methodology proposed in this thesis is seen by the author to add to the tools which can be used to understand urban environments more fully.

According to Karl Marx, capitalist power is inevitable and arises from the coming together of political and economic forces for the pursuit of corporate capitalist ends. The power system established by the corporate capitalist system, however, assigns the same pursuit to all of its members, including the public.*

* In this thesis, the term "the public" is used to encompass a collection of (possibly competing) subgroups rather than a homogeneous entity

It is a misguided effort to blame elites, whether they be individuals, governments or private interests, for urban problems. In the current system, everyone is guided by a search for power so replacing elites will simply create new ones. It is inaccurate to assign an altruistic nature to those groups who currently hold less power since they are equally lured to seek power within the system."

The purpose of this thesis is to set out the fundamental difficulties facing the activity of urban planning by showing that urban players are guided by ideologies which are antithetical to the proffered goals of modern urban planning. The process of urban planning is carried out by the realization of a vision, set out in a theory, by way of planning tools. For Ebenezer Howard, the father of the garden city, the vision was of a utopia set out in a theory of man's reconciliation with nature and implemented through a non-profit corporation. Today, the vision is of 'healthy neighbourhoods' set out in a theory of increased community autonomy and empowerment and implemented through cooperative decision-making and management between planners and residents.

Corporate capitalism as it exists in Canada insinuates a power dynamic which precludes sharing and cooperation, qualities necessary for community planning. Many urban critics have worked on the premise that identification of urban problems will allow solutions to emerge. An approach which hinges urban planning on power dynamics arising from an ingrained ideological system begins to show that mere identification will not be enough to effectuate real changes.

"It is for this reason that the term "community," in this thesis, is used to mean a co-existence of various diverse interest groups.

In the introduction to his M.A. Thesis, Alexander F. Cross writes of the Canadian built environment that its "creation has been consigned by society, largely, to chance, to the vagaries of popular taste and to those whose main motivation has been the accumulation of personal profits."¹ Development, it is true, has been effected by popular taste and profit seeking interests. But it has not been consigned to chance, a fact that is revealed by an urban analysis focused on power-seeking as a motive.

A detailed exploration of urban power dynamics cannot provide a complete picture of urbanity but it can broaden the understanding of urban development^{***} so that even the presumable caprice of popular fashions can be understood to have a logic which must be addressed if the goal is to execute change.

And while there is sufficient evidence to support the notion that profit seeking elites largely determine the outward form of Canada's cities, it is only by realizing that the power dynamic acts on everyone within the system that it becomes clear that the relationships going on within the city are extremely complex, that elites are often bounded by 'powerless' groups as well as by other competing elites and that a reformation of urban development practices would be remarkably difficult .

METHODOLOGY

The modern practice of urban planning was borne out of a nineteenth-century reform movement which sought to alleviate the noxious urban conditions which grew out

¹ Alexander F. Cross, "Built for Profit: Sources of Form in the Canadian Residential Built Environment, 1900-1960" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1994), 1.

^{***} In this thesis, the term "development" means both tangible and intangible change. Urban development is most often thought of as a physical change but within the context of urban social relationships, significant development can occur with minimal physical evidence.

of the Industrial Revolution. The amelioration of city living had two main methodologies: aesthetic improvements and social reform. The focus of this thesis is on the social reform aspects of urban planning since these provide the most logical basis for an exploration of urban social relationships.

The juxtaposition within the thesis, of urban planning and capitalism, provides a logical focus on Canadian corporate capitalism which began to emerge during the mass industrialization of the nineteenth century in tandem with the profession of urban planning.

Urban planning is an endeavor which involves three sets of people: the private sector, the public sector and society. Because of the broad nature of the subject, a representative group has been chosen for each set--developers for the private sector, urban planners for the public sector and the middle class for society. Power as a motivating factor is the framework for exploring the effect which corporate capitalism has had historically on each group. The interplay of power seeking between the three groups is then explored with respect to its effect on the activity of urban planning.

The exploration of the essence of modern corporate capitalism is not written from a Marxist or a capitalist perspective although it borrows from Marxist and capitalist theory. It is an attempt to look clearly at today's Canadian capitalism as it pertains to urban residents with the hope that this insight will allow a nascent understanding of processes acting upon the urban fabric.

Because of the relational character of this thesis, a linear and progressive methodology has not been adopted. Given the web-like nature of the subject, many of the

ideas explored in this work can effectively be placed in a variety of locations within the work. In an attempt to avoid extensive repetition, passages have been placed where they seem to have most relevance. Where information which may seem amiss is provided further in the thesis, a reference has been made to the chapter in which the upcoming information will be found.

SCOPE

Because the capitalist system is the mainstream ideological system in place across the country, this thesis has a national scope although it may be of less relevance in some urban pockets where there is a strong ideology acting as a counterbalance to the capitalist power dynamic.

The emergence and ongoing nature of corporate capitalism and urban planning ideology as a result of nineteenth-century industrialization and urbanization has made the temporal scope of this thesis largely based on nineteenth and twentieth century phenomena.

The future physical development of Canadian cities may proceed in a variety of ways, but community planning, as espoused by urban reformers, will only be possible if current power dynamics are counterbalanced or set aside. It is not within the scope of this work to recommend the viability of such a task or to suggest alternative methodologies for urban planning. Let it be said, however, that even if an extrication from current power dynamics is possible, it will be an extremely daunting task given the strength of the corporate capitalist barriers against that goal.

SOURCES

This thesis is based on secondary sources from a variety of disciplines including economic theory, urban history and urban criticism. Primary sources are used in Chapter 3 in the form of books authored by influential planners. These comprise both written and visual theories useful in exploring relevant planning philosophies.

Because this thesis explores urban development in Canada, every attempt has been made to use Canadian sources. While the body of theoretical and historical literature in the urban and economic domains is relatively paltry compared to American or British sources, it is sufficient to determine the parallels and contrasts between Canadian and foreign urban development.

Many facets of Canadian urban planning were influenced directly by foreign theories and practices, and Canadian corporate capitalism is strongly tied to international markets. A working bibliography of relevant foreign sources therefore proved to be a useful tool for exploring the hybridization of foreign influences on urban power dynamics in this country. American sources were especially relevant in exploring the rise of the middle class in North America and the suburbanization of the continent. British sources were used extensively in Chapter 3 because of the strong impact of British planning practices in Canada.

If the Canadian built urban environment is very similar to the American, the urban processes are a unique Canadian blend resulting from power seeking relationships between the public, the government and the private sector. It is for this reason that the sources used to explore power relationships are almost exclusively Canadian.

CHAPTER 1

CAPITALISM

Capitalism is a major economic regime and an extremely prevalent organizational system. However, it is an often misunderstood and ill defined term. The word capitalism conjures up a complex set of associations which are not necessarily mutually dependent. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly trace the history of capitalism *as it applies to this thesis* and to explore the nature of capitalism so that its role as the underpinning of modern Canadian society can be understood.

Capitalism, affected by temporal, ideological, and geographical influences - among others - is extremely adaptable. "(M)any forms have existed through space and over time," according to Peter Hugill, an author on the history of world trade, and, "many forms can coexist in a given place at a given time."¹

To relate capitalism to any study of cultural phenomena it is necessary to understand the particular form of capitalism which is cogent to the society and to explore its parameters. This permits an understanding of the regime and its relationship to various other ideological frameworks. The chosen methodology of this dissertation is based on an historical, rather than a cross-cultural, analysis: it is the introduction and growth of the capitalist system in Europe and its importation to North America which is of interest rather than a comparison of Canadian capitalism to other current systems.

¹ Peter J. Hugill, *World Trade since 1431: Geography, Technology, and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xviii.

It is assumed that the reader has a basic understanding of the notion of capitalism as a system dedicated to the pursuit of surplus wealth. The nature of capitalism, theory and reality, will be explored later in this chapter but it is necessary to first provide a means of differentiating capitalism from pre-capitalism so that economic progression in the Western world can be understood.

HISTORY

Pre-capitalist regimes* are often likened to capitalist ones based on the evidence of accumulation of goods extra to requirements. But the use of these amassed goods by such economic systems differs significantly from the capitalist use of surplus wealth.

In pre-capitalist societies, an overabundance of goods was regularly stockpiled to protect against upcoming crises; a surplus of grains may have been stored against future droughts or ammunitions may have been hoarded to protect against future enemy attacks. Such surpluses were in fact hardly 'extra' since they were almost sure to be used in the near future and were merely put aside as the result of a forecasting of a supply of goods which would be needed at a time when it couldn't, for whatever reasons, be produced.

Surpluses in such societies were also often exchanged for luxury goods which served as a status symbol and a show of power. Here, the surpluses were an end unto themselves and, barring some financial crisis, remained with the owner. In these societies, bartering

*For the purpose of this chapter, "precapitalism" is defined as a Western economic system which developed into capitalism and which is now defunct.

of goods was the main form of financial transaction. There was, therefore, a physical limit as to how much surplus wealth, in the form of goods, could be accumulated.²

The need to create surpluses became a means rather than an end with the birth of merchant capitalism in fifteenth-century Europe. The new economic forum was based on a trade relationship between Europe and the rest of the world. Europe was able to trade for goods which were highly valued in the West in exchange for what it considered to be relatively paltry sums.

In *Violence and Democratic Society*, Jamil Salmi writes that, "For the strong nations of that time, namely Spain, Portugal, France, England and The Netherlands, economic life was ultimately linked to the precious mineral ores from Latin America, the sugar from the Caribbean islands, the 'ebony flesh' from Africa, and the spices of Asia."³ He emphasizes the uneven nature of the relationship when he states that, "It is important to underline that these commercial profits were not the result of free trade between equal partners," since, "the profits would never have come about without the almost systematic use of brutal force, as the story of each one of the products mentioned earlier reveals."⁴

This unbalanced exchange allowed for the rapid accumulation of wealth by those Europeans who had enough capital to invest in the resources needed for international trade. The profits made were reinvested to allow for further exploitation of the market. The quest for increased capital had become *perpetual*.

² Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 34-5.

³ Jamil Salmi, *Violence and Democratic Society: New Approaches to Human Rights* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

The new economic system was gaining popularity among Europe's power holders but there was an ideological stumbling block which conferred ill-repute and moral unease, as well as riches, upon the beneficiaries of capitalism. At this time, avarice was abhorred as a vice which resulted in the misery of others. The negative view of acquisitiveness was a common element in pre-capitalist societies.⁵ However, in early capitalist Christianity, its loathing was extreme. In *The Passions and the Interests*, Albert Hirschman writes that in "the numerous treatises on the passions that appeared in the seventeenth century no change whatever can be found in the assessment of avarice as 'the foulest of them all' or in its position as the deadliest Deadly Sin that it had come to occupy toward the end of the Middle Ages."⁶

The rampant success of capitalism became widely acceptable only when a shift in ideology came to Britain and much of Europe in the late eighteenth century. At this time, the work of philosophers and theologians began to effectuate a shift in belief from the loathsomeness of avarice to its productive necessity and steadying powers. Two movements supporting acquisitiveness, one resting on 'scientific' methodology and the other on a reinterpretation of scriptures, were intertwined and mutually fulfilled the goal of the new and would-be capitalists:

The very possibility of such a science itself implies that acquisitive behavior has lost its connection with the unruly passions and has come to be regarded as a steady principle of human "motion," capable of measurement and restraint. The ideological aspect of the new science emerges, however, when we inquire into the purpose of political economy

⁵ Heilbroner, 109.

⁶ Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 41.

... [I]t is an explanation of how the commercial or nascent industrial system works, *from the point of view of the ruling class*.⁷

Adam Smith offered a relatively cautious justification of the merit of avarice. He believed that wealth and power were contrived to produce comfort. Such riches, "in spite of all our care, are ready every moment to burst into pieces, and to crush in their ruins their unfortunate possessor."⁸ Surprisingly Smith didn't rail against this dangerous accumulation but argued that it was God's way, through nature (he later called it the 'Invisible Hand'), of preventing man's idleness: "it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind."⁹

John Locke, in the famous chapter entitled "Of Property" to be found in his *Second Treatise of Government*, argued that ever increasing accumulation of capital increased the standard of living of the worker since it increased the amount and nature of goods available for purchase. Like Smith, Locke supported the ethic of hard work caused by the need to accumulate capital. He felt that this was in keeping with Christian scriptures and teachings.

Arguments like, "he that leaves as much as another can make use of, does as good as take nothing at all"¹⁰ are problematic with respect to modern issues such as ecological degradation. But it is not the validity of Locke's (or other philosophers') arguments that

⁷ Heilbroner, 110-1.

⁸ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 182.

⁹ Ibid., 183.

¹⁰ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Richard H. Cox (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 21.

is of interest here: it is the importance of the work to the success of the ideology of acquisition which must be recognized.

With the aforementioned shift in ideology came the possibility for the universal European acceptance of a system which allowed a small elite to benefit at the expense of the masses. In the nineteenth century, two separate developments which had begun in the eighteenth century gathered force and were used in Europe to gain domination of the world economy. It was England which was most successful with both geographical expansion and technological progress:

[T]he 19th century was a period of consolidation and development during which Britain asserted itself as the first world economic power. But here again, economic expansion was not built exclusively on the resources of the British islands, nor on the achievements of industrialisation; it was closely linked to the policy of imperialist expansionism followed during that time.¹¹

The Industrial Revolution was the first real introduction of the capitalist regime to the greater European society. Although England generally provides the clearest examples of various aspects of life at this time, its history is representative of what was happening in other countries in which rapid industrialization and capitalist gain occurred.

It was the creation of cheap labour that allowed the capitalists to make huge profits. But even though major social benefits were expected from the new technological advances, the actual monetary wages of the workers fell dramatically and as a corollary many aspects of their standard of living were greatly reduced. Some improvements have been recorded by researchers but as E.K. Hunt writes, in *Property and Prophets*, "There can be no doubt that industrial capitalism was erected on the base of the wretched

¹¹ Salmi, 32.

suffering of a laboring class denied access to the fruits of the rapidly expanding economy and subjected to the most degrading of excesses in order to increase the capitalists' profits."¹²

The intense hardships suffered by the populace were the result not only of financial impoverishment, but also of reduced creativity in the workplace, obsolescence of certain trades and relocation and social change resulting from mass urbanization.

These hardships were distributed globally by the geographic expansion which accompanied the Industrial Revolution. As in the time of merchant capitalism, many of the commodities produced in the colonies during this period came at the expense of cheap or slave labour:

While the Empire has undoubtedly made England rich and powerful, the contrary is not true. . . . Besides the systematic use of direct violence in the context of so-called 'pacification wars', without which the Empire would have never come into being, all the other forms of indirect violence which have resulted from colonialism must also be taken into account when evaluating the human cost of British economic development.¹³

The eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries were thus characterized by the exploitation of the general society both in Europe and in the countries encompassed into its empires. This exploitation led to the personal financial gains of an elite class and a filling of state coffers.

The proletariat of this time was geographically divided into two factions despite similar plights. There was a growing concern about the deplorable situation of the European workers but the oppression which was occurring in the colonies was ignored.

¹² E.K. Hunt, *Property and Prophets: The Evolution of Economic Institutions and Ideologies*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 52.

¹³ Salmi, 33.

This oppression of foreign workers remained a non-issue for many years due to the ease with which foreign discontentment was suppressed. The situation in England and in the rest of Europe was different.

Adam Smith had assumed that the Industrial Revolution would have a dual effect: the living standards of workers would be raised but the extreme drudgery of their work lives would lead to their stupidity.¹⁴ Despite conflicting data, it has already been shown that the wages of the workers of the time improved marginally at best but generally fell significantly. Heilbroner elaborates on Smith's posterior assumption:

Smith's second and more significant error was his expectation that the working class would lose its "martial spirit" as well as its acumen, and would be reduced to a state of apathetic ignorance. That was not in fact the outcome. It was not apathy but anger that grew within the proletariat."¹⁵

This infuriation of the populace had a strong impact on the ideological power of capitalism in Europe and led to a capitalist system tempered by cynicism.

The rise of socialism in Europe and Asia had a further ideological impact on the type of capitalism which evolved in post-Industrial Revolution Europe. Socialism became intertwined with capitalism in Europe as a result of the debate between the dominant capitalist system and the significant socialist voice. In fact, "socialist systems of belief posed a direct challenge to the very principle of the regime of capital."¹⁶ according to Heilbroner. Much of the European bourgeoisie was understandably suspicious of the

¹⁴ Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 781-2

¹⁵ Heilbroner, 158.

¹⁶ Ibid., 168-9.

working classes and granted social benefits grudgingly to reduce antagonism but even these weren't enough to ensure support of the system.¹⁷

Some of the bourgeoisie felt a genuine commitment to raising the proletariat out of their squalor. Utopian and idealistic reform movements were especially popular in England where their theoretical doctrines were often put into practice. A sympathetic attitude towards the poor and disadvantaged was created out of the belief that these groups were childlike and in need of protection, both from themselves and from 'the system'.

In America, mechanization and industrialization also had a negative financial impact on the lives of workers. However, this effect was felt much less than in Britain and the rest of Europe. According to Hugill, "America was by no means a classless society, but upward social mobility was far easier than in Britain or France. The social forces of production were thus good," although, "the cost of labor was far higher than in Europe, population being scarce and wages very high."¹⁸ Those wages, despite a drop, remained relatively high. This was one reason that capitalism was viewed with much less cynicism in America than in Europe and that socialism was a non-threat to the system.

The rise of a group of capitalists who had come to America in the same poor financial state as other workers created an arena of hope and a sense of admiration for the elite. This hopeful populist belief in the capitalist system characterized what came to be known as the American Dream and was the other reason that the growth of the capitalist system in the United States was largely unbounded.

¹⁷ Ibid., 169.

¹⁸ Hugill, 27.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the overwhelming industrialization which had begun in the first half of the century continued but now the actual incomes and political gains of workers throughout the capitalist world increased. Mass production, coupled with the relative wealth of workers signaled an era of prosperity which continued into the beginning of the twentieth century.

This prosperity was especially evident in the United States where mass production technologies were most advanced. "Thus the political and ideological logic of American capitalism reflected its successful economic logic," and, according to Heilbroner, it was this economic success which "was able to draw support from the allegiance of its working classes."¹⁹

The allegiance of the working class was not the only result of the high wages and America's economic growth. Concentrated economic power began to show itself:

Improvements in technology were such that larger-sized plants were necessary to take advantage of more efficient methods of production. Competition became so aggressive and destructive that small competitors were eliminated. Large competitors, facing mutual destruction, often combined in cartels, trusts, or mergers in order to ensure their mutual survival. In the United States this competition was particularly intense.²⁰

In the United States, rapid industrialization had been necessary to support the Civil War and was thus encouraged by law. Of equal significance was the Fourteenth Amendment to the American Constitution (1868) which included a clause disallowing state governments (without due process of the law) from withdrawing from anyone, life, liberty or *property*. While this clause was meant to protect the civil rights of Americans,

¹⁹ Heilbroner, 168.

²⁰ Hunt, 98.

particularly Blacks, it was used extensively by corporations to obstruct the passing of legislation to regulate excessive control by corporate America. By 1900, America had overtaken England as the world's leading industrial power.²¹

The extreme concentration of corporate power in the United States was the first example of a phenomenon that became a trend among capitalist countries. The twentieth century has been characterized by the destruction or absorption of small companies and the concentration of income in the hands of fewer and fewer elites. European pre-capitalism has moved through the stages of imperialist capitalism, industrial capitalism and imperialist expansionism to arrive at its current station - international corporate capitalism.

How does the Canadian system fit into the historical trajectory of European and North American capitalism as outlined above? It would seem that the ideological system in Canada is a unique blend arising mainly from British and American influences.

The British influence is due to the fact that the founding capitalist elites of this country, overwhelmingly English, used their positions of power to effect ideological sway over the broader population. In *The Vertical Mosaic*, John Porter examines the 1951 *Census of Canada* and finds that:

[E]conomic power belongs almost exclusively to those of British origin, even though this ethnic group made up less than half of the population in 1951. The fact that economic development in Canada has been in the hands of British Canadians has long been recognized by historians. Of the 760 persons in the economic elite, only 51 (6.7 per cent) could be classified as French Canadian although the French made up about one-third of the population in 1951.²²

²¹ Ibid., 99-100.

²² John Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 286.

The American domination of Canada comes from the geographic relationship between the two countries, the imbalance in relative populations, the intamous lack of Canadian identity, and the might (political, economic, ideological) of the United States. Canada has been a successful market for American capitalists: increasing trade with minimal effort.

Canada was founded as a capitalist democracy and has existed in this form since Confederation. Pre-Confederation, this country was established as a French and later an English colony and the economy in Upper and Lower Canada was meant to bolster the parent economy. This was done through the extraction of natural resources which were shipped 'home' to be processed and sold. The Canadian economy therefore was based on French and then British demand for raw materials and became "caught in a 'staples trap' — in good times when there was capital, there was no will to invest, and in bad times there was not sufficient capital to diversify."²³

During the period of French rule in Canada, capitalism was based greatly on trade (knowledge, land and resources in exchange for money and goods) with Native peoples. It is an accepted fact that the trade was uneven and that the Native groups were exploited but it is also true that the French traders of the time suffered great hardships because of the lifestyle which their profits demanded.

When New France came under British rule in 1763, a rudimentary system of trade and transportation was already established in what is now Quebec. A situation existed

²³ Leo Driedger, *The Urban Factor. Sociology of Canadian Cities* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1991), 165.

which allowed people of means to profit financially by developing existing frameworks through the injection of capital. The early days of British rule produced an elite which benefited from the particular circumstances they discovered here.

An influx of British Empire Loyalists from the United States into Upper Canada in the second half of the eighteenth century strengthened British power and influence in Canada encouraging westward expansion and settlement of what is now Ontario. The settlement of the country by means of a trans-national railway encouraged the large-scale industrialization and urbanization of Canada to occur towards the end of the nineteenth century.²⁴

Canada, although perceived as an egalitarian society, has been historically marked by elites and power differences. In 1965, John Porter wrote that, "The picture sometimes presented of 'every man a capitalist' or of 'people's capitalism' is scarcely borne out" since "it is clear that a good measure of control rests with the small group of very rich, or in some cases with their representatives."²⁵

"Despite its past history of an economy based on staples, Canada has developed manufacturing . . . Modern technological developments have accelerated in Canada since the 1950s, and giant corporations have become concentrated,"²⁶ so the research into Canadian capitalism and its history supports the statement that Canada, like other modern capitalist states, currently exists in a system of corporate capitalism.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Porter, 118.

²⁶ Driedger, 166-7.

CAPITAL

Strictly speaking, capital is the collection of material wealth (including tools, buildings, supplies, money and vehicles) used in production and trade for the purpose of producing more wealth. Capital is "a process of continuous transformation of capital-as-money into capital-as-commodities, followed by a retransformation of capital-as-commodities into capital-as-more-money."²⁷

Wage-labourers have no means of producing the commodities on which the capitalist system is contingent and so they are bound to seek out owners of production tools for employment. Meanwhile, capitalists are reliant on wage-labourers to supply their profits. It is important to keep in mind that the division of labour implies a social relationship; a mutual dependence. It is the interdependence of relationships which makes relevant exploration of capitalist power dynamics especially complex:

There are physical means of production in every kind of economic system, but they can become capital only in a social context in which the social relationships exist that are necessary for commodity production and private ownership. Thus capital refers to more than simply physical objects; it refers to a complex set of social relations as well.²⁸

Since capital is dynamic, an assessment of wealth possessed at any given time is relatively meaningless. It is the increase in wealth over what previously existed that is of interest to a capitalist and the potential future increase which is of primary concern. A capitalist is most able to exert pressure in the commodity portion of the capital process. There are several main methods for manipulating an increase in wealth through commodities.

²⁷ Heilbroner, 36.

²⁸ Hunt, 19.

The first method of increasing capital accumulation is to improve efficiency, allowing an increased output for equal or less input. If a monopoly is held on an aspect of efficiency (patents, for example), then the profits of the monopolist are especially great. Increased efficiency occurs largely through technological change.

Because technology is adopted by capitalists for personal gain, increased efficiency often disadvantages the worker population. As pointed out in the previous chapter, this was especially true during the Industrial Revolution when, "The pace of the work was no longer decided by the worker but by the machine. The machine, which had formerly been an appendage to the worker, was now the focal point of the productive process. The worker became a mere appendage to the cold, implacable, pace-setting machine."²⁹

Technology is intimately connected with science. Max Weber, at the beginning of this century, stated that capitalism's "rationality is to-day essentially dependent on the calculability of the most important technical factors. But this means fundamentally that it is dependent on the peculiarities of modern science . . ."³⁰ Noting a fundamental corollary, Weber continues: "On the other hand, the development of these sciences and of the technique resting upon them now receives important stimulation from these capitalistic interests in its practical economic application."³¹ Funding for scientific research is today often based on economic possibilities rather than on potential humanitarian or ecological gains.

²⁹ Ibid., 49.

³⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons with an Introduction by Anthony Giddens (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 24.

³¹ Weber, 24.

The omnipotent role science plays in capitalism has contributed to an increasingly abstract view of the world. Science has become an ideology to allow the exploitation of the earth, living species, natural processes and time for the purposes of capital. In the words of Heilbroner:

the usefulness of science as an ideology for capitalism does not imply that it could not serve another master. . . . The aspect of science that capitalism seizes upon is the reduction of the universe to an array of units of energy that can be legitimately used for any purpose whatsoever. The purpose for which the regime of capital uses them is a source of inexhaustible surplus to be gathered by the perpetual motion of [the capital process].¹²

The abstraction of the universe includes the abstraction of humans as well as nature. Within capitalist society, owners of the means of production are able to view wage earners as one of the elements of capital (similar to machines or raw materials) and customers as the means by which commodities can be exchanged for monetary profit.

Capitalism tends to ascribe non-capitalist societies to the natural world. By further degrading their stature in the minds of capitalist society, manipulation in the interest of capital accumulation is more easily rationalized. A justification frequently proffered by capitalists is that such participants are willing since "the development of capitalist relationships of production all over the world leads to the replacement of the traditional methods of wealth accumulation based on political domination (for example, slavery or feudalism) with a non-coercive, universally beneficial production and trade system."¹³

Globalization is the second method of maximizing profit. As space is abstracted, the world shrinks and a capitalist's labour and consumer market grows. Corporate capitalist

¹² Heilbroner, 135-6.

¹³ J. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Class* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1951), quoted in Salmi, 26.

organizations (trans-nationals) that can afford to invest the capital needed to penetrate international markets are best able to benefit from globalization. The possibility for profit through globalization is so great and market accessibility is so low that wealth has become overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of a minimal number of large corporations.

The third and last main method by which a capitalist can increase profit is through commodification: the introduction of aspects of daily life into the capital process. Commodification has been widely used in the twentieth century and has become an increasingly prevalent practice in the past two decades.

The emergence of postmodernism as modernism's successor is a sign of the domination of fashion cycles in secular life since a guiding interest of the postmodernist is "the penetration of the economy into culture and the resulting manipulation of cultural forms for economic purposes."³⁴ Postmodernism "facilitates rather than impedes this commodification. Cultural concepts like the house, the neighbourhood, the community, the notion of livability and even the city as a whole . . . become mere marketing devices for the promotion of consumption and speculation."³⁵

Commodification leads to the further abstraction of the natural world since it flattens the variety of human experience into one 'ultimate' experience: the process of buying. Purchase of commodified products represents buying *into* the idea that the commodification of the world is inevitable and desirable. The capitalist system has

³⁴ Barton Reid in Kent Gerecke, ed., *The Canadian City* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991), 74.

³⁵ Ibid.

commodified ideas themselves and it is precisely "because ideas are commodities that they can be so lightly and indifferently regarded."³⁶ It is an unusual but understandable characteristic of capitalism that subversive and heretical ideas are tolerated as easily as supportive ones.

Closely tied to commodification is obsolescence. As the public becomes more psychologically attached to consumption and commodification, the buying cycle becomes faster and products often physically outlive their psychological use. This is the point where built-in obsolescence is found:

In the material culture of affluent societies, people pay for the possession of products, not for their use; it follows that for the manufacturer it is more important that his products are bought and much less that they are actually used. Obsolescence is built into commodities because the industry that produces them depends on surplus, on people buying more than they need. . . . At the extreme, as soon as we purchase a product, we begin to fantasise about its successor.³⁷

The acceptance of the commodification of life and the eagerness to remain ahead of built-in obsolescence reflects the manner in which capitalist society has bought into the various doctrinal elements of capitalism. Consumers are not physically coerced into making purchases but there is a psychological force, attributable to capitalism, which acts as an imperative to procure.

³⁶ Heilbroner, 139.

³⁷ Dieter Rams, in "Economy: A Balance Between Losses and Gains," *The Humane Village Journal*, 1 (1994): 48.

DEGREE OF FAIRNESS IN THE SYSTEM

The dogma of capitalism is based on the fairness of the free market system. Jamil Salmi writes that, "Capitalism is often presented as the consecration of freedom in the economic sphere. Many blessings can be expected from a system that relies theoretically on the voluntary cooperation of all the different partners involved and that is supposed to incarnate the harmonious interests of society as a whole."³⁸ He then talks about the three virtues which theory attributes to capitalism:

1. The laissez-faire attitude of the government promotes the separation of the political and the economic spheres, inhibiting discrimination by promoting equal opportunity.
2. The competitiveness of capitalism promotes political freedom and prevents the state from concentrating political power thereby preserving democracy.
3. Free trade is a civilizing force which replaces systems of concentrated political/economic power with a fair market system.³⁹

The search for capital is the guiding force of the economic realm within the system. The political realm in the capitalist system is set up to deal with all other elements which are necessary to the functioning of society but which are not profitable and which are therefore ignored by the economic sphere. It is the balance of these two spheres which capitalist theory sees as the great strength of the system.

In actuality, this balance is a tension arising out of the conflict between these two domains since, "neither state nor economy can exist by itself, and each is capable, by its

³⁸ Salmi, 25.

³⁹ Ibid., 25-6.

faulty operation, of endangering the successful operation of the other.”⁴⁰ But the capitalist system is not just a tensile pairing of these two spheres. Rather, “capital, as the dominating principle of the society identified by its presence, must color and infiltrate the institutions and beliefs that lie beyond its immediate ambit of operation.”⁴¹ Capitalism is a doctrine which enters the cultural and ideological sectors of society just as solidly as the financial and governmental.

In the capitalist system stagnation is intolerable. Participation (or mere existence) in the system thus entails competition for finite resources because, “Each capitalist must win back from the public at large the money capital he has disbursed to various sections of it, and each capitalist is simultaneously trying to win for himself as much as possible of the money capital of other capitalists that has been relinquished in similar fashion.”⁴²

The competitiveness of capitalism is thus inherent because, “capital itself introduces a form of social war; and social war brings a new intensity to the drive for wealth . . . [which] derives from the motive of self-preservation, by popular repute the most intense and unrestrained of all instinctual responses.”⁴³

While the competitiveness of the capitalist system is apparent, the equality assigned all participants is not. There is a strong societal belief that personal stature is self-determined when evidence shows that “the relation between appropriators and producers rests on the relative strength of classes, and this is largely determined by the internal

⁴⁰ Heilbroner, 93.

⁴¹ Ibid., 84.

⁴² Ibid., 56-7.

⁴³ Ibid., 57-8.

organization and the political forces with which each enters into the class struggle.”⁴⁴

The fairness of the market system is an ingrained myth which allows capitalists to justify profits while the social war arising from the competitiveness of the capitalist system provides an incentive to use power to gain advantage.

The ruling class wields significant power in its ability to withdraw its support or commodities and produce an artificial scarcity as a result. The imbalance between owners of resources and commodities and the users who depend on these is not based on coercion but, “lies in the right of exclusion: a central, although often ignored, meaning of ‘property’ is that its owners can legally refuse to allow their possessions to be used by others.”

Essentially, “It is this right that enables the capitalist to dominate the sphere of trade and production in which his authority extends.”⁴⁵ The exclusion rights of property owners allow the possible homogenization of life resulting from decreased choices because “corporations are capitalist collectives that organize human activity. Transnational corporations are among the largest human collectives ever assembled.”⁴⁶

The psyche of both the capitalist and the wage earner is permeated by the history and nature of capitalism. Each person within the Canadian corporate capitalist system may be

⁴⁴ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism. Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27.

⁴⁵ Heilbroner, 38.

⁴⁶ Allan Engler, *Apostles of Greed. Capitalism and the Myth of the Individual and the Marketplace* (London: Pluto Publishing, 1995) 81.

equally bombarded by the doctrine and sub-doctrines of the system but different groups act differently depending on the power dynamics by which they have been moulded.

CHAPTER 2

THE MIDDLE CLASS

In a consumer society, homes not only shelter people but are also warehouses full of furniture, clothes, toys, sports equipment, and gadgets.¹

Our cities may be an arena of actual or impending social disaster but at least they look nicer.²

The rise of the North American middle class coincides with the advent of corporate capitalism. Nineteenth-century industrialization contributed to the severe down-grading of living conditions in many European urban areas. As discussed in Chapter 1, the negative effect of the Industrial Revolution was also felt by American and Canadian workers but its impact was much softer since the low population in North America kept wages high, in comparison with Europe. From the mid-nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, mass production increased the real wages of workers in capitalist nations giving rise to a large middle class.

A second aspect which favoured the growth of a Canadian middle class was the North American willingness to accept the 'nouveau riche', a contrast to the European distrust of new money. In North America, especially in the United States, many of the richest people had come by their wealth recently and these capitalists were generally admired by the public. The veneration of the self-made capitalist became a characteristic element of the American Dream.

¹ Witold Rybczynski, *Looking Around. A Journey Through Architecture* (Toronto: HarperPerennial, 1992), 79.

² David Harvey, "Voodoo Cities," *New Statesmen* (Sept. 30, 1988), quoted in Gerecke, 68.

The highly entrepreneurial and individualistic nature of many of the founders of the American upper class contributed to the regard of individualism as a respectable and positive quality. While the importance of individualism has never been stressed as strongly in Canada as in the United States, it remains an inherently admirable quality in this country and is one apparent influence of the American Dream in Canada.

Despite public admiration, there was a tendency for long-standing uppercrust families to scorn the newly wealthy. Capitalists sought to demonstrate their respectability while impressing with their wealth. In their view, establishing country residences which mimicked a long tradition of European nobility accomplished both:

The American nouveaux riches embraced the notion of conspicuous consumption in the form of ornamental real estate and decided that the most fashionable way to display great wealth was to invest in a rural estate of appropriately grand dimensions. In the short space of about twenty years between 1885 and 1905, they built neo-Gothic, neo-Renaissance, and Georgian structures as expansive and expensive as any in Jane Austin's England—one gentry estate after another.³

The owners of such estates certainly did not represent the masses but “they did set a well-publicized example of stylish suburban living that the merely comfortable attempted to follow.”⁴

In the nineteenth century, railroads tied nearby villages to large cities. Members of the upper middle class often established themselves in these villages and commuted by rail. This allowed the elite to work in the city and yet live in a country setting devoid of filth and depravity. These suburbs tended to house a mixture of economic classes made

³ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

up of original residents, commuters prosperous enough to afford rail tickets, and their subordinates. Railroad suburbs were not common but they were prestigious and contributed to a public aspiration to suburban living.

In Ottawa, Confederation marked an influx, into the capital, of civil servants, favouring suburban expansion:

The new residents eschewed working class Lower Town and commercial Upper Town for a phenomenon seldom found in 19th century Canada, the suburbs. Some moved to New Edinburgh, which had become respectable when McKay's residence was chosen as the residence of the Governor General. These people commuted by means of the Ottawa City Passenger Railway Company.⁵

The latter portion of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century saw a growing upper and middle class interest in improving urban areas. Arising out of a despair at the squalor and blight of modern industrial cities, the reform movement had two branches: aesthetic and social. The former is outside the scope of this thesis and it is to the latter that attention is now turned.

Social reform played a large role in altering the form of the city. The thrust of the social reformers' argument was that urban areas were dangerous to the physical and mental health of residents, particularly working class people who lived in dehumanizing conditions. Providing a respite from the city would have a civilizing effect on the common person. Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect of Montreal's Mount Royal, wrote the following in 1881:

It is a great mistake to suppose that the value of charming natural scenery lies wholly in the inducement which the enjoyment of it presents to change of mental occupation, exercise, and air taking. Beside and above this, it

⁵ Christopher James Taylor, *Some Early Ottawa Buildings: A Short History of Ottawa Building Development* (Ottawa: National Historic Sites and Parks Branch, 1975), 14.

acts in a more directly remedial way to enable men to better resist the harmful influences of ordinary town life, and recover what they lose from them. It is thus, in medical phrase, a prophylactic and therapeutic agent of vital value . . . And to the mass of the people it is practically available only through such means as are provided through parks."⁶

It was only a few years later, at the end of the decade, that electric trolleys became a viable and inexpensive means of transportation to the surrounding countryside. Trolley lines were extended in many Canadian cities allowing urbanites to escape the city for leisure activities. Social reformers looked forward to the days when the common person could afford to live in such healthy environments.

As fares tumbled and trolley lines multiplied, the countryside not only offered a day's respite from the city, but an opportunity for affordable suburban living as well. The city spread into the country in a linear fashion as houses and businesses grew along the trolley lines:

In the period between 1888 and 1918, when the automobile was still a novelty and a toy, the electric streetcar represented a revolutionary advance in transportation technology. Radiating outward from the central business districts, the tracks opened up a vast suburban ring and enabled electric trains to travel as fast as fourteen miles per hour, or four times faster than the horse-drawn systems they replaced. By the turn of the century, a "new city," segregated by class and economic function and encompassing an area triple the territory of the older walking city, had clearly emerged as the center of the [North] American urban society.⁷

The nature of the suburbs was to change dramatically after the Second World War as the trolley gave way to the car. The automobile allowed the spirit of individualism to flourish and liberated suburbanites and developers from housing located along trolley

⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Mount Royal, Montreal* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), quoted in Geoffrey Simmons ed., *Documents in Canadian Architecture* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), 79.

⁷ Jackson, 114-5.

lines. Developers were able to buy inexpensive land and subdivide it into suburban developments which could be made available to the public at a reasonable cost.

The suburban dream became more and more accessible to the middle classes. Conversely, as the number of middle class suburbanites grew, the suburbs came to be less country-like and suburbia became disassociated from the country while being viewed as distinct from the city. This is a phenomenon which has caused Peter G. Rowe to coin the term a "middle landscape" to describe modern suburbia.

Home ownership has long been regarded as a sign of status in North America and the growth of suburbia was central to the realization of that goal for many. The overwhelming strength of the suburban dream as a symbol of affluence was ironically coupled with the view of suburbia as class-less and accessible to all. Suburbia began as a way of distinguishing oneself as belonging to the affluent upper classes. Such a distinction involved an inherent and conscious separation of the suburban self from the lower classes.

Such a mental separation is indicative of the fact that the public cannot accurately be viewed as a cohesive entity since the public does not see itself as one common body. There exists, within Canadian corporate capitalist society, a self interest in differentiating oneself from some members while associating oneself with other members of the same society and "to expect, therefore, that most community committees or resident advisory groups contain the degree of social cohesion and collective resources required to solve local problems is generally naive."⁸

⁸ Lloyd Axworthy and Donald Epstein, "Public Policy and Urban Neighbourhood," in *Canadian Issues* 1 (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1975), 17-8.

Therefore there is a plurality of power where "a diversity of power groups compete in presenting their interests, some of which win and others do not. Thus, communities are composed, not of single elites, but rather of a series of competing elites, forming coalitions as needed to gain their ends."⁹ It is for this reason that attempts to integrate lower equity groups are often met with firm opposition by the middle class. Because low power groups such as the poor are not seen as valuable partners in forming coalitions, they are marginalized and remain largely powerless.

The middle class has had a consumer base since its beginning. The original country manors of the American capitalists were ostentatious and contained all the trappings of European country estates. They were a public display of conspicuous consumption which was offered as proof of status and belonging. This practice has largely continued through to today's modern subdivisions. It is to a large degree for this reason that the suburbs have come to seem so monochromatic and homogeneous although they are founded on a principle of individualism.

Just like the capitalists' country estates, modern suburban homes play the dual role of proving economic status while proving respectability. In this regard, the suburbanite walks a fine line between adequately displaying conspicuous consumption and remaining tasteful and discrete.

The urban renewal and development projects of the 1960s and 1970s (explained in Chapters 3 and 4) alienated the lower and middle urban classes and led to a backlash against developers and a distrust of planners. Developers and planners alike have spent

⁹ Driedger, 187.

the past decades trying to gain favour with a public which demands more decision-making autonomy and urban options. The middle class, with its buying power, is of more interest to developers so that the "built environment is a result of the private house builders being inordinately influenced by the tastes of their main customer, the middle-class housing consumer."¹⁰

After World War II, a period of prosperity ensued and home ownership became a reality for many. Beginning in the 1970s however, middle class incomes rose slowly or stagnated, land and house prices rose, and inflation and interest rates were high. Owning a home was becoming an unattainable goal for a large number of middle class people, especially younger, first-time buyers. Despite low interest rates in the 1990s, high prices and unstable job markets have made buying a house very difficult for the younger members of the middle-class. Social and economic trends have also meant that many members of the middle class are postponing the creation of families and are remaining in their parents' homes longer.

Another important factor affecting middle class housing choices is an environmental concern which grew out of the energy crisis of 1973. The energy crisis gave way to a series of scientific announcements about the worsening health of the earth. Global warming was a particular concern and cars were identified as contributing significantly to the warming of the atmosphere. There was a significant philosophical backlash, particularly among younger people, on the living practices of previous generations including a condemnation of suburban life.

¹⁰ Ibid., 178.

Environmental advocates espoused a system of reduction, reuse, and recycling. Ironically, the corporate capitalist system has co-opted and commodified these three practices. Despite outward societal support, the 3Rs have, in reality, become a facet of consumerism.

Gentrification is one example of environmental commodification in urban housing and most commonly occurs when renters within the urban core purchase property downtown and become 'homeowners.'¹¹ Gentrification has greatly affected both the social and physical nature of Canadian cities and since "the middle class gentrifiers have become key players in the speculative market of the inner city, their interests have absorbed the logic of speculation."¹² They have thus been co-opted into the modern corporate city by the "post-modern planning and architectural practices which mirror the urban and aesthetic sensibility of this class."¹³

Gentrification is an interesting phenomenon because it clearly illustrates the heterogeneous nature of the public. Gentrification is a process by which members of the middle class obtain property and exert the 'right to exclude' on members of the lower economic class. Over the past twenty years, older down-town neighbourhoods have increasingly seen their low and modest income residents replaced by young professionals. These professionals often find houses in older neighbourhoods to be sound investments, conveniently located, fitted to their lifestyles, interesting and affordable. The gentrification encompasses not only the change in residents but also the physical changes

¹¹ Ley in Gerecke, 186.

¹² Reid in Gerecke, 68.

¹³ Ibid.

undergone by the neighbourhood through renovation and upkeep of buildings (often neglected by absentee landlords), ameliorated municipal services, and an influx of new businesses.

Gentrification has a great impact on a neighbourhood's residents since the growth in affluence of a neighbourhood results in real estate sales which profit absentee landlords but which push out lower income tenants. Since the tenants do not profit from such sales, they find it increasingly difficult to find housing which they can afford.

Many gentrified areas consist of older homes which are relatively large by today's standards and which have therefore become rooming houses. Rooming houses tend to provide dwellings to single people of the lowest incomes and these people, once they are displaced, are the least able to find similar alternatives. While gentrification seems to benefit the gentrifiers and the physical and aesthetic quality of older housing stocks, "it has become obvious that the speculation and renovation which has emerged as a result of this has increased the exploitation of owners over renters."¹⁴

Gentrification indicates an insurgent affluence in a neighbourhood through transferred ownership: it maintains the residential use of the city's older housing stock while ensuring its upkeep and vigour. As such, zoning is not a tool which can control gentrification. As the number of gentrified neighbourhoods increases in Canadian cities, displaced persons are less and less likely to be able to find alternative housing on the private market.

¹⁴ Ibid.

If low and moderate income households are to be maintained in older urban neighbourhoods to avoid displacement and ghettoization, it is necessary for the government, through social housing organizations, to secure housing stocks in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification. Of course, as the gentrification process continues, the cost of securing such housing stock increases and makes larger housing subsidies necessary.¹⁵

The prohibitive cost of housing in newly affluent areas is not the only problem faced by the government. There may also be an opposition from the neighbourhood's new homeowners since urban living represents, for them, a financial investment. According to John Sewell, "These residents are often the most vociferous in stating they already have their fair share of social housing in their neighbourhood. Those who as a group have done most to directly create a housing problem are the least likely to wish to see that problem addressed. Hence the insidious nature of gentrification."¹⁶

Suburbanization and gentrification are two example of urban issues set in motion by one portion of society, the middle class, but greatly impacting Canadian cities overall. The middle class has been a major twentieth century urban decision maker as a result of a demographic force characterized by large numbers and relatively strong buying power.

Conventions of exhibiting status in an appropriate manner have been created and the middle class is constantly searching for guidance in matters of taste and fashion. The necessity to pander to the demands of the middle class constricts the housing industry but

¹⁵ John Sewell, *Houses and Homes. Housing for Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1994), 79-81.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-1.

it also enables the industry to increase capital by speeding up the cycle of consumption through obsolescence. According to Witold Rybczynski, the homogeneity of suburban housing "is due in part to similar building codes and standardized technology, and in part to the mobility of consumers, but it's also the result of an industry that is increasingly driven by trends and fashions—what merchandisers call pushing the hot buttons."¹⁷

Commodification has become an issue in every realm of corporate capitalist life and the built environment is not immune. The commodification of lifestyles has opened a new realm to consumerism and city living has been increasingly promoted and accepted as a middle-class lifestyle choice.^{*} There has therefore been an intertwining of urban living as a lifestyle and urban living as a capitalist decision.

The irony of this situation is that the middle classes have inherited the progressive role of trend-setter while subject to an insecurity which necessitates validation.

Alexander F. Cross writes that, "The middle classes, uncertain about their status in society are also uncertain as patrons of design. It is small wonder that aesthetic reform, so well-launched during the 1930s, was derailed, in the 1980s, with the rediscovery, in conjunction with emergent post-modernity, of tradition by the housing consumer."¹⁸

The underlying tie between the middle class and the rise of corporate capitalism is important in understanding the heterogeneity of the public where some of its members are more closely related to guiding capitalist forces than others. It is also important to

¹⁷ Rybczynski, 66-7.

^{*} It is interesting to note the willingness of the middle class to buy into the commodification of land despite a traditional perception of land as a resource. The argument that land is, in fact, a common resource is still promoted by the middle class when attempting to block the exercising of exclusionary rights by developers.

¹⁸ Cross, 179.

remember that the middle classes have long had a belief in the 'otherness' of the lower classes.

The issues of middle-class power and public cohesiveness have been raised but it is necessary to outline the capitalist history and resulting power dynamics of both developers and planners before continuing to explore urban power in a larger context.

CHAPTER 3

URBAN PLANNERS

During the nineteenth century, American architects fresh from European educations undertook to restructure the ancient activity of building into a modern profession able to meet the social and economic requirements of an advanced capitalist economy and a liberal state.¹

One word comes to mind to describe much of past and present planning strategy: inappropriate.²

Authors such as Jane Jacobs, Humphrey Carver and John Sewell have long been critical of modern planning practices. Such Canadian critics usually concur with Grabow and Heskin's article in the *Journal of American Institute of Planners* which identified the following as the major shortcomings of modern planning:

1. It is elitist, establishing a 'rational comprehensive advisor' quite separate from the planning client. Joint participation by both planner and plannee is not part of the game.
2. It is a centralizing activity, since it requires monitoring and control of planning actions consistent with rational planning objectives.
3. It is change-resistant, since all change other than that prescribed in the plan must be controlled and eliminated.³

To these three criticisms can be added another which Jacobs, in particular, has elaborated upon:

¹ Margaret Crawford, "Can Architects be Socially Responsible," in *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture*, ed. by Diane Ghirardo (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 28.

² Michael A. Goldberg, *Plannees and Planners: Toward a Synthetic Planning Process*, Working Paper #4, Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration (Vancouver: Urban Land Economics Publications, University of British Columbia, November 1977), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

4. Planning often comprises a set of solutions in search of a problem. To define problems in terms of the methodologies available to analyze them is incorrect. It leads to inappropriate definitions and inappropriate solutions.⁴

Any thoughtful study of Canada's current urban problems will support these criticisms to a degree. But the motivation and constraints behind inappropriate planning decisions has not been fully explored since the question of urban power has largely been ignored.

The issue of power must be set within the context of the affect of corporate capitalism on the planning mindset. There are several ideological beliefs which have become entrenched in planning theory. These basic beliefs have been shaped by and now act as guiding factors in the urban power dynamic. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the historical role of urban power relationships and to show that these have been largely responsible for the modern urban planning processes and products which have given rise to today's rebuke against planning.

Le Corbusier offers a good starting point to explore the hermeneutic of modern urban power. Le Corbusier was a Parisian architect whose planning proposals, introduced in the 1920s, were to have an international impact. His design for a 'Radiant City' was based upon the concept of high density urban living in buildings constructed of modern materials and raised on stilts to let the natural landscape roll by undisturbed. Although some of his urban designs were carried out, it is for his concepts that he is most well known. His proposals were of a grand scale and reflected the modernist desire to create a future unfettered by tradition:

⁴ Ibid., 2.

The threat of dispersal of the great city into the ever extending spider's web of satellite towns made Le Corbusier the first proponent of a massive programme of urban renewal. The packed, narrow-corridor streets of the central city must be removed to open up wide green spaces as the setting for towering residential blocks exposed to the sun and the wind and embracing wide views of the sky.⁵

The first elemental belief of planners corresponds directly to the first planning criticism: the transfer of urban planning to a specific group of professionals called urban planners. Humans have shaped and controlled urban environments since the first cities sprung up millennia ago but a widespread planning profession such as the one known today is a relatively recent phenomenon which has been evolving since the nineteenth century (although earlier examples of similarly planned cities exist). The birth of the planning profession was based on an interest in solving aesthetic and social urban problems through the introduction of a science and the planner was therefore seen in the role of scientist.

The modern planning profession is a sort of club of enlightened scientists and like a club it is exclusive rather than inclusive. According to Tom Wolfe:

Le Corbusier's instincts for the compound era were flawless. Early on, he seemed to comprehend what became an axiom of artistic competition in the twentieth century. Namely, that the ambitious young artist must join a "movement," a "school," an ism—which is to say, a compound. He is either willing to join a clerisy and subscribe to its codes and theories or he gives up all hope of prestige.⁶

So, for a planner to be recognized, indeed for a planner to merely survive, membership within the club is requisite. As a corollary, anyone left outside the club is

⁵ Humphrey Carver, *Cities in the Suburbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 44.

⁶ Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1981), 27-8.

not recognized by the compound and therefore has no right to carry out any urban planning. To ensure separation from non-members, the club becomes mysterious and adopts its own language and credos which are unintelligible to outsiders.

Jane Jacobs writes that, "an imitation of Le Corbusier shouts 'Look what I made!' Like a great, visible ego it tells of someone's achievement."⁷ This is important to understanding a major aspect of the power dynamic guiding urban planners. Like architecture and design, urban planning bestows prestige on its members for their works. Collaboration minimizes individual prestige and criticism threatens personal recognition.

The second planning belief is that not only should planners be forced to join the club and maintain the status quo, but the public should be forced to accept urban environments imposed by planners. As an architect, Le Corbusier not only designed the urban forms of his cities but also the homes within which he felt people should live. His plans were very specific and included minimalist philosophies of colour and ornament.

The last elemental belief taken up by the planning profession has to do with dealing with public discontent. The justification of the planner is that the public is unenlightened and does not recognize what it needs. This is coupled with an optimism that its design impositions will necessarily result in human progress. Le Corbusier believed that the proletariat would "have to be 'reeducated' to comprehend the beauty of 'the Radiant City' of the future."⁸

In Canada, planners like Eugene Faludi, the visionary of Thorncrest Village in Etobicoke, maintained a similar attitude. In 1950, Faludi wrote, "The 'common man,' for

⁷ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), 23

⁸ Wolfe, 32.

whom we intended this community, was against everything. . . . Nevertheless, there were people who liked the idea of this novel setting. They were the people who always support progress and advanced thoughts."⁹ John Sewell writes that Faludi "was writing for a planning audience that would share his frustration with objectors to the new ideas, an audience that would be sympathetic to his aspirations."¹⁰

It may seem strange to use Le Corbusier so extensively as an example since he represents Modernist utopian planning, a movement whose grandest projects were supported by socialist governments. Two things must be kept in mind: (1) Modernism was growing at the same time that corporate capitalism and socialism were in their infancy and (2) Modernism was the International Style.

European countries of the time were exploring their ideological stances with respect to socialism and capitalism and, as stated in Chapter 1, these new systems were closely juxtaposed. Planners such as Le Corbusier had a philosophy which came out of the Industrial Revolution and capitalism but they saw urban planning as a theory whose implications were universal and whose funding by socialist governments was in no way problematic.

Because the philosophy of the Modernist movement was that good design was objective and therefore global, its projects were not site specific. Design was an intellectual pursuit. The common practice was to create utopias on paper, either with drawings or words. Le Corbusier's utopias were extremely popular and "his design was

⁹ Eugene Faludi, "Designing New Canadian Communities," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 16 (1950), 77, quoted in Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 63.

¹⁰ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 63.

followed in many countries: Sweden, France, India and in Calgary's downtown."¹¹ In most cases, there was a government which supported the design implementation

The relationship between the planner and the government is very cogent to Canadian planning. Is it fair to take one urban planner, a European, and infer that Canadian planners are all cut from the same cloth as him? Of course not, but Le Corbusier is representative of Modernist planners and Modernism was an influential movement among Canadian architects and planners.

According to Jane Jacobs, "Le Corbusier's dream city has had an immense impact on our cities. . . . and has gradually been embodied in scores of projects, ranging from low-income public housing to office building projects." Although Jacobs is referring to Le Corbusier's effect on American cities, the statement holds true when applied to the Canadian situation. With respect to the planner/government relationship, this is especially important when analyzing the CMHC's post-war planners.

In *Cities in the Suburbs*, CMHC planner Humphrey Carver speaks with reverence of Le Corbusier, explaining that, "The impact of Le Corbusier upon the minds of his architectural contemporaries in the 1920's was not just that of an invigorating fresh wind on a sultry afternoon. It was a sensation: like the arrival of the first sputnik in the fifties."¹² He later continues, "Not the least of Le Corbusier's gifts is his highly personal, ecstatic style of self-expression on paper. In a few liquid, scrawling doodles of the pen

¹¹ Driedger, 264.

¹² Carver, 44.

and a few exclamatory words he somehow managed to capture a fresh universe of city enjoyments."¹³

Carver's acceptance, not only of Le Corbusier's designs, but also of his philosophy and methodology, is important because it is indicative of the impact of Le Corbusier, and Modernist planning in general, on the upper echelons of Canada's planning elite, those in a position to influence the decision-makers within the federal government. The federal government, in turn, was responsible for initiating and supporting such grandiose Modernist schemes as Jacques Gréber's plan for the National Capital Region.

It is not an overstatement to relate key CMHC planning advisors such as Carver to major urban changes. The influence of the British-born Carver extended deep into the planning profession. He was, for a time, the Canadian Director of the American Society of Planning Officials and the President of the Planning Institute of Canada. He set up the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research and the Australian Institute of Urban Studies. He was also the author of several seminal books which outlined his planning philosophy.

But, as Carver recognized, the search to create a utopian urban environment did not begin or end with modernist planners such as Le Corbusier. At the end of the nineteenth century, the horrible living conditions of workers brought about by the Industrial Revolution caused a surge of utopian planning in Europe especially in England. According to Françoise Choay, the urban planning of this time, "is thought out with

¹³ Ibid., 45.

reference to a systematic taxonomy more or less based on the idea of the city as an organism. The epistemological model, however, borrowed from the natural sciences, becomes increasingly involved with the matter of function."¹⁴

Ebenezer Howard, the father of the 'Garden City', was the most famous utopian planner. In his biography of Howard, Robert Beevers sums up the reformer's philosophy:

Town and country, which he represented in one of his fascinating diagrams as magnets compelling man towards one or the other by powerful counter attraction, must be made one. Each in its own way has a valid function, the town as the symbol of society and the country as the symbol of God's love and care for man. But as long as the unholy, unnatural separation of man and nature endures, the fullness of joy and wisdom will not be revealed to man.¹⁵

It is ironic that to eliminate the modern dichotomy and realize his goal, Howard developed a utopia composed of distinct and separated functions. He proposed the creation of relatively dense urban satellite areas set within a greater rural landscape. In *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, published in 1898, Howard wrote about and drew diagrams of a circular utopia made up of a series of concentric zones which separated parks, housing, public buildings and industries.

Howard's utopia certainly took a much different form than Le Corbusier's but the philosophy underlying the garden city (proposed decades before the radiant city) was based on the same three planner's assumptions. In fact, the radiant city grew directly out of Howard's garden city and was conceived as a 'vertical garden city'.

¹⁴ Françoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*, trans. Marguerite Hugo and George R. Collins (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 109.

¹⁵ Robert Beevers, *The Garden City Utopia: A Critical Biography of Ebenezer Howard* (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), 59.

To ensure its success, the lands of a garden city would have to be owned by a corporation committed to the program. The corporation would buy up inexpensive rural land which would provide the setting for the new city. Lands would remain in the hands of the corporation so that prices would not be driven up as the town grew in population and popularity. This would ensure the ongoing ability to serve the economically impoverished strata of society.

Howard was clear in his belief that the garden city was the 'right' solution to England's urban problems and as such felt that planners must come to support his utopia and workers must come to live in it. Western science was the tool by which Howard's Christian goals would be carried out. The first garden city was founded by 'First Garden City Limited' in 1904. Letchworth, as it was called, was a great success in the minds of both reform planners and the public. But clearly, it also embodied the greater paternalistic attitudes of society.

After World War I, Howard regrouped with some colleagues to form the 'New Townsmen'. This group took over control of the Garden Cities Association and proposed the creation of one hundred new towns in England. Its manifesto, entitled *New Towns After The War*, re-interpreted *Garden Cities for Tomorrow* for a hardened post-war audience:

The garden city is not in the line of Utopian communities. It is not a scheme for the localised trial of revolutionary self-contained economic systems. . . . The great national and international debate upon the question of industrial control will go on inside the garden city and everywhere else. Whatever the result, whether industry is to be capitalistic or collective, or a mixture of both, efficiency of the kind which is based upon the best labour-saving equipment and a good social and civic life will be desirable. The garden city not

only provides for an advance in social organisation, but is in itself a factor in the most efficient system of production.¹⁶

According to Beevers, "This pragmatical approach was to have a critical and permanent effect on the New Towns movement of the future, which came to be characterized as a housing programme rather than a scheme of social and economic reform."¹⁷ This was problematic for the New Townsmen who had reinterpreted *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* not because of a shift in belief but rather in an effort to revitalize the popularity of their scheme.

Perhaps it was the ideological inconsistencies between Howard's two documents which led to miscomprehension of the garden city idea. Perhaps it was the goal of industrial efficiency for the New Towns which became confused with the purpose of the original Garden City. Perhaps it was the creation of a new garden city at roughly the same time that *New Towns After the War* was being published that led to a mental melding of the two. Maybe it was all this and more. In any event, the garden city idea became one of the most misunderstood urban proposals of all time and was often cited as the inspiration for projects that bore no relation to Howard's utopia and that were, in fact, often antithetical to his idea.

Howard's garden city idea was important to Canada's urban development. There were serious attempts to recreate a true garden city in Canada. In *Une Cité-Jardin à Montréal*, Marc H. Choko writes about the now defunct garden city movement in Quebec:

¹⁶ 'New Townsmen', *New Towns After the War: An argument for Garden Cities* (London: J M Dent, 1918), 49-50, quoted in Beevers, 154.

¹⁷ Beevers, 151.

Le 2 août 1942, le Tout-Montréal et la presse sont rassemblés pour inaugurer la Cité-jardin du tricentenaire de Montréal à Rosemont. Il s'agit en fait des seize premières maisons d'une vaste cité-jardin coopérative modèle, destinée à essaimer à travers toute la province. Entre cette date et le printemps 1947, cent soixante-sept maisons seront réalisées à Rosemont, tandis que des cités-jardin coopératives seront entreprises à Hull, Trois-Rivières et Québec.¹⁸

True to the social reform movement, 'Les Cités-jardin de Québec Inc' hoped that by creating the ideal urban environment it would foster the birth of the new society. Such individual garden cities were to have a localized affect on Canadian planning. But Howard's influence was not isolated to the creation of Canadian garden city corporations. Rather it gained a stronghold in Canada's main centralizing entity.

In 1914, Thomas Adams, the former secretary of 'First Garden City Limited,' came to Canada as a planning advisor to the federal government. In *Cities in the Suburbs*, Carver explains that Adams "drafted the first town-planning legislation in Canada, laid the foundation of a new profession of city planners, and carried out several housing projects, among them Lindenlea in Ottawa and the Hydrostone housing in Halifax . . ."¹⁹

In the garden city model, the funding to create a town was based on private moneys donated to or borrowed by the not-for-profit garden city company. But the New Townsmen's grandiose plan for one hundred new towns stipulated that these were to be dispersed in key areas throughout England, and so it became increasingly necessary to turn to a central body, the federal government, to fund and administer the project. The

¹⁸ Marc H. Choko, *Une Cité-jardin à Montréal: La Cité-jardin du tricentenaire, 1940-1947* (Montréal: Méridien, 1988), 13.

¹⁹ Carver, 38.

government of England, therefore, played a decisive role in the creation of the 15 new towns which actually resulted from the proposal.

An overwhelming proportion of the planners who were instrumental in founding urban Canada were of British origin and carried with them the notion that the government must take a leading role in shaping urban environments in large part because in doing so it could affect the way in which Canadians lived. This philosophy was based directly upon the social reform espoused by planners such as Howard.

In addition to the Canadian proponents of Howard's utopia, the garden city idea was to have the added impact of being the inspiration for proposals which bastardized it either through partial application or through misinterpretation. The garden city was often combined with City Beautiful (an aesthetic reform movement) philosophy, and so the garden city came to be thought of as a city *of* gardens rather than a city within a garden. This misunderstanding is most evident in suburban designs which claim the garden city as the underlying philosophy but which bear almost no resemblance to Howard's turn-of-the-century depictions. It was rapid suburbanization that led Carver to write *Cities in the Suburbs*, an analysis of the modern misinterpretation of Howard's garden city and the ways in which suburbs should follow, more closely, the original plan.

When relating the influence of the garden city on Canadian urban planning and suburbanization, it is important to include the immense impact of Clarence Stein in Canada. Stein was an American planner who expanded upon the garden city idea to create, with landscape architect Henry Wright, the 'Radburn' idea in 1928. Howard was the spark which ignited Stein but the American felt that any modern utopia which did not

take into account the North American love of the automobile would not be successful in his homeland. Stein set about adapting the garden city idea to ensure its feasibility in the United States.

Stein became convinced that a modern utopia must reconcile the negative aspects of the automobile with idealized urban living. In the end, he created a "town turned outside-in, with houses turned around so that living and sleeping rooms face towards garden and parks, with service rooms facing towards streets."²⁰ This design divorced service (automobile) roads from pedestrian paths and was first attempted in the town of Radburn, New Jersey.

Radburn was not a mirror image of Stein's theory since events conspired to take the town further away from its garden city roots. The town was located close to a large city and became a bedroom community rather than a self-sufficient urban area. The Depression, rather than a lack in the design, was the major reason for both the economic decline of the region which forced residents to commute to a parent city and for the elimination of the characteristic bounding greenbelt.

Stein proposed an urban form which was quite different from Le Corbusier's and Howard's while maintaining the conventional planner's assumptions. Stein perceived modern urban planning to have the added role of addressing the adverse effect that the automobile was having on American communities while maintaining the traditional search for human betterment. He had a strong desire to educate the public by promoting his alternative city forms which he believed untangled the urbanite from the automobile.

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

In the "Introduction" to *Toward New Towns for America*, Lewis Mumford writes, "The important thing to realize, then, is that the work Clarence Stein took part in as architect and planner, though largely of a private nature, up to Greenbelt, went on against this background of wider public education."²¹

Stein's planning philosophy became known to many Canadians through his book, *Toward New Towns for America* and through various journal articles. According to John Sewell, "The new ideas in planning did not go unnoticed in Canada. Clarence Stein's clarion call to destroy the old and build the new had been published in full in the Canadian journal, *Community Planning Review*, in 1952, with admiring comment from Humphrey Carver, Canada's leading planning theoretician."²² Stein also had a direct morphological effect on Canadian urban history as the planner of another version of Radburn - Kitimat, British Columbia.

The growth of suburbia after the Second World War represented a pervasive expansion of the planner beliefs. The wild-fire growth of suburban North America represented the first time that urban utopias had become truly mainstream. The springing up of suburban developments went hand in hand with an automobile ethic, a national dream of home-ownership and an economic growth bolstered by the federal government.

The capitalist power dynamics encouraged Canadian planners of the 1920s to begin "explicitly allying themselves with real estate interests"²³ but following the economic collapse of the 1930s and the post-war housing shortage, public planning came

²¹ Lewis Mumford, introduction to *Toward New Towns for America*, by Clarence S. Stein, 3rd ed., (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 14.

²² Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 44.

²³ Tom Gunton in Kent Gerecke, ed., *The Canadian City* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991), 97.

to be seen as a necessary means for societal restructuring. The role and elitist self-perceptions of public planners shifted as the belief grew that private development would need to be controlled to ensure the design was in keeping with social and aesthetic values:

Between the old city and the new stands the planner. He sees beyond the social conflicts of his time to the true order of industrial society. His imagination is the first to comprehend the common good and give it form as a design for a new kind of community. This is the source of his authority, an authority that Howard, Wright and Le Corbusier believed to be deeper and truer than that of any political leader. For the planner does not sponsor the goals of any single group. Rather he works to create a society in which all social differences would be reconciled.²⁴

This belief that the planner must have control over the private sector because of an elevated position external to the power systems of corporate capitalism is the contradiction upon which the urban planning profession is based. It is the inability to deal with this contradiction in mainstream planning and in urban criticism which has fostered the paradoxes of today's popular theoretical solutions. The belief that urban planning can remain apolitical is a ghost which still haunts the profession despite a rational acceptance that such an aloofness is impossible. Tom Gunton writes:

Many planners, accepting that ends are political, still maintain that planning is an objective exercise in the sense that it rationally analyzes social processes and evaluates alternative means for realizing politically prescribed ends. But even this argument is highly suspect. . . . [and] planners have often concealed the normative aspects of their craft under the guise of technical expertise.²⁵

²⁴ Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 266, quoted in Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 76.

²⁵ Gunton, 107.

The shortcomings of urban Canada and of the planning profession which have shaped it are now largely recognized. The favoured proposal put forward for the past two decades has tended to be 'community planning' where plannees would have a large input into proposals and where planners would be resource people for the community to draw on. This approach is popular both with supporters of greater citizen participation and with those seeking protection of local built-heritage.²⁶

This new movement, which is thought by many to be having a drastic effect on planning practices, actually represents a co-option, by the planning profession, of the popular citizen movements of the sixties and seventies. In 1977, Michael A. Goldberg wrote that, "Recent suggestions for change in planning seem to be turning past planning practice upside down. Instead of top-down planning, a bottom-up approach is being widely suggested."²⁷ But what influence do the conventional planner mindsets have on concepts of community development and local empowerment. Is it really true that the current planning trend has placed much greater control over urban planning in the hands of communities?

Unfortunately, the capitalist power dynamic maintains a barrier which has so far not been surmounted by most efforts at community planning. Urban critics have continued to fall into the traditional planning pattern of prescribing predetermined solutions to urban problems. Their solutions, therefore, while noble, do little to attack the root of the problem since they do not recognize the fundamental barriers to be overcome.

²⁶ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 162.

²⁷ Goldberg, 13.

The reason for the maintenance of the status quo is that in many community development projects no effort has been made by planners to change the existing power dynamic. Planning proposals are still generally initiated by planners and the role of the community is largely understood to fall within the realm of public consultations.

For example, in the early 1970s, Winnipeg's local government was restructured to allow increased access to the citizens through the decentralization of the political system. The plan rested on dividing the city into fifty wards, each of which would have a population of approximately 10 000 residents, and was heralded as a new way to include citizen participation as a basis for the political system.

In fact, subsequent "analysis of Winnipeg's political and administrative structure indicated it to be an amalgam of competing principles and values lacking a clear rationale" where no "encouragement is provided to the residents of street or block neighbourhoods for controlling their local environment and requiring municipal implementation of acceptable plans and programs."²⁸

While unfortunate, the results are not surprising:

An attempt to impose a new governmental structure can be frustrated by the underlying social and political realities. In Winnipeg the tradition, as in most cities, has been one of city government based on the representative system, involving little of the notion of direct citizen participation.²⁹

Less threatening to the existing urban structure is consultation since it keeps the status quo decision-making power. Examples of projects carried out by planners despite public condemnation voiced during consultations have been problematic for the

²⁸ Axworthy and Epstein, 16-7.

²⁹ Ibid., 16.

community development approach in general. There is often a perception on the part of the public that consultations are mere formalities and take place after solutions have been decided upon by planners. This perception results in public apathy which further degrades the possibility for true community development.

The inherent illogic within the planning profession is a serious detriment to the possibility of effective community planning. Planners are part of the capitalist system and its power dynamic. But the negation of this fact must further cleave the uneasy alignment of the philanthropic and self-motivated interests of urban planners. Urban planning seeks social improvement on the one hand but is, on the other hand, largely kept from this by an internal fracture arising from its parent system:

Modern professions, rather than simply existing as the sum of the professional interests of their individual members, instead are complex social constructs that structure their autonomous identities in relation to the specific configuration of the economy and society in which they operate. . . . (T)he current gap between individual concern and professional inertia represents a contemporary reformulation of a persistent barrier between the needs of professional identity and the demands of social responsibility. Recognizing this, the current impasse needs to be addressed as much as a historical legacy as a contemporary dilemma.³⁰

The birth of urban planning was only one stream in a larger trend towards professionalism. During the nineteenth century, activities which had previously been largely unregulated came increasingly to be viewed as the exclusive domain of a professional group. Competence in medicine, law, architecture, and urban planning was now only possible after training within the related compound which is an important aspect of urban power dynamics. The professionalization of the Western world resulting

³⁰ Crawford, 27.

from a combined belief in the omnipotence of science and the possibility that socially-motivated professions could be divorced from the prevailing capitalist system:

Exclusive control of professional territory depends on achieving social distance from other groups who provide similar services, a process that involves two crucial legitimization strategies: first, competency and superiority based on technology, rationality, and efficiency, and second, an ethical claim of detachment from any particular class or business interest.³¹

The rise of professionalism was, in effect, the result of a search for financial and social power by an educated middle class, at the very time that this group was claiming social reform as its primary objective. According to Crawford, the "professional project depended on two separate but closely linked goals; first, the definition and control of a protected market for professional services, and second, the assurance that membership in the profession would provide both social status and visible economic advantages."³² The masking of vested interests can thus be dated to the birth of the modern planning profession.

With the increased interest in community planning, the contradictions within the planning profession have become exponentially more problematic. The mainstream of urban criticism sees community planning as a solution in itself and this has led to the silencing of the voices of urban critics. Former critics support the new school of planners which proposes increased community autonomy and self-government. It is now commonly believed that the fault of the planning profession has been its continual search for utopian solutions. But it isn't the utopia mentality which is at the root of the problem:

³¹ Ibid., 29.

³² Ibid., 28.

the search for power, nurtured by the ideology of corporate capitalism, underlies both utopian solutions and urban problems. Michael Goldberg's writing is representative of the planning philosophy of the past two decades. He writes in his 1977 working paper:

This paper is concerned with people who do planning (planners) and the people for whom planning is done (plannees). It is concerned with assumptions of rationality, certainty (or certainty equivalents), and comprehensiveness that underly much of current planning theory and practice. Above all it is concerned with the development of an open ongoing planning process that seeks to resolve inconsistencies and contradictions in peoples' aspirations, resources and abilities.³³

Typical of community planning proposals, Goldberg's paper does not explore power as a possible cause of inconsistencies and contradictions. Neither critics nor planners seem to comprehend the hidden agenda which corporate capitalism imposes. John Sewell, discussing a successful community development project in Toronto, perceptively writes that, "The idea that ordinary people could be involved in city planning was a major blow to the new suburbanist approach, which relied on experimentation, total clearance, and the mysticism of the private planner. Those principles were replaced by a much more mundane approach that relied on local experience and desires."³⁴ Although he is speaking of a event which took place several decades ago, it is still largely a shock to planners to truly find themselves on a level playing field with other urban participants.

In the literature of the past few years, urban power structures have become a more popular concept. Authors tend to take an interdisciplinary approach and explore power as it relates to all aspects of urbanity. Important issues include the power dynamics between

³³ Goldberg, I.

³⁴ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 160.

rural and urban areas, between people of various economic strata, and between the private and public sectors. The effect that power structures have on urban processes and products is also being explored. This work is in its infancy and to date has largely ignored the role which urban planners play in the power dynamic.

The most notable overall absence in the urban power literature is the lack of interest in the way in which power can be a motivating factor even when such power is not held. For instance, planners may or may not have the individual or collective power to shape urban morphology but the pursuit of that power seems to be a main element which guides them in their work.

Power seeking as a motivating factor is important to the urban environment, its residents and its critics because it often provides an understanding into seemingly inconsistent and illogical planning proposals and practices. Social status has historically been the major motivation of the urban planner. The planner's search for prominence is limited by external controls arising from the search for power by other groups. It is the interrelated nature of the power dynamic that is the subject of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPERS

Liberal Government policy was to leave housing to private industry. When industry wouldn't supply the appropriate number or types of unit, then the job of government was seen to be to provide help to the industry—improved financing; help with labour and material, setting targets, and all of the other tools set out in the National Housing Act.¹

If the question of power has been largely ignored with respect to urban planners, it has been the main focus of criticism directed at developers. There is a common perception that developers profit excessively from real estate deals and that this profit comes at the expense of the public. The distaste for developer profit can seem excessive. By factoring power into the equation, many jarring elements fall into place. And when restrictions on power are explored (Chapter 5), the tenacious attempt to develop land by developers and the resulting censure by some segments of society become understandable.

The use of capital for the creation of profit is the economic basis of and one of the rights associated with capitalism. Canada has historically had a secondary, socialist underpinning which has given rise to a debate concerning the ethics of profiting from the fundamental elements of life. With respect to land development, this debate is heated:

Over the years there have been more public debates about land rent, windfall gains, speculation and other issues bearing on the "right to profit" than on any other aspect of the land question. From Ricardo to Marx and Henry George to Edwin Mills, theorists of both the right and the left stripes have passionately taken opposing positions on the justification of owners profiting from

¹ Sewell in James Lorimer and Evelyn Ross, eds., *The Second City Book: Studies of Urban and Suburban Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company), 1977, 11.

land which is a gift of nature and whose value is a social endowment.²

Self-made capitalists are envied but they are also generally admired and their histories often inspire hope. If it seems odd that land developers are generally held in such distaste, it must be understood that the grudge against developers is independent of societal valuing of self-made, capitalist fortunes.

As previously shown, John Locke's theories of property were very influential and underlie modern rights associated with capitalism. For Locke, the concept of property was inextricable from the concept of land. Property was, in fact, ownership of land to which a value had been added by man. In modern times, the emphasis on the direct link between property and land has been minimized as property becomes more intangible.

According to Mohammad Qadeer, "Such changes coincide with the evolutionary trends of the post-industrial society where assets have increasingly taken the form of stocks, claims, notes and other paper wealth."³ Such changes also coincide with the constantly evolving abstraction of the world which is coming to include resources and is thereby affecting the debate surrounding developers.

Public concern about land development centres around the use of powers of ownership conferred by property rights. In Canada, the ideology and legality of property rights is based strongly on British common law. Property rights in Canada's French tradition are distinct both from English Canada and from France's civil code and are notable in that they only recognize tangible objects as property. Because property rights

² Mohammad Qadeer, *The Evolving Urban Land Tenure System in Canada*, Institute of Urban Studies Report No. 10 (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg, 1985), 34-5.

³ Ibid., 32.

fall under provincial jurisdiction, there are many variations of property rights across the country. However, if the nature of the property is ignored, both English and French traditions in all provinces are remarkably similar in the inherent rights they associate with property.⁴

Private property rights in Canada commonly constitute the following powers:

- a) power to use;
- b) power to alienate;
- c) power to assimilate;
- d) power to pass by succession;
- e) power to claim title to.⁵

The exercising of these powers by a land owner can have serious consequences for others. This is especially true of the powers to use and alienate. Common property rights such as the right to clean air and water can be destroyed or denied by land owners exercising private property rights. Because the development of land changes a 'gift of nature' it can seriously affect needs which are elemental to a portion or all of society's well-being.

The public perception is that developers have a purely economic interest in developing land and are therefore likely to negatively impact social and ecological aspects of life. It is the power which the developer has over society that is of concern to the public. Of even greater concern is the belief that this potential power will be used if the developer senses that there is money to be made. The perceived need to guard common property rights has led the urban public to disassociate land developers from other capitalists.

⁴ Ibid., 5-10.

⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

As a result, land development has historically been separated from other modes of capitalist production. The production of commodities is conceptually and physically very different from land development. Land development, like farming and mining, is seen by the public to have a direct impact on the most inherent part of land - the soil. Qadeer touches on the distinction between factory production and land development when he states that, "It is almost a cliché now that land should be viewed as a resource and not a commodity implying an enhanced social responsibility in its disposition."⁶

The developer has a different outlook: land is simply one aspect of property and a capitalist has the right to use property to make money; therefore, land must be a commodity. For the developer, land is a means to an end but for the public, the land is an end in itself. The divergent views of the public (land = resource) and the capitalist developers (land = commodity) is a primary cause for clashes between the two groups.

The major change in land development in Canada came at the end of the Second World War when a large urbanization process took place. It was at this point that land and property development became a major industry and started the move from the domain of an unorganized free market to an organized one. The development of urban land in Canada was traditionally the product of boosterism or land speculation. The receptiveness of developers to become corporate capitalists and the security ensured by government encouragement conspired to create what is today called the 'corporate city'.⁷

The end of the Second World War saw the return of thousands of veterans who needed inexpensive housing for themselves and their families. Demand outweighed

⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁷ Reid in Gerecke, 65.

supply significantly. As well, the economic desperation of the Depression had led to the existence of sub-standard housing which reformers fought to have improved or replaced. But construction was a risky business and demand was not enough to stimulate the free market to supply new units.

In Canada, as in any capitalist system, it is the role of the government to intervene to ensure the production of unprofitable but essential goods:

The perceived view of governments and their housing experts in the nineteen forties was that production of new housing by private enterprise was not only desirable, but also necessary for the health of the country. Post-war optimism placed a great deal of faith in the growth and ability of industry to supply housing for the needs of Canada. And governments geared themselves up to help the property industry meet that public need.⁸

The government was eager to involve itself because urban development was not seen merely as a housing issue but as a way to stimulate and rebuild the Canadian economy. In 1944, the subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning produced the *Curtis Report*, which idealistically set out the goal of housing all citizens and rebuilding the nation. The report lent a utopian air to the 1944 National Housing Act (NHA), whose full title was *An Act to promote the construction of new houses and the repair and maintenance of existing houses, and improvement of housing and living standards and the expansion of employment in the post-war period.*⁹

In 1946, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was set up as a government agency to regulate and stimulate the housing sector. It was to do so using a series of building and buying incentives which would reduce risks to the involved parties:

⁸ Sewell in Lorimer and Ross, 11.

⁹ Ibid., 10.

banks, construction companies and developers. The incentives included insured mortgages and the buy-back of unsold units. Government incentives made land development attractive. And the optimistic view of the future coupled with the dream of home-ownership made the public receptive to an urban lifestyle (suburbia) about to move into the mainstream.

By the second half of the 1940s—a short time into the NHA's grandiose housing plans—housing costs rose dramatically so that “there was consternation that real housing needs would not be met. One point rapidly became clear: that private developers would not be able to provide housing for those who most needed it. It was the old problem of discovering that the economy did not work for low-income people.”¹⁰

Developers continued to make money as a result of financial securities set up after the war and a middle class aspiration to suburban housing. Developers had entered the era of the corporate suburb. Don Mills was its prototype and the “style it established has become so pervasive that many people assume it is the only way residential communities can be built. Moreover, the economic arrangements underpinning Don Mills have been widely used by developers who hope to repeat its staggering economic success.”¹¹

Before the war, it had been characteristic to buy land speculatively to be sold to a builder at a time when a profit could be garnered. The builder would tend to make money on the land as well as the house. An Ontario capitalist, E.P. Taylor, had been buying land north of Toronto from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. Taylor gradually acquired parcels of land in a speculative process but decided on an experiment to absorb the profits

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 80.

usually captured by builders by cutting them out of the process as much as possible. In 1951, Taylor presented his proposal to the North York Council who approved it on the condition that industrial uses were added to the project.

Macklin Hancock, a postgraduate landscape architect student at Harvard, was hired as the chief planner of what he named "Don Mills". Hancock divided the land into four neighbourhoods which were to be the building blocks of the community. Hancock's neighbourhood idea reflected the interest of the time, in resolving humankind with the automobile and of building communities of human scale. The neighbourhood was seen as a planning tool which possessed the power to organize the way in which residents lived their lives.

These neighbourhoods were placed on a discontinuous street system of curved roads. The street system acted as a barrier to the outside world and therefore added to the cachet of the insiders, the residents. Sidewalks were eliminated to give the impression of a roadway cutting through a natural setting (the all-important greenspace). Noteworthy natural elements were skirted by the winding roads and thus maintained. Hancock designed the houses to take advantage of the greenery by using large lots and architectural styles, such as bungalows, which would spread out into nature. Hancock envisaged a variety of housing styles and non-residential uses in the community but he separated each use, even different residential uses, to its own block.

Like other grand experiments in city planning, the Don Mills utopia did not turn out as Hancock and Taylor had hoped. The local densities were too low to support most businesses and the success of Don Mills priced it out of many people's budget, resulting

in a homogeneous community. This meant that the Don Mills factory workers couldn't afford to live there and the residents of Don Mills had to commute to their centrally located, white collar jobs.

Hancock's design, while based on traditional planner beliefs and strongly rooted in the philosophy of Clarence Stein, was innovative as a Canadian suburb and was built on an impressive scale. The novelty of Hancock's design was matched by Taylor's entrepreneurial schemes.

The lack of a building company large enough to undertake the whole project and Hancock's desire for architectural diversity led Taylor to invite a variety of builders to join his venture. To ensure that his company controlled land prices so that he alone would stand to profit from land price increases, he asked builders to pay 25% of the lot price up front and to pay the balance within a year and a half. The builder could build the house and sell it, using the money from the sale to pay the balance. This reduced the capital needed by the builder and allowed Taylor to control the rate and fashion by which Don Mills grew. Taylor was able to encourage and benefit from a substantial and rapid increase in land prices as Don Mills quickly became fashionable.

Taylor's success was increased by his marketing techniques. He had silenced much damaging criticism by taking on so many different builders. Despite small contributions, each of these builders had a vested interest in seeing Don Mills succeed and would not promote their other projects to its detriment. Builders were responsible for selling their Don Mills lots which took the onus off Taylor. Taylor, however, built a large scale model of Don Mills for housing promotion and placed it in a mobile trailer

which could be moved as construction developed. This was an innovation in terms of suburban marketing.

Another revolutionary experiment was Taylor's gamble to cover the costs of servicing his subdivision. This took a considerable financial burden off the municipality, increasing support of the project. If service development did not have to be financially borne by local taxpayers, there was little cause for protest. Such arrangements soon became the norm and municipalities lost interest in developers who did not possess the means to incur the service costs associated with creating a subdivision.¹² The system therefore now favours large corporate developers.

Don Mills was a collaborative effort between an established capitalist who believed he had found an entrepreneurial way to dramatically increase development profits and an idealistic graduate student who believed he had the opportunity to change the order of people's lives by changing urban morphology. Before construction was complete, there were signs that the capitalist interests would win out over the urban reform interests if the two were to be set in competition. For example, Taylor refused to rent houses at a fixed rate to CMHC who wanted to subsidize rents for low income tenants. Taylor felt he could obtain more per unit on the free market, which ended by being true. If the CMHC had subsidized rents for some occupants, the homogeneity of Don Mills would have been alleviated to a degree.

There is no doubt that Taylor was the ultimate power in the Don Mills project and there is little doubt that the single most important aspect of Don Mills, for Taylor, was its

¹² Ibid., 80-96.

profitability. This is not to say that Taylor was only interested in making money (a subject to be dealt with shortly). The point to be made is that the profitability of Don Mills had as much of an impact on other developers and would-be developers as it had on Taylor and this influenced the shape of residential Canada:

The idea of Don Mills was quickly picked up by other developers. They used the corporate approaches Taylor had refined and the physical plan Hancock had produced. Within a few years, the fringes of Toronto and other Canadian cities began to sprout the progeny of Don Mills, with ring roads, neighbourhoods in each quadrant, walkways, large lots, and town centres. By the 1970s the planning of every Canadian city was dominated by the suburban form espoused by Hancock. With the success of Don Mills in the mid 1950s, the age of the modern corporate suburb had arrived.¹³

Don Mills provided the most impressive model, but the corporate suburbanization of North America was ingrained in capitalist profit seeking, in the automobile ethic, in the public dream of home ownership, and in the planning theories of the time. In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth T. Jackson identifies five characteristics of American urban development during the post-war period:

- Peripheral location with respect to the city;
- relatively low densities;
- architectural similarity;
- easy availability and reduced suggestion of wealth; and
- economic and racial homogeneity¹⁴.

These characteristics were equally elemental in Canada although it could be argued that today's subdivisions are little different from those of the post-war era. Each one of the previous characteristics maximizes profitability so it is little wonder that the suburban design was embraced by developers.

¹³ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴ Jackson, 238-45.

The nature and scale of the new corporate city was framed by emerging development corporations which were large and powerful but also local. These companies expanded on Taylor's marketing strategies and became more sophisticated at presenting the public with a fully packaged built environment.¹⁵

As the suburban dream became more ingrained, developing suburban land became more profitable and less risky. From the mid 1960s on, development corporations grew and became more powerful. The competitiveness of the market increased as the stakes grew and this competitiveness favoured a concentration of ownership. As the number of players was reduced, the power of the remaining few expanded and became less local. Large multinational organizations challenged even the largest local developers.

While land has traditionally been viewed as a resource, the city has over the past twenty years been increasingly viewed as a commodity as it has entered the postmodern consumerist realm. This has resulted in many inconsistencies with respect to urban analysis and middle (and upper) class buying practices. Developers have been quick to act on this confusion and market profitable elements of urban commodification.

Since the market alone has become enough to stimulate production, the government has turned its housing energies to a developing concern. The political unrest in the United States clarified the fact that many North Americans were being excluded by the post war housing policies and programs of both the United States and Canada. There existed a real need for housing for those who had no purchasing power.

¹⁵ Reid in Gerecke, 65.

Towards the end of the 1970s, the interest of a new wave of urban planners shifted from suburban utopias developed on paper to a reformation of the city as a whole. Jane Jacobs was a particularly influential writer at the time who advocated simple solutions to urban problems. Urban discontent could be alleviated by increasing diversity, making city blocks shorter and restoring the vibrancy of the downtown core. A large part of this rebirth involved bringing residents back to the urban core and this was, of course, in opposition to the suburban dream.

The public was increasingly concerned over monopoly control. This control was seen as insidious and far reaching. The developer financing of services for subdivisions had previously been seen as a gesture which would save taxpayer dollars. Such practices increasingly seemed to indicate that governments were being gagged by developers.

Community development was a reflection of the growth of citizen's movements in North America, particularly in the United States. Urban residents desired more autonomy and power to control their environments. The move towards residents' autonomy grew rapidly in the 1980s and continues to be promoted as an interest of the mainstream planning approach. The goal of community development is admirable and the need for residents to maintain an aspect of control over their environments is necessary. But the elevation of the community planning goal to the denigration of government control and private developer interests is problematic.

The importance of the community reform movement is evident in the attempt of developers, like planners, to co-opt the phenomenon. Barton Reid writes that the "development industry has not stood still. Its most sophisticated members, such as the

likes of Olympia and York, have learnt much from the reformers, even taking on reform planners. While they were world class builders in the 1970s, developers now become world class marketers and public relations experts as well."¹⁶

The public belief that developers are without a social conscience, that they will do anything to maximize profits and that development by private capitalists is necessarily evil cannot be maintained. Plans for social reform are closely associated, not only with utopianism, but also with capitalism. Philanthropic activities allow capitalists to gain prestige by serving urban residents.

Among many local developers there is a deep criticism of urban morphology and they often perceive their power and wealth as a means by which they can carry out what they deem to be solutions to the problems they see. Because developers are capitalists, they seek to reconcile their philanthropic beliefs with the economic system which binds them. There is a desire to demonstrate the economic viability of urban improvements because in a capitalist system, economic viability is necessary for and synonymous with success. If profitability can be demonstrated then change can be justified.

There may also be the desire, on the part of developers, to sway the attitudes of sectors of the public and the planning profession which hold them in contempt. In the minds of the developers, successfully doing so would increase personal and group status while increasing profit.

¹⁶ Ibid., 67.

CHAPTER 5

POWER DYNAMICS AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR URBAN PLANNING

Empowerment is a wide spread idea that is near each of us if we look.¹

Throughout the past half-century capital has engaged in a multitude of control practices often working hand in hand with state policies designed to facilitate capital accumulation "in the national interest" . . . Canadian society remains a fractured, distorted formation. There is a dynamic tension between capital and labour, with the state becoming an increasingly direct actor in the relationship mediating on behalf of capital and itself as an employer²

Since the 1960s, urban critics have outlined the need to identify the real problems plaguing urban environments. Such efforts have largely concentrated on exploring the negative physical results of human action and on pointing out the illogical nature of the planning decisions which originally led to those results. The cause of such illogical behaviour has mainly been blamed on an inability to accurately analyze on the part of decision makers or on the constraints placed upon them by powerful profit-seeking private interests.

There has therefore been a growing assumption that residents are better able to make planning decisions since they are in close contact with their environment and have a common interest in effecting real improvements. This attitude reflects a widespread public backlash against professionalism and seems to signal a turning point in urban planning theory which has a history of advocating utopian solutions.

¹ Gerecke, ed., 254.

² Wallace Clement, *The Challenge of Class Analysis* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988),

Over the past thirty years, urban critics have made substantial analyses of both the physical aspects of the built environment and the role that decision-makers play in these outcomes. But they have largely missed an accurate analysis of *why* the city has evolved and continues to evolve in a particular manner since they have ignored the motivation guiding urban decisions to act and to desist from action.

The product of the city is the physical evidence left behind from an urban development process. A belief in the importance of urban process has been an underlying aspect of the endeavour of community planning since community planning is based on empowerment, which is itself a process. It is only recently that urban processes have been explored in a larger context. The role of the process in urban planning is of critical interest and an analysis of power is an important tool for exploring urban processes. An examination of an urban product can never provide a complete understanding of how or why the product came about.

The analysis of the exercising of power provides evidence of how urban development takes place while a focus on the search for power can illuminate not only why development takes place but why there may be resistance. In this respect, a focus on power-seeking as an urban process is unique in that it allows an understanding of an aspect of urban planning which may bear no physical evidence. Urban morphology is impacted just as much by an absence of development as by development itself and so resistance is an important factor in urban form.

Left-wing criticisms of the division of labour resulting from capitalist power structures are extensive while capitalist teachings have historically denied the importance

of power in the system by pointing to the free market as an objective moderating force. According to Leo Driedger, "People tend to be ambivalent about power because in a democratic society we emphasize equality, whereas power implies the dominance of some over others."³

Power is an extremely broad and complicated topic leading to multiple concepts of its effects. It is not the intent to explore urban development using a Marxist, functionalist or other doctrinal theory of power and class. Rather, a personal theory of power is formulated by examining the Canadian corporate capitalist forces guiding three urban groups.

Power dynamics are not unique to capitalism. But the Canadian corporate capitalist system has had a sizeable effect on the nation's psyche and this has had an impact on the search for power by individuals and groups. An historical analysis of the urban development process provides an overview of the organic growth of the capitalist power dynamic in Canada and its inherent nature. It is this inherent nature (of the existing power dynamic in the Canadian corporate system) that creates the barrier against eradication. The popular assumption has been that the detrimental urban power dynamic can be eliminated through community planning efforts. This is inaccurate since capitalist power seeking is required of everyone acting within the system.

In 1965, John Porter offered a useful conception of the manifestation of power in Canada as a crucial means of exploiting property and resources. He suggested that modern society was so specialized and complicated that complex government and

³ Driedger, 186.

corporate systems had necessarily been created. Decision-makers in government and corporate organizations had enough power that they effectively ruled Canadian society. These powerful decision-makers did not act in full consensus since they were paradoxically found to be in competition and conflict while being in collusion.⁴ Porter argued that decision-makers maintain power and privilege even when they are found to lack merit but, in fact, politicians and CEOs can easily lose positions of power as the result of public scandals.

Porter's class theory is essential to this work but it is necessary to broaden his definition of power. Class can effectively be seen as the hierarchical pigeon-holing of all members of society according to their positions of power. It soon becomes clear that the manifestation of power through class structures encompasses more than political power:

Weber noted that persons distinguished among themselves by prestige as well as by power and economic possession. . . . Thus, many sociologists today take the view that there are three principal dimensions of stratification: the honorific (prestige), the political (power), and the economic (wealth). The Weberian three-fold distinction suggests that stratification is complex, rather than merely a matter of economic differentiation, especially in the modern nation state. The complexity suggests that full equality may fail to materialize even when there is equal distribution of wealth.⁵

Weber's three-fold distinction is a necessary element in recognizing the diversity by which people are differentiated. This author broadens Weber's definition by arguing that prestige, political control and wealth are all forms of power since power is defined (by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary) as, "possession of control, authority or

⁴ Porter, 22-8.

⁵ Dennis Forcese, *The Canadian Class Structure*, 3rd ed., (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1986), 3.

influence over others.” Class and power are therefore intimately connected since class is simply an organizational system by which power is understood.

The complexity of the corporate capitalist system mentioned by Porter and the complexity of class stratification explained by Weber are important to note because they indicate the difficulty faced when trying to effectuate change within either system. Urban critics have not fully understood the interrelated nature of the Canadian systems of power and corporate capitalism and have therefore believed it to be possible to let go of one while working within the other.

The focus of this thesis has been on the traditional concept and definition of power. The focus will continue to be on corporate capitalist power but it is necessary to note its distinction from the type of power proposed for community planning projects since the two will be contrasted:

1. “Empowerment means awareness of self as a guide to action. . . . While empowerment is rooted in the psyche, it has a political element. Empowerment means addressing inequality, injustice and domination in a new way.”⁶
2. “*Power over* . . . is power based on unequal relationships, from domination, hierarchy, patriarchy, a power that enslaves the oppressed as well as the oppressor.”^{7 *}

Community planning is based on citizen empowerment and without this underpinning the community planning movement would not exist. The phenomenon of

⁶ Gerecke, ed., 249.

⁷ Ibid.

* The terms “power-over” and “power” are used interchangeably in this text.

local empowerment, is of course, not unique to urban planning, but has been shown to have its roots in the citizen uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s, which were particularly forceful in the United States. The interesting aspect of local empowerment is that it has become so widely accepted, in so many fields, as the correct and only possible method for effecting positive urban change:

Planning legislation now uses the word 'empower' to convey the thrust of their efforts; the philosophy of community organising, still taught in most schools of social work, centres on empowerment; similarly the idea of local control . . . builds on empowerment; the emerging alternative of 'community economic development,' which of course is founded on Schumacher's work, keys on empowerment; . . . and all of the so-called 'movements' are founded on empowerment - self-help, feminist, ecology, and peace movements.⁸

Empowerment is a psychological re-conceptualization of the self but it also contains a political aspect since it seeks liberation from inequality and domination. While empowerment is strongly rooted in self-knowledge and self-awareness, the definition includes, in a broad sense, aid from without. It is the attempt, by those who have traditionally held power-over, to aid empowerment efforts to allow for local self-government that is of interest.

The Canadian system of corporate capitalism has incorporated the concept of empowerment into mainstream thinking. This is generally viewed as a positive step towards inclusive, rather than hierarchical forms of management. In fact, it masks the ongoing power-over management style and co-opts critical voices. Urban decision

⁸ Ibid., 254.

makers, like the rest of capitalist society, are seeking to maintain and increase power so there is little real support, on any level, for empowerment efforts.

There are several interesting characteristics of power-over. Firstly, power insinuates a hierarchical relationship used to maintain and gain power through the oppression of others and it is popularly believed that power can therefore “be represented by a pyramid, with a small elite on top of the pyramid and the rest distributed below and subject to the influence and decisions of the elite.”⁹

But at the apex of the organising system one doesn’t find an omnipotent elite of humans, one finds the entity of power itself. In other words, the ultimate oppressor in any power-over dynamic is power itself. The inherent paradox in power-over systems is that power enslaves everyone trapped within it. People are capable and do, themselves, exert power over others but one must recognize that they are ultimately powerless in the face of the power dynamic.

The nature of power’s enslaving forces is the underlying logic of a capitalist system which requires constant growth. It is not possible to decide that one has enough power and maintain the status quo. Capitalism requires increased capital for mere survival. And the search for capital goes hand in hand with the search for power:

The prerogatives of power within capitalism provide that private property and benefits which go along with it represent an important link between condition and opportunity. Private property is at the basis of the economic system in capitalist society and the advantages it affords some are the limits it imposes on others.¹⁰

⁹Driedger, 186.

¹⁰Clement, *The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power*, with a Foreword by John Porter (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 2

Critiques of capitalist power dynamics have been misleading in the past because they have focused on power as it pertains to ruling classes and elites. The scholarship has been set up in a manner which has only recognized the power used by elites to the detriment of the proletariat and has ignored any forms of power which might be held by the 'powerless'. Although power is a hierarchical system, it is inaccurate to view the system as one top-down entity. Everyone within the system holds some form of power-over. And everyone within the system is powerless to a degree. Essential to accurately analyzing urban processes is the recognition that:

1. Those who seem powerless have some power; while
2. those that seem powerful are also powerless; and
3. everyone is ultimately powerless against the need to increase power.

Power relationships are infinite in number and dynamic in composition. A large part of the dynamism and complexity of power structures is the fact that each person exists within a multitude of these structures and at a variety of relative positions of power. People are constantly seeking power in a myriad of relationships and negotiating coalitions to increase power as broadly as possible. It is for this reason that the concept of class as a categorization of people in one strata is not used here.

That said, it is still accurate to maintain that some people hold positions of power in most of their power relationships and some people are oppressed in most of their power relationships. The practice of collusion among powerful groups and individuals acts to further shut out and oppress the less powerful:

Communities are composed, not of single elites, but rather of a series of competing elites, forming coalitions as needed to gain their ends. . . . The power elite tend to be representative of business

and professional groups, who have greater financial means and higher levels of education and training. Thus, economic interests are usually well represented, but the poor remain powerless.¹¹

The purpose of defining power is not to quantify its existence in any way but rather to show how Canada's capitalist history has influenced people to seek power and how it is this search for power which affects the process of urban development. Such an analysis of the urban process is in contrast to mainstream power writings which are generally interested in identifying who holds power and how they do or do not use it to garner advantage.

An important element of the search for power is the way in which the process is bounded. Since people are powerful and powerless, contemporaneously, they place boundaries on others' search for power and similarly have boundaries placed on their own search for power. This bounding is ongoing and organic and reflects the kinetic nature of power dynamics.

Since the public is perceived as disadvantaged in the face of an overwhelming corporate power and victimized in the capitalist urban dynamic, it is seen as the role of urban planners, and the public system in general, to ensure the betterment of built environments and human situations by support of empowerment initiatives.

The image of the public as victim cannot be maintained, not only because each person is situated within multiple power relations, but also since the public is not a cohesive entity. Chapter 2 has shown that the urban history of Canada's middle class has come at the expense of lower equity groups. In addition, other phenomena such as

¹¹ Driedger, 187.

regional and ethnic power disparities, while not within the scope of this work, must be noted as a further cause of Canada's fractured public power. As a result, Canadian residents may have very little in common with one another, even when located within the same community.

If each person simultaneously maintains various relative positions of power depending on the power relationship being studied, then a concept of class structure should allow a person to belong to several classes. Keeping this broadened conception in mind, Wallace Clement's explanation of class has a bearing on this analysis: "Class is defined objectively by relationships to the ownership and control of capital and other valued resources" so that class is a "social phenomenon as represented by common relationships, backgrounds, residences, intermarriages, associations and ideology" which "all serve to create a social bond between members of particular classes and affect the life chances of their members."¹²

It is little wonder, then, that people in positions of relative power are unwilling to jeopardize a privileged status and all that that entails for the empowerment of other groups with whom they feel little kinship.

The British author Peter Ambrose explores the extent to which one's class position directly affects one's ability to gain access to elements of the built environment and his findings parallel the Canadian phenomenon:

If most of the stock of built environment were allocated at the 'social criteria' end of the scale, access would depend little on one's position in the labour-market hierarchy. But the years since the mid-1970s have arguably seen this translation become more direct. Increased production and ownership by profit-seeking

¹² Clement, *Corporate Elite*, 10.

interests has meant an increase in the extent to which 'market criteria' determine allocation and thus an increase too in the extent to which the user's income, rather than need, is the key to access to housing, good living environment and high-standard education and healthcare.¹³

The 'public' is therefore not without blame when it comes to the resistance against local empowerment and community planning. The numerous class interests within the public are often competing for power and are thus part of the underlying problem. Efforts at empowerment cannot co-exist within a power-over system and there have been few examples of ability or even of willingness to give up a hierarchical power structure for a collaborative one. Some local empowerment efforts are in fact thinly disguised attempts to gain power over another group.

It is disadvantaged groups that have the most to gain from self-discovery and empowerment. These groups often have little decision-making power with respect to the development of built environments, even their own, and would benefit substantially from making their voices heard. However, it has already become apparent that it is these very groups that are generally least able to gain the power of self-determination as they do not have the necessary resources and skills required by the organizational system in place and because more powerful groups have a vested interest in seeing them fail.

The emphasis has so far been on showing that the public is not a uniform entity whose members have common goals. Despite a wide-reaching interest in demographics, the public sector tends to view the public as a cohesive group inasmuch as every Canadian is eligible to vote. The fact that public servants in positions of power and

¹³ Ambrose, 13-4.

decision-making depend directly on the votes of the public to maintain or increase their positions is an important bounding mechanism in the system.

The extent of the ability of economic and prestige power wielders in the public to influence decisions of elected officials is of less interest here than the fact that many disadvantaged groups have the right to vote and if their numbers are high enough they can cause decision-making politicians to pander to them. The point is not that this ability to vote represents any advantage for groups with little power since this is often not the case. The point is that the net effect of trying to please all of the various interest groups within the voting population places the power holders in the public sector in a perceived position of powerlessness with respect to the public.

In their search for power, governments recognize the need to please and appease the public and this has led to a show of public sector support of empowerment efforts. To its dismay, the government is often placed in a difficult position when trying to resolve community empowerment schemes with powerful interest groups within the public.

It is the role of urban planners to facilitate and help effectuate community planning schemes. While planners themselves may feel that they are entering a new and radically different form of urban planning, the underlying force guiding their actions remains a search for status embodied in utopian social reform theory. Urban planners as public employees are bounded in a series of interrelated and complex ways. They are circumscribed by their utopian ideology which they believe to be inherently compatible with local empowerment but which is, in fact, based on a paternalistic power-over mentality arising from its corporate capitalist origins.

The utopian history of urban planners has led them to echo the age-old public view that land is a resource to be used for the betterment of humankind. However, the tie urban planners have to the public sector creates a problematic contradiction in that the government has a role to play not only in protecting the land resource but also in stimulating the economy, in which land-as-commodity plays an important role. The recent willingness of the middle and upper classes to buy into the commodification of land is also problematic in that it places a large sector of the population in ideological conflict with urban planners. As well, urban planners are part of the professional middle class which makes the separation of lifestyle and job questionable.

One area of particular difficulty in resolving urban power conflicts has been in public housing. Urban planners have long maintained that the poor must not be ghettoized. The government, in trying to maintain its power, finds it difficult to antagonize higher equity residents who are against the construction of low-income housing in their neighbourhoods. At the same time, the government is responsible to its poorer voting constituents.

Urban planners are professionals who work within a bureaucratic system and this gives rise to obvious conflicts of interest between the self-less task to which they are supposed to be dedicated and the attempt to rise within the system by increasing power over others. Planners also understand the role of a governmental organization in colluding with the private sector and this often means that planners' hands are effectively tied by organizational mandates which conflict with their reform theories. Financial support of development schemes by advantaged groups within the public further reduces

the power of the urban planner by increasing resistance to community development proposals.

The public represents the developers' client. Of course, it is only the public with the buying power which is of interest to developers in their search for economic power. Most detrimental to developers initially was the conflicting ideologies of land as commodity and land as resource (discussed in Chapter 4). In this respect, there has been a great effort on the part of developers to harness the increasing commodification of society and to apply it to housing and land development. The developers have become astute marketers and have largely succeeded in bringing land development into the arena of lifestyle commodification of the urban middle and upper classes.

There has also been great debate in the last few decades concerning the extent to which developers are able to manipulate and control the public sector. There has been a strong belief among urban reformers that government, which is supposed to serve the public, has more of a commitment to serve the large developers. Conventions such as the servicing of subdivisions by developers certainly serve to make the distinction of control between developers and municipalities less clear. And arguments that developers are gaining too much power over the public sector may be valid. However, it is important to remember that the government, in seeking to maintain and increase its power, has placed many restrictions on land developers. Zoning systems, for example, greatly determine the possible use and therefore value of urban land.

The public may be disadvantaged in that it is cut out of the colluding private sector/public sector loop of negotiations and deals. These often have a major impact on the lives of members of the public. However, the public cannot continue to be seen as a

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single body which is the victim of a capitalist system in which the government panders to private interests. This mainstream interpretation, popularized by urban reformers, is unfair in that it assigns powerlessness to 'the public', power to the developer and sees the urban planner as the mediator caught between the two

is useful as a body of analysis. Much of the literature dealing with urban power issues focuses on the city as an element within a larger system. This has been used to contrast dominant cities with subjected ones and has led to the exploration of the effects of urban development processes on rural places.

If the understanding of the urban system is shifted to take into account its inherent interdependence rather than the unidirectional acting of powerful bodies over weaker ones, then the city as a system could be a valuable framework within which to test power seeking as a determinant of inter-urban and urban-rural processes.

In any case, an expansion of urban power studies to incorporate power seeking as one element acting on urban processes should prove to be a useful tool for discovering the logic of seemingly capricious development activities, for testing other methodologies of urban criticism, and for creating a more holistic understanding of the complex entity which a city is.

which, when added to existing methodologies, allows for the emergence of a more holistic urban criticism.

The purpose of applying the proposed analytical methodology to three specific groups acting within an urban environment was for the maintenance of manageability during the preliminary testing of the theory. The research conducted for this thesis seems to support the statements that :

1. power seeking is a fundamental, and yet largely ignored, force acting on urban processes; and
2. a methodology which analyzes power seeking as a planning motive can be a valuable tool for expanding the realm of urban criticism in that it can point to barriers to urban development which are otherwise difficult to detect. Such a methodology is a useful component of understanding why the built environment has taken the form it has.

The majority of those critical of the built environment have not fully understood the extent to which power dynamics and corporate capitalism are interrelated and have therefore underestimated the difficulty in letting go of the former while working within the latter. The focus of this thesis was therefore on the drive for power as a vehicle for urban development processes because such an emphasis helps illuminate the pervasiveness of capitalist power dynamics as an influence on urban planning.

Mainstream research on urban power dynamics has generally centered on the identification of power elites and their influence on the physical elements of urban environments. Such a methodology does not take into account:

1. the absence of development as a factor in urban morphology;
2. the influence of non-elites on urban development; or
3. the inherent nature of capitalist power dynamics where *everyone* is ultimately oppressed by power itself.

The capitalist system which has encouraged the development of current power dynamics has also bolstered the consumerism and commodification which have come to characterize Canadian life. The progression from modernism to postmodernism has facilitated the incorporation of daily life into the capital process to the point where ideas themselves have become commodified. The result is that ideas which undermine capitalism are as inconsequential as sympathetic ideas and do not, therefore, unsettle the system.

The recent willingness of the middle and upper classes to embrace land as a commodity rather than a resource is problematic in that it places a significant sector of the population in ideological conflict with the urban planning profession. Paradoxically, urban planners are themselves part of the professional middle class so that a tension exists between their private and professional lives.

Suburbanization and gentrification have both become significant phenomena of the twentieth century urban environment. And both have occurred as the middle class, a demographic force made up of large numbers and strong buying power, has become increasingly willing to accept (and embrace) the commodification of land. However, when developers threaten middle class power dynamics by exerting their right to exclude, the argument that land is a resource is often cited by those affected.

Ironically, the right to exclude is exerted by the middle class on the lower class during the gentrification process - a process which continues to grow since the increasing affluence of an urban area is uncontrollable through planning tools such as zoning. Despite catering to different sectors within the middle class, suburbanization and gentrification processes both essentially perform the function of allowing large-scale consumerist activities to take place.

The ongoing belief of reform critics in the viability of community development belies the necessity for a large scale resolution to set aside current power dynamics in securing that goal. Even assuming that such a commitment exists, the organizational nature of the corporate capitalist system is set up in such a way as to impede empowerment processes. While Marx accurately professed that political and economic elites would come together in a capitalist system for the pursuit of corporate capitalist ends, he neglected the guiding effect of the power dynamic on non-elite forces. It is therefore unfair to assign all blame for urban problems on elites. Unless the system itself is changed, fallen elites will always be replaced by others guided by the same drive for power.

Disadvantaged groups, as those with the least power, have the most to gain from opting out of the system and becoming empowered. This task is, however, extremely difficult to achieve in isolation and since there is little support for empowerment within other sectors of the corporate capitalist system, these efforts are rarely able to actualize any real changes. Within a power-over system, the organizational structures favour the

status quo and lower equity groups are therefore placed at a disadvantage when interacting with other groups

Despite a theoretical understanding that planners are not apolitical, the perception persists that planners set aside existing power dynamics as evidenced in the belief that urban planners willingly subvert their positions of power to help communities establish systems of empowerment. Developers have long borne the brunt of urban criticism but urban problems resulting from a developer's drive for power are perhaps least unsettling since they are most easily understood. The misconceptions surrounding the drive for power by the planning profession and the public may be more difficult to resolve because the qualities associated with those groups are fraught with contradictions.

The intellectual framework proposed in this thesis can readily be tested against the daily events and occurrences which affect how cities evolve. Most urban planning activities can be broken down into processes of power dynamics involving the kinds of competing actors identified in this thesis. This framework can also easily be extended to analyze broader inter-group and intra-group dynamics. For example, there is strong evidence that power seeking by various levels of government produces tensions which are acted out in a city.¹

An even broader arena for testing the methodology would be through an inter-urban or a rural-urban study. Because urban planning exists as a distinct activity, the city

¹ For example, in the late 1960s, a federal Task Force concluded that there should be a major review of federal policies in light of negative public perceptions related to the government's recent bulldozer approach to urban renewal. The result of the review was that the Federal Government decided to decentralize policy-making to a degree and encourage community involvement in housing issues. But this positive step toward self determination was hindered by capitalist power dynamics in the form of municipal and provincial opposition to what was perceived as an effort by the federal government to short circuit the role of local government. (Axworthy & Epstein, 19)

is useful as a body of analysis. Much of the literature dealing with urban power issues focuses on the city as an element within a larger system. This has been used to contrast dominant cities with subjected ones and has led to the exploration of the effects of urban development processes on rural places.

If the understanding of the urban system is shifted to take into account its inherent interdependence rather than the unidirectional acting of powerful bodies over weaker ones, then the city as a system could be a valuable framework within which to test power seeking as a determinant of inter-urban and urban-rural processes.

In any case, an expansion of urban power studies to incorporate power seeking as one element acting on urban processes should prove to be a useful tool for discovering the logic of seemingly capricious development activities, for testing other methodologies of urban criticism, and for creating a more holistic understanding of the complex entity which a city is.

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