

**THE PLACE OF THE POOR:
POVERTY, SPACE AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION
IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, 1950-1997**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the social construction of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood since 1950, challenging the recent narrative of urban decline which has situated the area as a skid row district where an influx of drug addicts has displaced a poor but respectable working class community, inducing a spiral of decline. Contrary to this nostalgic memory, this part of Vancouver has been labelled as skid row for at least fifty years and has been the site for an array of programs focused on 'normalizing' the district and its population. Such programs have institutionalized ways of looking at and talking about this part of the city that have stigmatized the place and its inhabitants, providing broad continuity between the contemporary narrative and an earlier version of skid row.

In Vancouver, as elsewhere, skid row appeared in the official lexicon shortly after World War II as shorthand for the centre of the city's lodging house district. The notion of skid row combined assumptions about the isolation of and the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor with post-War anxieties about gender roles and panic by the local elite over sagging downtown competitiveness in a narrative of decline that situated the largely impoverished, male lodging house population as the source of decay and therefore as an impediment to renewal. The programs of urban renewal, population dispersal, and individual rehabilitation justified by this narrative were only challenged with the advent of the social rebellions of the 1960s and the rise of indigenous organization.

Central to this challenge was the formation of a counter-narrative that reconfigured the identity of the population and place, situating them in terms of the area's past at the interface of the urban and rural frontier industrial economy. The anomic decay of skid row was displaced by the image of a neglected, exploited but nonetheless proud community which served as a mobilizing tactic in the pursuit of neighbourhood improvement. However, this self-consciously oppositional symbolic politics of community was unable to escape the skid row narrative, which persisted as its 'constitutive outside'. As the social geography of Vancouver shifted in the wake of the 1986 world's fair, with gentrification of old working class neighbourhoods and the massive residential redevelopments on the once-industrial peripheries of the CBD, the Downtown Eastside is once more cast as a marginal skid row district with a population that threatens the well-being of Vancouver's downtown.

**DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
EMILY, MURIEL, AND SONYA**

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Chapter One

Moral Panic in Vancouver: Drugs, Poverty, and Nostalgia in the City Centre

In the late summer and autumn of 1997, when I had just started writing this dissertation, Vancouver was swept by a wave of panic over skyrocketing rates of HIV infection among intravenous (IV) users of heroin and cocaine. Most of the attention it focused was directed at the part of the city that I was also writing about, a neighbourhood called the Downtown Eastside, where a flourishing street market in illicit drugs had become increasingly visible over the course of the 1990s. Drug users could be seen openly injecting at any time of the day in the alleyways and even on the sidewalks of the district. The escalating density of the drug scene on the streets of the area, evidenced by the appearance of large numbers of emaciated, ragged-looking individuals, contributed immensely to a widespread sense of anxiety. Public displays of behaviour, to which the news media quickly gravitated, such as flailing limbs, dancing in traffic-filled streets, crawling on the sidewalk or grass carefully picking through every inch of dust and grass (all signs of cocaine use we were told by medical and police authorities) fuelled the alarm and the outrage. At the same time, the new visibility of homeless people, beggars, and “squeegee kids” in the downtown and inner city neighbourhoods contributed to a sense of insecurity and malaise that found expression in the panic over the epidemic. Health authorities declared that an HIV epidemic was in progress and, after much soul-searching, debating, countless

sensational media reports, and many, many meetings, began to prepare measures to contain the dual outbreak of drug use and disease and deal with its consequences.

Amid the barrage of press and electronic media reports that helped to frame these public discussions, one article, in particular, stood out for me. Written by two Vancouver police constables, this newspaper commentary, entitled “SKID ROAD meets ... Adam Smith,” purported to offer an insider’s view of the crisis that used the same images and rhetoric that were employed on a regular basis by many of the decided “outsiders” in the media, business, and government. (McKay and Hinton, 1997). The commentary itself featured a photograph of a young man injecting himself, presumably with illegal drugs, against a background of concrete and litter, labelled in the caption as a “drug addict in a skid road alley” (see Figure 1). Its authors outlined the conditions that prevailed in the part of Vancouver which they called skid road and pointed to changes which they had observed taking place during their eight years of working in the district. Foremost among these was gentrification, or “a slow incursion of the middle class” into an area which had once been “a colourful collection of our shared past ... – resource workers who had retired to the area after their pioneering efforts.” It was not, they noted, an especially benevolent change. Having been abandoned and ignored by “society,” the people who lived in skid road were now being threatened with displacement, as “unfettered development opportunities for real estate” began to overtake “societal empathy for low income people.”¹

¹ Curiously, despite their avowed dismay at the effects of gentrification, the constables used virtually the same narrative that was deployed by the agents of the latter to indict the area and its population, thus justifying policies supporting social upscaling.

SKID ROAD

Adam Smith

In the balancing act of societal empathy for low-income people and the unfettered development of real estate, two police officers find that the scales seem to be tipping in favour of the latter.



MARK VAN MANEN/Vancouver Sun
HEING ADOPT IN A SKID ROAD ALLEY: Typifying an area notorious as a disease-ridden enclave of filth and desolation, an area which drives young people to find slow suicide in the form of AIDS.

Figure 1: The image of the social outcast in the 1990s
Source: McKay and Hinton, 1997

Locating skid road's "epicentre" at the 100 block of East Hastings Street, "the worst crime block in Canada," and delineating the area's "nebulous" outer boundaries, the constables enumerated the problems and disorders that were rampant in the area, including property crime and rapidly deteriorating housing that was aggravated by the neglect of absentee landlords. "An influx of ... new denizens" was of particular note because they were "career criminals whose only solace is in prolific intravenous drug use where the price is humanity and their dignity." This intensification of needle drug use, together with the spread of HIV and AIDS among those drug users meant that "the solution to the many ills that plague the area has become a social issue." Unless "society" and the "community" began to care for such people and improve the conditions under which they lived, the writers claimed, gentrification would displace this "disease-ridden enclave of filth and desolation" and "the misery, hopelessness and despair that resides in ... the downtown eastside" would "re-emerge" in other neighbourhoods around the city, perhaps even in the suburbs.

As a student of urban geography writing about the same place at the same time as the policemen, I was intrigued by the authors' explicit spatialization of the problems they tried to describe. The article represented skid road not only as an area distinct from all others around it, but also as an intrinsically evil place, an "area once infamous for its rough edges, blue-collar workers and liquor licence establishments" but which is now an insidious zone that "drives those who have barely reached adulthood to find slow suicide in the form of AIDS." The kind of social problems that are found there are therefore the problems *of* skid road. Its space is not merely an

effect but rather a prime cause of the social malaise which is manifested in the awful scenes on the streets, in the alleyways, inside the buildings, what the two writers call a “collective onslaught on the senses.” But, despite its isolation from society, which has rejected and ignored it, such problems also move in and out of the area in a flow of concentration and dispersion. Drug addicts who, together with negligent landlords, seem to be the primary agents of decay, have come into the district. But, if the area is gentrified and its inhabitants are displaced, “its plethora of societal problems will” move somewhere else, to “re-emerge in outlying areas.” Addicts are thus both the carriers and the victims of a pathology that is essential to skid road. Once infected, they carry the disease with them.

The object of the panic thus emerged not so much as the HIV infection itself, nor even the drug users who were being infected. Instead, the epidemic scare was spatialized. Most of the attention it provoked was focused on the highly visible drug and sex-trade scene that was located in the Downtown Eastside. Indeed, despite clear evidence that the epidemic and the problems attendant on it were a metropolitan-wide, and even a provincial, phenomenon, they became virtually synonymous with their presumed location (VIDUS, 1998; Munro, 1997b; Munro, 1999). A newspaper article declared that “6,000 to 10,000 addicts ... frequent the seedy hotels and back alleys in the Downtown Eastside,” oblivious to the fact that the population of the neighbourhood was only about 8,000 people (Munro, 1997a). Increasingly, the debate over what to do about the spiraling HIV/AIDS infection rates was transmuted into a question of the measures appropriate to deal with what was perceived as the

accelerating moral and environmental decay of the Downtown Eastside. The proliferation of open drug dealing and using (both needles and crack-smoking) on the streets over the course of the 1990s, together with what appeared to be accelerating disinvestment in property were joined together in a rising chorus of authorities lamenting the development of a “US inner-city ghetto” (Middleton, 1996). The umbrella of epidemic was used to conflate fears about drug use, crime and violence, homelessness, and panhandling, transforming the Downtown Eastside into a “seething cauldron of drugs and poverty,” what one observer called “Vancouver’s worst neighbourhood ... probably Canada’s worst neighbourhood” (Strachan, 1998).

For most of these observers and commentators, this malign incarnation of space is but a recent phenomenon. According to the police constables, this was a centre of rough and tumble working class culture until the invasion of the “hypes” (intravenous drug users) and the negligence of property owners led to the present state of decay. “Until recently,” civic authorities claimed, “the Downtown Eastside ... maintained a healthy sense of community. People cared for one another and visitors felt safe, if not entirely comfortable, on the area’s streets.” But now, in the wake of the drug users’ invasion,

many of the area’s visitors are there only for the drugs and related activities. Of those arrested for criminal activity in the area, the majority live outside the neighbourhood. ... The neighbourhood is becoming more and more isolated from the rest of Vancouver and its residents are feeling increasingly under siege. Perceiving the area primarily as a haven of drugs and crime, fewer and fewer people who live elsewhere go there now. Although still a community of many strengths, the Downtown Eastside is in a downward spiral, which severely threatens its continued health and security” (City of Vancouver, 1998).

On reviewing this material, it is hard not to ask what happened. How did this supposedly rough, tough neighbourhood, acknowledged by authorities as a poor but caring community, begin the “downward spiral” toward its position as the worst place in the entire country?

Nostalgia & the concealment of power

This dissertation will show that the rosy vision of this district as a long-time community that has only recently been sullied by the encroachment of predatory drug addicts and criminals stands in sharp contrast to the actual ways in which it has been imagined and represented by political and social agents since at least the early 1950s. The commentary and report just examined above both draw from a narrative that is heavily steeped in nostalgia. Their point is simple and direct: what once was a decent place is so no longer. The loggers have been replaced by drug addicts, or “hypes,” whose presence has induced the sad decline of the place they occupy. However, given the doubtful provenance of most nostalgic renditions of any situation, it behooves us to look more closely at the reading it offers.

Nostalgic memory, according to Nora (1996), operates as the *uncritical* mobilization of the past to justify or explain present circumstances (Philo and Kearns, 1993).² It forecloses debate by creating a seamless narrative that erases the pain and conflict of the past, homogenizing and simplifying complex events so that they compare favourably with those of the present (Lowenthal, 1989; Davis, 1979; Bellelli

² Nora (1996) is concerned with the ways in which memory is constructed, often in a quite conscious fashion, in the service of mobilizing national identity. He distinguishes between memory and history, the latter as the representation of the past that has emerged through the play of debate and politics, whereas the former monopolizes the interpretation of the past, suppressing debate and dissent.

and Amatulli, 1997). In so idealizing the past, nostalgia conceals the social and institutional forces that structure the changes to which it refers, thus obscuring the relations of power that animate the contemporary situation it is deployed to justify.

The commentary by the two police constables examined above is remarkably similar in both sensibility and vocabulary to another newspaper article about skid road. Written by an ex-policeman thirty one years earlier, it, too, was accompanied by a photograph of a man. This time, the figure is bearded and shabbily-dressed, sitting on a bench in front of a cigarette machine (Cocking, 1966, see Figure 2). The picture is labelled “. . . no Square Johns need apply,” and the reader is obviously intended to see the man as an alcoholic, a figure that, like the IV drug user of the 1990s, was emblematic of the socio-spatial pathology of skid road. The piece argued that proponents of skid road “clean-up” were deluding themselves into thinking that the problems which comprised it could be eliminated via tight regulatory control and urban renewal. While skid road was “once the romping grounds of thousands of loggers ... today [it] is a haven for the rejects of society. ... The alcoholic, addict and sex deviate cannot cope with the demands and frustrations of general society, but they can function within their own group.”³ Consequently, “skid road is not just a geographic accident, it is a hard core of human failure.” Rather than eliminating the deviant impulses that are responsible for the existence of such a place, this writer argues, urban renewal will only move it somewhere else.

³ By “sex deviates” the author presumably means gays and lesbians.

MOVING FURNITURE WON'T HELP

V.S. Oct 4/66 p 6

It Can't Be Tidied Up So Easily

There will be no golden rule!
How does that sound?

By THOMAS COCKING

And neither does a Silver shoe make a child read.

To suggest — as the merchants in the area are doing — that we can blame the children of our child read on a Silver shoe is ridiculous. Child read is not so easily killed by just all the problems would disappear by removing one shoe. It is just an excuse, an excuse geography professor Walter Hoadwick suggests? Of course not. It is much more complex. The child read is a complex of many things, including those against which the merchants of the Improvement of Downtown East Area Society are barely making an impression.

ONCE THE FURNITURE MOVING OF thousands of boxes, and read today is a large for the rest of society. The important personality in the role of child read is the child.

The alcoholic child and are devote mental care with the children, and maintenance of parent custody, but they can function within their own group.

However, don't expect their values to be just values.

The child's conception of the steadily employed Square-John, his coming to be thought of as Thanksgiving, and others all his hopes and fears around here.

Close bonding, the connection with his father, and the poverty of his friends.

Mr. Cocking spoke to police with Mr. Vancouver police force, most of it in the child read area, before returning to culture to university.

Keep him on child read. To the child to require a wife more than when redevelopment.

NEW READ IN THE WHEEL WORLD to new children. Few read with a dirty window can hide from reality in the background's hair poster. This is the child's moment of security. He crawls out of a chair, and out into the world, for a few, and then comes for the light eye to receive last night when falling down. Meanwhile the parents of child read like hold past his back.

To him, these devices become the life force itself, that of the trapping of the dead outside world. To child read children he will say, "You're dead, you Square-John, you."

The trouble of a morning hangover may bring a fleeting revelation of his existence, but begging a drink to begin the cycle again is easier than releasing alcoholism. That will moving the Central street Square-John's story into something making him danger again?

WHERE IN ON THE ROAD CAN...
In the area, child read and children are...
In the area, child read and children are...
In the area, child read and children are...

Gay in his Saturday night attire of...
Gay in his Saturday night attire of...
Gay in his Saturday night attire of...

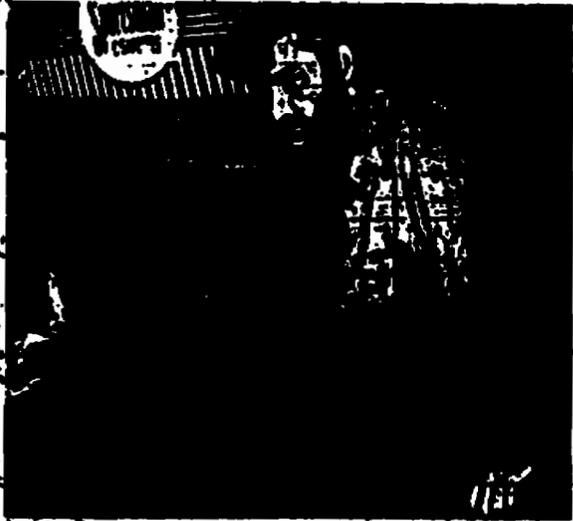
At quiet table, all the aggressive...
At quiet table, all the aggressive...
At quiet table, all the aggressive...

Nevertheless, urban redevelopment, to...
Nevertheless, urban redevelopment, to...
Nevertheless, urban redevelopment, to...

Industrial zoning laws operation...
Industrial zoning laws operation...
Industrial zoning laws operation...

PUBLIC HOUSING'S FAILURE...
Public housing's failure...
Public housing's failure...

Child read is not just a geographic...
Child read is not just a geographic...
Child read is not just a geographic...



...no Square-Johns need apply

Figure 2: The image of the social outcast in the 1960s
Source: Cocking, 1966

The resemblance between these two commentaries across a thirty-year gap is too striking to ignore. Each is concerned with the impact of the displacement of the destitute poor on the rest of the city; both emphasize the consequences of deviant conduct and its rejection by respectable citizens; and the two share an assumption of sheer inevitability of a place like skid road. Such concurrence is all the more remarkable when the most recent of the two commentaries disclaims any such comparison by its contrast of the starkly malevolent present with the implication of a wild but otherwise innocuous proletarian past.

An examination of the ways in which this part of Vancouver has been imagined and represented over the past fifty years, which is the key task of this dissertation, shows clearly that no such period ever really existed in the forms which have been attributed to it. Nevertheless, the contemporary nostalgia that frames such accounts and which has emerged in the context of rapid urban transformation and political reaction and retrenchment has provided an important strategic device for authenticating the claims of new groups to occupy and control this space. At the same time, it conceals emerging power dynamics that are attendant on a reconfiguration of the social geography of the inner city, distracting attention away from the problems arising from an influx of middle and upper income property-owning households into an increasingly poor neighbourhood. Operating in tandem with evocations of the district as a site of intertwined drug and sexual epidemics, it has functioned to both erase the long term facts of poverty and slum conditions endured by the area's

population for at least half a century and reverse the claims to community through which the latter sought to challenge earlier forms of subordination.

Social polarization and the material context of nostalgia

One place to begin disclosing the relations that are disguised by the resort to nostalgia is at the point where the local situation intersects with the conditions prevailing in the wider city. Given the scope that has been attributed to the changes in the Downtown Eastside, it may be that the panic which has enveloped it is an index not so much of local transformation, but rather of the tectonic shifts in the social fabric of Vancouver which are bound up with global and national patterns of political-economic and urban restructuring. The concept of social polarization in the global city, one of the dominant focii of urban studies in the past fifteen years, provides a useful framework for examining these shifts in the social geography of Vancouver.

In a proposition advanced initially by Friedmann and Wolff (1982) and elaborated by Sassen (1991), global and globalizing cities are cast as sites of dramatic reconfigurations in the social class structure caused by the combination of increasingly international flows of financial capital and labour migration, a dispersion of manufacturing away from central cities, and advanced economies, and a concomitant centralization of corporate control and management. The tandem emergence of a technocratic-professional middle class and a casualized, low-wage service proletariat with a large immigrant component, linked to rising corporate and government demands for producer services, the proliferation of consumer service activities, and a resurgence of sweated manufacturing, has produced a fundamentally

new urban class alignment characterized by the metaphor of the “dual city” (Mollenkopf and Castells, Sassen, 1991).

The geography of social polarization is nuanced. The composition of Canada’s labour market has more closely resembled that of the United States than of Europe, where professionalization has not been accompanied by the growth of a low-wage service sector (Esping-Anderson, 1993; Hamnett, 1994). But, if the emerging occupational structure of its cities is perhaps more characteristic of the former, urban income patterns in Canada are closer to those of Europe, which are less polarized than in the U.S. (Hamnett 1996; Ley, 1996; Bourne, 1993). The ongoing stability of Canadian income distribution since the 1950s is reflected in the persistence of the spatial patterning of inequality between central cities and suburbs and within central cities. But there is also increasing complexity in central city income patterns, where state-sponsored low income housing projects and condominium development and residential renovation have created sometimes adjacent concentrations of poor and middle-to-higher income households (Bourne, 1991, 1993).

Two particular themes have been taken as expressions of social polarization processes. First, the most destitute sectors of the urban poor are increasingly perceived as a permanent “underclass” that is located largely in badly deteriorating inner cities and public housing projects. As a consequence of deindustrialization and the rise of the service economy, large numbers of the inner city poor have been cut loose from the labour market. As the inner city middle class departed for suburban jobs, the poor have been left behind to fend for themselves in the wake of government service cuts

(Wilson, 1987; Jencks and Patterson, 1991). Thus isolated socially and spatially from the rest of the city, the underclass exhibits increasingly deviant tendencies that serve to aggravate its conditions of deprivation. In the Canadian context, evidence of an underclass has been mixed. Although indicators of “concentrated multiple deprivation” used as an index of underclass presence, actually declined between 1970 and 1990, “pockets of concentrated poverty” were identified in Canadian cities during the 1990s (Ley and Smith, 1997; Hatfield, 1998).

Second, the role of the new middle class in revalorizing central city property markets is implicated in the geography of social polarization and has been linked to the formation of the “abandoned city” of the underclass (Sassen, 1991; Marcuse, 1993). Gentrification, or the settlement of elements of the middle class in old inner city neighbourhoods, has been a signal phenomenon of central city real estate markets in Canada (Ley, 1988, 1992). But, its effects have been uneven, not only between cities but within them. There has been a serious erosion of the rental housing stock in many neighbourhoods subject to middle class settlement, particularly in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa, suggesting that residential renovation and redevelopment have resulted in widespread displacement of lower income households (Ley, 1996). However, evidence on gentrification from Montreal, where political-economic restructuring actually propelled the city away from the national centre, indicates a more diverse outcome, perhaps incumbent on the city’s economic decline, with incoming middle class property-owners sharing neighbourhoods with lower-income renters (Rose, 1996). Bourne (1993) argues, using evidence mainly from Toronto, that

gentrifying trends are based primarily on localized redevelopments as well as income upgrading in existing middle class and wealthy neighbourhoods.

The Downtown Eastside has thus emerged as a national problem in Canada at a time when the catalogue of urban problems in both European and North American cities has foregrounded the forms of inequality consequent on central city deindustrialization, the rise of the service economy, and concomitant state retrenchment. Certainly, the sheer measures of the economic inequality that divide the neighbourhood from the rest of Vancouver are startling. Income inequality increased in both Vancouver City and region from 1970 to 1990 (Smith, 2000). During that period, as region-wide household income median increased 4.7 times, that of Downtown Eastside households only went up by factors of 2 and 2.6 in the two Downtown Eastside census tracts. In other words, the median household income there fell dramatically in relation to the rest of the city, from 51% and 37% of the metropolitan median to 23% and 20% respectively (Statistics Canada, 1974, 1991).⁴

The deepening inequality manifested in these simple statistics has taken place in a context that is symptomatic of developments in global or globalizing cities. Over the past quarter century, Vancouver's core and much of its inner city have been radically transformed. Formerly working class neighbourhoods have been renovated or rebuilt for professionals and middle class service workers and the deindustrialized waterfront

⁴ The 1971 figures include data for Census Tract 59 while the 1991 data includes only CT 59.01. In the neighbouring Strathcona district, which has been subject to intense gentrification pressures, median household income increased 3.9 times, falling far less abruptly, from 39% to 33% of the metropolitan median. It is also worth noting that, as Smith (2000) points out, the proportion of people living on low incomes in the City of Vancouver actually increased overall, so that these figures are somewhat less striking (although only nominally so) when compared with the more restricted area

areas ringing the downtown are being redeveloped as high density residential districts for the same social groups (Mills; Ley, 1988; 1992; 1996; Hutton, 1994; Reid, 1998). Increasing flows of international of capital into metropolitan, particularly downtown, property markets during the second half of the 1980s were accompanied by accelerating immigration from east Asian countries during the 1980s and early 1990s (Olds, 1995, 1998; Reid, 1998; Mitchell, 1993). The changing built environment of the city has been joined with a changing human face.

The signal event of this transformation, the 1986 World Exposition, held on deindustrialized waterfront lands adjacent to the Downtown Eastside, offered a portent of the future for the neighbourhood when owners of SRO hotels and rooming houses evicted large numbers of downtown residents from their rooms in anticipation of a tourist boom (Olds, 1989; Chapter 9 of this dissertation). Already eroded as a result of gentrification, this once substantial stock of inner city housing has been even further depleted through conversions as tourism assumed an increasing role in the downtown economy, in the wake of the world's fair (The Housing Centre, 1997; Ley, 1996).⁵ Meanwhile, police campaigns to shift the street-oriented drug- and sex-trades from gentrifying neighbourhoods farther afield have resulted in their relocation to the Downtown Eastside and surrounding areas even as residential developments on the former exposition site, together with gentrification in the historical districts on its

⁵ The Housing Centre (1997) of the City of Vancouver estimates that from 1970 to 1994 there were 5700 units of single room occupancy (SRO) housing lost in the downtown core, while another 4700 sleeping and housekeeping rooms were lost outside the core area. One housing advocacy group estimates that nearly 1,000 more residential units have been lost between 1997 and 2000 because of conversions to tourist use (CCAP, 1999, 2000).

peripheries, have brought the new middle class of inner city property-owners face-to-face with the downtown poor (Lowman, 2000; McCoy, 1995; Bula, 1995).

The circumstances in which the panic over drugs and disease in the Downtown Eastside has developed, then, are characterized by urban transformation and growing socio-economic differentiation not only in a citywide context but also within the neighbourhood itself. Charting the faultlines that divide the neighbourhood's shifting social landscape, Smith (2000) traces not only patterns of what she calls "pauperisation," but also tendencies toward increasing "professionalisation" in the neighbourhood's population. The Downtown Eastside, she argues, is in the midst of a transition characterized by simultaneous processes of social upgrading and downgrading during which the "day to day living conditions of the community's poorest and most disadvantaged have worsened at the same time that pressures of gentrification and broad scale revitalisation have intensified" (Smith, 2000: 305). As an emerging inner city middle class directly confronts Vancouver's poor under conditions that impose increasing pressure on the living situations of the latter, intensifying class conflicts over space, small and large, have become characteristic of the city's urban core (Smith, 2000; Blomley and Sommers, 1999; Blomley, 1997a, b; 1998).

However, the condition of growing social polarization is not, by itself, sufficient to provide an explanation of apparent changes in the Downtown Eastside. To a great extent, the discourse of drug and sexual epidemic that has propelled the emergence of moral panic over the conditions in the neighbourhood recognizes the reality of

polarization through its stark comparison between the outcast poor in the streets and the new urban middle class whose presence is apparently “revitalizing” the downtown. However, in doing so, it situates the locus of responsibility for problems arising from urban social structural change with poor people themselves, especially those segments that were once classified as “social deviants,” and now as “the underclass,” such as beggars, drug addicts, and homeless youth. Anxieties expressed about the impact of the drug-trade and the conduct of drug addicts in the neighbourhood resonate with the same kind of apprehensions manifest in academic and media inquiries into the underclass.

In seeking an answer to the question of how and why the Downtown Eastside has changed, it is therefore important to move beyond an analysis of the social terrain of the neighbourhood and the city and the structural conditions that frame it toward an interrogation of the dynamics of power and meaning that give it a concrete form.

Dispossession, stigmatization and the symbolic power of nostalgia

Marcuse (1989, 1993) questions the novelty of the emergent social “dualism” measured by calculations of social polarization, arguing instead that urban space has always been inscribed with significant social and economic differences, incorporating patterns far more complicated than binary class divisions. Rather than seeking merely to gauge inequality, he argues, shifting social and spatial relations should be treated as “overlapping patterns of differentiation -- invidious differentiation” that reflect “not simply *lifestyles* or *special needs*, but ... positions in a hierarchy of power and wealth in which some decide and others are decided for.” Instead of measuring “the extent of

the differences,” “it is much more important to locate the breaks, the basic lines of cleavage” between relationships of “domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion, privilege and deprivation...” (Marcuse, 1993, pp. 356-57). If measures of polarization identify structures of difference, it is necessary to examine the processes by which those differences are mobilized as relations of power.

The power of naming and classifying, what Bourdieu (1991) calls “symbolic power,” has been a central strategic element in the emergence of nostalgia about the Downtown Eastside. In this respect, the area’s population has been at a double disadvantage. Wacquant (1993: 368) argues that

“in addition to being deprived of adequate conditions and means of living, to be poor in a rich society entails having the status of a social anomaly and being deprived of control over one’s collective representation and identity: the analysis of public taint [in designated slum areas] serves to stress the *symbolic dispossession* that turns their inhabitants into veritable outcasts.”

The consequences of symbolic dispossession are akin to those of *Orientalism* (Said, 1979). The conceptualizations and definitions of the poor and their problems emerge from the “positional superiority” of those who are able to name them, that is by social groups that possess the instruments of symbolic production. To be included in the category of “the poor” is to be situated as an object, rather than a subject, of knowledge. The poor are “contained and represented by dominating frameworks” that constitute them as “other,” exoticizing poverty even as they domesticate it and render it intelligible to those who are “not poor” (Said, 1979: 40; see Wacquant, 1997, on the exoticization of the poor). And, to the extent that the condition of poverty is traced to

the incapacity and irresponsibility of those it defines, they are stigmatized as morally and psychologically inferior (Katz, 1996).

The “orientalization” of the poor is most compelling at a spatial level. Like those of the Orient, dominant understandings of poverty function as “a distribution of geopolitical awareness” into a range of textual productions and systems (Said, 1979: 12). “The poor” is constructed as a category in discourses, representations, and meanings that produce what Said (1979: 54) calls an “imaginative geography” that locates its objects in places such slums, ghettos, inner cities, skid rows,⁶ places, that are as seen as being somehow separate from the rest of the city and society.⁷ The imagination and representation of the territorial segregation of poor people renders such districts as zones of isolation that signify the pathologies of their occupants (Ward, 1976). The stigmatization of poverty is amplified as it slides over to the spaces that contain them, and the consequent opprobrium that attaches to residence in zones of poverty (Wacquant, 1993). This “territorial stigmatization” appears as a key feature

⁶ Vancouver and Seattle were the only cities in which the old lodging house district was called skid road rather than skid row. The latter term is derived from the original skid road, which, in nineteenth century frontier logging vernacular, referred to the corduroy roads along which logs were skidded to lumber mills. Vancouver’s first archivist, Major Matthews, counted a total of 13 such roads at various times in early Vancouver. As saloons and other activities developed in and around logging settlements, the name skid road became the designation for the places where loggers spent their leisure time and money and was eventually being applied to those urban districts frequented by loggers and other migrant workers (Morgan, 1982; Casselman, 1995). Morgan (1982) claims that the term was corrupted into skid row when it was applied in the vernacular to the urban gathering places of single working men, indicating, at once, an anachronistic built environment and social failure, as in the phrase ‘on the skids’. It is interesting to note that the midway at the 1912 Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver was named skid road, indicating that at that time, that latter was a place associated with fun (Baxter, 1997).

⁷ Wacquant (1996) argues that the conflation of the concept ghetto with that of the underclass, and, through it, with poverty, has confused the discussion of contemporary poverty in advanced capitalist cities. Historically ghettos have served as zones of containment for racially stigmatized groups and have included wealthy as well as poor residents. Present tendencies to equate areas of concentrated poverty with ghettos confuses the differences between racial segregation and the forces of class and income segregation.

of the moral order of the city, as the presence or absence of poor people is deployed as a means of determining the boundaries between zones of safety, respectability, and normality and those of danger, impropriety, and deviance (Wacquant, 1996, 1999).

Wacquant (1996, 1999) contends that territorial stigmatization is a particular feature of the condition of “advanced marginality” that emerges from the confluence of intensifying social inequality, labour market restructuring, and welfare state retrenchment that are implicated in the increasing concentration of the poor people in “zones of urban relegation” (Wacquant, 1997). However, as will be made clear in this dissertation, *the stigma attached to residence in skid row districts has been a phenomenon going back to the end of World War II*. It has functioned as a means of dispossessing certain categories of poor people not only of the ability to construct their own identities but also of the spaces they occupy.

In what follows, then, I want to interrogate the constitution of the Downtown Eastside as an object of knowledge and power by tracing the movement through it of symbolic dispossession and territorial stigmatization over the past five decades. In so doing, the argument I want to put forward here, *contra* the contemporary discourse of panic and the nostalgic memory which is so central to it, is that this part of Vancouver has long been situated as a space of disorder, even danger, while its inhabitants have been consistently cast as social outsiders. Certainly there have been significant shifts in the neighbourhood’s social geography, just as there have in the rest of the city. However, the appearance of the drug addict as a new social scourge is an index not so

much of neighbourhood decline but of the enduring power of stigmatizing notions of poverty and the problematic place (or lack thereof) of the poor in the city.

Central to this argument is the idea that the ways in which the area has been imagined and represented have been more than mere reflections of any putative “reality” of the situation. Rather, they have been vitally constitutive of the “real” Downtown Eastside. The policies and programs directed at the neighbourhood are thus as much the product of this imagination and representation as they are the “concrete” problems which it poses.

Keith (1995: 357) suggests that “inner city” type areas are recognized, and thus made governable, through the deployment of narratives of “urban salvation and decline” that transform “political spaces into natural objects” which are suitable for the interventions of public officials and other agencies in the name of improvement or control. Among other things, such narratives render urban space intelligible to governing authorities by naturalizing the presence and conduct of particular types of subjects whose attributes are constituted as essential elements of the places they occupy. The imagination and representation of urban space are thus translated into concrete policies and programs as authorities seek to govern particular places *as if* they were populated by certain kinds of individuals and groups. Thus, Keith (1995) examines the central importance of two stereotypical figures, the “ethnic entrepreneur” and the “street rebel,” to the formation of planning policy in central London.

Beginning in Vancouver in early 1950s (although earlier in other cities), public officials appropriated the vernacular term skid road to constitute alcoholic derelicts and homeless transient men as the main figures in a narrative of inner city decline that situated the lodging house districts adjacent to big city downtown areas in North America as locations of the most outcast social groups in the city. Skid road, or skid row as it was more widely known in official vocabulary, was seen as a place that contained the most pathological sectors of a dysfunctional “lower class,” deviant men whose masculine identity was damaged possibly beyond repair. The latter’s presence, so close to the downtown, was treated by authorities as both a symptom and a proximate cause of city centre decline. Redevelopment offered political and business authorities the possibility of reviving the most forsaken parts of Central Business Districts at the same time as it promised to disperse a problem population away from the downtown core. But, skid row was also recognized as the refuge of a socially dysfunctional and incompetent population. Instead of simple dispersion, programs of disciplinary and tutelary management, designed to contain and rehabilitate local inhabitants, to remake their subjectivities, were advanced as a more reasonable and humane alternative. Nevertheless, in either scenario, the presence of the local population was assumed to be illegitimate and its removal was the guiding imperative.

However, the relationship between subjectivity and space is not fixed (Keith and Pile, 1993). Regardless of its longevity, the stigmatization that moved under the sign of skid road in Vancouver has not gone uncontested. Although the program of urban renewal moved ahead unimpeded in most localities, it was successfully challenged in

Vancouver. A key element in its defeat was the advent of an alternative narrative that challenged the scenario of decline which it projected by constructing the local population as the subject, rather than the object, of power. It was premised on the existence of a historically-rooted community composed of aging tenants of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels and rooming houses, most of whom, activists claimed, were retired or disabled hinterland industrial workers or elderly Asian immigrants. Through the presence of such people, the community group sought to rewrite the history of the area and its relation with the city, linking it with two particular legacies, the province's frontier resource industries, with an accompanying record of labour activism, and the long exclusion of non-British, especially Asian, immigrants. This history provided a context for the escalation of social and political activism that helped to transform the area into a community of the respectable poor, named the Downtown Eastside, with residents who were fighting for rights that had been denied to them by indifferent politicians, negligent bureaucrats, and exploitative businesses. It also provided the framework for a new rationality of development premised on the regulatory enforcement of the built environment, housing improvements, and new service provision for the local population.

The moral panic of the late 1990s signaled the tentative formation of a yet another narrative construction of the Downtown Eastside, this time combining elements of those which preceded it with new notions of the "urban pioneer" as inner city folk here. It is not coincidental that moral panic emerged at a time when Vancouver's downtown peninsula was undergoing massive residential and

commercial redevelopment and the city's inner neighbourhoods saw a sharpening of socio-economic differentiation. This was particularly the case in and around the Downtown Eastside, as gentrification and new housing development brought middle class property-owners into the area in increasing numbers (Smith, 2000). In Vancouver, as elsewhere, gentrification has been a key element in the rise of urban revanchism or the politics of middle class resentment toward impoverished and marginal populations (Smith, 1996). In the confrontation between the inflowing middle class residents and the poor, the latter are once again being constituted as the agents of neighbourhood decline, while the former appear as the purveyors of inner city revitalization.

In this context, nostalgic memory is more than just a means of interpreting changes in and around the Downtown Eastside. It frames a new recognition of the Downtown Eastside through the appropriation and retrospective affirmation of the claims to community that were once asserted in opposition to the earlier definitions of skid road, without noting the actual circumstances under which those claims were made, all the while simultaneously proclaiming their contemporary abrogation in the wake of new conditions, ie., the "arrival" of the drug addicts and other elements of the undeserving poor. Nostalgia thus reproduces the Downtown Eastside as skid road, a space that is, by definition, both malign and malignant. This reinvigoration of territorial stigmatization dispossesses the local population by constituting it, once again, as the other, as an object, rather than a subject, of power, justifying new interventions to remove skid road and its problem population.

This dissertation will thus challenge the conventional wisdom about the Downtown Eastside by showing how the nostalgia bound up with moral panic and its attribution of neighbourhood decline to the presence of drug addicts constitutes a fundamental misrecognition of the area's past and the problems which it confronted both then and now. Nostalgia not only ignores the facts of poverty and exclusion that moved under the sign of skid road. It also makes it easy to forget the half-century long rendering of the area as a field of professional-expert knowledge in which its inhabitants have been recognized, first, as the objects of policies and programs designed to rescue or contain them, and, second, and only when they have forcibly intruded into the arena of authoritative discourse and action, as subjects, cast in terms of residence and citizenship. Indeed, the recognition through the circuits of media and government of positive changes in the Downtown Eastside, whether "real" or "imagined," took place only when local groups directly contested the narrative of decline with assertions of subjectivity and community.⁸

The dissertation will also show that the narratives which have cast the Downtown Eastside's inhabitants as problematic objects of knowledge, and thus a deservedly subordinate group, or, alternatively, as social and political subjects, have, at once, given shape to and drawn from sometimes disparate cultural and political projects, especially those concerning poverty, marginalization, and urban space. In

⁸ Ironically, the most numerous and tangible improvements in living conditions, ranging from new housing and increased regulation of private landlords to enhanced health and social services, have taken place at precisely the same time that open drug use and HIV/AIDS infection were increasing, thus leading to the revival of skid road rhetoric in the circuits of official discourse. The notion of the poverty ghetto, which will be explored in the conclusion, seeks to causally link these two processes through claims that a supposed concentration of social services and housing in the area has led to rising drug use and associated diseases.

effect, the area has been officially constituted as a locale through the articulation of such projects and the discursive streams associated with them. The demarcation of the various overlapping spaces that have been known as skid road, the Downtown Eastside, or as both at once should be seen as more than the effort to administratively bound a neighbourhood. Rather, it must be understood as a political act, an effect of larger struggles over the definition of poverty and the place of the poor in the city. The frequent deployment of the preposition “on” to situate action there, whether in skid road or the Downtown Eastside, suggests that the area has provided both a local stage where some of those struggles have been played out and a slate on which discourses of conflict and power are written and rewritten.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 2 situates skid row within the wider discourses concerned with poverty and the urban slum. Skid rows have been classified as a special category of slum and descriptions of them draw on basic motifs used in the determination of the wider category, including the division of the poor into deserving and undeserving classes, the socio-spatial isolation of slum populations, and the constitution of slum districts as sites of spectacle and exploration.. The slum is not simply an urban district but a relation between space and the forms of subjectivity attributed to those subordinate groups categorized as poor. The spatialization of particular forms of subjectivity functions as a means of rationalizing interventions into the lives of slum-dwellers that would otherwise be intolerable in liberal democratic regimes. For much of the nineteenth century, slum districts were considered to be widespread and randomly

situated. The association of poverty with the inner city began around the turn of the century, coinciding with the emerging application of scientific methods to social reform that were mobilized in the service of slum “exploration” and the dissemination of information via books and articles about the poor, which produced increasingly fine classifications of poor people.

As sociological knowledge was brought to bear on urban problems, the divide between deserving and undeserving poor was recast as a question of incorrigible poor, who refused to respond positively to ameliorating measures and were thus cut-off, socially and spatially from the rest of society. The concept of social disorganization, originating as a device to explain the tendency toward social “breakdown” in immigrant communities, was applied to explanations of the conditions of the urban poor. Although the notion of disorganization among immigrants and the poor was subjected to significant critique, it inaugurated the cultural explanations of poverty that have persisted to the present day, of the idea of skid row is one variant. Beginning with the notion of a “lower class” that was constituted by people with distinct values, forms of conduct, and family structure, such explanations located the causes of poverty in the self-reproducing life patterns of the poor themselves. The increasing racialization of models of lower class conduct laid the basis for the emergence, in the 1980s, of representations of an urban underclass that is characterized by its apparent concentration and isolation in decaying ghetto areas of inner cities and the consequent pathologies of poverty to which it is prone.

The emergence of skid row in North American cities, on the sites of downtown lodging house districts after World War II, coincided with the formulation of the “lower class” as an object of research. Such areas came to signify a malaise that centred on the deviant values and conduct of predominantly male populations that were classified as “homeless” and “single.” The “skid row man” was the quintessential lower class male and stood as an antithetical representation to the then-dominant regime of male identity that centred on the masculine ideal of the professional, suburban-dwelling, family-man. Despite efforts to eliminate skid rows from the urban landscape, such areas have persisted and the social characteristics they designated have been incorporated into descriptions of the underclass which currently frames most debates about poverty.

Chapter 3 begins the examination of the Downtown Eastside, Vancouver’s skid road district. Situated at the eastern edge of the Central Business District, skid road occupied the site of the city’s original European settlement. Prior to the war, it had been a nodal point in the city’s linkages with the hinterland resource industries. It was the hub for rail and water transport into and out of Vancouver and the centre for numerous manufacturing and distribution businesses depending on hinterland products.

Socially, this was a place where resource, construction, and other migratory workers stayed when in the city. The lodging house district was interspersed with the small city’s immigrant “slum” district, called the East End, its industrial waterfront, the working class Yaletown apartment and rooming house district to the southwest,

and the Asian ghettos of Chinatown and Japantown. A large retail sector served Vancouver's working class east side as well as the immediate neighbourhood. The saloons and coffee-shops provided a retail centre for Vancouver's illegal opiate drug trade and some of the petty crime which accompanied it.

The classic skid row landscape, consisting of lodging houses and saloons, cheap restaurants, Christian missions, employment agencies, pawnshops, pool halls, warehouses, and light industry, that emerged in the early 1950s was thus a legacy of the recent frontier-industrial past. Its population, the presence of which was a key feature of that landscape, consisted overwhelmingly of single men. Although it, too, was an artifact of the city's development, this population was stereotyped as deviant, classified for the most part as alcoholic derelicts and rootless, unemployed, transients, together with heroin addicts, sexual "deviants" (ie., gays and lesbians) and wayward children.

Vancouver's skid road began to take shape in official discourse in the early 1950s, through newspaper exposés about shocking conditions and activities there and bureaucratic reports on the problems of alcoholics and transient single men on the city's relief rolls. The explanation for this situation drew heavily on a wider diagnosis of skid row in Canadian and U.S. cities and was constructed primarily through official and business channels. Like similar districts in cities across North America, Vancouver's skid road marked the outer edge of the space that bounded respectable society. The deterioration of the built environment, otherwise known as urban decay, was equated with the perceived moral decay of the area's inhabitants and was, in large

degree, blamed on their presence and conduct. Newspaper stories were accompanied by official investigations and reports, all of which linked falling revenues with moral dissipation. As business groups began to clamour for intervention to halt the spread of decay, civic authorities drew up plans to redevelop the buildings and rehabilitate and relocate the population. None of these plans were formulated with the latter's participation. It was considered largely as an object to be treated, rather than consulted and involved.

Chapter 4 continues the examination of skid road with a look at how preparations for its urban renewal produced a fundamental shift in the way it was perceived in official quarters. Unlike similar districts in other cities, Vancouver's skid road did not fall to the bulldozers and wrecking balls. Indeed, among the first quarters of effective opposition to urban renewal in the city were the area's social service agencies. They argued that in lieu of adequate policies and programs, skid road was an inevitable outcome of the need for acceptance among social outcasts so that redevelopment would only result in the displacement of the population, creating new outcast aggregations in adjoining districts.

Ironically, civic plans for urban renewal were vital to the reshaping of the framework in which skid road was constructed. Social surveys, a prerequisite for federal funding, revealed the complexity of the local population. Skid road inhabitants were recast, in short order, from pathological derelicts and transients into an agglomeration of subcultural groups which had been rejected by the social mainstream, a status reinforced by institutional exclusion. The district rapidly moved

from the position of a site that stood entirely apart from and at odds with “the community,” to one where deviants could find refuge from the rejections experienced at the hands of an intolerant and indifferent society.

Official recognition of skid road was thus transmuted from an anti-community to a community of outcasts. Urban renewal was positioned as a means of redressing this earlier indifference. Civic authorities therefore sought the active collaboration of social agencies to devise instruments for the amelioration of the social problems which had hitherto been ignored. Redevelopment was to proceed in the company of a series of tutelary interventions designed to treat the disorders that characterized the skid road population and restore individuals to normal ways of life, or approximations thereof. The point, then, was not to strengthen the deviant community, but to re-order the individuals who composed it, thus eliminating the basis for its existence.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are a series of short chapters that explore the events which overtook such plans and the civic response to them. Initial opposition to urban renewal came from social service groups that sought to enhance its effectiveness through rehabilitation programs. Direct confrontation with the agencies promoting it came from a different direction, moving along channels that were carved by the local version of the great rebellions of the 1960s, bringing together elements of an incipient professional middle class with neighbourhood groups, ethnic organizations, left-wing trade unionists, self-proclaimed revolutionaries, anti-poverty activists, and heritage supporters in a potent melange of opposition to the dominant bureaucratic-corporate model of civic development and politics. The consequent wave of popular protest

incorporating these diverse groups halted large-scale redevelopment projects in Vancouver's inner city.

Chapter 5 explores the emergence of a new imagination of the inner city through the opposition of the heritage movement to urban renewal, in which it played a central role, and its transformation of skid road from a slum to a repository of civic history that became known as Gastown. Heritage preservation was a somewhat contradictory process. On one hand, its advocates offered it as the means of achieving an open and democratic civic space, in opposition to the corporate-bureaucratic modernization that required "urban surgery" of the built environment and large-scale community displacement. On the other hand, the practicality of heritage preservation involved an assertion of its novelty that was accomplished by continually contrasting it with the skid road slum and population which, despite avowals to the contrary, it displaced.

Chapter 6 traces the development of another counter-movement to urban renewal which also positioned itself in opposition to the consequences of Gastown heritage preservation. Skid road was one of the Vancouver inner city districts that became the scene of intensive organizing efforts among the poor and the youth counter-culture by students and allied groups. The chapter focuses on the Vancouver Inner City Service Project (VISP), which brought various groups together and promoted a new rendition of skid road, offering what was essentially a project of "resubjectification" that constituted its occupants as residents of a community rather than alcoholic derelicts and transients. Skid road was thus resituated as part of a larger inner city area which was itself reconfigured from a zone of economic, physical and

spiritual degeneration into a space that was a vital centre of community, where the residents' experiences provided a point of mobilization for political and social action. The social isolation there was no longer seen as incumbent on the problematic difference of their inhabitants but was considered to be the product of systemic problems, especially official neglect, poverty, and exploitation. The point, then, was to attack these obstacles, rather than the people and places they oppressed. VISP thus initiated the formulation of a new mode of governing the urban poor which involved the direct participation of the latter themselves.

Chapter 7 explores the civic responses to these challenges. Following the publication of a major report on Gastown renovation, the City's new Department of Social Planning and Community Development, together with the Health Department, became increasingly directly involved in the skid road area. Civic perceptions of the area were ambivalent. Thus, in the face of ample evidence of negligent landlord practices and lax civic regulation, officials insisted that housing deterioration was due as much to problem tenants as to problem landlords and building inspectors. Seen through this frame, the problem was to make plans for the removal or rehabilitation of such individuals. Yet, in seeking to deal with the consequences of Gastown renovation civic authorities conducted a social survey that, for the first time, recognized the population as residents and asked them what they thought about living in the area. Through this recognition of the active subjectivity of local inhabitants and engagement with the community organizers who promoted it, officials entered into a policy that would encourage the emergence of locally-based organizations.

Chapter 8 traces the lines of convergence between some of these forces and their conjuncture in the emergence of indigenous organizations that gave voice to lodging house inhabitants. Ley (1994a, b) has documented the formation of an indigenous organization, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), and the battles it waged over the 1970s and 1980s to overcome the stigma that skid road imposed on the area. The central strategic element of this process was a fusion of localized identity with historical memory that was symbolized by the renaming of skid road. Instead, the name Downtown Eastside was applied to an area that its proponents insisted was an inner city, working class, residential neighbourhood, claiming its territory as the site of a community rooted in its historical role as a gathering place for workers in the province's hinterland resource industries.

This act signified an assertion of citizenship rights by attempting to replace the stigma of skid road deviance with claims based on residence. The image of the resident as a retired resource industry worker provided a tangible connection between the contemporary neighbourhood and its past and thus facilitated the legitimacy of demands for official recognition of the right of the people there to occupy that space. Such recognition of the area as the Downtown Eastside, even though it was often grudging, marked a fundamental policy shift toward and the provision of equalizing opportunities for residents, including significant modifications to the built environment through new housing, service, and recreation provision and increased regulation of properties and businesses. It also marked a pointed redirection in the narrative through which the area had been rendered visible. Once taken, it would be

more difficult for authorities to uncritically problematize the entire local population and devise schemes for its treatment and evacuation. No longer was it composed of total outsiders and deviants. Rather, it constituted a community of the “respectable poor” with historical claims to this place.

However, the label and language of skid road never really disappeared. Indeed, as I want to show, its existence was a necessary component in the elaboration of the counter-narrative that framed the Downtown Eastside. Focusing on the 1986 Expo evictions, Chapter 9 follows the emergence of lines of tension between the necessity of social and community services in a very poor neighbourhood, on one hand, and, on the other, the constructions of autonomy and normality bound up with assertions of community. The former produced subjects who were formed as clients, damaged in some way and thus dependent on professional service workers to fulfill their needs. Such incapacity stood in direct contrast with the imagination of a community of the respectable poor. The archetype of the Downtown Eastsider, the retired resource industry worker, excluded sectors of the local population that could not be so easily rendered into respectability, while explicitly rejecting other, newer elements that were increasingly present in the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood of clients could not be a true community.

The final chapter maps out the resurgence of skid road rhetoric after the sustained challenge of the 1970s and 1980s, during which palpable material and institutional changes altered the social situation and the built environment. The displacement of both the figures of the poor, aging worker of the Downtown Eastside

and the skid road derelict by the image of the drug addict, together with the conflicts over gentrification and redevelopment and the urban policy framework which it has animated, are symptomatic of a new geography of difference in Vancouver that is bound up, on one hand, with the city's shifting position in globalizing circuits of capital and labour movements and, on the other, with the kinds of political-economic retrenchment that characterize what Neil Smith (1996, p. 45) calls "the revanchist city."

Assertions of community in the Downtown Eastside, and the appeals to identity and memory which they encompassed, posed a strategic challenge to the principles of urban renewal and redevelopment which had previously framed official renditions of the area. At the time of this writing, the success of those state interventions which responded to and encouraged these claims has essentially situated the district as an obstacle to the continuation of that urban renewal by other means. For a variety of reasons, the neighbourhood occupies the cheapest land in the Central Business District and its periphery (Blomley, ND). However, in a fast-growing city where an inner-city location, especially in the downtown area, has become fashionable, both housing for the poor, which effectively operates as fixed capital for organized residents, and the network of services and facilities which make survival possible, have provided tools by which the local population has been able to resist development and continue to frame a local identity. The skid road poor, who only recently symbolized victimization by and resistance to the oppression of property markets, now stand in the way of improvements to the area.

Methodological Considerations

In a nutshell, this dissertation is concerned with asking: How has the Downtown Eastside been constructed as a problem and, thus, as an object of knowledge and power? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to critically investigate the discourses which have been brought to bear on this place and population, and through which they have been classified and named. "A place," Berdoulay (1989) contends, "comes explicitly into being through the discourse of its inhabitants." Noting the often dystopian consequences of planning interventions, he argues for the autonomy of local-discursive processes through which emerge the concrete meanings that transform spaces into particular places. Place thus takes on a kind of immanence as it attains shape through the rhetoric of everyday life and activity, paralleling Lefebvre's "representational spaces" or "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence a space of "inhabitants" and "users" (Lefebvre, 1991: 39).

For Lefebvre (1991: 39, 38), however, "representational spaces ... tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs," in opposition to "representations of space" in which "what is lived and what is perceived" is identified with discursive, hence verbal, conceptualization. As discourse, language is mediated via texts which abstract representations from their local contexts. Because language thus operates as a system of power, discursive representations of space, no matter how locally-rooted or popularly based, are always susceptible to appropriation and domination. Although these appropriations can be contested, the parameters of the

field of discursive struggle across which such challenges must take place are defined by those who control the means of linguistic and discursive mediation.

The study of discourses of place must take into account the politics of meaning through which specific sites are constituted and the relations of power that are brought to bear, and which may be at stake, in such engagements. In that respect, it recognizes that the meanings of any place are necessarily plural and potentially subject to change. However, to study discourse it is necessary, also, to recognize the forms of hegemonic power through which it emerges. Discourse is materialized in texts which operate, at once, as effects and as media of power.

The dissertation, then, is a study of texts through which the Downtown Eastside has been problematized or otherwise constructed as a discrete object. The texts which have been instrumental in constructing this place as such have been government and media documents. In recent years, electronic media have become more important in this process but for reasons of accessibility I will focus on print media. The main government documents to be considered will be from the City of Vancouver, especially the Planning and Social Planning Departments, which have been those sections most concerned with diagnosing the situation and prescribing solutions for it. As well, documents from non-profit and community organizations will be examined.

These texts, however, will not be considered in a vacuum or only in relation to other texts. As Bourdieu (1993) reminds us, texts are social artifacts that are produced through the "field of forces" in which authority is established. A field, in this sense, has two simultaneous meanings. It is an institutional sector that possesses a high

degree of autonomy from other fields, such as, in the broadest definition, cultural production, politics, or the economy, within which operate specific systems of rules and relations between different positions. At the same time, the field is “a space of conflict and competition” in which not only are the positions themselves at stake, but so, too, are the very rules by which the field is structured (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992: 17). *Contra* Foucault, Bourdieu (1993) argues that the main point of a text is not the discursive rules it brings into play but, rather, its contribution to the determination of authority in what he calls “the field of position-takings.” Discourses are formed and operate through constellations of power relations that are external to the texts themselves but for which the latter operate as tactical and strategic positionings. Texts are media of power, but it is the relations and politics of positionality, rather than the discourse, which structures the field.

In reading the texts through which the Downtown Eastside has been constructed over the past forty years, then, it is necessary to understand not only what they say about the place, that is, their express content. It is also important to understand how they position the various players responsible for their production within the overall constellation of relations that move through and constitute the Downtown Eastside as an object of power. In particular, I want to interrogate how such documents situate the various players as experts or authorities on the question of the Downtown Eastside and its problems. This is perhaps an easier task in the case of texts produced by government or non-profit agencies than it is with the media because, while the former

groups have an obvious interest in the situation, it is the latter's ostensible job to report on events in an objective and disinterested manner.

It is possible to gauge the constitution of expertise via media reportage, as well as through official documentation by investigating the ways in which texts and groups of texts seek to constitute "reality." Smith (1990a: 101) argues that

"Authority in the public discourse is not defined by position in a determinate system of positions, as it is in organizational hierarchies. It appears, instead, as the difference between the credibility granted to some sources and the treatment of others as mere opinion or as lacking credibility in some way."

The text is thus instrumental in constituting authority. This is broadly consonant with Bourdieu's understanding of autonomous fields of power which are structured not so much by the relations between positions but by those created through "position-takings," or the taking of positions, i.e., works, utterances and pronouncements, etc. (Bourdieu, 1993). Texts that take the Downtown Eastside as their object can thus be read as position-takings which establish the authority to speak on the matters at hand of both their sources and their source. But they are able to do so not because they are texts but because they originate from particular (privileged) places in the constellation of power relations and incorporate those relations in certain ways.

Smith (1990b: 215) distinguishes "textually-mediated reality from "local historic processes," identifying the former as the result of processes of inscription that transform lived experiences into the abstract language of institutions, constituting it as an object for inspection, analysis, and judgement. Clearly, the correlation between the "actuality" of experience and events and its textual representation is complex.

“An interpretive schema is used to assemble and order a set of particulars – descriptions of instances of actualities. These aim at and can be interpreted by the schema used to assemble them. The particulars become indices of an underlying pattern, corresponding to the schema, in terms of which they make sense. The ordering of events, objects, etc., is thus pre-informed by the schema of discourse or formal organization” (Smith, 1990b: 217).

The goal of reading discourse, then, is to uncover, first, the schemas into which “actualities” are fitted, and second, the tactics and strategies by which this is accomplished. If Bourdieu (1993) is right, though, discursive or organizational schemes are not simply ideological frameworks, as Smith (1990b) holds, but also patterns of relations between agents that occupy positions in fields of power. Uncovering the scheme, therefore, involves documenting the social relations in which texts are embedded and detailing the ways in which the latter frame the former.

In embarking on this investigation of the discourse as social practice, I want to draw on Fairclough (1989), who suggests three moments of discourse that roughly correspond to three analytic levels. First, reading text itself involves a descriptive procedure in which attention is paid to the ways in which vocabulary deploys what he calls relational and expressive values, metaphor, and classificatory schemes. Relational values refer to the assumptions, implicit or explicit in the text, about the social relations it represents. Expressive values are the assumptions it incorporates regarding the identities of both the subjects and the objects of the text. The descriptive level also includes analyses of grammar and the structure of the text. However, in the dissertation, I want to focus on the

continuities and differences in the vocabularies used in different groups and types of texts.

Metaphor is especially important here with regard to the other elements in the analysis of vocabulary for it is a mechanism of “slippage” between different categories of phenomena. The types of and the ways in which metaphors are used thus provide an index of the values and classificatory schemes in texts. In the case at hand, I am especially interested in determining the ways in which slippage does or does not take place between the descriptions and analyses of human bodies and those of the built environment.

The second analytic level involved in examining discourse, according to Fairclough (1989), is the interaction between the participants, or the producers of text and its audience. Here, the practice of investigation parallels that of the audience in that it requires interpretation of the meaning of the text. I am less concerned, though, with untangling the interpretive relationships established through the medium of the text than with the question of intertextuality at a general level and the routes along which ideas about skid road and the Downtown Eastside have travelled.

The determination of such intertextual processes requires a shift to the third level of analysis in which the relationship between the text and its social context is explained. The latter can itself be understood in terms of three organizational levels, the situational, the institutional, and the societal. I am concerned with the first two of these and I want to use two questions posed by

Fairclough (1989) with regard to each in the analytics of text and discourse.

First, it is important to discern the power relations that help shape the discourse of which each text is an instance. Second, an understanding of the relation of the discourse to various struggles at each organizational level is necessary in order to interrogate its role vis-a-vis power relations. In particular, it is important to situate both the process of production of the text and its audience in the context of struggles and the fields of power that intersect in the Downtown Eastside.

In deciphering these questions, I want to use the concepts of “schemata,” “frame,” and “script” (Fairclough, 1989: 158-59). The first of these categories refers to the question of content in a text, particularly the activity or event that is being represented. The second, frame, indicates the central topic or object of a text, which can be animate or inanimate. Finally, the script of a text is the way in which it constitutes the conduct of subjects or types of subjects.

Missing Persons

This dissertation focuses on how the Downtown Eastside and skid road have been looked at and talked about and the ways in which it has been apprehended in the local circuits of power. Although much of the data is historical in the sense that it follows a temporal pattern, this is not a complete history of the area. Rather, it represents an effort to interrogate narrative constructions of the district and its population as objects of knowledge and power, paying especially close attention to the development of and transformations in the relationship between certain forms of subjectivity and space. In particular, the focus is directed toward the shifting

constitution of the classic skid road figures, the derelict and transient. As such, there are some omissions that require explanation before the dissertation proceeds.

On Valentine's Day in 1991, about 100 people marched through the Downtown Eastside in a public presentation of grief and anger over the violent deaths of women in the neighbourhood. In succeeding years, the march would become an annual institution dedicated to the observance of and expression of anger about the disappearances of 31 women from local streets. In response to recriminations about perceived official inaction over these cases, City police would eventually mount a special task force to investigate them and the mayor would offer a substantial reward for information leading to the arrest of person(s) responsible for the disappearances. Nevertheless only one of the woman has thus far been found, alive and well as it turned out. Police have since scaled back their task force due to lack of new information, they said.

The case of the missing women resonates rather eerily with the situation of both women and First Nations people in the the official record of the Downtown Eastside during the period under consideration. Although both have been substantial, if minority, sectors of the local population, each has been largely absent from the archive of government and media documents. Skid road districts have been important gathering places for Aboriginal people in Canadian cities (cf. Brody, 1971). However, in the case of the Downtown Eastside, at least until recently, this presence has barely registered in official discourse. In the case of newsmedia, Aboriginal people have provided background, as figures in photographs, for example, but have rarely been the

foreground of news stories. This figurative absence has now been matched by the actual disappearance of real, First Nations women.

The situation is roughly similar with regard to women. For most the twentieth century and especially the past five decades, the part of Vancouver under consideration here has been seen as a man's district. Yet, the presence of women has been an essential element in the lives of the men who numerically dominated the district. From sex trade workers, restaurant and bar waitresses, and housekeepers in hotels and rooming houses to home support workers, nurses, and social workers, many women have made at least part of their living serving men in one role or another. And for many women, the district's hotels and rooming houses simply offered affordable housing and its numerous bars a social scene.

The absence of both women and Aboriginals from the official record of the Downtown Eastside, in spite of their very visible presence and, more recently disappearances, speaks to the socio-spatial constitution of the area as a zone of marginality where the most outcast sectors are rendered virtually invisible to the circuits of power. One approach to an interrogation of the relations of power that inhere in constructions of this part of Vancouver, then, would be to *deconstruct* the narratives through which it has been made intelligible, to uncover the absences that render it coherent, and to thus pry apart the boundaries through which it has been situated as a discrete space.

This dissertation follows a different path. Before a project of deconstruction can take place, it is necessary to diagnose its objects, making

them recognizable. Thus, rather than deconstructing the Downtown Eastside/skid road narratives, uncovering the absences that lurk within them, I have tried to produce a straightforward account of their structures, a kind of genealogy that searches out the breaks and continuities within and between them, as well as the substitutions and displacements that oscillate between these two poles. In seeking to chart the genesis of nostalgia, the dissertation explores the domain of appearances, rather than that of disappearances, asking how the representations and imaginings that constitute the narratives in question have defined the populations and spaces they claim to signify. In short, I have tried to render visible as narrative what has often been offered and taken as common sense.

If Aboriginals and women are absent from the dissertation, it is because they are largely absent from these narratives, which have constructed the spaces they signify in terms of particular forms of subjectivity. This dissertation provides an analysis of the conditions and context that have made such absences possible. As such, it serves as a prelude to the project in which they can be diagnosed.

Chapter 2

Skid Row, Poverty Discourse, and the Urban Slum

In the decade following World War II, middle class observers detected a new and troubling feature on the landscape of many North American cities. In the cheap hotel and lodging house districts, where the rhythm of social life prior to the Great Depression was organized largely around the movements of migrant and seasonal workers, they discovered a novel kind of anti-community, the skid row slum. Would-be reformers, with journalists, social workers, sociologists, police officials, businessmen and urban planners among their ranks, called for investigation of the problem and ameliorative action to eliminate it, their voices joining a post-war chorus of lament for the decline of the central city (Beauregard, 1993).

But, what was so new about these emerging urban zones? Certainly, the lodging house district was not a new form of ecological area. The figures which haunted these marginal districts, the broken-down derelict and the anti-social transient, were reworked images of an earlier problematic character, the “homeless, single man.” Moreover, in naming the characteristics that marked the skid row they deployed the same discursive strategy used to construct the concept of the slum, forging a causal nexus between the evident decay of its built environment and the supposedly dissolute conduct and characters of its inhabitants.

What distinguished skid row from other forms of slum was the way it constituted a nexus of environmental decay and human dissipation. Unlike earlier Victorian slums or immigrant “ghettoes” in the U.S., where concerns about class and race underlined

middle class fears of difference, the skid rows which emerged on the fringes of Central Business Districts were marked as spaces of a pathological masculinity, where post-War anxieties about male conduct and relationships were implicated in fears about the deterioration of big city downtowns that usually stood adjacent to such districts. Although the figure of the “homeless, single man” had long been a problematic social category, and the existence of “hobohemias” had exercised a wide range of authorities, this relation between downtown decline and the presence of so many of these men constituted skid row as an entirely new phenomenon. The construction of these new urban spaces provided a means of marking, at once, the frontiers of respectable community at a time when the hegemonic form of masculinity, a suburban, professionally-based domesticity, was being visibly eroded and the boundaries of the modernizing city.

The presence in large numbers of skid row derelicts and transients signaled the irruption of a disorder in the urban fabric that was problematic not only in its own right, but also because of the threat it posed to the rest of city and its population. The defects of personality that framed the identities of these skid row men precipitated a breakdown of social solidarity at an individual level. Such concentrations of damaged men thus created a vacuum of social solidarity that threatened, at once, to suck others into its vortex of anomic pathology, inducing an intensified dereliction of the built environment, and to ripple outward, engulfing more of the city. Moreover, the aging skid row population and the buildings it occupied were seen as remnants of the pre-World War II economy and society and, to that extent, were represented as obstacles

to the modernization of the central city. Indeed, the pathologies they contained were treated as potential threats.

Poverty discourse and the slum

As a particular category of slum, skid row was informed by many of the same anxieties and formulations that were, and are, part of that more general classification of urban space (Hunter, 1964). The relationship it underlined between spoiled manhood and urban decay fitted comfortably with, and was clearly informed by, the then-dominant paradigm of urban studies that sought to understand poverty in terms of social deviance and treated slums as containers of the deviant-poor. In exploring the wider context out of which emerged the institutional-discursive complex that would frame post-1945 interventions into Vancouver's lodging house district, it is thus important to examine not only the skid row discourse but also the intertwining discourses of urban poverty and slum districts through which it moves.

With a few notable exceptions, the construction of the habitats of the poor in the middle class imagination, skid row included, has followed certain recurrent themes that should be noted. First, explanations of the slum have often focused more on its inhabitants than on its spatial physical conditions, thus incorporating the large doses of moralism that infuse poverty discourse. The determination of the slum as a socio-spatial phenomenon is thus inextricably linked with the classification of "the poor" into gross categories that distinguish those who are "deserving" of aid from their "undeserving" counterparts, a division which has been a fundamental structuring

device for middle class understandings of poverty since before the days of the poor house (Katz, 1996).

Second, slums are invariably constituted as dark places, cut off from the world of propriety and normality, where those who occupy them are isolated from the middle class observers who talk and write about them (Ward, 1976). This isolation contributes to the third pattern that is extant in slum discourse, namely the fundamental difference of the urban poor from the rest of society. They have generally been understood as outsiders and misfits, whether by predisposition or by force of circumstance, who are set apart by virtue of their behaviour and values (Finch, 1993). The slum, then, has been constituted as a key feature in the middle class moral geography of the city. Its boundaries mark the divide between safety and danger, order and disorder, social belonging and social deviance.

Finally, the notions of isolation and difference that permeate the vocabulary of slum discourse constitute such places as sites of exploration and spectacle. The constant puzzlement of those who live outside slum districts has generated myriad investigations and reports that purport to describe and explain the conditions and lifeways that prevail there. Such accounts have both scandalized readers and viewers. They have also functioned as means of calling for, and moving people to, action, so that the slum is also a site and object of missionary intervention designed to civilize or, at least remove, the poor, thus controlling or erasing the conditions that, ostensibly, create the spectacle.

To understand how these themes resonate in formulations of skid row, particularly the persistence of Vancouver's skid road, I want to trace the development of slum discourse since the middle of the nineteenth century. Rather than conducting a Foucauldian genealogy, which maps out discursive breaks and discontinuities, I will pay special attention to the reproduction of themes and elements through which urban poverty and slum districts have been rendered visible as objects of policy and discourse for the past century and a half.

It is important to note here that the preponderance of ideas and literature derived from US and the UK sources reflects not only the relatively smaller population of Canadian cities. More than anything, the relative dearth of literature on urban problems in Canada can be attributed to the fact that, historically, Canadian urban and social reformers, despite ambivalent attitudes toward the situations in other countries, have largely taken their ideas and models from the United States, Britain and continental Europe. (Rutherford, 1974; Harevan, 1979; Wallace, 1952).

The Victorian slum

The roots of skid row can be traced to the Victorian moral distinction between the respectable and unrespectable poor and its encoding in turn-of-the-century scientific philanthropy. The singularities of the lodging house district and its homeless, single man emerged in the milieu of urban reform animated by the attempt to apply rational, as opposed to strictly moral, principles to the understanding and amelioration of urban problems, one consequence of which was that the imagination of the slum and its inhabitants underwent a significant change.

Until the final two decades of the nineteenth century urban slums were the central elements of what Ward (1976) refers to as the Victorians' "geo-political myths" in which the "dangerous" or "criminal" classes might erupt out of their teeming districts at any time, overwhelming civilization. Such danger was a consequence of what was perceived in respectable society as the spatial isolation and segregation of the urban poor. The demoralized and degraded conditions of the poor were attributed, not to unemployment, poverty, or abysmal housing, but, instead, to a social distinctiveness attendant on personal failure and inadequacy. Such problems were seen as natural deficiencies of the poor and were the consequence of their presumed isolation from their social betters. The theme of isolation was pervasive. Even Friederich Engels, (1952 [1892]: 26), who rejected this moral subordination in favour of a pioneering environmentalist perspective, commented on the spatial cleavage of the poor from the middle class, remarking that in the cities of England, "poverty . . . dwells in . . . a separate territory . . . where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can."

The slum was thus treated as a place apart from the rest of the city. Indeed, it was sometimes considered a place apart from the rest of whichever country it happened to be in. The poor who resided there were also conceived as outsiders. In Britain, slums were frequently associated with Irish workers, while in the United States (and somewhat later in Canada), discourse concerning pauperism and slums was elided with that on immigration, so that it addressed even questions of nationality, religion, and cultural homogeneity (Wohl, 1977; Ward, 1976). Yet, the very

marginality of slum districts and their inhabitants made them a central feature in the Victorian urban cosmology. Briggs remarks that “for most . . . writers on cities there was a dominant emphasis on “exploration.” The “dark city” and the “dark continent” were alike mysterious and it is remarkable how often the exploration of the unknown city was compared to the exploration of Africa and Asia” (Briggs, 1968: 62). In the United States of the 1870s, slums which had thirty years previously been seen as scattered pockets of physical decay and moral degeneracy were now characterized as a vast “wilderness” threatening to engulf civilization (Ward, 1989).

The poor were, literally, out of place in the new cities. Briggs (1963) notes the intense “fear of the city” produced as a result of such social segregation and the accompanying anxieties about the breakdown of the moral discipline that had been hitherto imposed by religion and personal contact with social superiors in smaller settlements. The urban slum thus represented the antithesis of the pre-industrial communal village, where order was constituted through social hierarchy and morality functioned in terms of proper displays of deference and solidarity. It also represented a spatial anomaly, with ill-defined boundaries that, unlike the village, offered a vast territory that was largely untraversed and, hence, unknown, to better off urban dwellers. The population that occupied this territory was understood only as an amorphous, undifferentiated, and potentially threatening mass (Ward, 1984, 1976). The place itself was unseen and, therefore, unknown. Like the frontiers and the jungles, the urban slums were spaces to be explored (Gandal, 1997).

Charting poverty and the problem of the "single homeless man"

The problem of the single, homeless man, the socio-cultural antecedent of skid row derelicts and transients, was formed in the wake of a transformation in this early industrial urban social geography that moved along two increasingly convergent paths. First, the task of opening the habitats of the poor to the gaze of the middle class was assumed initially by journalists and religious missionaries. The former undertook the exploration of those dark regions of the city, cataloguing and classifying their populations and providing the narratives that would bring some kind of order to the perceived chaos of slum life (cf. Riis, 1957 [1898]). The latter sought to "civilize" the slums by rigorous proselytization among the poor. Through campaigns like the Sunday School Movement and Bible Tract distribution, such efforts that were infused with an imagination of the essential moral and even physical degeneracy of poor people and inspired by the vision of recreating the communal ties of the village and restoring order in the cities (Boyer, 1978; cf.).¹ However, the failure of personal example and direct inculcation of Christian values to effect significant changes, coupled with the increasing attention paid to the *social* causes and consequences of poverty, meant that the early evangelists were rapidly superceded by the settlement house movement, with its insistence on the salutary presence of the middle class among the urban poor as a means of breaking through the latter's isolation at the same

¹ Interestingly, some of these campaigns tried to impose rigid disciplines of conduct on their targets. This movement would make a highly interesting study in terms of Foucault's concepts of discipline and surveillance. According to Boyer (1976), most early U. S. reformers hailed from such villages and small towns.

time as it agitated for the remediation of the conditions that necessitated such interventions (Deegan, 1988; Rowbotham, 1994; Davis, 1967).

The settlement house movement was both a signal and an agent of a reorganization of urban space. As a central medium for the deployment of the social survey, a key technique in the classification and location of slum populations, it played an active role in forging the thematic association of poverty with the inner city, a relationship that would be a constitutive feature of the urban order for much of the twentieth century (on the social survey, see, cf. Ames 1972; Booth, 1969 [1902]; on the relation between poverty and the inner city (Ward, 1984, 1989; cf. Riis, 1957 [1898]; Booth, 1969 [1902])). This increasingly precise mapping of the territory of the slum stemmed from the imperative of an increasingly scientific imagination of the city which saw environmental conditions as elemental in the genesis of urban problems. The moral degeneracy of poverty, recoded via a process of medicalization as social pathology (of which more below), could be understood and controlled in terms of the conditions in which the poor were forced to live (Driver, 1988; cf. Woodsworth, 1972 [1912]; Kelso, 1974 [nd]). In seeking to effect the disposition of populations via legal regulation and measures to improve living conditions, environmentalists thus effected a near complete reversal of the earlier notion that the degradation of slum conditions were created by the demoralized character and conduct of poor people (Boyer, 1976).

The settlement house was also a harbinger of the second path of transformation in the map of the city, in which the slum district, once figuratively situated outside the boundaries of society, became subsumed within the bonds of a larger community

which the settlement house project both represented and sought to build (Lubove, 1962; cf. Woods, 1970 [1923]; Holden, 1970 [1921]). This new space was the product of struggles by working class organizations and advocates of the poor to reframe the meanings of poverty and reform the structures that were believed to cause it. Challenges to the *laissez-faire* model of a market-based society of atomized and competitive individuals posited, in its stead, an organic community composed through complex interdependencies, the successful negotiation of which required new forms of human association and social organization (Rowbotham, 1994; Donzolat, 1988; Saville, 1993; cf. Tonnies, 1957 [1887]; Simmel, 1950 [1900]).

Here we see the incipient reshaping of the division between the deserving and undeserving poor, as the widening horizon of independence created through struggle and concessionary reform in the late nineteenth century reconstituted the figure of the citizen as property-owner into the citizen as respectable working *man* (Donzolat, 1988, 1991; Procacci, 1989; Zaretsky, 1986; Fraser and Gordon, 1994). The parameters of dependence shifted away from a definition that embraced virtually anyone without property to one that included only those who relied on the resources of the state and charity or who derived their livelihood from crime (Dean, 1991; Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Procacci, 1991).

The application of scientific method to the recognition and classification of “the poor” subjected them to an increasing rigour that formalized distinctions between respectable working class groups and a “submerged” class, or “residuum” of incorrigible and demoralized poor (cf. DuBois, 1976 [1899]; Marshall, 1924). Two

processes, in particular, facilitated this process of segmentation. First, the rise of social insurance, through its techniques of aggregation, calculation, and distribution, normalized its target populations and provided increasingly fine definitions of deviance (Ewald, 1991; Defert, 1991; Squires, 1991). Second, psychiatry reinforced and discursively framed notions of deviance by constituting poverty as a set of pathological conditions, shifting it from the arena of economy to that of medicine and rendering it into a problem of management, treatment, and rehabilitation (Finch, 1993).

The homeless, single man appeared at the point of intersection between the remapping of urban poverty and the environmental imagination which it impelled, on the one hand, and the scientific re-coding of the moral division between the deserving and undeserving poor, on the other. As environmentalists explored the slums and delineated their populations, the “vagrants”, the term given to mobile groups in the urban population, were assigned, along with “paupers”, to the lowest categories of the poor (cf. Hunter, 1904; Riis, 1957 [1898]; Nascher, 1909). Despite the still-widespread spatial mobility in turn-of-the-century North America, mobile working (and non-working) men were seen by authorities as reprobates and often treated as criminals (Clark, 1942, 1948). Increasingly, the mobile population, symbolized in the figures of the hobo and the tramp, was constituted not only as a gross category, but as the object of investigation in its own right, a project that was pioneered initially by journalists like Jack London (1970 [1907]) and Josiah Flynt (1972 [1899]) who, though both “riding the rails” with their objects, arrived at vastly different conclusions

regarding their disposition and situation. As the efforts of journalists were joined by those of charity workers and social scientists, the body of the itinerant poor was soon broken up into a whole range of categories on the basis of regularity and types of employment, levels of mobility, preferred forms of accommodation, dispositions to criminality, alcohol consumption, sexual activities, etc. (Solenburger, 1911; Anderson, 1921).

Men who were mobile and poor were represented by moral and social reformers as the antithesis of the ideal of middle class sociability, based on the nuclear family, anglicization and self-restraint, which they sought to promote. It was not only that such men were poor and tended to congregate in the inner city. It was also that they stood in opposition to the accepted middle class forms of male conduct, instead exemplifying a certain kind of virility that was congruent with forms of working class masculinity that emerged from the flux of the industrial revolution (Pleck and Pleck, 1980; Walker, 1991).² The nature of the expanding North American industrial economy, that was tightly entwined with frontier expansion and resource extraction, meant that itinerant workers were often employed in situations requiring physical toughness, strenuous activity and frequently even danger. Drinking, gambling and fighting were among their leisure-time activities. Social and urban reformers sought, with increasing success, to marginalize such forms of male conduct.³

² Walker (1991) notes the importance of drinking and fighting for 19th century British working class men and the prevalence of domestic conflict around the disposal of men's wages: household needs versus men's leisure pursuits.

³ One of the conditions for the maintenance of men's domination of women is the naturalization of particular forms of male behaviour, to the subordination or exclusion of other such forms (Connell, 1983). This systematic marginalization of certain kinds of behaviours and practices was vital to the

By the turn-of-the-century, Victorian understandings of middle class male behaviour were being reworked in the context of the cultural ascendance of the professional and business-oriented middle classes, marked by the rise of progressivism in North America, in which reformers in various fields held significant influence. (Boyer, 1978; Ward, 1984). The middle class ideal of manhood, characterized earlier in the nineteenth century by the virtues of independence, thrift, discipline and hard work, were being refurbished with the additions of abstinence, gentility, self-improvement and companionate marriage (Griffen, 1990; Marsh, 1990; Stearns, 1990; Dubbert, 1980). All these qualities were to be employed in the service of family life.

A second basis of antagonism toward the mobile working man from those who sought to promote middle class sociability among the working class and immigrants was the problematic nature of lodging house life (Chauncey, 1994; Valverde, 1991). The people who lived in them embodied the spatial mobility that was occasioned by immigration, frequently temporary and seasonal employment, and new transportation opportunities in an industrializing economy. Escalating mobility was viewed by the social and moral reformers, religious leaders and civic authorities who held themselves responsible for the nation's moral well-being as a direct cause of family breakdown and community fragmentation (Clark; 1948; cf. Woodsworth, 1972 [1912]). Moreover, the lodging house districts were the sites for what Chauncey (1994: 79) has characterized, in the case of New York's Bowery, as a "bachelor

establishment of what Connell (1983, p. 41) calls "hegemonic masculinity" or "the power of one version of masculinity over multiple masculinities" (Kimmel, 1990; see also Connell, 1987; Jackson, 1991).

subculture” which, “embod[ied] a rejection of domesticity and of bourgeois acquisitivism alike” and was “based on a shared code of manliness and solidarity.”

For social and moral reformers, the lodging house districts of industrializing cities, and especially the men who occupied them, provided a key point at which anxieties about gender intersected with the problematics of mobility and poverty.

Woodsworth (1972 [1912], pp. 60-62) declared in 1912 that:

“all must recognize the growing numbers of homeless people. . . . Housing a lower grade of workers we have the lodging house of all degrees of cheapness. Our industries and our constructive works call for large armies of unskilled workers. The very nature of their work, seasonal, shifting and intermittent, demands that they be more or less a mobile work force without the encumbrances of a fixed home and a family. . . . This ill-paid aimless, roving life reacts upon a man and is creating a large and well-recognized class -- “the homeless man.” The homeless man lives with a crowd, similarly situated, in a large, rough boarding-house. His bed and meals, with a little for clothes, form his expense budget. He could save something, of course -- many do. But with a large number there is little to encourage them. The hope of independence is remote and problematical. Coarse pleasures abound on every hand. What would you do if you had to live like this?”⁴

Lodging houses facilitated ways of living that were not amenable to presumably normal activities such as the pursuit of property, maintenance of steady employment, and the formation of families. A person’s presence in such a place was, hence, more than merely a response to superordinate forces but a reflection of deviant characteristics. Even a socially-minded perspective, such as Woodsworth’s, understood such places as, at best, promoting deviant forms of behaviour.

⁴ see also, Clark, (1942: 398-399) for examples of documents illustrating the concern of reformers with the effects of urban mobility and seasonal work.

Lodging house living was seen as the medium by which deviant characteristics, particularly failed masculinity, were constituted socially and environmentally. At the same time, the nexus of mobility, poverty, and deviance was corporealized in the bodies of the “single, homeless men” which it specified. In thus individualizing and personalizing the problem, reformers were left with few options beyond personal rehabilitation to effect change among lodging house populations (cf. Nascher, 1909; Solenburger, 1911; Anderson, 1921). Even during the Great Depression, with its masses of wandering, unemployed men, researchers contrasted by-then more traditional migrants, whose personal traits dominated their classification, with newer groups of travelers whose mobility was seen mainly a result of an absence of employment opportunities in their place of origin (Anderson, 1940; Locke, 1935).

Social disorganization and the slums

The post World War II transmogrification of the lodging house districts into skid rows and single, homeless men into derelicts and transients was refracted through the lens of Chicago School sociology, particularly the construct of a socially disorganized lower class that would emerge from the urban ecologically-informed field of community studies. The notion of *social disorganization* framed one of Chicago sociology’s central problems: the decline of group solidarity and traditional forms of status as narrowly-bounded communities of peasants were opened up through transportation improvements and increasing population mobility. It seemed to be especially acute in the case of immigrant populations that had moved from rural to

industrial, urban situations (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958). The diminishing collective moral suasion and sanction of the primary group, together with increasing individualization, resulted in an erosion of community or a rise in *social disorganization*, that was manifested in a range of problems, particularly family breakdown and criminal behaviour (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958; Zorbaugh, 1929; Thomas, 1923; Park, 1967 [1925]b). Although social disorganization was evident to some degree across the social range of the city, it was the poor, more than others, that were thought to be afflicted with the problems it brought.

The route between disorganization and poverty was indirect, travelling along a path marked by the relationship between mobility, spatial organization, and the land market. From its outset Chicago sociology was underpinned by a dichotomous notion of community, defined, at once, in terms of territorial and social unity constituted through the division of labour in any given location, and as the moral order, essentially what Zorbaugh (1929) referred to as a “cultural community” based on shared experience, through which social status was assigned (Park, 1952 [1925], 1968 [1926]). In seeking to reconcile these two conceptions, Burgess’s now classic model of urban expansion depicted the city as a series of concentric circles in which growth was driven by relentlessly competitive principles constituted by capital mobility (ie., land values), on the one hand, and human social and spatial mobility, on the other (Burgess, 1967 [1925]).

This fluid, restless urban order constituted an urban ecological “metabolism” that was both the consequence of myriad individual actions and which buffeted actual

individuals in an oscillation between sets of forces that included invasion-succession, concentration-decentralization, deterioration-regeneration, and organization-disorganization, which interacted to produce a landscape of increasing economic and cultural differentiation (Park, 1968 [1926]; Burgess, 1967 [1925]; Mckenzie, 1967 [1925]). Human mobility, in part a consequence of the constant effort at status improvement, interacted with land values to produce these forces, as the latter operated to “sift and sort the population” into *natural areas* that mirrored, at once, the land-value gradient and the segregation of social types that reinforced differential values and attitudes (Park, 1952 [1925]; Zorbaugh, 1968 [1926]). The new, specifically urban, form of social organization, meant that individual action required the support of an entire group to be effective (Wirth, 1938).

The essential difference of the poor came into play at this point, for it was in their isolation from other social types that slum-dwellers were truly distinct:

“The slum is a distinctive area of disintegration and disorganization . . . Aside from a few marooned families, a large part of the native population is transient: prostitutes, criminals, outlaws and hobos. . . . The slum gradually acquires a character distinctly different from that of the city through a cumulative process of natural selection that is continually going on as the more ambitious and energetic keep moving out and the unadjusted, the dregs and the outlaws accumulate. . . . The city, as it grows, creates about its central business district a belt of bleak, barren, soot-begrimed, physically deteriorated neighbourhoods. And in these neighbourhoods . . . are segregated by the unremitting competition of the economic process in which land values, rentals and wages are fixed . . . unadjusted, psychopathic personalities who are isolated from their old associates. And the barrier is never just one of disease, or failure, or vice alone. *It is always accompanied by a set of attitudes that serve to shut the person off from the rest of the world?*” (Zorbaugh, 1929: 128-29, 134, my emphasis).

The slum, then, was an *inner city* space, filled with people who could not compete and whose failure rendered them, at once, rootless and therefore mobile, but also socially inert. Slum-dwellers occupied the worst of all possible worlds, confined to the poorest accommodations in the city by virtue of a paradoxical combination of spatial mobility, noted here with the pejorative term *transience*, and social immobility.

But it was not poverty alone, or perhaps even at all, that produced such conditions. Rather, they were the consequence of demoralization and a complete lack of solidarity that made it impossible for such people to meet the needs of their neighbours, not especially because they did not know their neighbours, although that may be the case, but because they did not particularly care about their neighbours. Slums thus constituted one of the “moral regions” of the city, where “a divergent moral code prevails,” where the natural processes leading to social segregation gave rise to a “social contagion” in which the characteristics of “the poor, the vicious and the delinquent” were reinforced through regular and intimate contact (Park, 1967 [1925]a: 45). Slum-dwellers were thus incapable of the collective action necessary for individuals to be effective members of the community and, as such, were constituted as rootless and unattached individuals, an extreme social type in the restless, fluid urban *milieu*.

Skid row and the lower class

Skid row appeared during the late 1940s on the site of lodging and rooming house districts across North America, a quintessential slum and ecological zone of

poverty and social pathology, inhabited by un- or under-employed alcoholic drifters who were overwhelmingly male. The term, a corruption of the original skid road,

“denote[d] a district in the city where there is concentration of sub-standard hotels and rooming houses charging very low rates and catering primarily to men with low incomes. These hotels are intermingled with numerous taverns, employment agencies offering jobs as unskilled laborers, restaurants, serving low-cost meals, pawnshops and second-hand stores, and missions that daily provide a free meal after the service” (Bogue, 1963: 1).

The built environment of this classic skid row landscape was invariably old and deteriorating, the product of disinvestment that was itself incumbent on the shifting social and cultural geographies of North American cities and the structural changes in the economy that were bound up with the Great Depression and World War II. Its usually close proximity to the Central Business District constituted it as a key feature in a narrative of downtown decline and a common target for urban renewal schemes.

But, it was not so much its built environment as its population that made skid row problematic. As the name of an ecological zone, it designated not just a district but a social station and cultural milieu, signifying places that were filled with “a high proportion . . . of problem citizens”, rather than “normal citizens living in private households” (Bogue, 1963, p. 4). The inhabitants of a skid row were notable for their “maladjustment” to the expected norms of the larger community, characteristics of which included homelessness, poverty, and “acute personal problems.” To live in a skid row district was to experience “urban living at its worst. . . . not only is [it] a physical eyesore, it is also *sociologically poisonous* to neighbourhoods in a broad

surrounding zone” (Bogue, 1963: 4; Harris, 1956). The question of exactly what conditions made such individuals and the places they inhabited became the object of intense examination.

Beginning in the late 1940s, then, a voluminous literature developed, written largely by social workers, psychologists, sociologists, urban planners, and journalists, that located the old lodging house districts as key problems in a contemporary narrative that combined central city decline with human failing and moral decay. Much of this research and writing was part of a larger project that was informed by the notion of social disorganization and its incorporation into the construct of the lower class that infused the Chicago-inspired field of community studies. As a consequence the skid road literature reflects not only the dominant themes regarding social disorganization and the lower class but also the differing views which emerged in community studies.

In a series of ethnographic studies of inner city populations, beginning in the 1930s and extending through the early 1970s, researchers argued for the existence of a lower class stratum that was constituted as a cultural, rather than an economic, category. The poor, in this rendition, really are different from everyone else, a premise that was derived largely from the work of Robert Redfield (1955) and Oscar Lewis (1959, 1961) on the consequences of modernization, especially migration and urbanization, on Latin American peasant communities. The material conditions of poverty in rapidly urbanizing cities generated adaptive forms of interaction, conduct, and values among the poor that marked them as different from other social groups,

constituting a distinct cultural type, the reproduction of which also contributed to the reproduction of the material circumstances of poverty across generations. Inner city neighbourhoods in North America, particularly those populated by immigrants and their progeny, were sites of a similar “lower class subculture” that distinguished its bearers from a parallel working class subculture that was also evident in the same districts.

The notion of the isolation of the poor, that Zorbaugh (1929) attributed to both the latter’s spatial milieu and to its mindset, thus persisted in subsequent renditions of the inner city. While Thomas and Znaniecki (1921) had emphasized disorganization as the consequence of breakdowns in primary social relationships, conceptions of the lower class were marked by middle class notions of *personal* disorganization, emphasizing psychological characteristics. Perceived differences among slum-dwellers were classified according to various “traits” that included not only economic indicators but also attitudes and values which informed everyday conduct, especially gender behaviour and family structure (cf. Miller, 1958a, b; Miller and Reissman, 1961; Gans, 1962).

According to such criteria, the lower class was defined, in opposition not only to the middle class but also an inner city immigrant working class which, although often at odds with dominant values and modes of life, was nevertheless depicted as living relatively functional and stable lives within the socio-cultural milieu of the inner city. The lower class, in contrast, often occupied the worst housing and was comprised mainly of single mothers, criminals, single men, and other similarly disorganized or

pathological individuals and groups with little, if any, temporal or spatial stability. Structurally, this group was distinguished from the others in terms of its female-centred families that were marked by instability as the consequence of material deprivation and a lack of continuous male involvement. Lower class men were distinguished significantly from those in other classes by personal anxieties about masculinity which led them to reject education and continual employment in favour of “action-seeking” that operated as a “generating milieu” for illicit conduct (Miller, 1958a; Gans, 1962). Drake and Cayton (1962) underlined a similar situation in their monumental study of black Chicago, “Bronzatown.” Here, they found not only upper, middle and respectable working classes, but also a lower class “characterized by less restraint and without a consuming desire for the symbols of higher social prestige. Desertion and illegitimacy, juvenile delinquency, and fighting and roistering are common” (Drake and Cayton, 1962: 523).

The post-World War II sociological project to more precisely detail and classify the inner city and its population thus echoed clearly those earlier classifications of the poor, especially in its scientific delineation of the boundaries between the deserving and the undeserving poor. In doing so, it was harnessed to the project of “renewal” of central city neighbourhoods that, together with suburbanization and freeway-building, was a central platform of urban policy in both Canada and the United States. Throughout this period, the people who lived in inner city neighbourhoods were constituted as outsiders whose presence in these districts was seen as both an obstacle

to renewal and, in the need for their rehousing, as its *raison d'être*. No where was this more evident than in those areas labelled as skid row.

Damaged men

Skid row formulated poverty in the same narrow psycho-sociological, rather than political-economic, context used by constructs of the lower class. The pathological conditions embodied by lodging house dwellers comprised a specific subset of those described by the wider narrative. The central concern with family structure and gender roles in the delineation between the inner city working and lower classes marked the skid row man as an extreme outcome of patterns of lower class masculinity, particularly the so-called action-seeking and lack of restraint that led such men to desert their families and friends, to be mobile, and to engage in criminal or compulsive behaviour.

The idea of skid row thus forged a link between a particular kind of urban landscape and a certain kind of man that was underpinned by assumptions about correct forms of male identity and conduct which were integral elements in an emerging post-war regime of what Connell (1983: 41; see also Hearn, 1987) has called "hegemonic masculinity." The social and spatial parameters of the post-War corporate economy facilitated the consolidation of the kind of masculine domesticity that had been promoted earlier in the century (Ehrenreich, 1988). The rise of a managerial-technical-professional middle class and processes of suburbanization, through which the new masculine paradigm was incubated, accelerated rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s (Marsh, 1990; Jackson, 1985; Clark, 1961, 1966). The infrastructure of the

emergent welfare state was based on assumptions of a property-owning nuclear family dominated by a male bread-winner (Zaretsky, 1986).

For sociologists and social workers, "isolation from women" was one of the defining characteristics of a skid row-type life-style (Caplow, 1970; Bahr and Caplow, 1973). The almost complete absence of inquiry by skid row researchers into homeless, single women until the late 1960s attests not only to the low value placed on women positioned outside family and home during these post-war years, but also to the morally problematic status of men outside this same frame of reference. Skid row thus marked the outer edge of desirable male identity and behaviour and its occupants, by definition single, inebriated, familyless and homeless, and only marginally employed, cast a grim shadow over the archetype of the professional, suburban-dwelling family man, an ideal that was being actively promoted as the outcome of natural and normal male development (Ehrenreich, 1988).

The social and cultural significance of the skid row derelict, among the *bêtes noires* of urban industrial society, is as a negative lesson to men: He is what not to be, but what you could become if you're not careful.

"The skid rower does nothing. He just is. He is everything that all the rest of us *try not to be* . . . the terms of his existence challenge our most basic values" (Wallace, 1965: 144, emphasis added).

Skid row signified a danger zone. Although a man might exhibit deviant tendencies, it was his presence in skid row that constituted him as a problem. Once he crossed the line into the actual place, a return to any semblance of normality could be accomplished only with great difficulty.

The problem of poverty was completely effaced by a medicalized, especially a psychiatric, evaluation of his condition. The rhetoric used to describe the disorder marked by the presence of the derelict is a language of disease and deviance. What made skid row such a danger to society was the potential susceptibility of any type of man to its contagion. Describing his two years working in the Bowery, Harrington (1962: 91) remarked that the people living there:

“are different from almost all other poor people, for they come from every social class, every educational background to be found in the United States. At the Catholic Worker, I met newspapermen, a dentist, priests, along with factory workers and drifters from the countryside. This is the one place in the other America where the poor are actually the sum total of misfits from all of the social classes.”

Dereliction was thus a condition of rejection to which anyone in the right (or wrong) circumstances could be vulnerable. Its meaning, however, was subject to debate.

If the notion of the inner city lower class crystallized around the dysfunctional family structure and masculine conduct, analysts differed over both the cause of such a condition as well as its effects. In a pioneering study of North Boston Italian-Americans, Whyte (1943) echoed Zorbaugh's argument that social mobility translated into spatial mobility out of the slum. However, he disputed the notion of disorganization among slum-dwellers. Instead, he maintained, prevailing (ie., middle class) definitions of success and respectability excluded them by requiring mobile individuals to reject the forms of organization, notably social clubs with activities that centred on politics and gambling “rackets”, which provided local residents with means of adapting to their immediate situation. The slum was not *disorganized* but, rather, was organized in ways that were at odds with dominant values and institutions.

Gans (1962) also argued against disorganization as a feature of slum life.

The social life of Boston's West End was structured by elements of class, ethnicity, and locality. Even more important, however, were the locally-based formal and informal structures that he referred to as "peer group society" through which everyday conduct was regulated. Face-to-face relationships seemed to be far more important for the working class and poor inhabitants of these "urban villages," who comprised mainly international or rural-urban migrants and their children and grandchildren, than was the case for middle class or suburban-dwellers (Gans, 1962). Among such groups, the secondary, sometimes even casual, importance of paid work and education in comparison to the central importance of the family operated as a mode of adaptation and transition to the indigenous cultural milieu.

Similarly, as the literature on skid row developed, it began to follow two divergent paths of explanation. The proponents of skid row as a signifier of social and personal disorganization, who Hoch and Slayton (1989) refer to as the social problem analysts, recognize skid row as "a set of human relationships that are also likely to occur in the inner city slums and poorer working-class districts" (Blumberg, Shipley and Shandler, 1973: 4). Skid row men are seen as the bearers of a pathological condition, utterly alienated, composing in the aggregate a kind of anti-community of single men who rejected social connections. The operative element in the skid row lifestyle is that of "disaffiliation" or the "lack of social ties" which characterizes those who live in such places. They are downwardly mobile, single, presumably unattached, alcoholic, and transient men with low self-esteem. This condition is "a

complex of poverty, powerlessness, alienation, homelessness and, perhaps, alcohol or drug addiction" (Blumberg, Shipley and Barsky, 1978: 121-123). According to Bahr (1973: 17), a "distinguishing characteristic of the homeless is their powerlessness" to which "much of the social abhorrence for Skid Row men is due" and which is "itself a derivative of their disaffiliation." Skid row, however, is not necessarily a particular place. The institutional and social disconnection, powerlessness, and low status that characterize "skid row-ness" are constituted as a social condition that is pervasive, although not necessarily predominant, among the urban poor and which are also present in varying degrees in the "larger community" (Blumberg, Shipley and Moor, 1971). The skid row man is thus constituted as a complete social outcast.

However, not all students of skid row were so sure that their object was completely adrift. Another group of "social order analysts", following the notion of the lower class as a cultural adaptation, saw it as a "contra-status" or "subcultural" community in which deviant individuals found a space that enabled them to adjust to the patterns that distinguished them from the mainstream of society (Hoch and Slayton, 1989; Blumberg, Shipley, and Moor, 1971: 930; Wallace, 1965: 157-158). "Not only is the skid rower an outcast and a deviant", Wallace (1968) argued, "he is also a member of an outcast and deviant community." This was a milieu that provided the basis of sociability for individuals whose forms of conduct and identity led to a rejection of, or exclusion from, the mainstream of society (Spradley, 1970). Instead of a pathological maladjustment, skid row was understood in terms of "strategic

adaptations” to the socially unequal distribution of resources entailing the evolution of the “ecological area” that was composed of “skid row institutions” (McSheehy, 1979; Spradley, 1970). The rooming houses and cheap hotels served at least one purpose in providing a basis for social support networks for people who might otherwise be totally excluded from social attachments (Hoch and Slayton, 1989; Cohen and Sokolovsky, 1989).

Whether skid row was a condition of disorganization or a subcultural milieu, it was possible to argue through the 1970s that the spaces and populations that it characterized were on the decline, (Bahr, 1967; Lee, 1980; Miller, 1982; Marr, 1997; Metraux, 1999). As it has turned out, however, despite the gradual erosion of the classic skid row landscape, neither would really disappear.

From lower class to underclass

The persistence of skid row into the 1990s, despite predictions of its imminent demise, has been explained as a function of the growth and containment of “service dependent populations” (Dear and Wolch, 1987; Goetz, 1993). However, this label is itself a construction that must be understood in terms of the formulation of a category of the poor labeled as the “underclass”, a direct descendant of the lower class and its culturalization of poverty.

In the early 1960s, according to a widely-accepted narrative, poverty exploded into the consciousness of North Americans, primarily as a result of the civil rights movement. This resulted in the development of two divergent understandings of the relation between poverty and the inner city, one of which came to dominate public

discourse and was essentially a continuation and intensification of the approach that located poverty in lower class pathologies. The first reconceptualization of poverty was framed by two key books that marked significant departures from community studies. Both Harrington (1962) and Myrdal (1963) argued, in different ways, that the poor, rather than being social misfits, were being left behind by economic development and relegated to the institutional interstices of increasingly complex societies. The problem of poverty was discussed in political-economic, rather than psychological-cultural, terms and thus constituted as a question of social structural intervention. Myrdal (1963) also introduced the neologism "underclass" to refer to what he saw as a growing category of permanently underemployed workers.

This structural approach to understanding poverty brought a new logic to the determination of the necessary locus of intervention, both spatially and socially. On one hand, ending poverty was a matter of promoting social and economic equality rather than modifying individual or group predispositions (Myrdal, 1963; Runciman, 1966; Adams, 1970, 1971; Harp and Hofley, 1971; Gonick, et al, 1971). On the other hand, the location of poverty shifted, as it became evident that rural and suburban areas, as well as inner cities, were sites of poverty (Harrington, 1962, Canadian Welfare Council, 1966; Clark, 1978). It also marked a break with the traditional division between deserving and undeserving poor that infused other interpretations, advocating instead, a notion of poverty as an externally-imposed condition.

Urban slum districts were also reconceptualized as the nexus of causation that shifted away from supposed pathologies. The deterioration of the built environment,

particularly housing, was explained in terms of capitalist land market dynamics, state policies, and property disinvestment (Harvey, 1973; Harvey and Chatterjee, 1973). Jane Jacobs (1961) offered a devastating condemnation of the urban renewal policies which, she claimed, had destroyed the communities that flourished in and sustained impoverished inner city immigrant neighbourhoods. Extensive ethnographic evidence challenged earlier visions of the pathological disorganization of the inner city poor, documenting the ways in which such areas were ordered as neighbourhoods and communities (Liebow, 1967; Suttles, 1968; Hannerz, 1969; Ley, 1974). The forms of conduct that had been interpreted through statistical data and official documents as evidence of deviant values by some analysts, were shown by field researchers to be adaptive, often creative responses to concrete conditions of socio-economic marginalization.

The structural interpretation was closely bound up with the concept of community action as a motivating force for the alleviation of poverty. This was an exact reversal of the formulations of the lower class that located the sources for poverty in the pathologies of the poor but saw remediating actions emanating externally. Community action saw the poor themselves as the key agents of change needed to eliminate or alleviate poverty (Piven and Cloward, 1971, 1977; for a contrary opinion, see Moynihan, 1969). Ironically, this was the same position taken by Lewis (1966), for whom the self-perpetuating "culture of poverty" could only be overcome by revolutionary organization of the poor (Katz, 1990). However, in the North American

context, the “culture of poverty” would come to signify something very different than the necessity for community action.

Increasingly, however, the structural interpretation of poverty has been eclipsed by another approach for which the concepts of the lower class paradigm provided a basis for the interpretation of civil unrest by African-Americans in major US cities during the 1960s. Increasingly the concept of the lower class paradigm was racialized and the inner city slum was refracted into the image of the dysfunctional, minority ghetto. Glazer and Moynihan (1963), drawing on what Valentine (1968) calls the “pejorative tradition” of sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, both described a black culture situated in the inner city, characterized by high rates of female-headed families and illegitimacy, absent males, low educational and employment aspirations, and antisocial behaviour that is identical to typologies of the lower class. The stubborn persistence of the black lower class, they maintained, was as much a moral dilemma stemming from a fundamental absence of community among urban blacks, as a social or economic problem. In contrast to the gradual erosion of the lower class among other ethnic groups in which a mobile, middle class took responsibility for the tutelage of its problematic fellows, the black middle class contributed little to lower class uplift.

The imagination of slum was thus increasingly framed by concepts of a growing and dangerous, black lower class. Banfield (1968) situated responsibility for 1960s urban crisis in this lower class, maintaining that it was composed of individuals with impaired critical and moral capacities whose very presence in concentrated numbers

created and reproduced the inner city slums which harboured them. The poverty and economic marginality of the lower class/black urban poor were thus seen not as causes of but as the products of either culturally-derived defects of personality, namely a lack of future-orientation and impulse control, or, arising from those defects, deviant forms of conduct that perpetuated the pathological differences which characterized their subculture. This reversal of cause and effect, as Gans (1991) would point out two decades later with reference to the concept of the underclass, effectively obscured the operations of power in the production and reproduction of poverty and constructions of the poor.

Despite its circularity, the racialized construct of a pathological lower class provided the basis for the idea of the underclass which shortly emerged as the dominant contemporary theme in discourse about the urban poor in North America. Adapted from Myrdal's original usage as an indicator of long-term economic subordination through casualization or redundancy in the labour market, the notion of an urban underclass was being deployed by the mid-1980s as a shorthand means of representing the full range of problems supposedly stemming from concentrations of persistently poor people in inner city neighbourhoods across the US. The meaning of the term subtly shifted register as the cultural explanation of poverty extant in the concept of the lower class was substituted for the economic formulation of the original (Gans, 1991).

The defining feature of the underclass is its isolation from the rest of society, also, as we have seen, a defining feature of the undeserving poor for well over a

century. In the most lucid explanation of the underclass, it emerges as the product of the territorial segregation and concentration of the poor. In this thesis, central city deindustrialization, accompanied by middle class flight to suburban jobs, compounded by government service cuts, have stranded poor people in decaying inner city districts (Wilson, 1987). Not only has economic restructuring excluded those who remain in such areas from regular employment, it has left them bereft of the influence of their more respectable middle class neighbours. The urban poor are therefore susceptible to increasingly virulent medical, social, and criminal pathologies that accompany both economic and socio-cultural marginality.

The same relation between social and spatial mobility elaborated by Zorbaugh (1929) is clearly evident here. On the social side, the underclass is constituted in terms of both a series of characteristics that include unemployment, family structure, criminal activity, education levels, and welfare use and specific social types or activities, such as single parents, criminals, drug users and dealers, non-institutionalized psychiatric patients, or homeless people (cf. Auletta, 1982; Jencks and Peterson 1991; Jencks 1992). While any of these can be explained as structural outcomes of or adaptations to circumstances of material deprivation, they are frequently constituted as intrinsically pathological conditions which are actually the causes of such deprivation (cf. Mead, 1991; Murray, 1984).

The transformation of the conditions of the underclass, and thus escape for those included in its ranks, is foreclosed, or at least greatly impeded, by the problem of its spatial isolation. Central to this concern is the “ghettoization” of the poor who exhibit

what Ricketts and Mincey (1990: 141) call “dysfunctional behaviour” such as female single parenthood, male unemployment, welfare dependence, and low education levels (Jargowsky and Bane, 1991; Jargowsky, 1994; Ricketts and Sawhill, 1988; for a more critical perspective, see Hughes, 1989, 1990). High spatial concentrations of people with these characteristics of disadvantage in combination are problematic because they signal a rupture in the social fabric that is socio-economical but which also reinforces cultural differences between the underclass they contain and the rest of the social body (Lemann, 1986). The underclass is thus cut off, not only from opportunities available in the wider society, but also from “normal” models of conduct that might facilitate exit from its characteristic modes and spaces of life.

The diffusion of the notion of an underclass from the US to both Europe and Canada has foregrounded the question of the socio-spatial isolation of the poor at a time of rapid political and socio-economic change. Relationships between poverty, housing, and immigration have been broadly drawn in European countries, where the discovery of underclass areas in cities has called forth comparisons with the US (Morris, 1993; Musterd, 1994; Danschat, 1994; Van Kempen, 1994; Silver, 1993; Wacquant, 1993). In the Canadian context, while Ley and Smith (1997) find little evidence for the formation of urban underclass districts, other researchers warn of the imminent danger of underclass formation in high poverty places and among marginal populations (Beauchesne, 1998; Henry, 1995). In any case, in Canada, the imagination of an emergent underclass haunts public discourse on social and economic policy (cf. Copeland, 1998; Barlow, 1996; Romanow, 1996). As in the US, the concept casts a

long shadow over virtually all the discourse on the so-called new urban poverty so that its utility and ethical value have become central points of argument.

Skid row in the 1990s

In tracing the trajectory that links the “old homeless” with the new, Hoch and Slayton (1989) remark on both the autonomy that the lodging houses, the scourge of olden-day reformers, have provided for poor people and their importance as housing of last resort (see also Katz, 1996; Metreaux, 1999). Yet, there seems to be little resemblance between this hindsight view and the contemporary skid row of 1990s analysts. Despite efforts to erase them, skid row districts have persisted in many North American, and its seems even in Australian, cities, albeit on a much diminished scale. Ironically, however, the contraction of the actual territory of skid row *qua* skid row is implicated in a process in which the attributes of marginality which it has historically represented have been diffused across the social body of the poor. As the decline in available housing and social supports that lodging house districts offered to people at the social and economic margins combined with the shifting political economy of market restructuring and welfare state retrenchment, larger numbers of people have been forced into the streets (Siegel and Inciarda, 1982; Hoch and Slayton, 1989; Marr, 1997; Metreaux, 1999; Jencks, 1994; Wright, 1989). As a result, homelessness, once a condition that was considered to be specific to skid row and, before that, lodging house districts has become a common phenomenon in many cities.

At the same time, the remaining skid rows have been constituted as sites of last refuge for some of the most intractable elements of the underclass as the classic

figures of outcast and pathological poverty, the derelict and the transient, and the taint of failed masculinity they carried, have been displaced, if not replaced, by those of the homeless person, the drug addict, and the psychiatric patient. Indeed, recalling the social order analysts above, skid row is now viewed as a containment zone populated by various marginal groups which have been rejected by the mainstream (Dear and Wolch, 1989). Goetz (1992) shows how development policy in Los Angeles resulted in efforts to confine the downtown homeless population, much of which included de-institutionalized psychiatric patients, within the territory of its remnant skid row (see also, Wolch, et al, 1993; Wuerker, 1996; Cohen and Koegel, 1996; Wuerker and Keenan, 1997).

Skid row thus occupied a somewhat different territory by the 1990s. Yet, there remain important continuities between the early anxieties about vagrants and the more recent evocations of the “service dependent population ghetto” (Dear and Wolch, 1989). While concerns about the pervasive and destructive masculinity of the skid row population seem to have declined by the 1990s, it is still understood as isolated and different from other social groups. If the evident sympathy of latter day researchers has breached the divide between the deserving and undeserving poor that structured the narrative of male homelessness for much of the twentieth century, it remains extant in the underclass discourse that presently frames the classification of the skid row population and homelessness in general.

CHAPTER 3
DISCOVERING SKID ROAD: REPRESENTING AND DIAGNOSING AN
URBAN PROBLEM FROM THE 1950s TO THE MID-1960S

IDEAS & the rise of skid road

In 1966, a new Vancouver business association, the Improvement of the Downtown East Area Society, or IDEAS, was formed to confront a "decline in real estate values and trading volumes" in the eastern sector of the city's downtown shopping district (McKenzie, 1966a). "Distress signals have been flying for a long time," argued a newspaper editorialist (Vancouver Sun, 1966a: 4). "More than three years ago central Hastings, in particular, was recognized as a disaster area. Some stores had been vacant for years and more are emptying" (Vancouver Sun, 1966a: 4). Properties in the area, which catered mainly to the working class east side of the city, had undergone a reduction of tax assessments "by as much as 50 percent, with accompanying loss" to the city "of tax revenue" (Vancouver Sun, 1966a: 4). The group blamed this alarming development on the "blight" and "skid road connotation" that accompanied the "cheap hotels, dingy beer parlors, [drug] shooting galleries," and all "the claptrap that spells decay" (Fletcher, 1966: 12; Vancouver Sun, 1966a: 4).

Local editorialists and politicians waxed enthusiastically about the "IDEAS Men," who included representatives from one of Vancouver's major department stores, the real estate arm of the Canadian Pacific Railway, a national bank, a stockbroker, local property holders, wholesalers and retailers. Its members' first project was a public campaign to force the closure of a local liquor store, contending that the store "'attract[ed] a large number of derelicts, vagrants and chronic

alcoholics. The volume of this traffic create[d] a very unattractive and unpleasant atmosphere to responsible people desiring to shop or conduct business in the area” (Hesse, 1966:27). In particular, charged one of the organization’s directors, “women won’t go into that skid road district to shop because of the vagrant types that inhabit it” (Fletcher, 1966: 12).

Over the past two decades, this part of Vancouver had been a site of important economic changes. For much of the twentieth century, as I will reiterate below, it had been a centre for warehousing, transportation, and a host of manufacturing operations that relied on or supported hinterland resource extraction. Integral to its position as a nexus between the urban and frontier economies was the area’s situation as a residential and recreational space for many of those employed in this industrial complex (Hutton, 1997). Shortly after the end of World War II, however, these industrial linkages began to loosen, as waterfront manufacturers slowly began to relocate to cheaper land away from the urban core (North and Hardwick, 1992). Major strikes during the 1950s presaged the loss of two of the largest business operations and employers, as Pacific Press relocated the production and administration of its two daily newspapers off the downtown peninsula and the Canadian Pacific Railway shut down its steamship division, essentially closing a good part of the waterfront next to the area for the next forty years.¹ Certainly, IDEAS” members recognized the importance of such changes (McKenzie, 1966b). However, they insisted “that the

¹ Thanks to John Atkin for pointing out the importance of these two events.

social problems [were] the roots of their problems,” and gave “top rank to a sociologist among the[ir] consultants” (McKenzie, 1966b).

This subordination of economic shifts to the “social problems” offered a clearly defined strategic goal in the campaign to rejuvenate the commercial district. The “IDEAS Men” needed to win the area back from the clutches of skid road miscreants. The lines of battle drawn by the former thus traced the outlines of a struggle over urban space in which gender was central but women’s role was marginal. In this case they were cast as “shoppers” whose presence or non-presence served as an index of the area’s deterioration. The confrontation represented here was between two groups of men, one composed of respectable pillars of the community, the other a faceless, nameless array of deviants that was held to be solely responsible for the declining fortunes of property in the area. Masculinity was thus imprinted on the skid road landscape through a closure of meaning in which the supposedly pathological behaviours of the persons who occupied it stood in for the accelerating deterioration of the built environment.

The association of men with this part of Vancouver was not new. The concepts used by the “IDEAS Men” to frame the space they talked about, together with the language they deployed, were adapted from a wider discursive formation that sought to diagnose, explain, and prescribe remedies for the more generalized feature of skid row that has been discussed earlier. As in other places, the term named an area that was co-extensive with the space of the pre-World War II lodging house area adjacent to the CBD. And, like those other places, its social and cultural history was closely

bound up with the economic development of the North American west and the movement of working men around the continent.

To more fully appreciate the context in which IDEAS was formed, it will be useful to examine the antecedents of this conflict between two kinds of men.

The marginality of the lodging house district

The heart of Vancouver's lodging house district occupied the site of the original European settlement, which was incorporated as a municipality in 1886. The new City of Vancouver was assured of booming growth as the result of its designation as the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Roy, 1963). With the town's rapid growth, the centres of development and power soon shifted to the west and by the eve of the Great War, the original townsite was positioned on the eastern edge of the downtown (MacDonald, 1973; McDonald, 1979). As the middle class and propertied working classes followed the city's outward expansion the area was left to successive waves of immigrants, the unemployed poor, and the mobile workers who stayed in the lodging houses. The westward movement of the city's fashionable retail and business precincts drew light industry and warehousing operations further into the former business centre (MacDonald, 1973; McDonald, 1996). Its proximity to the city's vital waterfront industry and transportation hubs, together with its growing importance as a distribution centre and the still large retail and entertainment trade meant that this area remained the downtown centre for much of Vancouver's working class east side.

But it was also more than the working people's city centre, or an eastern extension of downtown. The people who inhabited this part of the city were Asian,

continental European, Scandinavian, working class, often poor, and frequently migratory and single. In a city dominated by a white Anglo (and anglophile) elite, such groups were constituted as social and political outsiders. The condition of the housing which they occupied, some of the earliest built in the city, and its cheek-by-jowl proximity to the complex of lumber mills, freight and passenger docks, fish canneries, rail yards, grain elevators, clothing sweatshops and warehouses extending east along the waterfront from downtown, and along the shore of False Creek, helped make the wider area as part of “the east end”, Vancouver’s first so-called slum (Anderson, 1991; Anderson, 1993; McDonald, 1996; Wade, 1994; cf. Marlatt and Itter, 1979; Knight, 1980). The city’s original townsite marked a transitional zone between the residential slum and the more genteel retail and office centre to the west. Although it thrived, it was also a place of dubious reputation, with a proliferation of saloons, bootleggers, brothels, and the apparently easy availability of opium and, later, heroin (Nilson, 1980; Marlatt and Itter, 1979; Freund, 1995; Anderson, 1991). Its spatial imbrication with the areas of immigrant residence immediately to the east and south marked it as a space of low prestige.

Ethnicity and class were also significant markers and means of mobilizing local identity for people who lived here, well into the twentieth century. As the one-time city centre gradually merged into the east end, it also acquired a symbolic importance. Kay Anderson (1991) has shown how the signs of “Chineseness” were appropriated and mobilized by the immigrant leadership in Chinatown as it negotiated with the Anglo leadership of the City, Province and Canada. In much the same way, oral

histories have documented the ways in which the stigmatized signs of poverty and the slum were transfigured into a markers of identity and solidarity that were used to positively distinguish the people of the east end from those who lived farther west (Marlatt and Itter, 1979; Knight, 1980).

McDonald (1996) describes an area where, at the turn-of-the-century, the streets overflowed with activity, making almost impossible entry to Vancouver's then-premiere department store. These streets and public spaces, he notes, were tremendously important for the people without the power and status of those who, further to the west, sought to control the city. They were used not only as gathering and socializing places but as strategic spaces where the subordinate position of east end residents could occasionally be contested. The racist riots that took place here in the first two decades of the twentieth century are indicative of the divisions among the people who lived here. Mayday marches and strike support demonstrations, however, later provided regular and visible evidence of a (largely European) inter-ethnic working class solidarity that operated extensively through the mobilization of local identity (cf. Marlatt and Itter, 1979; Roy, 1981).

Single working men played vital roles in this strategic use of the streets and public spaces. The lodging and rooming houses of the east end and the eastern downtown were full of such highly mobile men, employed in hinterland resource, transportation or construction industries, and they took an active part in militant labour activities, especially demands for relief during periods of high unemployment (Roy, 1981). The seasonal and cyclical fluctuations in these resource-based industries

meant that migratory workers sometimes required relief between jobs or in recessionary periods. This was something the city fathers offered only reluctantly and frequently under duress. Consequently, civic authorities were ambivalent about the flow of such men in and out of the city at the best of times. It was not possible, however, to control this kind of mobility. The Reverend Dr. Cochran (1891) reported in the *Vancouver Daily World* that “there are many men in Vancouver, and elsewhere, out of employment. The place is over-stocked with . . . men who have come under the impression that they will at once find work and make a small fortune.”

By 1901, a lodging house district was centred around the old townsite as one consequence of a growing demand for workers in the hinterland resource sector and the booming construction industry (Galois, 1979; Anderson, 1993). In the most densely populated area of the city, the large number of “transient” residents proved to be a major problem in the registration of voters (Galois, 1979). Together with the construction of tenement and rooming houses in the adjacent East End residential neighbourhood, this cemented the area’s role as a gathering place for mobile and unemployed workers in between jobs and working seasons (Wade, 1994).

Much of the east end and the eastern downtown was a man’s world. In the census tract which included the lodging and rooming house districts, the Census of 1911 and of 1921 counted men as 60% and 58% of the population, respectively. In 1921, this figure increased to 70% among the “Foreign Born” population. It seems likely that this demographic intensified in the core of the lodging house district. “As

you walk [east] down Cordova Street in the city of Vancouver you notice a gradual change," noted a 1913 observer:

"You see fewer goods fit for a bank clerk or man in business; you leave "high tone" behind you. You see few women. Men look into the windows; men drift up and down the street; men lounge in groups upon the curb. Your eye is struck at once by the unusual proportion of big men in the crowd, men that look powerful even in their town clothes" (Grainger, 1968 [1913]: 13).

These were the men of the frontier resource industries, loggers, miners, labourers, railroad and construction workers and their world in the city comprised the hotels and rooming house districts of the downtown peninsula and the East End. They socialized in the saloons, brothels and bootlegging joints, ate in the restaurants and cafes and gambled in private clubs. These migratory workers "lived in a relatively self-contained world" in which they shared more, both spatially and socially, with the poor in the adjacent tenement and rooming house districts than with Vancouver's "respectable" working class residents who lived in the outlying residential districts (McDonald, 1986, p. 40; Marlatt and Itter, 1979).

Such men were hardly paragons of respectability in a city dominated by a settled, propertied elite. Single men on the move were assigned to the same marginal social status as immigrants, both European and Asian, and the poor with whom they occupied more-or-less contiguous space (McDonald, 1986, 1996). The "large number of lodging houses" constituted a public health threat "especially in the foreign districts, where overcrowding and insanitary conditions [were] rampant"². Single

² City of Vancouver Archives (CVA), 145-C-1, File 1. Director of Environmental Health: Operational Records, 1913-1982. Archival File re: housing, lodging houses, 1913-1915.

working men were thus not only politically and economically, but also morally, problematic:

"The traditional logger went out and made a stake and wanted to be a logger and nothing else. He'd come down to town and blow his stake and go back into the woods. He never gets married and he never has anything to show for all the years of terribly hard, dangerous work he did" (Ebe Keoppen, in Knight, 1980: 113).

"We had a lot of these Scandinavian single men who worked in sawmills, mostly in logging camps, and whenever they'd come to town they'd stay at our place. They were quite a rough bunch, you know. They'd go out in the woods and probably stay 3, 4 months, maybe some would stay longer, and as soon as they'd come in town -- liquor store. And they drink sometimes for 2, 3 weeks, possibly a month. Straight! . . . When they'd be broke, they go back to the woods" (Ted Hovi, in Marlatt and Itter, 1979: 76).

The numerical dominance of such men in the centre of the city was thus more than a demographic fact. It was a cultural phenomenon through which the downtown lodging house district was rendered as a masculine space. Women who were on downtown streets or frequenting the bootlegging joints at night were considered to be asking for trouble (Boyer, 1996). This was, after all, where the city's various red-light districts were located:

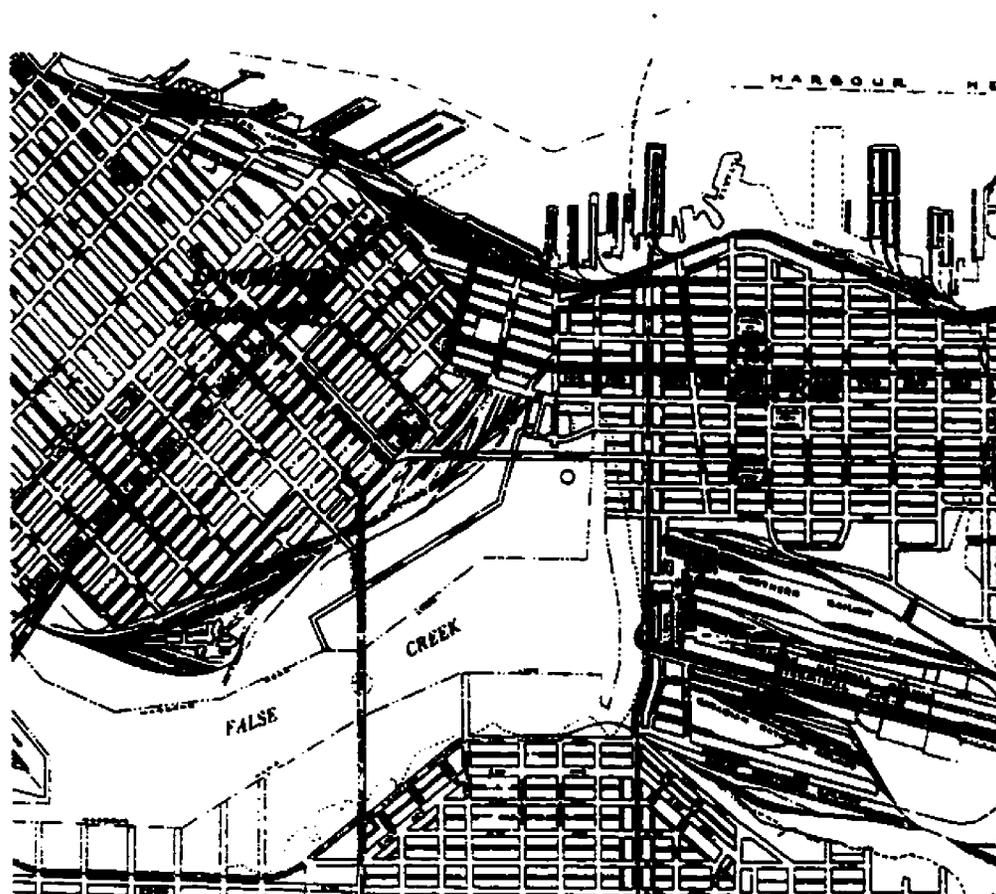
"Around Carrall Street it was a sort of tenderloin district . . . There'd always be people around talking. . . . Sure enough there were alcoholics around. But yet it was a friendly place, a place where loggers came to spend their stakes after working for two or three months in camp. Some talk about how rough it was, but it wasn't. . . . True enough, if you went down the streets roaring drunk and flashing money I suppose there'd be a good chance you'd get rolled" (Frank White, in Knight, 1980: 108).

By 1931, as the Great Depression began, men outnumbered women in the downtown by more than two to one (Barman, 1986). During this period, the previously transient population of the so-called hobo jungles on the fringes of Vancouver's downtown

mushroomed (Wade, 1994). The area again became the setting for militant action by the unemployed and their supporters as public sites like the library, the post office, the memorial cenotaph and the docks became the settings of occupations and violent demonstrations. Such events only served to amplify its already wild reputation. Yet, even in the face of widespread unemployment, questions persisted about the *moral* situation of the men who arrived here. A relatively progressive tract on the condition of the unemployed in the east end sought to answer the question of “why men fail.” The association between large numbers of single men, often immigrants, and brothels, bootlegging, gambling and other kinds of crime persisted through the second world war and into the early 1950s, setting the scene for the discovery of Vancouver’s own skid row (Marlatt and Itter, 1979).

Discovering Vancouver’s skid road

Vancouver’s skid road was first made visible as a discreet space and an official public problem in the early 1950s, when it appeared as a space that differed radically, even perilously, from the city around it (see Map 1). Although religious and social workers were already considering particular elements of what would later emerge as *the* skid road problem, it was initially through the efforts of local journalists that it entered into public discourse as a problem of government. In effect, the newspapers “discovered” skid road and forced it onto the public agenda, keeping it there for the next two decades, naming the authorities and experts who were or should have been responsible for it and reporting various signal events in the development of policy affecting it.



Map 1: Vancouver's skid road district in the 1950s and early 1960s
Source: CVA, Social Services Department, Series 107-A-7, Series 454, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 2, Vancouver's Skid Road ND.

The work of journalists was crucial in constituting a narrative that named and positioned the place within the discourse of local urban problems, establishing connections between disparate phenomena in ways that explained their existence and identified those authorities and experts whose responsibility it was to deal with them. And yet, in acknowledging various forms of expertise and responsible authorities, journalists effectively obscured their own, by no means small, role in constituting the skid road as a visible problem. Their most important contribution was not so much to publicize the worries and efforts of the churchmen and others working in the area but to cast the district as a spatial and social anomaly that required the concerted intervention of state agencies for its normalization. The skid road of the newspapers was a zone of disorder and danger. A 1952 series in the Vancouver Province, then the city's largest daily newspaper, claiming to expose the horrors of the area contended that it was "a national disgrace" and a "scar" on the urban landscape. A weekly magazine article defined it as the place "where Vancouver fades into shabby, shadowy sordidness. . . . where the derelicts of a great city dwell in filthy jungles, only a few blocks from main streets. (Ryan, 1952; Young, 1951). Incredibly, there was no plan by civic or any other authorities to deal systematically with this "physical and economic millstone around the community's neck" (Ryan, 1952).

Journalists helped to forge the key discursive connection between the idea of skid road and the presence of the "derelict" which would continue to define the area into the future. Through their work, the place and the figure would come to imply the other so that it was not possible to formulate programs or policies directed at one

without considering the effects on its companion. The “derelict” was a key figure in the news writers’ skid road narrative because his presence there was the central element of the problem. Skid road derelicts were a “hard core of human failure” and deviance whose congregation in this district marked it as a menacing aberration (Cocking, 1966). Such men were defined in terms of a complex of pathological “social disorders” that marked them as deviants, “the lowest in humanity.” They were the “homeless ‘canned heater’ and ‘alkey’,” “criminals, alcoholics, drug addicts and sex perverts” who trained “juvenile delinquents” and associated with “pick-up girls and prostitutes” (Ryan, 1952).³ Their presence defined a space of degeneration, a “grim abode”, where sickness and immorality at once infected the environment and reflected its deterioration. Skid road was “the haunt” and “hangout” for an array of outcasts and malefactors and “the heart” or “core” of their nefarious activities, “infest[ed] with centres of immorality.”

Mayhem ruled in “this ugly, squalid quarter of viciousness”, as rampant drug use and “sordid “vino” or “canned heat parties” erupted into violence and even murder. Skid road was, in other words, a potentially ungovernable space, occupied by a population that was utterly unrespectable and largely deficient in the qualities and behaviours that helped constitute any contemporary definitions of normality. It was also a space of total pollution, where even the appearance and the smells associated with its inhabitants and the place they lived were obnoxious. Decay permeated the air as “the oily smell of the vast waterfront mingle[d] with the stench of the city dump

³ All other quotes in this and the next paragraph are from Ryan (1952), unless otherwise stated

and the odor of stale alcohol” (Young, 1951). As one churchman went about his work saving lost souls, he used “his nose [to] distinguish ... the sheep from the goats . . . there was the smell of canned heat mixed with beer . . . of rotting garbage . . . of musty rooms” (Ryan, 1952). Although syphilis was on the decline, “tuberculosis and other infections” made their way through this “unsound, unsanitary cauldron”, contaminating inhabitants who were already “homeless, penniless, hungry, dirty [and] shabby”.

But, even as journalists sought to weave together the various, disparate elements into a coherent skid road narrative, other authorities were at work investigating and specifying those elements, the most pressing and dangerous of which was identified with the large number of men who lived in the district. Although skid road was populated “by men and women who have sunk so low they know no shame”, it was the male presence that was considered pervasive and overwhelming (Ryan, 1952). “This is a man”'s area,” wrote one researcher, and ignoring his own enumeration of “some 500 families . . . and 250 single women”, he claimed that “few women live here if they can avoid it” (Steiman, 1955: 33).⁴ Indeed, it seems the only women who could possibly inhabit an area where, it was claimed, “men comprise 90 per cent of the . . . population” were “predatory females, looking for a pick-up” (Young, 1951).

Prior to the War, the ongoing concentration of brothels and prostitution here attracted the attention of morally crusading politicians, police chiefs and social

⁴ See also, City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965, which was also concerned with the non-family nature of the population here. Here was a place in which two-thirds of the entire population consisted of men over the age of 44 (CVA, Add. Mss. 420, Alexandra Neighbourhood House - Publications, Vol. 39, File 5. Some Findings of Portions of East End of Vancouver, March 1952. Compiled by Boris Steiman for Field Work Placement Records and Master of Social Work Thesis, March 21, 1955).

reformers, and served a key marker of the district's reputation as a zone of potential danger and disorder (Nilson, 1980; Freund, 1995). But while sex-trade workers in the age of high profile moral campaigns were usually treated as victims, the wayward women (eg., "B-girls") and prostitutes of skid road, the only women whose presence in this part of the city was acknowledged, were recognized only in terms of a parasitical relationship with the men who surrounded them, as if to confirm the latter's essential failings. If the derelicts of skid road provided the negative markers of the outer limits of acceptable masculinity, the boundaries of manhood on the edge were delineated by the presence of women who were beyond the pale, who survived by exploiting the deviant conduct of the men around them. Indeed, it was their association with such women that helped to define the negative masculinity of these men.

It was not, however, the problem of wayward women which occupied authorities but the scandalous conduct of the men of skid road and its deleterious consequences. Thus, as early as 1951, a sub-committee of the City Social Services Department (CSSD) was struck to "inquire into and present recommendations pertaining to the Single Men's problem in the downtown area."⁵ The discussions leading up to the formation of this committee formulated a series of questions which were to frame the future agenda for skid road social problems:

1. What is or what can be done to rehabilitate these people, many of whom are unemployable apart from their alcoholism?
2. What can be done to improve their physical or mental condition so that they can again become self-supporting?

⁵ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 107-A-7, Series 454, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 2, Vancouver's Skid Road ND.

3. What is the cost financially of this group to the city of Vancouver and the Province by way of Social Services and assistance, Police Costs, Court and Jail Costs, Hospital and Medical Costs?
 4. What are the indirect costs to the community such as thefts, delinquency, spread of communicable diseases?
 5. Can any preventative measures be taken to alleviate this condition?"
- (CVA, SSD, Doc. 1).⁶

The enormous power of these questions to direct the future agenda of skid road research and action was due to their effective constitution of large numbers of individual men into a unified object, resting on a series of presumptions and assumptions they made about the men that rendered them as outsiders. The men in question were presumed to be both alcoholics and without employment. Consequently, lacking visible means of support and thus presumed to be dependent on the state or charities for sustenance, they were considered to be a financial liability. They were presumed to suffer from a condition that required some form of mitigation and which, together with their behaviour, placed them beyond the bounds of and in confrontation with normal and respectable society. At the same time, there seems to be an implicit obligation on the latter to do something about this condition, if not out of sheer financial self-interest, then from a concern for the well-being of those who suffered from it.

Defining skid road

The skid road problem was thus specified early on as a double-faceted object, one side economic, the other medical, in nature. As an *economic* object, the conduct

⁶ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 107-A-7, Series 454, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 2, Vancouver's Skid Road ND.

of its inhabitants was rendered calculable through an accounting of the monetary costs they incurred across a range of sectors. Rectifying this dimension of the problem, however, required the expenditure of even more money to eliminate both the social ills which afflicted the district and the blighted environment that incubated problems. Yet, spending money was considered risky and required extensive discussion and study prior to the implementation and any program necessitating large expenditures. To this end, skid road was economized in three particular, but interrelated ways. The heavy investment of moral language in this respect is interesting but not altogether surprising.

First, and foremost, the provision of funds to alleviate ill-considered social conduct required extreme deliberation in order to avoid its "abuse" by its intended targets or, even worse, the perpetuation of their state of dependence (Ryan, 1952). Concerns about promoting dependence in Vancouver's skid road were no different than those in any other more "traditional" kinds of slum districts. Indeed, they were perhaps even more acute here to the extent that they were informed by relentless anxieties about deformations of masculinity, of which perhaps the most glaring was the dependence of the various deviants and rejects who populated skid road on charity and relief.

The administration of relief to the men of skid road was even pointed to as an important cause of the area's problems.⁷ Instead of relief, "men should be encouraged

⁷ CVA, Add. Mss. 256, Vol. 25. Harry Patten Archibald, File 1 - Central City Mission, Midterm Report, 1967.

to help themselves and discouraged *from becoming barnacles on society*.”⁸ What was needed, according to a Salvation Army Major, was “some sort of work plan or character building . . . there is a need for them to face reality and acquire some initiative” that would transform them into responsible men, “rehabilitated . . . to useful Christian citizenship.”⁹ The men of skid road thus needed to be remoulded and reformed to end their parasitical ways, to be weaned from the largess of the community, in the form of charitable organizations or the state, or from preying on other, less worldly “barnacles”, for subsistence.¹⁰ Skid road was the site of the greatest concentration of single men on public assistance, as well as the highest number of administered cases in which the finances of an individual receiving public assistance were managed by the distributing agency.

Second, certain authorities attempted to calculate the financial costs caused by the conduct of alcoholics and associated forms of skid road behaviour. “Simple arithmetic”, claimed Ryan (1952), “illustrates that the Vancouver taxpayer in the year 1950 paid out of his own pocket to subsidize this centre of squalor and vice!.” In the early 1950s, the ratio of service provision to revenue generation was calculated at almost 2 to 1. By the mid-1960s, this ratio had increased to 20 to 1 (City of Vancouver

⁸ CVA, City Social Service Dept. Records, 107-A-7, Vancouver City Council Special Joint Committee on Skid Row Problems, A Plan for Action, 1962-1964, Administered Cases - Centre Unit by G. L. McPherson [interviews with a Salvation Army Major and the Director of the St. James Social Services Society].

⁹ CVA 107-A-7 Social Service Dept. Records, Special Joint Committee on Skid Row Problems, “A plan for action, 1962-1964, Interviews with agency staff; Central City Mission promotional brochure.

¹⁰ A 1953 memo to the Administrator of the City Social Services Dept. from R. F. Astbury, of the local City Social Services Unit, notes that taking control of the funds of alcoholics has improved ‘the standard of living for these men, there is still among other problems an increase in dependency and reliance on the worker to care for their needs’ CVA, SSD Records, Series 454, 107-A-7, Special Joint Committee, “A Plan for Action”, 1962-1964, GL MacPherson, Administered Cases, Centre Unit.

Planning Dept., 1965; The Vancouver Sun, 1966a). Foremost among these were the expenses incurred for policing skid road and enforcing violations, particularly those related to public drunkenness, while merchants complained about the costs generated by rampant shoplifting and the loss of customers who were being driven away by the deviant behaviour of local inhabitants (Hesse, 1966; McKenzie, 1966a; The Vancouver Sun, 1966a).¹¹ Moreover, such “primary costs” were accompanied by “secondary costs” that included the long-term complications of marriages and families affected by alcoholic behaviour, desertion, violence and lack of effective fathering.¹²

Finally, the consequences of “blighted” buildings were seen as a drain on public revenues that necessitated action. In the immediate context of skid road, this seemed to offer the best possibility of remedial action. This was a period of intense anxiety about the future of Vancouver’s downtown and urban core. As in other cities across the continent, suburban expansion was accelerating and the building stock of the urban core was aging. Downtown was facing retail competition from suburban shopping centres and the late forties and early fifties brought an incipient deindustrialization of the waterfront surrounding the peninsular core (North and Hardwick, 1992).¹³

¹¹ CVA, SSD Records, Series 454, 107-A-7, Special Joint Committee, “A Plan for Action”, 1962-1964, GL MacPherson, Administered Cases, Centre Unit;

¹² CVA, SSD Records, 107-A-7, Special Joint Committee, “A Plan for Action”, 1962-1964, GL MacPherson, Administered Cases, Centre Unit

¹³ With suburbanization came the problem of managing traffic capacity. By the late 1950s, the principle of improved automobile access to and through downtown Vancouver underpinned virtually all downtown planning documents, beginning with the 1957 civic centre study (cf. City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1956; City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1958).

The downtown planning imperative for civic authorities was redevelopment of those sections where the building stock was aging and deteriorating. Older residential areas on the fringes of the CBD, especially in areas where they were mixed with light industrial uses, were diagnosed as blighted zones and targetted for redevelopment. Thus, immediately to the east of the CBD, the city's old East End "slum" district was slated for Vancouver's first set of urban renewal schemes under the terms of the National Housing Act (Marsh, 1950; City of Vancouver, 1957).¹⁴

The industrial ring around False Creek was also targetted for redevelopment in the 1950s, although this would not even begin to be realized for another decade (Oliver, 1955). Meanwhile, as private capital began the redevelopment of the West End into high-rise apartments, the City began to sketch out its plans for CBD redevelopment. A 1957 study designated an eastern section of downtown, to the southwest of skid road, as an ideal site for a civic centre scheme that would provide one of the pillars of CBD revival (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1958).

Downtown automobile access was crucial to the scheme and the 1961 Downtown Zoning Plan called for large-scale land acquisitions in the skid road area in order to provide sites for clearance and construction of parking facilities (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1961).

Most of skid road was classified as two of the six key CBD "redevelopment areas."¹⁵ A business consultant, contracted by the City to devise a commercial

¹⁴ For a concise history of slum clearance, see Kay Anderson, 1991, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, Chapter 6.

¹⁵ Some local property-owners campaigned to defeat the civic referenda in which officials sought voters' approval for the capital expenditures necessary for such purchases (CVA, Pamphlets, 1978-70, *The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization* by M.G. Thomson, 1978).

revitalization plan, identified the district as “largely blighted and both economically and socially unproductive”, a condition that made redevelopment highly desirable (Larry Smith and Co, 1963). Moreover, the vacuum of investment that marked skid road real estate in this area that was seen as a “backwash in the westward drift of downtown” acted as a “magnet to the wayward” (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965; Ryan, 1952). However, redevelopment or renovation alone were seen by local social agencies as at best only partial solutions to the area’s woes, since they were generated primarily by social behaviour (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965; McKenzie, 1966b). For them, the skid road was not so much a bad place as it was a site where problematic individuals engaged in bad conduct. The consequences of this contradiction will be examined in the next chapter.

The second facet of the official version of skid road was its constitution as a *medical* problem, as the bodies of the men who populated the area were marked as damaged by alcoholism and unemployment. Such conditions rendered them inadequate and dependent. The conduct that was derived from, and in turn particularized, these conditions was defined as deviant, excluding them from acceptance in a wider community of belonging and responsibility from which the bases of normality were defined.

“To [skid road] gravitates the person who is unable to muster more social assets and who has been caught in a spiral of ever-increasing dependency. He is often a homeless man who has experienced years of social isolation and is inadequate in some aspect of his personality.”¹⁶

¹⁶ CVA, Social Service Department Records, 107-1-7, Special Joint Committee on skidrow problems, “A Plan for Action”

“Once the romping grounds of thousands of loggers, skid road today is a haven for the rejects of society. Disorganized personality is the rule among skid road dwellers. The alcoholic, addict and sex deviate cannot cope with the demands and frustrations of general society but they can function within their own group (Cocking, 1965).

The origin of skid road, according to this logic, was to be found in the bodies of its inhabitants. The co-presence, in sufficient numbers, of individuals with personality disorders and behaviours symptomatic of social pathologies, created a milieu in which skid road conditions thrived. The deterioration of the built environment and the land uses that characterized such areas were thus consequent upon a critical mass of “sick” individuals which, effectively, called them into being. Once in existence, this reciprocal complex of social pathology and spatial blight constituted a self-reproducing environment, the interruption of which necessitated radical intervention.

Attempts to repair the problems that gave rise to skid road conditions focused on programs of normalization that sought to manage the conduct of those individuals who were models of deviance. It was the bodies of such individuals that provided access to their deviance. Rehabilitating interventions consisted largely of creating appropriate conditions where, at most, correct thoughts, values and behaviours could be inculcated, thus repairing the damage that constituted deviance and, at least, conduct could be regularly monitored and therefore controlled in accordance with a regime of correct behaviour.

Although this medicalization was formative in the construction of skid road as a public problem, the prescriptions it generated contradicted the key solutions advanced to the economic problem. Rather than the “urban surgery” involved in the excision of

the built environment, the medicalized problem focused on the bodies of deviant individuals as the primary locus of interventions designed to terminate the skid road condition. In this analysis, accomplishing the former would preclude, perhaps even aggravate the latter. The IDEAS group, whose campaign to close the liquor store opened this chapter, stepped into the middle of this conflict. Composed of property-owners and business operators, the organization sought to constitute the private-sector as an authority on the problem(s) of skid road and, through this, to advocate for urban renewal. Its specific program included closure of cheap hotels and bars, physical improvement of local properties, and lobbying for more state-funding for redevelopment and public housing (Mckenzie, 1966a)

Although its diagnosis of the problem was neither new nor disputed, IDEAS' prescription was to be hotly contested. Indeed, the organization seems to have surfaced at precisely the time when the elements of the program it advanced would themselves become objects of derision and critique.¹⁷ Its ongoing plans for "skid road clean up" was chided by one upcoming urban critic as being too negative, claiming that the organization's skid road lament was itself a source of the area's problem image (The Vancouver Sun, 1968a; Blair, 1966). Others attacked it because it focused too much on physical measures that would generate skid road-like conditions in other parts of the city. Redevelopment would simply displace the social problems that were the animating dynamic of the skid road situation (Cocking, 1966). IDEAS plan failed, claimed a Salvation Army major, "to tackle the human problems involved" (The

¹⁷ Nor was this program especially successful - when the liquor store was finally shut down, it was soon replaced with another one three blocks to the east.

Vancouver Sun, 1968b). An effective program of change for the district necessitated the redevelopment and renovation of people as well as buildings because it was these specifically *social* problems that were responsible in the first instance for the existence of a place like skid road.

The formation of skid road experts

Despite differing positions regarding the appropriate course of action, the “IDEAS Men”, their supporters, and their critics all shared some common assumptions about the object of disagreement. Underlying what was essentially a debate about means rather than ends was the imagination of a space that was constructed through the forging of a complex linkage between the presence and activities (conduct) of certain categories of person and the physical conditions of the buildings in the spaces which they occupied. This connection came to form the heart of the skid road problem and in the course of its formation we can discern the emergence of what might be called a discursive-institutional constellation of authorities and experts that took as its object the identification, investigation and elimination of skid road.

Central to the formation of this apparatus was the claim to authority by the various parties directly involved in discerning skid road as a problem. Thus, for example, when IDEAS made its 1965 declaration, its members were doing more than simply asserting their interest and inserting themselves into the planning process. They were establishing a boundary that marked themselves and others like them as respectable and normal citizens, dividing them from those irresponsible men whose

behaviour inhibited business and frightened away “women shoppers.” As “responsible people desiring to . . . conduct business in the area”, the “IDEAS men” situated themselves in direct opposition to the “derelicts, vagrants and chronic alcoholics” who caused skid road decay. Similarly, the businessmen, social workers, church workers, planners and other civic officials, police, and journalists all positioned themselves within the parameters of normality and order that skid road threatened. The demarcation of this frontier thus defined both the objects of knowledge and its subjects. Moreover, as the subjects of knowledge about skid road, all these various parties were constituted, or constituted themselves, as experts and therefore authorities on the matter. And, in that authority, they sought to go beyond simply marking the boundary and began planning to recover the space and, in some cases, its population, from the perdition to which they had been consigned.

Neither the connection between bodies and space, nor the governmental apparatus through which it was articulated, appeared simultaneously with the advent of the skid road. Rather, it developed through the efforts of various agencies to enunciate explanations for the work they were doing in, or directed toward, the skid road district; and to identify connections between the problems on which they focused their labours, and others which were manifest around them. Deploying concepts and representations derived from bodies of knowledge ranging from formal disciplines to those of practical expertise and the “common sense” of experience, a host of individuals and organizations rendered the area into a discrete and recognizable space that was a highly visible, urgent problem.

In Vancouver as elsewhere, notions of citizenship and dependence, problematic gender relations and urban decay provided central themes in the emerging skid road landscape. The programs and projects that were designed to address the essential skid road connection between bodies and spaces were formulated, in part, from the ideas generated by these wider discourses. The latter framed the assumptions which both informed and enabled that vital connection to be constructed, providing the language and concepts with which authorities used to define and bound their object and to determine the means by which it would (they hoped) be transformed out of existence.

By the mid-1960s, all these authorities were ready to talk about taking action to rehabilitate skid road derelicts and transients. Skid road redevelopment was a certainty. The only question was the form in which it was to take place.

Chapter 4

Programming Skid Road

The skid road problem crystallized in the mid-1960s around the problem of the governability of the space and its population. Although there seemed to be consensus among authorities that this was a disorganized and dangerous place, it was only with the direct entry of the City of Vancouver into the scene in the mid-1960s that it became possible to begin articulating a systematic program for taming the unruly populace and rendering the spaces it occupied transparent. Civic intervention had been called for as early as 1952 in the Vancouver Province's series on the "cauldron of sin." In responding to reproaches over their lack of a systematic plan for dealing with the problem, civic officials explicitly included the skid road district in the urban renewal plans for the eastern sector of the downtown peninsula. What had hitherto been a difficult area for one City department, Social Services, became specified as a problematic object by the whole range of civic agencies. In constituting it as their object, those agencies brought to bear on skid road a level of discursive and institutional resources and a degree of coordination that were unavailable to the religious groups working in the area.

The City took on the central role in reconstituting skid road as a governable zone. Although journalists, social workers, and church workers continued to occupy key positions in formulating the problem, City staff played an increasingly central role in formulating and implementing interventions intended to reorder and then transform the situation. The City acted as both a conduit of ideas and concepts and their initiator,

formulating, facilitating, focusing and coordinating interventions. It also, increasingly, served as a funding source and a mediator between non-profit groups and other levels the state.

Yet the City itself was not a monolithic set of agencies. The various ends which the latter sought to achieve and the means which were deployed in their pursuit were not always in harmony with each other. Different civic authorities sometimes took contradictory stances on particular situations or issues and their positions shifted over time, subject to conflicting pressures from popular, service, and business organizations. Nevertheless, its capacity as *the* public authority with access to resources beyond those of any other single or even network of private organizations meant that once the City began to play the central role in skid road interventions, it became the axis around which all other authorities, public and private, revolved. It was situated, all at once, as the holder, the advocate, the mediator, and the arbiter of a range of interests and claims, including those of its own agencies.

The project of governing skid road was, at its heart, one of introducing and elaborating a normalizing rationality aimed at bringing the blighted space and its deviant, undisciplined population into line with the other parts of the city from which it differed so drastically. Ironically, though, it was the City's efforts to pursue the urban renewal option -- normalizing the built environment -- that opened the door for a shift in the ways that public authorities formulated and treated the relationship between the people and the space. The City's focus on skid road brought with it a range of new actors, in the form of City staff, as well as techniques of intervention that

started to loosen the parameters that defined the area and its population.

Journalists and social agencies had worked with a notion of skid road akin to the world of “social problem analysts”, a dark and frightening space of isolated, anomic and deviant individuals, with no hope and little affinity with anyone else. Civic authorities, however, introduced and promoted the idea of skid road as a deviant *subculture*, a representation that was closer to the concepts advanced by Wallace and the “social order analysts” than it was to the alternative vision of intractable decay and incorrigible degeneracy. In this rendition, it serves as a refuge not only for the aberrant and the inadequate -- people who fit in nowhere else -- but also for those who have been “left behind” by or who “can”t keep up” with the demands of contemporary society. Skid road, in other words, appeared as a means of survival for the marginalized.

The idea of skid road in Vancouver thus underwent a transition that was mediated by the concept of the deviant sub-culture. The formulation of a disorganized and dangerous space of isolation, where deterioration was consequent on the conduct of anomic and damaged individuals, was slowly displaced by the representation of a site possessing an order and a rationality that were determined through the processes in which the marginalized constituted themselves as a community in order to survive. The emergent community offered itself as an alternative vector of intervention to that of the damaged, masculine bodies which had, hitherto been the primary site of engagement. The notion of a space of exclusion would soon have tremendous

ramifications as the actors and interests concerned with skid road underwent a phenomenal proliferation.

For the moment, however, the limitations rather than the possibilities of the notion of the deviant community prevailed. Despite the City's size and scope, it needed to deal with the social agencies whose primary interests were to re-form the bodies and conduct of deviant men. Moreover, its own initial interest in skid road was with the reformation of the built environment through urban renewal, rather than with the area's population.

The City Moves In: Two Approaches to Skid Road

From the mid to the late-1960s, civic officials wrestled with conflicting approaches of engagement with skid road. Their interventions moved initially along the lines traced by two sets of problems, as they attempted to formulate the object of skid road, diagnose, and then prescribe solutions for it. The first of these was the question of dealing with the blight which some authorities believed was detrimental to the downtown area, discouraging the potential for the private investment necessary for CBD upgrading (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1956). As we have seen, the City's early interest in skid road situated it in terms of the overall problem of planning for the downtown peninsula and CBD. The City's 20-year plan for Downtown, however, noted that "the collar of slum and blighted properties . . . to the south and in particular to the east" required "surgical methods of cutting out old buildings and rebuilding as part of a comprehensive scheme of redevelopment" (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1956).

Although the residential East End district, immediately to the east of skid road, would fall first under the urban surgeon's scalpel, skid road and the surrounding area in the eastern sector of the CBD was also designated for urban renewal.¹ By the early 1960s, Cordova Street between Main and Richards, the main skid road thoroughfare, was zoned for parking lots to service adjacent shopping and commercial areas (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1956, 1961). Civic authorities twice sought agreement from voters to raise funds necessary for land purchase and clearance for the parking program.² The relatively low values, old age and deteriorating condition of many properties along Main, Powell and Water Streets merited their inclusion in plans for acquisition and "comprehensive redevelopment" of blighted areas (Technical Planning Board, 1956). The area to the southeast of skid road was slated for a civic centre complex (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1956, 1958).

Skid road and its surroundings were identified in a 1963 economic study of downtown redevelopment as the "weak link" in the CBD. It was "largely blighted and both socially and economically unproductive" (Larry Smith and Co, 1963: 21). While most of the area was included in two potential redevelopment areas, neither was recommended for immediate redevelopment because "the net benefit to the downtown . . . would not be sufficiently great" (Larry Smith and Co, 1963: 21). Despite its consultant's recommendation, however, the City applied to the Federal government

¹ The name Strathcona was initially applied to the East End by Social Work professor Leonard Marsh (1950), in his blueprint for urban renewal in the area. It was derived from the name of the elementary school, which was named for Lord Strathcona, Cornelius Van Horne, who was the chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway when it reached Vancouver.

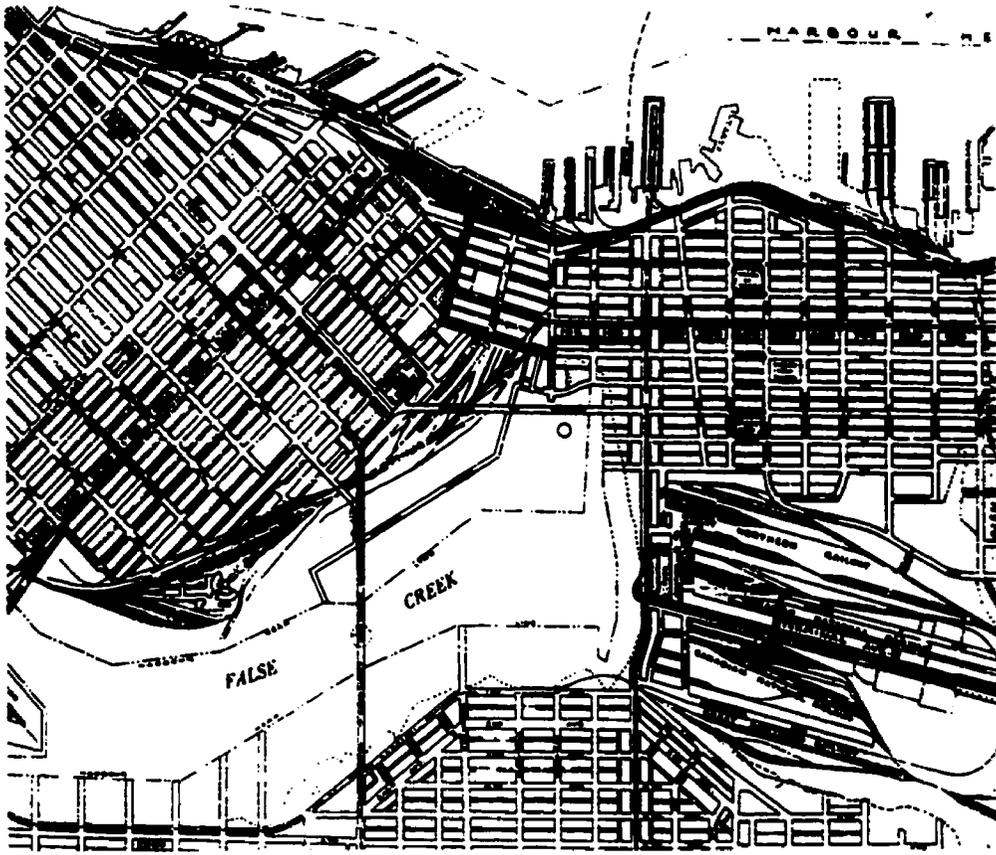
² CVA, Pamphlets, 1978-70, *The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization* by M.G. Thomson, 1978 .

less than three years later for funds to initiate a major urban renewal scheme in the eastern portion of downtown, including the “Downtown: East Side . . . characterized by poor subdivision, omnipresent blight and severe social problems” and the “Old Granville Townsite,” then the heart of the skid road district (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1966: 13).³ Reporting to City Council, the Board of Administration noted that this urban renewal scheme included “major transportation considerations, which must be examined” (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1966). This referred to the question of the downtown freeway alignment that, when unveiled in another consultants report in 1968, would bisect both the ethnic shopping district of Chinatown and the Old Granville Townsite, and hence, the skid road district (Pendakur, 1972; Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas, 1968). This particular alignment was chosen to connect with a waterfront portion of the freeway that would service both a new, third crossing of Burrard Inlet and a major waterfront redevelopment project that would include portions of the Old Granville Townsite. Dubbed Project 200 by its developers, this private sector project was announced in June of 1966. Pendakur (1972) notes, however, that a development executive revealed in a newspaper interview that negotiations with the city had been ongoing for a year prior to public disclosure (Bradbury and Peloquin, 1966). In other words, the City’s application for the urban renewal scheme was initiated with full awareness of and coordination with corporate plans to redevelop the waterfront.

³ Given the subsequent castigation of planners for opposing heritage renovation and the mythological status of the heritage movement in its campaign to supposedly persuade planners and politicians to embrace renovation rather than the demolition and redevelopment, it is highly significant that this report to City Council notes that in the OGT, ‘renovation of some of the older buildings has been started under private initiative and should be encouraged’, (p. 13).

The second set of problems confronted by the City stemmed from its imperative to plan for the population of areas targeted by urban renewal, as required by Section V of the National Housing Act. Civic authorities, however, believed that they lacked specific knowledge of the space and its population to make such plans. Consequently, in preparation for the application for urban renewal funding, they embarked on an extensive investigation of Skid Road and the larger area of which it was a part (see Map 2). The 1965 report which issued from this research, was called Downtown -- East Side and it created a knowledge base for the pursuit of the urban renewal objective. It also inaugurated a still-ongoing process of intensifying study and research of the skid road population.

Although it was based on the assumption that this population was an obstacle to that project, Downtown -- East Side also shifted at least part of the City's attention away from the "simple" task of redeveloping the built environment toward the question of managing a difficult population. Thus, although "this part of the City is rundown physically," the authors maintained that "*it is impossible to recommend physical changes without a greater and more important, concerted effort to tackle the fundamental social weaknesses*" (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965, emphasis added). In itself, such thinking reflected that of the social agencies that worked with the skid road population. The very fact of the report marked a shift away from the panicked response that characterized much of the thinking about Skid Road toward a packaging of the area as an object of knowledge. Downtown -- East Side ordered the space -- reframing it via an assembly of information and a refinement of categories



Map 2: The study area for the Downtown -- East Side report. Note the expanded area to the south and east that would be incorporated into skid road.

Source: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965

into a coherent package that described and explained the situation. The bodies that surveyors located on skid road were marked and classified according to the needs which were ascribed to them and the forms of treatment required to alleviate those needs. Panic at the seeming disorder of the place thus gave way to the perception of order, albeit deviant, thus rendering it less threatening. Downtown -- East Side also set out a blueprint for subsequent intervention into skid road. And in the process of ordering the space, there also appeared a different sense of what was possible.

The report reproduced the relation between problematic space and problematic population that had hitherto characterized the formulation of skid road. But, the device it used to create order where initial visions had seen only disorder reconfigured the elements of this relationship. In constituting Skid Road as an ordered space, the Planning Department drew on notion of skid row as a deviant lifestyle, propounded by Wallace (1965). The report acknowledged that not everyone here was a derelict or a transient. The population also included many elderly people as well as people with disabilities and unemployed younger men. But, in acknowledging their presence, it also constituted them as problems -- new obstacles to urban renewal:

“ One of the myths of skid road is that it is a closely-knit colorful community of human derelicts. This is not true -- at least not in Vancouver. Many other people live here with quite different problems. These other groups of people should be considered quite separately, according to their needs, instead of being treated as part of one insurmountable problem” (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965: 26).

The skid row lifestyle was problematic because it separated them from the mainstream of city life. For the first time, Vancouver's skid road appeared as a space

of exclusion with a population base that included many more people than those derelicts and transients whose presence and behaviour defined it (see Figure 3).

In a population that totaled 4,236 people, of whom more than three quarters were men and over half were “of Asiatic origin,” the report classified four problematic categories of population: “the homeless transient man;” “the old age pensioner;” “the unemployable, disabled and handicapped;” and “the police court drunkenness offender.” The derelict and transient were thus joined by two new officially-designated categories of person. Each of these types exhibited particular forms of need that required specific combinations of programmes for their alleviation. It is perhaps significant that there was no further mention made of “Asiatics.”

In calling for tutelary programming of skid road denizens, regardless of who they might be, the Downtown -- East Side report differed little from other memorandums, reports, and position papers. Despite having determined that the skid road occupants were a far more diverse group than that pictured by earlier, most anecdotal, reports, civic officials concluded that the solution to the problem of exclusion lay in the elimination of skid road. This goal was to be realized not only by urban renewal but by the rehabilitation of the excluded population, including the treatment of deviants, thus reducing the dependency of all. Accomplishing such aims would save the City from a situation which cost, by the estimation of the Director of Planning, some twenty times more than it collected in tax revenue from the area.

The report also criticized the efforts of groups that provided services in the area. Counting at least nine organizations addressing some of these concerns, only three of

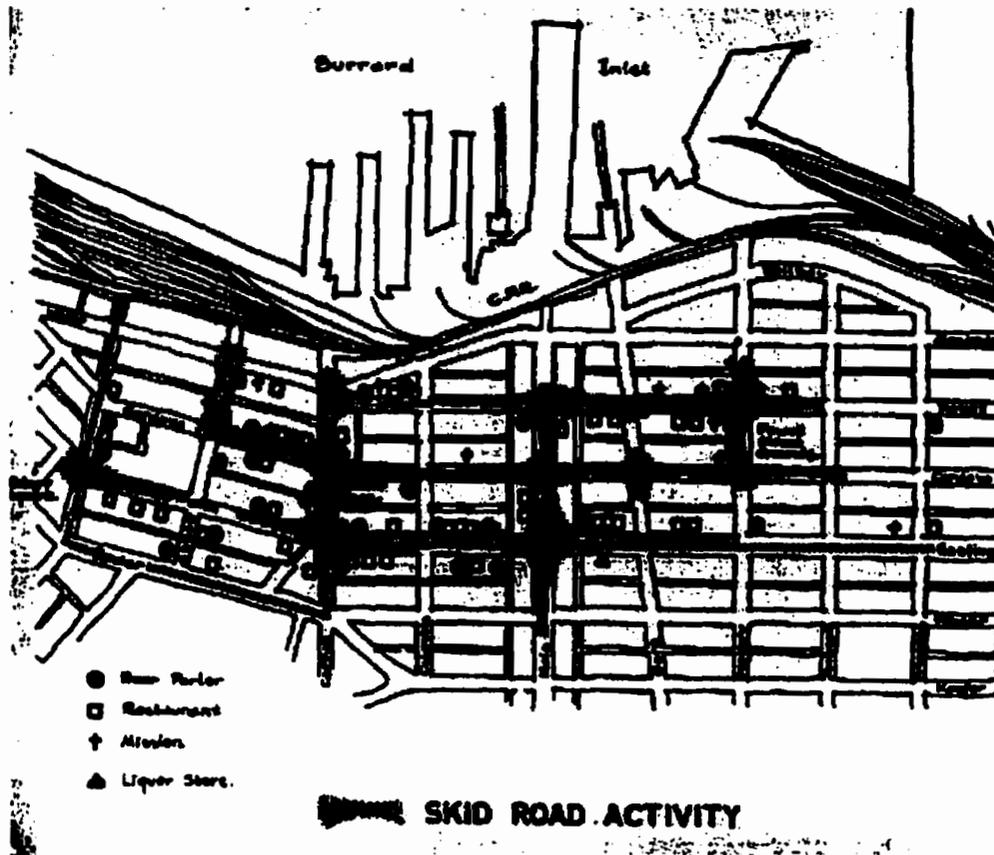


Figure 3: The now-classic depiction of Vancouver's skid road.
Source: City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965.

which were non-religious, the Planning Dept. claimed that “much present activity is fragmented and uncoordinated,” thus “enabl[ing] the derelict and the transient man to maintain his way of life more easily and safely than in another part of the city” (pp. 45, 41). It therefore presented a policy for consideration that would facilitate the elimination of skid road through a combination of centralization and coordination of services. The transient could then be assessed and referred to the agency that could best address his needs, especially for education and vocational training. The pensioner could be availed of improved housing, whether in this district or elsewhere in the city, while those with disabilities or otherwise “unemployable” would be offered a chance of “rehabilitation.” The report’s authors recommended “some form of compulsory treatment” for the most pernicious of the four categories, the alcoholic repeat offender, citing the example of “Scandinavian cities [which] do not even have skid roads . . . largely because chronic alcoholics undergo enforced treatment in which they earn their way” (p. 49).

Despite the avowal that not everyone in Skid Road was derelict or transient, these categories still provided the overarching archetype of the Skid Road inhabitant. The key reason for doing away with them was, of course, their cost to the state and the primary method of achieving their elimination was via their removal from the site of their dereliction.

Urban renewal under fire

Notable by their absence from plans for downtown redevelopment were the people who actually lived in and around the areas targetted by the schemes. The

Vancouver Transportation Study, for example, was more concerned with integrating the proposed elevated freeway along Carrall Street into the existing built environments of Chinatown and “the Old City”, than with the displacement of residents from the numerous SRO hotels that lay in the way of its ideal alignment. The Downtown – East Side report formulated possible approaches to dealing with a problematic population only from the position that proposed programs would facilitate the urban renewal schemes. Nevertheless, the urban renewal option as it evolved over the course of the 1960s existed in a constant state of tension with the imperative to rehabilitate the bodies and the conduct of skid road’s occupants. The two approaches to intervention were not necessarily congruent.

The two sets of problems along which civic interventions moved converged in the discursively forged link connecting the decay of the built environment with the figures of the chronic alcoholic or derelict, and the single man on the move, or transient. The question of what to do with the individuals subsumed by these categories emerged as the central issue in discussions about skid road. Unlike the figure of the hobo -- the old pre-war single, homeless man, and the outcasts who surrounded him -- these characters were cast as both cause and effect factors of blight. Excising blight, according to this logic, also required radical intervention into the lives of those who both caused and reinforced it. Increasingly, plans for the elimination of skid road came to hinge on interventions directed at its population, rather than on the built environment. Indeed, it would become apparent to various authorities that changing the latter was contingent on efforts to transform the people who made skid

road what it was. Skid road was thus an essentially social space in the sense that it was understood to be the product of the conduct, relationships, and values of its occupants. Erasing it required social solutions.

Shortly after the release of the *Downtown -- East Side* report in January 1965, the Director of Planning held a meeting with the City's other department heads to consider its implications and recommend the "creation of a Social Planning Board" for which "the reclamation of Skid Road," designed to "parallel the activities of redevelopment," would be its initial task (CVA, SSD, Doc. 9).⁴ The formation of a social planning body, however, would have to wait. In response to the Planning Department's clarion call for the centralization and coordination of services, the supposedly fragmented agencies attacked the very premise on which it was based.

Coordinating their efforts at the bureaucratic and political levels, a number of skid road social service agencies had formed the Downtown Clergy Committee and used it as a platform to attack the civic policies they believed aggravated local problems. This Committee was largely composed of church or religiously inspired organizations, most of which had a long presence in the downtown area, including the Central City Mission, St James Anglican Church, Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army, and the First United Church. This was a very diverse group. While the First United Church had played a radical role in the area for many decades, engaging in political social action of various kinds (and would be an instrumental agency in the subsequent development of resident-based organizing that would contest the narrative

⁴ CVA, Social Service Department, Series 454 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 3, 1965-66. Minutes of a Meeting held at 2 pm on Feb. 22, 1965 in the office of the Director of Planning to consider the Skid Road Report.

of skid road, as detailed in the following chapters), others such as Central City Mission and the Salvation Army tended to be conservative in both outlook and program, focusing primarily on rehabilitation of individuals. Nevertheless, in their effort to coordinate their activities, they argued that urban renewal would only make things worse. The Committee was supported by journalists who questioned the renewal program. In a 1964 feature article, the city's largest newspaper asked, "Can Bulldozers, Wrecking Balls Really Destroy a skid road?" Its author answered his own question: "Every city has a skid road. If you knock it down, its people will make another skid road. There will always be people who don't want to cut the grass" (Ardies, 1964: 4).

A year later, the Downtown Clergy Committee's delegation emphasized to Vancouver City Council that urban renewal was not enough to effect the reforms necessary to erase skid road. "Putting the same men in new buildings won't help", but neither would "moving people to new areas." According to one committee member, "'You take a girl, dress her up pretty and put her in a new home in [suburban] Burnaby. It doesn't work. It's like Buckingham palace to her; she's out of her element'" (Elsie, 1965). Reinvestment in land, infrastructure and building stock would all be for naught unless there was a concomitant rehabilitation of the humans involved. Indeed, these critics of civic policies maintained that City policies were already exacerbating the very problems that defined skid road as a place apart. Its method of dispensing welfare funds to single men in skid road supported the latter's drinking habits and, hence, their dissolute lifestyles, without providing counter-

measures to control and stop alcoholism (The Vancouver Province, 1965a, b).⁵

But, they claimed, renewal would only displace such problems, rather than eliminate them, spurring the creation of skid road-type districts in other parts of Vancouver.

The Committee thus opposed urban renewal while, at the same time, asserting the urgency of dealing with the stereotypical skid road denizens: the transient man and the incorrigible alcoholic. Where the City's research broadened the base of the skid road population and suggested that a range of interventions were required to deal with its different segments, the agencies sought to assert an imperative of medicalizing regulation through which the behaviour of deviant individuals could be governed. Responding to the agencies' concerns, City Council created, not a social planning group, but a sub-committee, including most of the members of the Downtown Clergy Committee, to investigate and deal with skid road problems.

Rather than the reconstruction of the deteriorating built environment, this sub-committee sought to achieve the moral and ethical reformation of the damaged male through a strategy of institutionalized control and care. The key technology in the achievement of moral transformation, and thus rehabilitation, was financial administration of those individuals who were located within the field of need. Income assistance, or relief, has never been simply an economic instrument. More often, it has been viewed as a technology in which considerations of moral and ethical significance are interlaced with the seemingly constant desires of fiscal authorities to reduce their commitments. The provision of assistance has thus most often been seen as a form of

⁵ CVA, CSSD, Series 454, 107-A-7. skid road, 1962-1971. File 3, 1965-1966. Excerpts of Two Independent Visitations of the Downtown Clergy and Church Agencies Committee on Social Welfare Problems at the Stratford Hotel. ND.

leverage through which the conduct of recalcitrant individuals can be constrained, directed or otherwise influenced (Polanyi, 1957; Dean, 1991; Piven and Cloward, 1971). In Vancouver, as elsewhere, the supervisors of relief sought to deploy it as an instrument to discipline the poor, discouraging “dependence” and increasing their reliance on the labour market – what is usually described as “self-reliance.” In the case of the 1960s skid road, however, the goal of directly influencing the conduct of men on assistance was informed by an explicit desire to control the environment in which they lived.

Constructing a regime of tutelary control

In recommending solutions to the problematic relationship between men and space, the sub-committee focused on the formation of a regime of tutelary intervention and supervision designed to “cure” its human objects. The latter were constituted in terms of the two stereotypical skid road figures: the chronic alcoholic, or derelict, and the transient. Both were considered subject to a debilitating condition of dependency and were seen as deficient in various dimensions of personality that were necessary for manhood. Two facilities, a detoxification centre and a single men’s hostel, were put forward as the key elements in the program to eliminate skid road. These settings would function as sites of surveillance and control where ideals of proper conduct could be inculcated, especially the virtues of thrift, labour and self-reliance be inculcated, thus providing opportunities to re-constitute damaged men as ethical subjects. The sub-committee, then, sought nothing less than the elimination of the conditions which rendered skid road men, both young and old, dependent.

This was a project that involved not only governing space, insofar as it focused on representing and changing a particular place. It was also a spatializing intervention in which the programmes and actions designed to produce ethical subjects initiated the construction of discrete spaces of order (usually contained inside buildings) in which conduct could be managed or controlled to induce order in the area outside them and contain the danger presented to people and buildings via the spread of skid road conduct. While all the ideas and plans for interventions into the lives of skid road men emerged in the context of overall plans for urban renewal, it became a precept of this project “that recognition of the social characteristics of the area must precede any workable physical plans” (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1965). The skid road service agencies thus effectively constructed an institutional-spatial nexus for centralization that provided a role for themselves in urban renewal as the fixers of social blight.

The spatialization of poverty-management techniques was not a new concept. The alms-house and the poor-house are notable forerunners. Its application in the 1960s is something of an anomaly during a time when politicians justified welfare state expansion with principles of participatory democracy that were explicitly concerned with the inclusion of the poor in “mainstream society.” The poverty of the two primary targets of skid road policies, the transient and the derelict, however, was considered to be only derivative of the personality deficiencies that marked them as a problems. Spatial strategies of control and rehabilitation were designed not to

alleviate or otherwise address poverty but to rehabilitate men by constraining the deviant conduct that marked them as outsiders.

Valverde (1996) notes that the contradiction between the autonomizing imperatives of liberal democracy and the imposition of disciplinary or punitive regimes by liberal democratic states is often resolved through the resort to a spatializing maneuver in which particular sites, such as asylums, workhouses, prisons, Indian reserves, reformatories, and schools, are designated as spaces of unfreedom reserved for those individuals or groups that are deemed incapable of autonomy (cf. Katz, 1996, Rothman, 1980). In this case, however, rather than discipline, social service agencies sought to construct a regime that resembled what Paine (1977) has called tutelage, in which a dominant group attempts to guide and teach its subordinates at the same time as it presumes to speak and act on the latter's behalf.

The catalyst for the intervention of the Downtown Clergy Committee in the City's skid road urban renewal plans was an attack on the Social Services Department (CSSD) program for chronic alcoholics at the Stratford Hotel. Initiated in the early 1950s as a means of dealing with men who spent all their assistance money on drinking, frequently leaving them without finances for shelter and food, the Stratford was the first public program directed at the skid road population that sought to achieve rehabilitative effects through spatial manipulation. The CSSD referred to the hotel certain male clients, that is men who were "dependent on social assistance", whom its workers considered to be chronic alcoholics. There, the the landlord received rent cheques directly from the Department while at the same time "administering," or

managing, the client's money, handing it out at regular intervals. As well, the clients received meal tickets to selected restaurants in the district.⁶ This approach made it possible to supervise alcoholic clients more frequently than a system that required them to visit an office to obtain their allowance.

The strategy involved in this form of control involved the determination of key nodal points and significant actors in the daily trajectory of the alcoholic client, forcing him to conform to a routine that promoted his health and well-being. Opportunities for drinking alcohol were minimized but not eliminated, by the predisposition of his finances. Indeed, the point was not so much to stop such men from drinking, but to make them conform to a spatially organized routine, placing chronic alcoholics in a state of "security" which "was gradually transforming and bringing back these men to a sense of responsibility. It was becoming a home to them and they were accepting of help."⁷ A programme of graduated financial management began with complete management of a client's money, but, "depending on their general conformance and sobriety, they would graduate to cash-issue [of their assistance] . . . daily, weekly or semi-monthly, eventually returning to complete independence."⁸ The management of such a man's finances was done to compel him to organize his movements in such a way that his routine, habits and behaviour would

⁶ There seems to have been some difficulty in locating restaurants that would both take this kind of clientele and provide nutritious food.

⁷ CVA, City of Vancouver Social Services Dept. (CSSD), Series 454, 107-A-7. Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 2 - 1962-1964. A. L. Richardson, Caseworker. Summary of the Alcoholic Casework Programme, Centre Unit CSSD. Stratford Hotel Programme, ND.

⁸ CVA, City of Vancouver Social Services Dept. (CSSD), Series 454, 107-A-7. Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 2 - 1962-1964. A. L. Richardson, Caseworker. Summary of the Alcoholic Casework Programme, Centre Unit CSSD. Stratford Hotel Programme, ND.

improve in conformity with the authorities” desired goal of independence and responsibility. Such compulsion would somehow facilitate a transfer of responsibility from the CSSD authorities to the individual concerned, perhaps through an expungment of his earlier failure which was itself the cause of the application of force in the first place, reconstituting him as an independent man and thus restoring his manhood.

The Clergy Committee attacked the Stratford Hotel regime as an essentially benign form of management that did nothing to improve its residents or their living situation. Its members deplored the condition of the building, claiming that the rooms were dirty and the men spent most of their time drinking. In calling for “90% more supervision” of the men living there, it promoted an alternative form of intervention that was at once more active and morally animated (The Vancouver Province, 1965a, b).⁹ They also mobilized local media, providing the sources for a 1965 newspaper story claiming that “social welfare every year turns hundreds of people into alcoholics” (The Vancouver Province, 1965a). Following the formation of the sub-committee, these authorities “concluded that the only reasonable solution for both [chronic alcoholic] and community is a court-sanctioned compulsory domiciliary cure.”¹⁰

⁹ CVA, CSSD, Series 454, 107-A-7. Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 3, 1965-1966. Excerpts of Two Independent Visitations of the Downtown Clergy and Church Agencies Committee on Social Welfare Problems at the Stratford Hotel. ND.

¹⁰ CVA, CSSD, Series 454 107-A-7 Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 4. Special Joint Committee - A Plan for Action, 1967-1969. Memo to Mayor’s Office from T. T. Hill, Director of Social Services[?], May 14, 1969. Copy of a letter to Hern, Wylie, Dixon and Levin, Barristers and Solicitors. Re: BC Collateral, et. al. and City of Vancouver, from T. T. Hill.

To this end, they sought an end to the criminalization of public drunkenness, typified in the characterization of the “chronic drunkenness offender.” In its place, was envisioned a system of medical treatment, beginning with police apprehension, commitment to treatment by a magistrate and release only “under conditions determined by the Chief Probation Officer.”¹¹ Chronic cases required special facilities, since “their personal habits may have deteriorated to such a level that it would present a problem as far as the rehabilitation of the other residents.”¹² The conduct associated with alcohol use was thus reframed, as the notion of public disruption gave way to a symptomology of disease. This change demanded different forms of enforcement and new regimes of control. If the chronic alcoholic was no longer to be treated only as a potential nuisance criminal and a drain on the public purse, but also as a patient in need of care, the police constable would cede his role to the counsellor; the drunk tank would be replaced by the detoxification centre. The body of the derelict, then, would become the site of therapeutic rehabilitation instead of punitive sanctions or benign neglect.

Intertwined with the chronic alcoholic as a defining problem of Skid Road was a second, related, figure, the transient. Although single, homeless men had been a concern of authorities for decades prior to the advent of Skid Road, the movement of

¹¹ CVA, CSSD, Series 454 107-A-7 Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 4. Special Joint Committee - A Plan for Action, 1967-1969. Memorandum from City Clerk to various Departments; See also, Report of the “Action Committee” to the Special Joint Committee on Skid Road Problems, City of Vancouver, April 15, 1968. Submitted to Alderman Halford Wilson, Chairman; Letter to T. T. Hill, Social Service Department Administrator, from Avis Pumphrey, Director of Social Service Department, Vancouver General Hospital, March 4, 1968.

¹² CVA, CSSD, Series 454 107-A-7 Skid Road, 1962-1971. File 4. Special Joint Committee - A Plan for Action, 1967-1969. Report from Medical Section, City Social Services Department. Re: The Chronic Alcoholic, April 4, 1968.

single men to Vancouver from other parts of the country following the Second World War, was seen as somehow a problem that distinct from its pre-war predecessor. One social service agency pointed to the “new element” in “the Skid-road area” of 1953, where it had operated “for over 45 years . . . to serve the unfortunates -- the weary, the bewildered, the frustrated, the defeated. Now, as an aftermath of depression and war casualties, has come a new element -- the young men who are drifting across Canada. They are often without parents, and many have no homes, no church or affiliation of any kind, and frequently they have no faith in man or God. Their numbers no one knows, but this we do know -- that our gaols today, as one authority put it, “no longer filled with old lags, but with young men.”¹³

The transient, like the hobo before him, was a man without a home, family or roots. He represented an intractable problem for the civic government as long as it was responsible for the provision of income assistance to indigent individuals. In the mid-1950s, the CSSD set up a system of dispensing assistance in the Skid Road area to unemployed single men newly arrived in the city. At that time, relief was a local responsibility and Vancouver officials believed their city was bearing the “main burden of assistance” because the city as “the focus of employment opportunity in the Province for loggers, laborers and construction workers” (CVA, Colcleugh, 1955). A special Single Men’s Unit (SMU) was organized and workers were stationed at two locations to “register and administer assistance for single destitute employables in

¹³ CVA Add. Mss. 256 Vol. 75, Harry Patten Archibald , File 1, Central City Mission, Book of Activities, 1953. Pamphlet.

quarters made available by the Salvation Army and First United Church” in 1954 (CVA, Colcleugh, 1955).

Guidelines were established to determine eligibility, based on authorities” clearly-stated desire to remove from the roles as quickly as possible those who were eligible for assistance and to narrow the potential pool of eligible recipients. At the same time, the framework within which applicants were evaluated was designed to supply an overall knowledge of each individual case and of the population of which it was a part. Such information was desired to both maximize the efficiency of relief distribution and provide a hedge against its “abuse.” CSSD personnel were thus directed to discover whether each applicant was “a part of the *normal* employment structure, whose lack of employment is caused by work scarcity, or [if] there are other causes for their destitution” as well as to inquire as to the duration of such circumstances (CVA, Colcleugh, 1955, emphasis added). Moreover, each case was to be situated within a wider context, to determine, first, whether “the applicants [were] a representative sample of the population” or whether “certain age groups, occupational groups, racial groups, dominate[d] the scene” and, second, if “the problem [was] indigenous”, or the result of a “recent influx of the marginally employable” as well as if “recent immigrants [were] a significant portion of the problem.”

Implicit in such determinations is a moral judgement about the conduct of the recipients, central to which is the issue of dependence. They situate relief as an

interim or emergency measure for any *normal* individual. Should it be required for a long period of time, then clearly, something else is happening that needs further investigation. Relief itself is placed within a framework of abnormality that requires the investigation of those who apply for it. Clearly, the intent of this kind of evaluation is to provide a picture of applicants in order to determine categories of recipients defined in terms of deviance and normality. The definition of such categories facilitates the specification of the objects of a policy directed to the ends of using relief as a means of influencing the conduct of the men who apply for it. Understanding one's objects is a necessary preliminary to begin formulation of the exact procedures required to undertake such a task.

The problem of single men thus intersected with that of the chronic alcoholic at the point in which both were rendered quantifiable, and their financial and social costs could be detailed. Ameliorating interventions could thus be made on the basis of accumulated knowledge of the problem. When provincial aid was obtained in 1957, the department established a Single Men's Unit (SMU) on the edge of the Skid Road area, consolidating the services that had been offered earlier through the First United Church and the Salvation Army. One count of SMU clients in the skid road area noted that of 80 % of the 415 cases there were considered alcoholics while one third of those were labelled "chronic." The total cost to the City of such "chronic" cases was \$4,611 per month. It sought means to "control . . . this unreliable portion of our total caseload."¹⁴ In 1964, the City appealed to the Provincial government yet again for

¹⁴ CVA, CSSD, Series 454, 107-A-&, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 2, 1962-1964, Vancouver's Skid Road, ND.

financial help that would enable it to enhance the SMU's capacity to supervise the individuals on its caseload in order to control bogus claims and "overdrawing."¹⁵ Yet, in the mid-sixties, when this appeal seemed to be part of a concerted effort that was emerging to deal with the Single Men's Problem, only slightly more than 28% of the SMU's caseload was located in the area defined as Skid Road. Another 6% of its cases were found uptown, around Granville Street, while almost two thirds of the Unit's clients were located in "other areas."

The formation of the SMU and its attempt to render its object visible and manipulable thus situated skid road in a space that was co-extensive with the figures of the transient and the chronic alcoholic. But, its success in this endeavour also opened it to criticism and journalists launched an attack, parallel to the Clergy Committee's assault on the Stratford Hotel policy, on the civic welfare system for single men. At end of 1964, a newspaper raised an alarm, claiming that "an easy cash welfare system, a mellow climate and a brightly-painted job picture are causing transients to pour into Vancouver by the hundreds" (Simms, 1964). Despite the overwhelming numbers of single men living outside the skid road area, the focus of efforts to deal with the relationship between welfare "dependency", transience, and chronic alcoholism was skid road rather than other parts of the city.

As with the problem of alcoholics, the social agencies claimed they could do a better job. While civic officials sought to specify and count the problem in order to better design solutions to it, other authorities were attempting to rehabilitate the

¹⁵ CVA, CSSD, Series 454, 107-A-&, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 2, 1962-1964, A Brief Submitted to the Honourable W. D. Black, Minister of Welfare, Province of British Columbia By the City of Vancouver Concerning Single Unemployed Men, May 14, 1964.

transients. At Central City Mission, established in 1913 specifically to provide material assistance and spiritual aide to the many single men who arrived in Vancouver, providing hostel and, eventually, eating facilities, the 1950s and early 60s saw the development of programs designed to promote independent habits among its clientele. Aside from the ministering obligations of an inter-denominational organization, the Mission also provided counselling, recreational and skill-building services that were meant to structure the lives of the men who stayed at its hostel. "Monotony," the group believed, "is one of the greatest enemies of the Skid-road. It is often to escape monotony that men turn to drink [and] dope . . ." ¹⁶ Beyond simply occupying them, however, such programming was meant to instill an ethic of "self-help" in the men as the means to independence. In turning to charity or social assistance for survival a man was thus seen as entering into a state of dependence, departure from which required intensive, therapeutic interventions into their daily relationships and conduct.

In the mid-1960s, when various private and public authorities were examining options for a publicly-funded hostel, the exacting rules of conduct for the men "accepted into Catholic Charities Hostel for rehabilitation" required a man to both work in the building and look for employment, while the hostel managed his money. Lateness or absences from the hostel required prior notification. Alcohol and "profanity or obscene language" were prohibited. ¹⁷ With this in mind, the sub-

¹⁶ CVA Add. Mss. 256 Vol. 75, Harry Patten Archibald, File 1, Central City Mission, Book of Activities, 1953. Pamphlet.

¹⁷ CVA, CSSD, Series 454 107-A-7, Skid Road 1962-1971, file 3, 1965-1966, Agreement and Regulations Governing Men Accepted into Catholic Charities Hostel for Rehabilitation.

committee considered adopting, for the planned Vancouver hostel, the operating principles in effect at one in Calgary:

- "3. No cash assistance is given to single men.
- 4. Hostel care ensures that two meals per day and a bed is available for anyone genuinely in need and that social assistance funds are used to the best advantage.
- 5. The cost of providing the hostel care is less than the cost of providing direct [cash] assistance. . . .
- 7. The maximum number of men should not exceed 300 in one location for effective control.
- 8. Hostel accommodation provides daily contact with the men, which is desirable" (CVA, Add. Mss. 670).

Rehabilitation thus required intensive individualized (and individualizing) intervention aimed at controlling the body and investing it with the moral imperatives appropriate to reducing the condition of dependence. Authorities from service agencies thus believed that the necessary prelude to the redevelopment of skid road's buildings was the redevelopment of the men who made it what it was.

Redefining skid road

The Downtown Clergy Committee thus secured a role for its members in the planning of urban renewal. This situation is not without its ironies, for it was precisely the effectiveness of the services those groups provided that came into question as the City planned skid road redevelopment. In its counter-attack, the Committee claimed that it was really civic policies that were responsible for the aggravation of skid road problems and that renewal would only worsen the situation. Yet, its victory was, in the end, somewhat hollow. The City Council's prompt formation of a special committee to examine and recommend solutions for the skid road problem served as a measure of

co-optation. Ensnared within an official City sub-committee, the members of the Downtown Clergy Committee laboured for five years to implement plans for a detoxification centre and a single men's hostel. At the outset of the sub-committee, both measures were considered to be urgent, the primary means of achieving the moral transformation of skid road men, and thus the elimination of skid road itself. Ironically, once they were realized in practice, the effect of both detox and hostel on the skid road landscape would be minimal. Each was implemented just as it was overwhelmed by the events that would radically change the district.

Nevertheless, the models proposed for the detox and hostel were characteristic of skid road as a long term project of moral determination and transformation that situated their location outside the space of the respectable community. Underpinned by a particular conception of the relationship between conduct, subjectivities, and space, this project sought to recover the bodies and identities of skid road men. Premised on the idea that improper conduct was both the cause of skid road, and its result, this program of action advanced five enduring ideas, derived from the discourse of the slum, that have been associated with the idea of skid road in Vancouver over the past half century.

First, it conceived of the area as a place unlike any other in the city. Second, derived from this, it stereotyped all of skid road's occupants, based on the most dissolute conduct in view, as deviant and, as a result, isolated from normal society. Third, in positing itself on an intrinsic relationship between space and conduct, this program agitated against the direct redevelopment of skid road, but, rather, sought to

concentrate the resources for its elimination directly on the space and its occupants. Fourth, it attempted to channel those resources into the creation of controlled settings where behaviour, values and attitudes could be corrected through discipline and supervision. Finally, the poverty of its residents was constituted in terms of dependence on public funds and charitable services, the consequence of deviant conduct, rather than as a formative condition of skid road.

And yet, this convergence of forces did contribute to shifting conceptions of skid road, introducing two new formulations of the problem into public discourse. First, the reciprocal interventions of social agencies and political and bureaucratic authorities helped achieve a redefinition of the district from a space of criminality to one of therapeutic action. Instead of being considered a public nuisance demanding enforcement, the figures of the derelict and transient were reworked into the image of the patient requiring care. The disciplinary normalization of both the police constable and the wrecker's ball was thus displaced, although not replaced, by the tutelary regime of the social and church workers.

Second, the willingness of civic officials to portray the skid road population as a subcultural grouping opened up a range of new possibilities for those who sought to engage with skid road and its population. Not only did this confer a certain functionality on the district, it also made visible an incipient collective identity among the local population. The intervention of social agencies in the urban renewal process shifted the direction of civic policy away from dealing with the skid road population as a subcultural group. But, it also delayed redevelopment plans long enough for both

other groups, as well as some of the same social agencies, to begin elaborating the implications that were latent in the subcultural concept.

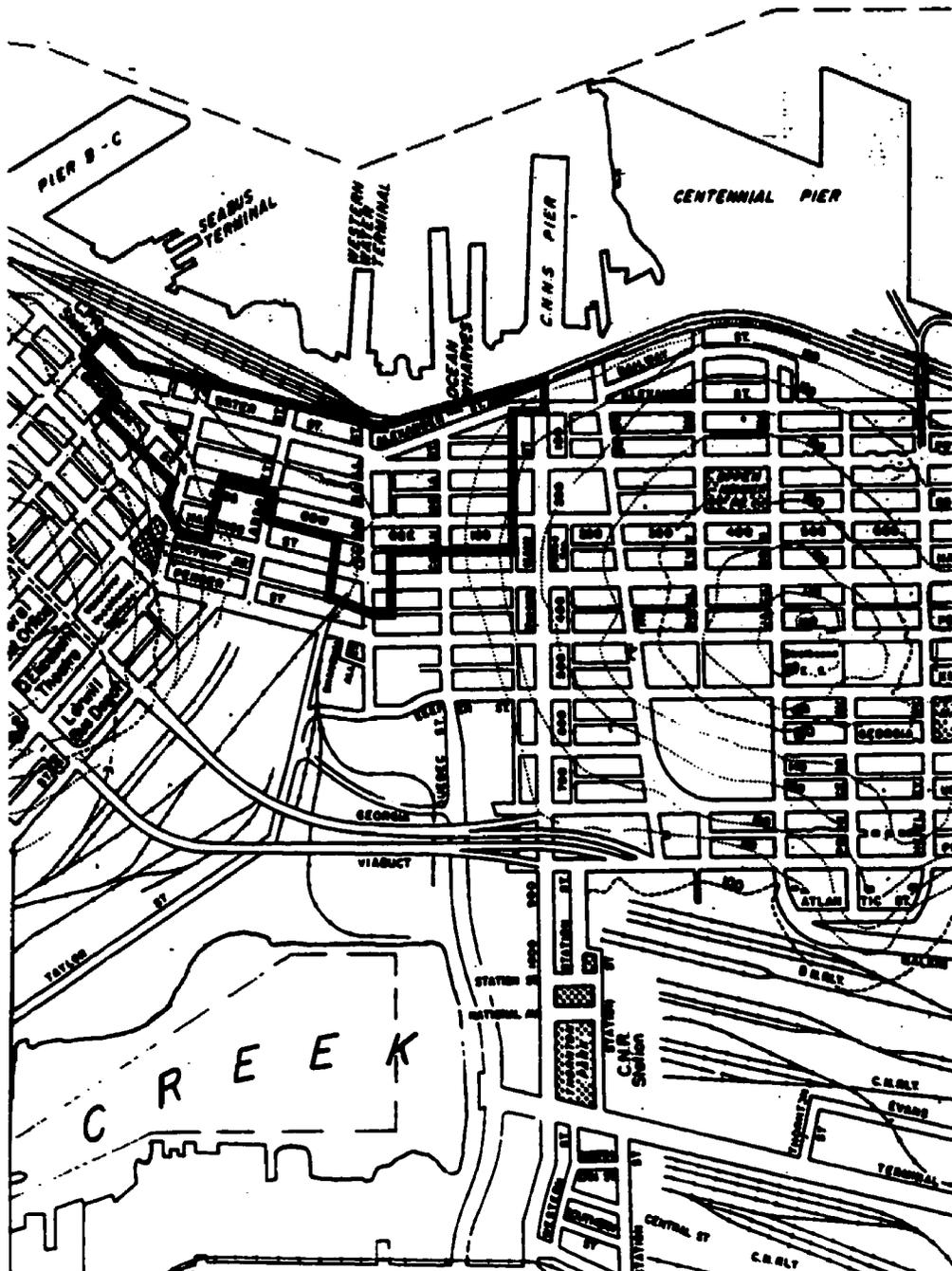
Chapter 5

Reconstructing the Inner City I: Renovating Skid Road

The years from 1967 to 1973 witnessed the formation of a new social imaginary of the skid road slum, as a range of institutional and discursive forces promoting equality, democracy, and community, as well as profitability and new forms of urban development, were brought to bear on the relationship between damaged bodies and decaying space which had hitherto characterized skid road. Three distinct but intertwined sets of interventions were constitutive of what would become a new version of skid road in which community and history were integral elements, and through which the relationship between bodies and space was severed, if only temporarily. These include the heritage renovation of skid road, the effort to organize the residential community of skid road, and the attempts by City officials to both respond to these imperatives and to determine their own strategic course.

The forces and groups that carried these interventions frequently expressed countervailing tendencies that, over the long term, developed into antagonistic relationships. Such contradictory impulses crystallized in the heritage restoration of the Old Granville Townsite (OGT), the heart of skid road, which was redubbed Gastown by its promoters, after an early settler and entrepreneur (see Map 3).

Although heritage renovation in skid road was a focal point of opposition to the civic modernizers, it also generated residential displacement from SRO hotels, setting off a dynamic of conflict that has reverberated over thirty years. The contradiction which this conflict incorporates between the 'ideology of liveability' and the policies through



Map 3: The Gastown historical district, as determined by the Provincial Government in 1971. Note the close overlap with Vancouver's skid road.

which it moved, both of which were a central theme of professional class elements of the civic opposition, and the goals of socio-economic equality advocated by more radical forces continue to haunt present debates about the Downtown Eastside. (Ley, 1980). Yet, both heritage renovation and the impulse to defend skid road residents from the displacement it caused emerged from and framed the opposition to civic modernization and its policies of urban renewal. The genesis and structure of these antagonisms and the interventions which they animated will be the topic of this and the subsequent two chapters, beginning here with a focus on the heritage renovation of skid road.

Like most other urban areas in North America, Vancouver was deeply influenced by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Ley (1980, 1987) argues that the city was perhaps even more affected than many others in North America because it was one of the few places where an emergent elite of 'post-industrial' professionals with a relatively liberal ideology was able to construct a civic regime that was based not only on cultural but also political hegemony. The urban core had special significance in the processes that led to the construction of this new civic regime. Confrontations over both the fate of specific sites and the establishment of visions for the downtown and inner districts were critical events in determining the direction of development in the centre of the city. The accession of this professional middle class to civic power was channeled, largely, through the convergence of different kinds of social, cultural, political, and economic interests and groups in opposition to the linked freeway proposals and urban renewal. Its ascendance was

facilitated through its articulation of an alternative civic planning regime, articulated through an 'ideology of liveability', that offered a vision of slower growth with a focus on consumption and quality of life issues (Ley, 1980).¹ Central to this program was a reconceptualization of the problem of urban space, especially the inner city, that constituted the city as a space contiguous with historically-rooted communities.

Skid road would prove to be important for the advent of this new civic regime because it was the site of key events and processes through which the liberal elite was able to construct its hegemony. The campaign for preservation and renovation of the heart of the skid road was one of the pivotal events in the formation of a new local elite. Emergent entrepreneurial forces, some associated with the counter-cultural scene that was moving into the area, were brought together with older, more established downtown business and property-owners, academics, a new generation of planners, social planners, and architects. They were joined by community groups based in the westside economic establishment, especially the Community Arts Council (CAC), that came to support renovation, rather than redevelopment, for aesthetic reasons.

Part of the challenge to the Vancouver civic administration involved a reconceptualization of the nature of decay in the urban core. In opposition to urban renewal plans, the built environment of the inner city was repositioned as an object to

¹ Although it originated initially outside the corridors of power at City Hall and uptown clubs and boardrooms, some of the same actors came to walk those same corridors and the spaces from which they operated would become power centres.

be recovered rather than excised from the landscape. From its incarnation as a civic liability, the skid road district was reworked into the city's cradle – the birthplace of Vancouver – providing the latter with both historical roots and a distinctive architecture that were made to serve as counterpoints to the modernist regime of planning and development that dominated Vancouver at the time. As groups emerged to promote heritage renovation in skid road, the deterioration of the building stock was reframed in the context of history and community that were counterposed, not only to the modernist aesthetic that animated plans for downtown redevelopment, but also to the skid road and the occupants which it would displace.

Community was an important factor in Vancouver's oppositional movement during the 1960s. Community groups were key actors in the rejection of civic modernism and 'the community' was the central site of oppositional organizing, as well as the justification for such action. However, although skid road renovation was supported by groups that acted in the name of 'the community', it was never completely clear whether or not that community included the area's inhabitants. Certainly, early rhetorical appeals for renovation sought to encompass the skid road population. In practice, however, the notion of community deployed here referred to the wider city and the respectable citizens for whom Vancouver's birthplace had become a slum. Renovation provided a means of recovering that space for the city, rather than for the residents, for many of whom heritage upgrading and regulations resulted in residential displacement. Ultimately, heritage boosterism relegated

residents to the status of 'rubbies' and 'bums' who offered a contrast to the burgeoning entrepreneurs who were transforming the district.

To a large extent, the success of heritage advocates in forestalling urban renewal can be traced to the link which they established between community and history, on one hand, and, on the other, youth, innovation, and enterprise. The significance of constructions of youth and youthfulness cannot be understated in this context.

Younger people began congregating in the area during the late 1960s, partly because of cheap lodging and the social scene that centred on bars and drugs, but also as a consequence of police action in westside Kitsilano, where Vancouver's counter-cultural youth scene first publicly appeared. Entrepreneurs of varying scale sought to capitalize on the concentration of counter-cultural activities in the skid road area, so that heritage renovation was framed initially as an embodiment of the same supposed vision, energy, and imagination that enabled them to take advantage of the opportunities which the youth/ful scene opened up.

The effectiveness of such representations was largely due to their contrast with two different opposing forces. On one hand, skid road renovations were offered as a viable and humane alternative to urban renewal, thus providing a point of convergence, albeit fragile and temporary, between more radical programmes of equality, the topic of the next chapter, and entrepreneurial programmes of profitability. In other words, heritage preservation was constituted as an expression of opposition to the regime of civic modernization. On the other hand, it was also contrasted with the apparently old and worn-out inhabitants of the district, the

derelicts whose presence urban renewal was concerned with eliminating.

Although the bodies of skid road men no longer were treated as the source of urban degeneration, they, nonetheless, remained an important component in the construction of the new inner city. Their existence provided a necessary contrast for the construction of Gastown redevelopment as a new and exciting form of urbanization.

Contesting urban renewal

Tracing the advent of heritage renovation in the OGT is complicated by the boosterism of later proponents, notably broadcaster and writer Gary Bannerman, whose potted history of Gastown situates it in the context of a struggle between youthful, innovative, and visionary forces of historical preservation, on one side, and, on the other, the exhausted and outdated forces of the civic modernizers (Bannerman, 1974). The story is somewhat more complex.

The City's plans for redevelopment included support for renovation in what was then becoming known as the OGT (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1966). Nevertheless, heritage preservation in Gastown provided an oppositional platform that was positioned in stark contrast to an apparently hierarchical, corporate and bureaucratic mode of development through which urban renewal was being planned and implemented. The key element of downtown renewal directly affecting Gastown was a large-scale waterfront redevelopment called Project 200. The original design included 14 office towers, 1000 apartments, a 600 room hotel, and retail sites along the waterfront. The key component presupposing the development, according to its builders, would be vehicle accessibility via a waterfront roadway (Pendakur, 1972;

Bradbury and Peloquin, 1966). It was this so-called roadway, in actuality a freeway connector, that would ultimately be the catalyst for the undoing of downtown urban renewal. Its construction would have been problematic for the retention of buildings in Chinatown and the OGT at precisely the time when public interest in historical preservation was on the rise (see Map 4).

The freeway connector, a key tool in the renewal process as well as a piece of vital infrastructure to support other redevelopment projects, operated to link the active opposition to redevelopment in the adjacent Strathcona residential neighbourhood and the Chinatown nightclub and retail district with other groups that sought to preserve the buildings of Gastown. Strathcona groups, assisted by the late 1960s by community organizations like the Neighbourhood Services Association, the umbrella group of neighbourhood houses (the Vancouver version of settlement houses), and the Vancouver Inner City Services Project (a university student-based community organizing group, the role of which will be explored extensively in Chapter 6) were attempting to contest urban renewal. But it was only when plans for the downtown freeway, including a Chinatown alignment, were announced, that they were joined in concert by west side academics, architects and arts groups (Anderson, 1991; Pendakur, 1972). At the same time, the idea of Gastown renovation was quickly taken up by the same organizations and individuals, in alliance with some of the area's merchants and landholders.

According to Bannerman's version of events, the proprietor of the Exposition Gallery was Gastown's original rehabilitation visionary (Bannerman, 1974). Realtor

PLAN

SWAN WOOSTER-CBA

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CROSSING CONSULTANTS TO THE N.H.B.



NORTH SHORE BRIDGE
OR TUNNEL (6 LANES)

BURRARD
INLET

4 LANE BY-PASS

DESIGN OPTIONS

FIG 13

FIG 14

6 LANE WATERFRONT
BY-PASS & DISTRIBUTOR

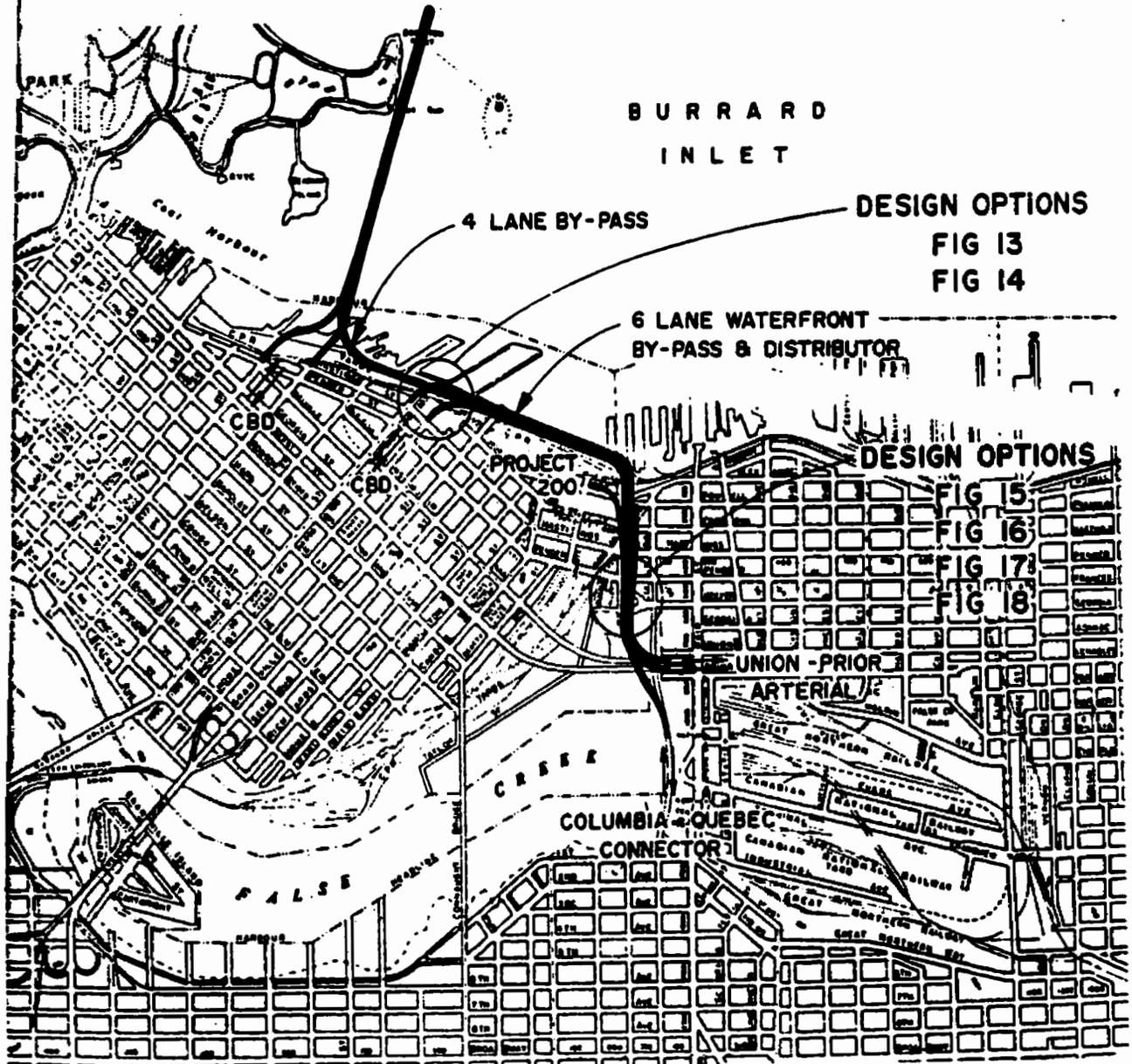
DESIGN OPTIONS

FIG 15

FIG 16

FIG 17

FIG 18



SCHEME I.1

COMBINED DISTRIBUTOR BY-PASS
WATERFRONT - CARRALL ST

Map 4: The Chinatown freeway alignment -- 1969. The design for urban renewal of skid road and adjoining districts.
Source: GVREB, 1969.

M. G. Thomson, whose family owned property in the area since the early part of the century contradicts this assertion. In a self-published memoir, he writes that in the late 1950s and early 1960s he worked with other property and business operators of the 100 and 300 blocks West Cordova to campaign against civic plebiscites that would have provided funding for the City to purchase and clear land in the area for downtown parking.² Inspired by the slide-show and discussion at a 1962 public meeting on heritage renovation in San Francisco, organized by the Canadian Planning Association and Downtown Business Association, Thomson helped form the Townsite Committee to promote preservation and renovation in the area that would soon become known as the Old Granville Townsite and then Gastown.

Although its initial efforts consisted mainly of exhorting members and neighbours to improve the appearance of their own buildings, the Committee soon forged an alliance with the UBC School of Architecture, providing space for fieldwork sessions and the site for a thesis project on “Gastown Beautification” that was discussed at a symposium in 1965.³ Although Thompson calls the announcement of the Project 200 waterfront scheme a “setback for rehabilitation,” the Townsite Committee revealed itself as an early supporter of “the breathtaking imagination exhibited by the . . . consortium.”⁴ It was not alone in its early support for the project.

² CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization, MG. Thomson, 1978.

³ Thomson proudly writes: “By that year [1965] the area west of Cambie St. was no longer included in the Skid Road area. The Downtown: East Side Report of January 1965 stopped at Cambie.” However, neither has any other official document I’ve seen go past Cambie in describing skid road. Either this was a projection or it was so-labelled in the vernacular.

⁴ CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization, MG. Thomson, 1978; CVA, Add. Mss. 301, Community Arts Council, Vo. 18, File 50, Civic Arts: Downtown

The Community Arts Council, subsequently one of the central advocates of Gastown heritage preservation, was concerned with downtown traffic flows as early as the late 1950s, and was initially an avid supporter of the waterfront redevelopment.⁵ Circumstance and opportunity for heritage soon knocked, however, when Project 200, so closely bound to the question of urban renewal, the downtown freeway, and a third crossing of Burrard Inlet, was subjected to increasingly critical scrutiny by a range of other groups.

Even before the freeway and Project 200 plans were announced, the Townsite Committee had become a member of the so-called Composite Committee, which would provide a crucial nexus for advocates of Gastown renovation and opponents of the larger redevelopment project.⁶ Formed in 1965 at the behest of the City's Town Planning Commission, the Composite Committee functioned as an educational and promotional device to disseminate ideas about planning, development and urbanization and as a link between planners, developers, citizens, and state agencies. Its membership, including downtown business groups, civic boards, the Community Planning Association, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was joined by groups that were quintessentially representative of Ley's (1980) emerging professional middle class, including the two local universities, architectural firms and the

Development re: Project 200, Preliminary Report of the Townsite Committee on Project 200, 11 July, 1965[?].

⁵ CVA, Add. Mss. 301, Community Arts Council, Vol. 18, File 46, Downtown Development. [Re: City of Vancouver's 5 year plan, 1957-1964.

⁶ CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization, MG. Thomson, 1978.

Community Arts Council.⁷ These links proved to be crucial. By 1967, Gastown was beginning to attract small-scale entrepreneurs, not only to the periphery of skid road where the members of the Townsite Committee were located, but to its heart, in what would become 'East Gastown', where the freeway connector to the waterfront would mean substantial changes to the built environment.⁸

Impending redevelopment, however, was problematic because it created a situation in which mortgage lenders were unwilling to provide funds for small-scale redevelopment. The necessity for small entrepreneurs to invest substantial amounts of their own equity in any property upgrading thus led, presumably, to an expansion of the base of proprietary interest in preserving and 'revitalizing' the area. In 1967, a series of informal meetings at the offices of architects Birmingham and Wood culminated a year later with official Planning Department support for and City Council approval of a formal study exploring the renovation of the Old Granville Townsite.⁹ It was during this period that the freeway proposal, and the urban renewal which it presupposed, became the principal focus of conflict in civic affairs.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the Townsite Committee, together with the Community Arts Council, was busy promoting Gastown as the heart of Vancouver's past and the soul of its future. In the autumn of 1967, the CAC formed a Historic Vancouver Committee, which, in

⁷ CVA, Add. Mss. 301, Community Arts Council, Vo. 18, File 63, Civic Arts -- Downtown Development, *The City Seen, 1966-1969, Minutes of the Composite Committee*, June 21, 1967; CVA, Pamphlet 1970-114, *Vancouver: Ours To Shape*. [by the Composite Committee].

⁸ CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, *The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization*, MG. Thomson, 1978.

⁹ CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, *The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization*, MG. Thomson, 1978.

¹⁰ See Pendakur (1972) for a detailed chronology of events.

light of the issue of renewal and preservation, quickly turned its attention to the Old Granville Townsite. Just under a year later, as Council vacillated on the downtown freeway alignment in the face of sustained and growing opposition, this committee organized a much-publicized excursion through Gastown, in which volunteer guides from the UBC School of Architecture led some 700 people on a tour of the district's buildings. With the active endorsement of the Planning Director, the CAC lobbied Gastown property owners, who subsequently agreed to a \$1 per square foot levy to pay for the beautification study.¹¹

Subsequent adoption of the report, discussed below, by City Council marked a turning point for heritage advocates. The financing formula negotiated between Vancouver and the federal and provincial governments, together with levies on local merchants and the eventual designation of the area as a Provincial Historical Site (see Map 3), provided a public infrastructure around which private redevelopment could accelerate. Moreover, adoption of the principles articulated in the report effectively terminated designs for both Project 200 and the Chinatown freeway connector. But, although the renovators essentially won their battle, the consequences of that victory were not universally appreciated.

The contradictions of heritage

Although early Gastown heritage advocates proffered a democratic, liberatory public space, the actuality of renovation did not quite live up to its promise. Unlike

¹¹ CVA, Pamphlets 1978-70, *The Townsite Story: The Original Gastown Revitalization*, MG. Thomson, 1978.

heritage preservation in Strathcona and Chinatown, which was linked to community through an emerging politics of ethnicity and identity, Gastown preservation was made to stand for both the city's past and its future through a somewhat nebulous connection with an ethic of counter-cultural entrepreneurialism and consumption. The actual renovation process, however, threatened the residential population with eviction and displacement. Ironically, heritage renovation targeted the site that had, until then, been specified as Vancouver's skid road, at the very time that IDEAS was decrying the spread of "all the claptrap that spells decay" to a wider area. Even though its renovation ostensibly served as the harbinger of a more humane form of urban development and aesthetic, it threatened to displace skid road and was thus closely connected with the latter's 'expansion' that so worried merchants. The contradiction of Ley's (1980) 'liveability ideology' thus became apparent in quite short order.

The Restoration Report of 1968 is an exquisite example of the 'liveability' ideology of the emerging urban professional middle class. The deterioration of skid road buildings was reframed as their value was redefined. The social value of a piece of property could no longer be defined strictly in terms of its economic return to the state or its owner. The conditions and uses of property should also be accounted for in terms of their cultural return to 'the community':

"For a city to stay alive and healthy it must be adaptive. As in any organism, this has to do with continuity and change. Maintenance and preservation of essential characteristics must be concomitant with growth. The widest range of choice for each person to participate and experience urban life is the basic fabric of a city's cloth on which must be woven the two most powerful influences in a city's future: movement--

communication; education--leisure" (Birmingham and Wood, 1969: 20-21).

This appeal to a mobilization of property and the built environment as means of maximizing choice, participation, and enhancing experience is clearly an expression of the larger anti-exclusionary, democratizing ethic of the 1960s social movements. The maximization of "choice . . . new experience . . . access by people. . . identity . . . human dignity . . . integration . . . diversity . . . visual enhancement . . . the quality of life" are the "fundamental principles" according to which the formulation of urban planning and development must proceed.

Nevertheless, the vision of a democratic urban space is articulated in terms of biological metaphors that naturalizes urban development, linking and subordinating it to the economy of property. The problem of urban blight is its minimization of economic returns on property and the threat of contagion. Thus rendered as an organism, the city's lifeblood consists of flows of capital and investment that keep it healthy and growing. Their loss or diversion leads to decay and stagnation. Heritage preservation thus becomes, more than anything, an alternative economic strategy to the centralized, bureaucratic and corporate urban renewal programs of the previous two decades that were devoted to revitalization through "major urban surgery, razing and rebuilding" (Birmingham and Wood, 1969: 16). It operates primarily as a means of channelling capital into the land and built environment of "marginal districts" that "are poor risks for private investment and burdens for public services" (Birmingham and Wood, 1969: 16).

Responses to the report signalled fissures that were beginning to open up, both inside the civic bureaucracy and among oppositional elements. A staffer in the newly formed City Department of Social Planning and Community Development commented that it “is nothing but a nice piece of tourist journalism” that ignored “the very visible and problem ridden population of Skid Road.”¹² But, this assessment was not completely accurate. Indeed, the sinister side of revitalization through heritage preservation is evident in the proposal to improve “shopping conditions . . . by minimizing contact between the shopper and the destitute” via increased policing of the offending population (Birmingham and Wood, 1969: 37).¹³ The Restoration Report recognized “the old city [as] a living room providing low cost living, tolerance, companionship and anonymity”, and advocated the achievement of renovation with a minimum of “dislocation by developing accommodation and supportive services for [residents’] life patterns with some dignity.” Residential displacement, however, was considered to be an inevitable, even natural, by-product of revitalization of the built environment, increased property transactions, and renovation (Birmingham and Wood, 1969: 28). The technical problem was to mitigate its effects, rather than prohibit its occurrence. Nevertheless, opposition to the report was so intense that City Council adopted the Planning Director’s recommendation ‘that the existing indigenous

¹² CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Letter from Darlene Marzari to Maurice Egan, Director of Social Planning and Community Development; see also, CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Delegation to the Standing Committee of Planning, Development and Transportation by C. Barrett and J. Wright, July 3, 1969.

¹³ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, City Planning Dept., Resume of Meeting, 16 July 1969.

population should not be expected to relocate against his [sic] will without assistance in totally unfamiliar sections of the larger community",¹⁴

Skid road housing thus began to emerge as an issue as a result of the accelerating renovation of Gastown. Working out of a United Church-sponsored drop-in centre called the Dugout, university students on summer practicums collaborated with a field-worker from the federally-funded Company of Young Canadians to organize Residents of Gastown, a group that sought to represent the interests of the people living the hotels and rooming houses of the area then being renovated (see next chapter).¹⁵ The renovation of Gastown raised questions about housing and displacement of hotel dwellers at the same time as the question of responsibility for the abysmal condition of those hotels became prominent. When the Stanley and New Fountain Hotels were threatened with closure by City health and buildings inspectors in 1969, concern over displacement as a consequence of 'revitalization' culminated in proposals to purchase and renovate the buildings to ensure low rental housing for people living in the district. The Urban Design Centre, recently formed as the result of student activism in the area, assisted the Residents in their attempt to design, develop and operate these buildings.¹⁶ The Stanley/New Fountain closure highlighted the deterioration of living conditions as the corollary of displacement threats. Starting in

¹⁴ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Draft Report, source unknown.

¹⁵ Cf. CVA CSSD, Series 454, 107-A-7. Skid Road 1962-1971. File 5, 1970-71. Correspondence. Letter to FJ McDonald from Roy Coveny, Chairman of the Residents of Gastown, 29 May, 1970.

¹⁶ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 21, Urban Design Centre, 1971, Letter from Ron Yuen to Dept. of Manpower and Immigration, Nov. 30, 1971; CVA, Pamphlets, 1970-61, Stanley, New Fountain Hotels Accommodation for the Residents of Gastown, Vancouver Pacific Community Self-Development Society, Feasibility Study, June 1970, Birmingham and Wood, Architects.

the summer of 1970, the Gastown legal clinic initiated the survey of skid road lodging houses that climaxed in the VCLAS report of 1971.

Responsibility for deterioration was thus displaced, at least partially, from the shoulders of derelicts and transients to those of building owners and operators as well as public authorities. But it was precisely those derelicts and transients -- the "existing indigenous population" --that underpinned the idea of innovation and novelty that were attached to Gastown renovation plans. If the mobilization of forces to support renovation was accomplished by building opposition to an established regime of planning and development, its claim to represent a new regime rested primarily on its contrast with the 'established' residents of skid road which it sought to replace. This was accomplished by resituating the problem of skid road through a shift in the discourse of urban decay that moved the bodies of the skid road inhabitants out of the centre of the causal nexus. But, their presence was no longer seen as the cause of this unfortunate situation. Rather, it provided an index of the decline of the area's building stock along with its general fortunes.

In his introduction to Bannerman's 1974 sketch of Gastown renovation, the Vancouver Mayor contrasted the earlier incarnation of "the shabbiness of the city's back door" with the "exciting human development which we all point to with pride." Bannerman (p.4) himself favourably compared the "aggressive and creative professionals with more ideas than they can ever hope to accomplish" with those other Gastown types, the "rubbies" and "bums." The Community Arts Council's September 1968 walking tour was composed of "Vancouver's finest citizens dressed in raincoats

that wouldn't be going the Salvation Army route for years," while their antics were witnessed by "Skid Road rubbies" living in a state of "alcoholic tranquility" (p. 24).

The same year that Bannerman's portrayal was published, a City Planning study of the effects of Gastown renovation provided clear evidence of housing displacement, some of it supported by civic relaxations for new business activity. Such changes, however, were considered as an unfortunate but necessary effect of "the increased productivity of the land and the buildings" that resulted from rising property values, real estate activity, and commercial diversity. What was more important was that "a rundown, "Skid Road" type area was transformed . . . into a vibrant part of Vancouver's downtown area", which supplemented "the balance sheets of the property owners, merchants, the City and Vancouverites in general" (Klenke, 1974: viii, x).

The community that Gastown constructed was thus more or less co-extensive with the space of society, rather than with any concrete place of habitation. It was not really much different from the notion which situated skid road and its inhabitants as outsiders. Despite the promise its proponents offered of an inclusionary city and planning processes, Gastown was ultimately a programme that operated mainly on property values. The self-conception of Gastown renovators and supporters was that heritage preservation acted to restore misused or underused space to 'the community'. That it was already in use by an existing resident population was of only secondary consequence. Although the image of the derelict was a key ingredient in the

representation of Gastown as a site of innovation, the actual residents were relegated to the margins of the process of reinvestment.

Renovation did succeed in displacing skid road inhabitants from the locus of responsibility for the deterioration of the built environment. Instead, urban decay was rendered as a quasi-biological process attendant on cycles of investment and disinvestment. The presence of derelicts and transients was only a symptom of this malaise, also serving as a counterpoint to the positive novelty of physical rehabilitation. That their interests were taken into account at all in the renovation process is due primarily to the pressure of advocates within civic departments and in community projects. Far more than the rehabilitation of the built environment pushed forward by heritage advocates, it was the interventions of community organizers and sympathetic city staff which initiated the transformation of skid road.

Chapter 6

Reconstructing the Inner City II: Renovating Subjectivity

In September 1971 a delegation to Vancouver City Council by the Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society (VCLAS) presented a report entitled Downtown Eastside: Skid Road Housing Conditions. Although its conclusions were hotly disputed by City staff, this report marked a decisive shift in the terms of the debate about skid road and its problems. The VCLAS report moved along two paths to drag the discursive and institutional focus away from deviant bodies and their reformation, shifting attention toward the built environmental, social, and political conditions in which those bodies were constituted as subjects. First, it dealt specifically with the condition of the area's SRO hotels and rooming houses, and the official neglect that enabled their owners and managers to exploit the poverty and need of their residents. It clearly named landlords as the culprits in the deterioration of the housing stock and called for more regulation of landlords' premises by more health inspectors, more stringent building code and health bylaws and harsher penalties for bylaw violations. The report also called for the withdrawal of City support for Gastown renovation unless adequate provisions were made for prevention of residential displacement as well as the extension of heritage zoning to lodging houses throughout the district.

Second, for the first time an officially received report recognized the people who lived in single rooms as active (political) subjects and recommended support for a series of measures designed to promote a vigilant tenant base, including tenant education and tenant unions, subsidized housing and the purchase of hotels in order to

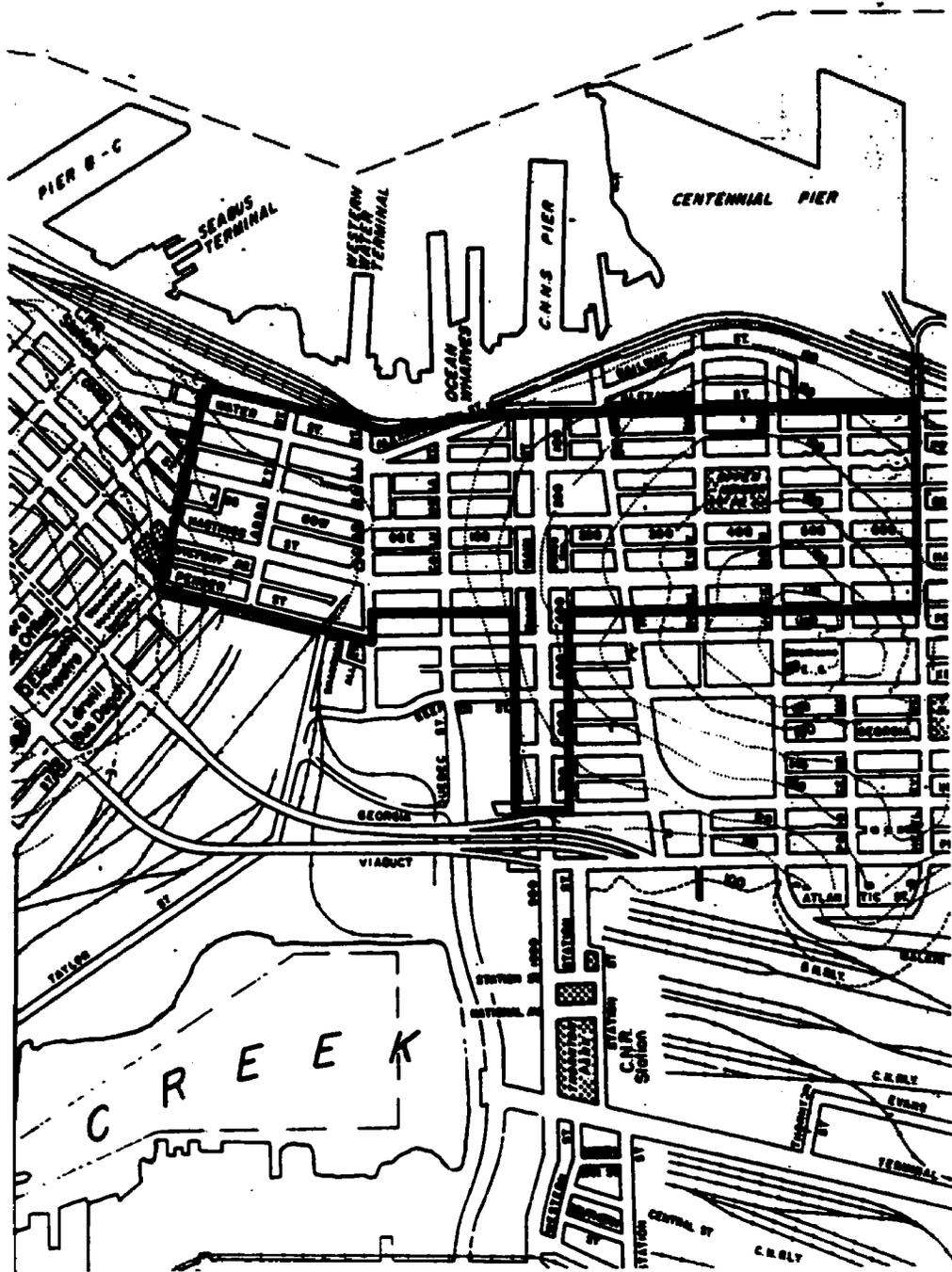
“remove the profit motive and exploitation [of tenants] which now exists”¹.

And, for the first time a report by a group claiming authority in this situation actually included the words of the people whom it was about.

Skid Road Housing Conditions recognized the people in the neighbourhood as subjects through a focus on buildings and their conditions that situated the bodies occupying them as tenants. Their subjectivity, in other words, was constituted through a property relation, conferring on them certain (informal) rights and obligations of citizenship that, hitherto, had been withheld. VCLAS also reworked the representation of the skid road man. The derelict and transient had been defined negatively in relation to property, as dissolute wastrels, pilferers, and destroyers – pure consumers rather than producers or users. By transforming them into tenants, the report rendered them as residents of a particular place, the boundaries of which were actually wider than those of the skid road district (see Map 5). Insofar as their social relations were directly mediated by property, the disgraceful living conditions they endured were brought on, not by their own actions, as earlier civic reports indicated, but by neglectful and exploitative business operators. The onus of responsibility for decay and dissolution was thus removed from the bodies that occupied the hotels and the streets and placed on the shoulders of property and business owners.

The program that flowed from the VCLAS report would clearly be different from both the urban renewal plans that civic authorities assembled to eliminate skid road and the designs for historical restoration of the skid road built environment which resulted in

¹ CVA, SSD Series 454, 107-A-7 Skid Road 1962-1971, File 5, 1970-1971, VCLAS, Skid Road Housing Conditions, August 1971



Map 5: Pushing the boundaries of skid road. The study area for VCLAS Downtown Eastside Skid Road Housing Conditions Survey.

residential displacement. It sought, instead, to reverse the economization and medicalization of the space and population with a political logic that positioned both within a nexus of power relations. Rather than calling for plans to restore order and reclaim the space from the deviants who existed in a predatory relationship with property, it advocated a program designed both to assert the rights of citizens and exact obligations from property-owners. And, in calling for the regulation of property-owners, Skid Road Housing Conditions also rejected the logic of heritage renovators that accepted residential displacement as an inevitable consequence of the property reinvestment necessary to their project.

Certainly, questions of property had loomed large in the previous discussion of skid road. Until now, however, its role was passive in relation to the conduct of the men who were the primary focus of skid road problematization. While their dissolution was responsible for the district's decay, property itself was problematic only insofar as its value was lower than authorities desired. In contrast, the restoration scheme understood property development as a kind of natural process which, despite avowals of the liberatory potential of human-scale urban design, marginalized certain groups by requiring them to adjust to its demands, ie., move somewhere else.

The VCLAS formulation, however, stood opposed to both of these. Property appeared as a mediating force and a vector of power that determined the relative positions of different groups of people. Exploitation and discrimination emerged as the key problems in need of resolution and they followed lines of force generated by property relations that effectively excluded skid road residents from participation in

determining the conditions that governed their lives. According to this logic, interventions into skid road should regulate the conduct of property-owners and promote, by force (ie., legal regulation) if necessary, the ability of skid roaders to engage with the various public and private authorities who exercised power over their bodies and conditions of life.

Constructing the inner city as a site of oppositional subjectivity

Skid Road Housing Conditions marked a radical shift in the framework by which the district and its population were understood. Although historical restoration reversed the link between bodies and the decay of the built environment, it reinforced the marginality of skid roaders by excluding them from the process of restoration. Whereas the proponents of Gastown renovation never challenged the basic assumptions of the then-prevailing behavioural diagnosis of skid road, and hence of poverty, the housing report sought, quite pointedly, to replace this approach with a notion of exclusion based on structural inequalities of power and resources.

Ironically, this position emerged from the same oppositional movement that spawned support for OGT heritage revocation. The division between the two, as noted in the last chapter, marks a fundamental rupture among those forces opposing the then-dominant civic regime. In the case of skid road, this difference is signified by the relation of such forces to the urban poor. On one side stood those groups that were essentially establishment rebels, an emerging professional elite, for whom poor people were marginal actors in the planning and development of the city. On the other side were arrayed those groups which took the poor as objects of engagement, and, hence,

as social and political subjects. For these groups, the whole point of intervening in the inner city was to mobilize the poor and, through this engagement, to transform society.

By the end of 1960s, the skid road area had become a site where new social subjects were gathering or forming. As large numbers of young people congregated in the area, searching for housing, services, and sociability it became a key locale for the counter culture. The counter-culture, however, was only one element of a wider youth movement that was also centred on new visions of society and politics emphasizing both participatory democracy and inclusion of marginal groups and, increasingly, identity as a basis of group interest. As a slum district, the skid road was recast as part of a larger inner city space with a marginalized population. The projects on which such community organizers embarked sought to provide ways in which skid road residents could actualize themselves, that is, construct their own subjectivities. Rather than direct intervention in the formation of subjectivities, they sought to bring pressure to bear on those conditions which inhibited or prevented the self-realization of particular kinds of subjectivity.

VCLAS was an organization of these new agents in the Downtown Eastside -- students and community organizers -- that originated in the late 1960s as one of a number of projects that had been developed through Vancouver Inner-City Service Project or VISIP, to provide services to, advocate on behalf of and provide a voice for the inner city poor. VISIP itself began, somewhat innocuously, in 1967 as a summer mission project for students at the Vancouver School of Theology which was operated

through the First United Church, a long-time institution in the Skid Road and East End of Vancouver.² It entered the inner city during a period of rising uncertainty and change, and it quickly became a key agent of that change. I want to closely examine the ways that VISP operated in the skid road / Downtown -- East Side district during its five year history, not because it was the only organization involved there during this period, but because its activities both incorporated the convergent and contradictory forces of the broader spatial and social milieu and animated the links between a variety of other groups, serving as the initial vehicle by which local residents were drawn into activist roles.³ By the time the group was dissolved in 1972, the summer student projects were only one component of an organization that had generated or supported a host of new services and programs, many of which were based on an emergent local identity and the community around which it crystallized.⁴

Its five year history coincided with the rise of an array of state funding programs designed to employ, or coopt, young people. The wide range of projects it helped carry out across Vancouver's inner city included working with single parents, children and youth, in parks, public housing projects and daycares, legal assistance, housing and

² Until this time, summer student missions had been carried out in rural areas. The urban setting was an experimental outing. CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 8, Vancouver Inner City Service Project, *Voices from Outside* by Julie Cruikshank, Aug. 28/1972; United Church Archives (UCA), Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 1, Reports, 1967, *The Vancouver Inner-City Service Project (goals and description of organization)*, '1967 Summer Projects' (summary and report), VISP Newsletter, #2, June 15, 1967, VISP Final Newsletter, Sept. 8, 1967.

³ A whole host of organizations operated in Vancouver's inner city during this time, including tenant and resident associations, political and community organizers, and more service-oriented groups. UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 19, Re: Use of Carnegie Library/Museum, 1970.

⁴ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 23, Reports, 1971, *Summary of Work Plan for Previous Fiscal Year [1970-71]*, April, 1971; File 23, *Final Evaluation*, 1972 by David Adair, Sept. 1972.

architectural research and advocacy, media education, setting up community information and health centres, assisting community opposition to urban renewal, and facilitating the organization of neighbourhood and other kinds of activist groups. One of VISP's key roles was in providing a vehicle that connected professionals and aspiring professionals from universities with the United Church, residents of particular, 'problem' neighbourhoods and community and social service groups organization. It was thus well positioned to serve as a kind of broker that channeled state and charitable funding into neighbourhoods and community organizations.⁵ The various schemes it thus encouraged forged and mobilized networks through which new discourses and practices of citizenship and community, resonating with the

⁵ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 8, Vancouver Inner City Service Project, *Voices from Outside* by Julie Cruikshank, Aug. 28/1972. Politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s was marked by a *zeitgeist* of participation that sought to incorporate groups, especially the poor and youth, which had hitherto been consigned to the social margins. The incorporation effort extended beyond the organization of large-scale universal social programs to the provision of funding that employed primarily young people, especially students (at first, anyway), to plan and carry out various community development and community service projects. Harnessing the energy of youth to solve social problems, most of which had, in fact, been officially identified only in the wake of and as a consequence of the civil rights, anti-war and youth movements, provided a way for governments to accomplish a number of goals. First, it was a means of addressing the newly emerging social priorities in a way that was consonant with the spirit of equality and democracy. Second, it enabled politicians and bureaucrats to (mostly) avoid direct accountability for the problems and obstacles that were encountered in the pursuit of these goals and in the practical activities of each project. Third, the provision of relatively small amounts of funding through limited-term programs provided a means of experimenting with alternative methods, aims and project concepts and, at the same time, setting limits to the commitment of state support. Fourth, and possibly most significant, the provision of funding to address social reform priorities via small-scale projects operated and staffed by young people provided a means of incorporating dissident or oppositional social groups in ways that transformed them into carriers of state-sponsored policy objectives (Craig, et al, 1983; Ng, 1986).

Despite highly critical interpretations, the 'co-optation' of oppositional groups, through the levers of program funding and organization, was not a one-way process. Critics of co-optation tend to adopt a functional Marxist understanding of the welfare state advanced by Gough (1979), among others, in which welfare programs exist primarily as a fob to working class organizations, designed to buy them off from more radical positions and practices while at the same time, serving to reproduce the conditions of capitalist production. While such may indeed be the case, it is clearly not a total picture, for the state funding of programs in the 1960s and 1970s also advanced the goal of participation and inclusion. (Indeed, this is why the funding of community organizing and development projects was largely discontinued in favour of service delivery projects.)

themes of what we now call 'the sixties', were introduced into skid road and helped to reconfigure the district as part of a larger inner city space.

The group's initial interventions into inner city neighbourhoods during the summers of 1967 and 1968 were tentative, almost exploratory in nature. In the skid road area, these forays included "helping at Vancouver's newly opened drop-in for skid row men" and "determining the needs of and seeking services for a deprived and 'forgotten' group of native Indians living in the centre of the city", as well as doing social work at a pensioners drop in and working with residents of the nearby Raymur housing project to organize a tenants association.⁶ By the end of the first summer, the students noted their critical perspective on the area:

"We have come to . . . some conclusions about the failure of a lot of the agency and church work being done in the area. We hope that the work of our team this summer may contribute to a more relevant outreach program by both agencies and churches of the area."⁷

If the description of the district generated through these initial efforts replicated the prevailing images of skid road, focusing on the "bums, drugs addicts, prostitutes and alcoholics" who "thrive on suspicion" and "live in constant fear", the diagnosis of such conditions presented a new conception.⁸ Presaging the position that VCLAS would enunciate three years later, the student who spent the summer of 1968 working with the men at the Dugout drop-in centre in the newly renovating Gastown proclaimed that "Skid Road is a manifestation of the relationship that exists between

⁶ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 1, Reports, 1967, The Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, mimeograph.

⁷ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 1, Reports, 1967, The Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Final Newsletter, Sept. 8, 1967.

⁸ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 9, Skid Road '68 (Report) by Michael Birch.

the indigent inhabitants of the area, the commercial interests present and the helping people, which include the religious groups and the government agencies.”⁹ The charities, churches and state agencies, which had until this point diagnosed dereliction, transiency, and their associated symptoms as the areas focal problems, would no longer be understood as benign forces. Neither would businesses be seen as passive recipients of a decay for which they were not responsible. Instead, they were cast as active elements in a skid road equation that, for the first time, was being perceived as a problem of power constituted through the play of social forces.

VISP participants thus formulated a program of action that was centred on a critique of power relations in the inner city. Visions of the ‘inner city’ thus loomed large in VISP’s rhetoric; it was the site where the contrast between the “mainstream of life in this affluent society” and “the life of those left behind” was most evident.¹⁰ It appeared as a space of exclusion, where people who were residents, tenants, and citizens were neglected and exploited by a range of authorities both public and private. But it also was constituted as a place where social change was both necessary and highly possible if the correct tools and processes were deployed. In seeking to achieve this deployment, VISP radically altered the frame through which the inner city, in general, and skid road, in particular, were recognized. VISP’s concern was not with the regulation of deviant masculinity but with the mobilization of identity and

⁹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 4, Vancouver Skid Road Picture, Summer -1968. An Analysis and Some Indicated Tactics, by Douglas Soles.

¹⁰ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, An Experiment in Service and Training; UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, Report of the summer activities and research evaluation of the Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, May 1-Sept 1, 1968, Office of Inter-Professional Education, University of British Columbia.

citizenship as a means of promoting popular participation and improving living conditions.

The organization's original goals linked "training opportunities" for "young people" to the provision of "service to the community", especially in the "deprived, depressed inner core of the city."¹¹ VISP positioned itself as the means of connecting this inner-city space of exclusion with the mainstream, providing a channel by which youthful energy and radical values could be injected into the urban core as a force for social change. Its capacity to accomplish this was premised on two assumptions that were entrenched in the cultural self-perceptions of 'the sixties'. First, the youth movement's self-recognition as something entirely new and different from earlier generations of radicals was shared by both its allies and detractors (cf. Lipset, 1967).¹² The Prime Minister exclaimed, during the debates leading to the creation of the company of Young Canadians in 1965 that:

"... the younger generation today possesses idealism without illusion; realism without cynicism. These young people desire to make a forceful and direct contribution to the kind of society they feel is worth living in, working for and fighting for . . . [and] . . . will have a stimulating, creative effect upon our society and its institutions . . . I believe the company will prove to be an organization deeply concerned with the fundamentals of inequality and poverty in our society and with social justice and democratic progress, and that it will become part of our continuing search for a better Canada in a better world" (Canada, 1967).

Second, the profound sense of difference that marked the youth culture evoked a sense of solidarity with the urban poor based on what was perceived to be a mutual

¹¹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 1, Reports, 1967, The Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, mimeograph.

¹² The contributors to Lipset (1967) generally hold that, historically, students have been receptive to and pioneers of dissent and rebellion. Rothman and Lichtner, however, strongly disagree on this point, noting that the 1960s was the first time US students openly and consistently challenged institutions.

estrangement from the “mainstream” of society. The inner city provided a crucial setting for the expression of this solidarity. In his expansive memoir of the decade, Gitlin (1987) underlines the transmutation of the ‘youthful difference’ of the fifties, that found its expression in dress, music and cinema, into the opposition which had emerged into a full-scale social and cultural movement by the mid-sixties. In particular, he pinpoints the bohemian enclaves in low rent urban districts, together with universities and college towns where the incipient student movement was active, as key sites where disparate forms of youthful alienation were transformed into political and cultural opposition in the wake of the early 1960s sit-ins by southern, black students. Thus, many of the non-academic centres where the youth revolt crystallized, like Haight-Ashbury and New York’s Lower East Side, were, in fact, neighbourhoods of the poor and minorities. By the mid-1960s, as white activists moved out of the southern civil rights movement, inner city neighbourhoods provided spaces where the tactics and strategies developed in the south could be applied (Gitlin, 1987; Rothman and Lichter, 1982; Walzer, 1967).¹³

Paralleling events elsewhere, the poorer residential neighbourhoods surrounding Vancouver’s CBD, most of which had been targeted for urban renewal, provided natural settings for activist youth. The inner city was already in transition. Residents in Strathcona, and the Fairview-Mount Pleasant areas were becoming increasingly edgy about the effects of continued urban renewal, on one hand, and a glaring lack of services, on the other. Responding to these concerns, social service agencies, such as

¹³ This affinity of alienated youth for the inner city has been cast as the incipient rise of a new ‘urban ethic’ that has resulted in inner city gentification. An ironic outcome, given its roots. (see Ley, 1993).

the Neighbourhood Services Association and United Community Services, which had long been involved in these districts, were beginning to deploy staff as community organizers, as well as service providers and advocates. Meanwhile, in westside Kitsilano and Fairview, the counterculture established a major presence, as an influx of youth -- 'hippies' -- and services that catered to them took advantage of plentiful rooming houses and low rents. Countercultural elements, partly in response to police pressure, but also because of low-priced housing and the proximity of bars and drugs, also became established in the skid road area, much to the consternation of the members of IDEAS. Countercultural entrepreneurs also took advantage of low rents and property values in the latter area and their presence provided a major ideological and economic foundation for the renovations that would transform the area's appearance and commercial function in the subsequent decade.

Subjectivity, interest, citizenship, and community on skid road

VISP thus began to engage with a population, composed largely of people who were poor and/or members of ethnic minorities, that was becoming increasingly articulate and organized. It quickly became a key agent in this process, taking advantage of the development of Federal funding programs that were designed to enlist -- or coopt -- young people and community organizations in the goal of promoting social change. In its 1969 proposal for Federal funding for an 'Inner-City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project', targetting skid road and the Strathcona residential district, VISP clearly linked these qualities of youth with an ability to

change the situation in the inner-city. "Much is in ferment in the Vancouver Inner-City area", it declared:

"New patterns of welfare income support and service delivery are forming. Increased co-ordination is being sought. The VISP proposes to assist in the process. It has enthusiastic young workers with varied academic and work experience skills. They are keen to innovate, experiment and test as they work with others to help tackle fundamental problems of welfare dependency."¹⁴

The diagnosis of "dependency" as the "fundamental problem" upon which youthful energy and its novel approaches should be brought to bear suggests that the explanation of such innovation was still framed by the dominant rhetoric of skid road. Yet, the tentative solutions it advanced, including improved health care and employment projects, were significant departures from the ongoing efforts to implement a detoxification centre and a hostel for single men. So, too, was the concrete means of actually bridging the gap between the inner-city and the mainstream -- through the "maximum coordination" of work not only with service agencies active in the district, but also with "outside professionals" and "local citizens groups." Thus, for the first time, skid road and its environs were recognized as a community, populated by citizens who, at least to some extent, were organized. If the 'rehabilitation' side of the project catered to the image of skid road as an anomic slum, the idea of 'advocacy' framed a perception of the inner-city, in general, and skid road, in particular, as a site of exclusion, where citizens were marginalized through

¹⁴ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 5, Inner City Service Project (Vancouver) 1969-1971, VISP Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project, Grant Application, to Health and Welfare Canada, March 31, 1970.

minimal cash income, inadequate health care, and lack of education and employment opportunities.¹⁵

VISP-sponsored projects in the skid road district sought to accomplish a number of reforms that incorporated two somewhat contradictory assumptions about the place and people. First, contrary to then-prevailing notions of skid road, the organization assumed that skid road inhabitants possessed some measure of autonomous subjectivity. Its program was premised on the principle of breaching the barriers that prevented the latter from exercising that autonomy. In 1968, VISP initiated an inner city legal assistance program in conjunction with the UBC Law School and law students as a means to widen the accessibility and representation of the court system. Operating from 'clinics' in the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown, law students, under supervision of a staff lawyer, dispensed advice and carried out research on a variety of issues of concern to the local population. By 1970, the office that served Strathcona and skid road areas had become one of the main local centres of opposition to the City's freeway and urban renewal plans, providing legal advice and representation to local activists (Ley & Hasson, 1995). A part-time clinic was also set up on the premises of the Gastown Workshop, a rehabilitation program operated by the St. James [Anglican Church] Social Services Society.¹⁶ If the stated goal of this project was to include the poor as participants in, rather than as victims of, the administration of the law this was effected by widening the network of services

¹⁵ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 5, Inner City Service Project (Vancouver) 1969-1971, VISP Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project, Grant Application, to Health and Welfare Canada, March 31, 1970.

¹⁶ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 16, Project Proposals and Reports (1970 (2)), Legal Services and Research Project, Report - Oct. 1970.

available to people living in the area and, in so doing, related to them as active subjects, rather than passive objects.¹⁷ The very acts of representation and advice-giving thus served to resituate the skid road resident in the networks through which power was mobilized, displacing, though not, as we will see below, eliminating, the object of tutelary programming. The body of the skid roader, as well as the social body of skid road, in order to be representable, had to be not only a locus of need, but also of will and interest on both an individual and a collective basis.

In attempting to facilitate the exercise of autonomous capacities, VISP projects sought the maximization of this interest in three particular fields of action. First, housing emerged as an obvious concern. As already noted, the group worked with tenants of public housing to develop representative associations. The VCLAS report was produced in the wake of at least two housing surveys conducted through the skid road legal clinic. The surveys themselves were carried out in the context of the accelerating renovation of the as-yet officially undesignated Gastown area, The threatened displacement of skid road residents, in the course of the renovations, dramatically highlighted both the lack of secure tenure they were afforded and the abysmal conditions of the available housing. The formation of an organization called the *Residents of Gastown*, through the joint efforts of VISP summer students and a Company of Young Canadians fieldworker, sought to re-position skid roaders as members of a community with interests premised on their locale of habitation. VISP continued in this direction with the formation of the Urban Design Centre, which

¹⁷ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 8, Vancouver Inner City Service Project, Brief on Legal Services and Research Program (VISP) - Dec. 10, 1969, [presented to Vancouver City Council as part of Civic Grant Package].

assisted tenants in two hotels threatened with closure due to licencing violations to purchase, design, develop and operate the buildings.¹⁸ The Centre was also instrumental in helping local groups in neighbouring Strathcona to develop a neighbourhood renovation and redevelopment alternative to urban renewal.

The second interest through which membership of the skid road community was constituted was poverty. VISP workers were instrumental in facilitating the formation of anti-poverty groups, the most militant of which was the Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Committee (UCWIC). First United Church was the site of a 1969 Senate Committee on Poverty public hearing at which a number of groups, supported and facilitated by VISP, made presentations emphasizing the exclusion of the poor and its consequences. UCWIC, the Association to Tackle Adverse Conditions (ATTAC) and the Vancouver Housing Inter-project Council, among others, called for "ordinary people -- the poor included" to have "more of a voice in running the affairs of the city, province and nation" in order to avoid "the widespread dissent, rebellion and perhaps revolution that is rife south of our border."¹⁹

Health provided a third form for the expression of skid road interest. During the summer of 1970, summer students worked on both an 'Inner-City Coordination Project' and a proposal to improve skid road medical care. The poor health of skid

¹⁸ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 21, Urban Design Centre, 1971, Letter from Ron Yuen to Dept. of Manpower and Immigration, Nov. 30, 1971; CVA, Pamphlets, 1970-61, Stanley, New Fountain Hotels Accommodation for the Residents of Gastown, Vancouver Pacific Community Self-Development Society, Feasibility Study, June 1970, Birmingham and Wood, Architects.

¹⁹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 8, Newsclipping, 1968-69, Newspaper article, 'Poverty Cure? Give them Money, Senate Probe told', by Tony Eberts, The Province, Thurs., Nov. 20, 1969.

road residents had already been targeted as a cause of unemployment and, hence, of poverty.²⁰ “These citizens are unfortunate in many ways. Their rating is at the bottom rung of the human success ladder in that they do not enjoy adequate benefits from the wealth and social welfare of our society.”²¹ The key to improving their health, though, was not simply through ensuring the provision of adequate facilities and care, but through a participatory democracy which included residents in planning and decision-making. In a significant departure from earlier efforts to determine and establish services for people living in skid road, however, project workers attempted to include residents in their discussions. Rather than simply gathering agency workers together, VISP tried to bring them into contact with people as citizens, rather than as clients. In its efforts “to encourage more interaction and cooperation among the existing agencies in the Skid Road area”, summer students and VISP staff tried to organize a conference to “gather together the heads of these agencies with representatives of the inhabitants of the area.”²² Improving health, then, was as much a question of promoting participation, i.e., citizenship, as it was of health care, *per se*.

Citizenship itself, however, was not taken for granted and was more complicated than just renaming derelicts. The second assumption that VISP operations

²⁰ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 5, Inner City Service Project (Vancouver) 1969-1971, VISP Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project, Grant Application, to Health and Welfare Canada, March 31, 1970.

²¹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Health is a Community Affair: Delay Breeds Disease (proposal and summary report of progress on efforts to establish medical clinic on skid road).

²² UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, , Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Handwritten Report by Derek Parry and Fraser Mackay on the Inner-City Coordination Project.

incorporated was that it was necessary to *construct* oppositional subjectivities.

What the organization offered, in this regard, was a program of political subjectification for skid road. Its goals there included “assist[ing] the citizens of the inner-city in gaining power and control over decisions that affect their lives and their environment . . . To increase political awareness of inner-city residents” and “to stimulate and encourage existing and new citizen endeavours.”²³ It sought to support and develop “self-help programs” that would bolster citizen involvement. In other words, VISP sought to construct and mobilize citizenship and community as ongoing developments. Certainly its general project differed from the repair-job of tutelary supervision. If the latter operated on an assumption of the absence or inadequacy of the subjectivity of its objects, VISP was premised on a *re-cognition* of the district’s population from damaged subjects to an *a priori* acceptance of the autonomy of those subjects and bodies. Nevertheless, in order to activate the citizen-subjects a program of education, persuasion, organization, and participation was required. VISP offered its staff and volunteers a way of *joining with* the poor and other marginal groups to combat oppression and exclusion. If the derelict and transient of skid road signified a space where citizenship and community were notable only in their absence, then the new discursive configuration situated them according to their *presence* as ethical and

²³ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 10, Reports, 1969, Submission for Demonstration Project, Sept. 3, 1969. Katz (1996) outlines the choice of option confronting social workers in the US as the field began to professionalize early in the 20th century. In the course of the consolidation of social work as a formal profession, leading organizations and educators focused on social casework rather than the social activism of what Katz (1996, p. 168) refers to as ‘urban mediators’. The VISP program thus seems to have been an attempt to reinstate a form of professionalized social activism.

active *forces*. VISP projects, themselves, operated as the agents by which these forces could be activated.

The program of subjectification, however, was not confined to the effects that VISP workers were able to exert on the skid road situation. In fact, one of the key elements underpinning the organization's whole concept was the experience that such work would have on its practitioners. Training and provision of service, the organization's two central goals, were undertaken not only to instigate change among the residents of the inner-city, and in their relations with other groups and places, but also as means of changing the participants and "produc[ing] a new type of city servant much needed in this time of stress."²⁴ They provided opportunities for the "destructuring and restructuring of the students pattern of conceptualization and ideologies", as participants were expected to use this experience as a way of questioning their identity through a developing imbrication of "the personal" with other categories of their experience (cf. Zaretsky, 1994, 1995).²⁵

"This task will hopefully accomplish a new awareness on the part of the student of multi-dimensions of personal, social and cultural life. . . . It will aim at educating students into a committed responsible freedom so that they can understand and participate in the metropolitan living situation, knowing and accepting its limitations and its complexities. Its ultimate goal would be the making of a truly 'catholic' society, which is so structured as to allow maximum openness to human fulfillment, so that

²⁴ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, An Experiment in Service and Training (summary report).

²⁵ Zaretsky (1994, 1995) traces the rise of 'identity politics' to the articulation, beginning in the 1960s, of a cultural politics that sought the self-conscious *generation* of meaning as a key strategic imperative. Identity thus became a question of construction and performance, rather than a pre-formed absolute, and spanned any boundary demarcating private from public life. Issues of personal life thus became public questions while public issues came to be understood as profoundly affecting the construction and maintenance of personal identity. Subjectivity itself thus became an object of analysis and practice. For VISP, then, the point of its work was to go beyond reflection and to reconstruct identities.

men could exist within the limits of historical time and yet be free for maximum creativity.”²⁶

The Project thus offered a program of/for subjectification, the key technique of which involved an encounter between work and critical self and social reflection/analysis. The work situation the project provided should require the student to be placed in “a radical confrontation” with difference, with people whose “lifestyle and thoughts [are] basically different from his [sic] own.” Transformative experience could not be had just through talk, words and ideas but needed to be based in a direct physical/spatial engagement.²⁷ Students about to embark on a summer of involvement in the inner-city were expected to take ‘the Plunge’, a two-day excursion in skid road with two dollars in their pocket where they were “asked to *live* the ‘other side’ and see what it is like to *ask* for service and not to *give* it.”²⁸ From the VISP perspective, then, the inner-city was a site of potential personal and social change, a space where new ideas and practices could be incubated and developed. The key to such liberatory practice lay in the critical engagement with difference and transformative political action constituted through participatory democracy.

The logic of this strategy of participatory democracy, ineluctably based on the distinctions between the inside and the outside, those with power and those without, helped to constitute, if not a politics of identity than at least a politics in which identity provided an explicit basis of mobilization. In the case of a strategy that

²⁶ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, Why VISP? A Position Paper on Student Urban Training, by Frank Fornelli.

²⁷ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, Why VISP? A Position Paper on Student Urban Training, by Frank Fornelli.

²⁸ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project. Box 2, File 5, Reports, 1968, An Experiment in Service and Training (summary report).

emphasized the difference of the inner-city, this had to be a *local* identity. Thus, during tours arranged for the Senate Poverty Committee, one of the Residents of Gastown noted that “welfare administration . . . refus[ed] to consider the skid road area as a unique problem.”²⁹ Ultimately, this led its student participants to question VISP’s role in the inner-city as a brokerage agency.³⁰ At least some of them constructed the organization itself as problematic: “a safe consumer of funds allotted by our society to quiet the demands of the dispossessed.”³¹ VISP was cast in the role of manager and controller, making sure the urban poor and radical students stayed within the boundaries of propriety in their push for social change. The organizational structure ensured that neither of these two groups could gain direct access to the levers of control and disposition of resources and information that give them real power. Nevertheless, as disenfranchised as the participating students were, they could not be effective in working with the poor unless they actually became part of the social fabric of the inner-city.

“We believe that indigenous community groups must replace students in the Inner-City Service Project because community action must originate within the community if it is to avoid being management. . . . Unless [people from outside] have experienced the same day-to-day problems and frustrations as those in the community, they will not be able to decide upon or even recognize the need for an alternate lifestyle.”³²

²⁹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 12, Senate Committee on Poverty, 1969, Poverty Study - Skid Road by John Palmer (handwritten notes for tours).

³⁰ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 8, Vancouver Inner City Service Project, Voices from Outside by Julie Cruikshank, Aug. 28/1972; UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 9, ‘The Gap’ (Newsletter), ‘Inner City’ by Cathy Munro, David Sharpe and Elizabeth Law, in The Gap, Aug. 24, 1970.

³¹ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 9, ‘The Gap’ (Newsletter), ‘Inner City’ by Cathy Munro, David Sharpe and Elizabeth Law, in The Gap, Aug. 24, 1970.

³² UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 9, ‘The Gap’ (Newsletter), ‘Inner City’ by Cathy Munro, David Sharpe and Elizabeth Law, in The Gap, Aug. 24, 1970.

The principle of resident-driven activism persisted after VISP dissolved itself in 1972. It left an imprint across Vancouver's inner city, much of which endures. Nowhere, however, was this legacy more apparent than in the skid road district, soon to be rechristened the Downtown Eastside, when the formation of a residents' association challenged the paternalism of planners and charitable service agencies over the succeeding fifteen years.³³

The formation of a new political identity

The transformation of skid road was accomplished neither by urban renewal nor by economizing and medicalizing programs that sought to treat damaged bodies. Ironically, it was the challenge to such projects that provoked the beginning of a reconstruction of the area, shifting its position in Vancouver's social geography by changing the meanings of the boundaries that marked it off from the rest of the city. The Vancouver Inner City Service Project and the wide ranging programs that operated through it brought the notions of citizenship and community to skid road, reconfiguring the latter as an inner city neighbourhood with a resident population, rather than an anomic space of damaged and alienated men. As the agents of intervention, young students and aspiring community organizers worked with local residents to introduce an ethic of participatory democracy to an area that had been

³³ The driving force behind this VISP engagement with the skid road population was Peter Davies, who arrived in the neighbourhood to coordinate the Skid Road Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project. Davies' role in pushing for the formation of locally-based groups in the Downtown Eastside has been generally under-rated. It seems that he was the first person to actively organize efforts to secure the old City library for a community centre. As well, It was Davies' insistence that local residents should control the definition of the problem and take leadership positions in solving them that presaged the formation of the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, or DERA, in the early 1970s. It is quite possible that without Peter Davies, events in this area during the late 1960s and early 1970s might have taken a completely different turn.

treated largely as a surface on which authorities could inscribe their plans and programmes.

VISP served as the vector of a new mode of governing urban poverty. Its strategy of participation, designed to mobilize the objects of governmental power, constituting them as subjects, inaugurated a process that pushed political authorities toward an engagement with poor people as citizens rather than as subordinates. This political 'subjectification' of the skid road poor took place in two ways.

First, the emergence of new subjects was framed by and functioned as a channel for new ways of talking about poverty and the poor that displaced dominant behavioural approaches with a more structural interpretation. The reconstruction of derelicts and transients as residents with interests and identities in common decisively resituated skid road in the social and moral geography of Vancouver. By positioning the area as part of a large inner city and a community which had hitherto been excluded from society as a consequence of self-perpetuating conditions of political and economic inequality, it directly countered the notion of an unstable, unattached population that had been used to justify the imposition of both dispersion and containment. Instead of bringing power to bear directly on the bodies of deviant men through tutelary and supervisory measures, VISP projects sought to change the conditions that facilitated exclusion. This shift would have tremendous significance for the ways in which civic authorities grappled with the area and its population over the next fifteen years.

The second movement of political subjectification involved new ways of acting on and especially *with* the poor. In the first instance, this took place through the attempt to redirect regulatory processes. Regulation of property instead of the regulation of individual conduct was advanced as a key means of abrogating exclusionary conditions. In this case, the citizen was constituted as a tenant with specific rights *viz-a-viz* the property-holding slum landlord. Exclusion was also understood in relation to the labour market and service accessibility. Bad health, one consequence of skid road living conditions, prevented people from working, while a lack of services was incumbent on the low incomes that came with pensions and welfare 'dependence'. Again, the regulation of bodies bound up with the skid road project was displaced by a regulation of property relations that located responsibility with authorities. In the case of labour market relation and service accessibility, however, those authorities were public rather than private. Regulation of housing conditions required an accompanying commitment to improved health care and service as well as increasing income via welfare programs.

This also involved a process of organizational innovation through which the emergent inner city communities, skid road included, were constituted socially through the formation of non-profit groups that claimed to act on behalf of as well as in the name of the poor. Such groups gave concrete form to a new relationship between the state and 'the community', serving both as representatives of the latter and, to the extent that they were financed by the former, as mediating devices between the two. Official recognition of organizations claiming to represent the poor

necessitated recognition, no matter how grudgingly, of the latter's capacities to speak and act. Henceforth, it would no longer be possible for political authorities in Vancouver to operate without cognizance of the aspirations of the skid road population through engagement with those groups that acted in its name.

The operations of VISP thus marked a crucial transition in both the discourses and institutionalization of skid road. It signalled an incipient politics of identity as citizenship came to be defined by residence in a particular place. Over the next two decades, the elaboration of the social and political identity of inner city residents would provide a crucial nexus for engagement between the Downtown Eastside and the state. The earlier programs of moral regulation were displaced, but not replaced, by a governmentalizing regime that moved through operations directed at changing the conditions of life of skid road residents. However, state agencies, at local, provincial, and federal levels, did not simply respond to this oppositional reconstruction of the inner city. Various political and bureaucratic authorities sought to actively intervene in these processes, both to support and to oppose the new renderings of the inner city. They also attempted to manage the emerging conflict between the business groups supporting historical restoration and the community organizations that claimed to speak and act on behalf of the residents who were affected by the changing built and social environments.

Chapter 7

Reconstructing Skid Road III: Community and civic ambivalence

The relationship of civic authorities to the organizations and population of skid road from 1968 to 1973 was an ambivalent one. While some agents of the local state continued to pursue the goal of removing skid road inhabitants from the area, others attempted to recast it as a community. Sometimes, the same agents tried to realize both at once. As we have seen, conditions on skid road shifted radically in the years following the release of the first Downtown – East Side report and the formation of the Mayor's Special Committee on Skid Row Problems. For one thing, the report marked the beginning of an ongoing attempt by civic authorities to impose order on the space of skid road with a series of investigations. But it also entailed a redefinition of skid road in terms of Wallace's notion of a community of social deviants. Nevertheless, for most of the next four years, the Special Committee dominated civic approaches to the area, most of which which were organized around the imperative of urban renewal, designed to facilitate the elimination of the social aspects of skid road in the same way that redevelopment was designed to erase the physical manifestations of blight.

The tutelary approaches of the Special Committee delayed the formulation of policies which were animated by the Downtown – East Side report's central theme of the deviant community, so that civic officials had to run to catch up with the formation of new social subjects and the immanent transformation of outcasts into citizens. But, as the drive to create a single men's hostel and a detoxification facility

was overwhelmed by the formation of new forces, planners and politicians sought to respond to the contradictory pressures for heritage renovation and citizen participation by engaging with them. In the wake of community organizing in inner city districts and opposition to the downtown urban renewal schemes, which included promotion of heritage preservation, however, civic officials began to re-orient the direction of their knowledge acquisition. Those agitations provided openings for the sectors and individuals in the city bureaucracy that were responsive to community planning concepts and led to a series of reorganizations of the bureaucracy itself. As it engaged with these forces, the City began to draw them out, helping to elaborate and organize them, setting up channels of transmission through which they could initiate projects and through which civic authorities could realize their own objectives.

Initial civic forays into the new territory that was being formed on the site of skid road took place through the newly-established Social Planning and Community Development Department (SP/CD), which was assigned the tasks of dealing with the social consequences of Gastown renovation and mediating between politicians community organizers and organizations, whose demands increasingly required state intervention. The SP/CD was formed in 1968 through a collaboration between the City of Vancouver and the Community Chest and Council, a non-profit organization that was the predecessor of the present-day United Way. It sought to realize the coordination of social services through the mobilization of residents of "local areas" in cooperation with service agencies. Citizen participation was to be organized with

the assistance of paid staff from another non-profit group, the Neighbourhood Services Association (Clague, et al, 1984).

Although the formation of the SP/CD followed the 1965 recommendations of the Planning Director regarding the creation of a Social Planning Board to oversee the “reclamation of skid road” (see Chapter 5), the new civic department had little involvement with skid road until City Council’s acceptance of the Restoration Report and the subsequent alarm at the displacement that renovations made likely.¹ Indeed, some of that alarm came from within the SP/CD itself.² Council approved the consultant’s report with the *proviso* that the population of the OGT not be expected to move out of the district. The Board of Administration also recommended, possibly with an eye to CMHC funding conditions, that the City carry out studies of that population which would include “the organization of owners and tenants to allow them to help improve their own district.”³

To ensure these stipulations of public support for the entrepreneurial renovation of Gastown, City Council directed SP/CD in October 1969 to create the position of Local Area Coordinator for the skid road district. The post would provide an onsite City agent to deal with the influx of youth into the area, the evictions of tenants due to

¹ CVA, Social Service Department, Series 454 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1971, File 3, 1965-66. Minutes of a Meeting held at 2 pm on Feb. 22, 1965 in the office of the Director of Planning to consider the Skid Road Report.

² CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Letter from Darlene Marzari to Maurice Egan, Director of Social Planning and Community Development.

³ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Draft Report, Dec. 19, 1969, source unknown; CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, Series 77-D-2, File 16, Gastown/Chinatown Beautification, 1969-70, Report of Board of Administration to Vancouver City Council, Re: Stage 1 Beautification Studies for OGT (Gastown), Hastings St. and Chinatown, June 3, 1969.

renovation, and to manage the relationship between service agencies, businesses, residents, and the city.

The accomplishments of this new effort at civic coordination are unclear. Even as the first attempt to coordinate skid road action, the 1965 Special Committee, seemed to be floundering in its efforts to establish a detox, the new scheme was subsumed by the interventions of VISP. The latter had applied for a Federal Department of Health and Welfare grant in the summer of 1969 to fund the following year's activities, which included work at the Dug Out, the United Church-sponsored drop-in for "skid road men" in what was becoming Gastown, as well as a Gastown legal clinic, and the early stages of organizing for a skid road health care clinic.⁴ The actual coordination of services and activities, including the organization of residents, seems to have been initiated through either VISP or other local groups, often with the cooperation of civic officers, rather than through the Coordinator, whose active role seems to have been limited to following these efforts to keep the Director of SP/CD informed of the situation.⁵ The City's Medical Health Officer provided the primary

⁴ UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 10, Reports, 1969, Submission for Demonstration Project, Sept. 3, 1969; UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Handwritten Report by Derek Parry and Fraser Mackay on the Inner-City Coordination Project; UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Health is a Community Affair: Delay Breeds Disease (proposal and summary report of progress on efforts to establish medical clinic on skid road); UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Vancouver Inner City Service Project Summer Program - 1970, July 20, 1970 (report); UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), The Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Group, by Peter Davies, June 19, 1970 (mimeographed report).

⁵ Cf., CVA, Social Planning Dept., Series 178, 77-C-2, File 7, Skid Road - Gastown Social Planning Committee, 1970-74. Letter to Maurice Egan, Director of the Department of Social Planning and Community Development, from George Whitman, Coordinator, May 20, 1970. (information regarding meeting to form Gastown Social Development Committee); CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road General Coordination, 1964-1975, Memo to Maurice Egan, Director of

civic presence in efforts to establish a medical clinic, in which VISP workers played a key organizing role, while resident organizing among OGT tenants was accomplished through the Residents of Gastown, assisted by the Company of Young Canadians and VISP workers.⁶ Meanwhile, VISP and other organizations negotiated directly with the City for funding.⁷

The position's coordinating function was therefore submerged by increasingly direct connections between civic personnel and local groups, as well as the latter's organizing efforts. The resulting proliferation of projects increased the scope for civic intervention by identifying needs among the local population and formulating means of addressing them. Civic coordination was made superfluous by both the involvement of City staff as key participants in most of these schemes and multiplicity of organizations brought together for each effort. Coordination was difficult given the ambivalent goals of local authorities.

Social Planning and Community Development, from George Whitney, June 23, 1970 (regarding a meeting held on June 11, 1970 to discuss "some type of storefront medical clinic").

⁶ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road General Coordination, 1964-1975, Memo to Maurice Egan, Director of Social Planning and Community Development, from George Whitney, June 23, 1970 (regarding a meeting held on June 11, 1970 to discuss "some type of storefront medical clinic"); UCA, Series I-15-17, Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, Box 2, File 15, Project Proposals and Reports, 1970 (1), Medical Care in Skid Road, by Joanne Barr and Gary Dickson. In *The Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Group*, by Peter Davies, June 19, 1970 (mimeographed report).

⁷ Cf. CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-1, File 5, Inner City Service Project (Vancouver), 1969-1971. Brief on Legal Services and Research Program (VISP), Dec. 10, 1969 (presented to Vancouver City Council as part of Civic Grant Package); Letter to Mayor and Council from M. F. Harcourt, Dec. 12, 1969; Letters to Jonathan Baker, City Social Planner, from M. F. Harcourt, Mar. 16, 1970 and Apr. 3, 1970. See also, CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Letter to F. J. McDaniel, Acting Administrator, City Social Services Department, from M. C. Gutteridge, Parish Worker, St. James Church, May 23, 1970, and Letter to J. A. Sadler, Acting District Manager, Department of Social Services, from C. C. L. Wright, May 29, 1970 (both letters asking for financial support for the Gastown Workshop, a rehabilitation workshop). See also, CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Letter to F. J. McDaniel from Roy Coveny, Chairman of the Residents of Gastown, May 29, 1970 (asking for use of 55A Powell St. as an office for the organization).

The Coordinator was also supposed to be the key organizer of the social and population studies required for CMHC funding.⁸ To this end, a Skid Road Study Group was formed in the summer of 1970 with membership from the Police Department and SP/CD, as well as limited participation from the Gastown Improvement Association (the property-owners group) and the Residents of Gastown.⁹ Tentatively designating it "Human Renewal," the Coordinator proposed a research project leading to the:

"development of a programme to relocate and rehabilitate the inhabitants of Vancouver's Skid Road so that it can be terminated without forming a new one in different locations..."¹⁰

A key component in the program was to be a "Pilot Project Diagnostic and Relocation Center" designed to facilitate the removal of the skid road population. Yet, little more than a year earlier, the Director of SP/CD had declared in discussions following the Restoration Report, that relocation was not feasible.¹¹

When he reported the results of the population survey to City Council, in July 1971, the Director of SP/CD noted that the purpose of such research was to provide a base of knowledge for the formulation of social policy for a district long neglected by authorities and about which "myths and assumptions prevailed" as a result of "the lack

⁸ Vancouver Sun, 1969, Skid Road to Get City Coordinator, Oct. 29; CVA, Social Planning Dept., Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road Coordination, 1964-1975, Report to Mr. Geach, Dept. of Social Planning and Community Development, Re: The Revitalization of East Hastings, Gastown and Chinatown, June 18, 1969; and Report on Skid Road, Sept. 17, 1969.

⁹ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3, File 9, Skid Road Study, 1970-72. Unless otherwise stated, the figures discussed below are from this mimeographed study, officially titled Downtown Eastside, authored by the Dept. of Social Planning and Community Development.

¹⁰ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3, File 9, Skid Road Study, 1970-72. Memo from G. A. Whitman, Gastown Coordinator, to M. Egan, Director of Dept. of Social Planning and Community Development, Re: Purchase of Outside Services, Aug. 24, 1970.

¹¹ CVA, 77-D-2, File 14, Gastown-Chinatown Historical Area Socio-economic Analysis, Oct. 1971. City Planning Dept., Resume of Meeting, July 16, 1969.

of overall information.”¹² To rectify this knowledge gap, the survey quizzed respondents on a range of issues, including health, employment, income, recreation, and housing and residence. For the first time, it seems, the people who lived in the skid road area were solicited for their opinions and asked to provide information about their world, which turned out to be somewhat different than authorities had presumed.

Contrary to prevailing “myths and assumptions,” the survey discovered that of the 6793 people living in the study area, of which 5377 or 79% were male, only 20% had been there less than a year. Fifty-four percent had lived and/or worked in the district for more than six years, while almost half stated that they had no desire to move out. Still, there were problems. All but 15% of residents lived alone and almost half (46%) were over the age of 55 years. Only 14% of the people living in the area were employed, while 42% received income assistance. Only two thirds of the population had any form of medical insurance, compared to 98% of the City’s population.¹³ The most prevalent forms of recreation included “walking around” and spending time either in one’s own room or in the bar. Respondents cited changes they wanted, including housing improvements, less traffic and pollution, repairs to buildings and neighbourhood improvement, and control of drunks. Very few named employment or training and “rehabilitation” as desirable changes.

When the results of the survey were tabulated, officials met to discuss them and determine further action. Yet another Skid Road Sub-committee was established,

¹² CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3, File 9, Skid Road Study, 1970-72. Report on the results of the surveys conducted by the Department of Social Planning and Community Development in conjunction with the Health Department of the City of Vancouver.

¹³ This is four years after the Canada Health Act was passed, providing a national medical coverage program and 5 years after the establishment of the British Columbia Medical Services Plan.

composed of the Directors of Planning, Social Services, Social Planning, the Medical Health Officer and the Police Department, this time to “review existing skid road programs and proposals and make recommendations to City Council...”¹⁴ The Sub-committee operated on a principle elaborated in the final version of the Downtown Eastside Report, and which echoed the original 1965 Downtown -- East Side :

“Planning for Skid Road requires recognition of the fact that this is not simply a homogeneous community of alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes. Rather, it is a polyglot community with different social characteristics.”

Neither relocation nor detoxification emerged as primary goals in this context. Instead, health care, in the form of a medical clinic, and housing improvement were set as civic priorities in the wake of Gastown redevelopment.¹⁵ The need for a medical clinic met with little disagreement, since various parties, including City staff, had been meeting to plan for one since the previous spring, before the survey had actually been carried out. Housing, however, was a different situation.

As noted, the 1971 VCLAS delegation to City Council was highly critical of the City’s standards and enforcement of SRO hotel accommodation. It situated responsibility for SRO deterioration and declining living standards in hotels with

¹⁴ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3, File 9, Skid Road Study, 1970-72. Minutes of Joint Technical Committee Meeting to follow up the Downtown Eastside Report, May 26, 1971.

¹⁵ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3, File 9, Skid Road Study, 1970-72. Minutes of Joint Technical Committee Meeting to follow up the Downtown Eastside Report, May 26, 1971; CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6. Skid Road , General Coordination, 1964-1975, City Council Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Skid Road Report, November 18, 1971; CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Memorandum to Standing Committee on Health and Welfare from City Clerk, re: Downtown Eastside, July 5, 1971. The Vancouver Province, 1971, Drop-in clinic for Skid Road, March 13.

owners and civic authorities. The latter reacted strongly to the suggestion that lax civic regulation and exploitative property owners were the source of decline. City Council immediately directed its department heads to begin a process leading to the formulation of a housing improvement policy, to be coordinated by the Director of SP/CD and including property owners.¹⁶ The Medical Health Officer (MHO), however, chafed at the City's implicit acceptance of responsibility for the sorry housing situation in the skid road district. Instead, he emphasized the allocation, a year earlier, of two health inspectors to deal specifically with skid road housing and three others to the wider core area. He also disagreed with VCLAS' recommendation that legal action be taken against landlords who did not comply with civic enforcement. "In the experience of the Health Department," the MHO asserted:

"the problems of Skid Road inhabitants has been more related to the habits and lifestyles of the persons in this area than due to the inherent shortcomings of the physical premises. . . . Any suggestion that the problem can be attacked solely through the physical environment does not do justice to the complexity of the problems in the area. The answer lies more in total programming at significant cost and effort directed to the total needs of the persons living in the area."¹⁷

The tutelary project was thus not dead, but was, in fact, being elaborated in a somewhat different form.

Responding to Council's desire for recommendations of actions to improve the housing situation, the Director of SP/CD distinguished between the normal majority of

¹⁶ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Memorandum from City Clerk to various departments. Re: Downtown Eastside, recommendations of Standing Committee on Health and Welfare (about housing conditions), Sept. 15, 1971.

¹⁷ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Memorandum from the Board of Administration to the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare. Re: Skid road Housing Conditions, brief by VCLAS. Response by Medical Health Officer, Sept. 21, 1971.

skid road residents who wanted good housing and “those who by virtue of personality, mental defect, alcoholism or some other cause do not want decent housing or are unable to care for themselves to the extent that in the absence of special custodial services their presence is inimicable to decent accommodation.”¹⁸

These “undesirable” tenants were blamed as the primary source of skid road housing problems, their actions leading to destruction and decay of the buildings in which they lived, and to the consequent reluctance of building owners to improve their premises. Although it was recognized that there was not an exact fit between the numbers of skid road alcoholics and such undesirables, the fact that 800 to 1000 chronic drinkers had been identified as resident in the district was considered indicative of the magnitude of the problem.

The class of housing labelled as “flohouses” provided housing for this otherwise difficult to house category of tenant. The report suggested that homelessness would increase if standards were improved and more rigorously enforced because hotel operators would close their businesses. “New institutions may have to be developed if we want to renovate or demolish substandard buildings presently used as flophouses.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, City staff recommended, and Council adopted, measures very similar to those VCLAS had advanced for the regulation of SRO premises in skid road. Within a year, the City would also begin to pursue the

¹⁸ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series ??, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road, General Coordination, 1964-1975. Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Re: Skid Road (housing conditions) report, Nov. 18, 1971.

¹⁹ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series ??, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road, General Coordination, 1964-1975. Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Re: Skid Road (housing conditions) report, Nov. 18, 1971.

development of housing for “undesirable” tenants, as well as what would become known as a “multi-use centre” to provide laundry, shower and food facilities for SRO residents.

In the meantime, however, Council had directed its staff to inaugurate another study, this time to examine the impact of Gastown development on its residential population.²⁰ The investigation which resulted, the Gastown/Chinatown Historic Area Socio-Economic Analysis, Phases I and II, focused on an area larger than that covered by the Downtown Eastside survey one year earlier. It more carefully delineated the population, distinguishing four categories of resident that paralleled the classifications of the 1965 Downtown – East Side report. These included “the elderly, ill and handicapped” (one third), “non-working men under 65 who are physically able to work but choose . . . not to do so,” (20%), “chronic alcoholics and heavy drinkers” (about one quarter), and “working men of whom some are employed, some not but seeking work” (about 14%). Cross-cutting these categories, the researcher also replicated City staff’s earlier distinction between the normal and deviant population, identifying “two client types,” one of which was “disorganized,” the other composed of people who lived in the skid road area “primarily because they are poor and do not have enough income.” It concluded that the majority of residents fell into the latter category, circumstances forcing upon them their current place of abode, but that in general, especially given the accelerating property development, the population was the most stable element in the district.

²⁰ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Board of Administration to Standing Committee of Health and Welfare, Re: Downtown Eastside Report, July 9, 1971.

The Director of SP/CD thus determined that despite the presence of a large number of deviants, most residents lived in the area by their own choice:

“For many, this is where the action is and for them may be preferable to the nirvana of a suburban nursing home. But for others, it is the ashcan where a society that gives its opportunities to youth places its elderly.”²¹

The goal of civic policy, therefore, should be to redress “the kind of population imbalance” that made skid road a place where the numbers of people aged sixty-five years or older was twice the city-wide rate. The movement of younger people into Gastown seemed to herald just such a shift, and this was considered to be an acceptable means of achieving a “healthy population mix” as long as older residents were not displaced. Still, it was left unclear why the relatively high proportion of older residents was less preferable than the more diverse mix sought by civic authorities.

In any case, the City began to move quickly on certain recommendations arising from all three surveys. Even though both sets of surveys indicated that there had been a smaller degree of housing loss from Gastown renovation than previously believed Council voted at the end of the year to ask the Provincial government for amendments to the City’s charter that would enable it to more closely regulate SRO hotel premises, particularly with regard to the management of operating permits. Given the widespread expectation that stricter enforcement would lead to the closure of those establishments housing “derelicts and the difficult to house,” Council also directed staff to begin examining options for housing those “undesirable tenants.”²²

²¹ CVA, Social Services Department, Series 454, 107-A-7, Skid Road, 1962-1974, File 5, 1970-71. Report from Director of Social Planning and Community Development to the Standing Committee of Health and Welfare, Re: Skid Road Reports.

²² CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 85-A-3 File 7, Skid Road, 1971-72. Minutes of Vancouver City Council, December 7, 1971.

A new relationship between the City and skid road

Certainly, then, civic authorities had mixed feelings about the district. On one hand, they offered a rather diffident acknowledgement of the existence of an “indigenous” population, a minority which was cast as a homogeneous group of undesirables in need of some form of institutional care. This creation of a population of clients represented the persistence of skid road imagery and the causal nexus of damaged bodies and deteriorating landscape. It thus became the primary vector for the provision of tutelary/supervisory programs over the ensuing twenty years. It was an unhealthy place that required medicalizing intervention to restore. In some ways, it was thus the social complement to the renovation of Gastown.

On the other hand, City officials had broken out of the programming mold imposed by the terms of the 1965 Special Committee, redefining skid road in terms of a population that was constituted as a social body with specific needs and, hence, particular interests. Considering its mandate, the assignment of SP/CD to deal with skid road conferred official imprimatur, if only grudgingly, on emerging claims to neighbourhood and community there. Institutional control was thus only one in a range of options that were available for dealing with what was becoming a complex space and population.

The failure of urban renewal as a means of imposing order on space led, via renovation and social surveys, to a reconfiguration of the relationship between bodies and space. The surveys revealed a multiplex population that was ‘indigenous’ to the area. Its relation to the built environment, to space, was formed through its occupation

of the housing and use of the streets, that is, in terms of residence and also via a property relation, in terms of tenancy. Dealing with skid road, in other words, could no longer be a simple matter of getting rid of an unwanted population. The individuals composing that population now had a legitimate moral and legal interest in the area. The question, then, was how to deal with that interest.

In the summer of 1972, the Director of SP/CD invited “as many residents and/or persons working in” the Downtown Eastside “as possible” to a meeting to discuss the feasibility of locating a full-time Social Planner in the district.²³ The Director had already solicited the former Coordinator of the VISP Inner City Advocacy and Rehabilitation Project to apply for the position. The latter, however, suggested instead that “local citizens and community workers” be invited to “a Consultation to examine the need for coordination of community services and education in the area, and the best ways of meeting the need” and that the meeting be designed to limit the number of paid staff in attendance and maximize the number of residents.²⁴ In organizing a meeting at which resident participation was considered a key indicator of success, SP/CD signalled a shift in its definition of the district and the ways in which the City should relate to it.

Not long before, the Coordinator had attested that his “own ‘hidden’ goal . . . is nothing less than the transformation of the inner city population into an inner city

²³ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road - General Coordination, 1974-1975. Open Letter from Maurice Egan, Director of Social Planning and Community Development to Persons Living and/or Working in Vancouver's Downtown East Side from the City of Vancouver, July 4, 1972.

²⁴ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road - General Coordination, 1974-1975. Letter from Peter Davies to Maurice Egan, June 27, 1971.

community”²⁵ It had been under his coordination that VISP workers had started to bring residents to meetings to discuss service development in the area. His insistence on resident determination of the needs and interests of the area meant that his appointment in this position was never more than a temporary situation. Consequently, when City Council approved a recommendation at the end of the year for an appointment of a Recreation Director for the Downtown Eastside it was directed to the development of a one year pilot program.²⁶ In accepting this position, civic officials made a fundamental change in direction in their relationship with the area, treating it as an urban neighbourhood and a community where the needs and the interests of residents were not inevitably subordinated to property values.

While civic officials continued to pursue the issue of standards and enforcement in the hotels, and the development of an institutional alternative for those “difficult to house” individuals, a second track of policy formulation opened up as the Downtown Eastside social planner worked with local groups and residents to develop the plans for a “multi-use centre” with laundry, food, bathing, and social facilities and a group of advocates that were called the Peoples’ Aides, who were to serve as advocates for locals and the poor. This program presaged the formation in 1973, of a Residents’ Association, but it was initially through the city, and its ambivalent relations with skid road, that the recognition of the skid road population as a community took place.

²⁵ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road - General Coordination, 1974-1975. Letter from Peter Davies to the Directors of the Downtown Medical Health Society, June 5, 1972.

²⁶ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, 77-C-2, File 6, Skid Road - General Coordination, 1974-1975. Board of Administration Report - Recreation Program for Downtown Eastside Resident, December 15, 1972.

Chapter 8
A Community of Working Class Heroes: Representing Respectability – 1973 - 1985

In 1984, a banner headline on the front-page of the Vancouver Sun proclaimed “Skid Road cleans up its act.” Noting that “there’s less blood on the streets of the downtown east side,” the writer enumerated a dramatic drop in robberies from the previous year. Police and community workers attributed the decrease to the recent closure of a liquor store at the corner of Hastings and Main Streets, a central corner in Vancouver’s geography of sociability as seen in the opening chapter, and stricter regulation of alcohol sales in an area with an estimated 80 per cent of licenced seating in the city. Commenting on the situation, the head of the local residents organization “maintain[ed] that many of downtown east side crimes are committed by non-residents . . . Vancouver has to stop viewing the downtown east side as a playground” (Bohn, 1984: A1, 12). Citing the now-closed liquor store as a “prime example of a situation where most of the drunks [who] lingered outside the store and in the the alleys . . . were not area residents. By the mid-1980s, even the police admitted that most of the crime in the neighbourhood is actually committed by people who live elsewhere, but who come downtown to prowl the beer parlors and back alleys preying on local residents, especially the elderly (Sarti, 1985). An ambulance attendant commented that he and his colleagues were receiving more calls from areas to the east.

In little more than a decade, skid road seems to have been transformed. The population of the district had changed only minimally.¹ But there were new ways in which it was perceived and constructed. No longer was the causal relationship between damaged male bodies and deteriorating buildings understood to be the main factor in the generation of slum conditions. In fact, the image of a run-down slum was being contested with a different rendition of the area that pictured it as an inner city neighbourhood named the Downtown Eastside. Although it was still treated as a source and locale of problems, the new construction of the area also cast it as a space populated by residents rather than human problems. Contrary to general belief, asserted one editorialist,

“they are not all derelicts and rubbies. In fact social workers say only about 15 percent of them have actually given up on life to that extent. The other 85 per cent genuinely try to make a go of it. They try to stay off the booze and make ends meet” (Clarke, 1977: 4).

To be sure, there were still serious problems. But, their causes were located with literal outsiders, people from elsewhere in the city who were attracted by the many businesses which purveyed booze or otherwise enabled criminal activity, thus lending

¹ Those population changes which did take place did not necessarily militate toward a new respectability. With the exception of a small decrease in numbers between 1971 and 1981, demographic characteristics of the Downtown Eastside population were more or less stable over that time. The proportion of residents over the age of 45 stayed between 60% and 70%, while the relative balance of males and females in the neighbourhood remained the same, with the former making up between 70% and 80% of the population. Economically, residents did not fare well. The median income of adult males continued to be well below the metropolitan median. Indeed, in Census Tract 58 it declined from 33% to 28% of the metropolitan median. (This may be attributed to an increase in the proportion of residents aged 65 or more moving into new housing for seniors in that tract). It is significant that women's median income declined from 1971 to 1981 as a proportion of the metropolitan median for women, despite the fact that the latter increased relative to that of men during the same period. In each case, it is also important to note that while median individual income fell relative to that of the CMA, labour force participation actually increased in the Downtown Eastside census tracts. There was also a decline in the percentage of people who reported being immigrants (Statistics Canada, 1973, 1974, 1982, 1983).

the area a playground atmosphere in which all kinds of unacceptable conduct was allowed. The lax attitudes and actions of the authorities responsible for housing, liquor, and criminal regulatory enforcement contributed significantly to this situation.

The key agent of this shifting representation was an organization called the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, or DERA, that was formed in the summer of 1973 in the wake of the Peoples Aide program.² The latter, as noted earlier, was a City-sponsored project funded with a Federal grant. The brainchild of the Downtown Eastside Social Planner, it was originally conceived of as a program of advocacy on behalf of individuals, to help them navigate the labyrinthine welfare and health care bureaucracies so they could receive all the benefits to which they were entitled. It was also seen as an instrument by which local people or those who knew the locality would be able to put their knowledge to use in assisting their neighbours.³ But it quickly became apparent to those involved with the Peoples Aides that collective self-help and political action, rather than individual advocacy, were the necessary ingredients in any prescription for neighbourhood improvement.⁴

As a result, DERA was formed in August 1973, a practical realization of the VISP formulation of individual transformation through social and political change, to

² CVA, Series 178, Loc. 77-D-#, File 29, People Aides, 1973. Letter from Allen Maccoomb, Secretary of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association to Gordon Thomson, Chief of Direct Employment Programs, Department of Manpower and Immigration (Pacific Region), August 16, 1973. [regarding Federal funding for the newly-formed DERA].

³ CVA, Series 178, Loc. 77-D-#, File 29, People Aides, 1973, A Proposal for the City Social Planning Dept. to Establish a Pilot Project in the Downtown Eastside. A Team of Peoples Aides funded by the Federal Government: Local Initiatives Project, ND.

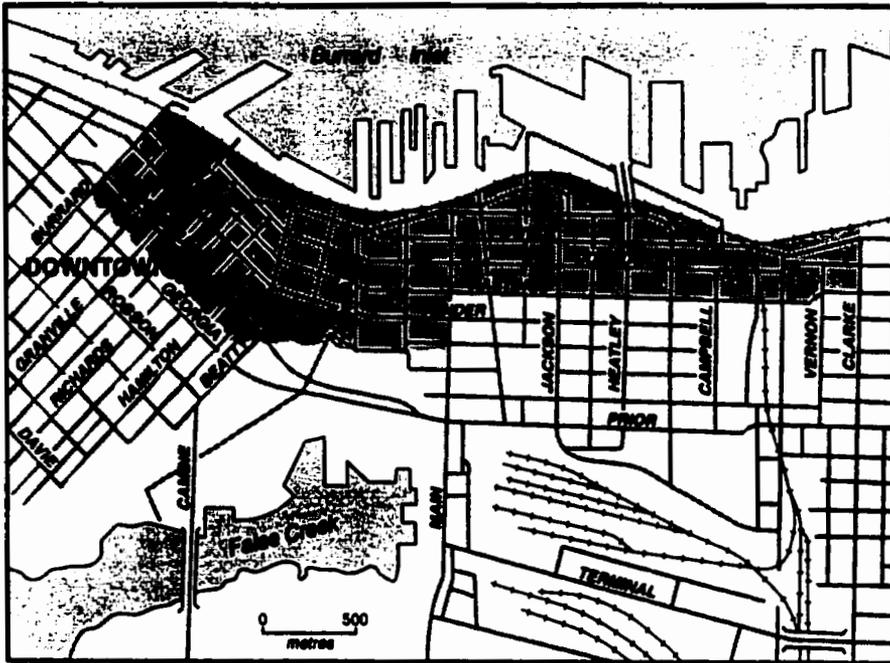
⁴ CVA, SPD Series 178, 77-D-3 File 29, Peoples Aides, 1977, A proposal for the City Social Planning Dept. to Establish a Pilot Project in the Downtown Eastside: A Team of People's Aides funded by the Federal Government's LIP. ND; Letter to Gordon Thomson, Chief of Direct Employment Programs, Dept. of Manpower and Immigration (Pacific Region), from Allen Maccoomb, Secretary, DERA, 16 Aug, 1973.

be achieved by indigenous organization and agitation.⁵ Its claim to represent a district that it called the Downtown Eastside, and a population that, it argued, had long been subjected to profiteering. Exploitation, and official neglect, signalled the beginning of an attempt to re-work the territory of skid road and thus resituate it within Vancouver's social geography. By redefining the identities of the individuals who occupied the area, DERA attempted to cast the Downtown Eastside as a working class community rooted in the frontier industries of British Columbia. According to a community organizer writing in DERA's federally-funded newspaper, it comprised an area much larger than the traditional skid road:

"The area designated as the 'downtown eastside' stretches along the harbour from Clark Drive to Burrard Street (except for the Strathcona neighbourhood, which maintains its separate identity). It contains downtown businesses, waterfront industries and a newly developed Gastown commercial-entertainment area which has pushed Vancouver's Skid Road eastward. The residents of the area include many single people who live in rundown hotels and rooming houses, the most visible of whom are the transients, alcoholics and social outcasts on the streets. However, the majority are permanent residents who have lived downtown for many years and include a number of Japanese and Chinese families in the eastern" [see Map 6].⁶

⁵ A number of the People's Aides were among the first DERA Board of Directors and later among its staff. Bruce Eriksen, the first DERA organizer, quickly became the most well-known of these and the inspiration for DERA is often attributed to him. Eriksen was abrasive and impatient and drew both sharp criticism and unmitigated praise for his work, as shown in some of the newspaper pieces cited in this chapter. Ley (1994) notes that Eriksen was important in providing a focal point through which DERA maintained its cohesion in its early years. He was later elected to Vancouver City Council, followed two years later by his wife, Libby Davies, another alumnus of the People's Aides and DERA co-founder (see note 6 below).

⁶ CVA Planning Dept, Series 69, 94-D-6, File 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975, Downtown Eastside Residents Association by Margaret Mitchell, Downtown East newspaper, No. 9, April 1975. Mitchell was a key figure in Vancouver's inner city neighbourhoods during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Shirley Chan, the daughter of Bessie Lee, both of whom were organizers of Strathcona resident opposition to the freeway, credits her with a central role in organizing and introducing them to the anti-freeway movement. As well, Mitchell was involved with the formation of DERA and several still-existing community projects in East Vancouver. She was elected NDP Member of Parliament for Vancouver East in 1979, remaining in that position until her defeat in the 1993 Federal election. It is worth noting here that the Liberal Party victor in that election was subsequently defeated in 1997 by NDP candidate Libby Davies, DERA co-founder and daughter of Peter Davies.



Map 6: The Downtown Eastside as defined in the Downtown East newspaper, 1975.

The area described here coincided with the heart of the old downtown lodging house district, where the large stock of SRO hotels and rooming houses had provided an urban base for countless migrant workers and immigrants. The contemporary population of the Downtown Eastside was represented as the latter-day successor of these frontier industrial workers, connecting the district's pre-war history to the existing conditions of the Downtown Eastside.

There were limits to the level at which this shifting imagination of identity could affect the spatial order. The evident deterioration of the built environment, together with the appearance of public (mis)conduct associated with alcohol and illegal drug consumption, made the skid road image hard to shake:

"Derelict, dangerous accommodation and a deteriorating 'slum' environment are major problems, along with a high rate of alcoholism and drug abuse and increasing crime and violence. Paternalistic services for the "down and out" often destroy initiative and self-respect."⁷

DERA's answer to these problems involved the promotion of environmental reform that worked in two directions. First, it pressured civic authorities to improve the physical and institutional conditions that prevailed in the district. High profile campaigns for increased legal enforcement of housing standards, surveillance of bars, and policing of public behaviour were accompanied by efforts to improve service provision, such as the placement of a local community centre and construction of new housing, and the rezoning of a large portion of the area from industrial to residential and amenity uses. The realization of this spatial regulation was contingent on the

⁷ CVA Planning Dept, Series 69, 94-D-6, File 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975, Downtown Eastside Residents Association by Margaret Mitchell, Downtown East newspaper, No. 9, April 1975.

second avenue of reform, the promotion of an ethic of self-help by which local people could remake both their neighbourhood and themselves. The appeal to history and memory embedded in the new identity of the former skid roaders was bound up with a call to political and social action. As noted earlier, the public spaces in and around this area had been settings for frequent militant labour action prior to the Second World War. Such events were recalled and projected onto the present and the future as templates for the direct action that was necessary to bring official attention to bear on the district's problems.

DERA thus attempted to turn inside-out the social and spatial order that situated skid road in a historical and political vacuum. The skid road area would, henceforth, be a part of the Downtown Eastside, a space that was, at once, a living connection with the city's working class past, a poor inner city neighbourhood, and a district where the population was struggling to improve its conditions. This alternative order was framed with a rhetoric of citizenship and infused with claims to community that crystallized those representations of the inner city which had been deployed by the VISP projects. DERA advanced active citizenship, understood in practical rather than theoretical terms, as the means of achieving self and environmental improvement. The elimination of slum conditions required the galvanization of a local identity, which could be directed toward social and political activism. The local population was constituted in terms of this common identity, organized as an interest group, and mobilized as the base from which to pressure authorities and property-owners to improve services and the living environment.

Community and conflict

The attempt at re-constructing skid road as a community took place at a time when community was entering into the formal channels of government. If VISP and other oppositional groups sought to mobilize community as a dissident force for change, it became institutionalized as a vehicle by which state, corporate, and charitable agencies could engage with citizens. The Downtown Eastside Residents' Association was founded during the years that both the Provincial state and the City of Vancouver were creating official procedures by which communities could be constituted and recognized as formal entities that served as arenas for democratic participation and, hence, as means of government. They also created avenues by which organizations that claimed to act on behalf of communities and their members could, more or less effectively, connect with state operatives and by which the latter could relate to such community agents.

Only eight months prior to DERA's formation, a new civic party majority was installed in Vancouver's city hall, heralding the transition to a new regime of planning and development with an ideology of liveability informed by the idea of neighbourhood communities of citizen-residents. The new regime instituted local area planning, officially dividing the city into neighbourhoods, thus conferring formal status on the latter. Its program focused on the downtown and the surrounding areas, attempting to regenerate public space and contain density and growth (cf. Ley, 1980, 1987). Community organizations thus achieved a legitimate role beyond that of service providers. It was now possible for such groups to achieve recognition as the

voices of communities, acting as mediators between individuals, particularly residents of neighbourhoods, and the local state.

The previous year had seen the election of the New Democratic Party (NDP), British Columbia's first social democratic government. Not only did the new provincial government swiftly delegate jurisdiction to the City to designate special purpose zoning for historic areas such as Gastown and Chinatown, it also made significant policy changes with direct relevance to the Downtown Eastside. Welfare services which had until then been the purview of a non-profit society and municipalities, were centralized under provincial jurisdiction in a new Ministry of Human Resources. The Ministry devolved certain policy and funding decisions in the City of Vancouver to the Vancouver Resources Board, which was itself composed of a number of locally elected Community Resource Boards that were responsible for administering welfare policy in designated areas within the city boundaries (Clague, et al, 1984). Once again, community residents, this time as voters, were able to exercise participation in policy formation and administration. DERA's level of organization and prominence in public and media discourse ensured the election of at least some of the candidates which it supported for the Downtown Community Resource Board (Clague, et al, 1984).

The Downtown Eastside, however, was not recognized by the City as one of its Local Areas but was, instead, largely subsumed by the Central Business District. Its status as a neighbourhood and a community received a precarious civic sanction only as a result of the sheer doggedness of DERA's workers and their willingness to

confront those authorities they deemed responsible for the conditions which prevailed in the area. Such recognition came only grudgingly from certain civic quarters. While the idea that skid road could be conceived of as a community may have been difficult to grasp for some bureaucrats and politicians, DERA's claim to represent that community, combined with its combative approach when dealing with officials and business operators provoked outright hostility (Ford, 1977).⁸

Almost from its inception, DERA began efforts to publicize the wrongdoings of those it took to be the culprits of the Downtown Eastside problems, picketing substandard SRO hotels and seeking to hold bar owners accountable for the effects of their businesses (Coull, 1973; Bird, 1973). It also took the civic administration to task whenever it saw political or bureaucratic negligence as a source of difficulties. When a strike by the building trades unions shut down construction of the first new housing project in the Downtown Eastside, DERA members picketed the ongoing work at the nearby Granville Street Mall, for which the City had negotiated an exemption from the unions (The Vancouver Province, 1974b, c, d, e). Support for such action was surprisingly strong. Editorialists reminded the Mayor of his campaign slogan, ("people before property") and the city quickly negotiated an exemption for the housing project (The Vancouver Province, 1974f, g). An empty city-owned building, recently vacated by the YWCA, was quickly transformed into an emergency hostel when the DERA Organizer talked his way into the building with some homeless men

⁸ Cf., CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, Loc. 103-E-3, File 9, Downtown Eastside Residents Association, 1971-76. Memo from Jonathon Baker to Doug Purdy, June 10, 1978, Re: Downtown Eastside Residents Association [memo opposing civic grant to DERA; Loc. 103-E-3, Memo to Mayor and Aldermen from Maurice Egan, Director of Social Planning, March 17, 1975, Re: Downtown Eastside Residents Association.

and then refused to leave. When officials reproached him for his conduct he replied that “sometimes you have to put city council on the spot, or else they will just sit back and talk for 10 years. They live in clean, warm, comfortable homes and they just don’t “understand the problem”(Young, 1974: 8).

The problem, from this perspective, was that the housing available in the Downtown Eastside was wholly inadequate. DERA conducted a well-publicized campaign throughout the 1970s for stricter bylaws governing residential hotels and rooming houses and better enforcement. In an earlier chapter, I noted the opposition in certain civic quarters to intensified efforts to improve conditions in SRO hotels, based on the presence of undesirable tenants whose conduct was deleterious to the building stock. As DERA campaigned to raise the profile of the poor living environment of many lodging houses, civic opposition continued, based on a logic that assumed that legal pressure imposed on the owners of buildings which did not meet required standards, or more rigorous standards, would inevitably displace those undesirables. DERA’s position, consistent with the one enunciated by VCLAS in 1971, was that it was the responsibility of civic authorities to ensure that citizens, regardless of their demeanor, should not have to live in degrading circumstances. Stronger laws and enforcement were absolutely necessary, even if that meant closing buildings and losing housing stock.

This difference was constitutive of a fundamental moral contradiction. Although the transformation of the skid road landscape was actually inaugurated by the City, civic authorities were reluctant to move on terms dictated by agents other than its

own. Thus, opposition to increased lodging house regulation and enforcement, and even the recognition of the area as a community, sometimes came from some of the same officials who worked with service agencies and community groups to start a health clinic and begin the construction of new housing for local residents. Despite a more enlightened approach, as the last chapter showed, such authorities carried the same assumptions about the relationship between damaged subjectivities, conduct, and the built environment which had underpinned the skid road project (cf. Ford, 1977; The Vancouver Province, 1978a). The latter construction persisted through the reconfiguration of derelicts and transients into high-need subjects now labelled as hard-to-house tenants. Damaged bodies and subjectivities were respecified but remained as the central locus of responsibility for the deterioration of the built environment. With the demise of urban renewal, the containment and management of such individuals joined rehabilitation as goals of official interventions. Minimalist standards for lodging house maintenance operated in tandem with the construction of a new building designed to house some undesirable tenants and improved health services to support a population which some authorities considered deviant and otherwise supportable. Skid road could be upgraded but the problem population at its core could only be stabilized and supervised.

DERA, in contrast, posited an environmentalism that reversed this relationship. Contending that responsibility for slum conditions lay with the businesses and property owners who profited from them and negligent political authorities who permitted such actions, rather than with Downtown Eastside residents, it pursued the

goal of eliminating the slum through intensifying legal regulation, new construction, and renovation. At the 1975 opening of the Multi-use Centre, the concept for which originated out of the recommendations of the City's 1971 Downtown Eastside report, DERA's Organizer declared that with a restaurant and a place to keep his clothes clean, "he [the Downtown Eastside resident] doesn't have an excuse to walk around in a mess like most of them do." Conduct was thus formulated as a response to environmental conditions. The key to eliminating skid row lay in the latter's improvement. Services that enabled individuals to improve themselves, or to help the community to undertake collective improvements, were preferable to those tutelary-supervisory programs that constructed residents as problem-objects to be managed and directed. Earning the respect of others required self-respect. And self-respect required the rejection of inferior living conditions and shabby treatment. DERA, its President announced, "is not a social service agency. We want to eliminate social services" (cited in *The Province*, 1976a).

In the place of social services, DERA advocated a self-help approach to environmental improvement and, from the beginning, situated itself within this framework. Applying for a civic grant in 1975, it listed its accomplishments, including the establishment of a daycare, increased enforcement of city bylaws, control and management of beer parlours, and research and promotion of community involvement in neighbourhood improvement and rezoning.⁹ This notion of radical self-help, which included political activism funded through the state, met with approval from

⁹ CVA, Social Planning Department, Series 178, Loc. 103-E-3, File 9. Downtown Eastside Residents Association, 1971-1976. Application for Civic Grant for Community Development Workers, DERA. Oct. 24, 1975.

commentators, one of whom noted that residents banded together into a viable organization of their own, in the apparently correct belief that only they can eradicate the profound social problems confronting them (Griffiths, 1973). The DERA Organizer himself was considered to be living proof of the moral efficacy of self-help and community activism. "Eriksen, a 49 year old reformed drunk . . . lives with these people. Hungry people, drunken people. Dying people. Kids who fight cockroaches for their supper" (Griffiths, 1973).

The shift here between modalities of subjectification is subtle but nevertheless highly significant. Plans for the elimination of skid road proposed the creation of a disciplinary apparatus designed to inculcate proper ideas and correct forms of behaviour in its deviant objects. Their bodies provided the points of direct access through which identities could be refashioned in tutelary processes involving the imposition of constraints on mobility and living environments. The idea of skid road presupposed an essential personality flaw in particular individuals that precluded autonomous conduct. Such defects could only be corrected by supervision and education. In some, perhaps many, cases, personal pathologies were chronic and incorrigible. Only continuous surveillance and constraint could provide effective management of such incorrigible individuals.

DERA inverted this model, projecting a scheme of self-government onto the landscape and people of the Downtown Eastside. It assumed that Downtown Eastside residents were fundamentally autonomous actors whose independence was eroded through immiserating slum conditions -- poverty, poor housing, bad environment --

and the merely palliative services designed to help individuals cope with, rather than substantially change, those conditions. At the same time, however, independence could only be achieved by changing those conditions, an act which required the exercise of that essential autonomy which slum life so drastically curtailed. This contradiction between, on the one hand, the assumption of autonomy and, on the other hand, the necessity of action in obtaining independence can only be resolved if we understand it as a practice as well as an outcome of human conduct (Hindess, 1993). In other words, the manifestation of individual autonomy was to be found in those actions that were required to change the very conditions which constantly militated against it. Autonomy was thus located in an individual's capacity for self-directed action.

This insistence on the intrinsic worth of people in the Downtown Eastside, on their identity as autonomous individual *residents*, rather than as problematic objects, changed the skid road landscape. The mobilization of local identity in the service of environmental improvement captured the public imagination, shifting perceptions of the area. The streets no longer were filled with miscreant derelicts and transients. The actual bodies which now occupied them were frequently those of more or less respectable citizens, some of whom campaigned in highly visible ways, on behalf of the others, for a better neighbourhood. "the fact that the phrase downtown eastside has largely replaced skid road in common useage," wrote one early media supporter, "is a symbolic measure of DERA's success in getting the area recognized as a community rather than a human scrap heap (Smith, 1976a). Of course, there were always the

outsiders like drinkers, druggers, and slumlords who caused problems, but DERA agitated for improved enforcement to deal with them, as well.

Reimagining the inner city

History and the memories of the people who lived in the both Downtown Eastside and wider city provided a lens through which DERA and its allies were able to focus on the vision of an inner city neighbourhood and community with legitimate claims to the space it occupied. The official image of skid road, centred on the archetype of the derelict or homeless, single man was challenged with a new figure, the working class hero or the retired working man. As the latter was established as the central figure of the Downtown Eastside, a large proportion of the areas population passed from the ranks of the vicious poor to those of the more deserving, respectable poor. Its problems were no longer understood as self-induced difficulties stemming from personality defects. The problems of the Downtown Eastside were those of society-at-large, sometimes caused by that society, or the ways that it was permitted to operate. The face of the Downtown Eastside was of someone who had worked and contributed to building the country and was, in return, consigned to a retirement of neglect and indifference.

Ironically, this transformation echoed one of the key themes of the skid road project. The unassailable fact that the overwhelming majority of the district's population was male led to the postulation of an intrinsic connection between masculinity and spatial order. This time, however, the relationship between space and male identity was positive rather than pathological. Like the proponents of Gastown,

DERA found that claims to legitimacy carry more weight if they are based on historical antecedents. Unlike Gastown, where old buildings substituted for the memory of a wider community, DERA tried to promote a local community and define its interests by appealing to the memory and experience of its members and linking this to a history that began with the foundation of the city.

Throughout the 1970s, such appeals operated primarily as observations or statements of fact in media discourse. A 1976 profile of DERA's Organizer notes that one drunken individual to whom the latter gives some assistance "is typical of the victims of Hastings and its side streets, home to former loggers, fishermen, construction and waterfront workers who are now pensioners without savings" (Shields, 1976b: 5). Another notes that many of the "surprisingly large number of . . . single men who have worked in B. C. resource industries . . . have been injured or have picked up disease in their working days. Having been denied . . . any form . . . of compensation for the hazards of their work they are now on the underside of society" (Clark, 1977: 4). Characterizations like this abetted the reworking of the skid road archetype into a more sympathetic figure, the retired resource industry worker. The presence of such individuals in large numbers operated as living evidence of the connection between their place of residence and the frontier-industrial past from which the city itself had sprung.

Formal legitimacy for this claim was facilitated with the publication of oral histories like those included in Along the No. 20 Line by labour historian Rolf Knight, whose commentary pointed to "the old bachelors who lived in the area a generation

earlier in rooming houses, old bunkhouses and row cabins . . . they lived around the margins of, or a short streetcar ride from, the loggers district [around Hastings and Carrall Streets]. ...

They were of a generation which had been part of the great transformation, of the construction of the modern world. Many had participated in the final phases of the great migration to the New World; their muscle and brain had helped lay railways which bound this continent together. Some were part of the homestead frontiers or mining rushes. Others had cleared the sites of present day cities as well as of boom towns now faded into obscurity. . . . they were part of an age that engendered millennial promise which, for some, could still strike fire in old age. . . . Hidden behind the crumpled suits of pensioners you saw sitting over coffee in the White Lunch or around downtown squares were experiences both dramatic and mundane, the story of an age" (Knight, 1980: 58-59).

Presaging journalistic assertions that would elicit public sympathy later in the decade when large numbers of SRO tenants were evicted in preparation for an anticipated World's Fair tourist boom, the author proclaimed: "thirteen years olds, and their parents, who now pass through the district often do so with a mixture of smugness and contempt for those bums and drunks they think they see everywhere. But was it hairstylists and accounting students who raised this city" (Knight, 1980: 231)?

The stories that were told here and in documentary efforts like those undertaken by the BC Oral History Project and the local community centre were used to reframe the images through which this part of the city had been understood in recent decades (Marlatt and Itter, 1979; Canning-Dew, 1987). Through such efforts, the figure of the retired resource industry worker was constructed as a symbol of the refusal of the pathological status to which the space and the people who occupied it were assigned.

It would henceforth no longer be possible to dismiss the inhabitants of the district as “mere” skid road derelicts or transients. They had been transformed into a group of hard-working, and possibly hard-drinking, but nevertheless proud and self-reliant individuals who had played a central role in building the West.

The corollary of this new definition of the kind of people who lived in the area was to resituate them as *residents* of a neighbourhood with common interests and aspirations. Unlike the damaged derelict of skid road, the Downtown Eastside resident was constructed as an active, politically-engaged subject, as a citizen. DERA sought to organize and mobilize the local identity in order to promote collective action aimed at improving the living conditions in the area. Promoting activism, however, was not an easy task. Appeals for political activism were rooted in the memory of the neighbourhood as a historical community where class power had been contested in the past. Both the unruly nature of challenges to authority, such as demonstration and riots, as well as the discipline of labour organization were elements in the representation of memory (cf. Glavin, 1986; Sarti, 1986b; DERA, ND).

The construction of the working class hero provided a rhetorical device for linking this past with present conditions. Motivating and animating that link was an equally complex process. Action required some form of popular sanction that came via reflection and representation. The publication of a local newspaper was instrumental in this process, representing to residents the claims that were being made on their behalf regarding their identity, their rights and their obligations. The Downtown East newspaper, funded with Federal employment grants, provided a

mechanism by which the community could be represented to Downtown Eastside residents, as well as connected to other groups that had formed around issues related to those in the neighbourhood. In photographs and articles it named and explained what its editors considered to be current issues and advocated appropriate action. Discussions and commentary on such issues, together with news about service delivery and agencies, DERA activities, politics, general commentary, and announcements of local goings-on all contributed to the formation of local opinion. In an area where most people lived in tiny, rapidly deteriorating and often dangerous SRO hotel rooms, the housing question loomed large. Together with poverty and unemployment issues, commentary and reportage on housing conditions and policies provided the central focus of the effort to form and mobilize local identity. Political activism directed at securing state intervention to provide jobs and regulate local businesses and landlords was seen as the basis of improved living standards.¹⁰ Militant activism was understood as a vital necessity given the perception that politicians would not respond to the claims of the poor unless they are forced to do so.¹¹

The Downtown East newspaper provided a catalyst for mobilization, evoking community solidarity and underpinning appeals for political action to change the situation. Local issues were often related to wider political and social circumstances, especially tenants rights, the anti-poverty movement, and civic and provincial politics.

¹⁰ CVA Planning Dept, Series 69, 94-D-6, File 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975, Downtown East, No. 9, April 1975.

¹¹ CVA Planning Dept, Series 69, 94-D-6, File 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975. Tenants Regard Rent Commission as an Oppressive Force, Downtown East, No.12, July 1975.

Locating the Downtown Eastside as a neighbourhood in the context of the larger city, disparities were noted and the necessity of action was hammered home again and again. Comparing the hotels, alleys and streets of the Downtown Eastside with the large houses and leafy drives of Vancouver's elite residential neighbourhoods, an editorialist told readers that "if you live in an area where people vote for a government that protects privilege . . . entering your home will be a different experience than if you live in an area where people don't vote."¹² By thus situating the Downtown Eastside within a broader social and spatial constellation of forces, the newspaper politicized neighbourhood life by constituting local identity in terms of a larger movement for progressive social change. In this context, local identity, grounded in similar living conditions, became a close approximation of political identity.

Outsiders in the Community

The deployment of a rhetoric of community produced a series of exclusions. The construction of subjectivity and community requires an outside, the boundary past which identity and belonging are thrown into question. In defining the residents of the Downtown Eastside, two outside forces were identified. On the one side of the community were the landlords, property-owners and business managers who exploited the community through excessive rents and poorly run hotels and businesses, allowing dangerous behaviour to flourish, and the regulators who permitted them to continue in business. Landlords were considered to be "milking the area just like a cow. They're

¹² CVA, Planning Dept. Records, Series 69, 94-D-6, file 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975, Voter turnout reflects quality of life in your neighbourhood, Downtown East newspaper, No. 26, Aug. 1976.

resisting putting money in their buildings because it cuts what they can put in the bank" (cited in Coffin, 1974). Demands for effective and accountable policing were only part of larger claims for enforcement of municipal bylaws directed at property and business owners that would constrain, restrain and marginalize opportunities for individuals to carry out the activities that were seen as damaging to the community. As with negligent landlords, the responsibility for such activities was placed on the shoulders of bar-owners and operators of premises where drug dealing and other morally suspect activities were allowed to be carried out (The Vancouver Province, 1973).¹³

On the community's other flank stood the criminals, drug addicts and alcoholics whose activities were encouraged by such exploitative practices. The kinds of conduct which had previously been attributed to skid road deviance and personality defects were now attributed to people who lived outside the area. "Virtually all skid road crime," DERA claimed, "is committed by visitors and not by local residents." The residents of the neighbourhood were their prey. "A lot of residents went on their way home from beer parlours at night . . . The residents would get either locked out at closing time or they'd get booted out into the back alleys. They wake up and start going home half intoxicated or totally intoxicated and they'd be the first victim for a mugging because the back alleys were really dark" (Davies, ND).

Exploiters and criminals, however, were only the most visible (not to mention least sympathetic) outsiders. Crime statistics notwithstanding, heroin had a long

¹³ CVA, Health Dept. Records, Series 69, 145-C-1 file 5, Bruce Erikson to Director of Planning, Sept. 5, 1973.

history in this area and many of the heaviest drinkers were also tenants in the hotels.

Yet it was never apparent that addicts or hard-core drinkers were ever included in the community symbolized by retired industrial workers. Other exclusions, most notably of women, took place largely by omission. Certainly, adult men in the Downtown Eastside outnumbered women and children almost four to one (Statistics Canada, 1971).¹⁴ The prevailing images of Downtown Eastside residents in both corporate and community media were almost always those of men, portrayed as tenants living in slum conditions or residents talking about politics.¹⁵ Only three women were ever named as evictees during the mass expulsions of hotel tenants in the months leading up to the 1986 Worlds Fair.

One significant exception to this rule was the inclusion within the community of elderly Chinese residents who were almost always pictured as women! Although DERA attempted to constitute the Downtown Eastside as multi-ethnic/cultural community, its Chinese-speaking constituency, consisting primarily of poor, elderly occupants of SRO hotels, mainly in Chinatown, and, later, of social housing projects, was marginal in relation to the rest of Vancouver's ethnic Chinese population (cf. The Vancouver Province, 1974a). Also, as an organization, it remained largely separated institutionally from those groups that sought to exercise leadership among the city's

¹⁴ CVA, Social Planning Dept. Records, 77-C-2, Skid Road - General Coordination, 1964-1975, Downtown East Side, report on research study, May, 1971

¹⁵ Cf. CVA, Planning Dept. Records, Series 69 [e], 94-D-6, file 1a, DERA Newspapers, 1975-1975, Survival as a tenant in the Downtown Eastside, Downtown East newspaper, No. 11, June, 1975; CVA, Planning Dept. Records, Series 69 [f], 94-D-6, file 1a, DERA Newspapers, Voters talk about December election, Downtown East, No. 18, June 1976; CVA, Planning Dept. Records, Series 69 [g], 94-D-6, file 1a, DERA Newspapers, Residents talk about the civic election, Downtown East, No. 28, December 1976.

Chinese-speaking population in a way that it did not among tenant and anti-poverty organizations, unions and left wing political groups.

The invariable separation of Chinese and white/Anglo residents of the Downtown Eastside in texts and photographs proffered by DERA in its publications tended to reinforce an impression of the essential white masculinity of the community. The presence of large numbers of aboriginals, too, many of whom had in fact been employed in the resource industries, was also rendered largely invisible through the iconic representation of the community by a figure whose whiteness was not only assumed but continuously confirmed in its representations. By the end of the 1980s, a housing survey conducted by DERA noted that the “average Downtown Eastsider is a Caucasian male who lives alone. He is 51 years old and a Welfare/Gain recipient and has a monthly income of less than \$439.00. His income comprises 47.5% of the poverty line” (Green, et al, 1989).

A new moral and social geography

DERA's activism, in tandem with a newly invigorated approach from the city to managing an old problem, shifted the area's position in Vancouver's geography of sociability. The Downtown Eastside represented a space of the hard-pressed, but nonetheless respectable, poor who were embattled on all sides. As it became reframed as a community it assumed a different role in civic morality. Like it or not, the public was told, “Eriksen prods us and pokes us and makes us all remember that in this city of gaucho pants, revolving restaurants and martinis for lunch, there are still human beings who spend 4:30 on a Friday afternoon lying in their vomit in a Hastings Street

gutter” (Poulsen, 1977a: 5). If, on the one hand, such claims underlined the differences between this area and the rest of the city, they are, on the other hand, no longer stark and irrevocable. The space it designated was contiguous with the rest of Vancouver and conditions in the Downtown Eastside were the responsibility of the city-at-large.

Key material alterations in the built environment and its mode of regulation signified the extent of the re-valuation that inhered in the renaming of skid road. The necessity of a community centre building and programs to any community, for example, seemed self-evident to Downtown Eastside activists. The renovation of the abandoned city library for that purpose, despite political opposition and incessant conflict between the City and the neighbourhood over the project, marked an increasing permeability of the boundaries that marked the district off from those around it. So, too, did the rezoning of the entire northeastern sector of the area from industrial to residential and community service uses.

The rezoning, which created the Downtown Eastside - Oppenheimer District, literally reconfigured the territory of skid road, securing recognition by civic authorities that people living in the area actually made their homes there as well. Although it did not cover the entire neighbourhood claimed by DERA, it did, to a large extent, satisfy the need for official cognizance of those claims. Like most of DERA’s efforts, this required a significant political fight, with opposition from both politicians and industrial operators in the district who wished to ensure that nearby land would be available for expansion. Rezoning was achieved in spite of this

resistance, bounding an area along the industrial waterfront that spanned the border of the CBD and included Vancouver's first residential district. It contained light industry, hotels and rooming houses, bars, family housing, a park, a few blocks of retail, and the centre of the skid road. The zoning regulations and policy specified this area as a community where the provision of services and amenities for residents and housing improvement would take precedence over other land uses.

Perhaps even more significant as an index of the Downtown Eastside's position in this civic moral geography was its entanglement in the shifting alignments of city politics. Certainly DERA's self-help ethic met with the general approval of authorities. The intellectual mentor and co-founder of TEAM, the governing party of civic reform, noted favorably in his 1974 book on the city that resident activism was responsible for re-building the skid road district (Hardwick, 1974). Nevertheless, its militantly political actions were viewed with great distrust by a range of politicians and officials who were uncomfortable with the tactical imperatives bound up with the assertion of political identity by poor people, especially skid road residents (Persky, 1980).

Throughout the seventies, the organization was kept in close scrutiny by City Councillors. The legitimacy of its community representation was thrown open to question as its militance was labelled by social planners as "questionable, if not irresponsible. . . . They tend to exploit unfortunate circumstances to agitate officials, press and political reaction" (cited in *The Vancouver Province*, 1975a). One Alderman, a vociferous opponent of civic funding, complained to one of Vancouver's

major newspapers that DERA's words and actions were so forceful that it took responsibility for achievements that, in fact, had been accomplished by social service agencies or by the City itself (Ford, 1977). Virtually all of those agencies cited in this instance were social service or church groups with minimal or no policy and administrative representation from the district's population. Because of political recalcitrance over provision of civic funding to DERA, the public approval of such grants eventually became flashpoints of confrontation between its wide range of supporters and its opponents on Council (The Vancouver Province, 1975b, c, 1976a, 1977a, 1978b, 1979, 1980a; Smith, 1976a, b; Persky, 1980).

Such confrontations, however, did little to hinder the advancement of the claims to community which DERA made on behalf of the district's population. In fact, they probably facilitated the positive re-positioning of the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver's geography of sociability. Because its efforts at environmental improvement were bound up with liberal notions of self-improvement and the exercise of individual responsibility, DERA attracted a wide range of supporters. Despite its detractors then, DERA quickly achieved an image as a near-paragon of civic virtue. The Downtown Eastside, in its turn, appeared as a beleaguered community where long neglected citizens maintained their dignity by struggling to improve their neighbourhood and themselves. The imbrication of the organization with the community it represented meant that such endorsement translated into an at least verbal commitment to the neighbourhood.

One generally supportive Alderman contended that DERA was a gadfly, which, though irritating, was both necessary and responsible for the district's "spectacular improvement," while further efforts were being "bogged down" by "ideological and personality conflicts" above which other civic authorities should be able to rise.¹⁶ Support also came from a wide range of other, sometimes surprising sources. Editorialists and columnists eloquently expounded on the desirability of DERA's political activism, pointing to the improvements it brought to skid road in such a short period (Shields, 1976a; Smith, 1976a; Poulsen, 1977a, b; Clarke, 1977; The Vancouver Province, 1977b). Other supporters included churches in the Downtown Eastside, labour unions, provincial and federal politicians, a local bank manager and even the President of the then-governing provincial Social Credit Party, a former police constable in the area (The Province, 1976c, 1980b).¹⁷

The ascent of the Downtown Eastside to near-respectability and demands for public support to assist the process generated fault lines within the loose alliance of forces which had been responsible for introducing the new civic regime. These divisions reverberated not merely with disagreements over the activities and attitudes of a particular organization, but also with the ideological cleavages. Both reformist politicians and bureaucrats frequently sided with conservatives, not only to reject the organization's funding requests, but also disputing its demands for more effective

¹⁶ CVA, Social Planning Department Records, Series 178, Loc. 103-E-3, File 9, Downtown Eastside Residents Association, 1971-76. Letter to Mayor and Council from Alderman Michael Harcourt. April 10, 1978. [Re: Oppenheimer Area Planning Process and difficulties on making further progress]

¹⁷ CVA, Social Planning Department Records, Series 178, Loc. 103-E-3, File 9, Downtown Eastside Residents Association, 1976-76. Letter to Mayor and Members of Council and Director of Social Planning from Martin Draper, Manager, Community Branch, Royal Bank of Canada, March 4.

bylaws and enforcement to control landlords and businesses in the Downtown Eastside (Coffin, 1974; The Vancouver Province, 1974g, 1978a; Smith, 1976b). DERA and the Downtown Eastside were pivotal elements in the formation of a second loose alliance of civic reformers, this one farther to the left (but in many ways also less radical) than the earlier one which had swept the post-War regime of corporate-bureaucratic planning from office.

Gutstein (1975) and Persky (1980) show that the latter, which Ley (1980, 1987) argues was characterized by slow-growth policies and an emphasis of quality of life issues, quickly became assimilated into a new regime of corporate development. The rapidity of this assimilation forced the old coalition apart, one faction aligning itself with representatives of the previous civic order and the other with what started as an oppositional bloc that included municipal, construction and waterfront unions, tenant and peace groups, and left wing civic parties affiliated with the Communist Party and the social democratic New Democratic Party. At the end of 1980, however, this alliance managed to elect its candidates for mayor and a majority of aldermen to City Council, among them DERA's original Organizer, who would be joined two years later by another of the organization's co-founders.

The accession to civic power of this wide array of groups, together with the changing tenor of the times, made for a less combative, more bureaucratic reform movement. While the earlier group of elected civic reformers had been far more politically moderate than those a decade later, they were propelled into office on the shoulders of a broad base of community organizing that reached across

neighbourhood, ethnic, and class affiliation. Much of the impetus for reform came from groups that were involved with militant action, including occupations of private and public property, and confrontations with the police and other public authorities over various issues, including urban renewal. DERA had emerged from this milieu and as the second civic reform alliance congealed, it was possibly the most militant group in the city. It quickly mellowed with its (only conditional) induction into the corridors of power. By the mid- to late-1980s, the organization operated primarily as a brokerage agency and its bellicosity was limited mainly to rhetoric.

Yet, to some extent, the moderation took place because DERA had achieved certain structural goals. As a result of its struggles in the 1970s, the Downtown Eastside was accepted as a community. The proliferation of community planning processes, involving residents as well as City staff, politicians and service agencies, that were bound up with the renovation of the community centre and the re-zoning of the industrial area turned the exercise of citizenship into a full-time preoccupation. Through the 1980s, DERA increasingly became a collaborator with agencies of the state in what Ley has termed the co-production of space, especially the construction of new housing in the Downtown Eastside. These were all signal markers of the area's shifting location in Vancouver's social and moral geography.

Nevertheless, claims were always only tentative. Skid road and its discursive imagery remained embedded in the institutions of state and many of the organizations that provided services in the district. DERA sought to institutionalize its claims through the deployment of a form of organization new to skid road. The militant self-

help association, adapted from VISP, linked residents with service agencies and state authorities on the basis of citizenship rather than tutelary supervision. Thus, planning and other official processes were henceforth required to take account of the wishes and desires of local residents. Yet, demands for financial assistance from the state for both organizational operations and re-construction of the built environment positioned DERA, as well as a burgeoning host of community service groups, as a brokerage agency which channelled and managed the resources it obtained from private charitable and state organizations. The provision of such resources was predicated on the need of those who received them, situating them in a position subordinate to and dependent on the providers. Brokerage transformed the citizen into a client, in a relationship that crystallized around an essential lack in the latter. This shift would have profound implications on the way the Downtown Eastside was ordered in space.

Chapter 9

Expo '86 and the Resurrection of Skid Road

In the late winter and spring of 1986, media personnel from around the world rushed to the Downtown Eastside to report on a series of mass evictions from SRO hotel rooms. Owners of residential hotels in the downtown peninsula were ejecting large numbers of tenants in order to renovate their rooms and increase the rents in anticipation of the tourist boom that was expected as a result of the upcoming Expo '86 World's Fair (Sarti, 1986a, 1986b; Winnipeg Free Press, 1986a; Cruikshank, 1986).¹ The evictions quickly drew widespread opprobrium and DERA deployed, to great effect, the vital contrast between the local community and the landlords, who were characterized as bloodthirsty "sharks" going "into a feeding frenzy" (cited in Sarti, 1986c; Sarti, 1986a) Photographs of the people being evicted, primarily older men were accompanied by thumb-nail biographies indicating that the evictees were no 'mere' transients. "They are poor now," wrote one journalist, "but before their bodies grew old and began to break they were working to help build this country" (Hume, 1986). After a lifetime of labour, an activist declared, they were being "thrown away like an old shoe, just for profits. Its callous" (cited in Sarti, 1986a).² They were former clerks, carpenters, soldiers, truckdrivers, cooks, millworkers, pipefitters, loggers, miners (Hume, 1986). All long-time hotel dwellers, these were the kind of

¹ SRO residents were not protected by landlord-tenant regulations, despite DERA's long campaign for the latter's extension to long-term hotel residents.

² These are the words of the DERA organizer, Jim Green, who succeeded Eriksen in 1982. Green brought his own style to DERA, taking a somewhat less confrontational, if no-less critical, position vis-a-vis state agencies, eventually engaging in what Ley (1994) refers to as "co-production" of the built environment. Through this process, during the 1980s and early 1990s, DERA became a major developer of non-profit housing in the Downtown Eastside.

people who could and should have homes, regardless of their circumstances and who were capable of making a neighbourhood and a community from which they had a right not to be displaced as a consequence of profiteering landlords, a fact acknowledged by the province's Housing Minister (Sarti, 1986a).

Although the number of actual evictions was open to dispute, the shock they induced to an already insecure and often stigmatized population is unsurprising.³ For three months prior to the opening of the World's Fair at a site adjacent to the Downtown Eastside, the ongoing evictions, and debates about the appropriate course of action toward them, dominated newspaper headlines. DERA claimed the area was "in a state of emergency," while politicians and experts argued with each other about taking responsibility for the situation (Christiansen, 1986; Fitterman, 1986; Vancouver Sun, 1986a, 1986b; Montreal Gazette, 1986; Mason, 1986; Winnipeg Free Press, 1986b). Vancouver's medical health officer speculated about the potentially adverse effects of such a disruption (Sarti, 1986e). But a noted economist, addressing a conference of the Canadian Homebuilders Association in Vancouver, claimed that the problem was really just "a question of choice of location. People are saying "I don't want to live in the Kootenays ... I want to live where the action is" [ie., in Vancouver] (cited in Glavin, 1986). The Premier of the province, the prime mover behind the World's Fair, declared the evictions to be a non-event, insisting that substandard housing was being upgraded and any displaced individuals had been rehoused (Winnipeg Free Press, 1986b). Nevertheless, the image of the episode which endured

³ For estimates of the numbers of eviction, see McLintock, 1986 ("more than 200"); Sarti, 1986d, ("over 300"); Krangle, 1986 (350); Bolan, 1986 (500-600); Hume, 1986b, (791).

was a picture of an 88 year old man, a former Norwegian immigrant and logger with long white hair and a long beard, who had lived in the same hotel for 62 years (Sarti, 1986f). Although he was immediately relocated to a new apartment in a local social housing project, the man refused to eat and died soon after his move (Sarti, 1986g).

The evictions and the World's Fair of which they were a part operated as a kind of prism that focused yet another new configuration of the Downtown Eastside as a feature of Vancouver's moral and social geography. Journalists, in particular, drew on a range of often conflicting themes in their efforts to render the neighbourhood visible as a place. In so doing, they began to articulate three elements of an emergent reformulation of social and spatial relations that facilitated an erosion of the myth of the working class hero and his fighting community. This incipient rendition both echoed the public dismay over skid road problems in the 1950s and 1960s and presaged the nostalgic view of the Downtown Eastside that would emerge a decade later. The first of these themes was the image of the fighting community of poor, retired workers, which persisted throughout the 1980s even as the forces confronting it began to shift. However, the nemeses confronting that community moved increasingly away from the array of official indifference and private exploitation toward the looming spectre of property development and the displacement it would presumably generate. Second, however, the relationship between the population and those who spoke on its behalf were also reconfigured into an institutional separation between active subjects and passive objects. The retired workers who inhabited the Downtown

Eastside were increasingly seen as helpless, somewhat decrepit figures whose need for protection and services overshadowed their abilities to defend themselves and their community. Hence, the organizations that journalists, as well as politicians and planners, saw as the community's representatives came to be understood, more and more, as different from those on whose behalf they acted. Third, the images of the glittering World's Fair, and the new projects that would soon be developed on its site, contrasted sharply with those of the deteriorating conditions and decrepit population adjacent to it. Perceptions and representations of the neighbourhood as a slum that was increasingly at odds with the rest of the city began to eclipse the depictions of a community. Instead of a working class community, the Downtown Eastside would be rendered, by the early 1990s, as an underclass "ghetto."

Fighting Developers, Building a Neighbourhood

The evictions were taken as an event that was both emblematic of and a signal moment in the process of residential displacement that had threatened the Downtown Eastside since the renovation of Gastown more than a decade earlier and which gathered momentum through the eighties. Expo '86 was a World's Fair that was meant to accomplish a number of objectives. Not only was it a political manoeuvre designed to shore up support for the governing provincial party, it was also intended to initiate the redevelopment of deindustrialized waterfront land in Vancouver's core. As early as 1957, civic planners noted that the future of downtown Vancouver hinged on the redevelopment of what was then the industrial zone around False Creek (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1957). By the late 1960s and early 1970s, its lumber mills,

smoke, and tow-boats came to symbolize the dysfunctionality of the downtown peninsula at a time when local elites aspired to the title of “executive and cultural capital of Western Canada” (Ley, 1980; GVREB, 1968). The residential redevelopment of the southwest shore of the Creek during the 1970s, driven by the City with Federal assistance, marked the first serious move to change its industrial character, via a pioneering project with a social and environmental design that incorporated the decade’s anti-growth ethos (Ley, 1980, 1986; Roger, 1976). The redevelopment of the False Creek north shore, however, would be much different. In the late 1960s, Marathon Realty, the real estate arm of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which owned much of the north shore, put forward a plan to extend the high density residential district of the West End eastward to False Creek (Kiss, 1971). Although this plan was never acted on, it seems to have provided the conceptual basis of the plans for BC Place, Expo ‘86, and the eventual development of the north shore two decades later.

In 1979, the provincial government announced that a comprehensive redevelopment of the north shore of False Creek would be undertaken and would include an international transportation exhibition (Transpo ‘86), a 60,000 seat stadium, new roads, and 10,000 units of housing (Maitland, 1981). Although this plan would eventually be sidelined when the transportation exhibition was upgraded to full World Exposition status, it sparked intense opposition by Downtown Eastside groups and displaced smaller, more localized enemies of the neighbourhood with larger, more impersonal forces. Community activists believed (correctly, as it has turned out) that

the successes realized by campaigns over alcohol distribution, park space, housing, and services would be eroded by a market-oriented development of this magnitude immediately adjacent to their neighbourhood. Thus, in struggles to oppose or retard property development, Downtown Eastside activists portrayed the neighbourhood as the intended object of larger forces which sought to usurp the community for their own profitable ends.

BC Place was seen as the catalyst of a immense change that loomed over the Downtown Eastside, in which poor people would be pushed out by property owners seeking to maximize their profits by renovating or redeveloping their buildings for a higher income population.

“The big developers now find our neighbourhood a ‘fashionable’ place where they would like to see only “fashionable” people, high rents, exclusive discotheques and beer parlours and expensive storefronts -- all in preparation for BC Place. ... we in the Downtown Eastside will not sit back passively and allow the devastation [sic] and displacement of our neighbourhood by this massive develoment” (SDEC, 1982).

The evictions of residents at the Stratford Hotel and the Aristocratic Rooms, so the buildings could be redone for higher-paying tenants, were taken as harbingers of an emerging new order (Highland Echo, 1981; Deacon, 1982).⁴ One activist argued that, “these people have been messed around by every government institution there is and now they’re having another government number land on them” (cited in Highland Echo, 1981). “This whole area as we know it could be wiped out. It could become a very trendy place for lawyers and architects and professional types” declared the President of DERA (cited in Maitland, 1981). In order to forestall that eventuality, the

⁴ Remember the Stratford Hotel, in a very different context, from Chapter 5.

Save the Downtown Eastside Committee (SDEC) was formed, with members from DERA, Carnegie Centre (the local community centre for which DERA had been a central agitator), First United Church, and other groups and individuals.

In opposing what it saw as the imminent displacement of its constituency, the SDEC offered a series of counter-proposals for the development, among which were a limit on the number of housing units, the inclusion of subsidized housing on the site, and the development of new subsidized housing off-site in the Downtown Eastside. The group sought to link BC Place to earlier, ongoing campaigns to improve housing in the area by re-introducing demands for upgrading of SRO stock and protection for SRO tenants (SDEC, 1982). As well as public meetings and commentary in a variety of media, including art, SDEC was a key participant in the so-called Double the Vote Committee, the goal of which was to mobilize the electorate in the Downtown Eastside and other poor neighbourhoods for the 1982 civic election around issues that included housing and traffic (Larson, 1982; Double the Vote Committee, 1982).

The argument against displacement the BC Place development would cause was not simply that it would hurt the poor. It was that, contrary to the image of the skid road slum, the Downtown Eastside was a place worth saving on its own merits. "There is a grubby, violent side to things and it is part of the world we have created. I think it is important to confront it every day, so you don't forget the kind of world you have created," proclaimed the first director of the community centre (cited in Maitland, 1981). One position, then, was that the Downtown Eastside was the product of a social order that marginalized and exploited some people. It was, at once, a place for those

who had been excluded and a kind of mirror in which the rest of society could see its true face. This was, of course, not far off some of the arguments that had been made against skid road demolition during the mid-sixties. As a rationale against displacement, however, it left something to be desired since it constituted the area as an artifact of external forces, rather than intrinsically worthwhile.

Another, related position was that the Downtown Eastside had been the site of significant public investment, which included “millions of dollars and ... millions of hours of work at residences, clinics, drop-in centres, advocacy facilities and most spectacularly the \$2.3 million renovation of the old Carnegie Library at Hastings and Main,” all of which was apparently put at risk by the development (Maitland, 1982). The displacement of the residential base of the neighbourhood would, presumably, render all this infrastructure useless, at least for its intended purposes. The obverse of this was that displacement itself would result from the erosion of the stock of badly needed affordable housing for the poor sectors of the city. BC Place thus represented the destruction of two significant public goods. However, these, too, essentially situated the Downtown Eastside as a creature of outside influences.

For activists, it was the fact of community, created under adverse conditions, that made the Downtown Eastside worth saving. “Down here,” claimed the director the community centre, “there’s a whole different sense of community ... Some of that sense comes from something pretty painful, some of it comes from concerns about the neighbourhood” (cited in Deacon, 1982). In other words, community emerged out of the struggle to survive at both an individual material level and a collective level. In

some ways, perhaps, the formation of community was necessary for individual survival. Writing about another large development on the fringe of the Downtown Eastside fifteen years later, Blomley (1997a) has argued that conflicts over property development in the area have emerged not only from the contention of economic and social interests. More fundamentally, there exists what he refers to as an “anti-hegemonic reading of property” which incorporates the locally collective experience of private property as a relation of exclusion. In consequence, real estate development is usually framed by activists as a question of power and, in particular, of the power of developers to infringe on the security of the neighbourhood’s population.

As we have seen, the community was constructed in relation to various sets of others, and situated in opposition to those external actors who sought to capitalize on or otherwise exploit the dire need of the area’s’ population. Its moral dimension of community, then, was especially acute, animated as it was by a self-awareness of exclusion, contest, and subordination. At the same time, activists seemed quite conscious of the constructed nature of the community and of its consequent fragility. The basis of community in the tenuous relationship between this particular population and the local territory was threatened by the potential displacement effect of BC Place or any other development of similar magnitude. As a local community, whatever its historical roots, it was tied to the space it occupied. If the population was evicted from that space, the community would cease to exist.

This kind of threat actually reinforced both explicit and implicit claims to community, as indigenous representations of the Downtown Eastside constituted it as

more than just a living space. An art show at the community centre, concerned with the effect of BC Place not only highlighted its damage but also articulated the self-conceptions of the neighbourhood. "These people didn't have much," maintained a popular local artist, "but at least they had their neighbourhood ... *which was a warm and friendly sort of place* ... Unlike everywhere else in the city, rents were cheap ... This was good because the people didn't have much money ... *Still, there were good times to be had*" (my emphasis). Such words evinced a kind of pride of place that was emphasized in the widespread story-telling through which the Downtown Eastside was increasingly represented to both its own population and the rest of the city. The lives of individual residents and stories of unusual incidents in the area were frequently taken as objects of reportage by indigenous media and city newspapers. The Downtown Eastside was, according to such accounts, a space populated by giving, caring people but also people who, in myriad small ways, had witnessed history and, for the most part, had to fight tremendous odds to survive (cf., Carnegie Crescent, 1984; Kettner, 1984; East Ender, 1984).

Such chronicles served to humanize an area with an otherwise fearsome reputation, integrating it into the social fabric of the city at the same time as they reinforced its distinctiveness. The people and events they portrayed were treated as being unique to the Downtown Eastside, confluences of lives and circumstances that would be unlikely to occur elsewhere in Vancouver. This specificity crystallized in the campaign for a waterfront park during the early eighties, which, when it was finally realized in 1985, had become a symbol of the community's own capacity to get things

done, to make itself. The campaign was animated by the same kind of oppositional awareness as the fight against BC Place. Park activists noted the differences between themselves and the “mansion dwellers along southwest Marine Drive [who] received a 17 acre riverside park this year, and the West End [which] got a five plus acre waterfront park, though they are not park deficient” (Larson, 1983).

In contrast, the waterfront park in the Downtown Eastside was intended for a whole different class of people.

“Nobody down here has a car. Most of us are oldsters who have done our share of work; some of us are handicapped. Some have suffered industrial accidents. Many cannot afford bus passes. We can’t make it to those sandy west side beaches and don’t want to try. We sit in hot, lonely, small rooms all summer. We don’t need cement ramps to help us stare at seagulls. We need easy access at ground level to open green spaces at the water’s edge. this is a waterfront city and we want access to our piece of the port” (Carnegie Crescent, ND).

It is not only the contrast with the rest of the city, but the intrinsic worthiness of the local population that drove the imperative of a new park. Although the “Downtown Eastside is one of the most established areas of the city, with 10,000 people averaging 12 years of residency ... retired loggers, fishboat crewmembers and millworkers living in single rooms obviously don’t rate as high with the authorities as, say, the parks-blessed residents of sunny Tsawwassen, whose six years average residency makes them “upwardly mobile,” rather than “transient” (Anonymous, 1983).

The strategy of highlighting social differences was a double-edged sword. The DERA project of claiming community sought to *normalize* the area and its population by de-emphasizing the radical discontinuity between space and population that had been signified by the terminology of skid road. However, as community was

increasingly asserted and elaborated in response to external threats or to mobilize local sentiment, the particularity of the Downtown Eastside began to overtake the elements of continuity that integrated it into the space of the city. Despite its effectiveness in conscripting support, this appeal to local sentiment underpinned a new representation of difference, one that undermined the recent efforts to reintegrate the neighbourhood into the space of the city. Moreover, continuing assertions of community operated in changing circumstances, that militated toward a different representation and framing of such claims.

Remaking the Citizen as Client

One of the many ironies in the story of the Downtown Eastside is that the emergence of DERA, an organization that was avowedly “against services,” and the recognition of the Downtown Eastside as a community which it impelled would generate a proliferation of services through which residents of the neighbourhood, and whoever else availed themselves of those services, would be constituted as a clients. But, if the initial expansion of service provision came from the drive to equalize and normalize the neighbourhood, then the constitution of residents as clients in fact defeated that drive in short order via the inherently unequal relations of power and control which it incorporated. While the interaction of discourses of citizenship and skid road masculinity a little more than a decade earlier crystallized in the themes embodied in the figure of the working class hero, there was another, less immediately obvious, articulation of these discourses that was concerned primarily with problems of dependence and need in the context of urban decay and disorder.

The problematization of “dependence” has a deep-rooted history in the Anglo-American countries, as Fraser and Gordon (1994) have shown. The term was originally used in the pre-industrial era to denote collective relations of subordination and domination, indicating the obligation of particular groups to their social superiors. The transmogrification of dependence into an attribute of individual conduct took place through what was essentially a moral transformation of liberal ideology in which private property displaced status as the central relation of social power. In this new context, dependence was conceptualized as a problem of reliance on charity or other individuals, or on state resources, for livelihood, thus distinguishing those individuals it classifies from those who are independent by virtue of private income from wages or investment (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). However, while incorporating the power relations of liberalism, the concept of dependence has also retained the earlier connotation of social subordination, thus signifying the moral impropriety implicit in the use of charity or public assistance as a means of survival.

The construction of “the client,” first appearing in industrializing societies, is intimately tied to this notion of dependence as a condition of individual subordination and inadequacy. The individualization of dependence coincides with a *medicalization* of poverty that linked economic deprivation with psychiatric diagnoses of “social pathology” (Katz, 1996; Finch, 1993). The relationship between poverty and individual disorder was institutionalized through a compromise that underpinned the emergence of the welfare state. Burchell (1993) has argued that the imperative of state intervention to regulate social life in the nineteenth century necessitated a shift in the

register of liberal conceptions of subjectivity, which initially cast individuals as bundles of private economic interest which required protection from public power. Responding to working class and reformist agitation, liberalism began to accept a new conception of the individual as a container of needs, thus resituating the state away from the position of a leviathan from which the population required protection to that of the guarantor of rights (Rowbotham, 1994; Saville, 1983).

The changing mode of “subjectification” was mediated by a rhetoric of national citizenship that subsumed differences of power arising from class, sex, race, among others, homogenizing and transforming them into degrees of need and “neediness” in a “division of normality and pathology (Hewitt, 1992: 45; Squires, 1991). It was therefore not so much interest as it was difference that was transformed into need, so that the new collectivism of an emergent welfare state maintained a crucial link with earlier *laissez-faire* individualism through its emphasis on the relationships between individuals and their relative abilities and worth, rather than on the power relations between groups. The central welfare relationship which emerges at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries, then, is not between citizens in a state of equality but between “recipient and benefactor” in which need becomes co-extensive with dependence (Bryson, 1993: 53-54). The client was constructed as the subordinate category in this relation, emerging in the early decades of the twentieth century as an object of rehabilitation or treatment, as the then-professionalizing social work adopted the casework method that had been pioneered by its predecessor, “scientific philanthropy” (Katz, 1996; Ward, 1989). Each family or individual that fell

under the purview of social workers became a particular case in terms of its need for treatment or rehabilitation, the subject of a lack or disorder of some sort. The client, in other words, was constituted as an incomplete or needy person, someone with a basic lack that must be filled by others with expertise. By definition, then, the client is an “other” who is fundamentally different, both from those who provide the services and from those who are not clients.

The Expo evictions marked the first time in almost a decade that the motif of dependence overshadowed that of the working class hero in media discourse about the Downtown Eastside. This was a different kind of dependence than that which had been evinced by earlier representations of skid road. Although the figure of the ne'er-do-well living off the public purse had been a constant theme in welfare discourse in both local and global contexts, the image of old people with “broken bodies” that was widely portrayed during the evictions was qualitatively different from the skid road derelict. Unlike the latter, whose failings were largely seen as the result of personal predilection, the frail old people who populated the ranks of the evictees, and, by extension, the rest of the neighbourhood, were incapacitated by circumstances beyond their control, necessitating the intervention of professionals to provide services that would, presumably, normalize the situation.

The figure of the client co-existed with those of both the derelict and the working class hero. It is therefore difficult to determine precisely when it emerged as a dominant paradigm of representation. The proliferation of community service organizations in the Downtown Eastside during the 1970s and 1980s was propelled by

state sponsorship, thus incorporating the relation of inequality between professional service providers and clients. This regime actually preceded the project of self-government, as the religious organizations which had dominated service provision during the skid road era and before, including the Salvation Army, the Central City Mission, St. James Anglican Church and Social Service Society, and the First United Church, were premised on assumptions of helplessness and need that were similar to those which animated the structure of later client-oriented services. The tension between these two modes of governing the poor are evident in the VISP critique of skid road and DERA's denunciations of services noted in earlier chapters.⁵

The discourse of citizenship which developed in the later 1960s and early 1970s centred on the promotion of social equality and political participation, provided a repertoire of terms and ideas that helped activists and civic staff and politicians to frame the "normalization" of the Downtown Eastside as a community. Social service provision was seen as a vital component of this project of normalization, necessary both for the improvement of living conditions in the area and the promotion of community participation by helping individuals get more control over their own lives. Concurrently, bound up with this, there was an expansion of the local political sphere as demands for recognition of new social subjects, both within and without the Downtown Eastside, propelled the formation of interest groups that sought the satisfaction of particular sets of needs that were intrinsic to their (self) definition. In

⁵ Ultimately, however, DERA itself succumbed to the institutionalization of the professional-client relation as its engagement with a whole range of state agencies shifted from direct confrontation to what Ley (1994) calls "co-production," a form of mutual cooperation with state agencies. In the absence of a confrontational stance, DERA assumed the position of a subordinate partner.

particular, women, youth, and Aboriginals were increasingly recognized as specific interest groups, each with their own distinct problems that needed special means of alleviation.

The impetus for increasing levels of service provision in the Downtown Eastside thus emerged out of the demand for recognition by new social subjects. In a situation of severe inequality, services provided the means by which individuals could exercise their citizenship rights. Housing and park space were at the top of the list, as were clean laundry, bathing and food services. Thus, the Gastown Men's Residence, the Central Residence, Cordova House and the 44 Club (the Multi-service Centre) were early projects in the 1970s. Improvements to Oppenheimer Park and the renovation of the old library as a community centre followed closely, as did the formation of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and the Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society. What made such developments especially significant was not only the fact that they institutionalized the recognition of the Downtown Eastside population in terms that were radically different than those of skid road, but that residents were involved in the initial funding lobbies and organizational set-up of these projects. To that extent, they marked an ongoing incarnation of the kind of vitality that animated VISP and its affiliates. Their goals were to provide residents with more than simply professional help, but with channels of civic participation and the means for improving the conditions in which they lived. In that sense, these were projects of *self-government*, collective tools for the inculcation of norms of conduct that would be conducive to a certain form of life.

Increasingly, though, the forms of subjectivity attributed to the Downtown Eastside population were being constituted in terms of need rather than as self-governing individuals or an autonomous community. Youth in the entire downtown area, particularly Aboriginal youth and those living outside families, involved with drugs and/or prostitution were constituted as a population in danger, requiring special measures. The urgency of this problem was thrown into relief as fiscal retrenchment by the Provincial government brought cutbacks to programs designed to connect with young people considered to be in dangerous situation, even as it became increasingly preoccupied with the development and promotion of the BC Place stadium. "We're seeing a whole new strip developing in the Main and Hastings area" argued a community worker, "The government pours millions of dollars into the downtown core for development and then it whips these services away. It's devastating" (Whaley, 1983). The difference between the "affluent stadium goers [who] drink after events at nearby eastside bars" and the "economically deprived native youths" who populate the area is central here, providing a vector of exploitation as well an index of need.

The construction of the victimized subject can be understood not only as a description of a concrete situation but as a strategem for the mobilization of support from the public, the media, and political authorities for resources to deal with the problems of new social subjects. The more victimized the group, the greater the needs of its members and, therefore, the worthier of services they seemed to be. Thus, women were called "an invisible population in the community" and were considered

by the author of one report to be “unable to look after themselves.” Unlike many others in the predominantly male neighbourhood, women were “not all longstanding residents, but many have been forced into the community because that’s where the social services they need are located” (Hossie, 1980: 5). Yet, in an area where women were very much in the minority, those services were preponderantly intended for men (Fralic, 1983). One solution to the problems of women, then, as with youth and aboriginals, was the provision of more specialized services. This does not mean that the quest for services (i.e., funding) was necessarily successful. But, it does mean that even limited success in this quest produced a multiplication of service organizations, constituting a network of spaces and sites of service delivery within which the subjectivity of the client could be constituted.

In constructing new subjects in terms of need, rather than capacity, activists also reproduced their subordinate positions. The problems of these emergent groups were constructed in terms that presupposed the requirement of external intervention for their alleviation. On one hand, the formation of community organizations, which incorporated the new subjects, identified the problems and formulated programs for their solution, operated as a basis for local determination and control of services. Indeed, such groups, a product of the organizational innovation a decade or more earlier, were increasingly represented as embodying the organized will of the community. On the other hand, the resources which such groups brought to bear on the problems with which they were concerned were largely derived from external sources, particularly agencies of state or private charitable foundations. In either case,

the relationship between funding providers and recipients reconfigured community organizations into instruments of official policy and thus as quasi-agencies of state, incorporating the division between service producers and consumers that underpinned the structure of welfare programs.

Community service organizations thus came to operate as brokers of resources between the state or charitable institutions and groups of “needy” subjects. The project of self-government via mobilization is obviated by the structure of state-funded service provision in which the transfer of resources from those who possess the requisite skills, knowledge, funds, institutional access, etc., to those who do not, is constituted as a relation of dependence, as outlined above. The recipients of those resources are constructed, at best, as deserving victims, or, at worst, as wilful sluggards. In either case, they appear as more or less passive objects -- clients -- whose sole form of engagement lies in the act of consumption.

The Expo evictions saga played a crucial role in the crystallization of a public discourse of Downtown Eastside clientelism by breaching the theme of the working class hero, the depictions of which pervading the media during that time were curiously bereft of the historical connection which had abetted earlier attributions of militance in the cause of moral rectitude and social equality. Ironically, at the same time that labour history walking tours were taking place in and around the area, the population of the Downtown Eastside was, at least in discursive terms, losing the ties to the past which had justified its contemporary presence. The imagery of the deteriorating skid road district, which had persisted as the subtext and the counter-foil

for the Downtown Eastside, quickly began to resurface. This time, however, the slum was populated not by only deviants but by victims and losers, old people, sick people, people with disabilities, none whom was able to defend themselves against the forces militating against their comfort and security. The fighting former resource industry workers were recast as elderly, frail dependents who required assistance from a community organization to deal with this life crisis. DERA thus appeared not as a community group composed of these individuals but as a helping group which stood apart from them. At the same time, the individuals and organizations that attempted to support them were manifestly not *of* them. In this formulation, there may be an affinity but there is no identity between the helpless and the helpers. The notion of self-help that was intrinsic and thus so necessary to conceptions of the fighting community was beginning to diminish for the first time in more than a decade.

The "poverty ghetto" emerges

"The Downtown Eastside," proclaimed one sympathetic journalist, "was never meant to be a neighbourhood that would spawn politicians or concerned citizens. It was meant to be a ghetto for the city's problem people: it's drinkers, its drifters, its bums. Despite that ... when they get a chance to speak their minds, the people of the Downtown Eastside" have essentially the same concerns as those in other parts of the city (Hossie, 1981). The skid road slum, as noted earlier, was a necessary element in the formulation of the Downtown Eastside, providing its "constitutive outside," the antinomy which, by its opposition, defined the neighborhood. However, the ongoing

presence of skid road imagery and rhetoric in the media and government circles throughout DERA's ascendancy provided more than a foil for that group's activism. It also ensured the availability of a discursive framework for the subordination of the local population, ensuring that in moments of conflict there was a pool of words, knowledge, and images on which authorities or other antagonists could draw to explain local problems or justify decisions and advance policies that sought to impose changes on the neighbourhood.

Perhaps most important, the discursive and institutional ascendancy of the Downtown Eastside as the signifier of claims to community incorporated a sense that the problems represented in the vocabulary of skid road could be overcome by state-supported indigenous activism. The similarities between the concerns of Downtown Eastside residents and those of other neighbourhoods, the fact that the former *could* produce activists at all, were taken as such signs of hope. However, accounts of the Expo evictions signalled a major reversal of that sanguine vision, tipping the balance toward the pessimism of the skid road subtext that was a necessary element of claims to community symbolized in the name Downtown Eastside. Nevertheless, these press accounts only crystallized currents of representation that were already present, particularly in the few years previous to the evictions.

In most of the media reports during the evictions episode, there was an absence of the historical connections which had abetted earlier attributions of the working class hero and his fighting community. And those reports that did emphasize the past of the evictees, as workers and as citizens, tended to situate them as individuals living in

straitened circumstances, rather than as constituents of a community of shared memory and experience. In the absence of the connection between history, population, and territory, the imagery of the deteriorating skid road district began to resurface in a way that would eventually submerge the kinds of claims incumbent on the name Downtown Eastside.

The 1986 world's fair was timed to coincide with the centennial of Vancouver's incorporation as a city, an event which elicited a sustained reflection on the city's past 100 years and much consideration of its possible future. The position of the fair, at the end, and hence the pinnacle, of the city's first century and at the beginning of the second, together with the constant exhortations from the fair's public relations campaign that directed Vancouver's residents to "invite the world," intensified the event's significance as a turning point Vancouver's history. During the evictions, which became an international media event, the Downtown Eastside was highlighted against the backdrop of a world exposition which was to herald both the city's new "maturity" and its entry into the global city sweepstakes. If the Downtown Eastside had, for the past 15 years, been cast as something of a centre of social change and an example of the positive results of community organizing, the narrative of the evictions helped to recast it as a slum "at the doorstep of Expo '86," an urban periphery populated by needy losers who didn't quite fit in to the shining future proclaimed by the Exposition (Cruikshank, 1986: A1).

Against the backdrop of the Fair, the Downtown Eastside appeared to journalists as a "seedy ... neighbourhood, which reeks of urine and vomit in the

doorways to old bars” (Eng, 1986). The evictions highlighted what one columnist dubbed the “eastside’s disease,” characterized by “a circle of dependence and deprivation that is very hard to break. ... In the ... United States, they call them ghettos” (McMartin, 1986). This marked a resurgence of the rhetoric of urban pathology. Like skid road, the Downtown Eastside itself was subjectified, as “an area of poverty maddeningly impervious to change and good intentions,” with a “resilience to improvement” (McMartin, 1986). As the characteristics of human actors are conferred on the space, the population begins to recede into the background. The same conditions of life, which DERA and other groups had been fighting to change, were seen here as the effect of the place itself. People live in the Downtown Eastside because of the conditions which prevail there, *ergo*, their adverse situation can be traced to their presence in the district.

While activists had defined crime, alcohol, and, increasingly, drugs, as problems that the neighbourhood fought to overcome, there were others who defined them as essential characteristics of the place. The increasingly widespread injection use of “Ts and Rs,” otherwise known as the heroin substitute Talwin and the amphetimine Ritalin, during the early 1980s was explained not only in terms of the drugs’ ease of availability, but also for their psychological and social utility in a specifically skid road context. A worker from a local service agency explained that “people who gravitate to Skid Road get involved with drugs, alcohol and prostitutes as a means of “getting in with people” and assimilating into the lifestyle ...

“The ones using it are transient youths, mostly kids in group homes or those coming to the city from the reserve. It’s an escape because they go nowhere down here ... Those people hooked on it are mostly female and

you see chronic anemia and severe loss of weight. It's usually the prostitutes" (Moya, 1984).

This was a description of the local population that was very different from those of the people threatened by BC Place or deserving of a waterfront park. Indeed, it harkened back to the dark images of skid road twenty years and more before. A significant difference, however, is that the re-ascendancy of skid road did not contain the possibility of change that marked its predecessor. Rather, a sense of inevitability seemed to pervade these new representations of the slum.

This accommodation to the forms of exclusion signified by skid road took two forms. One was a soft version of civic planners, exemplified by Downtown Eastside -- Oppenheimer Policy Plan that outlined the City's intentions to that part of the district that had been covered by the Neighbourhood Improvement Program a few years earlier. Although this report took pains to disavow the skid road stereotypes, noting that average period of residency was 13 years, it also acknowledged the presence of "transients," whose numbers varied according to rates of unemployment and income assistance policies, as a result of "inexpensive housing, a downtown location, pubs and a tolerance for eccentricity." It also recognized a fundamental difference between the area, its population, and other parts of the city.

"There are indications that the Downtown-Eastside will continue to attract a low income, unattached population, *that has difficulty fitting into society's norms*, and which seeks out inexpensive housing, appropriate social services, a downtown location and a tolerant social climate. The age, sex and ethnic composition of the population may change, but it will continue to have these economic and social characteristics" (City of Vancouver Planning Dept., 1983: 8, emphasis added).

The problem, then, was not one of normalizing the neighbourhood and integrating it with the rest of the city. This, in some respects had been accomplished by DERA. Instead, the Policy Plan sought to accommodate this deviant population by improving its quality of life, “to respond to people’s needs in a holistic, not a fragmented manner.” (Note the continuing plea for better coordination of services.) The construction of the client thus began to merge with that of the slum.

In this design, the history of the area was of interest only insofar as its “economic and social characteristics” had changed over time. Of prime importance was the formulation of a set of policies by which the health and social needs of the population could be managed in an optimal manner. The Downtown Eastside of the planners was the same space and population of the skid road agencies of the mid-1960s, projected through the insubordination and innovation of the following decade. Certainly these intervening forces produced a new framework for understanding the presence of an unruly population. Rather than a function of individual dispositions, the skid road environment was constituted as a social product that could be managed, if not directly overcome. But if the vocabulary and moral content of this re-emerging skid road discourse had changed, the fundamental assumption of a break between this area and the rest of the city remained.

The other form of accommodation was much harsher than that articulated in the planning document. It was also less novel and far less self-conscious. Bittner’s examination of the contextual nature of police conduct in a skid row district pointed out the higher tolerance for activities that would be restrained elsewhere (Bittner,

1967). This, of course, was a constant refrain of Downtown Eastside activists.

And, indeed, despite more than decade of work to revise the ways that Vancouver treated its orphaned neighbourhood, the city's police seemed to view it as a "natural area" of booze and social pathology. Talking about alcohol sales, a police inspector noted that "alcoholism and skid roads are a worldwide problem and he hasn't heard of a city yet that's solved it" (Vancouver Province, 1981). Moreover, he argued, the early closure of skid road liquor outlets caused problems for people elsewhere. "*It's almost better to keep them [drinkers] in one place*" (cited in the Vancouver Province, 1981, emphasis added).

Such a conclusion was, of course, disputed by residents and activists. As one elderly woman, a victim of a purse-snatching said, "What do police care about people like me? I got no money left" (cited in White, 1979). Thus, while residents mounted nightly patrols of the area around the only local park to guard against assaults and robberies, the police insisted that "we ... are doing a ...fine job," despite claims of widespread liquor bootlegging, public drinking, and violence (White, 1979). When a local bar changed ownership and introduced strippers, a public meeting denounced the consequent scene, claiming that attendees were "sick and tired of all the yahoos, rowdies and punks who come to their neighbourhood from the 4 corners of the Lower Mainland to meet and get drunk in their neighbourhood" (cited in Bocking, 1981).⁶

⁶ Expo '86, of course, brought people not only from the 4 corners of the metropolitan region but from around the world, including journalists.

This kind of tension points not only to the determination of resident groups to fight the effects of the negative stereotyping of the area, it also points to the pervasiveness of those stereotypes, despite the efforts to change them. Combined with the rise of a discursive-institutional framework of 'clientelization', the persistence of slum imagery provided an essential resource for journalists in their efforts to explain the Expo evictions and their aftermath. The slum which was portrayed during the Expo evictions was, nevertheless, significantly different from the earlier skid road. The latter had been a space of neglect and devalued property, an obstacle to development that needed to be excised from the urban landscape. With the advent of the fair, however, most observers saw the neighbourhood as place that was, rather than standing in the way of progress, being left behind by the future that was symbolized by the glittering 1986 World's Fair across the street.

Chapter 10

Conclusion: Nostalgia & the Place of the Poor in Vancouver

Nine years after the Expo Evictions, conflicting forces in the Downtown Eastside again made headlines and taxed the judgement of civic, as well as provincial, authorities. In the late winter of 1995, a property development company announced that it had purchased the former Woodward's department store, a huge building located at the western edge of the Downtown Eastside and which had been empty for two years. The developer planned to renovate it for almost 400 condominium apartments. As the site of the city's oldest department store and a shopping destination for almost a century, the building had sentimental value for generations of Vancouver residents and held a particular resonance for many people in the Downtown Eastside, for whom its coffeeshop had been a social centre. In the months and years that followed this announcement, the Woodward's property would become the focal point of a confrontation that crystallized the whole range of institutional and representational forces arrayed on the field of the Downtown Eastside.

The building is strategically located, sitting along both a main commuter corridor that links the northeastern sector of the city to the uptown office and shopping district and the route between Gastown and the new residential developments on the old Expo '86 site. Its sheer size means that it dominates the surrounding area, so that the building's uses will have an important influence on what happens around it. "As Woodward's goes, so goes the Downtown Eastside", proclaimed the editors of the city's leading newspaper after the collapse of a proposed deal between the developer

and the provincial government to provide social housing in the building (Vancouver Sun, 1997). As a consequence, it has emerged as *the* central symbol of the problems of the neighbourhood and the variable hopes for its future.

In concluding this dissertation, I want to use an interrogation of the symbolic construction of the Woodward's building to trace the pathways between contemporary perceptions of the neighbourhood and the forms of imagination and representation of the Downtown Eastside that have been explored in previous chapters. In Chapter 1, I described the broad outlines of a discourse of moral panic that, in the second half of the nineties, situated the Downtown Eastside as the geographic centre of a drug and sexual epidemic. The construction of a nostalgic memory of the area has been a central device in this discourse, characterizing present conditions in terms of a pervasive decay that ranges from the deterioration of the built environment, including empty, boarded up storefronts and graffiti, to the apparent moral and physical degeneration caused by rampant drug use, manifested in the "aberrant physicality" of the open "fixing" of heroin and cocaine or smoking crack, "tweaking", and "overamping", all accompanied by the maladies that are visible on the bodies of so many of those engaged in such conduct.¹ The presence of such people is blamed for the general decline of the neighbourhood from an earlier, apparently more benign state of affairs when it was the site of a poor, hard-drinking, but also hard-working community of loggers and other resource industry workers. Although its population was different from that in other parts of the city, this neighbourhood, it is claimed,

¹ Thanks to Nick Blomley for coining the term "aberrant physicality".

was relatively safe in comparison to the contemporary scene in which the presence of so many drug addicts has made it a source of crime and diseases like HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, and TB.

The overall goal of the dissertation as set out at the beginning has been to refute the nostalgic version of events in the Downtown Eastside and to thus offer an alternative rendition that, first, is cognizant of the actual developments in the area over the past fifty years and, second, rejects the subordination of the local population which is implicit in it. Nostalgia functions as a form of memory that cancels out the pain of the past and erases the power relations that structure social conflict. In the case at hand, it obviates the history of poverty and struggle by the local population and its allies by romanticizing past conditions in a way that make them seem almost quaint.

This is not to say that the changes in the social geography of Vancouver which nostalgia about the Downtown Eastside claims to document and contrast unfavourably with the past have not taken place. Indeed, as noted at the beginning, there has been a significant deepening of poverty in the area, along with indications of simultaneous social “upgrading” incumbent on accelerating residential redevelopment and renovation in and around the neighbourhood, spurred by the massive construction projects in the old industrial and warehouse districts on its periphery (Smith, 2000). This transformation of downtown space is itself symptomatic of the restructuring that has seen the fulcrum of Vancouver’s economy shift from the production of goods toward that of services while the importance of linkages with its provincial hinterland are being overtaken by expanding international export markets (Davis and Hutton,

1989; Hutton and Ley, 1991; Davis, 1993). The widespread gentrification of the districts in and around the downtown area is thus part and parcel of the rise of the downtown service economy and concomitant decline of goods production and related activities in the inner city (Ley, 1996; Reid, 1999; Smith, 2000).

This change has been especially problematic for the Downtown Eastside, which was once a key nexus between the urban and frontier economies (Hutton, 1997). Not only have many of the activities that traditionally provided support for its population been made redundant through economic restructuring, but the area itself has become a 'zone of urban relegation' for those sectors of the population which are marginal to the labour market of the new economy. Yet, even this function is in peril as tourism and middle class residential development increasingly impinge on the places inhabited by the poor. In this respect, the space of the Downtown Eastside is a microcosm of global processes of social polarization and has also served as a kind of proxy by which the rest of the city has watched its own transformation. There is plenty of evidence that such polarization has been a regional phenomenon, as income inequality increased throughout Greater Vancouver and gentrification transformed virtually all the neighbourhoods around and eventually in the downtown core. However, the Downtown Eastside has been taken as archetype of such change.

In any case, the explanation of the contemporary situation in the Downtown Eastside in terms of social polarization alone provides no guide for comprehending either the neighbourhood's pariah status or the moral panic which currently frames it. Poverty and the place of the poor in the city are not only matters of social and

economic difference. Socio-spatial inequality is animated by relations of power and meaning through which poverty is constituted as a social category, ie., “the poor”, that is different from and morally subordinated to other social groups. Rather than *measuring* the inequalities that mark the Downtown Eastside, then, the dissertation has interrogated the ways in which they have been *signified* and *institutionalized* in political programs and projects. In particular, it has argued that the Downtown Eastside has been recognized as a discrete territory in the city through the deployment of a series of competing narratives that have inextricably linked its singularity with the subjectivities attributed to its population. Consequently, the imagination and representation of the area and its population have been as decisive in the formulation of political plans and strategies as have any “objective” measures of its difference.

An understanding of the contemporary situation therefore requires an exploration of the formation of these narratives, both because nostalgia makes claims about the past which I have shown here to be untrue, but also because, despite an extremely equivocal version of that past, it draws on its predecessors and reworks them in new ways. Not only does it reproduce the stigmatization of skid road, it also takes up the challenge presented by the counter-narrative of the Downtown Eastside and selects particular elements, especially the mythology of the working class hero, even as it obscures the actual conditions which that figure emerged to contest and surmount. And, like these other two narratives, nostalgia operates as a means of applying wider discursive renderings of the poor and the marginal to the local scene.

The Woodward's building incorporates these competing narratives. Many of the elements of the main argument presented here can be examined through the lens of the conflict over the building's future. These include the role of nostalgia in reproducing the skid road narrative in the 1990s, the continuing counter-narrative of the fighting community of the poor that has been deployed to contest skid road, and the role of larger discourses on poverty and the related modes of governing the urban poor in framing these local narratives. The value of examining these arguments through the lens of the conflict over Woodward's lies in the way in which it articulates the enduring themes that have constituted this as a unique part of the city with new elements that reflect the changing social and moral geography of Vancouver.

Woodward's and the legacy of the fighting community

The announcement of the purchase of the Woodward's property and the developer's plans for it followed on the heels of a major victory the previous summer in which neighbourhood groups had successfully opposed a proposed casino, hotel, convention centre, and cruise-ship terminal complex on the adjacent waterfront. It also coincided with increasing concern and activism, both for and against, around gentrification in Gastown and the huge redevelopments on the nearby former Expo '86 site. Local housing activists responded negatively to the initial plans of the developer and City planners. Echoing the fears about the BC Place development a decade earlier, one of them noted that "revitalization often means the poor being eliminated" (cited in Bula, 1995). Harkening back to the mass evictions of 1986, they declared that when "the Woodward's building gets gobbled up by a new condo

renovation ... the 1,000 evictions that took place because of Expo [will] look like a party" (Anonymous, 1995a). These activists argued that the building is "the heart of the community and as goes Woodward's, so goes the blocks around it" (cited in Applebe, 1995).

Community groups feared that the renovation would spur a gentrification domino effect and quickly began efforts to build support both within and outside the Downtown Eastside. They sought to mobilize the kind of "anti-hegemonic reading of property" examined in the last chapter by situating their determination to stop the renovation project within the legacy of local resistance to property development, examined in the last chapter. Instead of condominiums, local groups argued that social housing should be a priority for the property. "We are being asked to give up and buy in", they argued, but urged people instead to "stand up and speak out" (Anonymous, 1995a). A series of events subsequently took place at the Woodward's site that were designed to let local people do just that. These included sweeping the sidewalks in front of the building, painting its ground-level windows with slogans and pictures "with scenes of a brighter, more hopeful Woodward's", and an "arms around Woodward's" day, when "representatives from neighbourhoods east and west came to join hands and show their support for Downtown Eastside residents" (Anonymous, 1995b).

This campaign proved to be so effective that within the year, the developer entered into negotiations with provincial government agencies and community groups that focused on the formation of a partnership to construct a mixed-income housing

project on the site. By 1997, however, after 18 months, these negotiations collapsed. Alarmed at the renewed prospect of an all-market condominium development, community groups met to discuss their follow-up strategy and formulated a statement declaring that:

“ ... the Woodward's project ... is a cornerstone of our neighbourhood. Will it become a cornerstone for future condo development. ... NO, private developers will not be allowed to buy and sell this community like a monopoly game! ... The community has agreed that Woodward's will be a cornerstone to our future, not someone else's” (DERA, 1997).

The difficulty for activist groups in this regard was that the Woodward's building had come to symbolize not only neighbourhood activism but also neighbourhood decline, and through it, the nostalgic rendition of the Downtown Eastside that reproduced the skid road narrative. Moreover, it also provided a channel for the appropriation of the counter-narrative which had hitherto framed their arguments against market development.

The new urban gentry and the genesis of nostalgia

Unlike earlier campaigns to “Save the Downtown Eastside” from BC Place or to promote a waterfront park, the opponents of market housing in the Woodward's building were directly confronted with local support for the redevelopment. When anti-gentrification activists organized a demonstration to paint the windows at Woodward's in 1995, the developer recruited a pro-gentrification contingent to join them. This group included not only homeowners and business representatives from Gastown, but also residents of nearby social housing, some of whom argued that “their [own] values are [not] so different from the people who will buy condos. None of

them like fighting on their streets, noise, prostitution, drug-selling”, implying that those opposed to gentrification for some reason approved of them.(Bula, 1995). The building, they claimed, was part of the heritage of the whole community, not all of which opposed the development of private strata-title units.

One of the main tasks of the dissertation has been to highlight both the significance of the Downtown Eastside as a site for the formation of new social subjects and, conversely, their importance in the shifting significance of the area in Vancouver’s moral and social geography. In particular, I argued that the emergence of new forms of subjectivity in this context has been inextricably linked with the narratives of urban space which have drawn extensively from wider cultural and discursive themes in their efforts to describe and explain what was and is happening here. Thus, skid road, with its derelicts and transients, was as much a product of the tensions and modernizing impulses in post-World War II urbanism as it was of local responses to the immediate situation and its perceived problems. The construction of the Downtown Eastside, as well, was informed by assumptions of a larger movement that framed it and which it was considered to be a part. In this case, the goal of emancipating poor and marginalized groups animated assertions of local identity and the rejection of stigmatizing notions of poverty.

The appearance of nostalgia, too, can be traced, at least partly, to the rise of a reactionary and repressive social and cultural politics across North America. Insofar as it is a response to local conditions, it draws on the sentiments and imagination of a much wider movement that criminalizes and marginalizes the urban poor. And, like

the movements which preceded it as a framework of socio-geographical construction, it has been predicated on the formation of a new social subject, the Vancouver version of the “urban pioneer” or, as one of its own put it, the “gentry in ... gentrification” (McCoy, 1995).

The conflict over the future of the old Woodward’s building consolidated the emergence of the inner city urban pioneer as a subject in Vancouver’s political and social landscape. To understand how this took place, it is necessary to examine the deployment of Woodward’s as the main conduit for the nostalgic vision that permeates present renditions of the area and which has been the means of reproducing and refurbishing the skid road narrative. The date of its closure marks the division between “the good old days” and the malign present, in which the skid road slum looms ever larger, threatening to subsume the neighbouring districts with its spreading pathologies. The image of the contagious slum articulated a number of themes bound up with the contrast between the past and the present. Foremost among these was the notion of a neighbourhood decline, brought about by the dysfunctionality of the poor, and the necessity of achieving a social “balance” among the population in order to renew the area.

According to the prevailing wisdom, the 1993 closure of Woodward’s department store due to the company’s insolvency created a consumer void in the area around it into which many of the adjacent businesses fell, leaving a host of empty, though not abandoned buildings. Into this commercial vacuum of vacant storefronts moved the drug trade and other dysfunctional activities, driving those legitimate

activities and making the streets unusable for respectable citizens. The senior planning official for the downtown area told the press that “the dereliction in the area has been very detrimental ... it would be better if there was a better social mix down there” (cited in Bula, 1995). The redevelopment of the Woodward building was to be the pivot of a regeneration plan that would achieve this improved neighbourhood via a “better social mix”, meaning a lower proportion of impoverished households.

This position was vociferously supported by local businesses and residential property owners. In the inaugural edition of the shortlived *Gastown Tribune*, the editor (who was also active in the organization of condominium owners in the area) argued, *contra* anti-gentrification groups, that

“a project like this is not going to displace people, it will bring more people into the neighbourhood which would create a balance in the area which is much needed. For those who feel that there should be more social housing in the area, just to let you know, there are five projects in various stages of development within a few blocks of the Woodward site. ... If we resist ... we would only continue the downward fall backwards instead of upwardly moving forward” (Whorral, 1995).²

The Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) distributed a publication that it claimed was a compendium of random responses from individuals in Gastown and the region to the new development proposal. Continuing the emphasis on the decline evidently induced by the closure of Woodward, it contended that the loss of the store left a “local economy geared almost exclusively to the few dollars that can be gleaned from Social Assistance cheques”.

² This broadsheet contained several advertisements for local strata-title developments and real estate agents, leading one to the assumption that it was financially sustained by pro-gentrification interests.

Although the closure of Woodward's provided the immediate explanation for this environment, its proximate cause was the socially homogeneous population of poor people that was itself a result of a proliferation of social services designed to help them. According to the Gastown's city-mandated planning committee, there has been "an influx of facilities targeted to clientele at the lower end of the socio-economic scale, which cater to the socially disabled and consequently have been known to attract an undesirable element" (GHAPC, 1996). One business publication argued that "it seems clear that without a critical mass of non-welfare residents Gastown and the Downtown Eastside will continue to be plagued by a litany of social ills" (Longhurst, 1997).³ Here, we see a conflation of the category of the client with the image of the slum in a manner that situates the former, together with the services on which he or she is presumably dependent, as the agents of the latter. According to one sensational report, "skid row" is the site of "some 180 organizations that try to protect them [clients], jail them, detoxify them, cure them, house them" (Jones, 1995).⁴ The presence of so many dependent people with serious problems leads to an area with "urine-soaked sidewalks" and "stinking garbage-filled alley[s]" (Jones, 1995). Such visceral repugnance is evocative of the early descriptions of skid road, an issue to which I will return shortly.

³ This quote is from what appeared to be an innovative form of publication in the Downtown Eastside, a propaganda piece on behalf of the Gastown Business Improvement Society disguised as a commercial review of downtown issues and lifestyles. Its publisher and the author of the quotation, Grant Longhurst was then and still is an executive member of the Gastown Business Improvement Society as well as being the campaign manager for the ruling civic political party, the Non Partisan Association.

⁴ This number has ranged as high as 300, by some estimates. When I began to count the actual service organizations in the neighbourhood, it rapidly diminished to 40 - 45 groups that provide services exclusively to people in the Downtown Eastside and Strathcona, including community centres and elementary schools.

The solution to this decline was located in what one (critical) report called “an influx of better off individuals looking for an urban lifestyle” or the arrival of “gentry in ... gentrification” (Sarti, 1995a; McCoy, 1995). The latter, claimed those who presumed to speak on their behalf, situated themselves in opposition to “the paid and/or self-appointed community activists, opportunists and media writers ... who give the impression that new residents who do not require the services of an agency shouldn’t be here. I sometimes think I am resented because I am not part of sustainable yield – the *client*” (McCoy, 1995, emphasis added). Homeowner representatives thus contrasted their constituency with the “tide of negative self-interested people who have their own reasons to keep the status quo here in the Downtown Eastside. Whether they be drug dealers or self-appointed spokespersons for the poor” (GBIS, 1995, *sic*). Implicit in such statements was the assumption that homeowners were an economically independent, socially functional group of people whose simple presence, seemingly on its own, would rejuvenate the declining district.

The notion of social mix is key here. In an open letter to the Premier following the collapse of the first set of negotiations over Woodward between the province and the developer, Vancouver’s Mayor argued that “it is difficult to overstate the importance of the mixed-income development of Woodward to the Downtown Eastside community and the city” (Owen). Although the Mayor is arguing for social housing in the building and for provincial funding and extra effort to make it happen, the notion of social mix is the legitimating factor. Local groups had contended that no development was better than market-oriented development (Vancouver Sun, 1995).

But this balance is not simply a question of social mix, it also refers to real estate development. For real estate interests, “balance” seems to have referred to rights of developers versus rights of poor people. One developer argued that “it’s not a very balanced equation. There are social issues that are getting worse and there’s no support from the province for heritage buildings” (Mazereeuw, 1997). Thus, the social situation was negatively juxtaposed with problems of property development. Indeed, prior to the Woodward’s conflict, such problems were expressed more crudely, as “a fiercely competitive economic struggle between market and non-market interests ... for finite and shrinking numbers of development sites” (UD&D, 1992).

Ironically, however, the role of the urban pioneer as the agent of neighbourhood improvement looked not so much to the future and the revitalization that a “better social mix” would promote, but to a supposedly more salubrious past, sentimentalized via memories of the Woodward’s department store. The status quo, according to the GBIS (1995), offered a stark contrast with remembrances of “what it was like when the streets bustled with people working, living and shopping in the area ... [and] how *nice* it was, how *good* it felt, how *safe* it seemed, how *clean* and *up beat* it was *when we all mixed together on Hastings at Woodwards*” (emphasis added).⁵ By comparison, the contemporary scene was a state of “decay and deterioration” that was bad, dangerous, dirty, and depressing. The lure of gentrification and the social mix

⁵ The use of the Woodwards site has still not been resolved at the time this was written. On again-off again negotiations between community groups, provincial government agencies, and the property owner are, apparently, on again at the moment.

that it promised was a return to this golden age in which power relations and inequality are masked by a pleasant diversity on the streets.

The dissertation has argued that such a period never existed. It is certainly true that the territory of skid road has shifted over the past fifty years. The streets and sidewalks surrounding the Woodward's store may well once have been a veritable font of social diversity, safety, and good-feeling. Nevertheless, the evidence presented here shows that many of the people dwelling in its vicinity have long been stigmatized as social outcasts. Whether they have been cast as derelicts and transients or drug addicts and social service clients, these stereotypes continue to slip over onto the space itself, reproducing it as the skid road slum which has been obscured by nostalgic representation.

Modernizing skid road

The closure of the Woodward's store has thus served as an instrument of mediation between the past and present through which new "voices of decline" have modernized the old skid road narrative. This modernization has taken place in two particular ways. First, the transients and derelicts in the original rendition have been replaced by drug addicts as the central figures and agents of decline. This has actually reinforced the construction of this part of Vancouver as a source of contagion, as the body and conduct of the drug addict both represent and serve as the vectors of urban decay. Singer (1990) argues that the permeation of wide areas of social life by measures of epidemic control measures that emerged in response to HIV/AIDS is a

relatively recent phenomenon.⁶ The proliferation of this “epidemic logic”, that underlines a deepening of social control revolving around intensifying disciplines of the body, has ominous implications for marginal groups which can be thus constituted as agents of virulent infection.⁷ However, in the case of Vancouver’s skid road, the rhetoric of spatial regulation that animates the contemporary narrative, focusing on issues of dispersion, concentration, containment, and treatment of the population, actually mirrors the discourse of thirty years earlier which, as we have seen, also situated the area as the site of a pathological condition and its population as the carriers. This thematic of spatial regulation structures the contemporary field of debate between the same two positions, urban renewal of the built environment versus rehabilitation/treatment of the population, that were extant decades earlier.

A second innovation of the nostalgic version of skid road is its construction of the Downtown Eastside as a “ghetto”. Again, however, this draws on existing discursive sources, involving a reworking, via the the concept of the underclass, of the figure of the social service client and the image of the slum that were just explored in Chapter 9. As examined above, this position has most recently been enunciated by

⁶ The increasing incidence of HIV among intravenous drug users in the Downtown Eastside has largely been interpreted as a result of untrammled and careless drug use. However, I think that the widespread fascination in the newsmedia with the act of injection itself, including frontpage closeup photographs of hypodermic needles penetrating skin and frequent television images of people “fixing” in back alleys (during a 1998 CBC Newsworld live broadcast from the Downtown Eastside, individuals were paid money to buy drugs and inject them on camera) that included action shots of needle penetration, drawing of blood, and pushing the liquid into the vein, betrays an erotic interest in the topic (based on Elizabeth Grosz’s reading of Lacan).

⁷ The Vancouver Sun’s lead editorial of Oct. 17, 1998 thus proclaimed that “Drugs are a cancer in the heart of the city” (The Vancouver Sun, 1998: A22). The editors argued that “overwhelming numbers of [drug] dealers” on the streets of the Downtown Eastside “are Hondurans — who in the last year have taken over much of the turf from Salvadoreans and Guatemalans”, thus pointing to immigration officials, with their lax policing of boundaries, as a key source of the neighbourhood’s problems and to migrants as agents of infection.

local business groups and residential property-owners,, the proponents of nostalgia. But, it can also be seen as a residual effect of the contradictory positions of community organizations which, despite having lobbied for increased service provision, have simultaneously viewed social services as potential agents of dependence and subordination of the local population (cf. Sarti, 1993). In any case, the consequence of such services and their clients has been the creation of a “ US inner-city *ghetto* ... with a wide range of graffiti and denizens including skid row drunks, spaced-out junkies and punk street kids” (Middleton, 1996).

This combination of the concept of a dependent population and the image of the ghetto borrows freely from the largely underspecified notion of the underclass and the plethora of labels and concepts surrounding it. As Wacquant (1997) contends, the application of ghetto terminology to spaces of poverty, as opposed to those of enforced racial segregation, not only obviates the implications of the latter, but also reinforces the stigmatization of the poor. The notion of the ghetto exoticizes poverty. It signifies not only the difference of “the poor” but also its socio-spatial isolation. The Downtown Eastside is thus cast, variously as the “dumping ground for the city’s ills and government dollars”, a “war zone”, and “ground zero” (Townsend, 1998; Sarti, 1995; Hulsman, 1998). Each of these terms is taken from articles by authors who are sympathetic to the impoverished sectors of the Downtown Eastside’s population, illustrating the pervasive insidiousness of what might be called the “ghetto-fication” of a neighbourhood where expensive condominium apartments, renovated turn-of-the-century houses and tourist shops sit across the street, down the

alley, and around the corner from cheap rooms, food lines, and open drug use.

Much of its population may be socially marginal, but it is isolated only in the ways it is imagined and represented. The terminology of the ghetto serves to impose this vision on the local population.

For all its discursive innovation, however, the seeming novelty of the social service ghetto is purely superficial. Leaving aside the question of whether such a thing actually exists, the rhetoric with which it is imbued simply updates the original notions of isolation, difference, and danger signified by skid road and, indeed, by any slum terminology. The revival of skid road in Vancouver parallels the deployment of the underclass in poverty discourse as the channel through which 'the poor' are constituted as pathological. Just as the former concept functions as a means of reorganizing the stigmatizing concepts that have long been used to subordinate poor people without substantially changing their meaning, the latter-day version of skid road provides a way of adapting that same discursive apparatus to explain contemporary conditions. In other words, the discursive framework that is currently used to explain the situation in the Downtown Eastside seems to have changed little in almost fifty years.

Appropriating the counter-narrative

It is ironic that nostalgia reproduces the narrative of skid road and, therefore, the stigmatization of the poor which it carries, while appropriating the counter-narrative that was used to contest it. By doing so, it effectively denies both the subordination of the poor that was intrinsic to skid road and the dynamic of resistance that animated the

counter-narrative. Vancouver's skid road district, as we saw, was transformed via the emergence of an indigenous leadership and organization that flowed out of the confluence of the youth and student movements of the 1960s with the anti-poverty movement, a junction for which it provided a key local site. During that period, Vancouver's inner city, like those across North America, was reimagined as a site of community and the potential resistance to corporate-bureaucratic forms of power which it nourished. Skid road was thus reconfigured as one neighbourhood in a larger inner city in which a whole range of new social subjects, youth, ethnic groups, and the poor were configured as agents of change. Opposition to urban renewal and redevelopment provided a key point of convergence between such marginal groups and a basis for alliance with more established sectors that were influenced by new ideas about the city, social relations, and urban design.

Facilitated at first by student organizers and state sponsorship and allied with a plethora of other oppositional organizations, the skid road population was recast as a local citizenry that formed a residential community. Through the aegis of a local residents' association, the territory of skid road itself was renamed the Downtown Eastside. This rejection of the pejorative label and the stigma it marked signaled an assertion of rights of residence and community that were based on legal claims of tenancy but also on a historical sensibility that sought to ground the contemporary neighbourhood and population in both the development of the hinterland resource industries and the legacy of immigration. The anomic slum of derelicts and transients was thus transformed into a poor, multi-cultural community of what I have called here

working class heroes, or former resource industry workers, and elderly Asian immigrants with historical claims to occupy this space. Through this process, the Downtown Eastside became a field of engagement between these resident-citizens and their organizations and those governing groups which had only recently subordinated them as the objects of projects of rehabilitation and reform.

The counter-narrative that was advanced under the name Downtown Eastside thus asserted the legitimacy of the local population to occupy this part of the city by re-aligning the relation between territory and identity. The latter-day nostalgic narrative has attempted to selectively appropriate this version of the Downtown Eastside, adopting its claim to a community of the respectable poor while disregarding the conditions and policies against which that assertion was made as well as the militance and political consciousness that framed it. Nevertheless, the counter-narrative incorporated key elements that have facilitated this appropriation.

The shift from the imagination of a desolate skid road district to the poor residential community of the Downtown Eastside involved a reconfiguration of the boundary between the respectable and unrespectable poor which had been key to the construction of skid road, essentially turning it inside-out. Whereas the latter had designated a spatial boundary between the two categories by demarcating a territory that contained a deviant population, the name Downtown Eastside signified the claim of respectability for the local population. But rather than escaping from the limits imposed by designations of respectability and its opposite, this attempt to despatialize the divide, and to thus integrate the area into the social fabric of the city, simply

marked the development of another divide, this one separating the “good” people of the neighbourhood from the public drunks, drug addicts and dealers, and petty criminals, all of whom were exceptions to the archetypes which constituted the community and were thus situated as outsiders to it.

Two important consequences flowed from the counter-narrative’s simple inversion of this local moral geography of poverty. First, it reproduced the spatiality of contagion that was fundamental to its nemesis. Constructed as a discrete neighbourhood with permeable boundaries, the Downtown Eastside was portrayed as being susceptible to the predations of a range of pernicious hosts, from slum landlords and opportunistic businesses to thugs and rowdies and even the social workers that sent deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients to live the area. Whereas the population of skid road had been regarded as the potential agent of infection, of both the district itself and other parts of the city, the inhabitants of the Downtown Eastside were treated as victims. However, this reversability of agent/victim status would yield ambiguous results for the community with the rise of the drug scene and the subsequent moral panic in the nineties.

The second consequence of the failure to transcend the stigmatizing categories which framed the difference of skid road was that the figures of the derelict and transient were never very far from the Downtown Eastside. The ideas and images associated with skid road continually lurked in and around the Downtown Eastside. Indeed, somewhat paradoxically, they were necessary for the constitution of the Downtown Eastside as an embattled community. The persistence of skid road,

encoded in the perceptions of official indifference and outright hostility of authorities to many of the projects of local groups during the 1970s and 1980s, provided an important point of oppositional mobilization as well as the pivot of demands for neighbourhood improvement. At the same time, those individuals whose conduct conformed to the skid road stereotypes -- public drunkenness, criminality, drug use, or violence -- were often excluded from the community which the Downtown Eastside signified. Skid road thus threaded its way through and around the narrative of the Downtown Eastside as a kind of "constitutive outside" that defined the latter through its opposition and exclusion. Without it, demands for recognition of community and equality symbolized by the name Downtown Eastside begin to lose their impact.

The endurance of skid road as a defining feature of the area and population, together with the reversability of the direction of its contagion, proved to be strategic weaknesses for the counter-narrative as the Downtown Eastside became, simultaneously, the site of development pressures and the point of convergence for the sex- and drug-trades from other parts of the city. Newspaper commentaries by police officers and civic planning documents, among others, romanticized the area's past by appropriating the legacy of the community of the "respectable poor" through lamentations of its decline and contemporary absence. The Woodward's building, its apparent emptiness contributing to the vacuum of storefronts all around it, emerged as the central signifier of this transformation, marking the difference between the neighbourhood's earlier vitality that is now being held out to be the consequence of

the association of different socio-economic groups in public space and local decline that has followed on the demise of this inter-class sociability. In other words, the neighbourhood's past, as symbolized by Woodward's, is also its future, if the right policies, ie., those promoting "social mix", are followed.

It is worth noting here the important role that the promotion of heritage renovation has played in maintaining the skid road motif. The historical consciousness of the inner city, elemental to the strategy of DERA, was focused as much on its built environment as it was on its inhabitants. The emergence of heritage preservation in the Gastown section of the Downtown Eastside as a strategic base of opposition to urban renewal was constituted largely by the attempt to offer an alternative means of stemming downtown decline. In seeking to promote private capital reinvestment in a deteriorating area, the same narrative of decline that had framed skid road policies was used to boost the heritage alternative. Thus, the presence of a counter-cultural youth scene in Gastown was contrasted with the local skid road population in an equation of derelict buildings with derelict people. Heritage renovation was viewed as a way of overcoming the obstacles this population presented and, indeed, significant residential displacement did occur during its initial stages.

The democratic and liberatory potential of historical preservation proffered by its proponents proved to be little more than hucksterism. Rather than a new context for urban sociability, it has instead offered a basis for the consolidation of business and property interests that have consistently challenged the claims of resident and social service organizations. In another of the many ironies that abound in the

Downtown Eastside, the leadership of groups representing the heritage zones, once a force of opposition to urban renewal, now promotes renovation as the means of “revitalizing” the area.

Conflict, power, and narrative: possible futures of the Downtown Eastside

It is important to emphasize that the fight over the Woodward’s site was not so much the cause of confrontation between various parties in the Downtown Eastside but, rather, served to crystallize positions on an emerging field of conflict between proponents of gentrifying-commercializing development and those groups opposing it in the name of the poor majority of residents (Smith, 2000; Blomley and Sommers, 1999). The conditions described by the two police constables in the article with which the dissertation opened were situated in the context of gentrification and a concern over the effects of the displacement it might cause, both on the population of the Downtown Eastside and on the rest of Vancouver. The assertions of impending development moving over the Downtown Eastside that were made during the campaign against BC Place fifteen years earlier now seem almost prescient.

Of course, as the dissertation has shown, this part of the city has been the object of conflict between various groups for much of the past five decades. What is significantly different about the present situation is that much of the space of the Downtown Eastside has been transformed in recent years, as one part of wider changes to the downtown peninsula in the decade after the Expo ‘86 evictions. The Exposition marked the beginning of the Vancouver elite’s bid for global city status and the planning procedures for the downtown area were modified in order to

facilitate massive residential and commercial redevelopment of much of the city's core, especially the industrial waterfront and warehouse districts adjacent to the Downtown Eastside (Beazley, 1994).

Yet, even as an inflow of development capital and new socio-economic groups transformed the downtown, the city's police, responding to political pressure exerted by resident groups in gentrifying neighbourhoods around the CBD, began relocating the street drug and sex-trades to the Downtown Eastside, thus intensifying the scope and expanding the scale on which those activities took place there (Olds, 1995, 1998; Smith, 2000; Blomley and Sommers, 1999; Ley, 1996; Lowman, 1989, 1992, 2000). The convergence of Vancouver's street scene with accelerating middle class residential development created a situation in which middle income homeowners found themselves, for the first time, directly confronting large numbers of the city's outcast poor in a relationship that extended beyond isolated encounters or vigilante operations against criminalized activities.

Ley (1994b: 720) argues against the current dominant conceptualizing of poor neighbourhoods as sites of a "service dependent" underclass, asserting that, unlike the situation in other Canadian cities "where poor households are more scattered, the concentration of poverty households in the Downtown Eastside has aided the building of a local base and the establishment of a politics of turf" that provides local groups with a degree of political capacity they might not otherwise possess. Central to the consolidation of this base has been the tangible improvements in the quality of life that were achieved as a consequence of citizen action which, in turn, has been framed

by “cultural and symbolic struggle” that has contested the stigmatizing label of skid road and the policies associated with it, which have been the object of this dissertation (Ley, 1994a, b). The forceful insistence on the renaming of the area as the Downtown Eastside combined with both the spectacle and results of citizen action to effectively remap it onto the space of Vancouver in a way that changed its meaning and legitimized the presence of its inhabitants.

The vigour with which the label of skid road has been reasserted indicates a seeming weakening of the political base of poor people’s organizations in the Downtown Eastside and a delegitimization of the presence of some of the groups occupying its space. Certainly such a development correlates with the emergence of polarizing pressures, in particular the rise of gentrification and forces that support it, on one hand, and, on the other, the increasing marginalization of poor people. Ironically, the perceived decline of the Downtown Eastside is closely related to efforts to upgrade it, particularly with the increasing presence of middle class homeowners who have come to be regarded as the agents of neighbourhood improvement by both civic authorities and themselves.

The deployment of nostalgia and the “ghetto-fication” of the Downtown Eastside can thus be seen as *tactical* responses to a situation of intensifying socio-political conflict over the control of space. But it must also be understood within the context of what Smith (1996) calls “revanchism” in urban policy. The emergence of nostalgia and moral panic is one instance of the wider North American reaction against the impoverished and other marginalized groups as well as their social

movements. Central to such reaction is the reorientation of public policy involving widening surveillance and escalating sanctions directed toward the marginalized population that is generated by both welfare retrenchment and its concomitant economic restructuring. For Smith (1996), gentrification is integral to this reactionary movement, functioning in tandem with punitive measures against marginal groups as a means by which the middle class can “take back” the city from the poor and minorities who have supposedly stolen it.

While the urban situation in Vancouver and elsewhere in Canada is perhaps not as harsh as it is in large US and European cities, and may be less racialized, the same pattern has, nevertheless prevailed. The conflation of crime and disorder with poverty and homelessness means that the latter are, more and more, seen as threats to social control, rather than as social problems. Thus constituted as a danger to the security of “normal” individuals, the presence of the outcast poor in public space has become subject to increasing circumscription. Gentrification in Vancouver during the 1990s converged with a emergent public order regime of urban government, as new middle class dwellers, often allied with business organizations, in the downtown and various inner city neighbourhoods have launched offensives against social services, the sex trade, begging, and drug users.

The construction of a nostalgic memory of the Downtown Eastside thus functions as a mode of stigmatization, labelling virtually all the poor inhabitants of the neighbourhood as drug addicts, social service dependents, criminals, and therefore as “undesirables”. Its exponents argue that this population is a recent arrival to the area

works, seeking to undermine the historical claims through which the presence of so many poor people in this part of the city have been legitimized. The reassertion of the name skid road, under which the stigmatization of the population moves, effectively dispossesses the latter of its claims to be here.

The conflict over property development and the security of the community, outlined in Chapter 9 and which continued with the fight over Woodward's, has thus been submerged and reconstituted as a sub-plot of a renewed skid road narrative in which the Downtown Eastside appears as a bleak and sinister urban landscape of dark shadows and shabby buildings, populated by even shabbier people whose only goal in whatever life they have is to buy and inject drugs. The earlier notion of a community of the poor is effectively eviscerated in this situation. The only choice left to authorities is between "leaving the slums in Skid Row alone ... [to] ensure that people who are down and out will continue to have a home, even if the community is dysfunctional" or to ensure that "price-controlled housing can be built along with market housing," the latter which is assumed to be inevitable (Jones, 1995).

Yet, there are signs pointing to the emergence of a new counter-narrative that contests nostalgia and moral panic with the assertion of a new kind of community that seeks to avoid the exclusionary pitfalls that rendered its predecessor susceptible to appropriation. What is most interesting is the way in which this incipient narrative is able to capture elements of stigmatization and rework them to its advantage. Thus, sympathetic observers have attempted to engage with the media spectacle that has been pivotal in propelling and framing moral panic, using it to challenge the very

assumptions on which it is based. On one hand, the images of open drug use and built environmental deterioration have been too tantalizing for television, newspapers, and magazines to resist and the increasing flow of depictions of open drug use, exotic behaviour, and a deteriorating landscape have been instrumental in making the Downtown Eastside not only the most notorious but, quite possibly, the most talked about and looked at place in the country.

On the other hand, the spectacle was not produced simply by news media hungry for shocking images and statistics or by governments seeking to document social and medical problems. Sympathetic photographers sought to “challenge the stereotypes of people living in the Downtown Eastside” even as they constituted them as objects of their art (cf. Grabowski, 1998). Writing about one of the women whose pictures he took against back drops of littered alleys, overflowing dumpsters, and other signs of urban decay, a photographer declared:

“I could see it in her eyes when I looked at her. Vancouver, shining brightly along her slender streets and alleys, glinting off of cracked bottles and broken windows. Past the buildings she calls to me and asks for a smile and some small change. I know her history runs deep through the Downtown Eastside ... her memory is as vague as her glassy eyes, but still her eyes speak to me; and though they show pain, they proudly say, “look at me. I am still here, I am still alive. I am still beautiful”” (Clarkes, 1998).

In much the same way, the local public radio station advertised a special radio program from the community centre, replete with music from local musicians with the slogan: “It’s a little rough around the edges, but it’s home” (CBC Radio One, 1998).⁸

⁸ Ironically, around the same time, the CBC Newsworld cable news channel conducted a live special from Hastings Street on welfare cheque day, sensationalizing the same situation that the local radio program sought to humanize by enabling residents and other people in the community to speak (Mulgrew, 1998).

Although this double-edged process of spectacularization has highlighted sensational and generally negative images and events, it also provides a field of engagement between a whole range of agencies, from civic authorities and media to local and extra local groups, which has constituted the Downtown Eastside as an index of how well Vancouver itself is doing. Certainly, this involves a measure of shock at the superficial level of appearance and concomitant calls for police to deal with the apparent disorder (cf., Estey, 1998). But it also evinces intense interest across the city in indigenous representations and the programs which they animate, such as the 1998 mural project that offer alternative interpretations of the situation and hope for a kind of “improvement” that differs from the prescriptions of nostalgia (cf. Sankar, 1998b, c; Sarti, 1998b).

Such engagement “opens up” the stigmatizing narrative of space, providing avenues along which the closure that moral panic and nostalgia have imposed on the meanings of the Downtown Eastside and skid road can be challenged or subverted. Thus, recalling profiles of community workers nearly thirty years ago, some newspaper articles have lionized community workers and activists, giving a positive spin to the separation of clients and workers that developed a decade earlier, damaging the image of the fighting community and opening the way for the depictions of the social service ghetto examined above. Instead, argues one journalist, “some of the city’s most creative and energetic people are working in ... the Downtown Eastside” (Bula, 2000). In the nostalgic turn, the presence of social services and social activists is negatively evaluated as being a key factor in neighbourhood decline. But

here is a direct challenge to that assessment, constituting the same group of people as the potential agents of change and improvement.

But, if these evaluations evoke the early days of DERA, they also offer significant differences that are, perhaps, more suggestive of the skid road of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the area was constituted as a site of the interventions by various counter-cultural and radical social groups. Contemporary community workers are seen as the vanguard of a new tolerance and inclusion that has been absent from the counter-narrative and its elaborations. Rather than “describ[ing] these people by their addictions and behaviour and miss[ing] seeing the whole person”, says one such worker, “we try to create spaces around people rather than force them into a space that requires them to change and achieve certain goals in order to stay” (cited in Morgan, 1999). This kind of sentiment is a major departure from recent anxieties of community groups, which clearly echo the counter-narrative, over the formation of an “institutional ghetto” in the Downtown Eastside where “the homeless, ex-mental patients, victims of abusive relationships and people with drug or alcohol dependencies” are segregated (Sarti, 1993).

This reversal constitutes a significant shift away from the closed community of both the counter-narrative and the new narrative of decline. Despite its past efficacy, the rhetoric of community deployed in each of these narratives is now proving problematic for, as already noted, it excludes as well as embraces particular sectors of the population. Nevertheless, its deployment thirty years ago was highly innovative: the claim that the skid road poor constituted a community provided a new frame of

imagination and representation that countered the area's stigmatization and initiated a program of neighbourhood improvement premised on its possession by the poor. The emergent efforts to challenge its exclusions offer a glimpse of the kind of "urban cosmopolitanism" suggested by Iris Marion Young (1990). If local groups are now to overcome the subordination that has taken place via the drug panic and nostalgic memory, it will be necessary to re-invent the Downtown Eastside through the formation of a narrative that transcends the exclusions of community, which have in any case been adopted by the gentrifiers, and develop yet another framework for imagining and representing the 'undeserving' poor as an integral sector of the city.

Directions for future research

Given the scope that the Downtown Eastside has assumed in public policy in Vancouver, this dissertation has been modest in its objectives. However, it does suggest a number of paths for other research that will more fully round it out.

First, there is the question of the relation between poverty in the Downtown Eastside and in the rest of the city. Both the early arguments against urban renewal without social services and the efforts to forestall development in the 1980s were premised on the spectre of displacement of the poor. These have been the same argument advanced by contemporary anti-gentrification activists. As well, over the past twenty or so years, there has been significant displacement of the the street-oriented drug- and sex-trades around the inner city. An examination of shifts in the poor population, not just in the city but across the region, combined with a study of movements in street-oriented activities and the shifting imagination and representation

of the poor will provide a better overview of how the Downtown Eastside has been constituted as one of Vancouver's central public policy problems. It might also provide insight into the question of why street activities are inevitably situated in low income districts.

Second, related to this, is the worth of investigating the relation between the perceived mobility or stability of marginal populations and the city's policy of neighbourhood planning, which was developed through and in response to the oppositional community movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As we have seen, the both skid road and Downtown Eastside have been problematized in terms of mobility and the permeability of local boundaries. This can be related both to the recognition of particular localities as discreet entities through the production of urban narratives, a central theme of this dissertation, and the representation of the outcast poor as vectors of pathology. While the formation of a neighbourhood planning regime was once taken as a progressive and democratic policy, it has also proved to be a weapon against the poor during a period of political reaction and inner city gentrification in which the poor have been constituted as both mobile and predatory. Middle class areas in particular are now seen as somehow vulnerable to threats not only from the drug and sex trades but also from social service facilities, social housing, and the groups they serve, an anxiety that has only intensified with the moral panic over drugs and HIV/AIDS. By studying the shifting reciprocal effects of neighbourhood planning as well as the recognition of neighbourhoods themselves on class and community mobilization it will be possible to highlight the role played by

notions of mobility and stability among marginal groups in changing constructions of the relation between poverty and community.

Finally, the relationship between the construction of community among the poor as a strategic innovation thirty years ago and its subsequent co-optation by middle class gentifying and commercializing groups today bears further research. Especially vital is the problem of how those groups representing the poor can offer yet another counter-narrative to reframe the contemporary debate, given that their constituencies are increasingly being excluded from the definition of community. One possible direction is to examine the feasibility and means whereby a narrative premised on the kinds of cosmopolitanism advanced by Young (1990) or the associations of necessity proposed by Sennett (1969), what this would involve and how it could be operationalized within the context of a wider movement.

Appendix A
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Appendix B
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