

MONITOR



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Book reviews in the *Monitor* are co-ordinated by Octopus Books, a community-owned anti-oppressive bookstore in Ottawa.



LOCAL MATTERS /12

CAN THE IDEA OF A “RIGHT TO THE CITY” REJUVENATE OUR DEMOCRACY? DOES IT ALSO HOLD THE KEY TO MORE CO-OPERATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES?

The Monitor looks into these and other urban questions with the help of Lynne Fernandez and Shauna MacKinnon, Laura Neidhart, Sophie O’Manique, Matthew Peters, Michelle Perry, Alex Hemingway, Joe Fantauzzi, Ava Kofman, Paul Shaker and Sonja Macdonald, Fiona Jeffries, Cheryl Gladu and Clare Mian.

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SETH KLEIN

A fond farewell

DEAR FRIENDS, After 22 years as founding Director of the CCPA's B.C. office, the New Year marks the end of my employment with the CCPA. I care deeply about this organization. My whole self-identity is fairly intertwined with it. Which is in part why, as I turned 50 last year, I felt the need to leave.

I was 28 when I was asked to open the CCPA-BC. I was honoured then and still hold deep gratitude for those who entrusted me with that task way back then—in particular Ken Novakowski, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Duncan Cameron and Bruce Campbell. Many of you have asked what I'll be doing next and I honestly haven't quite figured it out. I don't have another job lined up, though I have a book idea I hope to pursue. One thing I have clarity on is that I want to spend a lot more of my time and energy on the climate emergency. I will remain engaged in this struggle for a better and more sustainable B.C. and Canada in other ways.

I feel nervous about leaving because I wonder if I will ever again find myself working alongside a team of people with whom I share such strong values and who are so committed to their work and mission. It is a joy to work with such smart people at the CCPA—people who are not only great at their jobs but whose minds you admire. At the same time, I take great comfort in the CCPA-BC board's wise decision to appoint Shannon Daub as our new B.C. Director. As a "boss" of an organization you often (I would add unfairly) get a lot of the glory. The fact is, for many years Shannon has been a key leader of our amazing team. She's a deep and innovative thinker who has brought rigorous oversight to the research we publish. The CCPA-BC is in very good hands.

I'm going to miss the freedom we have at the CCPA to take on the issues and topics we are most passionate and curious about. I treasure the unique platform the CCPA affords us to share our research, analysis and policy solutions. And I feel gratitude that I've been able to work with our provincewide team of research associates—what a gift to be able to get regular free tutorials from people who are leading experts in their fields! In particular, I would like to thank all the wonderful people who have served on the board of the CCPA-BC over the years. We have been truly blessed with fantastic, wise and committed leadership there.

Of course, I feel tremendous gratitude to all of you who have been financial supporters of the CCPA—who believe in our project, our dedication to improving the lives of the most vulnerable, the connections we draw between inequality and climate change, and the role that our research and researchers play in building coalitions for social change. To all CCPA supporters let me offer you this assurance: these core elements of what we do are hard-baked into the centre's DNA. Living those values comes naturally to everyone who has worked and continues to work here.

We at the CCPA call ourselves Canada's foremost social justice think-tank. But what do we mean by social justice? The great African-American intellectual Cornel West defines social justice as "what love looks like in public." I like that. Social justice is love and caring for one another, expressed through progressive public policy. That's our goal. It is why we feel such affection for all engaged in the same struggle.

If I can be candid for a minute, the question I most dread on my travels

throughout B.C. is this: "What keeps you so hopeful?" I dread that question because my impulse is to lie. The person asking it is seeking hope and the urge is always to oblige. In truth, with the world the way it is, we all walk a razor's edge between hope and despair. We feel and know both. And maybe we should be more open about that.

And yet, I do see hope. I see it in the slow but sure progress of our movements. I see it in our research, which tells us that the world we want is possible, given the right political conditions and strong social pressure. I see it in the activism and good will of people I've gotten to meet around the province in this job. It's right there in the polls consistently showing people will choose to end homelessness or poverty before they chose a new tax cut, every time.

A couple years ago, my friend, the comedian (and long-time CCPA-BC gala MC) Charlie Demers, created a remarkable one-man play called *Left-overs*. It was an autobiographical piece in which a progressive activist and thinker wrestles with despair. Near the end of the play, Charlie describes a late-term ultrasound he and his partner Cara received when their daughter was overdue. The doctor warned them that when an ultrasound is done just before birth, the baby is so large you can't make out a bloody thing. Yet you are about to be blessed.

Charlie's point, as I took it, was that as anxious as we may feel, sometimes the dawn of something amazing is just before us—so damn close, in fact, that we can't make it out! I leave you ever hopeful that this is true, and ever committed to working collaboratively to bring that better future to light.

Onward! **M**



Good idea, or maybe not

David Dougherty's suggestion in the letters section ("Reforming how we govern," Nov-Dec 2018) has merit and deserves attention. I would like to see a good civics course provided in high school, graduates from which would be eligible to serve in a governing capacity. They could be chosen the same way a jury is and obligated to serve for a set period of time.

It's no more far-fetched an idea than the obligation youth have in some countries to serve a period in the military. This could be started with municipal politics to get a handle on the methodology. I don't know of any laws that would prevent this, but there would need to be provincial co-operation for an adequate civics course to be implemented.

Roberta Histed,
I'Orignal, Ont.

The letter "Reforming how we govern" is profoundly naïve. Running a country is very complicated and actually needs somebody with not only a lot of stamina, but also with the ability to make appropriate judgments. You have to be very idealistic

to put up with the personal abuse politicians are now exposed to, which creates the problem of finding qualified people to run for office. Unfortunately, it will likely attract people who are interested only in personal gain.

The best government is one where there is a very knowledgeable, respected, nonpartisan public service, and elected politicians who have enough experience and education and the ability to make the right judgment from the advice they receive. Politicians ideally are leaders who manage in a manner that expresses the policies of the majority of the population. This will only be possible when we get proportional representation. Right now, the government elected does not represent the majority of the people who voted.

Elisabeth Ecker, Toronto, Ont.

AFB, yes, but without the corporate taxes

The proposed Alternative Federal Budget as summarized in the last issue ("No time to lose," Nov-Dec 2018) is certainly very beneficial to ordinary citizens, but it makes a tax proposal that the remarkable economist Hyman Minsky would alter.

In his book, *Stabilizing an Unstable Economy*, Minsky states, "The achievement of an approximation to full employment is a major policy goal." He advocates eliminating corporate income taxes and the employer contributions to social security and replacing them with a value-added tax. Canada

replaced the manufacturers' sales tax (with the GST) for the same reason—competitiveness and job creation. McGill professor William Scarth has proposed a similar approach, as has Randall Wray, economics professor at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, who is very progressive and part of the "job guarantee" movement.

Minsky illustrated his progressive economic goals in his foreword to Ron Phillips' 1995 book, *The Chicago Plan*, which was returned to the public eye by IMF economists Kumhof and Benes. Minsky said that the 1930s economists were proposing "the creation of a financial system that is consistent with a full utilization of resources and which provides for the broad based economic well-being that is a prerequisite for a strong and viable democracy."

That change would address other issues covered by the Nov-Dec 2018 *Monitor*, including inequality for women and youth, and the relentless growth in debt. Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, in a 1921 two-part *New York Times* interview, complained about the weakness of our current financial system: "Any time we wish to add to the national wealth we are compelled to add to the national debt." Of course, to save the banks the *Chicago Plan* analysis was used. But it is not used to end poverty and unemployment.

Joseph Polito, Toronto, Ont.

Send thoughts, feedback, corrections, poems, praise or complaints to monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

WORTH REPEATING

"Moralizing about burned cars and banks' broken windows is misplaced. This must be seen in the context of the current status quo. A status quo in which the power of the powerful and the powerlessness of the powerless is maintained. A status quo of societies where only a few profit and the many loose."

Canadian actor turned activist Pamela Anderson in her December 4 online journal entry about the *Gilets Jaunes* actions in France. As the *Monitor* went to print, the French protests had forced President Emanuel Macron to raise the minimum wage, cancel a planned tax on pensions under 2,000 euros (just over \$3,000) and scrap a planned fuel tax. Woot!

"The Government of Canada funds and protects an oil industry whose activities degrade the environment and release greenhouse gases. In doing so, it jeopardizes the ability of future generations to meet their needs and contributes to the suffering of populations already suffering the consequences of global warming."

Bernadette Veilleux-Trinh, 17, speaking in support of a class action lawsuit filed in November against the government of Canada for violating the fundamental rights of all young Quebecers by doing nothing on climate change.

Up Front

Focus on Energy



PETER BLANCHARD (FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS, 2011)

J. DAVID HUGHES | NATIONAL

Trans Mountain pipedreams and other energy follies

Like it or not, we need to plan for a major transition over the coming decades from our reliance on fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Fossil fuels are the major source of energy for Canadians and people around the world (providing 85% of global primary energy in 2017). But hydrocarbons—oil, gas and coal—unfortunately also have major environmental impacts from both extraction and combustion. Given this reality, Canada's policy of selling off its remaining non-renewable

energy assets as fast as possible makes little sense.

Canada's production of conventional oil peaked in 1973 and natural gas peaked in 2001, meaning the only hope for significant growth is from oil sands and fracked oil and gas, both of which have high environmental impacts. Although Canadians will likely need oil and gas at some level for the foreseeable future, more than half of our current production is exported, meaning we are selling off the highest quality portion of

our remaining resources at rock bottom prices.

Even with the Alberta government's Climate Leadership Plan, which caps oil sands emissions at 43% above 2015 levels, forecast growth means Canada's economy outside of oil and gas production will have to reduce emissions 49% by 2030 and 84% by 2040 to meet the Paris targets—an unlikely prospect barring economic collapse.

We are told that any effort to curb oil and gas production will have disastrous effects because the industry generates the revenues that provide government services. But the facts show that returns to Canadians from royalties on oil and gas have plummeted.

Data from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers show that royalties paid by industry fell 44% between 2000 and 2017 (from \$11.9 billion to \$6.6 billion), a period in which hydrocarbon liquids production increased by 77%. The effective Canadian royalty rate decreased from 18.3 per cent on \$65.1 billion of sales revenue in 2000 to 6.2% on \$107.1 billion in 2017. The situation in Alberta is even worse, where the effective royalty rate decreased from 19.5% to 5.1% over this period.

In British Columbia, which aspires to become an LNG exporter, we've seen a similar story. The effective royalty rate in B.C. declined to 3.6% in 2017 from 19.4% in 2000, a period in which gas production more than doubled. In order to incentivize LNG development, the B.C. government has further minimized public benefits by deferring the provincial sales tax on construction materials, foregoing increases in the carbon tax (in early December, the Horgan government announced it would add \$5 per tonne to the province's

carbon tax, currently at \$35/tonne, each year until 2021 — Ed.) and scrapping the LNG tax implemented by the previous government.

The federal government has additionally supported the elimination of tariffs on imported steel components for the recently announced LNG Canada project, at an estimated cost to Canadians of \$1 billion. Emissions from the LNG Canada project alone will use up two-thirds of B.C.'s 2050 emissions limit.

The federal government also tells us that its purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline (TMX) is in the "national interest" based on false claims that exporting Alberta bitumen to Asian markets will provide higher prices. But the U.S. Gulf coast has the world's largest concentration of the complex refineries needed to optimally refine heavy oil. Two new pipelines to the U.S. with double the capacity of TMX are under development, which will eliminate pipeline capacity constraints well before the earliest TMX completion date of 2022.

Transport costs to the U.S. Gulf coast are lower than sending oil to Asia via TMX and tankers. Together, these factors mean Alberta's heavy oil will sell in the U.S. for \$2–\$5 per barrel more compared to Asian deliveries.

The bottom line: Canada has no energy plan beyond pedal-to-the-metal export of its non-renewable energy assets. The rhetoric from Alberta Premier Rachel Notley's government that the sky will fall without TMX and the federal government's "national interest" justification for buying it have no merit. It's time to look at the big picture and develop a viable energy plan that will meet Canada's long-term energy needs and emissions reduction targets. **M**

J. DAVID HUGHES IS AN EARTH SCIENTIST AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATE WITH THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES. THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE CALGARY HERALD ON OCTOBER 30, 2018.



Premier Notley announcing her oil production cut on December 2, 2018.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

RICARDO ACUÑA | ALBERTA

Seven questions about the oil production cut

In early December, Alberta Premier Rachel Notley announced her government was legislating a temporary 8.7% cut in the production of bitumen and conventional oil starting January 1, 2019. To the degree that the current price differential is the result of an excess supply of bitumen in the face of constrained upgrading, refining, and transportation capacity, curtailing production seems like a fairly logical and straightforward short-term solution to the problem.

Legislating production cuts in free-market Alberta could not have been an easy decision for Notley to make. No Alberta premier has taken such a step since Peter Lougheed legislated production cuts in 1980 as a way of fighting the National Energy Program. As was the case in Lougheed's day, there appears to be broad support

for the Notley government's move. Even the markets responded the day after the announcement with a jump in oil prices and in the value of some oil company stocks.

As is often the case with these types of announcements, however, the premier's broadcast message and the media release accompanying it leave many questions unanswered about the government's rationale and how it relates to energy policies going forward. Here, in no particular order, are some of those questions.

1. Why does the government continue to use discredited figures to justify its actions on the price differential?

The government has repeatedly stated that the increased differential between Western Canada Select (WCS) and West

As the price of oil goes up we will not be getting top dollar for our energy resources.

Texas Intermediate (WTI) is costing the Canadian economy \$80 million a day. This oft-cited number is based on a report produced by Scotiabank back in February 2018 that tried to calculate the potential economic impacts of a growing oil price differential.

Since then, energy economist Robyn Allan has looked in-depth at the report and found its calculations and methodology to be seriously flawed, overstating both the number of barrels that are subject to the deep discount and the actual size of the differential. Allan concludes, "Scotiabank concocted a narrative that does not exist." University of Calgary economist Trevor Tombe likewise recently suggested that Albertans should take the \$80 million figure "with a big grain of salt."

2. Why does the premier lay the blame for the price differential on the federal government's "decades-long inability to build pipelines"?

For years labour groups and think-tanks have been encouraging the government of Alberta to slow down approvals of new bitumen extraction projects and focus instead on building necessary upgrading and refining capacity in the province in order to maximize value-added for our product and ensure better out-of-province selling prices. During the height of the last boom, even former premier Lougheed encouraged the government to slow the pace of growth in the oil sands and focus more energy on value-added processing.

Another former premier, Ed Stelmach, famously stated that "there is no such thing as touching the brake" when it comes to oil sands developments. Subsequent governments continued to encourage rapid growth despite the non-existence of supportive infrastructure, yet here we are with all the blame

now being placed on the federal government's inability to build infrastructure after the fact. To its credit, the Alberta government has recently announced new investments in upgrading capacity, but it may be a case of too little too late.

3. If only 10% of the bitumen Alberta produces is subject to the full WCS-WTI differential, why is production being cut for all oil across the industry?

The Scotiabank report cited above assumes that every barrel of bitumen produced in Alberta is subject to the full WCS discount, and Premier Notley repeatedly implies that all or most Alberta oil is selling at rock-bottom prices. But here again, Allan estimates that only about 10% of the bitumen produced in Alberta faces the full discount. She breaks it down as follows in a March 2018 *Vancouver Sun* column:

- 40% gets upgraded locally to synthetic crude oil (SCO), which has been selling near par with or higher than WTI of late (i.e., the opposite of a discount);
- 15% goes directly to domestic refineries for processing into petroleum products (e.g., gas at the pump);
- 15% goes to integrated refinery operations in the U.S. owned either by Suncor, Husky or Imperial (either directly or through Imperial's parent company, ExxonMobil);
- 15% goes to the U.S. Gulf Coast, where it receives the same price as Maya oil (Mexican heavy); and
- 5% is locked into higher prices through long-term supply contracts and other hedging and price-swap activities.

4. What will the reduced production levels mean for the bottom lines of the three large integrated oil sands companies (Husky, Imperial and Suncor) that profit from the growing differential?

These three companies, responsible for just under 50% of production in the oil sands, made sure that they were building refining capacity and securing transportation capacity as they ramped up production. The result of their foresight is that they have not

been negatively affected by the current low price. Forcing them to curtail what is currently profitable production will actually have a negative impact on their bottom lines and, by extension, on the economy as a whole.

Not only will this partially offset whatever overall benefits might be derived from the government's move, the production cut actually punishes forward-thinking companies and sends the message that producers don't need to build upgrading, refining and transportation capacity as they grow because the government will ultimately bail them out from the consequences of their irresponsibility.

5. Premier Notley claims the cut will ultimately reduce the price differential by \$4 and generate an extra \$1.1 billion of government revenue in 2019–20. Can we see the math?

Given the Alberta government's ongoing use of a flawed study to determine the economic impacts of the differential, and its seeming misunderstanding of just how many barrels are affected by the gap, it would be helpful to know what assumptions and calculations were used to arrive at these numbers.

It is important to note, for example, that the WCS-WTI differential is not constant over time, but rather fluctuates from day to day. Within those fluctuations, a \$4 change from one day to the next is not uncommon. For example, between Wednesday, November 21 of this year to Thursday, November 22 the differential shrunk by \$5.

That one-day fluctuation was of more benefit than the government's oil production cut will be over the entire year.

6. Why did the premier not also highlight the environmental benefits of curtailing oil production?

Alberta's oil and gas production accounts for about 50% of total greenhouse gas emissions in the province, the bulk of which comes from oil production. Reducing production by 8.7% therefore stands to have a significant impact on emissions in the province. If we look at the most recent emissions numbers from the oil sands only (72 megatonnes),

Notley's cut will result in a 6.3 Mt drop in emissions over the next year.

Given Alberta's total emissions of around 274 Mt, this would mean a real reduction in provincial emissions of 2.3%—and that's just from the oil sands. Why would the government not promote this result as one of the benefits of the production cut? Why is it still so much more politically palatable to cut production to address a crisis of profitability than it would be to address the climate crisis?

7. If the production cut is in fact part of "Premier Notley's fight to get top dollar for our energy resources," why was that same fight not in evidence during the 2015 royalty review?

When faced with criticism after the 2015 royalty review for failing to maximize return to Albertans from the resource they own, Premier Notley stated: "If we were still in a \$100-a-barrel environment, I would suggest that perhaps we could have done better as a province. But the fact of the matter is that what we're dealing with now is fundamentally different."

In other words, by the premier's own admission, as the price of oil goes up we will not be getting top dollar for our energy resources, even if it does reach \$100 a barrel. Why the difference in approach between what we do when it comes to maximizing company profitability and what we do when it comes to maximizing returns to the actual owners of the resource?

As the *Monitor* went to print, the government's move to curtail production appeared to be having its intended impact. What this suggests over the long term is that the Alberta government needs to get over its aversion to intervening in the industry. Whether it's about upgrading and refining capacity, pace of expansion or, increasingly, the need to begin curtailing production permanently for the sake of addressing climate change, this episode demonstrates that it is not always in the best interests of Albertans to leave the market to its own devices. **M**

RICARDO ACUÑA IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PARKLAND INSTITUTE.

AMY JANZWOOD | NATIONAL

The New NAFTA — What's the deal with energy?

In the aftermath of the USMCA negotiations, the Trudeau government (which calls the deal CUSMA) chalked up two significant "wins" for environmental protection and Canadian sovereignty: the elimination of investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), at least in the Canada-U.S. context, and the disappearance of NAFTA's so-called proportionality clause in the energy chapter.

The latter is particularly surprising given that in the run-up to the negotiations neither the U.S. nor Canadian governments indicated that proportionality would be on the agenda. This begs the question: why was this undeniably regressive feature of NAFTA removed? And what does this mean for Canada's energy and climate future?

Proportionality in a petro-state

Canada is a petro-state. We have the third largest crude oil reserves and are the fifth largest exporter of oil and gas in the world. These exports are largely destined to the U.S. and have steadily increased over time. This trend has been driven by the bilateral integration of energy markets facilitated by free trade agreements.

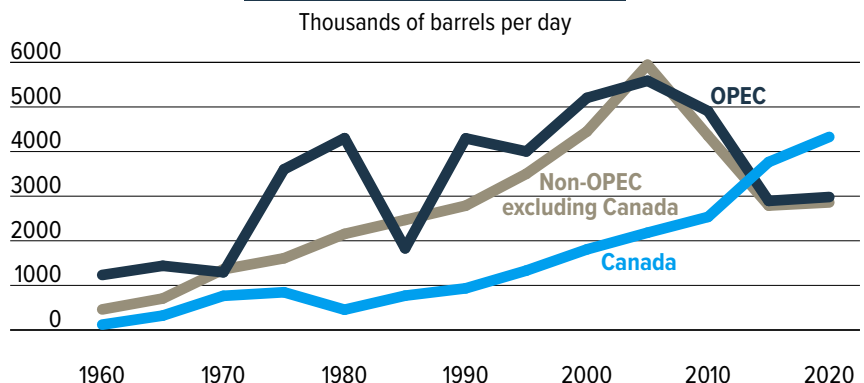
The graph here shows the sources of petroleum imports to the United States

(data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Monthly Energy Review). The Canada-United States free trade agreement was negotiated in the 1980s and this period also saw the beginning of sustained growth in Canadian petroleum imports. In 2014, Canadian imports overtook those from OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). While this graph indicates correlation not causation, the oil industry is not shy about crediting NAFTA for increasing oil exports to the United States.

The proportionality clause goes by a couple of different names: Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland calls it the "energy ratchet clause," while the oil industry prefers the "good neighbour clause." The proportionality clause was first negotiated in the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and later included in NAFTA. The clause, which has never been invoked in a NAFTA dispute, requires Canada to maintain a consistent share of energy exports to the U.S. as a proportion of domestic supply based on a three-year average. The proportionality clause effectively only applies to Canada, as Mexico negotiated an exclusion and the U.S. is a net energy importer from Canada.

I won't dive into the weeds on how proportionality was born (Gordon Laxer

U.S. petroleum imports, 1960–2018:
OPEC, non-OPEC and Canada



“CORPORATE COURT” REMOVED FROM NAFTA

Under the USMCA, investor-state dispute settlement will be eliminated between Canada and the U.S., and scaled back between Mexico and the U.S. This is an incredible achievement. NAFTA’s ISDS mechanism...allowed investors to bypass the domestic courts and sue governments before private international tribunals when public policy choices, laws or regulations allegedly harmed their investments. Of the three NAFTA countries, Canada has been the most sued, with U.S. investors frequently targeting federal and provincial environmental regulations....

The future of ISDS between Mexico and the U.S. is less encouraging. Under USMCA, existing contracts with the Mexican government in energy and several other key sectors will remain subject to full ISDS. The annex in the USMCA describing this process may lead to future investor-state conflicts as the new Lopez Obrador government moves to fulfil its pledges to achieve energy independence for Mexico. Going forward, ISDS claims by U.S. investors against the Mexican government and by Mexican investors against the U.S. government will be limited to matters of direct expropriation (when the state takes over real property with or without compensating an investor) and post-establishment national treatment (i.e., governments must treat existing investments by U.S. and Mexican investors in the same way)....

The fight against ISDS is far from over. But its phasing out between Canada and the U.S. and its retrenchment between Mexico and the U.S. is a remarkable victory for social movements in North America and globally, who have tirelessly campaigned to eliminate this insidious impediment to progressive public policy.

—**Scott Sinclair**, CCPA research fellow, in an October 10 *Behind the Numbers* blog post

has written many *Monitor* articles about it and Canadian energy sovereignty), but the combined political power of the oil and gas industry and the bargaining power of the U.S. produced a clause that guaranteed the U.S. unrestricted access to Canadian oil and gas. As a result, proportionality has hung like a spectre over Canadian energy policy and helped lock Canada into a high carbon pathway that makes us a major exporter of carbon emissions.

Why has support for proportionality waned?

In 1993, before the ink on NAFTA was dry, the newly elected Chrétien government promised to remove proportionality from the agreement. Two months later, NAFTA was signed and the energy chapter remained unchanged. Opposition from the U.S. government and the North American energy industry buried Chrétien’s pledge. Why was the Trudeau government successful this time? There are three key factors.

1. “It’s the economy, stupid.” The energy landscape in North America has changed drastically since the negotiation of the original NAFTA. The shale boom has meant U.S. natural gas and oil production have skyrocketed over the last decade. Although the U.S. is less reliant on Canadian oil and gas imports as a result, Canada remains the largest source of U.S. crude oil imports, with our exports exceeding imports by a large margin. But Canada is also the largest importer of U.S. crude oil exports and Eastern Canada has become an important market for U.S. shale gas. In other words, while Canada is still the most affected, proportionality now cuts both ways.

2. Corporate interests aligned. Neither the Canadian nor American oil industries appear to mind that proportionality is gone. Both the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) and its American counterpart, the American Petroleum Institute (API), have claimed their requests were met in the NAFTA renegotiation. They both welcome new language restricting “unnecessarily burdensome” regulations affecting the oil and gas sector (e.g., administrative delays in the approval processes for oil infrastructure, pipelines and major projects). API in

particular has been very vocal about the positive outcome of the agreement.

As evidence of the political power of the oil and gas lobby, the industry is one of a handful of sectors in Mexico to retain access to ISDS. Keeping the controversial dispute mechanism in place for their Mexican investments was a “higher priority” than in Canada, especially since Mexico opened its markets in 2013 to foreign companies. On the other hand, CAPP Vice-President Nick Schultz has said proportionality doesn’t mean much—it just isn’t needed to ensure the continued integration of North American energy markets.

3. It was a bargaining chip. The elimination of the proportionality clause has made other tough pills easier to swallow for Canada, like opening dairy markets to the U.S., extending monopoly protections for brand-name drugs and accepting continued tariffs on key Canadian products (e.g., steel, aluminum and forest products), to name a few. The pointed rhetoric coming from the federal government that the proportionality clause “impinged” on Canada’s sovereignty is indicative of this rationale. Although the U.S. government decided not to base the USMCA energy chapter on NAFTA, scrapping proportionality didn’t cost the U.S. or corporate interests much, and the Canadian government could claim a win.

Where to now?

The New NAFTA continues to bind North America together in an integrated fossil fuel market with ever-increasing production the top priority. Others have shown how much oil and gas needs to stay in the ground for us to avoid catastrophic climate change. The oil and gas sector is the highest emitting sector in Canada, largely concentrated in Alberta. Despite Alberta’s promise to cap emissions at 100 million tonnes, a forecast by the Canadian Energy Research Institute suggests they will exceed this cap in 2030.

Given this reality, the USMCA, with or without ISDS and the proportionality clause, falls far short of the agreement we need. **M**

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Below the Fold

CYNTHIA KHOO

Where the silicon hits the 49th

BY MANY REPORTS, Canada is poised to become—if it isn't already—a world leader in artificial intelligence (AI). However, Canadian governments at all levels don't seem to realize that leadership doesn't end at the word "innovation," or at cultivating high ethical and privacy standards, democratic values and the respect for human rights in AI policy. Leadership requires actually standing up for these principles.

While some economists and home-grown companies have pointed out that Canada cedes too much economic ground to technology firms in the United States and elsewhere—by letting them run off with Canadian-developed intellectual property, for example—the real and greater danger is in ceding ethical, normative and regulatory space to other countries or to industry in pursuit of short-term gains, or due to political complacency and inertia.

During the negotiations of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), or "New NAFTA" as it's sometimes called, Canadian officials said their goal was to maintain balanced copyright policy. By that they meant more or less the status quo, a copyright system that takes into account multiple factors—freedom of expression, access to information, research and education, and the implications of copyright for cultural heterogeneity—rather than focusing solely on the economic interests of those who would expand copyright protectionism.

Unfortunately, Canadian USMCA negotiators ultimately accepted many of the more radical intellectual property law provisions that were removed from the Trans-Pacific Partnership when the United States withdrew from that agreement. Those concessions include a 20-year extension to copyright terms from 50 to 70 years of exclusivity after the death of the author. But the betrayal of purportedly Canadian values and policies goes well beyond terms of protection for artistic works.

Data governance is an increasingly important area of policy in this age of ubiquitous surveillance, mass data breaches, and hunger for "big data" from AI, the Internet of Things (IoT) and smart cities. It is hard to understand, then, why Canada capitulated on the matter of data localization in the USMCA—by agreeing to a general ban on the ability of governments to require that businesses store users' data on servers within Canada, where constitutional rights and the Canadian Charter apply.

Privacy legislation in B.C. and Nova Scotia already mandates that some personal information (health records, for example) must be stored on local servers. Ditto for the federal government's own cloud adoption strategy. While USMCA includes some exceptions, it undoubtedly ties Canada's hands, not just now but into the future, which is problematic when multinational technology companies already dominate so much of our online activity. It is precisely because the future consequences of technological ambitions are hard to predict that we should be protecting our policy space to regulate the sector.

For a case in point, we can look at the debate over the future of Waterfront Toronto's high-tech, low-governance partnership with U.S.-based Sidewalk Labs, Google's sibling company, to build a neighbourhood called Quayside. See Ava Kofman's article on page 34 for further details, but for the purposes of this column, suffice it to say that a big part of the controversy boils down to what data will be collected on Toronto residents and visitors in the community, and who will own and manage it.

Sidewalk Toronto has been big on data, yet short on democracy. Shortfalls include poor consultation with all levels of government and with Waterfront Toronto's relatively new Digital Strategy Advisory Panel, which is consistently given scant time to review significant documents; a damaging report from Ontario's auditor general, who in December questioned why Sidewalk Labs was granted preferential treatment during the request-for-proposals process; and four high-profile resignations—including former privacy commissioner Ann Cavoukian and Saadia Muzaffar, founder of TechGirls Canada—over flawed process, lack of commitment to data privacy, and ongoing transparency and timing concerns, particularly with respect to questions of data ownership and governance, privacy and intellectual property rights.

"Sidewalk Labs continues to act like it's the government," points out Bianca Wylie of Tech Reset Canada, who has extensively detailed how and how often government entities meant to steward the Canadian public interest are caught flatfooted and complicit. Think here of the federal privacy commissioner's inability to enforce privacy laws against Facebook, or Canadian cities suddenly forgetting about Amazon's work conditions in bidding for HQ2.

Canada is taking some strides toward ethical AI and innovation—the Treasury Board's Directive on Automated Decision-Making is a good start—and is aware of the problem of publicly funded technology being patented and commercialized abroad. However, as the USMCA and Sidewalk Labs examples show us, when major U.S. tech companies are involved our government is susceptible to being pulled off track.

If Canada truly wishes to don a "leadership" mantle in the future of AI and technology, it is not enough to have hearts and minds in the right place. At the end of the day, we need a spine to keep them there. **M**

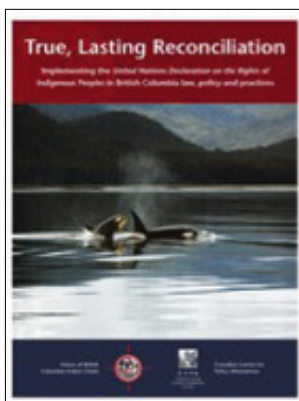
CYNTHIA KHOO IS A DIGITAL RIGHTS LAWYER WHO FOCUSES ON INTERNET POLICY AND HUMAN RIGHTS. YOU CAN REACH HER AT WWW.TEKHNOSLAW.CA.

New from the CCPA

Making reconciliation the law

The B.C. government has committed to implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). For the first time, a new report outlines what that could and should look like at the provincial level.

True, Lasting Reconciliation was released in late November by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the B.C. office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Building on the 2015 commitment document between the B.C. government and the First Nations Leadership Council, which comprises the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and UBCIC, the report makes the following recommendations:



- **Embed UNDRIP in B.C. law** based on the model proposed by NDP MP Romeo Saganash in Bill C-262. The legislation should oblige the B.C. government to adopt an implementation action plan, and to systematically review provincial laws, policies and practices to ensure compliance with the UN treaty.

- **Focus on Indigenous self-determination.** Efforts of governments or other actors cannot prescribe, define or determine Indigenous peoples' own priorities. The government must be prepared to offer the appropriate resources to Indigenous peoples in their self-determining initiatives.

- **Advance consent-based agreements** that reflect the minimum standards in the UN declaration. A concrete example is the June 27, 2018 letter of understanding between the B.C. government and the 'Namgis, Mamalilikulla and Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations regarding finfish aquaculture farms in the Broughton area.

- **Undertake public education projects about UNDRIP** within the public service, the school system and the general public.

"Implementation of the UN Declaration will involve a diverse and dynamic set of legislative and policy shifts by government," says **Kukpi7 Judy Wilson**, secretary-treasurer of the UBCIC. "It supports action by Indigenous nations to exercise self-determination and to rebuild and revitalize their own governments, structures, legal systems

and jurisdiction over their territorial lands and resources."

Big savings from pharmacare

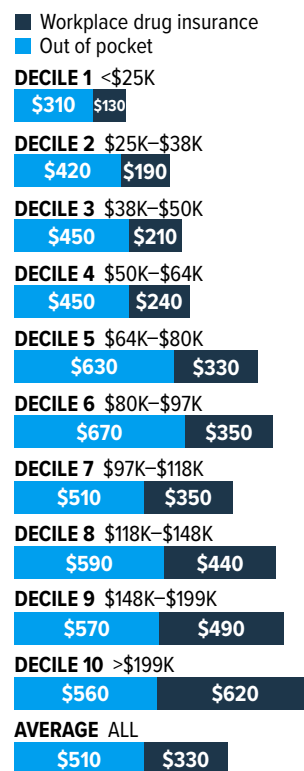
A federally funded universal pharmacare plan is estimated to cost about \$10.4 billion a year. But it could also save Canadian households up to \$600 a year depending on how the federal government chooses to fund the program, says new research from the CCPA and Canadians for Tax Fairness (C4TF).

In their new report, **A Prescription for Savings**, **David Macdonald** (CCPA) and **Toby Sanger** (C4TF) analyze various tax-based funding options to determine which are the most fair and equitable, and how Canadians can best share and distribute the considerable savings that would be generated by adding pharmacare to our public health care mix.

"There is a right and a wrong way to pay for pharmacare. Pick the wrong way and you can completely eliminate pharmacare's net savings for low and middle income families. Pick the right way and you can fairly distribute those savings between low-income families, the middle-class, businesses and governments," says Macdonald.

In almost all of the scenarios analyzed by Macdonald and Sanger, middle class households save \$400 to \$500 more than they would pay in new taxes to fund national pharmacare, while lower income households end up between \$300 and \$400

Household expenditures on prescription drugs by pre-tax household income decile (2020)



ahead. The one exception is if pharmacare is paid for by increasing the GST, in which case the benefits for low and middle income households are almost completely eliminated and employers capture all of the savings.

In almost all scenarios, employers also see net savings as their contributions to private drug plans decrease by more than their taxes increase. In options where pharmacare savings are shared with households, employers still save between \$1 billion and \$3 billion a year.

Work needed

"Ontario's labour market is increasingly racialized and persistently unequal."

So starts a new report by CCPA-Ontario economist **Sheila Block** and Ryerson University professor **Grace-Edward Galabuzi**, which breaks down occupational workforce data to shed light on who is and isn't finding work in the province. Unfortunately, whether at high or low incomes, it still helps if you're white.

Persistent Inequality: Ontario's Colour-coded Labour Market is a

follow-up to the pair's 2011 report of the same title for the Wellesley Institute and CCPA. By comparing data from the 2006 and 2016 federal censuses, Block and Galabuzi can show how the financial crisis, decline in manufacturing and technological change in the Ontario economy is affecting different workers differently. For example, when it comes to wages, the pair find the following:

- In 2015, racialized men earned 76 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned; racialized women earned 85 cents for every dollar non-racialized women earned.
- These earnings gaps have remained virtually unchanged since 2006.
- Labour market discrimination remains gendered and racialized: racialized women earned 58 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned.
- There has been little progress in closing the earnings gap between men and women. Non-racialized women earned 69 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned. Racialized women earned 77 cents for every dollar racialized men earned.

"A policy approach of benign neglect is not going to be sufficient to ensure that all Ontarians' talents, whether they are racialized or non-racialized, are fully utilized," said Block in an interview about the report with the *Toronto Star* in early December. "We need legislation that both strengthens the Employment Standards Act and makes it easier for workers who are in precarious employment to unionize."

Hellos and goodbyes

The CCPA is pleased to announce that Shannon Daub has been selected by the board of the CCPA-BC to be the new director of our westernmost provincial office. Shannon replaces Seth Klein, the founding director of the CCPA-BC, who had held the position for 22 years when he stepped down at the end of 2018.

Shannon has been with the CCPA-BC since its earliest days. A former Communications Director and then Associate Director, Shannon has been integral to ensuring the intellectual rigour and accuracy of CCPA research. She also brings leadership experience from outside the centre, having served as board chair of both CCEC Credit Union and the Wilderness Committee, and on the board of the Vancouver Public Library.

In announcing the transition, the CCPA-BC board said it is grateful for Seth's service and leadership, and pleased that he will remain connected with the organization. "We have no doubt the CCPA-BC,

under Shannon's guidance, will remain a vibrant and innovative research institute, serving British Columbians with the rigour and commitment we've come to know and trust."

There's new blood at the CCPA's national office, too. Rick Telfer joins us as Operations Manager. He'll be responsible for administering the centre's financial and human resources systems, as well as providing governance support to the CCPA's board of directors. A 20-year veteran of the student and labour movements, Rick has held many positions at the Canadian Federation of Students and was the CFS's Ontario National Executive Representative. Rick is a former executive director of the University of Toronto Students' Union, former VP of his old PSAC union local, and has held public office as a trustee of the Toronto District School Board.

Finally, it is with mixed feelings that we announce

Trish Hennessy's departure from the CCPA-Ontario. After 12 years with the centre—first as Income Inequality Project Director, then as Director of the Ontario office—Trish has moved on to new challenges. As of November, she is Executive Director of Upstream, an institute that develops evidence-based, people-centred ideas for addressing social determinants of health in order to build a healthier society.

For more reports, commentary, blogs, infographics, podcasts and other multimedia from the CCPA and its provincial offices, visit www.policyalternatives.ca. You can also find us on Facebook, Instagram, and on Twitter @ccpa.

— CCPA'S SIXTH ANNUAL —

TELEPHONE TOWN HALL



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RIGHT TO THE CITY

TO CHANGE THE WORLD WE MUST CHANGE HOW WE LIVE, COLLECTIVELY AND AT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL. THE *MONITOR* LOOKS AT SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ON THE PATH TO MAKING OUR CITIES MORE DEMOCRATIC AND TRULY SUSTAINABLE.

Cityscape, by theSpace artists

The illustrations on this page and the table of contents were produced by members of theSpace, a not-for-profit creative studio in Ottawa for adults with Autism and intellectual disabilities. Since opening almost two years ago, theSpace has been recognized for its unique focus on promoting lifelong learning and personal agency by way of identity-enhancing creative workshops for its members. The personal stories and creations of these members are shared locally and with the larger online community through podcasts, newspapers, videos and art shows.

For this issue of the *Monitor*, several members at theSpace were tasked with creating their own depiction of a liveable and sustainable community. After deciding on a theme and must-have images, each creator selected their favourite idea for illustration. Original images were then sketched, painted, scanned and further altered and/or coloured using open-source software such as Krita. The resulting panorama is reflective of each member's unique approach and creative style, harmonizing into one cohesive and colourful cityscape.

The *Monitor* thanks Clara Verdon (26), Michael Nedohin (27), Andrew Urie (25), Megan Lunua (27), and Julia Tuschak (46) for their contributions to this special edition on the right to the city, and Rian Alston, creative director at theSpace, for co-ordinating the project.

LYNNE FERNANDEZ AND SHAUNA MACKINNON

The right to the city as a foundation for social justice

A view from Winnipeg

THE RIGHT TO the city comes out of critical theory, a branch of intellectual thought originating in the early 20th century at the University of Frankfurt. The Frankfurt School consisted of a group of radical scholars who theorized about the rise of mass popular culture and its effect on society. A December 2016 *New Yorker* article by Alex Ross, “The Frankfurt School Knew Trump was Coming,” points out how relevant their ideas are today: “The combination of economic inequality and pop-cultural frivolity is precisely the scenario [Theodor] Adorno and others had in mind: mass distraction masking elite domination.”

Critical theory provided a base for the emergence of critical *urban* theory later on in the 20th century. Within this group, Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells and David Harvey were key in advancing the idea that there is such a thing as the right to the city (RTC). In the introduction to their 2009 book, *Cities for People, Not for Profit*, Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer explain how RTC scholars see cities as “major basing points for the production, circulation and consumption of commodities,” and believe every aspect of urban organization, governance and sociopolitical conflict stems from this role. An RTC framework, in other words, allows us to peer under the hood and observe the motor and transmission of urban life.

The fundamental role that urban centres play in capitalism has only intensified under neoliberalism. We see it in what Brenner et al. refer to as the hyper-commodification of urban land, housing, transportation, utilities and public space. Housing prices in Vancouver and Toronto are driven sky high by speculation (see Michal Rozworski’s article in the November-December 2018 *Monitor*); public transportation has

declined in many cities while single-use vehicles and app-based ride-sharing services choke our deteriorating roadways; developers exercise almost total control over urban spaces like True North Square in Winnipeg. These are all examples of how cities are built to meet the needs of profit rather than people.

The right to the city is valuable not only for helping us understand urbanization: as a theoretical framework, it is also extremely useful in helping us build resistance to mass consumerism and corporate control of our cities. The right to the city provides the impetus for those who are socially and economically excluded to take back the direction of their lives—to “expose, propose and politicize,” as Marcuse puts it. Groups working on single-issue campaigns including social housing, job creation, environmental issues, workers’ rights and poverty reduction, as well as anyone working within more transformative campaigns to disrupt neoliberalism and colonization, can mobilize under the RTC banner.

As Harvey notes in his 2012 book, *Rebel Cities*, “[h]ow such disparate groups may become self-organized into a revolutionary force is the big political problem.” Nationally this worthy project feels like a non-starter, at least at this political moment in Canada’s history. The RTC framework is appealing locally for its flexibility in accommodating any number of causes and groups in their pursuit of social and economic justice. It may be especially useful in a city like Winnipeg, with its many overlapping social realities.

EXPOSING, PROPOSING AND POLITICIZING IN WINNIPEG

Whereas a city like Winnipeg displays all the usual characteristics of neoliberal urban development—the dominance of

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY PROVIDES THE IMPETUS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY EXCLUDED TO TAKE BACK THE DIRECTION OF THEIR LIVES.

developers, ever expanding suburbs and car-friendly infrastructure—its large Indigenous population means the way groups might collectively respond to this type of urbanization will differ from, say, Toronto or Vancouver. Decolonization must play a part in any RTC movement in Canadian Prairie cities like Winnipeg.

There are a number of initiatives in Winnipeg that align with a RTC philosophy even though they have not been expressly framed that way. We propose that more consciously framing our efforts under the RTC banner would draw out how much they share in common, with the potential to strengthen a co-operative power base from which we are more likely to achieve our social justice goals.

Harvey witnessed this dynamic in action at the U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta in 2007. He writes in *Rebel Cities* that after years of fighting on their own for a variety of social justice causes, U.S. groups saw the benefit of unifying under a common RTC framework. Political geographer Elvin Wyly also notes in a 2010 article that diverse groups, without being aware of it, are already “doing work that constitutes a collective project of critical urbanism.”

We have been involved in several movements that forced change at the political level through the strength of collective organizing and mobilization, and that fit well under a RTC framework. Those groups include Winnipeg’s Alternative Municipal Budget (AMB), the city’s Right to Housing (R2H) campaign, Make Poverty History Manitoba (MPHB), and the Migrant Workers Solidarity Network (MWSN).

In what follows, we examine the nature of each of these four causes or movements, how research was used to mobilize the community and what changes were achieved. We look at how such groups have begun to consolidate their efforts, then propose how they might become even more united and effective under the “right to the city” banner.

ALTERNATIVE MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Economist John Loxley introduced the idea of alternative budgets to the grassroots activist coalition Choices in the 1990s. Choices produced the first

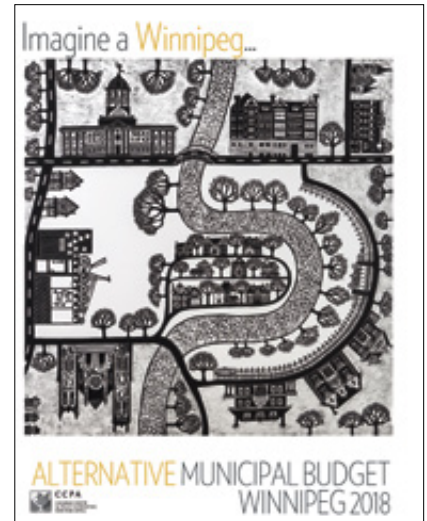
alternative budgets in Canada for both Manitoba and Winnipeg, but the practice eventually spread to the CCPA’s national office, where an Alternative Federal Budget is released every year. CCPA-Manitoba brought back the Winnipeg Alternative Municipal Budget (AMB) in 2008 and has put one out every four years since then.

AMBs are developed and published in election years as a way to educate, inspire and challenge candidates and voters. Unlike municipal government documents, which can be overwhelmingly complex, the AMB describes important elements of the actual budget in simple terms and proposes how the city’s wealth could be distributed differently based on different (not neoliberal) values.

Importantly, Winnipeg’s AMB is an exercise in local participatory democracy. Various community groups discuss what the focus should be for the year and strategize around the financial framework. AMB partners include community-based organizations working with marginalized women, newcomers and the Indigenous community, groups such as Bike Winnipeg, the Green Action Centre, the Manitoba Library Association and Food Matters Manitoba, as well as unions and academics. Economists place the participants’ spending priorities in a fiscal framework that is then contrasted with the city’s actual budget.

The exercise clearly shows how the community’s priorities differ from the city’s. In the 2018 AMB, *Imagine a Winnipeg*, we applied sustainable budgeting principles to accommodate environmental issues and income inequality. When you raise and spend money differently, you begin to imagine a different city. The AMB increased taxes—including business taxes—more than the city, implemented fees to discourage car use and urban sprawl, and spent that money on electric buses, a low-income bus pass and the remunicipalization of Handi-Transit, a privatized parallel service for physically challenged persons that is frequently criticized for poor service.

The 2018 AMB lowered the ever-ballooning police budget by 2%, arguing that it is starving the departments that could better deal with the root causes





Make Poverty History
Manitoba rally, October 11, 2018.
ANDREW TOD, MANITOBA FEDERATION OF LABOUR

of crime. Using an equity lens, the AMB found that increases in policing have been “disproportionately targeted in Winnipeg’s Black and Indigenous communities under the guise of outreach to those communities.” So, we introduced policies to educate officers about the social conditions, including colonization, that force people into crime.

The AMB also incorporated policies from the municipal poverty reduction report released around the same time by Make Poverty History Manitoba. And it allocated funds for increasing transparency and democracy at city hall while implementing electoral reform to encourage more Winnipeggers to get involved in city politics.

The AMB has proven to be a valuable tool in mobilizing the community around a common cause, educating the public and pushing politicians to implement progressive policies. We believe that past AMBs helped the city understand it needed to raise property taxes (after a 14-year tax freeze) and bring in developer fees to discourage urban sprawl.

The 2018 AMB was used as a basis for a mayoral candidate debate, an op-ed in the *Winnipeg Sun*, media interviews and newspaper stories, and various classroom and public presentations. The mayoral incumbent in the October elections, Brian Bowman, even promised to bring in a low-income bus pass if re-elected, which he was.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

Right to Housing (R2H) is a Winnipeg-based advocacy coalition made up of 58 organizations with several hundred individual supporters. The coalition’s strength has been its belief that researchers and activists can work side by side to change public policy.

Since forming in 2006, R2H has been disciplined in its call for an increase in social housing for low-income individuals and families. Although a single-issue coalition, R2H also recognizes that some people are more vulnerable than others, and it works in collaboration with groups representing Indigenous communities, women and newcomers who are calling on governments to build more social housing for their constituencies. In recognition of the need to connect with other social justice campaigns, an R2H member participated in the development of last year’s AMB.

Long before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its calls to action in 2015, R2H was an active ally of First Nations claims for space previously occupied by the Department of National Defence. When the government of Canada relocated the Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry Division to Camp Shilo near Brandon, Manitoba, several housing units were left vacant. R2H aligned with Pequis First Nation to advocate for this now “surplus land” on Treaty 1 territory to be repatriated by the First Nation as part of its land entitlement.

R2H had considerable success in exposing the need for social housing, proposing targets and timelines for government intervention, and politicizing its members and the broader public to call upon their government to take action. And after years of strategic political advocacy between 2011 and 2016, the R2H demand was met with the addition of a record number of new social housing units as well as the retrofitting of hundreds of units in disrepair.

R2H has entered a new era with a provincial Conservative government that is now privatizing public housing rather than building new units. However, the coalition remains strong and focused, while also working alongside other groups who increasingly recognize that the issues they are passionate about are

part of a collective struggle for social and economic justice in the city of Winnipeg and beyond.

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY MANITOBA

Advocacy efforts in the early 2000s to convince the government of Manitoba to establish a comprehensive plan to address poverty were unsuccessful. In 2008, organizations including CCPA-Manitoba pooled their collective resources under the banner of Make Poverty History Manitoba (MPHM) to develop their own poverty-fighting plan the community could really get behind.

The Manitoba government responded to this pressure by releasing a poverty-reduction strategy a few weeks ahead of the scheduled release date of the MPHM vision document, *The View From Here*. The coalition welcomed the government's initiative, but continued to advocate its own grassroots plan, which included specific timelines and targets.

In 2015, MPHM updated the *View From Here* and demonstrated that some progress had been made. The coalition continues to use the living document as its rallying cry for action on poverty aimed at all three levels of government. In 2017, MPHM developed a municipally focused plan, *Winnipeg Without Poverty: Calling on the City to Lead*, which also figures prominently in the Alternative Municipal Budget.

MIGRANT WORKERS SOLIDARITY NETWORK

As in much of Canada, Manitoba's vegetable farms have come to rely on migrant labour during the growing season. Each year, up to 400 workers, most of them from Mexico, are received in the province under the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program (SAWP). From spring to fall, these workers, mostly men, do physically demanding labour that most Canadians will not do.

In 2009, a group called the Migrant Workers Solidarity Network (MWSN) undertook a campaign of public education so consumers would understand who was harvesting their produce and how they were being treated. The network, made up of members of the Latino community, faith-based groups, labour advocates and academics, also met with relevant

provincial ministers to push the province to enforce employment standards and grant the workers access to provincial health care. MWSN adopted the strategy used by Right to Housing and Make Poverty History Manitoba to determine issues of concern; as in both earlier joint efforts, CCPA-Manitoba helped by producing research and policy recommendations that could be disseminated publicly.

The conditions under which migrant agricultural workers operate made it impossible to do extensive consultations. But MWSN members were able to talk to some workers and knew that the private health care coverage they had was not working well. As was the case with R2H and MPHM, the group homed in on one simple, clear ask and undertook a campaign to pressure the government to grant the workers access to provincial health care.

Although the network wasn't part of a community coalition per se, it did have the support of the labour community. Local 832 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) was happy to work with MWSN, for example, by pledging resources to translate an information pamphlet about the workers' rights and how they could access information about employment standards and workplace health and safety.

MWSN launched its health care campaign with a series of CCPA-Manitoba fact-sheets called "Fast Facts," which explained how and why the farm workers were here, the conditions under which they worked, and a plea to grant the workers access to the provincial health care system. MWSN members were invited to speak at local conferences and university classes about their advocacy.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour was also applying pressure on the government to open the health care system to migrant workers. UFCW pledged more money to the MWSN so it could print postcards urging the government to grant the workers access to health care benefits. Hundreds of these postcards were signed and sent to the premier's office.

In 2013, MWSN produced a larger report that included interviews with migrant workers, a literature review and

THERE ARE LIMITS TO THE ABILITY OF SINGLE-ISSUE CAMPAIGNS TO ACHIEVE MAJOR PUBLIC POLICY CHANGE.



**BY GIVING VOICE TO
MIGRANTS' PLEAS FOR
PERMANENT RESIDENCY,
HEALTH CARE AND FAIR
PAY, LOCAL ACTIVISTS
RECOGNIZED THE
WORKERS' CLAIM TO
SHARE IN THE BENEFITS
OF URBANIZATION—
THEIR RIGHT TO THE CITY.**

policy recommendations. At the launch of the latter report, the provincial minister of immigration and multiculturalism announced that the NDP government would grant health care coverage to migrant workers. The combined efforts of the labour movement and the research and public advocacy work of MWSN had paid off.

Beyond the lack of health care, workers had complained to us about being paid less than minimum wage through the piece-rate system, and of having wages held back. MWSN met with the head of the province's special investigations unit for employers of temporary foreign workers. The information the group provided alerted the unit to specific problems that, when investigated, were fixed.

MWSN still meets and interacts with the workers today and is connected to a national group that advocates on behalf of temporary workers everywhere. The Manitoba network is currently working with farms to offer English classes to the workers—a need that was identified through interviews and the MWSN policy development process.

THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL RIGHT TO THE CITY

Winnipeg's many grassroots organizations are mobilized and can be highly effective. But there are limits to the ability of single-issue campaigns to achieve major public policy change. Sanford Schram, the American political scientist, rightly states that "getting beyond neoliberalism will take political mobilization on multiple levels inside and outside the conventional public policy system."

Thankfully, the successes of the Migrant Workers Solidarity Network, Make Poverty History Manitoba, Right to Housing and the Alternative Municipal Budget process offer a signpost for what more could be accomplished if groups rallied together, and in particular if that happened under the "right to the city" banner.

Migrant workers naturally tend to live outside city limits, close to the vegetable farms that employ them. But the distinction between the rural and urban in this context merely hides the ways these workers' rights are being violated.

By giving voice to migrants' pleas for permanent residency, health care and fair pay, MWSN recognized their claim to share in the benefits of urbanization—their right to the city.

The MWSN example also shows the power of uniting grassroots campaigns with local labour unions. However, the labour movement could be better at responding to what Lefebvre describes in his RTC writing as the "cry and demand out of the streets and neighbourhoods."

Of course labour has the right to direct its members resources as it sees fit. However, we propose that current practice is shortsighted. Unionized workers and the organizations that represent them must join with others to challenge neoliberal capitalism. Our collective interests are best served by providing sustained support for broad-based organizing efforts such as the coalitions mentioned here. A RTC framework could make these efforts more attractive to union and non-union organizations alike.

The Alternative Municipal Budget itself offers a foundation on which a right to the city could be built in Winnipeg, as it already combines efforts by R2H, MPHM and the labour community. But the AMB brings these and other groups together only on a temporary basis and there is no mechanism to sustain collective advocacy efforts once the final report is published. By necessity, participants all too often return to their important issue-based work, with little time and energy to put toward a truly transformative, or as Harvey would say, revolutionary effort.

The social justice groups described above share the view that broader societal transformation is required and that focusing on one issue at a time will not get us there. Building our efforts on a "right to the city" framework, and funding that effort appropriately, could consolidate the aspirations of a larger group of equity seekers, including those most deeply affected by regressive public policies.

Fundamentally, we are all working to expose the corrosive effects neoliberalism on democracy and our urban spaces, propose new ways forward that are beneficial to everyone, and politicize and mobilize those who seek a more equitable world. The right to the city can get us closer to this justice we seek. **M**

LAURA NEIDHART

The right to a home in the city

“WELCOME TO CANADA’S Capital, courtesy of Timbercreek.”

These were the words of one of the organizers at an October rally for Ottawa’s Heron Gate community, a neighbourhood facing mass eviction from their single-family townhomes.

Timbercreek Asset Management, which bought the neglected townhomes from Transglobe Property Management in 2012, announced last May that it would be tearing down and replacing them. The new properties Timbercreek wants to build will re-enter the market at rates inaccessible to those who are being forced out.

From the viewpoint of the development world, this is just how “intensification” and “revitalization” works in a growing Canadian city. For the families of Heron Gate, a community largely made up of people of colour, nearly half of whom are Somali, it is a violation of their human rights.

For right to housing advocates, Heron Gate is a symptom. At present, in cities like Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, the poor are being pushed out of their homes, priced out of the vibrant communities they helped build in the first place. Globally the trend is called “demoviction” or “renoviction,” and it leaves us with a central question: who are Canadian cities for?

Should we be designing and maintaining our urban spaces for the housing developers, property management companies and speculators who are interested mainly in capital and wealth accumulation? Or is housing rather a social good and fundamental human right necessary for life?

Through the lens of commodification and financialization, housing—and by extension the communities and cities those houses and apartments are built in—does not exist for tenants. Housing appears largely to feed a system of unrestrained and under-regulated financial growth for those



Ikram Dahir of the Herongate Tenant Coalition addresses a support rally.

AUTHOR’S PHOTO

few companies and individuals lucky enough to have the money to ante up.

The intentional displacement of Heron Gate residents, like similar removals in Toronto’s Parkdale neighbourhood and elsewhere in Canada, is an attack on the country’s most marginalized communities, including racialized persons, Indigenous peoples and people living in poverty. It perpetuates and worsens socioeconomic stratification in Canada’s cities, as more people are pushed into unsafe housing conditions or forced to spend unsustainable proportions of their income looking for affordable housing.

When those displaced people attempt to form their own informal communities by building tent cities like those in Moncton, New Brunswick and Abbotsford, B.C., they are often quickly and ruthlessly evicted by municipal powers, losing their homes once again.

In the case of Heron Gate, a predominantly racialized community, each level of government pushed responsibility onto the next. The community’s city councillor along with Ottawa’s mayor said they did not have the power to stop the evictions, thereby shifting responsibility to an

unresponsive provincial government. The respective provincial legislator then shifted the focus onto re-homing residents rather than advocating for their right to stay where they were.

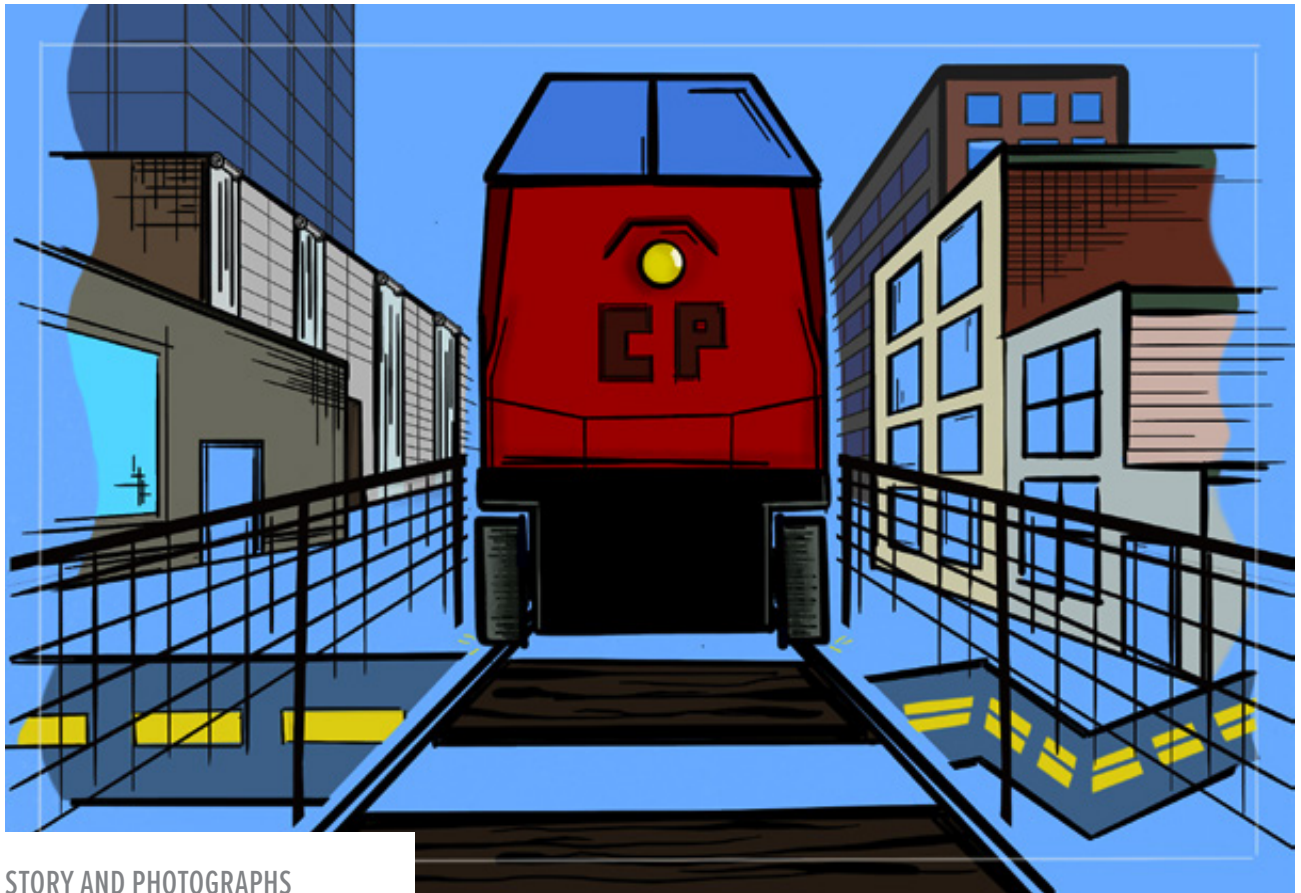
In the face of such injustice, when the interests of wealthy builders are balanced against those in poverty, clearly politicians of every level are inclined to exculpate themselves by shifting responsibility to someone or somewhere else.

Housing inequality is not a jurisdictional challenge; the housing rights of the poor and marginalized should be a priority in and of itself. In Canada, three million households are living in unaffordable, below-standards or overcrowded housing conditions. Nearly 250,000 people are homeless in any given year.

Among Canada’s human rights obligations as a United Nations member state is the promise to create conditions in which all people have access to adequate housing—or more simply, to protect the right to housing. Yet the federal government has also deflected some of its obligations onto the provinces and territories.

The current government says it needs the buy-in of provinces and territories, and municipalities under them, to fully realize a rights-based housing policy. To a certain extent, this is true, as all governments, national and subnational, have obligations to fulfil. It’s also true that governments complicate matters when they contract out or privatize goods and services, like housing, that intersect with human rights. But that does not mean they can equally contract out their international obligations.

What kind of Canada do we want to live in? One where developers and landlords have full control over people who cannot afford to own their homes, or one where cities belong to all people, where human rights are central to creating thriving cities? **M**



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY SOPHIE O'MANIQUE

Railroad blues

Infrastructure, inequality and gentrification
in post-industrial Montreal

VARIOUS TRAIN TRACKS run along the northern edge of the Outremont and Mile End neighbourhoods in Montreal, imposing something of a physical barrier between them and the boroughs to their immediate north, Parc-Extension (Parc-Ex) and La Petite-Patrie. Parc-Ex is further cordoned off by a set of tracks along its eastern edge that separate it from neighbouring Villeray. On the borough's western edge, another train line, this one reinforced by an imposing fence, creates a firm border with the affluent Town of Mount Royal.

While freight train traffic has diminished significantly over the last few decades, the tracks surrounding Parc-Ex are still used by

commuter trains that link the city's suburban sprawl to the downtown core. At the same time, the tracks are an impediment to convenient passage through the neighbourhoods closest to them—neighbourhoods that have become increasingly residential (and increasingly gentrified) in Montreal's post-industrial landscape. For proof, we need only look for the holes that appear in the fences bordering the tracks at frequent crossing points. These holes are eventually covered, but they always reappear.

The train lines remain the property of Canadian Pacific Railway (CP Rail), which has repeatedly expressed opposition to the construction of level crossings along the tracks. In an

open letter to the *Montreal Gazette* in 2017, CP Rail President Keith Creel explained he is only concerned about safety and a potential increase in unlawful trespassing. But there is still intense pressure on the company from the city, the boroughs of Plateau Mont-Royal and Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie, and various community groups including the Collective for Level Crossings. Discussions on the matter between city officials and CP Rail, which were mediated by the Canadian Transportation Agency, ended at an impasse in the summer of 2017.

The physical isolation that Montreal's train tracks engender is not borne equally. West of Parc Avenue, in Montreal's poorest neighbourhood of

Parc-Ex (part of the Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension borough), the tracks are a profound impediment to travelling from the north of the city to the south by foot or bike.

The only options for passing under or over the train tracks are the heavily trafficked main artery of Parc Ave. or else Rockland Road, about 1.2 km to the east. When Parc Ave. is not clogged with rush-hour traffic, drivers take advantage of its four lanes to far exceed the outlined speed limit. Despite being the most direct route for cyclists and pedestrians from Parc-Ex further south, Parc Ave. does not have a bike lane. Responding to safety concerns from cyclists, the city decided to exempt this stretch of road from the bylaw that forbids riding bikes on the sidewalk.

In contrast, to the east of Parc Ave. the train tracks are an inconvenience, but one seldom has to walk more than 500 meters to find a legal crossing. Recently, the bike path that runs along the busy St. Laurent Road that passes under the train tracks was widened and provided with a physical barrier to protect cyclists from cars. And, while unlawful passage is a possibility on the city's eastern side (although with the risk a hefty fine from the CP Rail police), crossing the two different sets of tracks between Parc-Ex and Outremont is much more challenging.

In spite of the different degrees to which the train tracks restrict pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the Mile End versus Parc-Ex, much of the push for new level crossings comes from the eastern side of the city, in proximity to the Rosemont Metro station. Here residents have organized to issue complaints about the poorly maintained St. Laurent and St. Denis underpasses and to highlight the extra time that walking or cycling around the train tracks adds to their daily movements. If soundbites from these groups in the Mile End and La Petite-Patrie neighbourhoods are easier to find in the media than from anyone in Parc-Ex, it is likely because there are more immediate concerns for community organizers in the latter borough.

We often take our built environment for granted, but as the above comparison makes plain, urban infrastructure can exacerbate inequality. By critically examining municipal investments into the land adjacent to Montreal's train tracks, we can see whose leisure, convenient passage through the city, access to public space and safety is given primacy over others in this city. Following the money in this way can also help us understand the ways in which municipal governments facilitate gentrification.

BY CRITICALLY EXAMINING MUNICIPAL INVESTMENTS INTO THE LAND ADJACENT TO MONTREAL'S TRAIN TRACKS, WE CAN SEE WHOSE LEISURE, PASSAGE AND SAFETY IS GIVEN PRIMACY OVER OTHERS IN THIS CITY.

The land adjacent to the tracks east of Parc Ave. has been developed into a “green corridor” that includes an outdoor gym, sculpture garden, bike and running paths, dog parks, green spaces and a skate park (currently under construction). These public spaces are all heavily used by the predominantly white and middle class groups that live nearby. Moreover, an annual music festival has been initiated next to the tracks and under one of the overpasses, taking advantage of the increasing trendiness of post-industrial landscapes.

At first glance, the repurposing of these spaces looks like democratization, and it would be hard to argue that these developments are to the detriment of the communities that surround them. However, if we are to understand the *right to the city* as David Harvey and others do—as a collective right to remake the city after our collective vision—then we must ask why no such amenities can be found in Parc-Ex. Why, in fact, is there very little access to any public space in that borough compared to Mile End or La Petite-Patrie?

According to data provided by the City of Montreal, as of 2015, 51.3% of residents in Parc-Ex were immigrants and 56.4% categorized as visible minorities. The median household income of \$38,022 in Parc-Ex (in 2015) is also considerably lower than the citywide median income of \$50,277. In contrast, in La Petite-Patrie only 16.9% of the population is considered part of a visible minority, and the median household income is closer to the city median at \$49,409 (in 2015). To the south of the tracks in the Mile End neighbourhood, more than 85% of the population is white, and the median household income in 2015 was \$53,205.

In this instance, public resources have been concentrated in neighbourhoods that are well-off. Further, we can assume that the “green corridor” initiated in La Petite-Patrie and the Mile End is in line with the desires and expectations of the groups living there, since the associated projects have garnered little protest and are widely enjoyed by the surrounding residents.



The skeleton of a torn down warehouse on the southeast edge of the tracks in Mile End.



In Parc-Ex, on the other hand, the redevelopment of the limited public space that exists has garnered opposition from residents. For example, the city recently awarded funding for new seating areas and kiosks for workshops and wares in Place de la Gare at the intersection of Parc Ave. and Jean-Talon Road. But the coalition behind the project, called Parc-Ex Nourriceier, has been criticized locally for not adequately consulting residents in remaking the space.

“This is the northern frontier of gentrification in Montreal, and on this open space...a skirmish over the neighborhood’s future is being fought,” wrote Kathryn Jezer-Morton for the Next City website in June 2017. “[L]ocals worry that the creative placemaking [that the redevelopment of the space represents] is intended to make the neighborhood more attractive to incoming young professionals at the expense of the ethnically diverse and economically marginal population that currently makes heavy use of it.”

To be sure, a scan of the websites for the various organizations involved reveals that the people driving this project are predominantly white, signifying that the demographics of the coalition are not representative of the demographics of the broader neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the kiosks have been constructed as planned. We need to consider this example as one among many cases where the allocation of public resources or initiation of public projects can facilitate gentrification. The government-led construction of convention centres or public tourist attractions are other examples of publicly funded gentrification that results in the displacement of residents.

The isolation that the train tracks create for Parc-Ex and the lack of city investment in public spaces there have likely slowed processes of gentrification. On the eastern side of the tracks, a plenitude of investment appears to be fuelling the urban transformation. In a recent book, *Green Gentrification*, Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis document the phenomenon in various New York City neighbourhoods whereby property values significantly increase in proximity to major city investments in parks, green spaces and other environmental amenities.

In Mile End much of the concern about the train tracks centres on the difficulty of accessing the Rosemont Metro station for people who work in the rapidly gentrifying Saint-Viateur Est portion of the borough. With the help of city money, many of the area’s larger buildings that once housed Montreal’s textile and garment industries have been refashioned into studios, co-working spaces, offices, cafes, yoga studios and other obvious hallmarks of gentrification. The need for level crossings here is usually framed in economic terms. For example, Mile End councillor Richard Ryan has said the train tracks are “slowing down labour mobility, and that’s also preventing economic development.”

Saint-Viateur Est is like many other neighbourhoods in rapidly gentrifying North American cities where city governments have sought to attract creative industries in order to repurpose post-industrial spaces and encourage economic development. Inevitably, this strategy caters

to a certain kind of urbanite and is accompanied by the displacement of others—frequently new immigrants and/or working class—who are more likely to live in proximity to industrial areas where property values are lower. Both Mile End and La Petite-Patrie were heavily populated by these people in decades past.

Saint-Viateur Est is home to a high concentration of start-ups and the offices of Ubisoft, one of the world's biggest video game developers. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of jobs in Saint-Viateur Est increased from 7,500 to 13,000, with Ubisoft alone employing 3,000 people in its offices there. The public spaces bordering the train tracks cater to these and other young professionals who work, live and hang out in the trendy area.

Each summer, the city and various corporate partners set up *Aire Commune*—an open-air networking and events space within and around decommissioned shipping containers—in a gravel lot on the southern edge of the tracks. The season-long pop-up festival features craft beer, free wi-fi, food trucks, local DJs and yoga classes. The website for the initiative is tightly branded, highly corporate and plastered with images of young, almost entirely white people having fun. In close proximity, an abandoned warehouse under municipal jurisdiction and used for years by homeless people to escape Montreal's notoriously harsh winters, was recently torn down. These two city initiatives taken together illustrate who is welcome in this space, and who is not.

Meanwhile, in Parc-Ex the city (and province) continue to invest in the construction of the new University of Montreal campus just north of the train tracks in what was once a train yard. Once completed, this new campus promises to bring thousands of students to the area, likely shifting the demographics of the neighbourhood and inflating rents. Developers have already begun construction on luxury apartments, sparking protests from local community organizations like *Brique par Brique*. While the neighbourhood has until now been sparse on public space, with the influx of students the plans for the campus include four new parks.

The development along the peripheries downtown Montreal's train tracks offers a case study for how infrastructure can worsen inequality, how the allocation of public resources favours some groups over others and how the city managers are working to facilitate gentrification. This discussion raises many more questions about how to pursue a more collective right to the city—both for policy-makers and for organizers.

How can we improve access to public space and remove impediments to free passage by foot and bike without spurring gentrification? How might well-intentioned community organizing in one part of the city leave behind people in others? And how can we form coalitions across neighbourhoods that are dealing with similar challenges, yet make sure that the loudest voices are not those with the most social capital based on race, gender and class? Only by pursuing the answers to these questions can we ensure that the right to the city is one we bear collectively. **M**



Cyclists and pedestrians must share the sidewalk on the Parc Ave. underpass.

“This is not my beautiful house”

The struggle for Halifax’s public spaces

“AND YOU MAY ask yourself, well, how did I get here?... And you may ask yourself, how do I work this?... Am I right? Am I wrong? And you may say to yourself, my God, what have I done?”

The Talking Heads echo out on this winter’s day in Halifax, circa 2017, from speakers high above the outdoor skating oval on the Halifax Commons. David Byrne’s words latch on and follow me through the downtown core, past the small park where a statue of Edward Cornwallis was then still standing firm against calls for its removal.

How did he, Cornwallis, get here? And my god, with what he’s done, why were the city’s decision-makers dragging their heels on citizen demands to remove the statue? Does it have to be this way, “same as it ever was”?

The right to the city, as envisioned by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre and modernized 10 years ago by David Harvey in his *New Left Review* essay, declares that people must be able to make and remake their surroundings in accordance with social needs. For Harvey, when we change the city, we change ourselves; the right to do so in a way that enhances our common well-being is an overlooked human right in an era of intensifying urban privatization.

Unfortunately, according to Harvey, urbanization—the shape and functioning of our cities—has been determined mainly, to this point, by the “perpetual need” of capitalism to find “profitable terrains for capital-surplus production and absorption.” The city has become a commodity in itself, he writes, “in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have

become major aspects of the urban political economy.”

If Harvey is right, the openness of institutional decision-makers to changing a city will depend on who is proposing that change and how it contributes to capital accumulation. I ponder this as I pass by Cornwallis, Halifax’s iconic monument to capitalist dispossession.

Halifax is often described as being a place that is “rich,” “steeped” or “laden” in history. It’s as if history is a reservoir from which we can all fill our buckets with wonderful bounty, a resource in itself to be extracted. In fact, the deployment of history in Halifax—and most everywhere else—can be a source of great surplus profit. An estimated 2.2 million people visited Nova Scotia in 2017, generating \$2.7 billion in revenues, according to the TIANS industry group.

However, the particular brand of history underpinning this profitable legacy—white, colonial, military—is in many places now challenged by the very people who are most dispossessed by it. The battle over the future of the city’s monuments to Cornwallis is perhaps the most high-profile example of this contest in Canada.

A colonial officer in the British army, Cornwallis left Halifax in the mid-18th century and drew little official fanfare until after the First World War. It was only in 1931 that Halifax, the city he is credited with establishing, agreed to partner with the province and Canadian National Railways (which put forth most of the money) to erect the regal statue of Cornwallis in a small downtown park directly across from the train station.

Was there something significant about the park that made it the most

important place for recognizing the collective history of Haligonians of settler descent? Were the big shots at CN also history buffs on some philanthropic journey to educate younger generations?

No. According to the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, when the statue was first constructed, the Cornwallis Memorial Committee (CMC) noted that “the Indians opposed the ominous big camp of white men” that would become Halifax upon Cornwallis’s arrival. The statue would be built anyway to “pay tribute to Cornwallis and attract tourists.”

In other words, the statue would serve the double-purpose of extracting surplus value through tourism incomes while entrenching and celebrating British-capitalist dispossession of the Mi’kmaq from their traditional land of K’jipuktuk. It served distinctly private interests within a public space that should be accessible to everyone.

The Cornwallis statue only became a publicly controversial site within the city in the early 1990s. Mi’kmaq elder Daniel Paul had just published his book, *We Were Not the Savages*, and was calling on the city to reassess its commemoration of a man whose scalping proclamations contributed to acts of genocide against his ancestors. The Cornwallis debate would simmer for years until it was put on the front burner in 2016.

In May that year, city council narrowly defeated (by a vote of 8-7) a request for staff to organize a “public engagement process to review and advise Council regarding possible changes (my emphasis) to the commemoration of Edward Cornwallis on municipal assets, including Cornwallis Park and Cornwallis Street.” Excuses



from the eight elected officials who didn't want to even consider changes to commemoration practices included your run of the mill, "you cannot change the past" and "we can't judge their actions by today's standard," to one claim that the activists behind the request were just "hotheads on a warpath."

What these voices get wrong, in Halifax as in other communities coming to terms with their colonial past, is that it is not about some act of changing history, but about remaking our current trajectory as a society. By giving primacy to one history over another, we give shape to and/or limit future possibilities. In the context of the right to the city, blocking attempts to change the present is itself a historical act that is opposed to the well-being of those demanding change (in this case the Mi'kmaq).

In April of 2017, a fresh-faced city council voted in favour of establishing an expert panel to advise council on "any changes to the commemoration of Edward Cornwallis on municipal assets, including Cornwallis Park and Cornwallis Street, and recommendations to recognize and commemorate the Indigenous history in the lands now known as Halifax Regional Municipality."

Seen as a significant step forward at the time, the panel was set to include input from the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. However, the panel was mired in delay and inaction and the statue stood for the remainder of 2017, amidst recurring public protests. One such protest organized on Facebook intended for citizens to tear down the statue themselves, at which point the city intervened and made a compromise to drape the statue in a tarp for a day.

On January 26, 2018, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs withdrew their participation from the advisory panel due to lack of progress, stating in a press

The Cornwallis statue in downtown Halifax

BEN MACLEOD, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

release that the process had taken "far too long" and that "The Mi'kmaq need to see action now, and that is why we voted for the statue to be immediately removed."

Chief Deborah Robinson, lead chief of the Urban Mi'kmaq portfolio, stated: "it's time for Nova Scotia to represent all of our histories.... Continuing to celebrate and commemorate only one part of history, and people like Cornwallis, is what we should all want to move away from."

The Assembly's call to remove the statue, even temporarily, before they would return to the panel put enough political pressure on the city to take immediate action. The Cornwallis statue was promptly ordered to be removed four days later. The advisory committee finally met for the first time at the end of October, after which Halifax Regional Municipality agreed to share responsibility for the decision-making process with Mi'kmaq leaders.

But the greater issue around public commemoration still remains within the city of Halifax and throughout Canada. The path forward on these issues, and how we might best work through questions about remaking the city, needs some deeper reflection on what public commemoration of "history" should and should not look like.

The Cornwallis statue was an advertisement for a type of colonial and capitalist dispossession that is anathema to concepts like the right to the city. Of course we cannot "change the past," but we can choose to commemorate differently so that we might shape our shared future in a more beneficial, reconciled and less privatized way. **M**

Is transit a right?

FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT.

It's an idea dismissed as noble but unworkable in Canadian cities. Without fares, who would pay?

Yet free transit is making inroads into our public discussions about the cities we want in an era of climate breakdown, growing congestion, ride-share competition, rising urban air pollution and calls for transportation equity. And more of those discussions are framing transit as a right to be extended to all.

Last fall, Ottawa municipal council candidate Shawn Menard, who went on to unseat an incumbent in a central urban ward, wrote an op-ed in the *Ottawa Citizen* explaining why he supported free transit. “[J]ust like libraries, sidewalks and parks, a free and efficient transit system would operate for the common good,” he said.

At a mayoral debate in Toronto, also last fall, candidate Saron Gebresellassi said several times that “transit is a right” and should be free. The “right to transit” was one of six rights in her platform, alongside the right to housing and to the fair allocation of city resources. *Toronto Star* columnist Edward Keenan called Gebresellassi's free transit proposal “the most interesting discussion idea of the debate—one that occupied an outsized amount of debate time, given that it's a promise she alone has made.”

Free transit was on the agenda in Edmonton last fall after Councillor Aaron Paquette proposed that the city should look at eliminating fares. Paquette argued that “transit should be seen as an essential service [and] a basic necessity for a thriving economy.”

The idea of free transit is having a moment, with inspiration coming from a growing cadre of cities where it is already a reality. An international survey of the free transit movement can be found in the second edition of *Free Public Transit: And Why We Don't*

Pay To Ride in Elevators, published in 2018 by Montreal's Black Rose Books.

Two oft-mentioned examples are Tallinn, Estonia, which in 2013 became the largest city in Europe to offer free transit to its residents, and Dunkirk, France, which in September 2018 offered the same free service for residents and visitors alike. Much attention was also paid to Mayor Anne Hidalgo's launch of a study of free transit for Paris, which was expected at the end of 2018.

Tweeting a photo of himself and Hidalgo during a visit she made to look at Dunkirk's free transit last October, Dunkirk Mayor Patrice Vergriete stated (translated from the French): “#freetransit is the right to the city for everyone. An innovative and modern answer to today's real economic, ecological and social challenges.” In the background was a promotional poster of a smiling youth and the tagline: “liberty, equality, fraternity...mobility!”

It's difficult to imagine a similar photo-up with two Canadian mayors, who operate in a political climate shaped by the archaic way our cities are funded, decades of auto-centric city planning, and the mainstreaming of public austerity in this country. Calgary's downtown fare-free zone notwithstanding, it's widely assumed that free transit in Canadian cities would place an unfair burden on taxpayers.

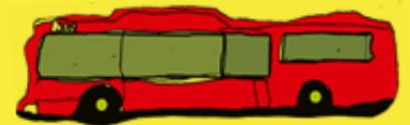
When asked on Twitter to eliminate fares on part of Ottawa's new light rail line, Mayor Jim Watson responded: “Who will pay the salaries and costs to operate if the service is free? The taxpayers and they are already paying over fifty per cent of the costs to operate.”

Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson is likewise skeptical of the idea of free transit, which he told Edmonton council would be “equivalent to at least an eight per cent property tax increase.” Toronto Mayor John Tory has said he doesn't support free transit for all, in part

because “the people out there know how much tax they're paying and they know that free transit is not free.”

In North America we have tended to look at only the most obvious costs of different transportation modes, but that may be changing. The “Cost of Commute Calculator,” developed by Discourse Media in the run-up to the 2015 transit referendum in Vancouver, uses full-cost accounting to show the cost to society of the same trip taken by foot, bike, bus or car. Based on the work of engineer and planner George Poulos, the calculator takes into account “externalities” such as carbon emissions, health impacts, congestion and noise pollution, and shows that driving is subsidized far more than other modes.

Even if we agree that transit is a right, making it fully or partially free in Canadian cities would require a serious rethinking of how transit is funded, how we calculate the true costs of our transportation decisions, and what kinds of behavior should be subsidized. But in the face of the climate crisis, growing urban inequality and—as Ontario Premier Doug Ford recently demonstrated—the urgent need for cities to have more control over decision-making and funding, now may be the perfect time for that rethinking. **M**





ALEX HEMINGWAY

What's missing from the Uber debate

Market power, pollution and our right to congestion-free streets

THE B.C. GOVERNMENT has introduced legislation expected to bring ride-hailing to the province late next year, though many questions remain about what the outcome will be in practice. A number of important policy details still need to be filled in by the Passenger Transportation Board and the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC).

Meanwhile the debate on ride-hailing has largely been stuck, with the pro and con sides repeating the same familiar arguments. As a result, important aspects of the story are being overlooked, with major implications for urban congestion, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and traffic deaths.

B.C. has a chance to be truly innovative in designing its ride-hailing framework. This will require rejecting the false choice between a local taxi

oligopoly and monopoly-seeking ride-hailing corporations, and recognizing there's another way forward that can help shape these services in the public interest.

In short, ride-hailing should be run on a non-profit basis, as a co-op or other non-profit model. Instead of the usual practice of taxi companies or multinationals like Uber extracting large fees from drivers, a non-profit model would allow this surplus to be shared by drivers and passengers alike. This approach can also help avoid the social costs imposed when floodgates are opened to expansionist firms like Uber.

THE DEBATE AS IT STANDS

Let's recap the ride-hailing debate as it stands now.

In favour of ride-hailing, proponents typically argue that it would bring faster and cheaper access to vehicle-for-hire transportation. The existing taxi oligopoly, with its total number of vehicles limited by regulation, has inadequately provided these services, especially at times of peak usage.

App-based services like Uber would make more rides available, say proponents, and also provide a more convenient way to book and pay for rides. Ride-hailing helps reduce drunk driving, it is claimed, and might even help some people ditch car ownership altogether.

Opponents argue, though, that bringing in companies like Uber would only create more precarious, unstable work and lower wages for drivers by flooding the market with vehicles for



hire. Large multinationals like Uber typically extract about 25% of the fare revenue, and this money would flow out of the local community to Silicon Valley.

Furthermore, ride-hailing raises safety concerns, as it tends to be much less regulated than traditional taxis, with less training and weaker driver screening and licensing requirements. Opponents can point to reports of sexual harassment and assault and discrimination—though there are similar reports relating to traditional taxis.

These points are all important. But a few crucial issues have been missing from the debate.

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF RIDE-HAILING

Ride-hailing has major impacts on a city's broader transportation system. A growing body of evidence from the U.S. shows that when companies like Uber and Lyft enter a market, they increase the total vehicle miles travelled. Ride-hailing has added 2.8 vehicle miles to the roads "for each mile of personal driving removed" in the U.S. The practice of "deadheading," where drivers circle the streets waiting for their

next passenger, also contributes to the increase in total vehicle miles travelled.

As a result, ride-hailing worsens the existing social costs of urban automobile transportation. Cities like Seattle, New York and San Francisco are grappling with increased congestion linked to the expansion of Uber and Lyft. For example, in Seattle back in 2012, taxis provided 5.2 million vehicle-for-hire trips, but the two ride-hailing giants were on pace to provide 31 million trips this year.

Added to the inconvenience and economic costs of traffic congestion, increasing vehicles miles travelled means more deadly air pollution and higher greenhouse gas emissions. A new study from the University of Chicago and Rice University also suggests ride-hailing has caused a 2–3% increase in traffic deaths in the U.S., equivalent to 1,100 more deaths per year.

Vehicle miles travelled increase with ride-hailing because users are often switching from other modes of travel like walking, cycling and public transit.¹ They also simply end up taking more trips overall than they otherwise would.

The enormous social costs of urban automobile transportation can't be

Portland, Oregon taxi owners demand fair taxi laws at a protest in 2015

AARON PARECKI, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

pinned on ride-hailing alone. Driving one's own vehicle still accounts for the vast majority of cars on the road. But the explosion of ride-hailing is making these problems worse, not better.

TRADING ONE OLIGOPOLY FOR ANOTHER?

Another element missing from the debate is that ride-hailing tends to be dominated by one or two firms in a given market (even though the charge of "oligopoly" is usually reserved for the taxi industry). That's as expected and intended. As one Uber analyst and critic put it, the company's "modus operandi is to subsidize fares and flood streets with its cars to achieve a transportation monopoly."

The business models of big ride-hailing companies are premised on establishing and profiting from a dominant market position. This is why venture capitalists have been willing

to pour billions into Uber even while it has continued to operate at a loss.

And it's not just ride-hailing companies. We're living in an era of huge winner-take-all digital platforms such as Facebook, Google, Amazon and others. These companies claim that users are only "one click away" from an alternative, but in reality these dominant firms benefit from a powerful set of advantages, including what economists call "network effects."

Network effects are features of certain markets wherein the more users that participate in a given service, the greater the value of that service. This gives incumbent firms a major leg up and creates a tendency toward one or two companies dominating the market.

Uber and Lyft passengers usually find it unattractive to switch to alternative upstarts—if they are even aware of them—because almost all the drivers are on the one or two established apps in their market. In turn, drivers have little incentive to switch to smaller apps because almost all the customers are using Uber or Lyft. It's a self-reinforcing dynamic, like the one that helps keep Facebook dominant among social networks.²

Ride-hailing markets have shaped up in practice much as theory would suggest: highly concentrated. Uber and Lyft hold almost the entire market share for ride-hailing in the U.S.³

WAGES AND VALUE EXTRACTION

Does this amount to an argument for preserving the status quo local taxi industry in B.C.? Not necessarily.

The existing taxi industry is oligopolistic and does not respond well to times of peak demand because of insufficient taxi licences (to the benefit of owners of these scarce licences). While drivers are sometimes taxi licence owners themselves, this is the exception rather than the rule, according to a recent report commissioned for the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The majority of B.C. taxi drivers don't own a taxi licence and have to pay "lease fees" to the owners (by the shift, month or year). Typical fees paid by a driver for a 12-hour shift in Vancouver have been estimated at \$120. After factoring in these and other costs, real driver wages in Vancouver would typically amount to \$12 per hour or less, according to an estimate by analyst Benn Proctor in 2014. These estimates put wages in roughly the same range as recent estimates of Uber wages.⁴

Of course, the endgame for Uber and Lyft is to cut drivers out of the equation altogether, as their growing investments and partnerships in self-driving car technology make clear.

Whether it's Uber extracting 25% of fares, or local taxi firms and licence owners extracting their own fees, drivers in both modes are getting the short end of the stick.

A DIFFERENT WAY FORWARD

There is another way forward for ride-hailing. Industries that tend toward market concentration are good candidates for alternative models of ownership. Rather than

being owned by for-profit multinational corporations or local taxi firms, vehicle-for-hire services in B.C. should be run on a non-profit basis: owned by their drivers (a co-op model), their communities, or both.

Instead of revenues being siphoned off to investors in taxi licences or corporations like Uber, drivers and passengers could share that surplus, putting it toward higher wages and cheaper fares.

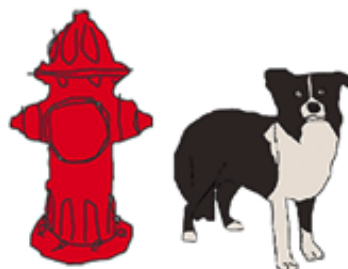
Instead of subjecting our cities to expansionist ride-hailing corporations with deep-pocketed lobbying operations, a non-profit alternative would be easier to regulate and contain as part of a broader transportation strategy that emphasizes public transit and active mobility.

The idea of a non-profit alternative to ride-hailing is being discussed, planned and attempted in a range of jurisdictions across North America and Europe. But these efforts face a key barrier: the aggressive, monopoly-seeking business models of the multinational ride-hailing giants.

The story of ride-hailing in Austin, Texas is telling. In 2016, the citizens of Austin voted to support new regulatory standards on the industry. Uber and Lyft didn't want to comply with these regulations, so they exited the Austin market. With the ride-hailing space now open, a community-minded group centred in the Austin tech sector decided to build a new ride-hailing service.

The app was created and the non-profit, RideAustin, was up and running within a matter of weeks, and it soon serviced over 50% of the Austin ride-hailing market. Drivers appreciated being paid more and treated with dignity. Passengers were given the option to round up their fares to the nearest dollar, which raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local charities in Austin.

THE IDEA OF A NON-PROFIT ALTERNATIVE TO RIDE-HAILING IS BEING DISCUSSED, PLANNED AND ATTEMPTED IN A RANGE OF JURISDICTIONS.



Unfortunately, a year later, the Texas state government overturned the local regulations, and Uber and Lyft came roaring back into Austin. They used their deep pockets to entice drivers and riders back to their services with discounts, re-establishing their market power. RideAustin's market share dropped off rapidly after the return of Uber and Lyft, though the service is still hanging on.

B.C.'S CHANCE TO BREAK THE MOULD

The case of Austin illustrates two critical lessons for B.C. First, a non-profit alternative to Uber and Lyft is very much achievable—RideAustin is the proof of concept. (This shouldn't really be surprising: the Uber app and service is well-designed, but it's not rocket science.)

Second, large ride-hailing corporations have the resources and motivation to torpedo efforts to build community-oriented alternatives if they are given the chance. B.C. is uniquely positioned to break new ground on this file. Unlike almost any other jurisdiction, we haven't yet let the ride-hailing genie out of the bottle.

If B.C. is going to sidestep a false choice between a taxi oligopoly and a ride-hailing one, we have to get the regulations right. A viable non-profit alternative can be built, but only if we say no to the big multinational players. To this end, one simple approach would be for the provincial government to permit ride-hailing to

WHETHER IT'S UBER EXTRACTING 25% OF FARES, OR LOCAL TAXI FIRMS AND LICENCE OWNERS EXTRACTING THEIR OWN FEES, DRIVERS IN BOTH MODES ARE GETTING THE SHORT END OF THE STICK.

operate in B.C., but only on a non-profit or co-operative basis.

THE NEW LEGISLATION

Where does the new B.C. ride-hailing legislation leave us? Unfortunately, there's no mention of alternative models of ownership in the government's recent announcements on ride-hailing. There is also no explicit discussion of wages or working conditions. Still, a lot remains to be decided, and the regulatory regime that emerges may well leave some breathing room for community-based alternatives.

The government, over the objections of Uber and Lyft, has said that ride-hailing drivers will need to possess the same Class 4 driver's licences as taxi drivers (though the B.C. Liberals have announced that they will propose an amendment to remove this requirement). In addition, ICBC has been tasked with designing an insurance product for ride-hailing, which won't be announced until next year. The ride-hailing industry has balked at certain insurance models in the past.

Other key regulatory questions have been delegated to future decisions by the Passenger Transportation Board, including setting out the fare rate structures for taxis and ride-hailing and deciding whether there will be caps on the supply of ride-hailing cars. New York is moving toward caps to help contain the added congestion the industry has brought, and taxi and ride-hailing drivers in Chicago have recently united in asking for similar caps.

All of these issues are relevant to the business model of companies like Uber and Lyft. Industry reaction to the announcements has been mixed, and Uber Canada's spokesperson mused that the legislation "raises another big question mark about the ability for ride-sharing to come to B.C."

If Uber and Lyft decide they don't wish to comply with B.C.'s regulatory framework (as they did in Austin in 2016), it's possible that they will indeed stay out of the market. This could create an opening for a community-based alternative to launch and take hold. If Uber and Lyft are allowed to throw

their weight into the market, though, building a viable alternative will be next to impossible if the experience of other jurisdictions is any indication.

CONCLUSION

In the bigger picture, urban transportation policy should focus on expanding high-quality, affordable public transit, as well as designing communities and infrastructure that support walking and cycling. But so long as taxis and ride-hailing are going to be part of the transportation mix, they should be accountable to the community so that their benefits can be shared and their social costs contained, while keeping money flowing in the local economy and not siphoned off to California.

Ride-hailing on a non-profit basis—owned by drivers or the community—is an innovative way to get this balance right. B.C. has the unique chance to sidestep the ills of both the status quo taxi industry and aggressive multinationals. We could help create a model for cities around the world, which are now grappling with the costs of this industry and finding it's not so easy to put the genie back in the bottle. **M**

Notes

1. While it's clear that vehicle miles travelled are increased by ride-hailing, there's a more nuanced debate about how ride-hailing affects public transit ridership. In the U.S., ride-hailing appears to hurt public transit particularly in places where transit systems are well-developed and have high ridership, but there is evidence they may increase transit ridership in places where public transit systems are poor to begin with.

2. Suppose you're a Facebook user keen to switch away to an alternative like Ello or Diaspora. This tends to be unattractive in practice, because however well-designed the alternative might be, most of your friends or colleagues aren't using it. As a result, it's not very useful as a social network. And your friends and colleagues are unlikely to switch for the same reasons. Everyone tends to stay put on the entrenched service.

3. Dominance in the ride-hailing market seems to be tied to location, which makes sense given that it's a service firmly rooted in physical space. Uber lost the battle for ride-hailing in China to the firm Didi, which itself holds 87% of the Chinese market share. In places like Russia and India, Uber has merged or struck deals with competitors. The common pattern is extreme market concentration, but different dominant players may emerge in different locales.

4. Still, the introduction of ride-hailing multinationals still seems likely to cause at least some deterioration of wages or working conditions for drivers in B.C. relative to the status quo. It would be surprising if a flood of new drivers and available vehicles didn't have some effect on taxi drivers' wages and job security.



JOE FANTAUZZI

Whose streets?

From the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty to Black Lives Matter—Toronto and beyond, Torontonians are asserting their right to a diverse and affordable “world class” city.

ON THE SHORE of Lake Ontario, almost as far south as you can go in Canada’s largest city, sits a 155-acre public park. It does not cost a nickel to get into Ontario Place, and save for the IMAX theatre and concert space you are rarely confronted with invitations to consume something. Many people go simply for the views along the water, for a day’s kayaking under the floating pavilions or stroll through Trillium Park.

But Ontario Place also sits on what some view as prime real estate for private sector development. In late 2018, the Progressive Conservative government headed by Doug Ford took control of the park’s public board and promised to turn the space into a “world-class attraction.” A new casino complex seems to be part of Ford’s preferred option, as it was when he sat on city council, while several of his former elected colleagues there want Ontario Place to be further converted to parkland.

Toronto, like so many other cities, is the site of a contest between starkly different visions of what urban life could or should be. Will the city continue to be privatized, branded, gentrified and made secure for a small urban aristocracy, or can it grow into a place where all residents share equally in its social and economic potential? Ontario Place is a merely one example of this enduring tension between the private and collective/public in a city that is rife with such confrontations.

Toronto is home to some of Canada’s richest individuals, running some of the biggest companies, living in some of the country’s wealthiest communities. It is also a place where unemployment is still higher than the national average and there is a huge shortage of affordable housing. Yet,

to the great frustration of anti-poverty activists, Toronto’s city council insists on maintaining tax increases to at or below inflation so as not to irritate current private home- and business-owners.

“Toronto has always been a city of such divides,” says John Clarke, writer and long-time leading organizer of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). He points out that almost 60% of all global mining companies list on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TMX and TSX), yet there is never enough money to go around. “Key industries have been lost, social housing all but discontinued, austerity measures imposed and a shameless course of upscale urban development pursued.... The neoliberal period has only made this more shameless and extreme.”

Clarke’s concerns are borne out by the data. Nearly 150 homeless people died in Toronto between January 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018, and what shelter programs are available typically

Trillium Park at Ontario Place
WYLIEPOON, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

hover at about 100% capacity. The average rental price of a one-bedroom apartment in the GTA rose from \$927 to \$1,202 between 2010 and 2018. Modest rent controls enacted by the previous Ontario Liberal government were scaled back by Ford Nation at the end of 2018. Meanwhile, there is a 12-year wait for subsidized, affordable one-bedrooms and decade-long waiting list for larger units. Toronto Community Housing faces a capital repair backlog of \$2.6 billion over a decade.

“Poverty and homelessness live side-by-side with rampant high-end consumerism and there is no indication that this is likely to change any time soon,” says Clarke.

On another stretch of “prime” lakeside land, Waterfront Toronto, which is co-run by the city, province and federal government, has partnered with Alphabet (Google’s parent company) subsidiary Sidewalk Labs to build and maintain a trendy, high-tech neighbourhood where most activities will be monitored, residents’ personal data mined for future private profit-making (see Ava Kofman’s article in this issue).

According to the *Toronto Star*, only 20% of housing units in the public-private community will be affordable. And in early December the province’s auditor-general criticized the lack of transparency at the project. Like at Ontario Place, the Ford government is promising changes at Quayside, as the neighbourhood has been named, maybe even another “world-class attraction,” though details were not available when the *Monitor* went to print.

In 2008, the radical urban geographer David Harvey wrote of our “right to change ourselves by changing the city,” emphasizing that this is a “common rather than an individual right,” but also one of our most deteriorated. Across Canada, private developments, international tourist attractions, infills and the big-box invasion of urban centres are proving formidable contenders for the soul of the city.

For Clarke, reasserting the ground-up right to make our cities more democratic, inclusive and sustainable, at least in the short-term, means

“limiting the oppression, exploitation and inequality that the neoliberal city rests on as much as possible.”

In October, OCAP held a demonstration in Toronto’s downtown east-end to demand that the city expropriate and build social housing on a vacant property where housing had been affordable for at least 50 years. OCAP is concerned (and fairly so) that the owner will eventually sell the property to condo developers, which will accelerate gentrification. Real estate broker John Pasalis wrote in August that 28% of Toronto properties for sale on MLS were listed as vacant. New condos are neither wanted nor needed in this part of Toronto. Affordable housing is.

Neighbourhood social services have strained to accommodate increasing numbers of people left homeless as Toronto’s housing affordability crisis escalates, says Clarke. Tenants and tenant groups across the city have become more innovative and militant recently as costs rise and repair jobs pile up. Rent strikes have become more common. To draw more attention to these struggles, groups such as Jane Finch Action Against Poverty have brought international speakers to Toronto to draw links with gentrification in other cities.

In Toronto, OCAP is asserting the right to the city for everyone in a

highly visible way. In the summer of 2017, the group held a barbeque in Allan Gardens to protest a lack of housing. A decade earlier, the same downtown park was the site of another OCAP protest during which the group set up makeshift shelters. At that time, in 2008, the coalition was met by police, some on horseback, who removed the shelters, citing municipal bylaws.

“The city’s own numbers say that there has been a crisis in homelessness that is in an unrelenting upswing since 2012,” OCAP activist Yogi Acharya told *Toronto.com* at the BBQ. “There are record numbers of homeless deaths. We’re in the midst of an opioid crisis, so it’s a really dark time for a lot of people and particularly homeless people.”

Also that summer, OCAP caught word that the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA was employing private security guards to harass homeless people out of St. James Park. Some were being ordered to leave the area by the private guards, who have no authority to do so, sometimes after being physically accosted. OCAP responded by informing the city, sending the BIA a letter cautioning them to halt the crusade, launching a poster with information about the right to access the park, and posting a video on YouTube entitled “Back off BIA.”

These and other OCAP demonstrations are manifestations of the coalition’s immediate actions against the neoliberal city. With an eye to the future, Clarke tells me the group’s shorter-term struggles also include “decent wages and workers’ rights, expanding public services that meet community needs, attaining free public transit, winning decent income for those outside of the workforce, challenging racism and limiting the oppressive role of the police as much as possible.

“We have no illusions, however, that a city based on social justice can be attained without social transformation,” he adds.



OCAP flyer for an anti-Ford rally last summer.

Toronto city council spends \$1 billion a year on the police budget despite falling overall crime rates that are, according to Statistics Canada, significantly lower than they were almost 20 years ago. Black and other racialized Torontonians bear a disproportionate brunt of the over-policing, which includes random street checks, also known as carding. In early December, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released damning statistics showing Black people in the city are much more likely to be killed or injured at the hands of police. But we have known of such police bias for some time.

A 2011 paper by Scot Wortley and Akwasi Owusu-Bempah, for example, which examined the experiences of 1,522 Torontonians, found that Black respondents were much more likely to report being stopped and searched by police. Another paper in 2014, this one by Yunliang Meng of Central Connecticut State University, found that Black people in Toronto are disproportionately stopped by police for alleged drug-related reasons in neighbourhoods that are wealthier and that have a high concentration of white residents.

Probably the most high-profile direct actions confronting over-policing and other forms of racialized inequality in the city have been organized by Black Lives Matter–Toronto. Since 2014, BLMTO has created an encampment outside Toronto police headquarters, held numerous public demonstrations and pushed for the elimination of carding data from municipal police and other governmental databases.

While fighting police violence is one, albeit high-profile way that the right to the city can be asserted for everyone, the heart of the divisiveness inherent to today's homogenizing gentrification has also been on the minds of some thinkers associated with the Black Lives Matter Global Network for years.

Alicia Garza, who co-founded BLM with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in 2013, was involved in anti-gentrification work, among other projects, in San Francisco in the 2000s. By 2014, after the death of Michael Brown at the hands of a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, Garza was organizing in the St. Louis area to build the BLM movement.

"There are tonnes and tonnes of black workers here in St. Louis who work for poverty wages, who live in communities that have been ravaged by poverty and racism," she told *SF Weekly*. "If we're only organizing people around class issues, we're missing a huge part of people's experiences. Those young people are making the connection between racism, poverty, police violence, and state violence."

Darnell Moore, a writer and BLM activist in the United States, also commented on these class-race connections on *The Nature of Cities* website in October 2015, drawing a link to struggles for the right to the city. "While some may argue that the increased number of white people in black spaces is the singular problem, I contend the...more insidious problem is the belief that whiteness at all times and in all places signifies safety and bounty and, therefore, represents a site of investment," he wrote.

"[N]ew stores selling expensive items begin emerging; the same stores stay open (the doors and not just side windows) twenty-four hours; realtors finally begin to take an interest

in property sales; nameless and faceless 'investors' begin leaving cheap flyers on stoops or in mailboxes promising cash for homes. Safety becomes a relative experience when gentrification occurs. The presence of white people almost always guarantees the increased presence of resources, like police, which does not always guarantee safety for black people in those same spaces."

Moore noted that his vision for a safe and just Black urban space is one in which homeowners and renters alike "are actually asked about the changes they'd like to see occur." In such a city, residents could afford to eat, purchase goods and get access to the services they need right there in their neighbourhoods.

"A safe and equitable space is one that centres the needs and desires of all residents regardless of race, gender, ability, income, or sexual identity," he wrote. "And in the cases when design and redevelopment revolve around those typically centered in the public imagination—characteristically white, sometimes heterosexual, nearly always abled-bodied people with wealth or access to other forms capital—the work must be recalibrated. Yet the only way these forms of erasure can be assessed is by ensuring the group assembled at the planning table is as diverse as the communities it aims to reimagine and rebuild."

Toronto's future, like those of countless cities, is a contested terrain. A new provincial government and city council are renewing and in places accentuating the tensions between the privatized, elite playground version of Toronto and the livable, equitable one that groups such as OCAP and BLMTO, among many others, are trying to create.

Noting the ongoing capacity crisis in the city's shelters, high attendance at local foodbanks, the deterioration of public housing and the province's politically vindictive move to slash the number of councillors in Toronto from 44 to 25, Clarke says he expects the Ford government to deepen neoliberal governance, and the inequalities it feeds off of, during its term in office.

"The Ford government must face a united working class movement that can unleash enough economic disruption and face enough of a political crisis that it either retreats from its agenda or is driven from office," Clarke tells me. "On the city level, there must be a mobilization on a similar scale to win a massive program of social housing and to challenge the broader neoliberal agenda."

Though Clarke is retiring from his position at the head of OCAP, he plans to continue volunteering with the group, with the ultimate objective of creating a city "in which the labour process, the physical infrastructure, the public services and the housing and community planning are not organized in the interests of developers, speculators, bankers and capitalists but in order to rationally and fairly meet the needs of the working class population." **M**



AVA KOFMAN

ILLUSTRATION BY REMIE GEOFFROI

Google’s “Smart City of Surveillance” faces new resistance in Toronto

This article was originally published November 13, 2018. It is republished here with permission from The Intercept.

THE WORLD’S MOST ambitious “smart city,” known as Quayside, in Toronto, has faced fierce public criticism since the fall of 2017, when the plans to build a neighborhood “from the internet up” were first revealed. Quayside represents a joint effort by the Canadian government agency Waterfront Toronto and Sidewalk Labs, which is owned by Google’s parent

company Alphabet Inc., to develop 12 acres of the valuable waterfront just southeast of downtown Toronto.

In keeping with the utopian rhetoric that fuels the development of so much digital infrastructure, Sidewalk Labs has pitched Quayside as the solution to everything from traffic congestion and rising housing prices to environmental pollution. The proposal for Quayside includes a centralized identity management system, through which “each resident accesses public services” such as library cards and health care. An applicant for a position at Sidewalk

Labs in Toronto was shocked when he was asked in an interview to imagine how, in a smart city, “voting might be different in the future.”

Other, comparatively quaint plans include driverless cars, “mixed-use” spaces that change according to the market’s demands, heated streets and “sensor-enabled waste separation.” The eventual aim of Sidewalk Labs’ estimated billion-dollar investment is to bring these innovations to scale—first to more than 800 acres on the city’s eastern waterfront, and then to the world at large.

“The genesis of the thinking for Sidewalk Labs came from Google’s founders getting excited thinking of ‘all the things you could do if someone would just give us a city and put us in charge,’” explained Eric Schmidt, Google’s former executive chair, when Quayside was first announced.

From the start, activists, technology researchers and some government officials have been skeptical about the idea of putting Google, or one of its sister companies, in charge of a city. Their suspicions about turning part of Toronto into a corporate test bed were triggered, at first, by the company’s history of unethical corporate practices and surreptitious data collection. They have since been borne out by Quayside’s secret and undemocratic development process, which has been plagued by a lack of public input—what one critic has called “a colonizing experiment in surveillance capitalism attempting to bulldoze important urban, civic and political issues.” In recent months, a series of prominent resignations from advisory board members, along with organized resistance from concerned residents, have added to the growing public backlash against the project.

In October, Ann Cavoukian, one of Canada’s leading privacy experts and Ontario’s former privacy commissioner, became the latest stakeholder to resign from the project. Cavoukian was brought on by Sidewalk Toronto (as the collaboration between Waterfront Toronto and Google-sibling Sidewalk Labs is known) as a consultant to help institute a proactive, “privacy by design” framework. She was initially told that all data collected from residents would be deleted and rendered unidentifiable. Cavoukian learned, however, that third parties would be able to access identifiable information gathered at Quayside.

“I imagined us creating a Smart City of Privacy, as opposed to a Smart City of Surveillance,” Cavoukian wrote in her resignation letter. Her concerns echoed those of residents who have long pointed to the privacy implications of handing over streets to the world’s most profitable data hoover.

In response to questions from *The Intercept* about Cavoukian’s resignation, a spokesperson for Sidewalk Labs said, “Sidewalk Labs has committed to implement, as a company, the principles of Privacy by Design. Though that question is settled, the question of whether other companies involved in the Quayside project would be required to do so is unlikely to be worked out soon, and may be out of Sidewalk Labs’ hands.”

Now, in an effort to get ahead of Quayside’s development before it’s too late, a coalition of experts and residents have launched a Toronto Open Smart Cities Forum. The group represents the latest and largest effort by Torontonians to start having the kinds of public conversations, teach-ins and debates that should have “taken place...when this project was first announced,” according to Bianca Wylie, co-founder of Tech Reset Canada and one of the lead organizers of the opposition to Sidewalk Toronto. “The process Sidewalk Toronto has started has been so anti-democratic that the only way to participate is to be proactive in framing the topic,” Wylie continued.

Toronto Open Smart Cities Forum is taking the lead in the local fight against the commodification of its city’s data. The group’s struggle is one that urban residents around the world have been watching closely. Even those who never set foot in Canada may soon be subject to the products, norms and techniques produced by Sidewalk Toronto, simply by virtue of using Google’s earth-spanning services.

“This isn’t just about data being sold,” Wylie said. “It’s also about how is this data being used with other kinds of data in other products. You can move a lot of information around within Alphabet without having to sell it, and we need to talk about that.”

The outcome of Toronto’s ability to rein in the Google affiliate, in other words, has ramifications not just for Canadians, but also for the future of who controls our civic life.

A CITY OF SURVEILLANCE

Sidewalk Toronto’s ongoing controversies may serve as the latest warning sign for cities who are considering signing over public spaces to major tech companies. Cavoukian’s decision to quit represents only the most recent resignation in a series of departures that Wylie has referred to as an “ongoing bulldozing of stakeholders.” In addition to Cavoukian, a Waterfront Toronto board member and two Waterfront Toronto digital advisers have also resigned in the last seven months. Three more digital advisers have also threatened to resign unless major changes are made to the project’s planning process.

In anticipation of the negative press, Sidewalk Labs has allocated \$11 million of its initial \$50 million budget to “communications/engagement/and public relations.” This includes a strategy of building influencers “to ensure support for the Master Innovation and Development Plan among key constituents in Toronto.” In early November, *iPolitics* reported that Sidewalk Labs has begun lobbying at least 19 federal departments, including the Prime Minister’s Office, Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Treasury Board, among others. The meetings all took place days after the

SIDEWALK LABS’ VENTURE IN CANADA MAY HEW CLOSELY TO THE SILICON VALLEY MODEL OF OFFERING FREE SERVICES IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RIGHT TO VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS DATA COLLECTION.

resignation of Cavoukian, the former Ontario privacy commissioner.

But so far, the project has been losing allies more quickly than it's been making them. When Saadia Muzaffar, a prominent technologist and the founder of TechGirls Canada, resigned from Waterfront Toronto's Digital Strategy Advisory Panel in October, it was due in part to the partnership's "blatant disregard for resident concerns about data and digital infrastructure." In her viral letter of resignation, Muzaffar criticized Sidewalk Toronto's dishonest negotiations process: "There is nothing innovative about city-building that disenfranchises its residents in insidious ways and robs valuable earnings out of public budgets, or commits scarce public funds to the ongoing maintenance of technology that city leadership has not even declared a need for."

If Google's other global projects are any indication, Sidewalk Labs' venture in Canada may hew closely to the Silicon Valley model of offering free services in exchange for the right to virtually limitless data collection. Sidewalk Labs-associated LinkNYC and InLinkUK kiosks have already

been installed in New York and London. The kiosks—which include three cameras, 30 sensors, and Bluetooth beacons—aggregate anonymized data for advertising purposes in exchange for providing passersby with free Wi-Fi services.

Given that there is no genuine way to opt out of public space, Torontonians have been asking questions about what meaningful consent would look like. In the case of Quayside, the terms of any agreement wouldn't just cover Wi-Fi but could also extend to basic government services.

Julie Di Lorenzo, a real estate developer who left Waterfront's board in July, explained to the AP news agency that questions she had asked about residents who might not consent to share data had gone unanswered. She wanted to know if those who didn't opt-in to the city would be told that they couldn't live there. "It's one thing to willingly install Alexa in your home," wrote Toronto journalist Brian Barth. "It's another when publicly owned infrastructure—streets, bridges, parks and plazas—is Alexa, so to speak."

Adding to these concerns is the fact that Sidewalk Labs has asked potential local consultants to hand over all of their intellectual property, according to a recent *Globe and Mail* investigation. As Jim Balsillie, the former CEO of Blackberry, recently pointed out in an op-ed, Waterfront Toronto has left the ownership of intellectual property and data unresolved in its latest agreement; this means that it would default to Sidewalk Labs, giving the company a gross market advantage. Indeed, in an announcement last year, Schmidt went as far as to thank Canadian taxpayers for creating some of Alphabet's key artificial intelligence technology, the intellectual property of which the company now owns.

Balsillie noted that what happens in Toronto will "have profound and permanent impacts on the digital rights and prosperity of all Canadians because IP [intellectual property] and data—our century's most valuable extractive resources—spread seamlessly." This is why current and former stakeholders in Waterfront Toronto have called for the public to receive

Image from the Sidewalk Labs Toronto website

financial benefits from the project, emphasizing that Canada's largest city should not simply be seen as a U.S. company's urban laboratory.

The Sidewalk Labs spokesperson said that the company's "relationship with its contractors does not impact its agreements with Waterfront Toronto in any way, including its commitment to the process laid out in the PDA, which says that in the future Waterfront Toronto may have rights to certain Sidewalk Labs IP. Of course, if Sidewalk Labs does not own the IP created by the planning process, it would not have the power to share or convey that IP to Waterfront Toronto or anyone else."

Yet until recently, Sidewalk Labs refused to say who will own data produced by Quayside's visitors, workers and residents in what it calls "the most measurable community in the world." Nor had the company clarified, despite facing pointed questions at public town hall-style meetings, whether or how the information streaming in from sensors in park benches, traffic lights and dumpsters would be monetized. (The writer Evgeny Morozov has summed up Google's strategy as "Now everything is permitted—unless somebody complains.")

In an apparent response to the mounting public pressure against the project, Sidewalk Labs recently released its first proposal for the digital governance of its collected data. Most significant among these plans was the suggestion that all data be placed in a "civic data trust."

On the company's blog, Alyssa Harvey Dawson, Sidewalk Labs' head of data governance, explained that with the proposed creation of a civic data trust, no one would have the "right to own information collected from Quayside's physical environment—including Sidewalk Labs." This would represent, she wrote, "a new standard for responsible data use that protects personal privacy and the public interest while enabling companies, researchers, innovators, governments,

TORONTO OPEN SMART CITIES FORUM IS TAKING THE LEAD IN THE LOCAL FIGHT AGAINST THE COMMODIFICATION OF ITS CITY'S DATA.





and civic organizations to improve urban life using urban data.”

According to experts who have been following the project closely, the details of how this trust might be implemented are vague and at times contradictory. On one hand, the proposal states that Sidewalk Labs would get no preferential access to any data that is collected. On the other, as Sean McDonald points out, “the proposed trust would grant licences to collect and use data—and the more sensitive the data, the more proprietary it would be.”

There is also the question of just how anonymous certain data would be, and whether such anonymity would be reversible when it came to sharing information with law enforcement. Some residents are opposed to Sidewalk Labs having any involvement with this data proposal. “It is as if Uber were to propose regulations on ride-sharing, or Airbnb were to tell city council how to govern short-term rentals. By definition, there is a conflict of interest,” writes Nabeel Ahmed, a smart city expert and member of the Toronto Open Smart Cities Forum.

Part of the mission of the new Toronto Open Smart Cities Forum is to shift the public conversation away from debating the latest minutiae of the company’s proposed terms and toward a broader consideration of whether the project should move forward under any terms at all. This conversation, Wylie emphasizes, should be taking

place between residents and the government; Sidewalk Labs should not be the only voice setting the terms and advancing the agenda.

“We need to state clearly and unambiguously that this infrastructure is public,” Wylie said. “You can say in March, ‘This data isn’t being collected,’ but then in July, it’s updated to do something else. This infrastructure creates plausible surveillance so long as you always keep the door open to what’s possible.” **M**

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The right to play in our public spaces

We could build better neighbourhoods by focusing on how and where kids have the most fun

KIDS PLAYING TAG, a street hockey game, hopscotch on the sidewalk. These could all be scenes from a commercial promoting physical activity or selling sports apparel. They equally call to mind common ideas about neighbourhood play, but is it an accurate reflection of what is going on today?

To know where kids play in a neighbourhood helps us figure out how well their community is designed. Is there a local park where families congregate? If so, what do they do when they are there? Are there places for structured play like a soccer field or basketball court, and are there any spaces for unstructured play? Beyond a formal park, what other spaces, both public and private, are used for play in neighbourhoods?

The importance of unstructured outdoor play is well known. For example,

one study from Statistics Canada suggests that for kids aged 7 to 14, outdoor time was strongly associated with increased moderate to vigorous physical activity, higher step counts and decreased sedentary time. Also, each additional hour spent outside was associated with 13 fewer minutes of sedentary behaviour per day.

For kids aged 5 and 6, each additional hour spent outdoors was associated with an additional 10 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity and an increased likelihood of meeting physical activity guidelines. Overall, children who play outdoors after school take approximately 2,500 more steps daily.

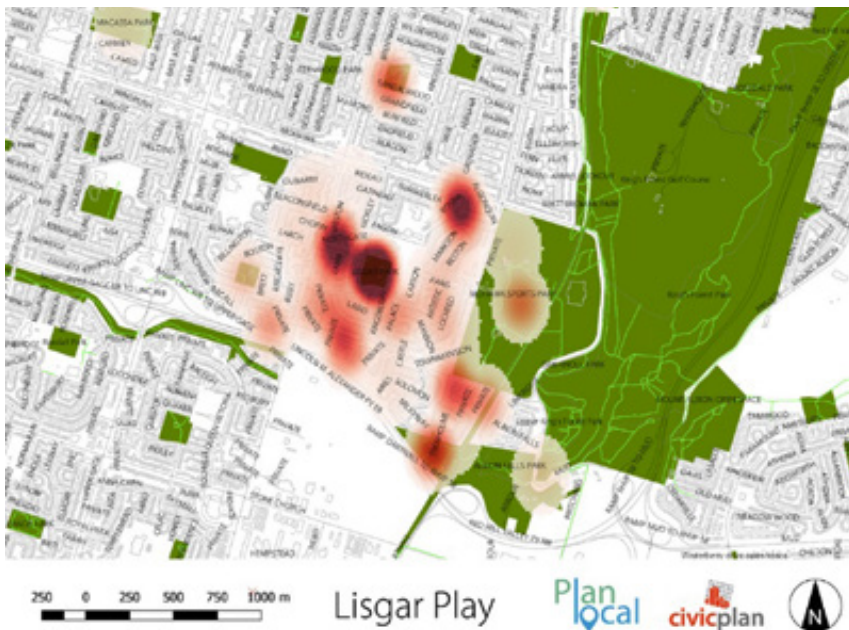
In terms of challenging sedentary practices in children, supporting and encouraging opportunities for safe, free, unstructured active play, especially outdoors, may be one of

the most promising, accessible and cost-effective solutions to increase children's physical activity in Canada.

At Civicplan, we set out to begin a neighbourhood discussion on this issue through the design and development of an engagement tool that records how and where people play in the community outside of school hours. Partnering with Public Health Services at the City of Hamilton, and with funding from the Ontario government's Healthy Kids Community Challenge, the team designed and implemented a pilot project targeting a typical suburban neighbourhood in Hamilton.

Lisgar neighbourhood is located on the east mountain in the city of Hamilton. At the centre of the neighbourhood are two elementary schools, one public and the other Catholic. The neighbourhood is bounded by major arterial streets that carry significant daily traffic, while in the middle of the neighbourhood, adjacent to the schools, is Lisgar Park. There are a number of other parks accessible on adjacent streets and a major regional park, Mohawk Sports Park, is located to the east of Lisgar neighbourhood.

In the spring of 2018, families at both schools were asked to complete a survey about how their kids play in their neighbourhood. Both a take-home survey and an online option were provided to parents who were encouraged to complete the questions with their children. A project engagement website was established to provide background information and updates as the project proceeded.



Play hotspots in the Lisgar neighbourhood

Additional questions about how kids get to school were included.

LOCATION OF PLAY

The results about the location of play offered important insights. First, locations were mapped out to determine the primary hotspots of activity. The major hotspot for play was Lisgar Park, followed by other smaller green spaces in and around the neighbourhood (see map).

While that might not be surprising, the results reveal other interesting insights when you look at types of neighbourhood locations as a whole. In total, over 50 neighbourhood locations were recorded. Overall, the top locations for play identified by respondents were streets and sidewalks closer to home (30%). While these neighbourhood-specific locations are diffused geographically so they do not show up on the heat map, this demonstrates that streets and sidewalks themselves are important public neighbourhood spaces alongside typical recreational spaces such as a neighbourhood park. The second most identified location for play was home (27%). Lisgar Park came in third at 14% of respondents.

TYPE OF PLAY

In total, over 420 activities were recorded and mapped as part of the project in over 50 neighbourhood locations (see Highlights). The activities were organized into 12 categories of play to give a sense of the most popular types of activity.

Coming out on top was the “Wheel” category, which includes cycling, skateboarding and scooting. It comprised 18% of activities reported. This was closely followed by general park play (at 16%), which encompasses activity on



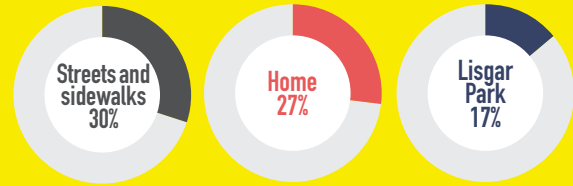
HIGHLIGHTS

424
ACTIVITIES
REPORTED

12
PLAY
CATEGORIES

51
LOCATIONS

TOP LOCATIONS REPORTED



TOP ACTIVITIES REPORTED



formal play structures. Third was “walk and run” in the neighbourhood, such as jogging and walking the dog (at 14%).

Two types of activities of unstructured play—running games like manhunt, tag, and hike and seek, as well as general outdoor play such as jump rope, chalking and playing with bubbles—were both at 8% of activities recorded.

REPORTING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

A key element of the pilot project was to report back to the community. As a first step, the results were posted on the project website (<https://lisgar.planlocal.ca>). Secondly, a printed visual summary of the results was included in take-home packages for each student in the fall of 2018. Interactive mapping showing the locations and types of play activities were provided to residents in order to help continue the dialogue about more active lifestyles in their neighbourhood.

LESSONS LEARNED

Our first takeaway from the project was that understanding how and where a neighbourhood plays outside is an important step toward building community conversations about more active lifestyles. The pilot project was about more than recording what people are currently doing, but also about sharing these experiences and behaviour with the broader community to

demonstrate easy, local options for an active lifestyle.

Second, engagement on neighbourhood play can be used to enhance community planning. For example, the fact that the most popular location for play was neighbourhood streets and sidewalks indicates that street safety should be a central issue in neighbourhood planning. When streets are observed through the eyes of children at play, planning interventions such as lower speed limits and traffic calming measures take on added importance.

Overall, the project provides an example of how play-centred engagement could be the basis for a more enhanced and responsive form of neighbourhood planning. Further, the project utilized the local elementary schools as a means to collect and distribute the results, as there were not many other structures of neighbourhood organization. Thus, future community engagement could involve the school community to facilitate conversations about a variety of neighbourhood issues, reinforcing the role of the local school as an anchor of community life. **M**

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TRAVIS LUPICK

FIONA JEFFRIES

The right to safety in the city

Overdose Prevention Societies are leading by example — and saving countless lives in the process.

IN THE SUMMER of 2017, amidst an unprecedented and devastating wave of opioid overdoses in cities across Canada, a group of activists erected a couple of tents atop a ragged triangle of grass on the eastern edge of Ottawa's downtown core, less than two kilometers from Parliament Hill.

This was the first overdose prevention site in the nation's capital and it offered people a safe place to use drugs. Like similar grassroots initiatives that activists have set up over the past decade in Vancouver, Toronto, London and elsewhere, the tents were a makeshift response to an unspeakably urgent crisis.

Calling itself Overdose Prevention Ottawa (OPO), the group initially set up one tent where people using opioids could come, sit down, inspect and test the drugs they bought to use, inject, then rest. Almost immediately, guests identified a need for a similar space to safely smoke crack, and so the organizers erected a second tent for that purpose.

For the initial handful of OPO activists, the impetus for the site was deeply personal. Many of them had long been

involved in the city's grassroots harm reduction efforts. Others had experienced the acute pain of losing a loved one from an overdose. All of them knew people were dying and the authorities charged with protecting some of society's most vulnerable were failing to react.

More than 8,000 people have died from an opioid-induced overdose in Canada since 2016. In October 2018, health officials announced that the crisis of fatal encounters with opioids has become so acute it is causing a decline in life expectancy in B.C. If the trend continues, they explained, the same demographic effect will soon follow for the rest of Canada.

"This is the most significant public health crisis that we've seen for many decades," Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam told the CBC News before describing the scale of the crisis as something not seen since the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s.

In November, the CBC reported that 10 people a day are dying from drug overdoses in Canada. British Columbia and Alberta have the highest

concentration of overdose deaths in the country. In B.C. overdose deaths more than doubled between 2011 and 2016. In January, Dr. Mark Tyndall of the BC Centre for Disease Control described the opioid crisis as “our Ebola.”

This fall, federal Health Minister Ginette Petitpas-Taylor responded to the death toll by vowing to make the opioid crisis the ministry’s top priority. Harm reduction, she claimed, would be a key pillar of the strategy.

Harm reduction refers to a complex of public health policies and practices that aim to reduce the harms associated with certain activities designated as risky. It is rooted in the idea that it is not necessarily the drugs that cause harm but the system of prohibition and punishment that society has erected and which makes buying and possessing drugs dangerous for the user.

“When someone uses heroin in an alley, hurriedly injecting for fear of police, it is not the drug that causes them to rush and miscalculate their dose, possibly leading to an overdose. It is their fear of persecution,” explains Travis Lupick in his account of Vancouver’s harm reduction struggles, *Fighting for Space*.

Drugs are dangerous, we are told, because of the nature of the substance itself. The conditions under which drugs are consumed are considered emblematic of their dangerous nature.

But hospitals dispense opioids every day to relieve pain. These drugs are not killing people in care because the quality of the supply is regulated, the dosages are managed, ingestion is overseen and, should a problem arise, there are trained people on hand who can intervene and who are not made afraid by the spectre of criminalization and stigma. Proponents of harm reduction argue that context matters and shunting drug consumption out of sight while criminalizing and stigmatizing it does the opposite of keeping people safe.

The announcement by Minister Petitpas-Taylor comes at a time of growing pressure linked to the scale of the crisis and the extraordinary efforts of the grassroots OPS movement, which has operated on shoestring budgets gathered from private donations and is fuelled primarily on volunteer labour.

Still, harm reduction remains a marginal position in mainstream health care. OPO’s

Lisa Wright points out that strategies based on reducing harm have received only 2% of the federal drug strategy’s budget—even though harm reduction principles have nominally been at the centre of the strategy since the 1980s.

In Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government of Doug Ford evidently disagrees that the overdose crisis demands urgent public attention. This summer, as the death toll climbed, the province shelved plans to fund desperately needed safe consumption sites scheduled to open in Toronto, St. Catharines and Thunder Bay.

Conservatives like to argue that treatment leading to abstinence, not harm reduction, should be government’s priority. But as Toronto nurse and OPS activist Leigh Chapman quipped in response to Ford’s announcement, “you can’t treat people if they’re dead.”

Ford’s position is consistent with the rest of Canada’s law-and-order establishment, which opposes harm reduction strategies and sees grassroots overdose prevention sites (OPS) and government approved and regulated safe injection sites (SIS) as condoning illegality.

At the federal level, the former Harper government fought hard to shut down Vancouver’s INSITE, Canada’s first legal SIS. After losing that battle at the Supreme Court, the government vowed to make it more difficult to open new sites by passing the Respect for Communities Act. Such moves seemed designed to bolster a decades-old punitive War on Drugs conception of public safety while the undertow of criminalization is battled in courts, clinics, legislatures, in the media and on the streets.

The question of how to address the crisis is marked by deep societal polarization. In the conservative imagination, the drug user is designated as an object of fear and social breakdown and the idea of rights for and humane treatment of drug users is seen as condoning crime and rewarding immorality.

But among a spectrum of service providers, researchers and grassroots activists, addiction is seen as symptomatic of a broader mental health and social crisis, which for many is rooted in legacies of colonialism, the kind of alienation and sense of dislocation that

THERE WAS NO OPIOID CRISIS WHEN LEFEBVRE WAS WRITING ABOUT THE URBAN REVOLUTION, BUT TODAY’S OPS MOVEMENT WOULD HAVE IMPRESSED HIM.



The Trailer Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS, as it's usually called, or Area 62) in Vancouver.

TRAVIS LUPICK

has preoccupied critics of capitalism for the last two centuries, and the crisis of care in an era of gutted welfare states. Calls for intensified criminalization are one response. The OPS movement is another.

Wright describes the establishment of the tents in the park as a watershed moment for people who do not have access to a safe place to consume drugs in the city and who have borne the brunt of stigma, criminalization and fear as a result.

Visitors to the site would say, "Oh the tents changed everything," she recounts. "One guy came in during the first days and asked, 'Why are you doing this? No one has cared about us our whole life.'"

Activists identify two catalytic events driving their decision to open the site despite the risk of prosecution: a friend's fatal encounter with fentanyl and the recent launch of an OPS in Toronto's well-worn Moss Park. This and similar sites operating without government consent or support in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside represented a public affirmation of the rights of drug users to inhabit the city and receive care.

The tents provided a critical infrastructure of support in parts of the city weighed down by suffering, fear,

neglect and loss. In so doing, they created the city anew.

That is perhaps what Henri Lefebvre would say were he here to witness this extraordinary example of grassroots organizing of urban infrastructure. The French intellectual came up with the idea of the right to the city in 1968, while participating in Paris' clamorous summer of social discontent.

For Lefebvre, the right to the city wasn't a "pseudo-right" to simply appear and touch the surface of urban life as the powerful dictate. Rather, it represented a "transformed and renewed right to urban life." The right to the city in Lefebvre's view means much more than a formal right to be present in the city. It is an affirmation of the need to participate in the making and remaking of our cities.

Lefebvre was participating in and writing about the right to the city in times that were not so different from our own. Paris in the late-1960s was ablaze in debate about urban renewal and the expulsion of poor and working class people from the urban core, furious discontent with institutional authority, and unbridled enthusiasm for the de-alienation of urban life. Lefebvre's writings celebrated the re-conquest of the city's urban core by those who had been shunted aside by forces we now call gentrification.

In recent years, urban geographer David Harvey has revived Lefebvre's ideas for our own era of recurrent crisis, austerity and gentrification. The right to the city, he argues, reminds us that another vision of the city is made possible by creative alliances of the dispossessed and the discontented.

For Lefebvre, the urban street was the domain of spontaneity and the authentic arena of transformative politics. And what could be more spontaneous than a group of activists coming together in sorrow and rage to launch a radical endeavour of care, a transformative project aimed at enabling those rendered most vulnerable to participate more fully in the production of urban life?

The eruption of OPS initiatives in Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Guelph, Montreal and beyond over the last few years is an extraordinary story of grassroots activists creating infrastructures of care. By securing

safety for some of society's most vulnerable people, the OPS movement expands everyone's right to the city.

The story of the OPS movement is not just a story of life-affirming service delivery, but also a struggle of people devoting themselves to improving life in an increasingly inhospitable urban landscape, in the face of entrenched stigma, criminalization and official neglect.

Once the tents in Ottawa went up, pressure from the city, the police and some of the area's homeowners started to mount. Police circled the site, some angry neighbours intimidatingly took photos and video of people accessing the tents, and Mayor Jim Watson complained about "children and families" not being able to use the scrappy triangle of grass. At one point, Wright recounts, someone dumped 400 pounds of horse manure right in front of the tents.

But Wright also notes that each act of aggression against the site attracted more and more support from the wider community. "People drove in from the suburbs with their families to bring us granola bars and juice boxes. Something you just don't expect."

At first the core group of organizers figured the site would be held together by less than a dozen people working for free, around the clock, "but soon we had over 200 volunteers converging from around the city," says Wright. The core organizers still worked around the clock to keep the space going while engaging with the steady flow of visitors, volunteers and media, as well as naysayers, but they were certainly not alone.

Standing outside Ottawa's OPS tents last summer, University of Victoria nursing professor and OPS organizer Marilou Gagnon explained to *MacLean's* magazine, "I have this feeling of being at the right place at the right time doing the exact right thing. It's just very special to witness the kind of resilience and support that people have. And the message that they get [from OPO volunteers] when they visit us is, 'You know what? We show up every night on our own time and on our own money because your life matters.'"

So much of the public discussion about the opioid crisis in North America has focused on adjudicating drug

users' right to receive care if they are not in treatment. Much of the media coverage of the crisis has been devoted, understandably, to the devastating scale of the deaths and the morality conflicts surrounding drug use, criminalization, permissiveness and treatment.

Less often highlighted is the remarkable eruption of grassroots infrastructures of care that have saved countless lives and modelled a dispersed and democratic vision of public health. The story that needs to be told and repeated is not only about the epidemic, but also about the activism transforming the city by making life livable.

We live in times when it is not difficult to see hints of societal psychic crisis, a sense of pervasive existential despair. "From my perspective, the most compelling theory around addiction is that it is rooted in social dislocation," explains Gagnon. The OPS tents seek to provide a counter to that.

"We had food, people felt accepted, we treated them as people, not as clients, and I saw people's lives improve just by using the site. At the OPS people felt safe. They could nod safely [after injecting] because they didn't worry about their stuff getting stolen or being assaulted."

But criminalization, contends Gagnon, makes everything really hard. Prison makes everything even worse for people. And in addition to providing people with a safe place to carefully test out and use in the company of others, one of things an OPS does, Gagnon states, is provide protection from the police.

There was no opioid crisis when Lefebvre was writing about the urban revolution, but today's OPS movement would have impressed him. The labour-intensive work of the OPS is caring labour, generally uncompensated, intensely arduous and life-saving. Without it our cities would be even more devastated and people more imperiled.

Overdose prevention sites across the country are saving lives, either by direct intervention when guests overdose in a tent or because being in the tent allowed users to feel safe enough to take their time, test their drugs, and feel a sense of community. Lefebvre would recognize the sites as vital expressions of his call to "de-alienate" urban life, to make life livable for the many who are struggling to improve their cities and their world. **M**

"ONE GUY CAME IN DURING THE FIRST DAYS AND ASKED, 'WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? NO ONE HAS CARED ABOUT US OUR WHOLE LIFE.'"



CHERYL GLADU

Get to know the neighbours

Cohousing experiments in democratic living

Cohabitat Québec

FITCH ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN

IT IS POPULAR today to claim that polity is giving way to tribalism, whether of the partisan or lifestyle-politics variety, making a widely shared understanding of the challenges we face, and the possible solutions to them, feel out of reach. In such a situation it would seem foolhardy to try to invite closed-up people into a deeper form of civic engagement.

Regardless of how much weight you give to the “new tribalism” argument, there are tried and tested ways of bringing people together, even at the intimate level of the household, that negate the pop-culture naysayers. These experiments in collaborative housing could even be scaled up under

the right conditions—as long as we start by trusting citizens with more power to make important decisions collectively.

THE COLLABORATIVE HOUSING MODEL

Many of us have sat around the table with friends and family and imagined something similar to collaborative housing, or cohousing for short. It could be as simple as building a place together, with a shared yard, garden, workshop and maybe even a playroom for any future kids. Almost 430 households have managed to turn those lofty goals into a reality across 17 very different neighbourhoods in

Canada, and we can learn a lot from their experiences.

Cohousing is a type of intentional community in which the design, development and management of a project is shared among participants in a self-organizing group or collective. There may be a process of leadership in such communities, but no one leader. Likewise, while participants may hold shared values—a commitment to mutual respect, for example, or environmental stewardship—in general you will not find a single philosophy on the “best” way to live in cohousing setups. The end result of the development process is a high-functioning

neighbourhood where members share in both the labours and celebrations of life.

The cohousing model of design and development was introduced to North America in the late-1980s by U.S. architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett. The pair based their concept on cohousing projects they had visited in Northern Europe, such as the Danish *bofællesskab* (sharing community/cohousing) and Swedish *kollektivhus* (collective house). These communities were as much a different approach to living as they were a different approach to design—and I would argue that it's in considering this approach to living that we have the most to learn.

While cohousing communities can vary in design, they are typically made up of between 15 and 33 households. At this scale, most members can get to know everyone else by name. The projects also generally include a participatory process, an overall design that encourages residents to come together from time to time, common facilities and complete resident management using a non-hierarchical decision-making structure. Other than that, cohousing arrangements can be quite different from one another, sometimes taking the form of urban courtyards or clusters of rural single-family homes, among other variations. As the design brief is put together by the community itself, cohousing projects are a reflection of the people who live there.

What makes this model particularly well-suited to North America is that it strives for community while preserving a high degree of individual privacy. Cohousing residents own or rent complete private dwellings within the project, but also share common property that is designed to be used together. Each community member has a complete home (the “co” doesn't stand for cohabitate), though they do tend to be smaller than in traditional suburban settings.

In Canada, some cohousing communities have allowed people to downsize, on average, by 75 m² (800 ft²). Residents were able to do this by making use of clever space-saving designs and by letting go of some personal occasional-use spaces including, in some cases, guest rooms or single-purpose dining rooms. The common house in a cohousing development typically includes an industrial-sized kitchen and dining hall for large gatherings, as well as guest rooms and spaces for play, exercise and creative projects. The common area can be a standalone building or part of a complex of spaces.

I interviewed nearly 100 people living in cohousing in Canada as part of my doctoral research. In talking about some of the benefits, one community member described her experience like living in the “private wing of a shared manor.” By sharing, she was able to live a much richer life both materially and interpersonally even if, as an individual, she had less stuff.

Smaller individual living spaces are also cheaper to heat and cool, furnish and clean. So it isn't surprising that research is starting to demonstrate that cohousing communities can outperform green apartment or condominium buildings on many environmental metrics.

The sense of community that allows for this level of sharing, including in the management of daily affairs, is

not a happy accident or left to chance. It is in many ways the central aim of cohousing. And it is perhaps this quality that makes cohousing projects so worthy of study and emulation as models of local democratic engagement.

COLLABORATIVE HOUSING IS ROOTED IN CONSENSUS

Cohousing communities in North America make use of consensus- or consent-based decision-making. Consensus is not the same as unanimity, and there are a variety of ways to achieve it in group settings. But overall, we can say that consensus is akin to gaining a *general agreement* between members of a group on matters that concern that group. Consensus is, in other words, a democratic practice.

This democratic approach to decision-making will be familiar to some people who are already trying to create a more just and equitable society, perhaps through small voluntary collectives or within larger professional co-operatives. In the case of cohousing, consensus is also a process used to successfully design, develop and manage award-winning, multi-million-dollar real estate projects.

One of the many reasons that this process of decision-making should be interesting, in an increasingly diverse yet polarizing world, is that consensus-based decision-making aims to create a formal space for dissenting perspectives to be communicated and explored in an environment well-equipped to manage this kind of dialogue.

There is a common expression in organizations that make use of this means of decision-making: embrace the “no.” It means that in seeking consensus it is important to make space for the dissenting voice that may help the group fully understand an issue and figure out how to better resolve a decision. This effort to embrace dissent is rooted in a shared desire to overcome group-think in pursuit of the best options for the community.

In diverse communities, agreeing to disagree is an outcome arrived at only after careful consideration of the assumptions that underpin different proposals. Through this process, people may better understand the real roots of difference—how our upbringing, experiences and education shape our ideas and preferences. This awareness, in turn, helps to create a new understanding between people (dialogue is fundamentally a creative process). Learning to look for this understanding is imperative to making our cities more inclusive and just.

**COHOUSING COMMUNITIES CAN
OUTPERFORM GREEN APARTMENTS OR
CONDOMINIUM BUILDINGS ON MANY
ENVIRONMENTAL METRICS.**

For consensus-building to work, however, group members have to make a commitment to improving their ability to communicate in an open and honest way, while also adopting a more charitable view of the ideas of others. As you might imagine, these skills are built with time and practice.

And this is why the years-long, deliberate approach to building a neighbourhood in a community-led project is such a good incubator: cohousing allows people to master the art of collectively working through challenges. It is, unfortunately, the opposite of what currently goes on in our federal and provincial legislatures.

Consensus-seeking is obviously not without its challenges. Rarely do Canadian cohousing communities adopt models of pure consensus, where there is a risk the group could be held hostage by a single dissenting member for an extended period of time. While it is uncommon for groups to vote on contentious issues, it does happen. This is generally considered to be an unfortunate outcome of an attempt at reaching consensus that didn't work.

Even when a group has come to a general agreement regarding a decision, it doesn't mean that every community member has gotten "their way." Individuals may ask themselves, "Is this the hill I want to die on?" That is, does the proposal go against my understanding of what the community needs, such that I'm willing to fight for the community by blocking the proposal? Most frequently the answer is no, which means that some decisions are arrived at with the understanding that a proposal is "good enough for now, and safe enough to try."

SCALING UP COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

Several consensus- and consent-seeking models, with names such as Sociocracy or Holacracy, are being adopted by an increasing number of cohousing communities,



ULTIMATELY IT SHOULD MATTER LESS HOW MANY UNITS ARE PART OF A NEW DEVELOPMENT AND MORE HOW THOSE UNITS OCCUPY THE SITE.

collectives, companies and co-operatives who want to engage their members and/or employees in a more creative and democratic practice of organizing. Can any of these models be scaled up for other kinds of community-led projects, or even community-wide decision-making?

As a first step, we need more local expertise in the processes that are particular to community-led development. One of the key success factors in multi-family real estate development is the completion of previous projects. Given that communities developed by their members are, by their very nature, one-off projects, this presents a challenge, since it leaves the prospects for spreading collaborative forms of community almost completely in the hands of real estate professionals. The designers, project managers or developers who want to direct more of their work into the field of cohousing should have the option of receiving more training in methods of democratic collaboration.

Experienced, top-down housing developers could also be engaged in the process of building co-housing communities. McCamant's Cohousing Solutions company has successfully brought cohousing communities into master-planned neighbourhoods such as Hearthstone Cohousing in Denver, which was built into the Highlands Garden Village plan. The benefits to the developer are many and include reduced risk, increased equity, and political support in the project.

Cohousing also widens the housing market. According to McCamant, cohousers are not your typical new home buyers; they are often drawn to the kinds of locations that are vibrant rather than new. Cohousers can also seed any new project with a level of community engagement that can take generations to establish for more traditional residential or commercial projects.

Canadian cities and towns can do more to encourage this kind of development by zoning in a way that describes minimum rather than maximum densities on a site. Ultimately it should matter less *how many* units are part of a new development and more *how* those units occupy the site (e.g., how they are massed). Zoning that describes the maximum density and number of units on a site incentivizes developers to build the most square feet per unit that they can possibly sell. It's easy to see where "McMansions" come from when you consider these rules.

Finally, governments at all levels can look to open up the process of accessing government properties, for example by including land grants or leasehold contracts that guarantee the long-term use of land to such communities in exchange for rent. This type of model has helped make collaborative projects more affordable and sustainable in cities such as Berlin, where *Baugruppe* ("building groups") are a common model of community-led development.

There are a number of paths that a variety of actors can take on the way to making our cities more engaged and more livable. Each path involves giving people the tools they need to work together. Cohousing is about trusting in people to make the kinds of decisions that benefit not only themselves but their wider community. This will allow cities and towns to make use of the latent creative capacity of their citizens at a time when we need it most. **M**



CLARE MIAN

The right to come home

More than most, refugees are denied a right to the city—theirs or anyone else's. In Israel-Palestine, brave actions are filling in for a neglectful and repressive state.

Palestinian children play at their family's house in Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, January 15, 2018.

REUTERS/MOHAMMED SALEM

TAREK LOUBANI, a Canadian doctor from Western University, was shot in both legs on May 14, 2018 in Gaza. He was part of a medical team attending to casualties among protesters of the almost 11-year-old Israeli land, sea and air blockade of the occupied territory. Loubani was the first doctor to be shot in the series of protests known as the “Great March of Return.”

A Gazan paramedic attended to Loubani, offering him immediate transport on a protesters' makeshift ambulance to the nearest relatively well-equipped hospital. Knowing there were more serious injuries on the ground, Loubani refused. When the shooting stopped, he was transported in that day's last ambulance run to a neighbouring, relatively poorly equipped clinic. The only doctor there was busy with more urgent injuries, so Loubani stitched his

own wounds. Painkillers are rare, but he was offered some precious Advil. He refused it.

Loubani described his experience and the conditions of the Gaza protest in a recent speech in Toronto. The overwhelming majority of wounds among protesters are to the legs, he recounted. Though the chest is an easier target, Israeli snipers aim at the legs in order to disable the protester and detain others who need to carry the injured person to medical aid. Because little medication is available, infections are rampant, and wounds that could be repaired with reasonable medical intervention turn into amputations and lifelong disabilities. Many of the injured, who could be helped with timely assistance, often bleed to death.

Loubani grew up in Palestine and has a deep commitment to ending the suffering



Israeli border police officers run toward Palestinians during a raid to Al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, on May 28, 2018.

REUTERS/MOHAMAD TOROKMAN

of Palestinian refugees whose exile is now in its 70th year. Those in Gaza face the most life-threatening conditions as a result of the blockade. But refugees from Palestine also live in the occupied West Bank and in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Their exile began in 1948 when approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes as a result of the failed plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, and the ensuing takeover by the new state of Israel. In 1949, a dedicated agency, the United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA), was established to attend to the needs of refugees of this unique ethnic conflict. All other refugees fall under the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), which transfers them from their country of origin through a country of asylum to a country of settlement.

Palestinian refugees have no country of origin, as Palestine has never been and is not now a country. The “privilege” of a dedicated agency has relegated them to permanent neglect and suffering. They and their descendants now number four to five million refugees.

International opinion and a series of Geneva conventions and protocols continue to affirm that Israel’s occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is illegal, that people displaced in war have the right to return to their homes, and that a country must not settle permanently territories occupied through war. These eloquent and repeated

affirmations have proven to be the most egregious examples of the impotence of international institutions to impose compliance on powerful members who flout international law. Israeli governments have consistently used the argument that, since Palestine was never a country, refugees have no right of return.

As the most long-lasting refugees in modern history, Palestinians have endured, and to varying degrees continue to endure, denials of adequate food, shelter, employment, health, education and freedom of movement; shortages of clean water and electricity; daily lives governed by walls and checkpoints; denial and delay of building permits; demolition of houses; intrusive surveillance; arbitrary detention and arrest; and violence resulting in injury, permanent disability and death.

The most life-denying refugee conditions are in Gaza and Syria. Of the 1.9 million residents of Gaza, 1.3 million are registered under UNRWA. The entire population has been under a total blockade since shortly after they elected a Hamas government in 2006. Any semblance of local control granted to them in the 1994 Oslo accords has disappeared. The economy is in free-fall; the main employer is Hamas, and unemployment is as high as 70% among youth.

With recent American cuts to their UNRWA contributions, the agency is barely able to maintain its financial assistance to refugees. There is only one power plant in the region, supplemented by unreliable power lines from Israel or Egypt. Residents have electricity for approximately four hours a day. Access to food and water is tightly regulated by the Israeli army (IDF).

In May 2018, on the 70th anniversary of the *Naqba*, the Gazan population rallied at the walls and gates to Israel, risking injury and death to protest the inhumanity of the blockade. Despite Israel’s claims that their security is threatened, one need only compare the powerful resources of the IDF with the homemade bombs and rocks of the Gazan protesters to realize that Gaza poses no security threat, only potential exposure to international condemnation.

The inequality of casualty numbers since the protests began bears this

out: approximately 170 Gazans have been killed and 15,000 wounded; one Israeli soldier has been killed, while six soldiers and five civilians have been wounded. The United Nations, Human Rights Watch, the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations have all condemned Israeli force in this conflict.

The interventions of medical workers such as Dr. Loubani have ameliorated the death and casualty rate through practical solutions, like the manufacture of 3D plastic printed stethoscopes and the production of tourniquets made from discarded rubber tubing. In addition, they and international organizations that support Palestine's refugees have undertaken fundraising efforts to outfit the biggest hospital in the region, Hebron's Al Ahli, with solar power to overcome the chronic electricity shortage.

In Syria, Palestinian refugees have found themselves in the most war-torn regions of the country. Three of the 12 UNRWA refugee camps have been shut down; 60% of all refugees have been displaced at least once, and many of these have fled to neighbouring Lebanon or Jordan. Over 50,000 are known to be living in inaccessible areas of the country. UNRWA staff have been killed, wounded or imprisoned in their efforts to protect their camps.

Palestine's refugees in Lebanon found themselves in the middle of that country's long civil war beginning in 1975, and many were killed in the massacres of the two camps of Sabra and Shatila in 1982. Close to half a million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon continue to live—whether in camps, cities or villages—in conditions of harsh discrimination, which exclude them from adequate education, housing and employment. With the recent influx of refugees from Syria, UNRWA's ability to provide monetary aid, food, schools and medical facilities has been stretched to a foreseeable breaking point.

In the West Bank 25% of refugees live in camps while the balance lives in towns and villages. The concrete results of the largely unsuccessful 1993-94 Oslo peace process did lead to the recognition of the Palestinian Authority as the representative of the Palestinian people and gave strictly designated areas of the territory some limited control on

local affairs. But daily life consists of negotiating checkpoints, facing water and power shortages, and exposure to arbitrary harassment, arrest and imprisonment by the IDF.

Israeli government regulations in the West Bank are designed to create Jewish-only towns or city neighbourhoods. Building requests from Arab Palestinians are systematically denied or face interminable delays. Those who risk building in order to remain in, or return to, their cities confront the threat of demolition. In 2014 there were 11,000 outstanding demolition orders in East Jerusalem alone.

The 2.2 million Palestine refugees who fled to Jordan have the best living conditions. In part because of geographical proximity and the fact that Jordan has historically coveted the West Bank, the Jordanian monarchy has granted citizenship to many refugees, and the restrictions to employment and housing are relatively limited.

A little-known experiment in Canadian immigration policy brought 100 Palestinian refugees to Canada in 1955. It was a forward-looking attempt to come to their aid and perhaps resolve tensions in the Middle East. Canadian officials were dispatched to Cairo, Beirut and Tel Aviv to screen potential candidates. The rules for admission were very strict, and bureaucratic slowness led to the eventual admission of 53 households with 45 dependents.

In a November 2015 article about the resettlement for *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, Jan Raska provides a fascinating case study of Canadian foreign and domestic policy, the growth of the immigration bureaucracy, and public opinion at the time. His main conclusion is that the chief value of this experiment was in streamlining procedures "for the future selection and resettlement of non-European refugees." Unfortunately, among this latter group, Palestinians have barely figured, and there has never been any follow-up to the Canadian trial.

But within the region, one potentially promising diplomatic initiative has emerged from the violence in Gaza: the intervention of Egypt in brokering talks between Hamas and Israel. Understanding the potential for the growth of ISIS-like terrorism on its

DAILY LIFE CONSISTS OF NEGOTIATING CHECKPOINTS, FACING WATER AND POWER SHORTAGES, AND EXPOSURE TO ARBITRARY HARASSMENT, ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT BY THE IDF.

UNWRA 2016 FIGURES

	Gaza	West Bank	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria
Number of camps	8	19	10	12	9**
Number of refugees	1.3 million	810,000	2.2 million	450,000*	438,000***

* This number includes about 50,000 Palestine refugees from Syria.

** 12 camps were established in Syria, but three have been destroyed by war.

*** This figure reflects a decrease of about 120,000 who have fled Syrian camps for Lebanon, other Arab countries, Europe and North America, or are now living in inaccessible areas.

border in Gaza, Egypt has a stake in working to end the explosive situation.

The United States, on the other hand, has redoubled its support for Israeli policy and actions. The Trump administration has moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in the heart of the occupied West Bank and in a city that contains the holy places of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. It has also cut contributions to UNRWA by \$60 million, with a threat of cutting \$290 million within a year. The U.S. called the agency “irremediably flawed.” Appeals from the organization itself as well as from other countries and refugee agencies produced compensatory funding such that the survival of these refugees is assured for another year.

In contrast, Canada has increased its contribution to UNRWA by \$50 million to be distributed over two years. The current government, like its predecessors, never misses an opportunity to affirm Canada’s friendship with Israel based on common values of “freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.” It much more rarely expresses Canada’s position, in line with UN declarations, that the occupations of Gaza and the West Bank, and the continued extensive building of settlements there, are illegal.

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in a 2016 address on Gaza: “The international community has an ongoing responsibility to act decisively for peace. The United Nations will continue to work for a future without occupation and oppression; with dignity and democracy in a State of Palestine that exists in peace and security with the State of Israel.”

Whether a two-state solution is geographically feasible, given the extent of Jewish settlement in the occupied territories, is now highly questionable. Israeli historians Ilan Pappé and Avi

Shlaim, as well as Arab-American historian Rashid Khalidi, now believe that even though the term is still used by Israeli governments—to indicate they are open to negotiation—there is no true commitment to the two-state policy.

In his talk in Toronto, Loubani said he believed the two-state solution is in rigor mortis. He and others, including the embattled former CNN commentator Marc Lamont Hill, have pointed out in the past year that it would be better at this point to think of solutions that prioritize equal civil rights for all citizens, regardless of religion.

In his speech to the UN at the end of November, Lamont Hill drew parallels between the violent state response to Black protestors in Ferguson, Missouri in the wake of the police killing of a young Black man in that city, and the condition of Palestinian lives everywhere.

“We brought a delegation of Black activists to Palestine, and we saw the connections between the police in New York City who are being trained by Israeli soldiers and the type of policing we were experiencing in New York City,” he said. “We began to see relationships of resistance, and we began to build and struggle and organize together. That spirit of solidarity, a solidarity that is bound up not just in ideology but in action, is the way out.”

In his extensive research on East Jerusalem, Palestinian scholar Ahmad El-Atrash has concluded that Arab Palestinian residents of the West Bank have lost their right to the city, their own historic cities and those being built around them. With walls, checkpoints and restricted roads that separate neighbourhoods within a city and cities from their natural rural area, they live in a permanent state of housing insecurity. The Fatah government in Ramallah is becoming increasingly ineffective, forcing individuals and groups of citizens in West Bank cities to take the lead in struggling against the oppressive illegal occupation.

But as they do take up this mantle, the strength and resilience demonstrated by the citizens of Gaza in their fight for survival against the blockade, and by the citizens of the West Bank in their fight to live in their cities, is possibly the most hopeful sign that an end to this 70-year-old tragedy is possible. **M**



The good news page

Compiled by
Elaine Hughes

The Marshall Islands, an atoll nation in the Central Pacific near the equator and vulnerable to sea level rise from climate change, was the first country to submit new, binding climate targets to the United Nations. In November, the country pledged to reduce emissions by at least 32% below 2010 levels by 2025, 45% by 2030 and 58% by 2035, with a national plan drawn up to adapt to climate change impacts by the end of 2019. / IKEA, the world's biggest furniture group, has pledged to cut greenhouse

gas emissions by 80% by 2030. The company emitted 3.4 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2016. / The Dutch city of Zwolle, about 75km east of Amsterdam, has installed the world's first plastic bike path made of recycled bottles, cups and packaging. The 30-metre wide path is built with hollow (and therefore light) prefabricated sections that can house cables and utility pipes; rainwater drains off its upper surface, which will contain sensors to monitor the path's performance. / Reuters / Guardian (U.K.)

Since it opened in August 2016, Rio de Janeiro's Refettorio Gastromotiva restaurant has been serving low-income and homeless diners for free. The food is donated from companies who would otherwise throw it away, prepared by a team of trainees—most of them from nearby favelas and other low-income communities—who are led by professional chefs, and served to 90

diners a night who have been selected by various non-profit groups. Pedro de Souza, who is formerly homeless, says at Refettorio Gastromotiva, "[t]hey don't just socialize the homeless, they humanize us." / Geothermal energy is making year-round vegetable growing possible in Iceland. Spurred on by the 2008 financial crisis that hit the island nation hard, the country's farmers started putting geothermal heat and electricity to work growing about 500 tonnes of tomatoes, cucumbers and paprika year-round. Technology now also allows producers to control the temperature and moisture levels inside their greenhouses by smartphone app. / Guardian (U.K.) / Reuters

Organic farming is on the rise in the Prairies after a period of sluggish growth in the early 2010s. Acreage of organic cereals, oilseeds and pulses increased 26% from 2015 to 2017, and there were gains for organic wheat and hemp

as well. / Eating organic may lower your chance of getting cancer, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. French scientists tracked 69,000 people over several years and found that those whose diets consisted of more organic food had about 25% fewer cancers overall, with 35% fewer breast cancers in older women and more than a 70% reduction in lymphomas. The findings suggest, but do not prove, that pesticides and other chemical residues found in food cause cancer. / Western Producer / Public Radio International

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ASAD ISMI

Can the left look to Portugal for an alternative to austerity?

WHILE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC parties all over Europe have been losing power and popularity, the centre-left Portuguese government is being lauded even by the mainstream media for defying the European Union (EU) with its anti-austerity policy and thereby sparking an economic recovery in the country.

The minority government led by the social-democratic Socialist Party (PS) has been in power since 2015 thanks to parliamentary support from the Communist Party (allied with the Green Party) and the euroskeptic radical Left Bloc. These two parties, which are to the left of the PS, do not have any cabinet posts in the government, so the arrangement is not a coalition.

Hit hard by the 2008-09 economic crisis, Portugal got a 78 billion euro bailout in 2011 (about \$107 billion at the time) from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB). In exchange for the loan, the troika, as the trio of European institutions are called, imposed drastic spending cuts on the country that increased unemployment to 17.5% and company bankruptcies to 41% in 2013.

Close to half a million Portuguese (out of a population of 10 million) left the country between 2011 and 2014, the highest number in five decades. The centre-right government of the day, led by the misnamed Social Democratic Party (PSD), slashed public salaries, pensions and health spending, and instituted the highest tax increase ever of 35%. Education spending was cut by 23%.

The unpopularity of these stringent austerity measures saw the PSD lose power to the left in the 2015 elections. The PS reversed some of the salary and pension cuts and tax increases, raised the minimum wage and improved social security for poor families, and gave businesses subsidies.

As the British political commentator Owen Jones noted in the *Guardian* (U.K.) in late 2017, by 2016 corporate investment in Portugal had jumped by 13%, and by 2017 the budget deficit had been halved to 2.1%, the lowest figure in 40 years and in line with the EU's requirements.

PHOTO OF JEREMY CORBYN (LEFT) BY HAMISH GILL, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS; PHOTO OF ANTÓNIO COSTA © EUROPEAN UNION / FRED GUERDIN.

In 2017, Portugal's GDP grew by 2.7%, according to the country's official statistics agency, the fastest rate in 17 years (compared to 1.5% in 2016), and the country has seen an investment, tourism and export boom in 2018 that has lowered unemployment to 8.5%.

"What happened in Portugal shows that too much austerity deepens a recession and creates a vicious circle," claimed Prime Minister António Costa in a *New York Times* interview last spring. "We devised an alternative to austerity, focusing on higher growth, and more and better jobs."

Some are not convinced by this argument. Catarina Principe, an organizer with the Left Bloc, called the government's economic program "austerity lite" in an article she wrote for *Jacobin* magazine last summer. She does not think that the PS is serious about ending austerity, only about countering "mass impoverishment."

Principe points out that the government's stimulus measures have been made possible by a severe reduction in public investment and deep cuts in the health care and education sectors which "are on the verge of collapse."

The PS reduced public investment by 16.5% in 2016 to only 1.8% of GDP, the lowest amount since 1960. AECOPS, the main construction industry association, cautioned against “the danger of false savings,” stating: “Through drastic cuts in public investment to reduce the deficit, the government has contributed decisively to the degradation of construction activity and prevented the recovery of the sector.”

Then there is “the central question,” as Principe put it, of Portugal’s massive debt, which the PS is committed to repaying. This issue has “disappeared from public debate,” she wrote in her article. Portugal’s debt is 130% of its GDP, the third largest in Europe after Greece and Italy.

According to Principe, the current economic boom is the result of factors unrelated to the government’s stimulus, such as the reduction in European tourism to the Middle East due to political instability there. This has resulted in more tourists visiting Portugal, where tourism is the country’s biggest employer. Secondly, low oil prices have helped the Portuguese economy bounce back.

Principe does not believe official unemployment figures and thinks that the true number is 17.5% (not 8.5%), which she attributes to a study by the Observatório das Desigualdades. She maintains that most of the new jobs created are precarious and that “collective bargaining has almost vanished” since the troika-imposed labour laws were retained by the PS.

Furthermore, Principe warns, the Portuguese banking system “is a ticking time bomb, with more banks bailed out with public money but not under public control, leaving it more vulnerable to shifts at the European center than in 2008.”

Conn Hallinan, an analyst with Foreign Policy in Focus, says Principe and others who see only “austerity lite” in Portugal’s recovery are overstating their case.

“Portugal is a lamb midst a pride of lions, and it has to tread carefully lest, like Greece, it gets devoured,” he tells me. “The steps that have been taken to cut taxes on working people, fund pensions, increase job growth through economic stimulation are clearly the best way out of the crisis. That approach has a long record of success dating back to the Great Depression following the 1929 crash.”

Still, Hallinan is not enamoured of the PS, which, he points out, “has a track record of caving in when caught between the demands of capital and the demands of the people.”

Hallinan agrees with Principe that repayment of Portugal’s debt is the central question and that it cannot be repaid. The Communist Party and the Left Bloc are correct, he says, to demand that the debt be reduced or dumped.

“If the PS insists on repaying it they will eventually break up the alliance, and Portugal’s mean-spirited right will lift a page from the fascist League party in Italy and attack the EU and austerity. That will leave the PS as defenders of capital, and they will go down to defeat, just like the Democratic Party did in Italy.”

Hallinan explains that Portugal’s debt is not a result of irresponsible spending. Portugal had a budget surplus when

the 2008 financial crisis hit, causing interest rates to soar so that Portugal could not afford to borrow money.

“That is what killed the country,” says Hallinan. “The crisis was caused by bank speculation in the U.S. and Europe and enormous real estate bubbles pumped up by speculators. When the bubble popped, governments committed themselves to bailing the banks out at taxpayers’ expense. That is what tanked budgets in Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Cyprus.”

For Hallinan, the solution is a London debt conference, such as the one in 1952 that reduced the German debt by 50%, lowered interest rates and gave more time for repayments. This “ignited the great German industrial explosion and countries like Portugal, Spain and Greece can never catch up unless those debts—debts they were not responsible for—are cut,” he says.

Francisco Louçã, one of the founders of the Left Bloc and an economics professor at Lisbon’s Instituto Superior de Economica e Gestão, told me a renegotiation of the external public debt is necessary “in order to obtain further means for investment and creation of jobs.” For Louçã, the solution to Portugal’s economic problems and the best strategy to deal with them are investment and full employment.

So, do Portugal and the PS alliance offer a model for other European social-democratic, socialist or leftist parties to follow? Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the British Labour Party, thinks so. He has proposed the creation of an “anti-austerity coalition” in Europe with help from the PS.

For Louçã, on the other hand, “social democracy is dead,” killed off from within by neoliberals such as Tony Blair in the U.K. and Francois Hollande in France. Social-democracy “plays no role in the reconstruction of sensitive economic and welfare politics,” he tells me.

Indeed, the PS has already started moving to the political centre. Reuters reported last April that the PS and the centre-right PSD agreed “to co-operate on some reforms and funding plans, in a deal that may reduce the government’s dependence on its hard-left allies.”

On the other hand, they may not need to co-operate with opinion polls showing the PS at 42% public support. If sustained until the May 2019 elections, that would deliver a majority to the party, making an alliance with other parties unnecessary. The PSD lags far behind at 27%.

“Being part of the EU has trapped Portugal in a situation where we can economically recover only to a small extent and it can only be a short recovery,” said Principe in an interview for the *Politics Theory Other* podcast. “In order for us to really overcome austerity, we have to get back the instruments of sovereignty and democracy that have been taken away from us by membership in the EU.

“These instruments are democratic control of the means of production, state control of the strategic sectors of the economy, the banking sector serving the public interest and national control over how to respond to economic crises,” she adds.

But is this so different from what Corbyn is proposing for the U.K.? Whether or not we call these policies social-democratic, the Portugal experience suggests there popular and practical alternatives to neoliberal austerity. **M**

SHOSHANA MAGNET AND CATHERINE-LAURA TREMBLAY-DION

A picture of good listening

Three new children's books teach us how to deepen our human connections

FROM POLITICIANS SHOUTING past each other to internet trolls who don't read the posts they are commenting on to a U.S. administration that believes ignoring the people it serves is a form of authenticity, it's clear the act of listening is not having a moment. And yet listening remains essential to our ability to connect, to empathize and to have compassion for one another.

When one side does not listen to the other, self-disclosures are little more than empty shots fired in the dark; negotiation and compromise become impossible, and the art of conversation—that lifeline to human connection—dies.

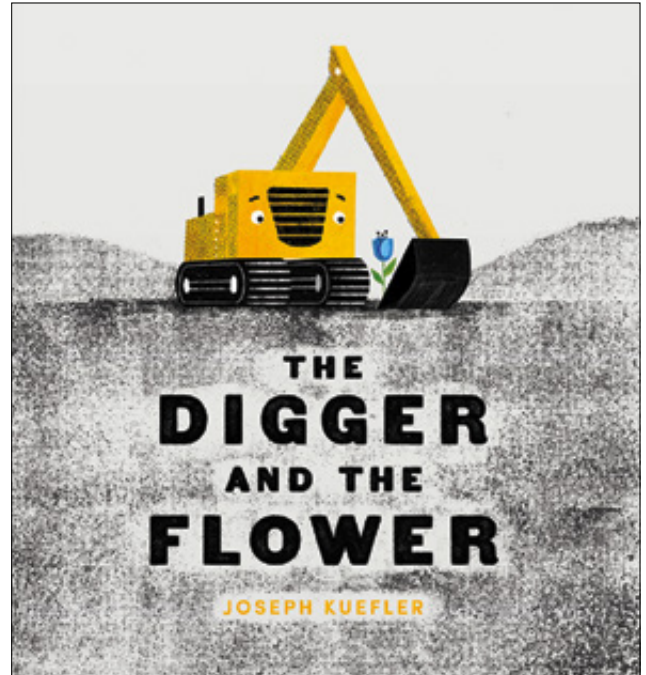
In his first novel, *Jonny Appleseed* (Arsenal Pulp, 2018), two-spirit Oji-Cree poet Joshua Whitehead contrasts what he dubs “fierce listening” with the ignorant version that we see so often in everyday life. Listening is fierce when it is not designed to interrupt or to interject, when it is an end in itself rather than a simple matter of checking a text message or commenting on someone's Facebook status.

For some, “fierce listening” is a skill learned quite late in life, if ever. But it can be taught, too, and at a fairly early age. A number of children's picture books published in 2018 challenge parents and children alike to think about how we might better listen to one another, to find our shared humanity, no matter how wide the gulf is between our perspectives.

Fiercely listening to life

Joseph Kuefler's dusty graphic illustrations in *The Digger and the Flower* (HarperCollins) juxtapose a slow story about fiercely listening to love. Digger, a member of a three-machine construction team, loves his work: to dig. A cityscape emerges as he and his colleagues push, hoist and dig buildings.

When one side does not listen to the other, self-disclosures are little more than empty shots fired in the dark.



As the workday closes, Digger remains on the job site—he has met a tiny flower. While readers will delight in Digger's care of the flower (“he shielded it on windy days”), so too will they sorrow alongside the machine when the only place left to build in the city is exactly where Digger's beloved flower stands.

Kuefler's nuanced work is remarkable for the attention with which a personified object, Digger, comes to listen to and care for a mute (yet alive!) flower, calling into question our binary understanding of the animate and inanimate, and of life and death. The book allows space for sorrow and joy without ever pretending life is without heartache.

We would even venture that Kuefler illustrates life as the poet Mary Oliver once described it: “to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, let it go.”

Fiercely listening to our selves and others

Like Kuefler, Jessica Love is both author and illustrator of *Julián is a Mermaid* (Penguin Random House), a visual feast of a picture book that centres on the task of listening to both our own selves and the selves of others.

Through sparse text and soft images, we meet a child, Julián, who simply, and understandably, wants to embody what he loves: the beautiful, perhaps queer women he admires on the subway. When his nana goes to shower one day, these people from his community swim into his imagination as mermaids. Julián decides to adapt his own beautiful mermaid costume out of found materials in his home.

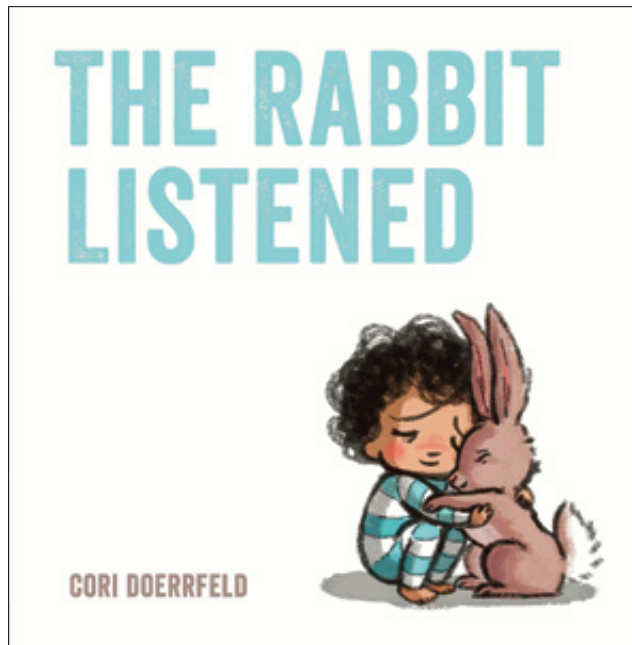
Julián's fantasy is soon interrupted by the apparently disapproving glare of his nana. Yet it is here that Love asks readers to consider deeper forms of listening in two ways. We have Julián listening to his own desires to be like his mermaid idols, but also Nana who must choose how to listen and respond to her grandson's playtime realization.

We have been longing for more children's books that treat racialization, queerness and the complications of gender performance with the nuance they deserve. Older books on queer families, including Leslea Newman's *Heather Has Two Mommies* (first published in 1989), could be a bit moralizing.

In contrast, by refusing to name Julián either as a trans child or genderqueer, and refusing racist assumptions that homophobia is worse in communities of colour, Love's book offers an artful, playful and deft new guide for parents on how to listen fiercely to the complexities of their children's identities.

Fiercely listening through stillness

In *The Rabbit Listened* (Penguin Random House), author-illustrator Cori Doerrfeld gives us a deceptively simple book about the pain of losing "something amazing" in our lives. Taylor could be any child. Clad in curls and green-striped pyjamas, our main character is immediately relatable in their childhood pain after enduring something terrible—though it doesn't seem that way to adults—and feeling unseen and unheard.



While trying to come to terms with these strong feelings, Taylor receives a litany of advice from the characters around him. Chicken wants to "talk, talk, talk about it," while Bear just wants to growl. Snake suggests revenge and Ostrich, as you might expect, would like to ignore the incident. None of these responses make sense for Taylor.

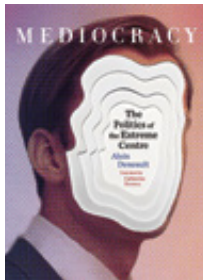
Until Rabbit comes along, that is. As Doerrfeld's title suggests, Rabbit is perfect not simply for Taylor's pain, but for pain in general. That is because Rabbit listens, a silent presence there to lend an ear and nothing else. No judgment. No advice. Certainly no growling. This is a beautiful book that nails the difficulties as well as the vast rewards of truly listening to someone else—of being the rabbit.

We urgently need to learn how to listen to each other—fiercely and with a true hunger for communicating across the gulf. In a moment in which ambiguity and nuance are so often looked over in favour of side-taking and divisiveness, these picture books help both parents and children appreciate the value of considering complex and multiple ideas, and identities, simultaneously.

"Understanding and loving are inseparable," said the great theorist of listening Erich Fromm. "If they are separate, it is a cerebral process and the door to essential understanding remains closed." Listening is political work, too, which benefits both listeners and storytellers everywhere. Rabbit, Digger and Nana show us how it's done. **M**



Democracy beyond the mushy middle



MEDIOCRACY: THE POLITICS OF THE EXTREME CENTRE

ALAIN DENEULT

Between the Lines, May 2018, Paperback, \$22.95

IN CANADA AS ELSEWHERE, the complex intertwining of corporate interests and democratic processes is feeding deep cynicism about the prospects for a politics that reflects what we might call the common good. In this new English translation of his 2015 book, Alain Deneault attempts to demonstrate the depths of the encroachment of the economic sphere more broadly on all of social life in modern times. The *economization* of our society has become so entrenched and seemingly normalized, he suggests, that we should call our present situation by a new name, *mediocracy*, “a mediocre order that is set up as a model.”

Deneault charts the pervasive, conformist acceptance of the current economic order and the ways it is perpetuated, by what he calls the “mediocre class,” through the spheres of academia, the market and the arts. For Deneault, knowledge and the researchers who produce it are the agents and objects of corporate interests; citizens are subjects of the “economy,” which both implicitly and explicitly comes to be seen as a timeless and neutral system; and art becomes the means by which big business encourages “political uniformity.”

Reading through *Mediocracy*, however, it becomes clear that the real target is the capitalist system

itself. “Mediocracy,” then, describes a social and political orientation that maintains a status quo championed primarily by those who benefit from it.

As a graduate student, I found Deneault’s critique of contemporary academia particularly insightful. The overall “professionalization” of the academy he describes is apparent in my daily experience; academics are under pressure to produce “useful” and marketable research, to write successful grant applications, and to privilege quantity over quality when it comes to publications.

All of these pressures encourage an *averageness* that is co-constitutive of a “mediocre” worldview, as the arbiters of what is deemed useful and deserving of funding are the same people who wish to maintain (and reproduce) a particular socioeconomic status quo. Deneault’s theoretical and sociological account of how the capitalist system shapes the university is bolstered by empirical details and examples, thereby demonstrating the strong links between business and knowledge production in post-secondary education.

The problems Deneault identifies in the academy, however, are merely a symptom of a much broader and more serious social and political malady: the corruption of democratic principles, or their subsuming under economic liberalism. Even those groups and individuals who attempt to counteract these pressures fall into a mediocre trap, he writes: “Despite the system’s failures, liberalism is so hegemonic that even those who challenge it compose in its key to make sure their little music is heard.” What unites these failed attempts to challenge liberalism, according to Deneault, is that they turn away from notions of “the collective” and/or the common good.

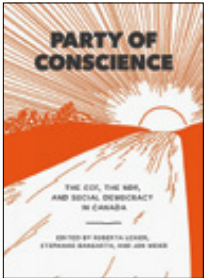
Labour movements, for instance, have fallen into the habit of merely

administering the lives of individual workers within the capitalist system, as opposed to challenging the wage-relation itself. “Left liberals” embrace an “individual ethics” that conceives of buying organic foods and recycling as political statements, as opposed to foregrounding how these actions remain firmly entrenched in the capitalist system. The pervasiveness of identity politics, Deneault suggests, has further taken our eye off the ball of collectivity.

All of these above trends point to a prevailing depoliticization in contemporary social life, in Canada and beyond, where increasingly the institutions and norms that govern our lives are taken for granted. Deneault’s analysis here is relevant and novel in how it uncovers the structural components of this depoliticization as being an order of “mediocrity” founded on and reproduced by unequal relations of power. Therefore, while the influence of private interests on academia, art and culture, and politics is not a new discovery, the identification and critique of a depoliticized centrist politics as a broader politics of the mediocre is a valuable contribution.

For those of us unsatisfied with the degradation of politics into “governance,” it is important to be reminded that a truly democratic politics happens, in Deneault’s words, “when people who belong to a community give themselves the capacity to discuss and define the fundamental principles that govern life in society.” *Mediocracy* brings traditional notions of the common good and class conflict back into the foreground—to reimagine a potentially revolutionary future in which political action is not merely a request for incremental rights and benefits within a (seemingly) naturalized capitalist system, but rather the expression of “collective subjects” engaged in continuous deliberation about how we structure our everyday lives. **M**

Party like it's 1933



PARTY OF CONSCIENCE: THE CCF, THE NDP, AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM IN CANADA

ROBERTA LEXIER, STEPHANIE BANGARTH
AND JONATHAN WEIER (EDITORS)

Between the Lines, Sept. 2018, Paperback, \$27.95

LAST YEAR MARKED the 85th anniversary of the Regina Manifesto, the founding programme of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, precursor to today's NDP. A conference in Calgary last May brought together academics, social movement actors, think-tanks and NDP stalwarts such as Stephen Lewis, Avi Lewis and Bill Blaikie to discuss the party's contribution to politics in Canada. Their papers, 18 in total, are collected by Between the Lines in *Party of Conscience*.

The historical focus of these essays is exemplified in the contribution of historian James Naylor. At its beginning, the CCF was a fractious mix of farmers, labourers, middle class socialists, reformists and antifascists, not the bastion of social democracy—Keynesian economics, a mixed public/private economy and social welfare programs—that the party would become in the 1940s and '50s, he writes. Jennifer Hassum of the United Steelworkers also looks back to the party's earlier days in her chapter, lamenting the loss of the solidarity between the labour and academic sides of the CCF. She believes it vital that labour and intellectuals work together to make a programmatically socialist electoral campaign a success.

The chapter with the greatest general interest is perhaps Christo Aivalis's on democratic socialism in the NDP from 1968–1984. Aivalis, an editor at ActiveHistory.ca, holds that there is a stark difference between the party's current position on public ownership of the economy and that of Tommy Douglas, David Lewis and Ed Broadbent. David Lewis, for example, said the free market simply empowered multinationals “so omnipotent that they can threaten the sovereignty and independence of entire nations.” Broadbent was equally categorical at that point: “A privately owned economy is inherently exploitative and inherently unjust. We must develop a program whose eventual purpose is, in the words of the Regina Manifesto, to eradicate capitalism.”

Aivalis contrasts this with the market-centric approach of today's NDP that equates socialism with social welfare. What has changed, of course, is the rise of neoliberalism, anti-unionism and globalization, shifting political discourse firmly to the right. But, Aivalis contends, the potential exists for the NDP to reignite the flame of its radical intellectual beginnings. This theme is taken up again by Matt Fodor, a PhD candidate in political science at York University, in his look at NDP platforms from 1988 to 2011, which finds a shift from traditional social democratic policies to a version of Blairite Third Wayism.

Another major theme of this collection is the NDP's repeated and challenging attempts to come to grips with the tensions between electoral politics and social movements, as exemplified in the Waffle movement of the late 1960s, the New Politics Initiative of the late 1990s and the recent Leap Manifesto. These movements have generally not fared well within the party, although a Leap compromise resolution was adopted at a convention in 2016. As Fodor puts it, when faced with such challenges,

“the NDP has resisted the demands of social movement actors and activists have failed to fully support the party, to the detriment of both.”

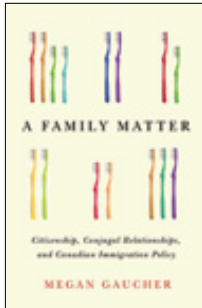
In the book's final chapter, Avi Lewis reflects on the roots of the party in the Regina Manifesto, which he finds surprisingly relevant today with its emphasis on inequalities of wealth and opportunity. He also notes that decades ahead of Occupy Wall Street, another historic text of the left, *Make This Your Canada* (1943) by David Lewis, actually refers to the 1% who control things and the 99% who struggle to make ends meet.

Avi Lewis finds the CCF's emphasis on a planned economy still compelling today. Government direction of the economy during the Second World War should inspire how we respond to climate change, he says. The problem is that due to steadily shrinking taxes, we have a vastly smaller pool of financial resources available to address large-scale society problems. According to Avi Lewis, we need to recover the capacity of government to manage vast societal transitions—a segue to the Leap Manifesto he helped to draft, which is printed at the end of the chapter.

As in any such collection, some chapters deal with topics of rather parochial interest, such as Fabianism and the left in British Columbia, the New Left and municipal politics in Toronto in the '60s and '70s, and the role of religion in the rise of the CCF. But this collection can be recommended to the lay reader for its broader treatments of the NDP in Quebec, an assessment of the federal party's last leadership campaign and the NDP's approaches to foreign policy over the decades. One strange and glaring omission is any reference whatever to the Bob Rae government in Ontario. Perhaps his subsequent defection to the Liberals has made him not only *persona non grata* but an unperson among NDPers. **M**

REVIEWED BY MARGOT CHALLBORN

Still in the bedrooms of the nation



A FAMILY MATTER: CITIZENSHIP, CONJUGAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY MEGAN GAUCHER

UBC Press, Paperback, Nov. 2018, \$29.95

OF THE MANY themes and concepts covered by the umbrella of politics, intimacy and conjugality do not often stand out. And yet intimate life is perhaps the very foundation of political life; political communities would not exist were it not for constellations of people connected by their relationships to one another. Examinations of intimate life are therefore critical to our understandings of politics and power.

In *A Family Matter*, Megan Gaucher presents an intellectually rigorous and thought-provoking examination of the intersections of family, conjugality, citizenship and security in Canadian immigration policy. Though Canada's "model of migration management" is based on the assumption that Canadian society is "defined and enhanced by immigrant admittance," Gaucher writes, the state has a "vested interest in the privileging of conjugal families for immigration purposes."

To make her case, Gaucher examines three areas of Canada's immigration and refugee program: the role of applicants' relationship histories in the determination of sexual minority refugee claims; spousal sponsorship

processes for married and common law couples; and the Harper government's anti-marriage fraud campaign. The book invites readers to reconsider how "the Other" is treated in both immigration policy and political environments more broadly.

Who is welcomed and who excluded? What qualities or experiences are desirable to the Canadian nation-state and why? These questions could not be more important as an increasingly divisive and far-right global politics spreads and feeds off anti-immigrant fear and rhetoric.

Gaucher notes that although Canada understands itself as a "refugee-receiving country," the Canada Border Services Agency recorded a 25% drop in successful refugee applications between 2006 and 2011 at the same time as deportation and detention rates increased. More than 83,000 people were deported between 2006 and 2011.

Furthermore, amendments to the Refugee Protection Act in 2012 gave the federal government the power to identify "safe" countries from which individuals would not be able to seek asylum in Canada—even if they were facing persecution. Migrant and

The Canadian state produces and maintains divisions and hierarchies among citizens and those seeking citizenship.

refugee rights groups dubbed the reforms the Refugee Exclusion Act.

Curiously, while the grant rates for sexual minority and non-sexual minority refugees are comparable, Gaucher cites data from Sean Rehaag of Osgoode Hall Law School showing the rates of refusal for bisexual refugees are higher than those for homosexual refugees. This pattern is the result of bisexuality's invisibility in Canadian law and policy and of the Immigration and Refugee Board's assumption that sexual orientation is "immutable."

Lest we assume these trends stopped with the election of a Liberal government in 2015, *CBC News* reported in October that the Canada Border Services Agency is targeting a 25–35% increase in the deportation rate.

We often compare our national politics to those of the United States and conclude that Canada is in the more favourable situation, perhaps especially on matters of queer rights. However, we don't have to dig very deep to reveal the ways in which the Canadian state also produces and maintains divisions and hierarchies, among citizens and those seeking citizenship, along lines of class, race, sexuality and other intersections of identity.

As governments around the world devise increasingly restrictive immigration policies, it behooves scholars, activists, politicians and policy-makers to think critically about alternative ways of organizing political life and citizenship. Gaucher takes us a step in that direction with this book.

A Family Matter urges us to ask whether we can live with the consequences, for ourselves as individuals and as members of social and political communities, when we allow the state to limit the range of possibilities for our intimate lives. **M**

My neighbours are falling for right-wing populism. What can I do?

SPENT YEARS STUDYING and writing about participatory democracy and inclusive economic development in Brazil and today I'm a senior researcher with the CCPA, working out of the Toronto office.

A few months ago, when a Brazilian compatriot vowed he would vote for Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian ultra-right candidate in a presidential campaign he would go on to win, the road to self-righteousness looked tempting. I came close to taking it.

Instead, the Bolsonaro supporter and I talked, learned about each other's views and the experiences that have shaped them. Soon into the conversation, we were no longer talking about Bolsonaro's inflammatory stances but real problems that Brazil faces. We found some common ground, but mostly agreed to disagree.

I don't know whom he ended up voting for, but that night we scored a point against populist bigotry, whose goal is to fuel discord over faux issues and manufactured crises.

With many parts of Canada experiencing a right-wing populist resurgence, it is worth reflecting on how some politicians make it work for them, what the Canadian particularities seem to be, and what we can do to disarm it.

Right-wing populists are illusionists: they misdirect public attention to a distraction then play a sleight of hand. The distractions are either a crisis or a mirage.

American leaders have for decades focused on security crises of the real, imagined or exaggerated variety, though Donald Trump adopts a Reaganesque "Make America Great Again" with anti-immigrant overtones.

European populism goes after immigrants much harder than Trump, claiming they and other ethnic groups

(Jews, Muslims, Roma) threaten both economic security and national identity. Though a sizeable portion of left-Labour supporters voted for Brexit, the primary "yes" campaign was waged by xenophobic parties like UKIP and the Islamophobic English Defence League.

Latin Americans will pledge to end corruption and install public order, though they often bring disarray, like Peru's Alberto Fujimori. Bolsonaro's open misogyny and virulent attacks on minorities is new in the region.

Even political leaders who don't embrace populism will try to pull a rabbit out of a hat when under pressure. Case in point: 75% of French nationals support the *gilets jaunes* protesters demanding economic justice, and yet President Emmanuel Macron's address to the nation, after discussing economic questions, closes with comments on immigration, a profound identity crisis and the need for the nation to make peace with itself.

What about Canada? What's our brand of populism? There are at least two that I can tell.

In Ontario, Premier Doug Ford embraces a more American and Latin American style of populism, while Quebec's Francois Legault is more of a European type.

Like many populists before him, Ford presents himself as a commoner, an outsider to the political class who will clean up government on behalf of the little guy. His government "For the People" antagonizes Ontario's Liberal Party and the elite of crony capitalists they are supposed to serve. With this framing, Ford has managed to galvanize anti-elite sentiment without threatening the corporate power base whose interests his own party represents.

Premier Legault's magic trick consists of decoupling Quebec cultural nationalism from the political project to which it traditionally belongs. He succeeded in presenting himself as a non-separatist true defender of Quebec values, thanks to scapegoated immigrants and religious minorities. If there could ever be a manufactured distraction it is the notion that immigrants to Canada who can freely



move around the country but choose to settle in Quebec are not interested in learning French.

If populist distractions have a local taste, the sleights of hand tend to be the same everywhere: fiscal austerity that cuts social spending; handing over of public assets and government controls to private investors; and wage suppression and attacks on organized labour.

But if right-wing populism is so easy to spot and discredit, why does it work?

It works because it speaks to the real fears of real people. People who work full time or care for children or care for elders or do all of the above. People whose doctors say they don't exercise enough, whose dentists say they have to floss more regularly, whose financial advisors say they have to save more for retirement, whose mothers say they should call at least once a week, who wonder why winter tires have to come off the same week taxes have to be sent in.

These people are like everyone else with limited time to read about, reflect on and discuss political issues. They are our spouses, children, friends, relatives, neighbours and coworkers. They are our very community.

One day one of these people may sit at your dinner table and profess their support for a right-wing populist who is planning to send your country or province 50 years back in time. What will you do then?

Telling them they should learn more about their candidate probably won't work; in the best-case scenario this might make it to third place on the to-do-more list, after calling mother and flossing.

No, the best thing to do is to have a real conversation, engage in dialogue. But that's never easy.

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator and philosopher, claimed that dialogue is the best and only tool we have to transform the world. His writings offer a way we can strive for true dialogue, education and the liberation of the oppressed.

Here I borrow just a few of Freire's concepts and arguments from his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

to help us think about how to disarm populism in Canada. This abridged discussion doesn't do justice to Freire's theoretical work, but its intent is aligned with his political concerns (in other words, please forgive me).

"Dialogue cannot exist without humility."

Dialogue cannot happen if either party lacks the humility to learn from the other. The one-way transmission of content, where one person tells and expects the other to adjust their worldview uncritically, qualifies as neither dialogue nor education. Dialoguers must be willing to discover the world—or "name the world," in Freire's words—with someone who experiences it differently, and by doing so transform their own worldview as well as that of the other.

Easier said than done. When I stared across the table at the Bolsonaro supporter, all I could see was a seriously misinformed person. Oh, I thought of so many hashtags. Humility only surfaced when I started learning about his experiences, his disillusionment with life in Brazil and his waning hopes that his children will live in a safe country. I learned about an earnest path that leads to conclusions with which I utterly disagree, but that I accept as being part of someone's world and therefore also my world.

"[T]he dialogical nature of education begins with thematic investigation."

Freire's adult literacy method places great emphasis on the investigation of people's "thematic universe," that is, people's realities, lived experiences, and ways to articulate both. Educators applying the dialogical method must engage with the thematic universe of their students, not just draw from their own social and cultural contexts.

I find this point relevant to present-day discussions about political correctness. Trump and Bolsonaro regularly throw punches at political correctness. They depict it as a frill of the overeducated elites, as something that doesn't serve commoners.

Political correctness is a social and cultural shift toward thoughtful and inclusive language, actions

and interactions aimed at creating safe spaces for the participation of all. Voting rights are crucial to the functioning of democracy, but participation in public debate—including the right for people to physically access debates—is equally important. Our public sphere remains unwelcoming and unsafe for large segments of the population. These inclusive practices and language are democracy's next frontier.

That said, we ought to make sure that political correctness doesn't get on the way of dialogue. This happens if people hesitate to express themselves for fear of not knowing the correct lingo; if people avoid issues perceived as taboos; or if the use or non-use of certain terms breaks communication.

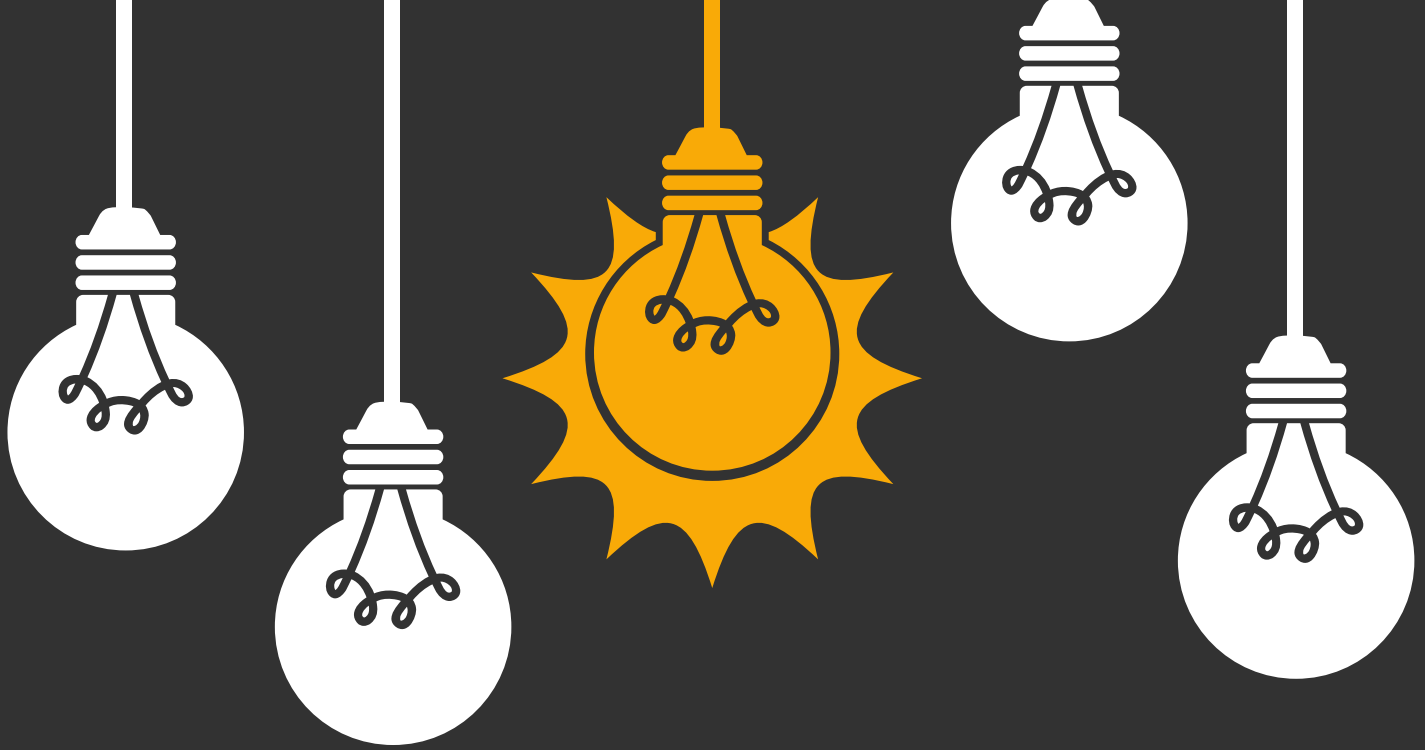
We don't have to accept language we find inappropriate. But if and when we are able to overlook the use of language that is not inclusive, more opportunities for true dialogue and learning may open up, including opportunities to share experiences and explain what terms mean, historically, for us and our communities.

"The revolutionary's role is to liberate, and be liberated, with the people—not to win them over."

The reason for engaging in dialogue is not to tell or to convince others, change their minds or enlist them. In Freire's view, this attitude is typical of oppressors, who will use every tool at their disposal to conquer, subjugate and win people over to their camp. He juxtaposes the desire to conquer the other with acting in collaboration with the other, to unveil the world and act on its transformation.

Difficult conversations don't need to turn into arguments when the goal is not to convince the other, but to explore with the other, to turn our eyes away from manufactured distractions and to focus instead on each other's experiences and troubles, even if we continue to disagree on the way forward.

The opposite of populist bigotry is not political correctness but dialogue. Populist bigotry wins when arrogance, self-righteousness and fear of discord get in the way of difficult conversations about real issues. **M**



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