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ANT in Westboro: An examination
of the applicability of Actor-Network Theory in gentrification studies

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ABSTRACT

This work considers the applicability of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) for gentrification studies. The thesis argues that ANT, as a methodology for scholarly research on gentrification, broadens the scope for scholarly critique of gentrification. Whereas traditional methodologies in gentrification studies are designed to analyze gentrification in terms of causality, the ANT approach adopts a relational ontology and so seeks to document and describe how assemblages of associations between actors produce the effect of gentrification. The thesis applies the ANT approach to an analysis of gentrification in Westboro, an urban neighbourhood of Ottawa, Ontario. Several actors, including the Mountain Equipment Co-op, the Loblaw's Superstore, new condominium developments, parking meters and bicycles are incorporated into the analysis to illustrate the relationality that achieves the enactment of gentrification. The thesis concludes by outlining strategies for future, critical, ANT-inspired inquiry related to gentrification.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 6 |
| The Purpose of the Study..... | 6 |
| Methodology in Existing Gentrification Research..... | 8 |
| Methodological Characteristics of ANT..... | 10 |
| Chapter Outline..... | 13 |
| CHAPTER TWO: GENTRIFICATION RESEARCH & ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY..... | 15 |
| Introduction..... | 15 |
| Gentrification Research..... | 18 |
| Neil Smith..... | 20 |
| David Ley..... | 24 |
| Contemporary Debates..... | 27 |
| Actor-Network Theory..... | 31 |
| Mariana Valverde..... | 35 |
| Steven Flusty..... | 40 |
| Randy Lippert..... | 44 |
| Summary..... | 47 |
| CHAPTER THREE: OTTAWA, WESTBORO, THE MEC & THE SUPERSTORE..... | 51 |
| Introduction..... | 51 |
| Ottawa..... | 53 |
| Westboro..... | 60 |
| The MEC..... | 69 |
| The political ideologies embedded in a cooperative..... | 71 |
| The popular environmental politics of many Co-op members..... | 72 |
| The Superstore..... | 74 |
| Summary..... | 77 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: PARKING METERS & SWEET CITY BICYCLES..... | 80 |
| Introduction..... | 80 |
| Parking Meters of Ottawa..... | 82 |
| Sweet City Bicycles..... | 91 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Summary | 102 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION..... | 106 |
| Forward in All Directions | 108 |
| WORKS CITED..... | 115 |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

This thesis explores the potential of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as a fruitful methodological approach to gentrification studies. Despite its title, ANT is not a theory but rather a methodological approach to research developed in the sociological field of science and technology studies (STS) and predicated on a radical relational ontology. This means that its practitioners “treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located [and] assume that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations” (Law, 2007, p. 1).¹ Consequently, the ANT approach involves a different set of research practices than traditional qualitative and / or quantitative approaches. Gentrification studies explore the interrelationship between social class and urban form and pay particularly close attention to the way the reinvestment of capital in urban areas creates urban spaces that displace, marginalize and exclude the urban poor and working class.

This thesis demonstrates the usefulness of the ANT approach by applying it to a study of gentrification in Westboro, an urban neighbourhood in Ottawa, Ontario. In the past decade, Westboro has experienced the arrival of a Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), a Loblaw’s brand Superstore, and several condominium developments; subsequently, the cost of housing and retail space has increased in Westboro more than in any other area of Ottawa (City of Ottawa Planning and Development Department, 2009,

¹ The three sociologists who originally conceived of ANT are John Law (2007), Bruno Latour (2005), and Michel Callon (1986) (Law, 2007, pp. 3-6). The texts referenced are not “seminal” works (except maybe for Callon’s) but are most revealing about each theorist’s contribution. More background information on ANT is provided in Chapter Two.

p. 23). The thesis neither offers an extensive study of the Westboro area, nor a comprehensive critique of gentrification theories and inquiry; rather, it is a preliminary examination of the applicability of the ANT approach in gentrification scholarship. The principal argument of this thesis is that ANT broadens the scope for scholarly critique of gentrification.

Although the most significant contribution of the work is methodological, it was an interest in the gentrification process and not methodology that inspired this study initially. The original goal of the research was to destabilize the commonly held belief that gentrification is an inevitable process of urban development. One of the misconceptions that perpetuate this belief is that the inverse of gentrification is urban decline. Tom Slater, a new and well-respected gentrification scholar,² claims that “a key victory for opponents of gentrification would be to find ways to communicate more effectively that either unlivable disinvestment and decay or reinvestment and displacement is actually a false choice for low-income communities” (2006, p. 753). As an example of this belief, Slater cites an excerpt from an article in the *Toronto Star*, entitled, “Less crime, busy streets are bad things?”:

Gentrification is no miracle cure, but nor is it a disease. As Larry Bourne tells me, in diplomatic fashion, ‘it certainly seems better than the alternative of constant, pervasive, apocalyptic decay’. As a process and an end result, it’s the best we’ve got. (Whyte, 2005, as cited by Slater, 2006, p. 752)

² According to a headline that briefly appeared in the “news” section of the journal’s website, Slater (2006), “The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research,” was the most downloaded article from the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* and responses to this article formed a special edition of the journal just over a year after it was published.

Grappling with this myth led me to realize that gentrification methodologies are partly responsible for perpetuating the belief that gentrification is an inevitable urban process; or, at least that methodological tools for destabilizing this myth have not been well established in gentrification literature. For example, in the same article in which Slater (2006) states that a key victory for those opposing gentrification would be to debunk the gentrification-decay dichotomy, the author also proposes that gentrification scholarship be methodologically geared towards “providing qualitative accounts of displacement [engendered by gentrification]” (ibid., p. 749). This exemplifies a methodological disconnect; from the outset, this approach not only fails to address the problem but could also potentially sustain it in the way that it links hardship and struggle with un-gentrified space. Before the gentrification-decline dichotomy can be debunked, new methodologies for researching gentrification need to be discussed.

Methodology in Existing Gentrification Research

In her excellent textbook, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies*, Paula Saukko (2003) writes about the difference between methodology and methods:

The difference made by the Greek epithet ‘logos’ (knowledge) is that, whereas methods refers to practical ‘tools’ to make sense of empirical reality, methodology refers to the wider package of both tools and a philosophical and political commitment that come with a particular research ‘approach’. (p. 8)

The matter of a researcher’s philosophical and political commitments is complex and affects research practices long before the research gets underway. Why do gentrification research? Why do research at all? What is knowledge and how is it produced? Many gentrification scholars have spent a great deal of time debating the theoretical

underpinning of gentrification research (ex. Smith, 1987a; and Ley, 1987) and its political commitments (Slater, 2006) but the wider methodological “package” has not recently been examined explicitly.

Ironically, it seems that one of the last attempts to do so was “the beginning of the end” for analyses of methodological approaches to gentrification research. In 1984, Canadian scholar Damaris Rose wrote an article pointing to “important problems of epistemology and method [in gentrification research], which will not be resolved purely by an increased volume of literature in the same vein...” (p. 51). Rose was critiquing critical gentrification research on the grounds that it operated exclusively from a Marxist theoretical perspective. Rose’s main argument was that positivism is not the only alternative to Marxist analyses of gentrification and that critical theorists could analyze the process without reverting to the naiveté of the former or the determinism of the latter.

Speaking methodologically about a Marx-influenced theory of gentrification, Rose makes the following statement:

This produces a type of analysis which, in my view, prevents us from asking questions about the significance of changes in reproduction that ‘gentrifiers’ themselves are bringing about, although not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing. (p. 54)

Unwittingly, Rose herself set the methodological agenda by focusing critical gentrification research on the debate between Marx-influenced theories of gentrification (which look at political economic structures) and theories which look at the behaviours, attitudes and practices of gentrifiers themselves. What was not evident at the time, and what constitutes a central argument of this thesis, is that while these two theoretical foundations are diametrically opposed, they are linked to bodies of research that are methodologically similar. In both cases, researchers seek to identify social forces that

cause gentrification. Marxist-influenced analyses are methodologically geared towards the identification and interpretations of macro-level social forces and so deploy methods that capture historical, institutional and political economic data; research that followed Rose's lead are methodologically geared towards the identification and interpretation of micro-level forces and so deploy methods that capture hermeneutic data. This debate creates a particular methodological terrain in which social forces, processes of urbanism and the researcher's lens are presumed to be hierarchically distinct and within this terrain, the researchers' job is to juxtapose these three variables in a way that reveals how the first two are causally related. Chapter Two of this study engages more with this methodological terrain.

Methodological Characteristics of ANT

Gentrification scholarship began at least four decades ago and in that time has accumulated a great deal of theoretical baggage.³ Entering this field can be overwhelming for new researchers because of the volume of literature that exists and because within the field, two theoretical camps zealously defend their position over the other.⁴ From my experience, it was initially difficult to say with any certainty which camp most accurately reflected my beliefs but it seemed that a decision was immediately necessary and inevitable; it was also obvious that such a decision would affect the research. I was reading a great deal about gentrification but wanted to attain some first-hand knowledge of the process before forming any foundational opinions. What was required was an

³ For a comprehensive review, see Lees et al., (2008).

⁴ These two theoretical "camps" will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

approach that allowed research to proceed with as few arbitrary theoretical decisions as possible.

Although ANT has been nicknamed “slowciology” (Latour, 2005, p. 165) because it is a methodology that takes a great deal of time (more on this point later), it does allow researchers to wade quickly into empirical data at the beginning of the research process. In fact, the first step in ANT research is to begin indiscriminately accumulating as much data as possible. Research begins with obvious sources like newspapers, existing scholarly research and both official and unofficial texts about the locale being studied. The myriad of information technologies, particularly search and data-association applications, offer countless ways to accumulate and categorize potentially meaningful data. The rule of thumb is to read anything that might be relevant, try to find the opportunity to speak about the subject with a wide variety of people, and always be on the lookout for leads that might reveal something new about the research area. ANT does not ask its practitioners to make any difficult theoretical decisions at the beginning of the research process. The only criterion for selecting data is that its connection to the research topic, in my case gentrification in Westboro, is somehow empirically traceable.

Not only does this approach facilitate entry into the research process, it also establishes a wider range of possible research outcomes. If a researcher, for example, follows Marxist-influenced theories of gentrification, she will inevitably find capitalist modes of production; however, if she follows empirical connections, there is no telling what she will find. ANT does not suggest, however, that research can be void of theory; instead, it harnesses the unpredictability of empirical data to engender a kind of theoretical reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Data has a way of keeping theory in

check if the researcher grants it authority over the focus of her analytical lens. In this study, for example, there are a great number of outdoor stores in Westboro that arrived when gentrification in the area became noticeable and so the analysis moved towards the outdoor-gear market. That is not to say that the guiding theory of this research is that this market *caused* gentrification, nor does this research *test* this statement as a hypothesis; instead, the empirical data (there are sports stores in Westboro) is leading the analysis (it had better say something about sports stores).

At this point, it is useful to understand why ANT has been nicknamed “slowciology.” In more tradition methodological paradigms, after the researcher makes those difficult theoretical commitments at the beginning of the research process, the theory moves the analysis forward relatively quickly. Generally speaking, the data that reaffirms the theory will be recorded and used as evidence to support the thesis but data that contradicts the theory might be ignored. A Marxist-influenced gentrification researcher, for example, might analyze gentrification in Westboro without ever learning anything about the people who are buying outdoor sporting equipment because the theory points the analysis to structural factors like institutions, policies and class. Consumption-side theorists might analyze Westboro without ever considering the macro-level supply chains that allow this type of consumption to proceed. If the decision to employ the ANT approach is made, however, the researcher is forced to follow the data and this can be a very lengthy process.

The goal of this thesis is *not* to provide a comprehensive analysis of gentrification in Westboro but to examine the applicability of the ANT approach to research in this field. Indeed, Chapter Four provides an ANT analysis of the Westboro area but its sole

purpose is to illustrate ANT in action and not necessarily to make any original contributions about gentrification or Westboro. Undoubtedly, the goals of resistance and critique underlie this research; after all, it was these initial goals that led me to the topic of methodology in gentrification research. Nonetheless, the goal of this research is only to show the potential of ANT for gentrification studies and not to provide any original contributions about the gentrification process itself. Chapter Four describes gentrification in Westboro but only to demonstrate ANT's compatibility with a relational ontology. Chapter Five suggests that the ANT approach affords a wider range of possibilities for scholarly resistance and critique.

Chapter Outline

Since there are no studies that explicitly examine the methodological nexus between ANT and gentrification studies, this thesis undertakes that task. Chapter Two begins by describing the epistemological issues embedded in traditional gentrification methodologies. It also takes up the work of several leading gentrification scholars to integrate how existing methodologies work in practice. ANT is also described in theory and in opposition to the epistemological issues identified in gentrification research. Three existing ANT studies are then showcased to exemplify how this approach works in practice.

Chapter Three provides a description of Ottawa and Westboro and of the two major developments that took place when gentrification in the Westboro area became evident, namely the establishment of the MEC and Loblaw's Superstore. This chapter also demonstrates the way existing gentrification methodologies limit and frame

scholarship. The goal is to show that the two supposedly diametrically opposed theories of gentrification both seem feasible in the case of Westboro.

Chapter Four applies ANT to the study of Westboro and isolates several empirically identifiable actors that associate with one another in such a way as to enact gentrification. The findings are not transferable to any other locale because each instance of gentrification has its own empirically identifiable actors. What is transferable, however, is the knowledge about how gentrification is reproduced. The patterns and connections identified in the gentrification of Westboro will have some connection with other instances of gentrification. Chapter Four identifies one actor-network of gentrification which is undoubtedly linked to other, translocal actor-networks that produce the same effect. Again, this study provides the preliminary steps for inquiry in this direction. The Conclusion summarizes the findings and argues that the ANT approach to gentrification research broadens the scope for scholarly critique of the gentrification process.

CHAPTER TWO: GENTRIFICATION RESEARCH & ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

Introduction

This chapter concerns the two principal bodies of literature with which this study engages: the first is gentrification research; the second is research that adopts an ANT approach. The discussion of both research areas includes an outline of their general characteristics and more detailed descriptions of works from scholars who exemplify each in their writing. Inquiries that fall under the category of gentrification research do so because they are topically related and so are carried out by scholars working in a narrow variety of research areas (usually urban studies, planning, economics and geography); ANT research, on the other hand, is bound only by its methodological approach and so includes the work of researchers from an increasingly broad range of disciplines. The overall goal in this chapter is to make specific links between the topic of gentrification and the methodology of ANT and to provide the background information necessary to understand why these two are a good fit.

There is a rich academic history in the gentrification field and Canadian scholarship has contributed greatly to this literature. In the last decade, however, there has been a certain degree of unease amongst gentrification theorists: there has been a call to be more reflexive about, and accountable for, the research and subsequent theories produced on the topic (Allen, 2008; Slater, 2008); and there has been an effort to think more fundamentally about the role of theorists in the field (Slater, 2006; Shaw, 2008; Wacquant, 2008; Wyly & Hammel, 2008). This chapter scrutinizes this uneasiness more closely and identifies particular issues with which gentrification scholars grapple. It also

suggests possible connections between the issues that are troubling gentrification scholars and those that ANT seeks to address.

In the gentrification literature, I have identified three interrelated epistemological issues that reappear. First, gentrification research is often *theory driven*. Researchers in this field are influenced significantly by a central theoretical debate and are therefore often “driven” by a commitment to either side of the debate. Choices about which methods to deploy, which data sets to grant analytical import to, and what qualifies as relevant are often decided after a researcher chooses his or her side of the theoretical debate. The trouble with this set of epistemological practices is that research in the field of gentrification studies becomes predictable, repetitive and of little significance except to those engaged in the particularities of the theoretical debate. Second, this theoretical debate is *foundational* in its approach; in other words, it is a debate about the root causes of gentrification. Besides engendering “chicken or egg” determinism, foundational thinking is fundamentally at odds with relational ontology - that there are indeed truths and / or realities but that they are the effects of webs of associations and therefore socially enacted. The third and most complex issue relates to the way researchers conceive of *the social*.⁵ Within the social sciences in general, there are methodologies that conceive of the social as a special *a priori* field that is granted the capacity to explain, determine or produce a given phenomenon. In the case of gentrification research,

⁵ Latour (2005) suggests that traditional social sciences have conceived of the social as a “type of ingredient” or “type of material” for two reasons: It is conceived as something that is ontologically unique and it has the special ability to produce, determine, or cause a variety of phenomena (p. 1). Instead of describing this particular way of conceiving the social as a “material” or “ingredient,” I use this term “field” because it holds the double meaning that Latour describes. The term “field” can mean either a “sphere of activity” or “the region in which a non-material force such as gravity is effective.”

the field of socioeconomics (constituted by processes of production and consumption) is granted this unique status and is believed to be the root cause of gentrification.

ANT methodology was developed as a “prophylactic” against epistemological issues similar to the ones described above, and there are at least three important ways the ANT approach is different. First, a central tenet of ANT is to be *data driven* or to “let the actors act”. There is a great deal of describing and documenting in ANT research because ANT practitioners strive to amplify the analytical import of the data and diminish that of their own theorizing and interpretation.⁶ Second, ANT methodology is predicated on a *relational ontology*. Nothing has a reality outside of the webs of associations that enact it. The type of question that ANT research asks therefore is not *what* or *why* but *how*. ANT researchers offer descriptions and explanations of an issue’s inner-workings. The third important way that ANT is distinguishable from traditional social sciences is that the meaning of *the social* embedded in ANT is quite different than the one embedded in traditional social sciences. While this will be explained in greater detail later, it can be noted that the social realm is not conceived of as a field, acting upon the city, but as webs of associations between actors that are not themselves social.

In the context of gentrification studies, the ANT methodology allows a critique of gentrification without having to engage too deeply in a long history of theoretical debate. Analysis can be focused on the particularities and circumstances that allowed gentrification to gain momentum in one particular place. The well-developed and thoroughly documented cases of gentrification that already exist in the literature will help

⁶ A common criticism of ANT is that it reverts back to the methodological goal of objectivity and personal / political detachment. Later in this chapter, I pay close attention to the way ANT is political and produces situated knowledge.

decide which clues to look for and how gentrification might have operated in other times and places but, if data does not match the frameworks of already established theories, the methods do not need to be discounted or adjusted; using an ANT approach, the data will instead uncover new perspectives about the inner workings of gentrification in a particular place and time. In the case of Westboro, gentrification gained its momentum from a range of actors, including those not typically associated with the process. While it is commonly thought that changes in the retail sector are what ultimately caused Westboro's gentrification (Boswell, 2001b), the ANT analysis presented in Chapter Four reveals that other actors, including parking meters and a bicycle, are also implicated in the process.

Gentrification Research

In 1964, Ruth Glass coined the term “gentrification” and today, over 40 years later, a substantial and coherent body of research on the topic exists and continues to grow. Indeed, three prominent journals, *Environment and Planning A*, *Urban Studies* and the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, recently produced special issues on the topic (AbdouMaliq, 2008; Ley & Lees, 2008; Slater et al., 2004).

Gentrification research is primarily the domain of urban geographers but anthropologists, sociologists, architects, economists and planners have also addressed the issue. The definition of the term provided in *The Dictionary of Human Geography* is as follows:

The reinvestment of CAPITAL at the urban centre, which is designed to produce space for a more affluent class of people than currently occupies that space. The term ... has mostly been used to describe the residential aspects of this process but this is changing, as gentrification itself evolves. (Smith, 2000, p. 294)

Over the four decades of gentrification scholarship, the meaning of gentrification has been extensively debated and, as a result, shifting definitions and grey areas about *what is* and *is not* gentrification have emerged; in that time, however, socioeconomic class consistently has been at the heart of the meaning of the term. Indeed, the debate about gentrification is inherently a debate about the causes and effects of class on the urban landscape or, put another way, how particular urban landscapes can be causally linked to the social-economic aggregate of class.

Canadian scholars notably influenced the direction of gentrification research. In 1984, Montreal-based scholar Damaris Rose coined the phrase, “the marginal gentrifier” (p. 47), which makes reference to social and professional groups, including women, single parents, students, artists and intellectuals, who chose to live in central-city areas due to the range of support services they offer (ex. public transportation). Rose arrived at this path-breaking concept through an effort to “address the epistemological problems of neoclassical Marxist approaches to the subject” (ibid.). Canadian geographer David Ley’s (1996) influential work, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, is a highly sophisticated and thoroughly researched continuation of “the marginal gentrifier” thesis. Ley employs Census data and in-depth qualitative data from six different Canadian cities to show that the political, cultural, social and professional practices that define the new middle class are central to the gentrification of the inner-city.

Ley is the most prominent theorist from one side of a foundational debate that defines gentrification scholarship in terms of “consumption” vs. “production” explanations of gentrification (Hamnett, 1991; Lees et al., 2008). Hamnett (1991) writes:

the most important explanation for the prominence of gentrification in contemporary urban geographical literature is that it represents one of key

theoretical and ideological battlegrounds in urban geography, and indeed in human geography as a whole, between the liberal humanists who stress the key role of choice, culture, consumption and consumer demand, and the structural Marxists who stress the role of capital, class, production and supply. (p. 174)

The guiding research questions for scholars on both sides of the debate are *what* and *why* questions: *what causes gentrification and why does it continue to be produced*. Ley and other theorists who focus their analysis on “gentrifiers” (marginal or otherwise) are associated with consumption explanations. They look to the behaviours, attitudes, practices, politics, etc. of the class groups associated with gentrification for explanations. Theorists who focus their analysis on the macro-level social, economic and political conditions are associated with production explanations. They look to institutions, policies, technologies and other “structures” associated with the capitalist mode of production to explain gentrification. This debate between consumption and production theories, above all else, has acted as a theoretical compass for gentrification scholars; it delineates the field and, in many instances, sets the agenda for gentrification research. This section reviews recent articles on gentrification by researchers from both traditions and also identifies the key positions of debates concerning future directions of gentrification scholarship that appeared in special issues of the three scholarly journals mentioned earlier. The aim of this section is to provide a general characterization of gentrification scholarship and the epistemological issues to which it gives rise.

Neil Smith

Neil Smith is the most prominent production-side theorist of gentrification and one of the first to connect globalization and gentrification. His work is intuitively

appealing to scholars whose political dispositions are left-of-centre because it is “state of the art” Marxist-influenced urban analysis. In his (2002) article, “New globalism, new urbanism: Gentrification as a global urban strategy,” he makes two central arguments: (1) that neoliberalism is reconfiguring the governmental roles of the city in a manner that mirrors the reconfiguration of the state;⁷ and (2) that gentrification has become a general urban strategy, present in cities around the globe, that “moved into the vacuum left by the end of liberal urban policy” (p. 441). Smith begins by reviewing the work of Saskia Sassen, applauding her for being “astute about the shifting contents of some urban economies” but critiquing her theory on the grounds that “it does not go far enough” (p. 431). Smith explains that in Sassen’s framework, nation-states can be thought of as “containers” and cities as “smaller containers” within (*ibid.*). Although Sassen correctly identifies a shift in the “kinds of social and economic relations and activities carried on in these containers” (*ibid.*), the containers themselves remain intact. “I want to argue,” Smith writes, “that in the context of new globalism, we are experiencing the emergence of a new urbanism such that the containers themselves are being fundamentally recast” (*ibid.*). Smith’s overall argument is that neo-liberalism, as a hegemonic set of political economic ideologies, has determining effects at multiple scales and, at the urban scale and in all parts of the world, it is rendering gentrification the new default mode of development.

In the back-drop of Smith’s arguments are familiar characterizations of globalization’s political economy: an international division of labour; the

⁷ The policies of the former “expresses the impulses of capitalist production rather than social reproduction” just as much as the policies of the latter reconstitute the state as an “agent of – rather than a regulator of – the market” (p. 427).

internationalization of finance; and the development of computerized information systems (like the Internet) and subsequent digitization of telecommunication technology. Smith's first argument is that before these processes began to take effect, the most important factor defining the spatial scale of "the urban" were processes of urban social reproduction. The example of social reproduction that Smith continuously makes reference to is the daily commute of workers between home and work (pp. 431-432).⁸ Today, within the megacities of developing nations, workers are enduring commute times never experienced before and using a greater portion of their earnings to cover commuting costs; but, as Smith (2002) points out, "the rigors of almost unbearable commuting have not yet compromised economic production" (p. 436). Even though workers must commute six to eight hours per day, they continue to go to work and the gears of capitalist production continue to turn. For Smith, this is reflective of a massive shift in the way society is organized. With close attention to the historicity of the politics of urban development, Smith convincingly argues that capitalist production now has more effect on spatial scale in the urban context than social reproduction.

Smith introduces his second argument – that gentrification has been generalized – by contrasting Ruth Glass's original definition of gentrification with an excerpt from a contemporary policy document, released by the UK Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR), outlining a strategic response to urban decline. Specifically, this response was to politically enable reinvestment (read gentrification) in the city centre. Whereas Glass seems to be describing gentrification as something very

⁸ Other examples from Peter Hall's extensive historical analysis of urban development and planning might include the rise of suburbia which, as Hall (2007) argues, was the result of capitalists wishing to live apart from the workers they employed (pp. 48-86).

particular, local and idiosyncratic, the DETR describes urban decline as a general problem that is global and systemic. As Smith further deconstructs the policy discourses surrounding urban reinvestment, one can begin to see gentrification, not as the transformation of a handful of neighbourhoods that can easily be upgraded, but as a broad structural phenomenon. Explicitly engaging with the consumption / production debate, Smith shows how misleading it is to link the root causes of gentrification to cultural phenomena (ex. “white-painters”, “empty nesters”, “YUPPIES”, “the new middle class”) because gentrification (in the guise of reinvestment) is outlined as a strategy in state-level policy documents. Using the method of discourse analysis, Smith goes on to show that cities of all different sizes and from all over the world are strategically aligning themselves in directions similar to that described by the DETR.

Smith’s research is an obvious example of contemporary Marxist approaches to gentrification research. Smith’s agenda is to show that macro-level, political economic structures are the primary forces producing gentrification and not the characteristics of the social-class groups associated with the process. His approach can thus be easily contrasted against consumption-side theories of gentrification. David Ley has been the most prominent theorist from this school of thought. His research cited below is a recent contribution in which he explicitly bridges the lacunae between his approach and the approaches of structural theorists like Smith; nonetheless, tension between these two positions continues to influence his research.

David Ley

Ley is particularly well known for deploying a mix of methods and adopting a methodology of triangulation as illustrated in his monograph, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (1996). In the article reviewed here, Ley (2003) makes use of the following methods: in-depth interviews with artists living in the areas that he is studying; the analysis of census tract data; field observation in a variety of settings including the urban areas he is studying and cultural milieus (like visual art galleries) that are related to his analysis; and historical contextualization. This contrasts with Smith who de-emphasises any empirical study but instead proceeds with attentiveness to the historicity of gentrification and to deconstructing the discourses of the political and economic institutions involved with the process. Ley very explicitly engages with a theoretical framework from the social sciences, namely the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which he calls a “principal guide” to the research (p. 2529).

Behind Ley’s central argument is a spectrum along which varying social groups are located. At one end are artists and other professional and social groups high in cultural capital including social scientists, journalists and web/software developers (p. 2537; p. 2540). At the other end are groups high in economic capital including investment capitalists, researchers in the natural sciences, engineers and lawyers (ibid.). These two groups are dialectically opposed but are therefore mutually constituted; without the production activities of groups high in cultural capital, there would be nothing to consume and without the consumer power of groups high in economic capital, there would be no incentive to produce. This interrelationship has very specific consequences on the class configuration of urban space.

The groups rich in cultural capital choose to live in areas that are not commercially driven and are not main-stream. Ley finds evidence to support this theory by interviewing a Vancouver-based artist and by referencing Census data, shown respectively below:

[Citing an informant:] Artists need authentic locations. You know artists hate the suburbs. They're too confining. Every artist is an anthropologist, unveiling culture. It helps to get some distance on that culture in an environment that does not share all of its presuppositions, an old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups. (p. 2534)

The 1996 Census of Canada uses a new occupational classification that permits a more precise specification of artists' occupations. Now against the standard of the metropolitan area as a whole (=1.0), a location quotient of 2.95 is identified for artists in the City of Toronto, compared with a figure of 0.62 in the remainder of the metropolitan area. Similar, if less polarised profiles existed in Montreal (1.87, 0.68) and Vancouver (1.65, 0.74). (Ibid.)

The crux of Ley's argument is that groups that are high in economic capital follow the opposing groups. If, for example, a journalist moves into a downtown urban neighbourhood, her editor and then the owner of the publication firm she writes for will eventually, and in turn, follow. Ley explains, "The population that follows artists does not enter the field haphazardly, but in a succession that is shaped by their proximity to the aesthetic disposition and cultural competency of the artist" (p. 2540). Urban areas that experience gentrification are first aestheticized by cultural workers and then commercialized by cultural capitalists.

Ley's research is timely and helpful for critical scholars of urban development because it unmask the currently popular political rhetoric surrounding the concept of the creative city. For Ley, the creative city discourses are evidence of the aestheticisation-cum-commercialization process interrelating with policy. Ley is not blaming artists for

gentrification (p. 2541) but explains to both critics and policy makers that supply and demand, structure and agency, political economy and culture are fundamentally enmeshed in processes of change in the urban landscape. Ley's research agenda is to show that both structure and agency, production and consumption, cause gentrification and that theories about what causes gentrification must therefore account for practices of social groups as well as the political economic conditions of which they are part.

Ley's research is an obvious example of consumption-side theories. His agenda is to show that consumption practices are central to the production of gentrification. Where Smith uses context, historicity, technology and larger structures to explain the process, Ley looks at the behaviours, attitudes and demographic characteristics of those *doing the gentrifying*. Although Ley does not ignore the broader structures associated to the process of gentrification, they are not his analytical prime mover.

The differences between Smith and Ley's work are less important for this thesis than are their similarities. Both researchers are guided by the question of what causes gentrification and why is it happening. Both pay little attention to "how" questions of gentrification. For example, Smith does not ask how nonlocal interests and policies actually come to reify locatable class-based boundaries built into urban space and Ley does not ask how the aesthetization-cum-commercialization process actually *takes place* and then how it becomes so significant and pervasive as to displace entire class-groups of citizens. Both research projects beg the question, why do some areas experience gentrification and others do not? Are there processes that are similar to gentrification but necessarily associated to class or is class-based urban change entirely

unique?⁹ Both researchers are also guided by their respective theories, which are defined in opposition to one another. Indeed, the most fruitful sections of each study are those that engage with the opposing theory, trying to establish an upper hand. In the end, however, both theories are arguing the same thing: socio-economic processes are what cause gentrification.

Contemporary Debates

Several new theorists are emerging as principal actors in the gentrification debate: Kate Shaw from the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, Tom Slater from the School of Geo-Science at the University of Edinburgh, Loretta Lees from the Department of Geography at King's College London, and Elvin Wyly from the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia. In 2008, the last three published “the first textbook” on the topic. These four academics, and several others, are pushing gentrification research in new directions. Specifically, they wish to move beyond the binary debate described above that has defined (and confined) the intellectual enterprise surrounding the issue of gentrification.

At this point, it is difficult to predict whether the new theories and approaches to the topic are sufficiently innovative to produce a new paradigm of thought. On one hand, very original and very fresh approaches have been well articulated and the old debate is rarely explicitly addressed. On the other hand, the same terms, the same methods and the

⁹ See, for example, Smith's (2008) article, “The politics of studentification and ‘(un)balanced’ urban populations: Lessons for gentrification and sustainable communities”. Smith argues that there is a paradox between dominant visions of sustainable communities and the geographical effects of the promotion of higher education—in a similar vein to policies that generate ‘positive’ gentrification.

same research goals are still implicit in the new projects and it seems that theorists continue to grapple with the same epistemological issues.

Danyluk & Ley (2006) examine modes of transportation selected by Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto residents for their commute to work and found that bicycling is over represented in gentrified areas but public transportation is under represented. This can be considered a “new” approach because it explores new connections between gentrification and the field of transportation (which is not necessarily a subfield of socioeconomics); but, instead of further revealing how the bicycle and transportation infrastructures are involved with the production of gentrification, the authors conceive of bicycling as a behavioural trait that is categorically associated with the social group, “gentrifiers”. In this example, the possibility of destabilizing the field of production / consumption as a gentrification-producing force was not pursued; instead, the authors implicitly link consumer culture, behaviour and agency to the root causes of gentrification.

Policy has been a central concern of new gentrification scholars. Loopmans (2008) traces the fall and rise of gentrification as a policy goal in relation to macro-level policy contexts in Antwerp, Belgium. Newman & Ashton (2004) take up the case of West Side Park neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey where they argue gentrification is promoted “not by rent-seeking private developers but primarily by local political actors and community development organizations” (p. 1151) whose policy goals are to deconcentrate poverty and increase low-income home-ownership. In many policy circles, the goal of “deconcentrating poverty” is usually described as “social mixing” which is the topic of Lees’ (2008) contribution. Lees shows overwhelming evidence that “social

mixing” only benefits a small amount of middle-class residents and most often displaces low-income families. Lees also notes that “social mixing” is only ever deployed as a policy goal in low-income neighbourhoods; it is never deployed in neighbourhoods that are primarily middle and upper-middle class (p. 2460). Finally, Visser & Kotz (2008) show that gentrification in Cape Town, South Africa is the result of state-led policies aimed at urban regeneration.

Slater (2006) argues that research should be methodologically focused on documenting the negative effects of gentrification. This perspective is at least partly aligned with the issue concerning the social position of academics but also relates to a revived appreciation for the methodological challenge of the gentrification issue. To use another scholar’s terms, Slater feels that gentrification research lacks “dialogic validity” (Saukko, 2003, p. 19). There are very few accounts of gentrification from the perspective of those being displaced precisely because they are displaced. This is a point that is echoed by Weesep (1994) and by four other contributors to the *Urban Studies* special issue (Lees & Ley, 2008; Harris, 2008; Lees, 2008; Smith, 2008; Larsen & Hansen, 2008).

This line of argumentation led some researchers to theorize more fundamentally about the role of academics vis-à-vis gentrification. Those in favor of focusing on documenting negative effects believe the most important goal of gentrification research is to make actors within policy circles aware of the consequences of neoliberal policy from the perspective of low-income families and thus to politicize urban development and recruit more voices critical of development strategies aimed at producing urban spaces that appease middle-class tastes but uproot working-class families. Others have argued

that the role of academics is to provide policy makers with tools to inhibit or counter gentrification. Three articles in particular make a contribution towards this end.

Ley & Dobson (2008) and Walks & August (2008) both examine the factors that have inhibited gentrification in Vancouver and two Toronto neighbourhoods respectively. In both cases, the most important factors are the following: a housing stock not particularly conducive to middle-class rehabilitation; security of housing tenure including homeownership; an embedded and politically active community; and the maintenance of industrial employment lands. Similarly, Wilson et al. (2004) document “successful protect-community discourses” in Chicago’s Pilsen neighbourhood. They found that developers stayed clear of neighbourhoods embedded with communities who vocalized plans for resisting development initiatives.

Clearly, new gentrification research is expanding the former boundaries of the field. Theorists who are not committed to either side of the old debate are more willing to see the multifaceted nature of gentrification and new theorists search for alternate entry points and methodologies in an attempt to better understand a process that they feel is theoretically overburdened but, in practice, still vaguely understood. An approach that explores the intricacies and complexities of the process, without engaging with either *cultural or structural foundations*, could open research on the issue to a wide range of theoretical formulations and political / practical responses. In the section that follows, ANT is introduced and some ANT inspired projects reviewed. Although ANT was developed in European Science & Technology Studies (STS), it is now adopted by theorists working in a wide range of other research areas. Gentrification theorists have not yet embraced ANT but, as stated earlier, there are some similarities between the

epistemological challenges that gentrification theorists grapple with and the ones ANT theorists seek to address. ANT is not a theoretical compromise between production- and consumption-side theories but is instead a completely different methodology that could expand knowledge on how gentrification operates.

Actor-Network Theory¹⁰

ANT is an *approach* to research in the social domain rather than a *theory* about the social domain (Law, 2007, p. 2). It is difficult, and perhaps unproductive, to stabilize a definition of ANT as numerous researchers working in various areas design their own unique research program using an ANT mode of inquiry. Despite its fluidity, it can be positively stated that, compared to what is standard in traditional methodological approaches to the social sciences, ANT represents a shift in research methodology. The following review of ANT surveys texts that describe this approach and provides some examples of how specific authors use it in ways that might be instructive for an inquiry into gentrification.

The traditional social sciences, ANT practitioners argue, base their analysis on neat divisions between the social domain and a domain unique to an established discipline of social science (technology, economics, psychology, management, politics or culture, etc.). The intuitive response embedded in traditional approaches is to conceptualize a causal link between the two domains (ex. economics “determine” social

¹⁰ The phrase actor-network theory is very misleading. Many people, myself included, initially interpret it as a theoretical formulation of the agency / structure dialectic where “actor” refers to agent and “network” refers to structure (agency-structure theory). The reasons why this is *not* the case are explained in the following section.

relations, or technology is “constructed” by social relations). Methodologically speaking, the intuition is to *look away* from the issue being studied to other separate and discrete fields and then establish a causal connection between these and the original issue. In the previous section, we saw that Smith (2002) looked to modes of production, institutions, technologies and policy discourses; Ley (2003) looked to the *habitus* of artists. In contrast, ANT argues that there is no ontological distinction between the social domain and other domains (such as politics, economics and culture) because each are *enacted* by webs of associations between material and semiotic actors. The metaphor of “enactment” is useful because it is indicative of ceremonial or theatrical performance (Law, 2007, p. 10). Social enactment is a modification of the “social construction” metaphor and more accurately reflects the relationality that defines this perspective of reality (ibid., p. 11). A relational ontology is not predicated on the stability of *a priori* fields or entities but on the complexity, unpredictability and immediacy of webs of identifiable, interrelating actors (human, non-human, material and semiotic). The methodological implications of a relational ontology is that the analytical goal of social scientists is to explain *how* these webs give rise, or not, to distinct, identifiable and coherent assemblages.¹¹

ANT traces its origins to sociology and specifically sociological studies of natural sciences (or “science studies”). ANT practitioners argue that researchers in the domain of science studies maintained a strict division between the natural world (the domain of

¹¹ Taking my lead from Latour’s (2005) monograph, *Reassembling the social*, I will use the terms “assemblages” or “actor-networks” to refer to distinct social spheres. I will not use the term “field” because its second meaning (“the region in which a non-material force such as gravity has an effect”) is no longer applicable. An assemblage is only a social field in the sense that it is an “empirically identifiable sphere of relational activity” between actors that are themselves non-social; it does not, however, have any explanatory powers nor any degree of necessary stability.

sciences) and the social world – society (the domain of sociologists) (Law, 2008, p. 625). Based on their allegedly deeper understanding of society and sophisticated social theories, sociologists could claim a more profound comprehension of the process of scientific inquiry. This sociology of science is thus predicated on an ontological distinction between societal and scientific inquiry.

Within the field of science studies, there was another group of sociologists whose approach was radically different. Instead of basing their theories about sciences on a privileged and exclusive *a priori* understanding of society, they viewed scientific knowledge production as a socially enacted assemblage of processes that demands analytical attention. The important part is that the enactment itself becomes the object of study and not the social aggregates (in this case, science) that it assembles. This is a pragmatic response and, as such, its analytical goal is not to fit empirical data from the world of scientific practice into established frameworks from the world of social theory because social theories are embedded in practices. The aim of the second group of sociologists was to illustrate how social relations give rise to science as a distinct assemblage in itself. In the process of answering this question, the ANT approach was established.

Bruno Latour summarizes ANT as a switch from the “sociology of the social” to the “sociology of associations” (Latour, 2005, p. 9). The first “takes social aggregates as the given that could shed light on the residual aspects of economics, linguistics, psychology, management, and so on...” (p. 5). The second “considers social aggregates as what should be explained by the specific *associations* provided by economics, linguistics, psychology, law, management, etc.” (ibid.). The definition of the term

“associations” that Latour provides is “*a type of connection* between things that are not themselves social” (ibid.). The principal task of social scientists employing an ANT approach is thus to “trace” those associations. The intuition of the traditional approach to *look away* to related fields is correct, therefore, but the move should not be driven by theory but empirical data – “the trail of associations between heterogeneous elements” (ibid.). The type of “elements” that can leave a trail for ANT-inspired researchers is not restrictive at all. These elements or actors can be human, non-human, material or even semiotic in their constitution, so long as they are empirically qualified. An ANT mantra could thus be stated as follows: If you follow social theories, you will only find society; if you follow associations, there is no way to be sure what you will discover.

There are three ANT-inspired research projects that stand out as instructive for this thesis: the first is by sociolegal scholar Mariana Valverde who looks at “local law and the negotiation of urban norms” (Valverde, 2008b); the second is by geographer Steven Flusty who studies quotidian global formations (Flusty, 2004); and the third is by sociolegal scholar Randy Lippert who considers a case of urban revitalization (Lippert, 2007). Valverde (2008b) recently adopted an ANT approach in her scholarship and so is very explicit about the influence of ANT sensibilities. The topic that she analyzes, however, is the most far removed from the topic of gentrification. Flusty (2004), by contrast, is interested primarily in matters that could be categorized as urban geography. Like the research project undertaken here, Flusty is particularly attentive to spatial political issues. Flusty’s research, however, is much different than the research presented here in terms of its scope. His book, *De-coca-colonization*, is based on doctoral research that extends well beyond the reaches of this project, both in terms of its geographic focus

and intellectual import. Furthermore, neither Flusty's field work nor his case studies (unlike the other two researchers) are located in Canadian cities. Lippert's (2007) research project is similar to this thesis in terms of its methodological approach, its topic and scope. Despite these similarities, however, the "findings" of his study are much different than what will be presented in Chapter Four. The combination of these three texts affords a comprehensive review of ANT and foreshadows its applicability to the study of neighborhood gentrification and, more specifically, to the interrogation of developments in Westboro.

Mariana Valverde

Valverde (2008b) is an early publication of ongoing research for "a larger urban law-in-action project" (p. 900) specifically dealing with municipal law and "municipal governance of everyday conflicts in Toronto" (p. 895).¹² The goal of Valverde's research is to "open up the blackbox of diversity... [and] shed light on how diversity is made, unmade, and remade in the self-defined most diverse city in the world [Toronto]" (p. 896). Valverde uses the term "blackbox" (both as a noun, exemplified by the phrase cited above, and an adverb, exemplified by the phrase "diversity has been blackboxed") to describe a common-sense-fact or taken-for-granted-truth. Diversity is blackboxed

¹² Valverde has published at least two other articles that are significantly influenced by ANT methodology (Valverde, 2005; 2008a). Valverde (2008a) comments that, "such work is just beginning to have an impact on law-and-society circles" (p. 420), adding that two panels featured at the 2002 meeting of the Law & Society Association (LSA) on the place of ANT inspired methodology in the field were especially influential. The first two papers on the subject that Valverde published were strictly methodological contributions about adopting ANT tools into her field. Six years after ANT was introduced at the LSA, a third paper, the one I wish to showcase here, appears as Valverde's first application of the approach.

because, Valverde explains, “it is presented as a Durkheim-style ‘fact’ with normative force: [in Toronto] diversity is universally regarded as a good thing but also as a brute fact, like the weather” (ibid.). Put another way, diversity is widely recognized as Toronto’s principal brand and distinctive quality while simultaneously existing as an unavoidable demographic consequence of contemporary globalization.

Interestingly, Valverde admits that diversity was not the initial focus of the field research from which most of the data were drawn (p. 900). Valverde writes, “hearing constant reference to diversity in other municipal venues made me reflect on the notable absence of any diversity talk in the tribunal hearing room, despite the binary demographics of the typical hearing” (ibid.). While diversity is central to the discourse within Toronto’s political arena, which is demographically homogenous, it is ironically absent in the quasi-judicial arena of Toronto’s licensing tribunal, which is demographically diverse. It is formed of “five men and one woman, all white and not noticeably ‘ethnic’” (ibid.) while the majority of appellants are formed of taxi drivers (p. 899), and a large portion of drivers are “recent immigrants from Somalia, India (mainly the Punjab), Nigeria, and a handful of other countries, many in the Middle East or in the horn of Africa” (ibid.). The crucial insight is not that there is a certain degree of irony in the discourses of diversity. As Valverde writes, “the main finding I want to highlight here is not the all-too predictable ‘gap’ between diversity in theory and diversity in practice” (p. 897); instead, the insight is that diversity sometimes *is* and sometimes *is not* the leitmotif of Toronto’s municipal institutions. This is an insight that depends on an implicit understanding of reality as relationally enacted. Instead of asking *what* diversity really is or *why* can diversity not exist in municipal courts, Valverde employs the ANT

approach to ask *how* diversity sometimes successfully reproduces itself within the discourses of some municipal institutions and *how* it sometimes is blocked. Valverde answers this question by documenting the processes of each outcome and shows that some of these processes transpire in the judicial setting of the licensing tribunal and the City Court.

It is important to note that Valverde's analysis remains almost exclusively documentary; as she writes, "I hold that it is not necessary to make ontological statements of any sort in order to document processes of power/knowledge" (p. 898). Rarely does she make conceptual leaps or bold ontological claims but instead focuses on empirically painting a picture (Latour uses the term "panorama") of *how* diversity is enacted or not in judicial settings. Valverde's text is composed of five case studies. The case study is a principal method of ANT research (Law, 2008, pp. 629-630; 2007, p. 1). Indeed, Flusty (2004) eloquently describes his purpose for deploying case studies, which also accounts for the priority ANT places on the method: "[They are not intended] as exemplary case studies in any classical sense: they are neither average nor ideal microcosmic representations of larger processes" (p. 9). Instead, they are a "point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process" (ibid., citing Smith, 1987). Three of the five cases that Valverde documents take place in the tribunal, the fourth case recounts the revision of a by-law pertaining to property standards and the appearance of private homes and gardens, and the fifth case traces revisions to a by-law that makes hotdogs the only legally sanctioned type of street food. All of these cases offer an entry point for an analysis of the making, unmaking and remaking of diversity as an urban norm.

What is noteworthy about Valverde's (2008a) approach is her presentation style that veers significantly from her previous academic work. In this article, her focus concentrates on documenting what transpired. An excerpt from the case study illustrates this point:

A tall, elegant, would-be taxi driver, dressed in a suit and tie and accompanied by a well-dressed wife and an adorable toddler, appeared before the tribunal one day in January of 2004 to persuade the tribunal to overturn the bureaucracy's decision to not give him a taxi driver's license. He was represented by an agent (not a lawyer). Most taxi drivers appeared without any representation—thus, the presence of an agent combined with the strikingly elegant attire of the applicant and of his wife to create the impression that this gentleman was one of those new immigrants who were doctors or university professors in their own countries but who are reduced to taxi driving in Toronto. This impression was corroborated as two mobile phones went off within minutes of each other, phones belonging to the applicant (whom we shall call Mr. S.) and to his wife. (p. 901)

This careful narration and the highly ideographic mode of analysis deployed by Valverde convey the negotiation of cultural diversity in the hearing. The main point Valverde wishes to illustrate is that the majority of appellants who approached the tribunal in a manner that suggested they were seeking to repent were white and they were likely to be granted their license. In contrast, the majority of appellants who approached the tribunal in a manner that seemed to demonstrate a willingness to appear worthy of vindication (like Mr. S.) or deserving empathy tended to be ethnic and would likely be unsuccessful in their case.

Valverde's research is instructive in that it demonstrates how the microscopic empirical documentation of processes can advance knowledge within a field. Valverde writes:

If one sets out to *document how* particular networks are negotiated, built, challenged, rebuilt, and taken apart instead of setting out to *investigate a*

concept or institution, one has a better chance of being able to see the amazing contingency underlying the most stable-looking forms of governance. (Emphasis added, p. 921)

It is Valverde's attention to detailing the processes that shows how diversity is enacted or not in the webs of relations surrounding municipal judicial proceedings. Valverde (at this point) has not made any foundational claims about the nature of diversity or law outside the enactment of those relations; indeed, her most important contribution is to open the blackbox of diversity and make visible the social relations on which it is contingent.

It is noteworthy that in the final pages of her analysis, Valverde abandons ANT sensibilities and hypothesizes on the foundational "form" of municipal law:

But while each of the particular networks described in this article is contingent and unstable (and may well have changed by the time this article appears), a certain one-sidedly dialectical logic that is embedded in the very form of legal governance is found throughout the case studies. (Ibid.)

I suspect Valverde makes this claim to connect the present research with the theoretical perspectives employed in her earlier work. In another paper, Valverde scrutinizes the ANT perspective calling it "apolitical" (2008a, p. 823). "Much of ANT ends up unabashedly celebrating innovation [of the actors it chooses to mobilize]" (ibid.). One example that immediately comes to mind of the political detachment that concerns Valverde is Mark Levinson's (2006) study of globalization, *The box: how the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy bigger*. Levinson's study of the box exposes the "amazing contingency" (to use Valverde's terms) underlying globalization but it does not grapple with the negative social consequences and related politics that it engenders. The politics of ANT are elaborated upon in the following discussion of Flusty's (2004) study.

Steven Flusty

Flusty (2004) contributes significantly to the myriad of social science studies on the topic of globalization. Specifically, he responds to theories from both ends of the political spectrum that conceptualize globalization as a structural phenomenon primarily related to (and determined by) economics. Flusty's methodology is instructive because of how it is simultaneously non-foundational and highly political. Echoing Valverde's concerns, a common criticism of ANT is that it reverts back to the methodological goal of "objectivity" and personal/political detachment – what Harding (2004) calls "the view from nowhere" (p. 26). As noted in the review that follows, Flusty (2004) remains true to the ANT mode of description and documentation but also is himself highly visible in the analysis. There are at least fifteen case studies presented in Flusty's monograph. When considered cumulatively, these case studies effectively recast globalization, not as macro set of structural processes, but as a reality enacted by everyday associations among heterogeneous social actors.

One of Flusty's most exemplary case studies concerns his acquisition of a shirt. Immediately, by choosing to document the story of how he acquired a shirt, the global and the extraordinary are juxtaposed with the local and the everyday. It is possible here to draw a parallel between Flusty's and Valverde's research: Valverde's strategy is to study diversity "in situations that are not already seen by the participants themselves as engaging diversity" (Valverde, 2008b, p. 900). By recounting the story of how he acquired his shirt, Flusty enlists the artifact as a participant that is not already seen by the human actors involved as engaging globalization. We then learn that this is not just any shirt but a barong. Apart from the processes leading to the procurement of *his* barong, a

barong itself is a potential narrative trope for a story of globally formative processes. Flusty explains that a barong “is similar to a Caribbean-cum-Yucatecan *guayabera* ‘wedding’ shirt, and to other formal-dress garments diffused from Madrid to Manila via Mexico City by the preeminent globally formative institution of the mid-second millennium, the Spanish Empire” (p. 95). Most of the actors, but particularly the material ones, that play a role in Flusty’s case studies are introduced through the characterization of their geopolitical history and so convey a sense that everything is situated and everything is political but only in relation to one another. This, of course, is a central tenet of ANT – “treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located [and assume] that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations” (Law, 2007, p. 1).

Flusty (2004) begins the story by telling us that he services his automobile at the most conveniently located service station (he also includes a material geopolitical history of his automobile). The owner of this service station is a member of the Armenian diaspora but, as we learn, this is not merely a coincidence nor is it a coincidence that this particular service station is conveniently located. Indeed, many North American urban landscapes feature Armenian-owned service centres because of the global demographic displacements that began during the Armenian genocide. As a result of a conversation he had with his mechanic, the story changes locations from the Armenian owned and operated garage to a concert hall featuring an Armenian pop band. Persian pop, as it so happens, is very popular in Southern California and, at the concert, Flusty reunites with an old friend, Sheryl. Later that week, Sheryl and Flusty meet to catch up and while chatting, flipped the TV station to a show hosted by a man wearing a barong. From there

and through a series of equally idiosyncratic day-to-day experiences involving many different actors, including a coffee shop-cum-lesbian hang-out in West Hollywood called “Little Frida’s” and an AT&T employee’s international calling rate, Flusty acquired his authentic jussi dress tunic. Flusty explains:

Now, in this globally expanding nonlocal network of day-to-day relations, the barong is just one of the plethora of possible protagonists. As an alternative track, the tale could branch off with Avak’s music, and discuss how his sense of ‘Arminian-ness’ has led him to approve the circulation of pirated cassette tapes among cash-strapped fans in Yerevan. Or I could follow an edgy subset of Little Frida’s habitués a few blocks east to the Pleasure Chest, an ‘adult novelties’ emporium that has responded to neighborhood demographic change by installing signs reading ‘Parking for Customers Only’ in Russian. All of these parallel stories reinforce the quotidian processes of global formation exemplified by my barong’s adventures, processes real enough to put the very shirt on my back. (p. 97)

In Flusty’s case, the ANT methodology is particularly useful because quotidian practices and experiences lend themselves well to ANT’s predilections for micro-level data while also reinforcing Flusty’s thesis that globalization is constituted by everyday life. The politics embedded within the ANT methodology however, go beyond assigning analytical and epistemological significance to everyday life. Flusty’s barong case study is micro-level in scale and its focus is quotidian practices. By contrast, the last case study he presents about Nike is more macro-level and focuses less on everyday life. This case study is primarily historical and documents the processes of Nike’s transformation from a small business in Oregon to a globally recognized corporate brand and politically charged symbol of the violent and horrific enactment of plutocratic globalism.

One aspect of Nike’s story that Flusty elaborates is the way the logo and the brand are subversively appropriated by individuals and groups protesting the actions of global corporations that have oppressive consequences. He describes a Nike television ad for a

hiking boot featuring a Samburu tribesman saying something in his native language with the slogan “Just Do It” appearing on the bottom of the frame (p. 165). Apparently, what was actually said by the Samburuan featured in the ad translates as “I don’t want these. Give me big shoes” (ibid.). Flusty provides several other examples of the Nike brand being subverted in a manner that resists corporate globalism, including a conversation he overheard between two boys where one says, “Don’t buy that shit. Slaves make it” and the other replies, “Don’t be an idiot! You think this is *real* Nike?” (p. 164).

Immediately following this case study, Flusty defines “de-coca-colonization” (which is the title of his book) as the process of “reheterogenizing processes and practices” (p. 166) or “the dynamic by which the repeated dislocalization of things’ meanings and enactments cause them to veer ever further from those inscribed and prescribed, thus rendering authoritative practice itself highly impracticable, and even potentially explosive” (ibid.). Thus, ANT is itself a type of “de-coca-colonization” as it wishes to “reheterogenize” any social assemblage including municipal law, diversity, scientific knowledge, globalization or urban development. The politics embedded within ANT are expressed by a willingness to engage explicitly in the act of reheterogenization of these assemblages. As Flusty (2004) writes, “Whether this is a revived medieval notion, a utopian modernist notion, a postcolonial or postmodern one is immaterial. What matters is that it *is*” (p. 208). Not all ANT practitioners share the radical and anarchistic tendencies exhibited by Flusty, but all ANT inspired projects, by definition, are purposeful “enactments of materially and discursively heterogeneous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, ‘nature’, ideas, organisations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and

geographical arrangements” (Law, 2007, p. 1). Such an undertaking is undoubtedly a political act.

Randy Lippert

This last study clearly demonstrates how illuminating the ANT approach can be for inquiries into urban development. Randy Lippert (2007) engages with issues related to revitalization in Windsor, Ontario after the development of its “Las Vegas-style” (p. 29) commercial Casino. Specifically, in the wake of the Casino’s development, the night-clubbing scene expanded exponentially and noise, violence, vandalism and drunkenness escalated. Lippert takes an ANT approach to analyze how responses to these issues were defined and then implemented. His findings show how particular actors, who cannot be held accountable for their political influence, are mobilized in a way that influences municipal political processes. The time-line for Lippert’s study is a decade (1996-2006) and the study is geographically focused on the downtown core. The methods he deploys include the following: an analysis of news media, policy documents, research reports, and meeting minutes; interviews with insiders; and visits to the area in question during which field notes were taken.

Lippert’s study is on the topic of urban revitalization, which is a particular kind of gentrification, but he completely side-steps the consumption vs. production debate and, in line with ANT sensibilities, avoids any foundational theorizing of the process. “Previous scholarship,” Lippert writes, “neglected to explore—more broadly—*how* unexpected problems that develop within the ‘process’ of urban neo-liberalism (which contains downtown revitalization in its repertoire) are overcome” (emphasis added, *ibid.*, p. 32).

Similar to the other ANT studies reviewed, Lippert is asking *how* neo-liberalism is made and unmade as opposed to *what* it is, *what* its consequences are, and *why* it operates in a particular way.

Lippert names several factors influencing the Windsor revitalization nexus including the symbolic implications of the phrase “kiddie bar” (echoing the phrase “kiddie porn”), which is the name that the news media assigned to the type of night club that emerged after the development of the Casino, and the discrepancy between the legal drinking ages in neighbouring Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario. He also names several actors including the Business Improvement Area (BIA) and its historical origins and contemporary form. His analysis, however, shows that a report produced by an outside consultant named Peter Bellmio, is the most influential actor. Following Lippert’s lead, this report will be referred to as “B.R.”. Lippert explains:

Latour and his followers’ work “provokes us to see what happens when one looks at things and texts as if they were people, and at people as if they were a part of a technical assemblage.” This tack is taken in this article and is why – besides abbreviation – the integral Bellmio Report will be referred to as B.R., that is, as though it were an agent. (p. 33, citing Valverde, 2005)

There are three points that Lippert makes about B.R. that might not have been addressed had Lippert not adopted an ANT approach. First, focusing on how development transpired allowed Lippert to see the degree and extent of B.R.’s influence. B.R. is repeatedly cited in several venues, in varying contexts, but always with the effect of provoking changes. Indeed, Lippert documents a formative role on the part of B.R. in relation to the actions of the B.I.A (pp. 42-44), the actions of City Council (pp. 44-45), the actions of police (pp. 45-48) and the results of a land-use study and the subsequent implementation of closed-circuit television surveillance (CCTV) (pp. 48-51).

Second, while not as idiosyncratic a process as the acquisition of Flusty's barong, the course of action from which B.R. emerged was highly circumstantial and contingent on several other elements. Lippert explains that "after September 11, 'broken windows' guru George Kelling was in great demand, so in 2002 he not surprisingly refused Windsor officials' requests to follow-up from his visit a year earlier" (p. 41). George Kelling is the author of *Fixing Broken Windows*, a book that has been widely received and very influential in policy circles. The "broken windows thesis" states that minor repairs of the physical urban fabric go a long way to prevent urban crime (Wilson & Kelling, 2003). After Kelling's previous visit, the City formed an ad hoc research committee on which several police representative sat. One of these representatives suggested that Maryland-based Peter Bellmio be hired as an alternative to Kelling: "Bellmio visited Windsor for several days in November 2002 before returning to Maryland, but B.R. remained behind as an agent of change" (ibid.).

Finally, Lippert shows the "translatibility" of B.R. and the nature of its enduring validity. B.R.'s position is highly influenced by and very much in-line with Kelling's "broken windows theory". This "theory" has been criticized for many reasons but its simplicity is the most common target.¹³ Bold causal relationships between infrastructure maintenance and criminal behaviour are suspect to anyone who holds a more nuanced perspective of the relationship between space and society.¹⁴ Nevertheless, its simplicity might also be one of the reasons why it has gained popularity in the political arena. Without generating too much controversy, it is much easier for a politician to describe

¹³ See Thatcher (2004) for an overview.

¹⁴ Arguably, nuance defines the history of perspectives on this relationship, see Massey (2005).

how she will clean-up the city than to explain how she will reduce crime. The broken windows theory may indeed be simple and causally weak but it “translates” well into both actionable policy and political rhetoric. B.R. inherited a translatable demeanor from the broken windows theory. Lippert explains:

B.R. was a straightforward actor and therefore highly translatable. Absent were impenetrable discipline-specific terminology, multivariate statistics, intricate maps, tables, and graphs, and complex analyses. And B.R. was all but thirteen pages. A police representative remarked: “[H]e wrote it without making the thing five hundred pages and some bound text that goes on a shelf somewhere...” Far from sitting on a shelf, B.R. was subsequently invited to meetings held before diverse audiences and slipped into texts destined for influential readerships. (Ibid., p. 42)

B.R. was easily and quickly enrolled into Windsor’s decision making circle. Furthermore, B.R. came with a high degree of (street) credibility because it is comprised of “knowledge of what has proven to work in other areas, [like] Knoxville, Tennessee” (ibid., p. 41, citing an informant).

Lippert’s study destabilizes any notions of foundations or root causes of revitalization but clarifies how revitalization gained momentum in Windsor, Ontario. Furthermore, his study opens new possibilities for analyses of revitalization in other locales. This study of Westboro certainly involves different actors than those in Windsor and the way Westboro’s actors act (or do not act) will also vary but the approach to studying the gentrification in Westboro will be similar and gleans much from Lippert’s approach.

Summary

In these three examples of the ANT approach, there are clearly identifiable patterns in the types of questions being asked, the strategies of collecting, analyzing and

presenting data, and the characteristics of research findings. The question Valverde (2008b) asks is “how diversity is made, unmade, and remade in the self-defined most diverse city in the world” (p. 896); the question Flusty (2004) asks is “how particular everyday practices are brought together so as to embody the effect of globalization from above” (p. 6). Lippert (2007) asks “how unexpected problems that develop within the ‘process’ of urban neo-liberalism (which contains downtown revitalization in its repertoire) are overcome... [and] how governmental knowledge transferred from afar allows problems arising in local urban contexts to be conquered” (p. 32) and how agents on which neo-liberalism is contingent are mobilized. As these examples confirm, an ANT analysis always moves forward by asking *how* relational materiality is enacted. The “how question” is driven by data, rather than theory, it is embedded with a relational rather than foundational ontology and it allows the social to be conceived not as a separate field, but as evidence of the webs of associations that constitute assemblages.

Blackboxes are to ANT inspired researchers possible entry points into broader issues. Valverde’s (2008b) project was to take diversity out of its blackbox, Flusty (2004) opened the blackbox of globalization and Lippert revealed the inner working of one neo-liberal urban development. Each of these is an assemblage that has no other reality outside of the webs of associations between the various actors that enact it. Tracing the actors on which these assemblages are most contingent is central to the way in which ANT researchers collect data. These “traces” could be called “cases” or “tropes” but they are always empirically identifiable entities. We saw how Valverde traced the term “diversity”, how Flusty traced his barong and the Nike brand, and how Lippert traced the Bellmio Report (B.R.). Each of these actors is not itself social but associates with other

non-social heterogeneous actors to assemble urban diversity, globalization and urban revitalization. By analyzing traces, the focus is always on particular sets of processes: in these examples, the processes were law-in-action, quotidian-life-in-action and urban revitalization-in-action. In each case, the research documented and described how these processes transpired. Since documentation plays such an important role in ANT's analytical practices, the presentation of the research tends to reflect the micro-level details that are documented. Valverde describes to her readers the clothes of the appellants she observed, Flusty describes all the actors he traces in great detail paying particular attention to their materiality and their geopolitical historicity, and Lippert describes to his readers the form of B.R. because it affects its "translatability". These three research projects are not theory-driven; they are embedded with a relational rather than foundational ontology; and the social is radically destabilized from its *a priori* conception as a separate field that can explain any given phenomenon and is instead conceived as the evidence of webs of associations that enact the assemblages surrounding urban diversity, globalization and urban revitalization.

Gentrification research must also show how heterogeneous actors enact gentrification. Such an advancement of knowledge will come through detailed description and documentation of the gentrification process; it will be more difficult to attain by debating the true foundations of the process, no matter how many methods are recruited to triangulate the evidence or how astutely the policy discourses surrounding the issue are deconstructed. The reheterogenization of gentrification's actors must be done by following empirical "trails of associations." The researcher must therefore choose which trails from which actors to follow. These choices are not made "in a bubble" but

inevitably are a reflection of the researcher's politics. In the following chapter, the "usual suspects" of Westboro's gentrification are discussed. These include (1) the political and economic history of Ottawa, (2) the behaviours, attitudes and practices that can generally be associated with the demographic moving into Westboro at the time it started gentrifying, and (3) the arrival of both the MEC and the Loblaw's Superstore. Chapter Four reheterogenizes these three elements with two other actors, namely parking meters and a bicycle, and so reveals my politics vis-à-vis gentrification. Most importantly, however, the contrast between the following two chapters demonstrates how ANT can push gentrification studies in new, unpredictable but revealing directions.

CHAPTER THREE: OTTAWA, WESTBORO, THE MEC & THE SUPERSTORE

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to describe gentrification in Westboro and to begin analyzing the process in terms of causality. As discussed in Chapter Two, the direction in which analyses of gentrification intuitively lead is towards identifying its origins, roots, principal causes, and foundations. Once gentrification has been identified, there is an almost “knee-jerk” reaction to ask *why* it occurred or *what* caused it. The intuition to *look away* to other separate and discrete social fields and then theorize their causal connection is the jump that characterizes the methodologies that ANT practitioners warn us against. This chapter identifies numerous social fields that all can be causally linked to gentrification in Westboro *in an effort to raise doubt about the applicability of any one in particular*. The strategy is not to present traditional analyses of gentrification as simplistic or inaccurate and then present a more sophisticated methodological fix; instead, I am demonstrating that many of the traditional theories of gentrification seem plausible in the hopes that the rationale for a new methodology that does not seek to theorize causality will become clearer. The previous chapter described how ANT research could push the boundaries of knowledge about gentrification; this chapter shows how the methodologies of traditional gentrification research create those boundaries. Chapter Four will examine gentrification in Westboro but will abandon the central theoretical debate between production- and consumption-side theorists. It will attempt to explain *how* the process is enacted instead of analyzing *why* it happened or theorizing *what* produced it, and it will conceive of the social, not as separate field that can explain gentrification, but as evidence of the webs of associations that enact the process.

This chapter is divided into four sections: (1) “Ottawa,” (2) “Westboro,” (3) “MEC” and (4) “Superstore”. Each one of these sections identifies an external force that, in theory, could be causally linked to gentrification in Westboro. The first, “Ottawa”, describes the city, its geographic, demographic, political and economic structure, and shows that the context for gentrification to proceed in Westboro has long been in place. The second section, “Westboro”, describes the area’s gentrification and makes the case that Westboro is branding itself to appeal to Ley’s (1996) “new middle class.” The third section, “MEC”, describes the organization *Mountain Equipment Co-op* (MEC) and suggests that a special set of circumstances created MEC’s success and those circumstances also drive neighbourhood gentrification. The fourth and final section, “MEC”, describes the development of a Loblaw’s hypermarket in the Westboro area at about the time Westboro began showing patterns of reinvestment and makes the case that this development set a legal and political precedent that enabled gentrification.

Each of the four sections offer plausible explanations of *why* gentrification in Westboro began to take place; but they all, as Latour (2005) would say, keep the notion of the social “stable” (pp. 10-11). In other words, validity of each as explanations of gentrification is predicated on the ability of *a priori* conceptions of stable socioeconomic fields (namely, production and consumption, supply and demand, or structure and agency) to produce spatial segregation built into the urban fabric, which, in turn, is based on class. Each of these sections describes phenomena that may indeed be meaningful to gentrification scholarship but the phenomena do not themselves constitute explanations of the process. In the ANT mode of inquiry, the analytical goal of the researcher is no

longer to identify the most plausible external force producing gentrification but instead to explain *how* a particular process is enacted through dynamic webs of associations.

Ottawa

It is difficult to discuss urban Ottawa without mention of urban Gatineau. Ottawa / Gatineau is the only census metropolitan area (CMA) that is divided into two provinces. Many residents of Gatineau work in Ottawa and vice-versa and so the infrastructures (but not the government) of each city are closely intertwined and the development patterns of one undoubtedly affect development of the other.¹⁵ In terms of its population, Ottawa / Gatineau is the fourth largest CMA but is much smaller than the largest three and only marginally larger than the fifth (see Table 1). Its population density is the lowest of the largest five CMAs and the area that is densely populated is geographically much smaller than in other cities. Generally speaking, both residents and visitors perceive the city of Ottawa to be small, especially when compared to their perceptions of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Adding to this perception is a rather homogenous professional population. Most Ottawa residents are directly employed by the Federal Government or by a business whose main client is the Federal Government (Andrew, 1983; Hall, 1993).

¹⁵ Shared transportation infrastructure is the primary qualification for multiple municipalities to be united into one CMA: “To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census place of work data” (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Table 1: *Population counts for ten largest census metropolitan areas*

| City | 2006 | 2001 | % Change | Density, 2006 |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|---------------|
| 1. Toronto (Ont.) | 5113149 | 4682897 | 9.2 | 866.1 |
| 2. Montréal (Que.) | 3635571 | 3635571 | 5.3 | 853.6 |
| 3. Vancouver (B.C.) | 2116581 | 1986965 | 6.5 | 735.6 |
| 4. Ottawa - Gatineau (Ont./Que.) | 1130761 | 1067800 | 5.9 | 197.8 |
| 5. Calgary (Alta.) | 1079310 | 951494 | 13.4 | 211.3 |
| 6. Edmonton (Alta.) | 1034945 | 937845 | 10.4 | 109.9 |
| 7. Québec (Que.) | 715515 | 686569 | 4.2 | 218.4 |
| 8. Winnipeg (Man.) | 694668 | 676594 | 2.7 | 131 |
| 9. Hamilton (Ont.) | 692911 | 662401 | 4.6 | 505.1 |
| 10. London (Ont.) | 457720 | 435600 | 5.1 | 171.7 |

Note: Adapted from "Population and dwelling counts, for census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2006 and 2001 censuses," Statistics Canada, 2008, *Statistics Canada* [Website].

There are very few historical analyses of Ottawa (Andrew, 1983; Taylor, 1986; Elliott, 1991; Gordon, 2002; 2001; Fullerton, 2005) and all describe the political / geographical nexus as being very closely intertwined. Indeed, as the following passage reveals, Ottawa's very existence as the National Capital is directly related to this nexus:

Ottawa is the only place which will be accepted by the majority of Upper and Lower Canada as a fair compromise. With the exception of Ottawa, every one of the cities proposed is an object of jealousy to each of the others. Ottawa is, in fact, neither in Upper or Lower Canada. Literally it is in the former; but a bridge alone divides it from the latter. (Citing Governor General Sir Edmund Walker Head, Gordon, 2001, p. 5)

It is noteworthy that Ottawa was chosen as the Nation's capital not because of what it is but more because of what it is not; in other words, Ottawa was nominated as the National Capital because it was the most suitable compromise.

Caroline Andrew is one of the few scholars with expertise in the municipal politics of Ottawa / Gatineau. In her contribution to an edited collection entitled, *Urban Communication*, she provides an historical analysis of "stories that Ottawa has tried to tell about itself" (Andrew, 2007, p. 130). Her analysis makes it clear that Ottawa has a long history of "trying to be world-class" that long predates the era of territorially competitive neoliberalism.¹⁶ In 1899, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier created the Ottawa Improvement Commission (1899 to 1927), the institution that preceded the Federal District Commission (1927 to 1959) and then the National Capital Commission (1959 - present). Andrew explains, "Laurier was interested in converting Ottawa from an ugly lumber town that he had first encountered in coming to Ottawa in 1874" (ibid., p. 128). Ottawa is located at the intersection of three rivers and so the beautification of the area in

¹⁶ For an overview of the various way of conceptualizing the neoliberalization of urban space during the 1980s and 1990s, see Brenner & Theodore, 2002, pp. 1-103.

this era involved cleaning up the mess left along the river banks from logging activities and beginning construction of the Queen Elizabeth Parkway (one of eight Parkways that exist in present-day Ottawa). Laurier believed that Ottawa could be the “Washington of the north” (Taylor, 1986, p. 148).

This focus also dominated planning strategies of the Federal District Commission (FDC). In 1937 and again in 1945, Prime Minister Mackenzie King invited Jacques Gréber, a French Beaux-Arts / City Beautiful planner to advise the FDC on the (master) planning of Ottawa as Canada’s capital. This is when the Greenbelt and the Gatineau Park was created, along with Confederation Square (now Confederation Park). Again, it is not difficult to imagine what was motivating Gréber and the commission. The National Capital Commission (NCC) currently has more than fifteen parks in its possession, in an urban region that also has many City-kept parks. Ottawa as the “green capital” is perhaps the most pervasive story that the city tells about itself. “Indeed,” Andrew (2007) writes, “even the NCC, author of the image, has become concerned with the ‘green capital’ fixation of local citizens who have so bought into this idea that almost any development project is viewed with suspicion” (p. 130). An abundance of green space within the city and easy access to country-side vistas, lakes, parks and trails are all important elements of how Ottawa defines itself and presents itself to the world. Again, in terms of prettifying Ottawa and making it seem like a suitable place for ministers, diplomats and Parliament workers rather than frontiersman, loggers and labourers, the most obvious landscape amenities to build upon were the waterways and green spaces.

It seems that the post-colonial history of Ottawa very closely resembles the process of gentrification, but on a city-wide scale. Originally a settler and logging town,

political elites sought to use their power to build a city in their image and the image of capital city grandeur. They wished to transform a city that was chosen as the national capital because it was a fair compromise to something that they could enjoy. David Gordon (2001) suggests that “the motives for the involvement of elites in planning Canada’s capital” were primarily related to a “desire for simple comforts” and only secondarily to the “representation of imperial power” (p. 26). Gordon notes, “suggestions of driveways from the viceregal residence to Parliament Hill, and picturesque vistas and attractive grounds in Rockcliffe Park, seem motivated by these rather selfish concerns” (ibid.). Whether the elites were motivated to achieve world class capital city status or day-to-day comfort and appeal, by 1946, industrial activity on the Ottawa side of the river was effectively eliminated and Ottawa was no longer a place for industry workers (Taylor, 1986, p. 174). Taylor writes, “The foundation of a major working-class community had been displaced... Expansion of government continued to require space for both work and residence” (ibid.).

At the neighbourhood scale, gentrification has also long existed in Ottawa. Rockcliffe Park is one of the oldest and most well-known enclaves for Ottawa’s more wealthy citizens. Both Westboro and Rockcliffe share many of the factors that are usually associated with neighbourhood gentrification (Ley & Dobson, 2008): they are both located along the Ottawa River and so both share a similar “environmental amenity”; both were railway suburbs located roughly five and three kilometers away from Parliament Hill; both became “police villages” in 1903 and 1908 and so shared a similar

legal / political constitution,¹⁷ and industrial activities have not taken place in either for at least half a century. The point is that the context for gentrification in Westboro has long been in place and, in an urban area with a relatively small inner-city region, it seems that it was “just a matter of time” for socioeconomic “up-scaling” to take place in this neighbourhood.

Finally, the political context for gentrification arguably exists in contemporary Ottawa. Particularly between Councillors of rural-area and urban-area wards, there is a great deal of in-fighting and political dysfunction (Denley, 2009). Instead of organizing and running the city for the good of the whole, members of City Council, generally speaking, make decisions based on their own fight for political constituency within their ward (ibid.). There are many problems with this set of political circumstances but one is that developments that build political constituency are often big and expensive and thus require private investment and guaranteed return (the following discussion of Loblaw’s Superstore illustrates this pattern of development). These types of developments are more likely to stimulate rather than impede gentrification because they must be commercially profitable and thus are created with the needs of the upper classes in mind.

This section looked away from the particular issue of gentrification in Westboro and looked to the more general political, economic, demographic and geographic history of Ottawa that may have enabled the process to take place. In short, it looked at the context that might have produced the gentrification in Westboro. This is an approach that

¹⁷ “Police Villages were established under County By-Law which provided for the appointment of a Board of Police, for a specific area within the county, with limited powers to pass by-laws and regulations for public order and maintenance” (Municipal Records at the Archives of Ontario, 2009).

aligns itself more with “production-side” theories of gentrification. That is, it looks to social “structures” that can be causally linked to urban reinvestment. As we discussed in the previous chapter, production-side theorists tend to depend on detailed analyses of the historicity of particular cases of gentrification. They tend to place particular events into the context of much broader periods and trends like “industrialisation” or “globalisation”.¹⁸ Even based on the small amount of evidence provided in the few pages above, it is possible to see how a production-side theorist might explain the recent renaissance in Westboro.

The following section takes a more “consumption-side” approach. It begins by reviewing some of the indicators that gentrification is indeed taking place in Westboro and then turns to the central “paradox” of the new middle class – that gentrification happens in areas populated by politically left-leaning groups. Westboro developments have begun to create a brand for itself that would appeal to middle-class tastes like those identified by David Ley (1996) in *The New Middle Class* and this was at about the same time gentrification in the neighbourhood was evident. Based on the analysis here, it seems reasonable that the “new middle class” is causing gentrification in Westboro.

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that an analysis of urban development patterns on a national scale also point to the inevitability of gentrification. Danyluk & Ley (2006) write: “A recent examination of gentrification in 10 Canadian cities between 1981 and 2001 showed that even with extensive screening of census tracts... 20 per cent of inner-city dwelling units in Toronto and Vancouver gentrified... and 12 per cent of units in Montreal (citing Meligrana and Skaburskis, 2005); adding a second category of less certain cases of gentrification raised the totals to close to a quarter of all inner-city units in Montreal, over a third in Vancouver and over 40 per cent in Toronto. And this figure does not include existing inner-city elite districts or districts with a high proportion of new construction” (p. 2197).

Westboro

In 1994, the average Ottawa Multiple Listing Service (MLS) resale housing price decreased for the first time in at least six years and continued to do so for the next two years (Figure 1). Between 1998 and 2002, this trend dramatically reversed and the average resale price grew from a fraction of a percent to just over fourteen percent; between 2003 and 2008, the average resale value continued to grow at an average of around six percent annually (Figure 1.). During this time, the Westboro / Hintonburg area experienced the greatest rate of price increases, growing at an average rate of 13.5%.¹⁹ Since 2001, the annual rate of increase in Westboro / Hintonburg has been much greater than that of both the urban area with the second greatest rate of increase (“Downtown”) and Ottawa’s average (Figure 2). Indeed, the summer of 2001 was the moment that the average MLS price in the Westboro / Hintonburg area surpassed the average for the City of Ottawa, and since then it has continued to grow more rapidly (Figure 3). The most important point is that, in the last decade, nowhere in urban Ottawa has the price of housing increased as much as in Westboro / Hintonburg.

At the same time real estate began climbing, the retail landscape in Westboro began to transform rapidly. Official news stories of the first two major developments were both released in the summer of 1999: Loblaw’s Superstore would anchor the east end of the neighbourhood’s “main street” (Richmond Rd.) and the new MEC the west end. Christine Leadman, then director of the Westboro BIA and currently the City Councillor in the area, is quoted in *The Ottawa Citizen*: “By the middle of next summer,

¹⁹ There are no MLS listings on Westboro alone so the adjoining neighbourhood, Hintonburg, is also discussed.

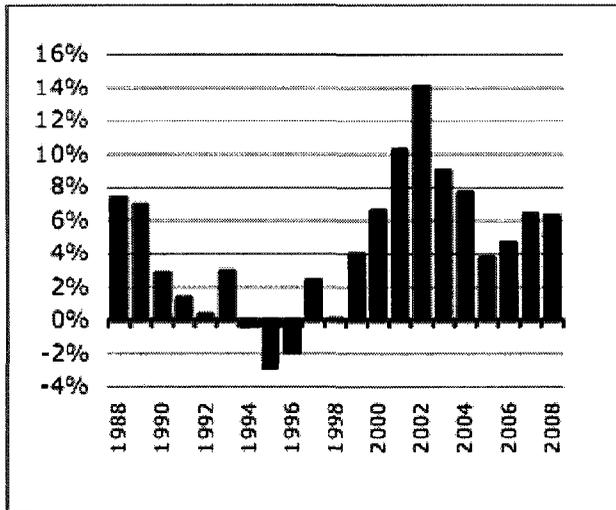
the whole neighbourhood will be changed. People will be in shock.” (Gray, 1999e). She could not have more accurately described what happened. Shortly after, an editorial about “the foot race to Westboro” was also published in *The Ottawa Citizen*:

The Westboro area is attractive to outdoor [gear] retailers because of the relatively inexpensive leases and land prices. It is also close to the Ottawa River, the parkway trails and the bridge to Gatineau Park, all lures for the runners, paddlers and cyclists most likely to patronize these stores. Bob Laughton [owner of one such store], ...[and managers] of the Expedition Shoppe, made the decision to move to Westboro upon hearing the Mountain Equipment Co-op would be moving there... The Co-op has triggered similar explosions of activity by competitors in Vancouver and Toronto when it opened new stores. (Hill, 1999c)

In another news article, the owner of Trailhead, an existing outdoor gear store in the Westboro area was interviewed and told the press that MEC’s move into the neighbourhood would for him represent an increase of \$1 million in annual sales (Campbell, 1999).

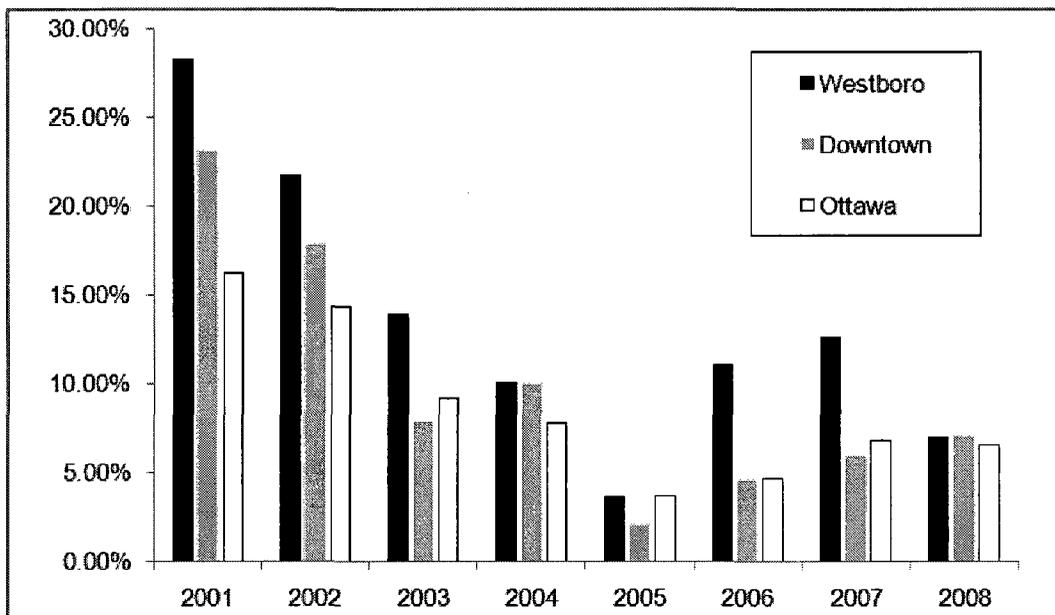
In 2003, the City’s Annual Development Report (ADR) states that Westboro’s main street has “virtually no vacant retail space, where there were 27 available store fronts as recently as five years ago” (City of Ottawa, 2004, p. 25). Today, there are fourteen sports stores in the area, ten of which are along a one kilometer stretch of Richmond Rd. The neighbourhood is a national hotspot for gear shopping. Long time Ottawa journalist Noel Taylor, recently wrote a special article for *The Ottawa Citizen* entitled, “The Demise of my Old Neighbourhood.” He reports that the rent of the Westboro bakery shop increased from \$700/month in 2002 to \$3500/month in 2007, forcing it to close (Taylor, 2007). Many of the existing shops in the area were forced to relocate to nearby neighbourhoods as new trendier shops moved in. There are certainly

Figure 1: *Average MLS Resale Price Change, 1998-2008*



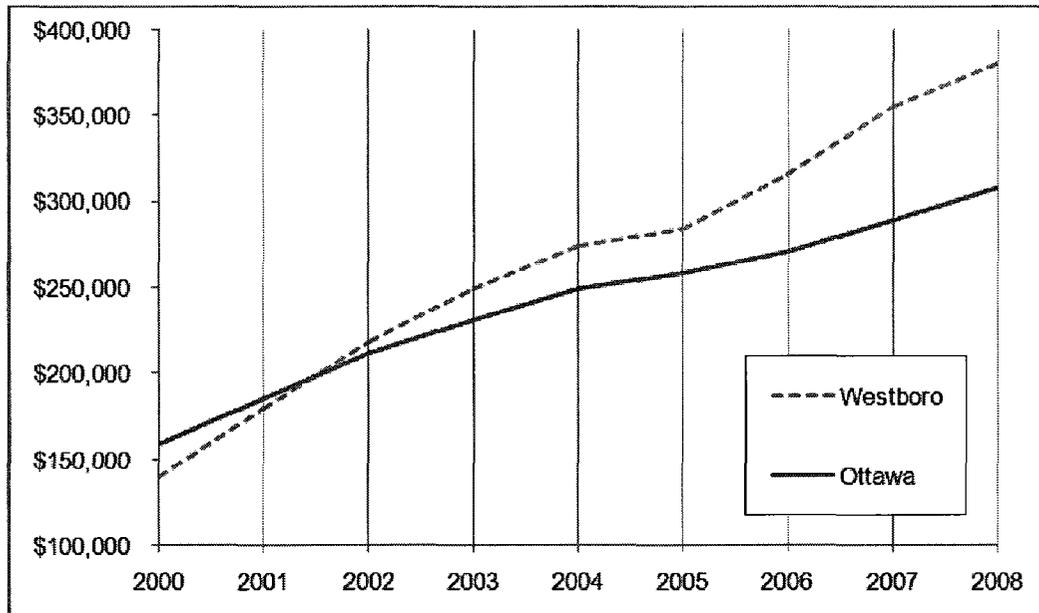
Note: From "Average MLS Price Change," City of Ottawa Planning and Development Department, 2009, *Annual Development Report 2008* (Publication No. 12-35).

Figure 2: *Percentage of Increase in Average MLS Price, 2001-2008*



Note: Values from "Average MLS Resale Price," City of Ottawa Planning and Development Department, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

Figure 3: *Average Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Price, 2000-2008*



Note: Values from "Average MLS Resale Price," City of Ottawa Planning and Development Department, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

some voices raising concerns about the changing character of the Westboro neighbourhood but they are a minority.²⁰

The momentum that gentrification in Westboro gained is representative of a paradox identified by consumption-side theorists. Danyluk & Ley (2006), for example, asked “whether gentrification is associated with distinctive patterns of journey-to-work travel” (p. 2196). Based on a myriad of previous studies that showed a clear relationship between gentrifiers and social liberal political attitudes, the authors hypothesized that public and non-automobile transportation would be over-represented and automobile transportation would be under-represented. Their study found that “residents of gentrified areas are more likely than other commuters to ride a bicycle to work [but] ...they are less likely to be users of public transport, despite their political support for the notion of the public household” (p. 2209).

The identification of this paradox is a variation of Ley’s theory of the new middle class. There are five political priorities that are associated with the urban ideology commonly expressed from this group and, as described below, these political priorities seem to be present amongst residents of Westboro. The priorities, outlined by Danyluk & Ley (2006), are as follows: (1) environmental sustainability; (2) social equity; (3) the “public-household;” (4) health and fitness; and (5) connectedness to the physical fabric of the city (p. 2196). These five priorities are closely connected to three dominant characteristics of new middle class employment. The authors explain these connections as follows:

²⁰ Contrast Taylor’s (2007) article, “The Demise of my Old Neighbourhood” with Gray’s (2007), “Why Westboro Works”.

First, [the new middle class] are frequently sustained and financed by public institutions or by the government itself. They depend on the collectivist policies of social liberalism and government intervention, and thus may be more likely to support left-of-centre policies. Secondly, many occupations within the new middle class can be read as having objectives beyond the mere pursuit of profit or personal gain... Hence, we might expect their practitioners to sympathise with disadvantaged or marginalised groups, supporting a politics that prioritises the collective good or the public household over individual goals... Finally, these occupations require often lengthy post-secondary education, frequently with specializations in the arts, humanities and social sciences. A body of research has argued that highly educated people express more liberal views on a variety of issues, including democratic values, civil liberties, foreign policy and tolerance. (p. 2198)

The categories of employment associated with the new middle class are overwhelming represented in gentrified neighbourhoods (Ley, 1996). The paradox is that despite being characterised by political beliefs that place a high value on social equity and the public good, the pattern of urban development associated with this social group is characterized by displacement and segregation based on class. Based on the indicators described above, the new middle class might very well be linked to the gentrification taking place in Westboro.

Out of the total population 15 years and older of the sub-urban census area in which Westboro is located, 85% held a university certificate, diploma or degree; 95% worked in “white-collar” jobs; and 43% were directly employed by the federal government (City of Ottawa, 2009a). Furthermore, the advertisements from the development companies who are presently building condominiums in Westboro seem to be targeting new middle class tastes and sensibilities.²¹

²¹ Note that 49% of Westboro’s working force report that they drive to work and 28% take public transit (City of Ottawa, 2009). These are similar figures to the percentages in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver’s inner city areas of gentrification (Danyluk & Ley, 2006).

The Westboro Station, for example, is a mixed-use mid-rise development currently under construction at the west end of Westboro. The name of the development was chosen because it is the site of the old street-car station that connected Westboro to downtown and Britannia Beach. Inner city gentrification like that in Westboro has often involved the adaptive re-use of old urban structures from the industrial era, best exemplified by the conversions of lofts into artists' live-work studios (Zukin, 1989). The Westboro Station is not an example of adaptive re-use because it is a brand-new construction, but it is an example of a development that attempts to create a post-industrial brand. The logo of the Westboro Station is similar to that of London's Underground public transportation (the "Tube") and San Francisco's Municipal Street Car (the "Muni") (Figure 4). The slogan of the Westboro Station is "Live. Shop. Work" (Westboro Station, 2009a). This exemplifies what Danyluk & Ley (2006) call "post-industrial planning 'a la mode'" (p. 2195), which they explain as "mixed medium- to high-density land uses that juxtapose work, home and leisure space, permitting quick connections from labour, to rest, to recreation" (ibid.).

Figure 4. *The logo of the Westboro Station condominium development*



Note: From "Home page," Westboro Station, 2009a, *Urban condominiums in the heart of Westboro Village* [Promotional website].

The five elements associated with the social liberalist ideology mentioned earlier are all present in the Westboro Station marketing literature. On one of the top pages of the Westboro Station website, there is a passage placed in quotation marks with the

signature of the architect directly below, indicating that these are the words of the architect himself. Embedded in this text is the first element associated with the urban ideology of the new middle class - “a connectedness to the physical fabric of the city”.

The passage reads as follows:

I grew up in the Village of Westboro. My childhood memories are found in the nooks and crannies of this little world: the bakery where we bought donuts on our way home from the beach, the hardware store where we bought balls and bats, Cole Park where we played endless hours of hockey, the Bank of Nova Scotia where I opened my first bank account, Turpin Motors where my Dad bought his cars, and the streetcar line that took young boys to other adventures. When I was presented with the opportunity to design a building for this site all of these lingering memories were a reminder of the great opportunity I have as an architect..... to create meaningful places and buildings, I hope you enjoy your experience in Westboro as much as I have. (Westboro Station, 2009b)

The passage clearly demonstrates nostalgia and a romanticized notion of one’s *connection* to the city. The importance the new middle class places on health and fitness is also evident in the marketing of the Westboro Station. This is evident in the following two passages: “Westboro Station is only a few strides from the jogging, walking and cycling trails that run along the wide expanse of the Ottawa River;” and “Westboro is a destination for those who enjoy life” (Westboro Station, 2009c). Potential buyers are also assured that the design of the condos are energy efficient, which aligns with their attitude about environmental sustainability: “Westboro Station’s energy efficient architecture, mechanical and electrical systems help reduce pollution, conserve valuable resources and save you money by reducing energy consumption and maintenance costs without reducing your comfort” (Westboro Station, 2009d). Finally, the most important aspect of the Westboro Station development is that it places a high priority on the public household: “This plaza is a combination of community meeting spaces and private paved

patios providing a balance between a gathering place for the condominium community and the individual homeowners” (Westboro Station, 2009e). The idea here is that the opportunity for public gathering and the chance (but safely familiar) encounters it engenders are built into the physical layout of the building itself and that by buying a condo, one is also buying into this idea.

My point in this section is that consumption side theories also seem to offer reasonable explanations of gentrification in Westboro. The average real-estate cost in Westboro began to rise at the same time that the retail landscape began to change. Consumption-side theorists do not deny that historical context and broader socioeconomic trends are related to patterns of urban development but, for them, the most important factors causing gentrification are the behaviours and group characteristics of gentrifiers, namely the new middle class. The theory of the new middle class and the subsequent analyses of their cumulative effect on inner city reinvestment are powerful and persuasive texts.

The next section looks at the gentrification in Westboro more closely. The most obvious catalysts of gentrification in Westboro are the MEC and Loblaw developments. The following two sections examine each more closely, in an effort to see how they might have caused gentrification. Both sections are attempts at combining production- and consumption-side theories of gentrification. This theoretically hybrid approach sees production and consumption as mutually constituted processes and does not claim that either is more or less responsible for gentrification. While these approaches are more nuanced and less one-sided than the two previous theories, they still causally link the field of socioeconomics with the process of gentrification.

The MEC

The Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) is a Canadian consumers' co-operative that sells outdoor gear and clothing. It was first established in 1971 by six students and members of the Varsity Outdoors Club at the University of British Columbia to meet the needs of a niche market of alpinists, climbers and wilderness travelers who required specialized equipment. There is a great deal of lore about these founders and how they came to establish the co-op, much of it is (probably) imagined and spread in front of camp fires and under the stars, but there are a few sources that include direct quotations from the founders speaking about the organization and its origins. One journal reports that the founders were “tired of shuttling south to Seattle for decent climbing and wilderness gear” and their idea to create a Canadian equipment co-op was hatched “the previous spring, when a snowstorm stranded them on Mount Baker in Washington State” (Macqueen, 2002). Sara Gowling, one of the founders and a current member of the board recalls that “the co-op's initial mandate was to sell good gear at fair prices for ‘self-propelled’ recreational activities” (ibid.). Today, MEC is Canada’s largest consumers’ co-op with thirteen locations across the country, over three million members, and an average growth rate of ten thousand members per month (Newswire, 2009). One in every ten Canadian adults is an MEC member (ibid.).

The first Ottawa MEC opened in October of 1992. At that time, there were only three other locations in existence (one in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto). MEC rented 10,000 square feet of retail space at the former Towne Cinema on Beechwood Ave. in the north eastern section of Ottawa’s urban region. The store first moved to Ottawa because the demand there was stronger than in other Canadian cities. A spokesperson for MEC

describes how Ottawa residents were “more vocal” about wanting an MEC than residents in other cities like Edmonton (which got its store in 1998) and Montreal (which got its store in 2003 and where a second is currently being constructed) (Scanlan, 1992). The new building, designed and constructed by MEC, has a footprint of 28,000 square feet and a 60-spot parking lot (Hill, 1999a; 1999c). At the time of the move, MEC had roughly 82,000 Ottawa members and sales in the outdoor equipment market were rising quickly and steadily (Hill, 1999b).²² As explained in the previous “Westboro” section, when MEC moved to Westboro in March of 1999, the neighbourhood transformed into a retail hotspot for the Canadian outdoor gear market. MEC is truly a “destination shop” and for that reason it seems that it has had the most substantial impact on the nature of gentrification in Westboro. Although an outdoor gear retail store existed in the area long before MEC arrived, there is something qualitatively different about the MEC and the kind of success the organization has achieved.

The following quotation from Ekkehard Behrmann, president of Taiga, an MEC competitor based in Vancouver-based retail competitor, speaks to this phenomenon. Behrmann says that his company “can compete against MEC on price and quality... But, matching the co-op's ‘psychological advantage’ is tougher” (Stuek, 2001). What Behrmann refers to as a “psychological advantage” is perhaps the most important characteristic of this co-op, what I call its “monopoly on good.” Although it is impossible to comprehensively explain MEC’s success, a nexus of two sets of circumstances has at least added to it. What is important about these circumstances is how closely they align with the tastes of the new middle class. They are as follows: (1) the political ideologies

²² MEC would not disclose the current number of MEC members with Ottawa addresses.

embedded in a co-operative; and (2) the popular environmental politics of individuals and groups who shop for wilderness and self-propelled recreational equipment.

The political ideologies embedded in a cooperative: As outlined on the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) website, the definition of a co-operative is “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (International Co-operative Alliance, 2009). There are seven values that are explicitly defined by the ICA, which the MEC incorporates into its organization. There is an obvious similarity between the defining principles of the co-operative movement and political principles that could be described as “socialist” or “liberal”. The most obvious is a message that repeatedly appears in the literature the organization provides about itself: *We do not exist for the purpose of creating a profit but to meet the needs of our members.* The following line appears in large font in the “About Us” section of the MEC website: “Directed by the members, MEC fulfills its core purpose – to help people enjoy the benefits of self-propelled wilderness-oriented recreation. We do that by selling outdoor gear, clothing, and services” (Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2009a). The degree to which this mandate alters the behaviours of this organization from that of a privately owned company is not of concern; the important point here is that MEC tries to create an overall perception amongst its members and the general public that it is different from a profit driven (capitalist) organization in that it strives first to look after its members (not customers) and that generating profit is not its primary purpose.²³

²³ Sales people at MEC never refer to patrons as customers, always members (MacMillan, 2009).

The popular environmental politics of many Co-op members: The popular environmental politics of many Co-op members are aligned with the politics embedded in co-operatives. On the front page of the “Sustainability section” of MEC’s website, the largest text reads as follows: “Count on us to act with integrity. We’re driven by passion, not profit. We continue to look for ways to protect our wild spaces and reduce the ecological footprint of our business” (Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2009b). The measures that MEC takes to “green” its operations and products is very impressive; indeed, their newest buildings are made from re-used, re-cycled and re-purposed materials (Hill, 1999a), the cotton in their clothing is organically grown and they donate 1% of their annual gross sales (an estimate of over \$ \$265-million in 2008)²⁴ to Canadian, non-profit environmental organizations (ex. The David Suzuki Foundation). They are undoubtedly an industry leader in green consumerism.

The commercial success of green for MEC is at least partly related to the belief amongst MEC clientele that their enthusiasm for outdoor recreation is indicative of a special connection with nature. Quite simply, as a result of being outdoor enthusiasts, many patrons of MEC spend a lot of their recreational time in parks and non-urbanized environments and in those environments they encounter lots of seemingly primordial vegetation, waterways and mountainous landscapes. This fosters a heightened awareness and appreciation of a wilderness or nature that requires preservation (Baker, 2002). Both political and social theorists have shown a fundamental connection between such an awareness and the politics and sociology of green consumerism (respectively, Dobson, 2007; Szasz, 2007).

²⁴ Strauss, 2009.

What is interesting about these two sets of circumstance is how well they fold into a highly profitable marketing strategy. For example, compared to most online retail chains, MEC's website provides by far the best on-line shopping experience. The visual design is simple but clear (solid contrasting colours on a white background), giving the impression that it has been implemented to provide a service rather than to market its products. There is a substantial amount of detailed information about the products (materials used, the country in which it was manufactured, weight, quantities of stock) and it is one of the only online stores that allows Interac as well as credit card transactions. MEC justifies their investment in such a sophisticated system, not because it increases sales, but because it is part of the organizations' commitment to reduce its ecological footprint.

In the same way that online shopping aligns itself well to the two sets of circumstances that give MEC its "monopoly on good," urban landscapes that are associated with gentrification also align themselves with these circumstances. Medium- to high-density developments are more environmentally sustainable because they house more people in a geographically smaller area. A more compact city requires less mechanical and electrical infrastructure and thus consumes less energy. The re-investment in the inner-city area is therefore not only desirable but also an ecological imperative. A compact city is also a less privatized one (in the sense that the boundaries between public and private space blend into one another) and so appeals to the new middle class belief in the public household as well as their beliefs about environmental sustainability.

Based on the discussion of MEC above, it is not difficult to see how this organization could be causally connected to gentrification in Westboro. The time that MEC moved into Westboro aligns with increasing gentrification in the neighbourhood; many of the stores that arrived in Westboro align themselves with MEC's target market (or membership); and, the characteristics of this targeted group seem to be the same group that Ley (1996) calls "the new middle class." In the following section, Loblaw's Superstore is discussed and it too is likely a prime gentrifier in Westboro.

The Superstore²⁵

On February 4th of 1999, news broke about Loblaw's plan for a Westboro Superstore. The official story was that a consultant, hired by Loblaw, was to meet with City Councillor, Shawn Little, to discuss the proposed development. Little is quoted, "Their aim is to continue the storefront character of Westboro" (Gray, 1999a). This statement foreshadows the central issue in what evolved into a debate spanning a twenty-six month period: Those who opposed the development believed that a Superstore was too big for the neighbourhood-scale that characterized Westboro.

Graeme Kirby, the former general manager of the NCC, was the consultant that Loblaw hired. Loblaw expected resistance from the community (Gray, 1999a; Gray, 1999b; Westboro Loblaw, 1999) but Kirby's job was essentially to "pitch" the idea and politically and legally enable the development to get underway.

²⁵ For clarification, the term "Loblaw" (singular) represents Loblaw Companies Limited. The term "Loblaws" (plural) refers to a Loblaw grocery retail company. Loblaw's plan for Westboro includes another of their grocery retail companies, a "Superstore".

Legally, Loblaw was required to take two steps before the development could proceed: First, the ten acre site was rezoned from “Light Industrial” to “Commercial Retail”;²⁶ second, the site plan required approval from the City's Planning and Economic Development Committee. Loblaw signed a conditional contract with the owner of the site in mid February agreeing that, if the site was rezoned, they would purchase it at the agreed upon price. Loblaw was expected to request zoning approval in June but delayed this date after public consultation with community groups and residents (Gray, 1999c).

The initial proposal specified an 80,000 square foot building and also parking lot for 440 cars but, after the public consultation period, Loblaw increased the building size to 98,000 square feet. The other major revisions included the addition of design elements on the front (Richmond Rd. side) of the building; specifically, a low-rise small-retail section, garden centre and patio to complement the “main street” look-and-feel (the other three sides of the site border residential areas) and the design was to hide the 440 car parking lot from the mainstreet’s viewscape. Those who opposed the Superstore were outraged about the increase in size but the developers and supporters claimed that, although the new site was larger, it boasted a much better and more fitting design.

“We want a renaissance to take place in Westboro” said the architect (Gray, 1999d). The retail analyst promised the development would “revitalize” the Richmond Rd. community: “Its not like the 80's - it's not just put up a yellow store” (ibid.). Kirby deployed the rhetoric of “new urbanism” – a set of architectural and urban design principles that advocate mixed use, medium density, traditional architecture and lots of

²⁶ It is the site of a no-longer-operational textile manufacturer, “Crane-Drummond”.

green space – to promote the company’s development plan.²⁷ The Loblaw Company was unwilling to reduce the size of their development and so Kirby’s strategy was to promote its design in a manner intended to appease the tastes of the opposition. The development might indeed be big, but its design would allow it to fit into the neighbourhood.

The new proposal was approved by City Council (vote: 7-4) and community coalitions immediately announced their plan to take the decision to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). Letters between the leaders of the community groups who opposed the development and Councillor Shawn Little who supported it continued to appear in *The Ottawa Citizen* for the next five months until the focus of city reporters turned to the election. As mentioned earlier, the Loblaw issue was key in the 2000 race for the Kitchissippi Ward. It was a great surprise to many that Little was reelected but, what is more noteworthy, the voter turn-out was a record high 47% (the previous year only 31% voted), a trend that continued into the following elections which had a 54% voter turnout (City of Ottawa, 2009b).

The OMB hearing began at the beginning of February 2000 and lasted three months. Immediately before the hearing got underway, the OMB explained that “neither traffic issues nor the impact of the new grocery store on surrounding businesses will be considered by the adjudicators” (Boswell, 2001a). This means that those appealing the decision would have to focus on legalities related to planning (The Planning Act); in other words, most of the community’s reasons for resisting the development were not within the OMB’s mandate to address. Loblaw won the OMB trial and construction began in the fall of 2001. Even today, opinions about the Superstore remain mixed: Some

²⁷ See Parker (2004, pp. 65-73) for a critical appraisal of new urbanism.

believe that its design makes it a success (ex. Gray, 2007); others feel that, regardless of design, the store irreparably created too much traffic in Westboro (an issue that dominated a more recent parking meter debate) and that a Superstore will never “fit” with the neighbourhood’s “local” character (Harrison & Mann, 1999; Ludington, 1999; Boswell, 2001b).

The Loblaw development would set a precedent for future developments in the neighbourhood. The size of the building and its surrounding parking lot is the absolute maximum the neighbourhood could accommodate. A larger development would require an expansion of the Westboro retail boundaries.²⁸ The physical boundaries of the main street retail area are shaped like a triangle rather than a rectangle and the Superstore takes up what was the largest of the seven city blocks on the south side of Richmond Rd. and the ten blocks on the north side. Westboro would not have gentrified to the extent that it has because of a few specialty shops and coffee bars. The developments that most likely pushed the neighbourhood past the “gentrification tipping point” are the condominiums and Loblaw’s, which set the legal precedent for larger scale developments and enabled more condominium builders to move in.

Summary

The sections above described various social fields that can be linked to the production of gentrification. The “Ottawa” section describes the historical / political context in which gentrification took place; the “Westboro” section showed evidence that the residents of the neighbourhood are part of a socioeconomic group that has been

²⁸ The Westboro BIA just recently expanded its boundaries (Zakaluzny, 2007).

associated with the gentrification processes for the last half a century, namely, the new middle class; the “MEC” section showed how the circumstances that have produced MEC’s success have also produced changes in the urban landscape associated with gentrification; and the “Superstore” section outlined how the Loblaw’s development set the legal, political and symbolic precedent for gentrification to have taken place in the Westboro neighbourhood. Cumulatively, these sections show that *many* fields can be seen to produce gentrification when the methodology of research aims to identify *causality*.

The reason for this is that the fields described in each section are almost the same. In every case, they are part of one or both sides of the dialectically opposed socioeconomic fields called production and consumption, supply and demand, or structure and agency. In each of these accounts, these fields (which are actually just one field because they are mutually constituted) remain “stable” (Latour, 2005, pp. 10-11). That is, in the background of each account, the field of socioeconomics acts upon the urban landscape but remains relatively unexamined. The important point for this study is that these explanations of gentrification rely on a particular methodological approach, that which Latour (2005) calls the “sociology of the social” (p. 9). This is a sociology that seeks causality while relying on the stability of an ontologically distinct social aggregate to provide it. In the case of gentrification theories, this aggregate is represented as socioeconomics. As sociological accounts of urban development, both production and consumption theories of gentrification begin to lose validity if they are not conceived as an *a priori* field that can offer an explanation but as parts of an assemblage that requires one. The methodology called “the sociology of associations” of ANT perceives of

socioeconomic processes, not as potential explanations, but as evidence of an assemblage (or actor-network) that needs to be explained. The following chapter traces that evidence in an effort to reassemble the associations that enact the Ottawa, Westboro, Superstore, MEC nexus to show how the ANT methodology can produce new knowledge about gentrification. This account will not be driven by any theory, it will not seek causality, and it will not forward socioeconomic factors as research findings; it will, however, open up new avenues for critical gentrification research.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARKING METERS & SWEET CITY BICYCLES

Introduction

This chapter describes one actor-network in Westboro. Simply put, it identifies a set of mutually reinforcing but heterogeneous actors which interact together to perform gentrification and do so in a manner that perpetuates it. This does not mean that they *cause* gentrification; instead, as explained in Chapter Two, gentrification is the effect of the webs of relations among these actors. In this actor-network, the two principal actors are (1) parking meters (PMs) and (2) bicycles. This chapter will show how these two actors interact with the two major developments discussed in the previous chapter, namely the arrival of the MEC and Superstore. Both of these developments are also actors in the same actor-network but, as the research presented below demonstrates, they are no more the root cause or the beginning of gentrification than PMs and bicycles; instead, they are just two of many actors on which the enactment of Westboro's gentrification is contingent.

Indeed, none of these actors could enact Westboro's gentrification on their own; the way they connect, define, reinforce and shape one another is what produces the phenomenon. This is not always a straightforward matter. Some connections are more direct and some pass through a variety of mediators before meaningful connections are made; as Latour (2005) describes it, the actors have to "work hard" to sustain the actor-network (pp. 34-37). The relative "sustainability" of the gentrification in Westboro, however, is a subject that goes beyond the scope of the research presented here. The purpose of the case study presented here is to describe gentrification but to do so in terms that are compatible with ANT's relational ontology.

The actors in this particular assemblage have not been selected arbitrarily but were chosen after a lengthy period of accumulating as much data as possible by reading about Westboro, spending time in Westboro, and speaking to people about Westboro. Gradually, patterns began to emerge. Key words, reemerging ideas, and reappearing symbols aligned themselves with existing knowledge on gentrification and urban affairs. The patterns that emerged, however, do not perfectly match any existing theory of gentrification or urbanism. Certainly, there are connections between the gentrification produced in Westboro and the gentrification that Neil Smith (2002), David Ley (2003), Tom Slater (2004) and Loretta Lees (2000, pp. 402-406) describe, but tracing *those* connections is also beyond the scope of this research.

Actor-networks do not have a beginning, middle or end, nor do they have a hierarchical structure so a description of one can start from any point within the network. The most important variable determining the parameters of an actor-network is the researcher's scope. The geographic scope of this research has already been defined as the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA and within this actor-network, the principal actors left traces as far as South Keys (in the south-end of Ottawa) and Gloucester (in the east-end of Ottawa). The temporal scope of this research is principally defined around the changes in Westboro's real estate market, described in the previous chapter; these began around 2000 and have continued to intensify to the present day. The actor-network that this research highlights does not need to be traced much farther back in time. The oldest relevant trace is left by the parking meter just over twenty years ago and so the description of this actor-network begins then. The following story, however, loses its chronological order very quickly.

Parking Meters of Ottawa

My discovery of Ottawa's parking meters (PMs) as a significant actors came from background research on an issue that became a major news item after the 2008 Ottawa City budget was announced. The City of Ottawa decided to raise the cost of on-street meter parking from \$2.50 / hour to \$3.00 / hour and planned to charge for it on evenings and throughout the weekend (Zakaluzny, 2007; Cash Grab, 2007). This issue appeared to receive an abnormal amount of press coverage and zealous debate.

Approximately two decades earlier, in the final months of 1986, Councillor Michael McSweeney, motivated to diminish property tax increases, suggested that parking meter fees be increased from \$1.00/hour to \$1.50/hour (Kelly, 1987). "Alderman Michael McSweeney," *The Citizen* reported, "argued for the rise in parking rates, saying it is up to the city to generate as much money as it can to keep the property tax increase to a minimum" (*ibid.*). Although council eventually voted against his initiative, this would be the first of a series of attempts to strategically utilize PM revenue to freeze tax increases. The same proposal went to council again in 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996 and in 1998, when a price increase was finally approved for the first time since 1983. In every case, City Council made it clear that the change was a budgetary consideration (Aubry, 1989a; 1989b; 1989c; Eade, 1991; Downtown City Parking, 1993; Boswell, 1996; Adam, 1998; Elliott, 1998).²⁹ It seems that the press coverage and zealous debate appearing in 2007 was not abnormal at all. The quotation that best summarizes the Council's position and that most accurately reflects the rhetoric of its supporters, appeared in the paper just before the fee-hikes of 1998: "The corporation has to operate this year with \$17.7 million

²⁹ Meter-fees have a variety of unintended consequences (see Shoup, 2005).

less than last year and the question is, do you want to have a compulsory tax or an elective tax? It is one or the other” (Adam, 1998).

Those who would rather see a hike in property tax than PM fees are downtown merchants and the BIAs that lobby for their interests (Eade, 1989; Blanchfield, 1991; Boswell, 1996; Elliott, 1998; Dare, 2007; 2008; Sutcliffe, 2008). Their rationale is that the perceived cost of parking (both in terms of monetary fees and time spent “trolling” for an unoccupied parking meter) and fear of parking infractions are the most significant deterrents for potential downtown patrons (Shufelt, 2008). This issue is compounded by perception that parking is hassle-free at the box-store retail centres located outside the city core, thus providing a vast amount of free parking space. Indeed, the quotation that best summarizes the position of those opposing meter-fee hikes appeared in *The Citizen* on two separate occasions (almost five years apart). Citing two separate City Councillors (one of whom was running for mayor), and in articles written by two different journalists, an increase in PM fees is described as “another nail in the coffin” of Ottawa’s downtown (Blanchfield, 1991; Boswell, 1996). This group also defines itself as supporters of the city centre; furthermore, it defines its opposition as a group that does not understand the social, cultural and political importance of the city centre (ibid.).

PMs are at the heart of several competing interest groups, and property taxpayers and downtown retail store owners are only two among them. Westboro’s gentrification is partly the effect of negotiations between at least three of these groups, including developers, downtown BIAs, and political actors seeking to build a constituency by aligning the interests of developers and downtown BIAs. The research of Joel Garreau clarifies how these interest groups negotiate parking meter issues. Garreau (1992) names

and identifies “Edge Cities” as a new and predominant pattern of urban development and, more important for this study, he also exposed the factors that motivate developers to build cities in this fashion.

Edge Cities are the areas of every North American city constructed principally by private developers and organized around the automobile. South Keys, particularly the area along Bank St., between Heron Rd. and Hunt Club Rd. is a classic example of Ottawa Edge City development. It has numerous box stores lining one side of a four- to six-lane road that is a principal artery between the older city centre and newer suburban developments. Located on the other side of the road is a mix of Drives, Crescents, Privates and Cul-de-sacs lined with middle-income single detached homes, townhouses and small parks. Between the giant box stores and the road, there are huge parking lots that usually take up just over half the combined footprints of the box stores and the parking lots together. Many other neighbourhoods that border Ottawa’s greenbelt are prime examples of Ottawa Edge Cities including Pineview and Gloucester areas along Innes and Cyrville Rd, and along Ogilvie Rd. between Aviation Parkway and Montreal Rd. respectively. A good west-end example is Bells Corners, particularly along Robertson Rd., near its intersection with Moodie Drive. Through research that could be described as ethnographic, Garreau (1992) exposes the logic that guides the practices of the commercially successful developers who have built and are building Edge Cities. This logic perpetuates itself, Garreau explains, because developers feed off one another’s success (p. 117). If one form of development is profitable, it stands to reason that subsequent developments will mimic that form.

In regards to parking, Garreau identifies at least two rules to which developers adhere. First, “An American Will Not Walk More than Six Hundred Feet [one hundred and eighty meters] Before Getting into Her Car” (pp. 117-118). The adherence to the “one hundred and eighty rule” is definitely identifiable in Ottawa Edge Cities. Each of the parking lots that rest between Bank St. and the box-stores of the South Keys shopping plaza are around 200m long.³⁰ The fifth parking lot, which is a “park-and-ride” serving the transit way running on the other side of the box stores is just over 200m long. More telling than this, however, is that the distances between the car entrances to the lots is also approximately 200m.

The second rule is, “To Park an Automobile Takes Four Hundred Square Feet [thirty-seven square meters]” (p. 118). This rule is even more consequential than the first. This measurement was arrived upon through the developer’s primary means of calculating density, the floor-to-area ratio (FAR),³¹ and the effect the FAR has on a development’s projected profitability. The FAR is calculated by dividing the total floor space by the property size. If a developer erects a building with 100,000 square feet of floor space on 100,000 square feet of land, there is an FAR of 1.0. According to Garreau, FARs greater than 0.25 will render traffic congestion noticeable (p. 470) and FARs greater than 0.4 require parking garages instead of lots (ibid.). These are important numbers because investment bankers use them to calculate the projected profitability of a

³⁰ These measurements were taken with a range finder. The range finders that are available commercially are typically used by golfers and hunters. These devices use a laser beam to determine the distance between it and any object in line of sight. They are accurate enough for any application that does not require sub-millimeter precision.

³¹ As I mentioned earlier, Garreau’s research can be described as ethnographic because he provides many details about the character of developers. For example, Garreau tells us that developers always pronounce FAR, “eff-eh-are” (p. 121).

development (p. 119). If a developer allocates only 40% of the land to parking (an FAR of 0.6), the banks will not loan on the development unless a parking garage is part of the plan, which will at least double the developer's cost of parking infrastructure (p. 120). If 50% of the land is parking (an FAR of 0.5), the development is at risk of being unprofitable because it only *just* provides enough parking space. If a developer allocates 75% of the land to parking (an FAR of 0.25), then traffic will increase in that area so a bank requires that the existing automobile infrastructure be expanded.

The most profitable density level, at the lowest cost of development, is represented by an FAR of 0.4. Garreau makes it very clear that, according to developers, "the world moves at a point-four FAR" (p. 121). By simply using the satellite imagery available from Google Maps, this density level is viewable in Edge Cities across all of North America. One only needs to search for a major metropolitan area, follow one of its major road from the centre to the outskirts, locate a "retail power centre" along the road (these are easy to see from space), and you will see box stores taking up around 40% of the land they sit on, with parking taking up the remaining 60%. Indeed, this equation accurately represents the configuration of the retail space in the aforementioned Ottawa Edge Cities of South Keys, Pineview, Gloucester, and Bells Corners. In the era of the automobile, this configuration is the cheapest way to profitably build on land.

Westboro is not an Edge City but an old street-car suburb and new "urban village" with an increasingly profitable commercial strip along Richmond Rd. Nevertheless, the rules that motivate developer to build Edge Cities are identifiable in Westboro. Using a range finder, I plotted distances in Westboro between its two anchor stores (Loblaw's in the east and MEC in the west) and calculated FARs of individual stores and of the urban

area cumulatively. In total, 36 measurements were taken and eight FARs were calculated. These measurements helped reveal how negotiations between the different economic and political actors transpired. It was very surprising how closely Westboro adhered to the same rules that govern the development of Edge Cities. In an almost uncanny way, a point-four FAR and the “one hundred and eighty rule” regarding the limits of walkability kept reemerging in Westboro, despite the fact that this type of development often defines itself in opposition to Edge Cities.

For example, the Superstore and the LCBO share the same city block (which is the largest block in this retail sector) and have a combined FAR of 0.37 (63% of the property owned by these two shops is allocated to parking). Predictably, this number is very close to the magic point-four FAR because this is a new, box store-like development. Within easy walking distance of the Superstore (150m) there are several other businesses including Bushtukah (which sells high-end camping, cycling and running equipment), a Rogers Wireless store (which sells mobile phones and accessories), a bakery and dessert shop, Fischer’s (which sells expensive formal and business clothing for men), and a strip mall housing several businesses (including a music store, a voice and dance studio and a small fitness centre). These locations cannot provide as much parking as the Superstore and the LCBO and have an average FAR of 0.65 (in other words, only 35% of their property is allocated to parking). These smaller shops, combined with the Superstore / LCBO have a cumulative FAR of 0.5. The actor that brings this part of the Westboro commercial sector back to the magic point-four FAR is the PM. Along the streets, between all of these locations, the absence of PMs offers up

around 400 square meters of free parking. This brings the combined FAR of the east end anchor of Westboro's retail sector very close the magic point-four FAR.

The west-end anchor of Westboro's retail street is predictably a more difficult area for developers to build at point-four FAR. Although the city block is approximately the same length as the one on which the Superstore and LCBO sit, its width is much shorter (60m as opposed to 250m) and so there is no room to hide box store-like parking behind a main street-like façade. Looking only at its footprint, MEC has an FAR of 0.45 but MEC's retail space is on two floors and so the FAR is approximately 0.9. In other words, MEC offers almost as much shopping area as it does parking area. The parking lot that MEC provides is not free either. The "pay-and-display" system, managed by another company, charges customers \$1.00 for half an hour, \$1.50 for one hour and \$2.00 for two hours.³² From my own experiences, however, it is never difficult to park at MEC for free and, once again, the PM (or lack of PMs) is what makes it this way.

On the east end of MEC's block, along Churchill Ave., there are 10-12 parking spaces or approximately 285 square meters of parking. On the south side of the block, along Danforth Ave., there are 20 spots (not only parallel parking but side-by-side as well) or approximately 575 square meters of parking. There are no parking spots along the west side of the block (Roosevelt St.) but there are at least 30 spots along each side of

³² According to the store manager, the fee parking is "part of the Mountain Equipment Co-op's philosophy of doing what it can to protect the environment" (Prentice, 2000). Many other MEC locations continue to offer free parking and many appear to be point-four FAR configurations. Based on remote sensing from satellite imagery, I could see that the Central Vancouver MEC provides parking on its roof (that's an FAR of 0.5); the North Vancouver location is in a very Edge City-like area and looks to have an FAR of approximately 0.4; Calgary looks to be between 0.4-0.5 FAR; and the newest location in Burlington looks to be closer to 0.3 FAR, but is located immediately beside a major six-lane road that connects directly to Burlington's central business district, so the automobile infrastructure could handle the traffic that the new store will generate.

Richmond Rd. for a total of 1000 square meters. That brings MEC's cumulative FAR to approximately 0.5, which is commercially much more viable than and FAR of 0.9, which is the configuration of the store if street parking is not included in the calculation. Again, these spaces are not metered but free parking, for a maximum of one hour along Richmond Rd. and Churchill Ave. and three hours along Danforth Avenue. It is easy to "troll" for parking because a navigable right-turn only route along which 40-50 parking spots are available surrounds the store, all within 180m (or 600 feet).³³

Westboro is an urban village but it shares many similarities with Edge Cities. This happened in part due to the influence of Christine Leadman who was Executive Director of the Westboro BIA for a total of fourteen years before becoming (in 2006) the City Councillor for the ward in which Westboro sits; her experience in this role gave her insider knowledge about how to build a political constituency in this area. It is difficult to identify when Leadman began building this constituency, but her involvement in the 1994 decision to permanently ban PMs from Westboro might have been a first step. Westboro and Hintonburg are the only neighbourhoods in Ottawa where the streets are meter-free and this will remain the case until the Executive Director of the Westboro BIA invites them in.³⁴ In the meantime, the absence of the PM has made Westboro one of the few places where developers and individual downtown retailers feed off one another's success. Destination stores (MEC) and big box store-like developments (the Superstore) bring people to Westboro, which benefits the small retailers without overly impeding

³³ The parking spot along this route that is farthest away from the front door of the store is almost exactly 600ft away.

³⁴ The Westboro Village Urban Parking Strategy stipulates "that meters will not be installed in the Westboro BIA area without consultation and consent of the BIA" (City of Ottawa, 2007, p. 13).

traffic flow and over-burdening on-street parking while the smaller stores symbolically and physically conceal the characteristics of box stores that stop some individuals from buying from them.

The description of this actor-network has, up until this point, followed connections in succession. The parking meter first entered the analysis as the topic of a 2007 / 08 debate relating to the new city budget; next, background research revealed that this particular debate is a reemerging one and the PM has been the centre of tensions between downtown merchants and those wishing to freeze property tax hikes since at least 1986; next, it was discovered that Westboro is the only place in Ottawa that is meter-free because the Director of the BIA, who has since become a City Councillor for the Westboro area, struck a deal almost a decade earlier; finally, the meter-free streets of Westboro significantly increases the commercial viability of the area for large scale, well funded developments like MEC, Loblaw's Superstore, or condominiums that would normally only develop in Edge City-like areas or city centres that already have a high degree of exclusivity. Given its broad set of important associations, the parking meter is likely a significant actor in the gentrification of Westboro but it does not act alone. Westboro's small specialty shops, particularly the sports shops, are also an important part of the story and to see how they fit in, the storyline must now move to the next important actor in this assemblage, namely a bicycle. It becomes clearer towards the end of the description how the set of associations surrounding the bicycle reinforce and help define those surrounding the PM.

Sweet City Bicycles.

The bicycle is a 19th century invention that has assumed many roles over time but today, particularly in North American urban centres, it is a rather familiar, “everyday” and ubiquitous transportation and recreation technology. Its “everydayness,” however, lends itself well to ANT research for reasons discussed in Chapter Two. Most importantly, it turns the analytical focus away from higher-order phenomena that are believed to determine the gentrification process and towards the processes themselves. The chosen actor for this ANT analysis is not just any bicycle, or bicycles in general, but a specific bicycle model called the “Sweet City Limited.” The company that produces Sweet City, Steelwool Bicycle Company, is not the only – but one of the few – Ottawa-based bicycle production companies. The owners of Steelwool are two young men named Will Ficner and Thom Johnson who opened a bicycle retail shop located in Westboro called Tall Tree Cycles. Sweet City only went into production in 2006; by the time Steelwool / Tall Tree decided to open in the neighbourhood, also in 2006, Westboro’s reputation as an outdoor sporting equipment retail hotspot was in place. Given their branding strategy (described below) and the well-documented advantages of retail clustering, Westboro was really one of only two possible neighbourhoods in which Steelwool / Tall Tree could open, the other being the Glebe. Of the twenty-two bicycle stores in Ottawa, eight are located on or near Bank St. and, of those, six are located in the Glebe area. Bank St. / Glebe is therefore the home of most Ottawa bike shops but Westboro is close behind with five shops within an even smaller area. The small differences between bicycle retailing in Westboro and in the Glebe are important to understanding the Westboro gentrification actor-network.

The bicycle shops in both Westboro and the Glebe are privately owned businesses and are relatively small compared to larger sporting retail corporations like The Forzani Group (which owns Sport Check, Sport Mart, Sports Experts and Athletes World). Four out of the five shops in Westboro, however, are considerably specialized in their marketing approach whereas five out of six of the Glebe / Bank St. shops are more general. For example, Foster's Sport Centre (on Bank St., just north of the Glebe) claims to be "Ottawa's oldest bicycle shop" (Foster's Sport, 2009) but it also sells ice skates, in-line skates and curling equipment. The other Glebe-based bicycle shops either have vaguer market targets or their strategy is to be a "one-stop-shop." Tommy & Lefebvre, for example, is one of Ottawa's largest sports retail stores. They carry only one brand of bicycle, Specialized, but they carry its entire line. The shop therefore has BMX, hybrid, competition-road, cross-country, cruiser and cycle-cross bikes all on the same floor. The bicycles in each of the Bank St. shops are sold at a wide variety of prices (\$350 - \$2000+) indicating an effort to "have something for everyone."

The Westboro-based stores take the opposite approach, aiming at specific niche markets. For example, the retailers Cycle Logik and Fresh Air Experience predominantly sell high-end road racing bicycles.³⁵ Most of these bikes are priced over \$2000 but can go as high as \$14000. They are used for competition and regular training exclusively. Cycle Logik sells bicycles year round whereas Fresh Air Experience sells Nordic ski equipment during the winter. Road cycling and Nordic skiing are complementary aerobic sports and one often substitutes as off-season training for the other. Competitive cyclists can

³⁵ Cycle Logik is now located just outside of Westboro (in Hintonburg). They were located beside the MEC but moved in 2004 because rent was too high (MacMillan, 2009).

therefore buy their off season training equipment at the same store they buy their bicycles and vice-versa. Indeed, their “About Us” page tells customers that Fresh Air is “the Official Retailer of the Canadian National Cross-Country Ski Team” (Fresh Air, 2009). Bushtukah, the third specialized Westboro-based bicycle shop, also sells running and camping equipment but still meets the needs of a niche market in the sense that they only carry high-end products. Similarly, the average prices of the bicycles they sell are higher than what is commonly sold at big box stores. While they offer some bikes in the \$500-\$750 range, the majority of the bikes they sell are \$1000+ and \$2000+ models.

I am not suggesting that niche markets are foundational to gentrification. The Glebe and Westboro are both experiencing gentrification and, in each case, bicycle retailing is part of the associations producing it. But the retail environment, within the bicycle segment, is completely different in these two neighbourhoods. This is an important clue for ANT research, for the formation of a set of associations (an assemblage) that enact something as consequential as gentrification (class segregation designed into the built environment) requires some sort of basis for doing so (Latour, 2005, p. 31). The actor-network in gentrification defines itself in part through practices of specialized merchandizing.

Surrounding the Sweet City bicycle is the latest niche market to enter Westboro, *urban cycling culture*. Urban cycling culture is a trend, indeed some call it a “movement” (Colville-Andersen, 2009a), that connects urbanism, environmentalism, utilitarianism, fashion and lifestyle and does so in a way that further clarifies how gentrification in Westboro operates. It is important to have an image of this bicycle because its looks and intended use are part of the story. Sweet City, as its name suggests, is a bicycle designed

for riding in the city. It has thin tires and standard-size road wheels. It is usually seen with rounded “drop” handlebars but sometimes with “moustache” bars. The metal tubing that forms the frame is narrow and there is very little “flash” on the bicycle. The frame is painted in one solid colour (black, blue or white) and the name, “Steelwool,” appears on the top cross bar. There are no small parts on the bike like fenders, racks, bells or baskets. It looks like a classic “ten speed”.

The Sweet City could be called a “classic” or “traditional” bicycle for a couple of reasons. First, the bicycle is made from steel tubing and these tubes are held together with lugs. After the late 1970s and early 1980s, most consumer bicycles were made out of aluminum and some out of titanium or carbon fibre, and the method for connecting the tubes rendered lugs unnecessary.³⁶ The reasons for this change are technical; they are related to advances in metallurgy, welding technologies and the methods of mass production, but the important point is to understand that steel, as a material for building bicycles, has become central to the niche market of which Sweet City is part. This is made clear on the front page of the Steelwool website where the following text is displayed:

Steelwool Bicycles was born in the spring of 2006 when Thom Johnson and Will Ficner, frustrated with the lack of quality steel bicycles, decided to do something about it and founded a company dedicated to making high quality, functional, stylish, steel bicycles. (Steelwool, 2009)

Not only has steel reentered the bicycle marketplace as a desirable frame material but companies that specialize in making steel bikes of higher quality are finding their place. Many of these companies, including Steelwool, assert that steel is a better material for

³⁶ Compare Raleigh’s slogan in the 1920s, “The All-Steel Bicycle”, to Cannondale’s 1980s slogan, “Aluminum for the masses” (See Herlihy, 2004, p. 345).

bicycles because of its intrinsic qualities (it lasts longer, it allows builders to use thinner tubing, etc.) and that their contemporary design blended with this traditional material results in the highest quality bikes.³⁷ This concept, combining new building techniques with traditional building materials, is precisely one of the strategies employed by the consultant, hired by Loblaw, to convince those opposed to its Westboro development that it would benefit the community. As described in the previous chapter, after the Loblaw development initially met with some resistance, consultants met with community members and figured out how to present the development as acceptable. One of the more significant changes was to ensure the store would “blend into a traditional downtown neighbourhood [and] incorporate old brickwork common in the Westboro area” (Gray, 2007). The consultant proposed the development, met with some resistance, and then came back with a solution: the store would be built in the tradition of the Westboro neighbourhood.

A similar rhetoric is used for several Westboro developments. Along with the post-industrial look and feel of the marketing material that resembles the London underground transit (described in the previous chapter), the development company of the Westboro Station Condominiums explains that “this building uses traditional materials such as brick and stone and treats every storefront in a unique manner” (Westboro Station, 2009b). This is very similar to the marketing of steel bicycle frames that, according to the companies selling them, are each hand built and not mass-produced. Mountain Equipment Co-op also adopts this rhetoric but takes it even further. The MEC

³⁷ Other companies, beside Steelwool, include Surly, Salsa, Banshee, Custom Steel, Soma, Geekhouse, and Iro.

building, the organization describes, is actually made from the materials of the original building that stood there previously. “The portions of the floor that are red,” a salesperson explained to me, “are made from the same floor that was in the old Chinese Supermarket that was here before us” (MacMillan, 2009). There is more information on the MEC website about the Ottawa building under the “Sustainability” tab. It reads as follows:

The 40-year-old building that existed on the site was carefully disassembled to reuse as much material as possible. By weight, 75% of that building was incorporated into the new store. During construction, we used panelized material and screwed connections. This will allow the new building to be deconstructed more easily when it reaches the end of its life. The floor is made from reclaimed timber from the St. Lawrence River (and from the previous building). It's a renewable resource and reduces the burden on landfills. It's beautiful too, so we don't need to use carpeting and can further reduce material consumption. Rock excavated from the site was used in the cladding material. Using material already on the site reduces its embodied energy. In fact, 80% of all the material travelled less than 500km to the site. (Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2009)

Embedded in the Westboro brand is the idea that traditional building materials combined with present-day building techniques constitutes a longer lasting, more sustainable, more utilitarian, more desirable product. Each of the actors is responsible for creating this idea and, in turn, this idea is part of what attracts capital and displaces people from the Westboro neighbourhood. Both MEC's building and Loblaw's building are no more responsible for the gentrification in Westboro than PMs or the Sweet City bicycle but all four play a role in the enactment of the process.

The second thing that makes Sweet City a classic bicycle is its drive train. Sweet City is designed to be exclusively a single speed. Original bicycles, of course, were all single speeds. It was not until the mid-1970s that “the ten speed” bicycle, as we know it today (with a much wider range of gears), became ubiquitous in North America (Herlihy, 2004, p. 363). In the last couple of years, however, the single speed and even a “fixed

gear” has become trendy.³⁸ The proponents of the single-speed bicycle assert that it is mechanically very simplistic so the bicycle is less prone to malfunction; it promotes better riding technique because the rider cannot rely on gears to get up hills; and it makes for a more enjoyable riding experience because it is quiet. The Sweet City, however, combines a contemporary component called an “Eccentric Bottom Bracket” (EBB) with the single speed design to produce a truly sophisticated bicycle. Without getting into the technical details, the EBB effectively eliminates the chain tensioning issues that single speed bicycle typically experience.

The marketing of the Sweet City, as a traditional, more simplistic, more enjoyable, limited production single speed bicycle that is enhanced with the innovative ingenuity of the EBB echoes Westboro’s “urban village” branding strategy. The best description of the urban village concept is provided in the Institute of Civil Engineers (1998) white paper titled, “Urban Villages: An Introduction:”

An urban village is a concept of a settlement which is small enough to create a community in the truest sense of the word - a group of people who support each other, but big enough to maintain a reasonable cross section of facilities. Walking determines the size - a 10 minute walk from one side to the other. To provide a sufficiently large population to maintain a range of community facilities all within a walkable distance means the density of development must be high. An urban village is densely developed in the centre, with town squares and key community focal points, density eases away from the centre, and the boundary of the village is marked by greenspace. (p. 1)

In the passage above, notice how the terms “settlement,” “community” and “town squares” invoke images of traditional urban development, and they are mixed and

³⁸ A fixed gear is a bicycle without a free-wheel, which is the component that allows you to coast without the pedals revolving. The free wheel was a turn-of-the-century invention that arguably was central to the bicycles early rise in popularity (Herlihy, 2004, p. 310, 405).

juxtaposed with terms from contemporary urban planning like, “cross section of facilities”, “density,” “focal points” and “greenspace.” The adoption of the “urban village brand” in Westboro was spearheaded by the BIA. The name, The Westboro Village, is the brand that the BIA has most aggressively endorsed; one of the best examples of their endorsement is the mural they hired a local artist to paint on a brick wall along one of the busiest streets used to enter the Westboro area, Churchill Avenue. The mural depicts an older gentleman, wearing a Trilby (or a similar hat from an earlier era), beside the words, “Westboro Village.” Images of an imagined urban village appear elsewhere in the community including the murals on the walls of the Loblaw Superstore. The hybrid of tradition and cutting-edge innovation is a leitmotiv of the gentrification in Westboro. It is a marketing strategy that is adopted by the BIA, the merchants (like Tall Tree / Steelwool) and even the developers. Promotional material for the Westboro Station condominium, for example, reads, “Life in Westboro is the perfect balance between urban excitement and the slower pace and friendliness of a small borough” (Westboro Station, 2009c). This mix between the imagined tranquility of an older, traditional urban village and the supposed innovativeness of contemporary planning, architecture and urban design is at the heart of how Westboro has branded itself. An article that recently appeared in *The Ottawa Citizen* entitled, “Why Westboro Works” reflects this tradition / innovation hybrid:

When city planners point to a model community in Ottawa, Westboro and area is the poster child... There are quaint 80-year-old homes, apartment buildings, and fashionable condominiums... Loblaws then built its new store -- a grand experiment that attempted to make big-box blend into a traditional downtown neighbourhood... Success breeds success, creating demand for housing in the neighbourhood. The old used-car lots that mar the urban landscape are being replaced with low-rise condominiums... The Transitway provides rapid bus service for the area only a block or two

from the neighbourhood's commercial ribbon and connects the community directly to downtown jobs...All this development, and more importantly people on the street, result in a feeling of community. (Gray, 2007)

In the same way that the EBB is a new innovation in bicycle-building technologies that renders traditional single-speed designs more cutting edge than contemporary multi-speed designs, the architectural design feat of “hiding” an Edge City-like 400+ car parking lot within a traditional urban village makes Westboro an urban planning “poster child.” Westboro is one of the few locales that are an Edge City / Urban Village hybrid. There are certainly those who feel that the City “sold out” one of the few remaining affordable old street-car suburbs (Boswell, 2001; Ficner, 2004; Taylor, 2007); but, for the most part, that is not how the Loblaw’s is perceived. Instead, it is considered just part of the natural evolution of cities (Gray, 2007).

Westboro’s niche is high-end and practical sporting equipment. Urban cycling culture, the niche in which the Sweet City bicycle fits, has its roots in bicycle couriership. Bicycle couriers or messengers have existed almost as long as the bicycle but only in the last two decades has a subculture surrounding this occupation began to emerge. The irony is that automobile usage has exceeded capacity in older city centres so bicycles, which were rendered obsolete within the delivery industry by the automobile, are now the most time-effective means for delivering documents or items in person. Bicycle messengers have a very difficult and dangerous job. They must ride for entire work-weeks, through cars, and as quickly as possible. Those who are capable of enduring the rigorous demands of a bicycle messenger are a minority and, over time, have produced a particular image of themselves and of their lifestyle. They often wear street style, “punk” clothing with one pant leg rolled up to avoid snagging it in their bicycle chain. Valerie Steel, the New York

based fashion museum curator writes, “it is clear that some messengers favor an aerodynamic athletic style, while others look like ninjas. There is a punk style and a paramilitary style, Afrocentric style and grunge style” (Steel, 2000, p.1). In most work settings, the typical bike messenger attire would be deemed inappropriate but this feeds into messengers’ alternative lifestyles. In an interview for a book on the fashion emanating from messenger sub-culture, James Ellis of New York-based “Cockroach Couriers” explains: “A lot of people want to be bike messengers. It’s about freedom. The boss is not on your back” (ibid.). Couriering is not high-paying work but those who do it often speak about the freedom that comes from its flexible work hours and the autonomy one feels while performing the duty. This notion of a freedom that derives from your occupational setting is central to the branding strategy of the Westboro Station condominiums. Indeed, the official title of the development is “Westboro Station – Live Shop Work – 430 Richmond Rd” and the implication is that the lifestyle afforded by condo-living is about the freedom that comes from closely integrating one’s domestic, professional and consumer spaces. The website depicts a middle aged man wearing a white t-shirt, un-tucked from his jeans, sitting at a small coffee table behind his laptop, and looking out of a café window onto the street. The text below him reads as follows:

Living close to where you work is not only convenient, but a blessing in time saved and life better spent. The cheerful cafes and restaurant terraces of Westboro are the perfect place to catch up on work without the stress of the workplace. For the lucky few, the office component of the Westboro Station will put the workplace a short stroll from their front door.
(Westboro Station, 2009f)

Condo-dwellers, just like bicycle messengers, are less constrained by their professional life. The man depicted in the advertisement appears to be engaged with work but by no means in a rush. The ad therefore asks, since everyone has to make a living, why not

integrate your work with your preferred lifestyle? The marketing suggests that condo living is for those individuals who would prefer casual clothing over business attire and hip downtown coffee shops over sterile office cubicles and that the kind of development occurring in Westboro offers the freedom to integrate these choices into one's professional duties.

In this actor-network, clothing seems to be a recurring theme and is perceived to be related to one's freedom to integrate domestic, professional and recreational life. The Sweet City bicycle has appeared in many different settings, including some of the bicycle magazines about urban cycling culture and even more websites dedicated to the trend, but one of the more telling appearances was in 2009 at a "Velo Vogue" fashion show hosted at the Tall Tree Cycles store. Globally, the coming together of European high-fashion and cycling began to increase in popularity when Danish film director / photographer, Mikael Colville-Andersen, began (in June of 2007) writing a blog called "Copenhagen Cycle Chic." The website consists mainly of Colville-Andersen's photos, taken in Copenhagen,³⁹ of stylish bicycle commuters. There are also articles about fashionable cycling and the urban cycling experience, including these titles from the list of notable blog posts: "Cycle Chic Top 10 Gorgeous Bicycles"; "Copenhagen – The World's Most Liveable City"; "The Cycle Chic Manifesto";⁴⁰ "The Cycling Girl – A Cultural Icon?";

³⁹ The exceptions are the photos that appear in the "Cycle Chic & Copenhagenize Goes to New York" blog entry (Colville-Andersen, 2009b).

⁴⁰ The Copenhagen Cycle Chic Manifesto:

(1) I choose to cycle chic and, at every opportunity, I will choose Style over Speed. (2) I embrace my responsibility to contribute visually to a more aesthetically pleasing urban landscape. (3) I am aware that my mere presence in said urban landscape will inspire others without me being labeled as a 'bicycle activist'. (4) I will ride with grace, elegance and dignity. (5) I will choose a

and “The Red Light Posture Series”. As the practice of linking fashion to bicycle commuting gained popularity, events like the Velo Vogue in Westboro became more popular. Tall Tree hosted the event but several Canadian fashion designers contributed their latest products. The media coverage of the event (Cycle Chic, 2009) and its organizers all stressed the same point: One does not need to feel obliged to dress like (or be) an athlete to ride their bicycle in the city. Urban cycling is about freedom, but that freedom also includes the 'freedom' to dress fashionably while riding.

Summary

The gentrification in Westboro stems from a vision of the city as a milieu in which the ingredients of a happy life can be found. Westboro is constructed as a place where one’s personal, vocational, recreational and material lives effortlessly flow into one another and this is achieved through innovation in urban design and planning. In the context of the urban cycling culture trend, Sweet City is not just a useful metaphor for the imagined lifestyle behind Westboro Station’s marketing; it is also the same ideal that sells both products. Those who are immersed in urban cycling culture and who can really appreciate the genius behind Sweet City’s design do not just see a bicycle. They see maintenance-free cycling, they appreciate the design and the workmanship, they see the

bicycle that reflects my personality and style. (6) I will, however, regard my bicycle as transport and as a mere supplement to my own personal style. Allowing my bike to upstage me is unacceptable. (7) I will endeavor to ensure that the total value of my clothes always exceeds that of my bicycle. (8) I will accessorize in accordance with the standards of a bicycle culture and acquire, where possible, a chain guard, kickstand, skirt guard, fenders, bell and basket. (9) I will respect the traffic laws. (10) I will refrain from wearing and owning any form of 'cycle wear'. The only exception being a bicycle helmet - if I choose to exercise my freedom of personal choice and wear one. (Colville-Andersen, 2008)

bike as being perfectly suited for their lifestyle and their necessities and, consequently, they see the bicycle as part of their identity. This is not much different that the Westboro condos.

The important point is not to assume that the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the social group that is purchasing condos are what *cause* gentrification. Condo-buyers are no more at the root of gentrification than bicycle messengers but both, in the case of Westboro, are implicated in the process. Westboro is the home of the Sweet City, one of the most innovative bicycles to come out of the urban cycling culture movement. Westboro is therefore a significant place on the map of many urban cycling culture enthusiasts, which includes many bicycle messengers. This is a group who identify themselves in contrast to dominant patterns of social reproduction. They do not work regular work hours, they have physically demanding and dangerous jobs, and both their lifestyle and their vocational practices produce, and are produced by, contemporary urbanism.

Similarly, condominiums enable closer integration between work and private life. Condos produce luxurious urban living quarters for those who can afford to pay it. Condominiums are large scale and expensive developments that must guarantee return for its investors. Before a condo is constructed, a neighbourhood must make itself a viable locale for that degree of investment and the measure for this is often in the form of an equation between people and space, risk and reward, and cost and return. One such measure is the ratio between free car space and people space and, in the case of Westboro, the necessary car space is partly achieved by meter-free streets. This is because of an arbitrary ruling that was arrived upon long before Loblaw, MEC, local

developers and urban cyclist became interested in the area, but it is an important characteristic of Westboro that reinforces its identity as a commercially viable urban village. With this identity comes an element of exclusivity; not only is housing in this area increasing in price but so are commercial lease prices. As a result, the only class groups who can afford to live, shop, work or sell in Westboro are the already wealthy or upwardly mobile classes and this displaces and excludes those living in poverty.

The application of ANT presented above is different than Valverde's (2008), Flusty's (2004) and Lippert's (2007) but it shares with these three studies some basic methodological principles. The focus of these analyses is on processes *in-action*. The application of ANT in this chapter asked *how* do associations between actors produce gentrification and so revealed gentrification in-action. The three examples of ANT, presented in Chapter Two, also ask 'how' questions. All four analyses also incorporate non-human actors because the method of tracing in ANT does not go very far without doing so. The actor-network presented in the chapter reheterogenizes politicians, parking meters and shops, developers, FARs and bicycles, condos, fashion and messengers. The interrelationships between this assemblage is seen to produce the effect of gentrification.

My own social situatedness is indeed reflected in the analysis. Sport retailing is familiar to me because I am able-bodied and athletically competent, and I have both the time and the means to participate in the sports for which the necessary equipment is bought and sold in Westboro. It is also not a coincidence that almost all outdoor sports, particularly the one endorsed by the MEC, require regular access to an automobile, which I am also privileged to have. My social situatedness, however, does not necessarily skew the research presented here negatively. While the case study engages with actors that I

am indeed privileged to associate with, its purpose is not to forward any ontological (or moral) claims from that position. Instead, the purpose is to excavate the relationships on which my situatedness is sustained. ANT offers a fruitful way to engage in this process of excavation and, most importantly, leads to more excavation. The case study above is not the final word on Westboro, nor gentrification, but that is precisely its strength. Its purpose is to widen the scope of possible avenues for future inquiries.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Gentrification is a word we love in the media, perhaps for just this reason. It has dramatic tension. It engenders extreme reactions. It gives us a story that writes itself: a neighbourhood is changing. Catalogue the reactions, which are so abundant as to be endless. Vividly describe the ubiquitous images of acute discord - lovingly restored Victorian homes next to crumbling rooming houses; prostitutes on one side of a street, Banana Republic-clad young mothers with baby strollers on the other. Starbucks next to greasy spoons. (Whyte, 2005)

Through the process of examining the applicability of the ANT methodology in gentrification studies, I began to question the usefulness of the term “gentrification”.⁴¹ On one hand, it seemed that causality and social determinism are integral to its definition and, as Whyte describes, the term gives us a story that writes itself. It was frustrating how the only term for the issue being studied leads the analysis precisely in the direction I was trying to avoid while terms like “development” or “urbanism” seem to engender a more adaptable methodology because they point the inquiry toward the processes themselves and not their suspected *causes*. On the other hand, gentrification is the only term that necessarily describes the hegemony of a plutocratic conquest for space within the built environment and specifically *that* is the issue. There is no other term that refers to processes of displacement, marginalization and exclusion, enabled by the built environment, based on social class. As several scholars have recently pointed out, “to lose the term would be to lose [its] politics and political purchase” (Lees et al., 2008, p. xxii).

The term “gentrification” is by definition linked to the concept of “social class”.

Class is a social aggregate in the sense that it is produced by associations among

⁴¹ Others before me have suggested that the term “should be allowed to collapse under the weight of its own burden” (see, for example, Lees et al., 2008, p. xxii).

assemblages of non-social actors (which include currency, property, items that are bought and sold, employees, employers, etc.). Given that gentrification is a process linked to this particular aggregate, it is understandable why it has been studied in one particular way, namely in a Marxist mode of analysis (or in a manner that defines itself in opposition to Marxism). Many gentrification scholars have identified a need for new ways of approaching research (see AbdouMaliq, 2008; Ley & Lees, 2008; Slater, 2006; Slater et al., 2004). These authors appear to be looking to resume the task of researching gentrification without having to engage in the same theoretical debates. The argument of this thesis is that ANT provides a way to do just that. With an ANT approach, existing scholars can find new ways of seeing the issue and those entering the field will feel encouraged to offer new perspectives. Existing research is indeed still relevant and it would not be in anyone's interest to ignore the large body of research that already exists on the gentrification process; nevertheless, ANT challenges theorists to breathe new life into existing studies by reexamining them, looking for un-acknowledged patterns that these works have documented, and connecting them to their own empirical observations.

The connection to the social aggregate of class that defines gentrification and the predilection toward Marxist modes of analysis that it privileges are not reasons to abandon the term or research on the issue. ANT demands that researchers examine the issue without causally linking it to another social aggregate (political economy, particular class groups, etc.) but does not question the existence and devastating consequences of gentrification. Rather, ANT is a methodology that allows analysts to understand gentrification beyond the theoretical binary that has thus far defined the scope of analyses.

This thesis demonstrates that the issue of gentrification and the methodology of ANT are well matched. ANT excels with issues involving a variety of stakeholders and a variety of points-of-view, particularly if those points-of-view are cloaked in official texts, regimes or systems of knowing (policy, urban planning, economics, etc.). Gentrification is an issue with many grey areas because it is related to the division of space, which is a highly contested resource, and those with power will always try to organize space to their advantage and in a manner that protects their power. The goal of gentrification scholarship operating in the ANT mode, therefore, is to analyze how social relations either give rise or not to built environments that reflect plutocratic polities. As an approach to research, ANT allows its practitioners to excavate the associations on which particular realities have established an upper-hand. As Smith (2002) argues, gentrification is indeed the most firmly rooted reality for the evolution of cities this far into the 21st century but the pressing question for those interested in changing the fate of the global urban system is not *what causes* gentrification but *how does it work*.

Forward in All Directions

To use a line from Flusty's (2004) monograph, ANT asks gentrification scholars to move "forward in all directions" (p. 206). As an epistemological mechanism, this is precisely what ANT does. It allows knowledge production to proceed but in a scattered, undisciplined, non-linear succession. From this, the key epistemological insight is not that "more is better," nor that "anything goes," but that ANT engenders a shift in urban scholarship to produce research that does not reflect a presumed mastery over processes being examined but a willingness to become part of the processes. ANT is not about researchers having the freedom to write about "bicycles" as well as "policy" but about

inter-mixing a given assemblage of actors to change the effect of that assemblage. The process of “reheterogenizing” actors that form urban assemblages renders authoritative accounts of the city – plutocratic, technocratic or other – just another “version” of urbanism (Flusty, 2004, p. 207). This is a first and necessary step towards resisting processes like gentrification because before a discussion of alternative – even “emancipatory” (Lees, 2004) – urban visions can take place, dominant beliefs that guide everyday practices and decisions (and the myth that gentrification’s inverse is urban decay is just one example) must first be destabilized.

The destabilization of dominant urban visions is not going to come from one well formulated and robust theoretical framework but from the cumulative effect of many visions forging a widespread consciousness of the necessarily partial and situated nature of knowing. That is to say that gentrification is not soon going to end if scholars focus their energies on producing yet another authoritative account of the city; instead, what is needed are many accounts of the city. One possible “litmus test” for scholars wishing to produce research that resists gentrification is to ask, *does the methodology and presentation of the case reflect the highly contingent nature of urban evolution or do they make the version of the case presented seem like the only possible one?* This test forces researchers to become aware that their own situated and partial ability to know is not only reflected in their research findings but in the way they arrive at those findings. ANT, therefore, is a series of tools to help researchers stop their systematic efforts to understand from digressing into systematic frameworks for understanding.

Lessons Learned

Through the process of examining the applicability of ANT in gentrification studies, several problems arose. A review of these will help future researchers attain some idea of what to expect. First, the most apparent traces related to gentrification appear in the media and they often point to controversy, scandal and corruption. News paper stories point to possibilities of “backroom deals;” key informants will also often imply that *things are more than they seem*; and the quick and pervasive economic upgrading of a neighborhood, like that which took place in Westboro, leads anyone to believe that some bending of the rules must have enabled the process. Likewise, there is a great deal of secrecy surrounding large scale developments like the MEC, the Superstore and the condominiums discussed earlier because, understandably, businesses keep their development plans secret.⁴² The implication of conspiracy and secrecy is part of the assemblage of urban development.

Since conspiracy and secrecy are so apparent in popular texts about urban development, it is easy for researchers to become preoccupied with the possibility of uncovering them. The important point to remember is that ANT is not about finding the “*ah-ha* moment” – one key piece of information that explains the issue under study. In ANT research, the abundance of readily accessible data allows analysts to avoid wasting time trying to get behind closed doors. On one hand, ANT research is very much like investigative journalism in the sense that analysts will spend a great deal of time “on the trail” of a variety of interconnected actors. On the other hand, ANT research is not about

⁴² A researcher might even feel compelled to trace assemblages of secrets surrounding urban development to understand the effects they produce.

exposing secrets or uncovering conspiracy but documenting interrelated processes to reveal their unanticipated effects. Urban ANT research should not necessarily reveal traces leading to secret “internal company memos” or something of a similar nature; instead, it can reveal how assemblages of common urban processes create particular ways of understanding the city.

My thesis also confirms that the research findings will not necessarily be apparent when field research first ends. Again, ANT is not about the “*ah-ha* moment” and so an analyst does not simply go into the field, conduct research, discover an actor-network, and then type their description or research findings. After a significant amount of evidence or traces has been documented, the research shifts into the mode of tracing backwards and analyzing how the traces are interconnected. From my experience, it was necessary to go back into the field at this point to document additional traces that might provide more precise evidence of the assemblage being studied. The parking meter, for example, left a trace in news media dating back at least two decades. The trace of the parking meter leading to contemporary Westboro ended because the neighbourhood is meter-free and there was not much data about the decision to make it this way. To better understand how the parking meter connected to contemporary processes of gentrification, I had to revert to field work to discover the degree to which the lack of parking meters in Westboro changed the character of the neighbourhood. Future researchers adopting an ANT approach should be prepared to closely integrate and simultaneously perform both observation and analysis throughout the research process.

A third lesson is that critical analyses of “texts” in an ANT mode of inquiry should resist the urge to move into the traditional mode of “deconstruction”. Saukko (2003) provides a useful introduction to the term deconstruction:

Deconstruction, which is a theory, methodology and a method, at the same time, is one of the most popular devices to critically analyze texts in cultural studies. Most frequently associated with the thought of the French poststructuralist theorist, Jacques Derrida, it is closely related to both semiotics and Foucaudian genealogy. (p. 135)

In practice, the difference between ANT’s methods of analyzing texts and the methods associated with deconstruction is that ANT is less concerned with the text itself and more concerned with how it mediates connections. Whereas in deconstruction, an analyst is “reading between the lines”, an ANT analyst tries to identify connections and patterns of connections, mediated by the texts, between multiple heterogeneous actors. It is possible to incorporate methods of deconstruction into ANT analyses (see Flusty, 2004)⁴³ but, in the process of identifying assemblages, deconstructive methods can tend to misguide the analysis more than they provide insight (the first point about conspiracy theories is a related example). ANT research is less about the analyst’s abilities (decoding *true* meaning, for example) and more about connections between actors that reveal (free of any masterful interpretation) the effect of their relationality. In sum, ANT is about close observation but not interpretive expertise.

The fourth lesson is that ANT is time consuming, not just in terms of the research process but also in terms of its effect after publication. Widespread opinions and common

⁴³ Flusty’s (2004) case studies of Thai street gangs (pp. 108-113), Star Trek fans who identify themselves as “Klingons” (pp. 120-126), and of Meiji’s Chelsea brand Yogurt Scotch Toffee (pp. 138-147) are arguably good examples of intermixing both the methods associated with deconstruction and with ANT.

sense interpretation are not formed or changed quickly and although ANT incorporates this goal into a methodology, there are many unpredictable factors affecting how research is received and what effect it will have. Furthermore, ANT research does not necessarily produce knowledge that translates well into instruments for policy makers and so if scholars are hoping to produce research that will immediately be applicable in policy circles, they must choose to follow actors that will make this goal more realizable.

A fifth and final lesson is that analysts must continually remind themselves that traces are not neutral. Theoretical accounts of ANT tend to describe tracing actors as a process that transpires free from any overarching power structures. Although ANT tends to lead inquiries to a wider variety of perspectives, it is still necessary for analysts to ask which voices are not reflected in the assemblage being analyzed. Had the goal of my research, for example, been to produce a more comprehensive account of gentrification in Westboro, I would have sought to incorporate traces through which the experiences of the struggling classes become part of the assemblage. For example, many of the employees at the high-end sports stores cannot afford to live in the Westboro neighbourhood. What are their live / work arrangements? How long are their commute times? What are their working conditions? While I do not necessarily think the most disadvantaged by gentrification in Westboro are the employees of sports stores, I do think that tracing the day-to-day practices of retail / service industry workers might begin to incorporate the negative social consequences of gentrification into the assemblage being discussed.

Other directions to which the research in Chapter Four might lead include comparative research between Ottawa and other neighbourhoods housing MEC stores. Again, the purpose of such research would not be to show that MEC *causes* gentrification

but to find parallels between the way city development changes in different cities with the arrival of the same company's store. Similar kind of patterns might be traced in other neighbourhoods that resemble Edge City / Urban Village hybrids or, more specifically, places that are parking meter free.

The strength of my ANT analysis of Westboro is that it forwards a critique of gentrifying processes without making any causal arguments or ontological statements. As stated earlier in Chapter Two, ANT-inspired research is tied together, not by its subject matter, but by its methodological approach. Although it would be useful to further explore the actors discussed in Chapter Four (the MEC, the parking meter, bicycles, etc.), the most fruitful way to continue the research presented here is to search out *new* connections. This thesis has provided preliminary steps for this endeavor by comparing the theories and practices of both ANT and gentrification methodologies and by demonstrating an initial application of the ANT approach. Above all, I hope this study initiates more ANT-inspired research on gentrification because, as such, these future studies will alter perspectives on gentrification in unpredictable ways. There are urban areas experiencing much more drastic and devastating reinvestment than Westboro and without excavating the relationships on which these patterns of gentrification are built – and by only producing more accounts of what is *causing* gentrification – the patterns themselves will not necessarily change. More of the same, we must all understand, is not a viable option.

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