

**“We’re just trying to help...make it a positive place”:
Community Organizations, Gentrification, and Neighbourhood Change in
Hamilton, Ontario**

by
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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Planning

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2018

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

As a historic hub of steel manufacturing impacted by deindustrialization, Hamilton, Ontario has until very recently been positioned as a centre of decline. However, new narratives of revitalization have emerged alongside recent waves of investment and improvement projects focused on Hamilton's urban core, introducing concerns of gentrification and displacement within the city's central neighbourhoods. In this thesis, I explore community-based organizations (neighbourhood associations, community-focused business improvement associations, and certain city-wide organizations) as actors within this context of gentrification, an area that has received limited exploration within the literature. I examine how organizations' initiatives shape and respond to the current trajectory of change within Hamilton's inner city neighbourhoods, and the equity implications therein. I also consider how representatives of community organizations perceive change, as well as their roles and impacts, within the gentrifying neighbourhoods.

My findings draw on 15 semi-structured interviews with representatives from 12 organizations engaged in neighbourhood-level activities and gentrification-related issues in central Hamilton, as well as document analysis. Representatives' perceptions and their organizations' impacts with respect to gentrification and neighbourhood change emerge as multi-faceted and occasionally contradictory. Actions often work in tension to simultaneously protect and potentially compromise the inclusivity of Hamilton's inner city neighbourhoods, with instances in which gentrification and displacement are both resisted and facilitated. Despite consistently placing value on diversity and belonging, organizations identify a multiplicity of priorities and face limits to their capacity, which constrain their ability or sense of responsibility to respond to evidence of inequitable neighborhood change. These findings raise the question of who is ultimately responsible to address determinants and impacts of gentrification in Hamilton and other similar contexts, suggesting the need for policy and/or financial supports from multiple levels of government.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep appreciation to those who supported me throughout the research and writing process.

I would first like to extend a huge thank you to all of my participants, who graciously shared their time and insight in order to make this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Markus Moos and Dr. Pierre Filion, whose feedback and guidance throughout was invaluable. I also greatly valued the advice and support that emerged from Dr. Moos' research group, so thank you to all the students who were part of those meetings.

Thank you as well to all of my friends from the University of Waterloo for making the past two years so memorable - it has been a pleasure to both celebrate and commiserate with you!

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their continued support, as well as my partner, Nick, for acting as a sounding board, providing sage advice, and generally putting up with me throughout this process!

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1.0 Introduction

On the evening of March 3, 2018, an anonymous group of 30 individuals took to Locke Street, a symbol of Hamilton, Ontario's much-touted "renaissance", to protest the construction of an increasingly exclusive city at the expense of more vulnerable, lower-income populations. This action emerged as the latest in a series of demonstrations across gentrifying neighbourhoods in Hamilton, which have focused on inflicting damage to and actively discouraging new businesses, development, and investment targeted at a more affluent clientele. These direct action tactics, and the responses that overwhelmingly condemned them as violent and indefensible while still recognizing evident inequities, capture and expose the tensions surrounding the current nature of neighbourhood change in central Hamilton.

On the one hand, recognition of ongoing neighbourhood revitalization continues to permeate public discourse on Hamilton in a largely uncritical and often celebratory manner, with new (upscale) commercial activity and other reinvestment positioned as the saviour of undesirable landscapes of dereliction. These narratives are amplified through the media and advanced in many instances by those promoting and structuring revitalization through their projects and strategies, including developers and municipal actors involved with planning and economic development. However, counter-narratives that explicitly position the transforming physical and socio-economic landscapes as gentrification and emphasize heightened affordability challenges and displacement pressures are also increasingly present. These counter-narratives have emerged not just through instances of direct action, but also within community dialogues more broadly.

Against a backdrop of conflicting celebration of renewal and concern for its inequitable implications, I seek to understand the place of community organizations within these narratives and as actors of change within downtown Hamilton and surrounding neighbourhoods. I examine the initiatives and actions of community-based organizations in gentrifying neighbourhoods in relation to strategies pertaining to Hamilton's "revitalization" and explore the underlying tensions between revitalization and gentrification. For the purpose of this study, community-based organizations include neighbourhood associations, business improvement area associations, and city-wide organizations engaged in gentrification-related issues and neighbourhood-level activities. In situating community organizations' initiatives within processes of gentrification and neighbourhood change in Hamilton, I aim to examine and address the following questions:

1. How do representatives of community organizations perceive neighbourhood change and understand their organizations' roles and impacts in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods?
2. In what ways do the actions of community-based organizations in Hamilton shape and respond to the current trajectory of change in inner city neighbourhoods? What are the equity implications of these actions with respect to gentrification and displacement?

Additionally, the following research objectives guide the research:

1. Identify the spectrum of roles that community organizations implicitly or explicitly play with regard to gentrification and neighbourhood change in Hamilton, drawing conclusions on the implications for lower-income populations, as well as the inclusivity of the neighbourhood more generally.

2. Explore the tensions between revitalization and gentrification through the perceptions of community organizations in Hamilton, with a view to identifying strategies that balance revitalization goals with considerations of affordability, sense of place and diverse community needs.
3. Understand the interplay between community-based initiatives in gentrifying neighbourhoods and municipal revitalization policy, as well as challenges faced and introduced by community organizing, in order to formulate effective policy recommendations.

In addressing these questions and objectives, I intend to expand current knowledge of the connections between community-based action and gentrification, resistance to gentrification and displacement, and the dynamics of gentrification in a mid-sized city context.

Indeed, while much research has investigated the progression and impacts of gentrification processes, community organizations' roles and responses with respect to gentrification and revitalization have received limited attention, as identified by Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016). I intend to develop new understanding in this area by focusing on the ways in which community organizations influence the nature of change in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods and the equity implications therein. Additionally, acts of resistance to gentrification and displacement, whether by community organizations or by others, have not been sufficiently explored in the existing body of literature, as emphasized by DeVerteuil (2012), Lees & Ferreri (2016), and Slater (2008). My examination of how community-based organizations shape gentrification and displacement in Hamilton, including through resistance efforts, lends itself to also growing this body of knowledge. More specifically, the study will not only add to the relatively small number of studies on community organizations' resistance

strategies and experiences, but also expand the limited exploration of resistance both within Canadian cities and to forms of displacement beyond the physical relocation of residents.

Hamilton, a city of approximately 537,000 residents located 70 kilometers west of Toronto, serves as an ideal case study for a number of reasons. In situating the research within Hamilton, I address a broader shortcoming within the gentrification literature, as discussed by Lees (2006): the tendency to focus on examining processes, actors, and impacts of gentrification in larger centres. This research will help to provide some balance to the literature by considering representatives' perspectives on gentrification and placing their organizations' roles within gentrification processes in a mid-sized city context. Additionally, Hamilton's transforming landscape provides an interesting and pertinent setting in which to investigate how gentrification and neighbourhood change is shaped by community-based action. Indeed, Hamilton is home to a large number of community organizations actively involved in questions of neighbourhood change within its central neighbourhoods, including as a function of the City's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (described in Chapter 3). These organizations are operating in a context of intensifying gentrification pressures in the wake of municipal attraction strategies, spillover from Toronto's tight housing and commercial markets, and fairly widespread hype over Hamilton's newfound "coolness". However, despite frequent mention of Hamilton's revitalization in recent years across local, national, and international media, the dynamics and equity of this trajectory of change has received little consideration in gentrification research, particularly in comparison to extensive research on gentrification in Toronto.

In acting as the sole case study for this research, Hamilton's status as a fairly large mid-sized city also provides the opportunity to draw comparisons with and apply lesson to both larger centres and smaller mid-sized cities. For instance, the types of community organizations in

Hamilton relevant to this study reflect both those common to mid-sized cities, such as neighbourhood associations, and the more diverse extent of community-based action in larger cities. The mechanisms of gentrification identified in larger centres across the literature are also similar to those identified in Hamilton. At the same time, the context of Hamilton's revitalization (aka gentrification) is very much comparable to the dynamics at play in many Canadian and international mid-sized cities (e.g. Windsor, Pittsburgh, Sheffield) that have experienced deindustrialization and are now being, or trying to be, redefined. In highlighting the complexity of community-based action with respect to gentrification and revitalization, the results of this study will provide a basis for recommendations to planners, policymakers and community leaders concerning balancing revitalization policies and initiatives with the creation of more equitable communities.

In the following chapters, I explore in greater detail the questions I have raised in this chapter. I begin in Chapter 2 by reviewing the relevant literature on gentrification, displacement, resistance, and actors of neighbourhood change, identifying key knowledge gaps in these areas. In Chapter 3, I contextualize the research by discussing past and current narratives surrounding Hamilton and the different actors of its so-called "renaissance", raising the question once again of the place of community organizations. In Chapter 4, I outline the research philosophy, approach, and methods that have guided this study, as well as details on data analysis and ethical considerations. In Chapter 5, I unpack representatives' perceptions of neighbourhood change and the roles and responses of community organizations in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods. Chapter 6 allows for further discussion of the equity implications of this community-based action, as well as for reflection on who is responsible for addressing inequitable neighbourhood

change, the applicability of themes in other contexts, and policy implications. Finally, I return to my research questions in Chapter 7 to provide concluding thoughts.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature in order to position the study within current research and identify research gaps. Specifically, I explore the existing bodies of literature relating to community organizations' roles and responses in a gentrifying (mid-sized) city, as well as the particularities of the case study setting. I first consider perspectives on gentrification and displacement, including definitions and drivers of gentrification, perceptions of gentrification and its tensions with "revitalization", and the different displacement impacts that gentrification can produce. Subsequently, I examine existing discourse on community organizations as actors of gentrification and neighbourhood change, as well as on resistance to gentrification and displacement and community organizations' acts of contestation. I conclude the section with discussion of the ways in which the study addresses knowledge gaps identified within the literature.

2.2 Perspectives on Gentrification and Displacement

2.2.1 Defining Gentrification as a form of Neighbourhood Change

Unpacking the concept of gentrification upfront helps to frame subsequent discussions of the relevant literature and study findings. The phenomenon of gentrification has been continuously defined and redefined in the literature since its conception by Ruth Glass in 1964, without unanimous agreement on the characteristics, determinants and catalysts (Slater, 2011). Glass' original definition captured gentrification as the result of a gradual, small-scale upgrading of residential units, demonstrated in the following extract:

One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes -- upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages...have become elegant, expensive residences...Once this process of "gentrification" starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed (p. xvii).

While the dimension of class displacement identified by Glass remains central today, such a definition fails to capture the many ways in which gentrification takes shape (Slater, 2006, 2011). Accordingly, current understandings of gentrification look to conceptualize the process more broadly to reflect its variations and changing nature in current economic and political contexts.

While the details of recent definitions vary, they collectively encapsulate gentrification as the physical and upward socio-economic transformation of a neighbourhood, spurred by an influx of capital, as well as new residents, and resulting in different forms of displacement (Clark, 2005; Davidson & Lees, 2005; Lees et al., 2008; Smith, 2000). For instance, Hackworth (2002) defines gentrification as “the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users” (p. 815), reflecting a comprehensive class transition within an area that encompasses not just the residents, but also the amenities, services, and land uses themselves. In doing so, this broad definition is inclusive of “new-build gentrification”, discussed by Lees et al. (2008) and Davidson and Lees (2010), among others, as the redevelopment of vacant land for higher income uses at the risk of indirectly displacing or excluding lower-income populations. Hackworth’s definition also suggests at gentrification as a larger scale phenomenon facilitated at an institutional level and rooted in forces such as the “commodification of space, polarised power relations, and a dominance of vision over sight” (Clark, 2005, p. 265; Slater, 2011). However, it is important to note the specification on the urban in many of these definitions, with Clark (2005) and Davidson and Lees (2005) being notable exceptions. Indeed, while gentrification has

typically been conceptualized as an inner-city phenomenon, the current, complex geographies of gentrification processes around the world make such a distinction too restrictive (Clark, 2005; Lees et al., 2016).

Beyond defining gentrification, theorization of the drivers of gentrification has also been a continually present theme in the literature. For some, gentrification has been critically catalyzed by individuals' locational decisions and preferences in relation to available amenities, resulting in a (phased) influx of residents defined as "middle class" in the traditional sense or as a function of their cultural capital (Clay, 1979; Ley, 1987, 1996, 2003). Rose (1984) adds nuance to this picture by relating the emergence of these variegated gentrifiers (by income and other characteristics) to the broader workings of labour market changes, specifically deindustrialization. The culturally-driven nature of this progression has been particularly emphasized in recent years, through both agglomerations of artistic workers attracted to diverse and affordable environments and contrived municipal branding strategies and "culture-led urban policies" (Bain, 2016; Gainza, 2017, p. 953; Ley, 1996, 2003; Molotch, 2002). The advancement of gentrification has also been discussed in connection to processes of youthification and studentification in circumstances where incoming students and young adults possess high cultural capital (e.g. Moos et al., 2018).

For others, particularly Smith (1979; 1987, 1996, 2002), the powerful force of capital accumulation and the spatial flows of capital is a stronger determinant of gentrification processes, centred on the presence of a "rent gap" (Smith, 1979). Smith defines the rent gap as the difference between "the actual *capitalized* ground rent (land value) of a plot of land given its present use and the *potential* ground rent that might be gleaned under a 'higher and better' use" (1987, p. 462, emphasis in original). The potentially substantial economic gains in capturing this

gap works to drive reinvestment into previously depressed areas, changing the landscape of the neighbourhood (Kallin & Slater, 2014; Smith, 1979). Nevertheless, despite the long-standing debate between production and consumption-related drivers of gentrification, the catalysts of gentrification are much more complicated and interconnected than this dichotomy would suggest (Slater, 2006). While different scholars have emphasized certain factors over others across the decades of gentrification research, many have argued the complexity of gentrification requires similarly multi-faceted, robust conceptions of the various processes at play (Clark, 1992, 2005; Slater, 2006). The advancement of such complex processes provides the backdrop to this study.

2.2.2 State-Led Gentrification and Territorial Stigmatization

While little is known about community organizations' contributions to inequitable neighbourhood change, there are other actors whose roles in advancing gentrification processes are widely recognized and have potential implications for community-based action. Given prevailing neoliberal ideals and in a context of continued inter-urban competitiveness, the investment of capital, attraction of higher-income residents, and subsequent transformation of neighbourhood landscapes has been increasingly facilitated by governmental plans, policies, initiatives, and strategies (Lees et al, 2016; Paton & Cooper, 2016; Shaw, 2005; Slater, 2006, 2008; Smith, 2002). This state facilitation of gentrification is a key feature of what Hackworth and Smith (2001) characterize as “third wave gentrification”, which reflects the extension and expansion of the process over the past few decades, in terms of both geography and scale. With the rise of increasingly neoliberal, entrepreneurial cities, where a focus on addressing economic imperatives deemphasize and devalue public provisions for social welfare (Harvey, 1989), indications of state-led gentrification often emerge at the municipal level. Such indications are evident in the intent and discourse surrounding beautification projects, redevelopment incentives,

neighbourhood rebranding, area revitalization plans, and the push to establish social mix in low-income communities (Doucet et al., 2011; Hochstenbach, 2015; Shaw, 2005; Slater, 2006).

In the wake of Florida's (2002) "creative class" thesis, municipalities have strived to re-imagine neighbourhoods as haunts for middle-class, creative professionals (and capital) by providing for an array of hip urban amenities deemed to be desired by this subset of the population. In actively reshaping neighbourhoods around the attraction of a new type of resident, existing populations in lower-income communities have experienced displacement and disintegration of social networks (Doucet et al., 2011; Gordon et al., 2017; Slater, 2006; Teernstra, 2015). While seemingly contradictory, the production of gentrification by the state and other actors is frequently facilitated by narratives of decline and stigmatization, which are embedded in and reinforced through plans, policy documents, and the media (August, 2014; Kallin & Slater, 2014; Wacquant, 2016). The attachment of stigma to disinvested, lower-income neighbourhoods works to increase the existing rent gap by reducing the worth of the areas' current uses and occupants.

Through this problematization, redevelopment and revitalization projects are rationalized while profit margins that can be realized are enhanced, establishing the basis for a "thorough class transformation" (Kallin & Slater, 2014, p. 1353; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014). Vulnerabilities introduced by such projects have been exacerbated by the increased financialization of housing and erosion of social welfare provisions and protections at a broader scale (Doucet et al., 2011; Paton & Cooper, 2016). As existing residents continue to experience the burden of lingering negative perceptions, the strength of the property market and municipal initiatives to redefine the neighbourhood help incoming investment and development to overcome the "blemish of place" (Hochstenbach, 2015; Wacquant, 2007, p. 67; Weber, 2002).

While many recent gentrification studies have been framed by state involvement in local socio-economic and physical transformations (e.g. August & Walks, 2012; Gordon et al., 2017; Teernstra, 2015), the dynamics and impacts of community organizations' actions within a context of municipally-driven gentrification has not been thoroughly explored, particularly in a mid-sized city context.

2.2.3 Perceptions of Gentrification and its Tensions with “Revitalization”

As a contentious and “ideologically and politically loaded” concept (Lees et al., 2010, p. 3), the ways in which gentrification processes are framed vary substantially in both practice and the literature. Understanding these different perceptions helps to contextualize perspectives on neighbourhood change held by representatives of community organizations within this study. Given the widely-identified inequities that emerge in the creation of elite neighbourhoods and spaces at the expense of marginalized populations (Smith, 1996), the nature and impacts of gentrification continue to be widely critiqued in the literature. Nevertheless, much more positive conceptualizations of the process have also emerged in recent years, as criticized by Slater (2006), including praise for the impacts of commercial gentrification (Zukin & Kosta, 2004) and patronizing emancipatory discourses (e.g. Byrne, 2003). In particular, gentrification is portrayed as something of a saviour to low-income residents by enhancing their prospects and quality of life through new amenities and beneficial interactions with gentrifiers (Slater, 2006). Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016), while relatively more critical, challenge the notion of gentrification as a “zero-sum game”, arguing that the gentrification process in Gallery Row has supported increased advocacy around neighbouring Skid Row. Newman and Wyly (2006) and Slater (2006) also suggest that the minimization of displacement impacts in the absence of clear

evidence of direct residential displacement (e.g. Butler et al., 2008; Freeman, 2005; Freeman et al., 2016; Hamnett, 2003) has been used to frame gentrification in a positive light.

The narrative of “positive gentrification” is also echoed by policymakers, including in the intentional redevelopment of lower-income neighbourhoods (e.g. concentrated social housing) into socially mixed communities (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013). This positive language also appears in municipal policy documents in cities such as Amsterdam, where gentrification is conceptualized as a controlled process bringing beneficial amenities to neighbourhoods, despite a less equitable reality on the ground (Hochstenbach, 2015). Such narratives imply an achievable “happy medium” of gentrification, in which low-income residents experience increased opportunity and quality of life through access to revitalized surroundings and more diverse social interactions, with minimal displacement (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Hochstenbach, 2015). However, the anticipated benefits of social mix, however paternalistic, rarely materialize; studies show residents in gentrifying communities are more commonly faced with a loss of sense of belonging, widespread displacement, and disintegration of social networks and other community assets (August, 2014; Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Slater, 2008).

In other instances, the presence of gentrification in “revitalizing” neighbourhoods has been questioned or denied given lacking evidence of a comprehensive class transition underway (Gainza, 2017; Hochstenbach, 2015). Hochstenbach (2015) notes how policymakers in Berlin have used the absence of higher income earners in a neighbourhood to reinforce the absence of gentrification, despite other differing characteristics between incoming and existing residents that suggest a socio-economic shift (e.g. “temporarily poor” students versus residents reliant on social assistance) (p. 827). Gainza (2017) also discusses the appropriateness of gentrification as a label for the changes a Bilbao neighbourhood has experienced in the presence of cultural re-

branding initiatives, noting its continued, though more constrained, accessibility to recent immigrants and the lower-income status of new residents undertaking creative work.

However, Gainza suggests that regardless of how the changes are classified, the evolving physical spaces and social dynamics within the neighbourhood, encompassed by broader understandings of gentrification, have introduced questions of inclusivity and tension over the meanings neighbourhood spaces hold. As such, gentrification is argued as a more complex process that extends beyond traditional conceptions of class transition, represented by income or rent, and subsequent physical displacement (Gainza, 2017; Hochstenbach, 2015; Ley, 1987, 2003). Gentrification also emerges in discourse as an inevitable or unsurprising result of revitalization initiatives, which are justified on the basis of avoiding the impacts of sustained disinvestment (Hochstenbach, 2015; Slater, 2014). Through this narrative, reinforcing the false dichotomy of decline and gentrification as a neighbourhood's possible trajectories, policymakers and other actors absolve themselves of responsibility for the consequences of their initiatives in pursuit of the lesser of two evils (Hochstenbach, 2015; Slater, 2014; Teernstra, 2015).

The tensions and connections between revitalization and gentrification as alternatively distinct, overlapping, and successive processes is also prominent in discussions of neighbourhood change. Revitalization and gentrification are often distinguished as more and less acceptable incarnations, respectively, of the same dynamic of reinvestment, with revitalization as, for instance, an earlier and more desirable stage of change that risks gentrification and its negative aspects should it progress too far (Levy et al., 2007). Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) also argue that revitalization can embody a more just process through acts of resistance that work to redefine its objectives, suggesting that it “does not necessarily have to result in the ugly aspects of gentrification”, such as residential displacement (p. 418). Similarly, community

land trusts, in providing for neighbourhood assets through community ownership, may be framed as “community-led revitalization without displacement” (Bunce, 2016, p. 134).

However, language of revitalization is also commonly employed by policymakers and others as a palatable alternative to the negative connotations surrounding gentrification, making the two terms essentially synonymous in many situations (Hochstenbach, 2015; Slater, 2008). In this way, the advancement of gentrification and its negative impacts are often hidden behind a veil of “revitalization” (Slater, 2008). Thus, an overarching objective of this study is to consider how representatives of community organizations navigate and reproduce these tensions between gentrification and revitalization, as well as between different conceptions of gentrification, through their perspectives on neighbourhood change.

2.2.4 Understandings of Displacement: From Physical Relocation to Questions of Identity

Displacement in cities is a long-standing phenomenon, resulting from gentrification processes that include post-war urban renewal and reinvestment in urban cores beginning in the late 20st century (Fraser, 2004). As a common outcome of inequitable neighbourhood change, displacement is central to discussions of community organizations’ priorities and impacts within a gentrifying context. Defined quite inclusively by Hartman et al. (1982) as “what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable” (p. 3, as quoted in Slater, 2009), the possible manifestations of displacement vary. Indeed, literature on displacement can be understood through its interaction, or lack thereof (Slater, 2009), with Marcuse’s 1985 typology of displacement.

In his seminal work, Marcuse identifies three central types of displacement: direct displacement¹, exclusionary displacement, and displacement pressure. Direct displacement describes the forced relocation from one's home and neighbourhood as a result of a variety of factors, such as, in the case of a gentrifying neighbourhood, rising housing costs. Studies of gentrification-induced displacement have largely centered on this understanding of displacement, including seminal works such as Sumka (1979) and Atkinson (2000). The process of direct displacement has often been framed within recent decades by a narrative of state-led gentrification, including the adoption of neoliberal and entrepreneurial policies. For instance, both Freeman & Braconi (2004) and Newman & Wyly (2006) studied the direct displacement of low-income residents from gentrifying neighbourhoods in the context of increasing deregulation of housing in New York City during the 1990s. More recently, Goetz (2011) undertook a quantitative analysis of African American residents directly (and indirectly) displaced due to the mixed-income redevelopment of social housing projects (and subsequent neighbourhood change) under the state-driven HOPE VI program in the United States.

Direct displacement often acts as a linked process with exclusionary displacement, as emphasized by Lopez-Morales (2016) and Gaffney (2016). Exclusionary displacement, as described by Marcuse (1985), refers to the inability for a household to move into a neighborhood (or remain once displaced) due to the unsuitability (e.g. unaffordability) of available housing. Lopez-Morales (2016) explores gentrification-induced direct and exclusionary displacement in Santa Isabel, Santiago resulting from residential redevelopment that increased land and property values and decreased unit sizes. Similarly, Gaffney (2016) uncovers evidence of both direct and exclusionary displacement due to the conversion of a lower-rent residential building to a hotel in

¹ Marcuse highlights two different ways of measuring direct displacement: last-resident, which considers only the most recent household as displaced, and chain, which encompasses those who may have been displaced prior to the most recent household.

Rio de Janeiro for the 2016 Olympics. In both case studies, directly displaced residents have been largely excluded from their neighbourhoods due to an inability to find comparable and affordable replacement units. Additionally, rent gap closure and the loss of (rare) affordable housing also preclude the arrival of new low-income households (Gaffney, 2016; Lopez-Morales, 2016). Concerns of direct and exclusionary displacement have also been identified in Mexico City, where revitalization strategies are working to construct an elite city (Delgadillo, 2016), as well as in gentrifying inner Melbourne (Weller & Van Hulten, 2012).

Marcuse's final category, displacement pressure, reflects an indirect form of displacement resulting from neighbourhood transformations (e.g. gentrifying commercial activity) that make remaining increasingly less desirable and possible. This final type of displacement meshes with those who go beyond displacement as forced (direct) or suppressed (exclusionary) mobility to conceptualize the phenomenon as a "loss of place" that can be experienced by those who remain in a changing neighbourhood (Davidson, 2009, p. 222; Davidson & Lees, 2010; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). Indeed, a growing body of research recognizes that "people can be displaced—unable to (re)construct place—without spatial dislocation, just as much as they can with spatial dislocation" (Davidson, 2009, p. 228). Encapsulating this notion, *displacement*, as coined by Davidson (2009) and Davidson and Lees (2010), reflects a dwindling connection to one's neighbourhood and loss of place identity due to changes in (read: gentrification of) commercial amenities and "renewal" of public spaces. Davidson and Lees (2010) suggest this form of displacement is about "much more than the moment of spatial relocation" (p. 402), which overlooks embedded social relations and emotional place attachments in framing space as an abstract entity (Davidson, 2009).

Blomley (2004) reflects on this understanding of place-based displacement in his case study of conceptions of property and ownership in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. More specifically, he discusses existing residents' drive to protect the meanings attached to the neighbourhood's spaces, which are significantly threatened by state-led desires to revitalize and re-brand the area. More recently, Shaw and Hagemans (2015) have noted evidence of displacement without relocation in two inner Melbourne neighbourhoods experiencing gentrification. The authors describe how the erasure of familiar services and streetscapes and introduction of upscale businesses has led residents to feel "out of place" (p. 331) and question their belonging in the neighbourhood. Hodkinson and Essen (2015) suggest that residents of Myers Field North social housing in London, UK have also experienced this "dispossession of place" (p.83) as a result of its redevelopment as a mixed income community. Strategies to rebrand the community to attract investment to the market rate housing externally project certain images onto the neighbourhood, which fail to reflect or resonate with the place identity of existing residents. This reimagining effectively dismisses and obliterates existing meanings associated with the site, challenging residents' connections to their community (Hodkinson & Essen, 2015).

However, the gentrification literature does not generally consider displacement as an intangible, identity-based concept. Indeed, this more subjective understanding of displacement has been overlooked or ignored by those who, as discussed above, dismiss or diminish its existence in the absence of (quantitative) evidence of relocation. This narrow conception of displacement is reflected in an oft-quoted passage from Hamnett and Whitelegg (2007) in their study of loft conversions in London, UK, which concludes they have demonstrated:

...a clear example of gentrification without displacement although it may well be accompanied by growing feelings of relative deprivation on the part of existing residents who have seen traditional working men's cafes and pubs replaced by swish restaurants, wine bars, kitchen shops, and florists. (p. 122).

Ironically, as Davidson (2009) and Slater (2009) emphasize, what Hamnett and Whitelegg portray is indeed in situ displacement as a result of a changing place identity, equating to Marcuse's (1985) description of "displacement pressure".

The notion of place-based displacement connects to Lefebvre's Spatial Triad (1991), in terms of the construction of place identities and conflict between the conceived meanings of external development interests and the lived space of existing residents. Lefebvre's Spatial Triad posits that space is formulated by the convergence and interaction of physical, social, and mental realms, which are conceptualized as *spatial practice*, *representational space*, and *representations of space* (conceived space). Spatial practice (perceived space) encompasses how the urban form is navigated and shaped by society's "daily routine", while representational space (lived space) reflects the meanings attached to space by its users (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Finally, representations of space (conceived space) refer to the abstract, hegemonic space of planners and other technical professionals, "all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38). This framework speaks to the potential tensions between, and dominance of, certain spatial identities depending on the distribution of power (Lefebvre, 1991). However, the place of community organizations within this framework in the context of processes of gentrification and neighbourhood change requires further exploration.

2.3 Community Organizations as Actors of Neighbourhood Change

A substantial portion of the gentrification literature focuses on unpacking the usual suspects of this process of neighbourhood change. For instance, as previously highlighted, the role of the state and policymakers in facilitating gentrification through, for instance, neighbourhood rebranding, policy direction, and the sanitization of public space, has been extensively documented (e.g. August & Walks, 2012; Doucet et al., 2011; Gordon et al., 2017; Hochstenbach, 2015; Shaw, 2005; Teernstra, 2015). Alongside these public sector actors, including municipal staff, private developers are also identified as heavily involved in reformulating the physical and socio-economic landscapes of neighbourhoods (Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Hackworth & Smith, 2001). However, while certain functions of community organizations, such as liaising with municipal actors and pursuing neighbourhood improvements, position them as agents of change (Clay, 1979; Elwood, 2006; Koschmann & Laster, 2011), the implications of their priorities and actions with regard to gentrification has received limited exploration (Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). Existing discussions do not yet provide comprehensive insight on the subject, as many studies focus on roles and impacts across one or two neighbourhoods in larger cities (e.g. Toronto, Los Angeles) and/or touch upon community organizations in passing or alongside other actors of neighbourhood change (e.g. August & Walks, 2012; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Clay, 1979).

The position and nature of community organizations (broadly defined) has evolved in a neoliberal era, with a new place in the governance of urban areas (Fontan et al., 2009) and new challenges negotiating their functions, spheres of influence, legitimacy, and agency to determine priorities (DeFilippis, 2004; Elwood, 2006; Stoecker, 2003). In this context, Elwood (2006) argues, community organizations embody and project multi-faceted, and perhaps seemingly

contradictory, roles and responses beyond a dichotomy of institutional cooptation and community advocacy. The functioning of community organizations also continues to be challenged by questions of financial capacity, as well as the ability to assemble a critical mass and unite around common goals (Koschmann & Laster, 2011).

Within the diverse literature on the agency and dynamics of urban community organizations, specific characteristics of community-based action emerge in the context of municipal revitalization narratives and realities of gentrification. In this context, community organizations encompass neighbourhood associations or councils, as well as activist groups, event organizations, and business improvement associations (August & Walks, 2012; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Koschmann & Laster, 2011). While some organizations have a long-standing role in the community, other collectives may arise for specific purposes (Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Keatinge & Martin, 2016). Echoing the sentiments of Elwood (2006), the roles of community organizations with regard to gentrification and neighbourhood change are complex, numerous, and evolving, ranging from participation in beautification and other local “rehabilitative” projects, to reinforcing a neighbourhood identity, to involvement in (re)development processes (Bunce, 2016; Clay, 1979; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Keatinge & Martin, 2016). The aims of community organizations also vary; in the latter instance, playing a role in (re)development processes may be motivated by securing certain amenities or development characteristics, providing affordable housing, or resisting inequitable proposals (Bunce, 2016; Clay, 1979; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016).

In determining priorities and direction within a context of gentrification, both Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) and Koschmann and Laster (2011) identify instances of collaboration across perceived divides (e.g. gentrifier versus non-gentrifier) within community organizations to

arrive at shared goals or address shared issues. For instance, in their Los Angeles case study, Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) note the establishment of an organization between actors in Skid Row and gentrifying Gallery Row focused on improving the quality of public space in the area, although whether or not this initiative is as equitable in practice as it is on paper remains in question. While in both instances collaboration is perceived as strengthening the impact of subsequent actions, it also seen as a challenge that involves recognition of the broader forces of gentrification. The existence of differing interests and power imbalances also emerge in the work of neighbourhood associations and other community organizations. These tensions are seen in the uneven representation of residents depending on their social class and position on renewal, and the disproportionate sway and capacity behind those in support of continued gentrification versus those pushing for a focus on issues of poverty and other inequities (August & Walks, 2012; Collins & Loutaikou-Sideris, 2016).

The roles, perspectives, and qualities of gentrifiers themselves has also been increasingly explored (Keatinge & Martin, 2016; Ley, 1996; Slater, 2006; Rose, 1984), including their differentiation on the basis of their willingness to counteract the impacts of gentrification, with relevance for analyzing the actions of resident-led community organizations. Indeed, Brown-Saracino (2010) identifies three variants of gentrifiers (as summarized by Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016), the first being “urban pioneers” focused on economic gains and reclaiming the neighbourhood for uses and users deemed “appropriate” without concern for neighbourhood impacts. “Social homesteaders”, who recognize their position within the changing neighbourhood but fail to react, and “social preservationists”, who who strive to diminish the negative impacts of gentrification, represent the other two types (Brown-Saracino, 2010).

Returning to the initiatives of resident-led community associations in gentrifying neighbourhoods, these distinctions raise questions of who is involved and whose interests are being supported in the (resident-driven) shaping of a neighbourhood. As with the power imbalances and differing priorities noted in community organizations more broadly (e.g. Collins & Loutaikou-Sideris, 2016), such questions evoke Lefebvre's Right to the City (1996) concept in terms of who has the agency to transform urban spaces and the exclusionary implications therewithin. For instance, August and Walks (2012) note how residents' organizations in neighbourhoods surrounding Regent Park, Toronto demonstrate a push to exclude uses and people deemed "undesirable" from the community, such as social housing and its residents. Similarly, Keatinge and Martin (2016) discuss actions undertaken by a collective of gentrifiers to resist the progression of commercial activity that did not fit with the imagined identity of their inner suburban Toronto neighbourhood as a family-oriented area undergoing renewal.

Class-based acts of defining who and what activities are acceptable (e.g. palatable to continued reinvestment) by groups of more privileged residents highlight the element of power in terms of who gets to define the character and direction of a neighbourhood (Keatinge & Martin, 2016). However, in contrast, Koschmann and Laster (2011) provide an example of "social preservationists" working with non-gentrifier residents within their case study neighbourhood association to mitigate the impacts of gentrification, owing in part to recognition of their position and the associated guilt. Through this study, I intend to extend understanding of the dynamics and tensions of community-based action in gentrifying neighbourhoods, including through investigation of the inclusivity of both decision-making processes and their impacts.

2.4 Resistance to Gentrification and Displacement

2.4.1 Resisting What?

While examples of resistance to gentrification and displacement in the Global South are growing (González, 2016), such studies in the Global North are relatively limited (De Verteuil, 2012; Lees & Ferreri, 2016) and present a bias toward experiences in large urban centers and mega-cities, such as New York and London, UK. In response, I explore resistance to gentrification and displacement as a possible facet of community-based action outside of this context, which requires first unpacking current research in this area. Recent accounts of gentrification and displacement-related resistance are largely focused on the contestation of third-wave, state-led gentrification (as defined by Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Resistance to the outcomes of social mix policies and entrepreneurial revitalization strategies, including displacement, are two such examples. For instance, August (2016) frames the mixed-tenure redevelopment of Regent Park, Toronto as state-assisted gentrification in investigating social housing residents' capacity to resist elements of the project. In Berlin, Novy and Colomb (2013) examine mobilization against a place marketing and regeneration project aimed at redeveloping an industrial zone as a media cluster (Media Spree), capitalizing on existing cultural scenes while introducing threats of displacement. In an earlier example, Smith (1996) explores the contestation of gentrification in Lower East Side Manhattan centered on the sanitization and regulation of Tompkins Square Park by authorities in the interest of capital accumulation.

While most examples of resistance to gentrification-induced displacement are centered on concerns of physical relocation (see, for instance, DeVerteuil, 2012; Maeckelbergh, 2012; Newman & Wyly, 2006), there are a limited number that do highlight resistance to in situ displacement, specifically a loss of place. For instance, Lees and Ferreri (2016) and Robinson

(1995), while explicitly discussing resistance to physical displacement, also implicitly touch on displacement by highlighting resistance to diminished public space and the loss of certain amenities as a result of gentrification and redevelopment. More explicitly, Blomley (2004) emphasizes the fight to keep the former Woodward's department store in Downtown Eastside Vancouver for the community due to its historical identification as a social gathering place. Returning to the Media Spree project in Berlin, Novy and Colomb (2013) demonstrate resistance to the "displacement of the area's subcultural fabric", which encompasses both a changing place identity as well as the physical displacement of existing groups, "community networks", and activities occupying the area (p. 1825, 1827). In this study, I look to consider community organizations' resistance to both the direct and place-based displacement of community members.

2.4.2 *Strategies of Resistance*

Two overarching forms of resistance to gentrification and displacement emerge from the literature: *coping* versus *contesting*, which have relevance in contextualizing community organizations' acts of resistance. While *contesting* strategies look to bring visibility to issues, advocate for marginalized interests, and ultimately affect larger-scale change, *coping* strategies are tools or benefits that help residents and services to remain in a neighbourhood without challenging the basis of displacement concerns in the same way. For instance, Newman and Wyly (2006) discuss several coping strategies that arise from state involvement, including rent regulations and the provision of social housing or vouchers. Residents in New York City also employ other coping strategies, such as enduring lower housing standards or sharing units (Newman & Wyly, 2006). The social service organizations examined by DeVerteuil (2012) also

largely resist displacement through the use of coping strategies, such as altruistic landlords, government subsidies, and maintaining a critical mass of service providers.

Contesting strategies, particularly at the neighbourhood level, typically involve some degree of grassroots mobilization supported by residents, housing activists, and other community advocates (Robinson, 1995; Rodriguez & Di Virgilio, 2016). However, the forms and actors involved do vary. Indeed, Novy and Colomb's case studies (2013) highlight the central role of cultural actors in contesting outcomes of state-led gentrification, such as displacement and the construction of elitist spaces. In Berlin, the coalition contesting Media Spree protested and raised awareness using demonstrations, public workshops, and artistic products. Mobilizers in Hamburg occupied the historic Gängeviertel neighbourhood, hosting of a variety of events to draw attention to the issues of the destruction and high-income redevelopment of the remaining buildings (Novy & Colomb, 2013). Similar to Hamburg, those contesting the redevelopment of Heygate Estate in London, UK as a mixed-income community maintained a presence on the nearly empty estate through a range of events, including "gentrification walks" (Lees & Ferreri, 2016). A coalition of stakeholders within the broader neighbourhood (Elephant and Castle) were also involved in critiquing and responding to planning decisions while advocating for more equitable alternatives and a more transparent and participatory planning process (Lees & Ferreri, 2016).

In contesting displacement, Robinson (1995) emphasizes that action can be reactive or proactive, highlighting how community advocates in the Tenderloin both responded to displacement pressures and were involved in proactive efforts to protect, improve, and expand the supply of affordable housing. This duality is also evident in Caracas, Venezuela, where residents of informally developed settlements in Chacao both protested threats of nearby

commercial displacement and organized to identify new, improved housing opportunities (Atehortua, 2014).

Contesting and coping strategies also operate at different scales. As demonstrated, coping strategies most commonly operate at a smaller scale, such as the neighbourhood or household level, although networks of government support that help organizations or residents to remain in place go beyond these boundaries. Contesting strategies, on the other hand, can operate at a range of scales. While the examples discussed above are centered on the neighborhood, although tapping into larger issues, Watt discusses resistance to the ownership transfer and redevelopment of social housing in the UK within cities and at the national scale (Watt, 2009). Similarly, Maeckelbergh (2012) describes how Movement for Justice in El Barrio not only resisted gentrification-induced displacement in East Harlem, but was also involved in housing mobilization efforts at local, national, and global scales, linking themselves with other networks through broader themes. This framework of resistance provides a useful lens through which to understand how community organizations may resist gentrification and displacement.

2.4.3 Community Organizations and Resistance to Gentrification and Displacement

Despite indications that community-based action has been depoliticized in recent decades (August, 2016), a small body of literature also highlights community organizations' ongoing efforts to resist gentrification and its impacts, which has specific relevance for this study. While gentrification produces a multiplicity of challenges, such resistance commonly tackles issues of direct and exclusionary displacement through work to increase or retain affordable housing within gentrifying neighbourhoods (Bunce, 2016; Fields, 2015; Levy et al., 2007; Lloyd, 2016). Establishing community ownership through the development of land trusts, where property is removed from market forces and developed around shared interests within the neighbourhood, is

one such strategy to address rapidly decreasing housing affordability while addressing speculative patterns of development (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis, 2004; Levy et al., 2007). Nevertheless, there are also examples of community organizations resisting challenges of indirect displacement. Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) note that Skid Row activists experienced some success in holding off upmarket commercial activity and development through involvement in the Downtown Los Angeles Neighbourhood Council, while also working to monitor and improve the justness of decision-making processes within the association.

As a whole, community organizations' efforts to resist gentrification and displacement reflect a combination of coping and contesting strategies. Their actions intend to help individuals cope with the impacts of gentrification within their communities, as well as contest the production of gentrification at a broader scale. For instance, in addition to helping residents avoid displacement on-the-ground (Bunce, 2016; Levy et al., 2007; Lloyd, 2016), community-based action can also expose factors compromising housing affordability and producing displacement through data, reports, and protest, as well as develop and promote policy solutions (Fields, 2015; Lees & Ferreri, 2016). Additionally, while community organizations institute alternative development models, such as land trusts, to directly address community needs in a gentrifying context, they also work to contest gentrification/decline binaries and the use of land as a tool for wealth generation (Bunce, 2016; DeFilippis, 2004).

Collaboration with a range of parties within public, private, and community realms emerges as a frequent requirement to advance these responses (Bunce, 2016; Fields, 2015; Lloyd, 2016). However, while establishing such relationships may leverage broader connections and increase capacity (Bunce, 2016; Fields, 2015; Lloyd, 2016), they can also produce a less radical result; in the case of the East London Community Land Trust, compromises were

required within the politicized context to bring a degree of community ownership to fruition (Bunce, 2016). Community organizations also face other challenges in resisting gentrification and displacement, including acquiring sufficient financial resources to support their actions, achieving legitimacy, and overcoming differing priorities focused around redevelopment and private investment (Bunce, 2016; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Fields, 2015; Lloyd, 2016). This study provides the opportunity to expand knowledge on community organizations' strategies and challenges of resistance to gentrification by considering organizations' different roles and responses within gentrifying neighbourhoods.

2.5 Community-Based Action in a Gentrifying Mid-Sized City: Research Gaps

Initial theories of gentrification as an isolated phenomenon, both within and across urban areas, (e.g. Berry's 1985 "islands of renewal" thesis) have been overturned in the past two decades as extensive gentrification processes have been identified globally (Lees et al., 2016; Wyly & Hammel, 1999). While much research has focused on how gentrification unfolds in larger centres in both the Global North and South, as highlighted throughout this discussion of the literature, there has been a relative dearth of studies on processes and perceptions of gentrification in a smaller-city context (Lees, 2006). I help to fill this gap by using Hamilton, Ontario, a gentrifying mid-sized city, as a case study to investigate community organizations as actors of neighbourhood change. In doing so, I build and expand upon the small body of research to date that has worked to identify the existence of gentrification and the nature and drivers of its progression in mid-sized urban settings (e.g. Bain, 2016; Bereitschaft, 2014; Roth & Grant, 2015). Additionally, despite substantial popular discourse on its changing urban landscapes, Hamilton itself is also understudied with respect to processes of gentrification and revitalization,

with work to date focusing on arts-related components of neighbourhood change (e.g. Bain, 2016).

Through this study, I will also address broader shortcomings and develop new understanding within the gentrification literature with regard to the roles and responses of community organizations in a gentrifying context (Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). Indeed, previous studies that consider the ways in which community organizations shape the progression and impacts of gentrification and neighbourhood change are relatively limited in number. Not only that, but existing research tends to focus on a very small number of groups within one or two neighbourhoods and/or only briefly consider the roles of community organizations within broader discussions or in combination with other actors. In contrast, I place the actions of a substantial number of community organizations as the central focus of this study and consider their impacts in several gentrifying neighbourhoods across Hamilton. Expanding knowledge in this area provides a more complete understanding of the different actors shaping gentrification processes, from which pathways of neighbourhood change that support socially just initiatives and respond to less equitable conditions can be determined.

In studying the actions of community organizations within a context of gentrification, I also extend this research to encompass acts of resistance to gentrification and displacement. As a result, the research contributes to an area that DeVerteuil (2012), Lees & Ferreri (2016), and Slater (2008) note has been generally understudied to date while simultaneously addressing the large-city bias and dearth of Canadian experiences in existing research on resistance to gentrification. Additionally, unlike many studies, I examine the presence of resistance to place-based displacement, as well as to more traditional forms of direct displacement. I also differentiate this study from related studies by engaging with a range of potential outcomes of

community-based action, including consideration of tensions between facilitating and resisting gentrification, instead of focusing predominantly on resistance.

3.0 Context

Hamilton has experienced substantial change in the past decades. For much of the 20th century, the city was a prominent centre of steel manufacturing, an industry that provided employment for a large proportion of its residents and gave the city its “Steeltown” identity. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, Hamilton witnessed its long-standing economic base shrink as steel mills and other manufacturing plants closed, relocated, and downsized (Arnold, 2012), reflecting the widespread deindustrialization of North American cities. While not all industry disappeared from the city, substantial losses in manufacturing nevertheless contributed to a challenging economic and social context by the turn of the 21st century. Impacts of a changing economic structure, such as unemployment and increased commercial vacancy, were particularly evident in traditionally working class, inner city neighbourhoods in the central and eastern areas of the city (author’s interviews).

The continued social and economic need in these areas has been amplified through local media in recent years. Of particular note is a Hamilton Spectator article series initiated in 2010 under the banner “Code Red”, which emphasizes the disproportionate health problems faced by residents of many inner city neighbourhoods in a context of high poverty rates, low education levels, and other challenges (The Hamilton Spectator, n.d.). While these discussions intend to bring attention and initiate solutions to systemic issues, the “code red” label attached to these neighbourhoods is also perceived as (re)producing stereotypes and stigmatization (author’s interviews). At the same time, discourse on Hamilton in the past few years has also centred on a new trajectory of change identified across its inner city neighbourhoods. Indeed, terms like revitalization, renaissance, and renewal are regularly employed in news articles, blogs, and dialogues to describe the transforming character and dynamics of central Hamilton, terms Slater

(2008) challenges as positive conceptualizations of mechanisms of gentrification. Those pushing for or writing on Hamilton's revitalization frequently highlight new commercial activity (largely upscale, with some exceptions), proliferating condo developments, and streetscape improvements. In doing so, contrasts are often drawn to past (and existent) dereliction, persisting social challenges, and the city's "gritty" identity (e.g. Gee, 2015; Hayes, 2016; MacLeod, 2015; Reilly, 2017).

However, substantial concern from residents, housing advocates, and other community members over the inclusivity of a transformed Hamilton has also emerged in the media in the context of these revitalization narratives and growing evidence of gentrification and displacement pressures (e.g. Dreschel, 2017; Trapunski, 2017). Multiple news articles, as well as a recent study on neighbourhood change (Harris et al., 2015), point to (threats of) residential displacement in central Hamilton neighbourhoods as a result of rapidly rising rental housing prices and rent eviction tactics (Fragomeni, 2015; Hayes, 2015; Moro, 2015). Indeed, the change in residents' average individual income between 2005 and 2015 in census tracts around "revitalized" corridors in the downtown area, such as Locke Street and James Street North, was much greater than the change experienced across the census metropolitan area of Hamilton (Statistics Canada, 2006, 2016). The displacement of artists and businesses from such corridors due to rising rents has also been recognized (Reilly, 2014; Trapunski, 2017). In connection to displacement concerns, the reframing of Hamilton's "Steeltown" identity as a promotional device or conceptualizations of the city as a blank slate, as employed by certain proponents of revitalization, have been contested through both dialogue and direct action (Trapunski, 2017; Van Dongen, 2017). The most prominent acts of resistance to these narratives have come from groups of anonymous (anarchist) individuals, who have responded by protesting at investment-

focused events and damaging businesses and developments representative of the progression of gentrification (Gardner & Paddon, 2018; Van Dongen, 2016, 2017).

The so-called Hamilton “renaissance” has been driven in part by an influx of residents and businesses struggling to find space in Toronto’s tight real estate market, as well as the projects of small and large-scale developers drawn to perceived opportunity from within and outside of Hamilton (e.g. Gee, 2015; Moro, 2015; Sponagle, 2017; Trapunski, 2017). A burgeoning arts scene, now compromised in some respects by gentrification, has also played a role (author’s interviews; Bain, 2016), in part through a monthly art crawl along James Street North that has become increasingly commercialized and co-opted as a place marketing strategy (Carter, 2017). However, an arguably larger driving force has been the City of Hamilton itself through its planning and economic development policies, strategies and incentives, which have supported arts-driven revitalization (Bain, 2016) and facilitated different forms of reinvestment.

Indeed, reflecting mechanisms of state-led gentrification, the City of Hamilton has played a lead role in drawing private investment to the city. The municipality has achieved this in part by actively participating in events that look to promote the city and its economic and lifestyle opportunities to external populations and businesses (Trapunski, 2017). Additionally, the City of Hamilton’s proposed Downtown Secondary Plan discusses using “public realm improvements as a catalyst for revitalization”, emphasizing the role of such improvements in “stimulating investment on adjacent private properties” (City of Hamilton, 2018). Alongside these place marketing strategies and public space improvements, the municipality also provides a series of grants and incentives for development projects and building improvements in areas targeted for revitalization. These incentives are particularly robust along two inner city commercial corridors portrayed as having “declined alongside industry” (The Planning Partnership, 2014). Such

initiatives are aligned as a response to the identified manifestation of decline in “vacant and neglected properties and...low-income households facing social and economic challenges”, as well as the need for “substantial investment to first stop the decline, and then begin the reinvention” (The Planning Partnership, 2014). However, as emphasized by certain community members, the place of current (low-income, marginalized) residents in this “reinvention” is unclear, as the trajectory of revitalization appears catered toward more affluent populations despite claims from City staff of fostering an inclusive approach to change (Dreschel, 2017; Moro, 2015; Trapunski, 2017).

In partnership with other entities, the City of Hamilton also responded to narratives of neighbourhood decline and deprivation, such as the economic and social challenges that emerged in the Code Red article series, through the creation of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) in 2011 (author’s interviews, City of Hamilton, 2012; Pecoskie, 2014). The intention behind the NAS was to address some of these challenges in 11 priority neighbourhoods across the city, many centrally-located, by providing support to groups of community members to develop action plans and undertake or facilitate local initiatives (author’s interviews, City of Hamilton, 2012). Given this ongoing mandate, the NAS emphasizes the place of neighbourhood associations and the like in shaping processes of neighbourhood change. However, outside of occasional news article references and current research on the progression of the NAS, a comprehensive picture of the roles community-based organizations play in this revitalizing (gentrifying) context is lacking. In augmenting this understanding and drawing relevance for other municipalities, I consider the work of neighbourhood associations and a variety of other community-level organizations involved in these questions of revitalization, gentrification, and neighbourhood change.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this section, I outline the data collection process I followed to explore community organizations as actors in a gentrifying, mid-sized city context. The nature of my research questions provided a basis for adopting a qualitative approach to investigate how community organizations shape change in inner city Hamilton neighbourhoods encountering revitalization narratives and gentrification pressures. I pursue a qualitative approach in this study through the use of semi-structured key informant interviews and document analysis. Details on recruitment, interview format, document selection, analysis, measures of validation, and ethical considerations are outlined below.

4.2 Research Philosophy

This study was shaped by my adherence to a constructivist philosophy. In approaching research, constructivism holds that knowledge creation should emerge through interaction with a variety of "lived" perspectives (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015). As a result, my research design reflected an acceptance of the existence of "multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge", referring to diverse realities shaped by a range of contextual factors (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015, p. 18). Accordingly, I focused on allowing the informants from community organizations to define and shape "concepts of importance" in the study through their varied perceptions and experiences (Charmaz, 2003; Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015, p. 19). This approach is reflected in my use of inductive coding to analyze my data. Additionally, I placed an emphasis on capturing a range of understandings of gentrification and neighbourhood change and of community organizations as actors within these processes, as implicitly and explicitly

discussed by those involved in the study. This grounded theory approach aligns with an understanding of the formulation of knowledge as a multi-directional process predicated on the interaction between the researcher and study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Mertens, 2015).

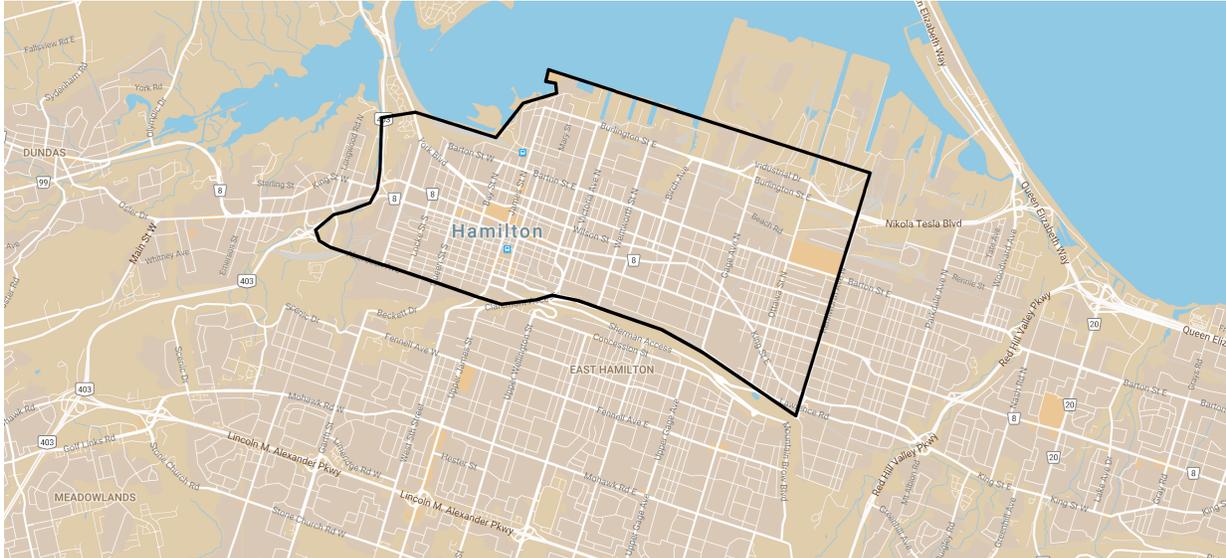
4.3 Case Study Selection

I selected Hamilton, Ontario as the case study setting for this study given the scale of change it is currently experiencing as part of its so-called “urban renaissance”, with municipally-driven revitalization initiatives underway and a continued influx of new residents, as detailed in Section 3. In addition, Hamilton’s classification as a growing mid-sized city provides the opportunity to explore different dynamics that may exist outside of a larger centre with regard to actors of gentrification and neighbourhood change. Hamilton is also a particularly appropriate setting to study the roles and responses of community organization in this regard, given the existence of many active organizations concerned with neighbourhood issues operating both within specific communities and at a city-wide level. While the city as a whole provides the broader backdrop, the focus of the study is on community-based action in Hamilton’s “inner city” neighbourhoods.

For the purposes of this study, I define Hamilton’s inner city as the collection of older neighbourhoods below the escarpment and around the downtown core, extending west to Highway 403, east to Kenilworth Avenue, and north to the dockyards (see Figure 1 below). This boundary reflects a large portion of the “lower city” and was identified according to where narratives and tensions of redevelopment and revitalization, as well as shifts and pressures indicative of gentrification, appear most prominent. These inner city neighbourhoods are predominantly lower-income and on the cusp or in the midst of a socio-economic transformation,

although some have higher-income pockets that are long-standing or have emerged in recent decades (author’s interviews).

Figure 1: Central Hamilton Study Boundary



Base Map Source: Google Maps

Nevertheless, all of the neighbourhoods connected to the organizations included in this study are impacted by narratives of revitalization and realities of gentrification, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees. The majority are traditionally low-income, working-class neighbourhoods, viewed for years as areas of decline, which have recently witnessed new gentrification pressures in the context of Hamilton’s “renaissance”. An emerging interplay of real estate speculation, redevelopment, other private (and public) reinvestment in these neighbourhoods is rapidly increasing housing costs and transforming commercial landscapes to the exclusion of many less affluent residents. While changes over the past few years have been most dramatic in the previously declining neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the downtown core, others also appear to be quickly becoming centres of gentrification. At the same time, a few of the neighbourhoods represented in this study appear already “gentrified” or have long been experiencing physical and socio-demographic indications of gentrification. Nevertheless, these

neighbourhoods are still home to lower-income residents and continue to experience pressures for high-end redevelopment that pose threats of direct or indirect displacement to these residents (author's interviews; Statistics Canada, 2006, 2016).

4.4 Research Approach

I followed a qualitative approach based around the previously described case study of central Hamilton. Broadly speaking, a qualitative approach looks to gather participant meanings and experiences in reference to a "social or human problem" to facilitate the emergence of a theory (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014, p. 4; Farthing, 2016). This approach is often characterized by an adaptable research design, as well as in-depth descriptions and the exploration of processes, with recognition of the researcher's influence in shaping the study and interpreting findings (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016). These elements tend to align a qualitative approach with constructivist and transformative philosophies (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015). However, as with the quantitative approach, there are still processes, and a responsibility, to confirm the trustworthiness of the findings based on certain criteria, despite the more subjective appearance (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Applying a qualitative case study approach to this research allowed for more extensive exploration of community organizations' roles and responses with respect to gentrification and neighbourhood change in a specific setting (Yin, 2009). Indeed, exploring informants' perceptions and experiences with regard to their initiatives, impacts, and changing neighbourhoods presupposes a reliance on qualitative data collection techniques (Berg & Lune, 2012; Palys & Atchison, 2014). A qualitative case study approach also best aligned with my constructivist research philosophy, which demanded a flexible research process and deep engagement with a multiplicity of participant perspectives (Mertens, 2015). The literature on

gentrification and displacement also sets a precedent for pursuing a qualitative approach within a geographically bounded case study. For instance, DeVerteuil (2012), Maeckelbergh (2012), and Pearsall (2013) discuss resistance to gentrification and displacement in specific temporal and spatial settings using qualitative methods, such as interviews and document analysis. In examining the roles of community-based actors in gentrifying neighbourhoods, both Bunce (2016) and Collins and Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) adopted a qualitative approach with a focus on certain areas in one city. Thus, given these precedents and the nature of my research questions, which require insight from narratives rather than numerical data, I deemed a qualitative approach most suitable for this study.

However, I also recognize perceived drawbacks of qualitative research, including an innate subjectivity in its interpretive nature, a limited ability to generalize and reproduce findings, and a typical lack of clarity in the reporting of the research design (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, I would argue that the critiques on subjectivity and replicability are limiting in the ways in which they reinforce perceptions that findings based on quantifiable, measurable data are more trustworthy or credible. These critiques fail to accept qualitative data and research as fulfilling different (but equally valid) purposes, such as allowing complex phenomenon to be unpacked in depth through individuals' experiences and perspectives. In this way, replicability is not an inherent indicator of validity, particularly when recognizing multiple realities, and the intrinsic subjectivity of a researcher is recognized, valued, and explicitly addressed (Payne & Payne, 2004; Seale, 2004). For this study, a qualitative research design allowed me to access informants' perceptions and adequately explore the motivations and tensions behind their organizations' initiatives in order to develop a rich and nuanced picture of community-based action.

4.5 Research Methods

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews (n=15) were the primary mode of data collection for this study. This method allowed me to "explore with people involved in a situation their experiences and understanding of what is happening" (in this case, representatives from community organizations working in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods), which provides a basis on which to build future studies (Farthing, 2016, p. 129). The use of semi-structured interviews to capture the perceptions and experiences of actors in processes of gentrification and neighbourhood change has precedent in the body of literature on the topic, including Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris (2016), Hochstenbach (2015), and Keatinge & Martin (2016). This method is also connected directly to my constructivist philosophy that situates my research as a participant-driven exploration of multiple realities, as the nature of a semi-structured interview "can reflect an awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways" (Berg & Lune, 2012, p.113).

Interview participants were key informants from active community organizations operating within the neighbourhoods of interest, as described in 4.4. I identified a total of 20 relevant community organizations through web-based keyword research and review of news articles and neighbourhood planning documents. These organizations included neighbourhood associations, community-focused business improvement associations, and city-wide organizations engaged in neighbourhood-level activities and issues relating to gentrification and neighbourhood change within the central Hamilton study area (see 4.3, Figure 1). In order to focus the study and contain its scope, I did not include social service and affordable housing providers. Informants from the community organizations were those who hold, or have

previously held, prominent roles relevant to the focus of the research and, where possible, have had relatively long-term involvement with the organization. Given that the focus was on recruiting those with specific insight related to topic of study as a result of experience within the organization, characteristics such as age and gender varied among the interview participants and were not a consideration for selection.

I recruited interview participants via email, with an information letter sent to either the organization's general email and/or to specific individuals within the organization. I used a combination of non-probability sampling techniques to recruit participants given the need to identify key informants based on the possession of certain attributes (Liamputtong, 2013; Parsons, 2008), namely, a high level of involvement and familiarity with the organization and an applicable role. I recruited a large proportion of informants using purposive sampling, where sufficient information was available to allow me to directly identify and contact suitable participants from an organization (Berg & Lune, 2012). I also used snowball sampling, in which potential participants were identified through initial contact with organizations via the general email address (Farthing, 2016), in instances where publicly available information on the organization's structure and individual contact information was lacking. The contact emails I used were those made publicly available on the internet or obtained indirectly through other publicly available contact information (in the case of snowball sampling). In some instances, potential participants requested me to present further information on the study through a phone call or brief presentation at a meeting.

I recruited a total of 15 interview participants from the 20 relevant community organizations that I contacted. These 15 participants represented eight neighbourhood associations, three city-wide organizations, and one business improvement association, as

outlined in the table below. I considered this sample size appropriate given the repetition of themes and insight identified as interviews progressed (“saturation”, as per Small, 2009), as well as the greater depth of knowledge possessed by the key informants. Additionally, the sample reflects both substantial geographical coverage of central Hamilton neighbourhoods and a large percentage of the relatively small number of relevant community organizations from which participants could be recruited.

Table 1: Interview Participants

Key Informant	Role	Organization Type
Informant A	Director	City-Wide Organization
Informant B	Director	City-Wide Organization
Informant C	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant D	Senior Staff	Business Improvement Association
Informant E	Active Member and Past Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant F	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant G	Active Member and Past Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant H	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant I	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant J	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant K	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant L	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant M	Senior Staff	City-Wide Organization
Informant N	Active Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association
Informant O	Active Member and Past Executive Member	Neighbourhood Association

The neighbourhood associations and business improvement association represented in this study are all neighbourhood-based or place-based groups focused on issues within or affecting the local community. These associations collectively represent the majority of the neighbourhoods located within the central Hamilton study boundary (4.3, Figure 1). Accordingly, they operate in somewhat diverse contexts, reflecting discussion in 4.3 on the different progressions of gentrification among Hamilton's inner city neighbourhoods. Many associations work in (formerly) "depressed" neighbourhoods that have only recently started to rapidly gentrify, most intensely beside the downtown core. However, a few work in areas in which gentrification appears more advanced and its residents more affluent, but which still have lower-income populations and continue to face redevelopment pressures (author's interviews, Statistics Canada, 2006, 2016).

The neighbourhood associations, and their decision-making processes, are primarily led by current residents, with instances of involvement from those with other interests in the respective neighbourhoods, such property or business owners and service providers. These eight neighbourhood associations represented in the study include both those that existed prior to and those born from the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), with half currently involved in the NAS. Their broad aim, portrayed on their websites and within their documents, is to improve residents' quality of life and support positive experiences within the neighbourhoods for all community members (also, author's interviews). As such, the neighbourhood associations intend to represent and serve the needs of both homeowners and renters. However, the tendency for homeowners to be overrepresented within the associations (author's interviews) suggests potential imbalances between the interests of homeowners and renters, the implications of which are discussed in subsequent chapters with respect to addressing impacts of gentrification.

The business improvement association included in the study is largely focused on addressing the concerns of local businesses, but places additional emphasis on involving and serving the needs of the broader local community. The three city-wide organizations represented by the study are somewhat diverse in terms of aims but are all involved in projects that speak directly to the changing nature of Hamilton's inner city neighbourhoods. These organizations have worked and continue to undertake initiatives across many of the neighbourhoods within the study boundary.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the informants from the above described organizations following a set of predetermined questions that remained consistent across participants, with the order and phrasing adjusted as needed to suit the different interview contexts² (Berg & Lune, 2012; Farthing, 2016; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The balance between themes also differed depending on the importance of each for different informants based on their experiences, and I skipped questions that were not relevant to the context or had already been covered in earlier responses (Robson & McCartan, 2016). I also used varied probing questions to further explore points raised by the informants, particularly in relation to themes identified in previous interviews, and provided responses to participant inquiries as necessary (Berg & Lune, 2012; Charmaz, 2003; Farthing, 2016).

I conducted all interviews in-person and on an individual basis between January and March 2018 at various locations across Hamilton, including coffee shops and organizations' offices. Interviews ranged from 15 to 60 minutes, with an average length of 30 minutes, and were recorded with consent from participants. During the interview, I asked participants a series of open-ended questions pertaining to the initiatives, priorities and perspectives of their

² Two interview guides with slight variations were created (see Appendices A and B): one for community organizations operating at a Hamilton-wide scale and one for community organizations working solely within a specific neighbourhood.

community-based organization with regard to changes occurring in one or more central Hamilton neighbourhoods. The use of broad, open-ended questions allowed for unexpected focuses to emerge and for the exploration of themes in substantial depth and detail (Charmaz, 2003; Palys & Atchison, 2014). Questions touched more specifically on perceived roles and impacts within the community and with regard to neighbourhood change; members, constituency, and connections with institutional actors; identified issues within the community; types of initiatives and perceived successes and challenges; changes observed in recent years; and the degree of concern or action surrounding gentrification and its impacts. While the informants were acting as representatives of their organization, I recognized that their perceptions cannot be assumed to reflect the group at large (Payne & Payne, 2004).

4.5.2 Document Review

The interview data I collected is augmented and, in some respects, validated (Bowen, 2009) through analysis of the priorities, discourses, and tensions that emerge in plans, reports, and newspapers produced by the relevant community organizations and the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. I identified documents through organizations' websites and keyword searches and selected them for further review based on both availability and perceived relevance with regard to the topic of study, with 20 documents included in this analysis. I completed the document analysis in tandem with the analysis of interview data, with the intention of confirming emergent themes or identifying new themes with regard to the research questions. In addition to the review of community organizations' documents, I used the language and intentions of municipal documents explored in Section 3 to frame and nuance discussions of the study findings.

4.6 Data Analysis

Simultaneous to and following transcription of the interviews, I analyzed and coded the narratives gathered from the key informants and present in the organizations' documents using an inductive approach (Berg & Lune, 2012; Charmaz, 2003; Palys & Atchison, 2014). This technique required me to review the interview dialogues and document text in detail without looking to identify specific preconceived themes within the data. Instead, I gathered and considered the common points that emerged from the data in relation to the key aspects of the research questions. I reviewed the data twice, first to understand the relevant themes in a broader sense, and then to examine these themes and their meanings in more depth, pinpointing precise examples and statements to support the conclusions drawn. As a way to further organize the data, I grouped the identified themes within broader categories according to the different elements the research looked to address. Through this interpretation process, I recognized the potential for my conclusions to be shaped by own realities, refuting the notion of achieving objective meaning (Johnson, 2001).

4.7 Measures of Validity and Limitations

While I recognize the inherent subjectivity of knowledge production through my constructivist philosophy (Creswell, 2014; Mertens, 2015), the study findings can nevertheless be confirmed as a valid picture (but not sole truth) of community organizations' impacts in a gentrifying context. This validity is a function of my use of credible informants and data collection procedures, as well as measures to increase confidence in my findings, such as the frequent inclusion of informants' quotes in text and the use of data triangulation (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010; Sousa, 2014). Berg and Lune (2012) describe data triangulation as "the use of

multiple data-gathering techniques...to investigate the same phenomenon" (p. 6), which I achieved in this study through combining semi-structured interviews and document analysis. While the different methods can each be understood as a "different line of sight directed toward the same point", thus enhancing the comprehensiveness of the study, the data produced by the methods needs to be interconnected in order to address trustworthiness (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 6; Fielding & Fielding, 1986). The use of document analysis as a form of triangulation for this study achieves this goal, as I used the review of community organizations' plans and discourse to confirm or expand themes identified through the interviews. Even without triangulation, the frequent repetition of themes across informants supports the credibility of the data produced through the semi-structured interviews. Finally, I reflect on the validity of my findings in Chapters 6 and 7 by identifying ways in which they are transferable to other contexts (Sousa, 2014).

However, I recognize that this study is limited in part by the focus on one urban centre, which increases the possibility that functions and perspectives of community organizations in other gentrifying contexts are not identified. It is possible that certain themes that have emerged in this study possess a uniquely 'Hamilton' quality to them that may not be as relevant in other cities. Finally, while the informants interviewed represent over half of the relevant community organizations, their narratives do not necessarily reflect or encompass all potential views within an organization.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The University Waterloo Research Ethics Committee approved this study and its data collection procedures, which was required given the reliance on insight from key informants. My primary concerns while undertaking the research were achieving informed consent and

maintaining confidentiality of participants, given the minimal risk that certain statements could impact participants' employment or social situation if connected back to them (Kvale, 2007; Palys & Atchison, 2014). I addressed the issue of informed consent by providing participants with substantial detail on the study through a recruitment email and information letter, as well as providing opportunities for questions to be answered, prior to the signing of the consent form and the interview itself. Confidentiality was a particularly relevant concern given the focus on a limited number of relatively small community organizations within one urban area, which I protected by storing data securely and removing personal identifiers and organization names from the presentation of results. I also gave informants the opportunity to provide clarification on any of their quotes used in the presentation of results in order ensure their perspectives were most accurately represented (Kvale, 2007).

5.0 Findings

Now I don't disagree/It's a hell of a scene/Jackson Square dropouts/Avoid the police/If the '80s were tough/The '90s were mean...But month by month/I feel a change in the breeze...

- Arkells, "Cynical Bastards"

5.1 Representatives' Perceptions of Neighbourhood Change in Hamilton

5.1.1 Gentrification is in (Hammer)Town

In looking to understand how community organizations shape neighbourhood-level change, representatives' perceptions of gentrification provide insight into the degree to which the process and its impacts are contested. In discussing their perspectives on the changes occurring in Hamilton's central neighbourhoods, informants provided anecdotal confirmation of the progression of gentrification and its impacts in these areas, although often unintentionally and without employing the language of gentrification. While many of their descriptions of neighbourhood transformation align with narratives of gentrification that have emerged in local media and other sources, such as decreased affordability and direct residential displacement, a diversity of other indicators were identified. For instance, insight from informants into neighbourhood changes and challenges also suggests that exclusionary displacement and displacement as a "loss of place" are being experienced, as captured by the following sentiments:

"There's a lot of people we know, younger...that wanted to live in Hamilton...no one that I know 25 can afford a place downtown anymore, like it's just not a thing...so a lot of people...have to live in St. Catharines, Grimsby, you know, pretty far away..."
(Informant F, neighbourhood association)

"...a lot of the change has just been subtle, like the feeling that it's just not the same community that it was before." (Informant A, city-wide organization).

In connection to experiences of a declining sense of place, a few representatives of community organizations noted in particular the changing character of commercial areas toward higher-end uses, including the displacement of pre-existing businesses. As one informant suggested, “what’s really changing in the neighbourhood isn’t so much, I think, the people that’s moving in, it’s [the commercial street]...it’s become a popular street for, let’s call it, hip eateries” (Informant N, neighbourhood association). A shift in commercial amenities was also connected to an influx of young people and young families, a demographic change that was emphasized by five informants. Such observations speak to youthification as a linked process to gentrification (Moos, 2015), as well as to the class dimensions of gentrifying neighbourhoods in which certain young people are able to find a place while others are excluded (as emphasized in the previous quote by Informant F).

While younger, incoming populations were perceived in some instances as actors of neighbourhood change, the roles of (speculative) investment in the built environment and of the municipality in facilitating new development and reinvestment were also quite widely recognized by representatives of community organizations. Regarding the municipal dimension, one informant spoke to the “great financial incentives available to businesses”, such as building improvement grants, noting that they have “been a little bit of a flame for some of the investment that has happened on the street, which is good.” (Informant D, business improvement association). Other incentives or City strategies, such as development fee rebates, were not framed as positively by other organizations, with an emphasis on undesirable changes to the urban form and social context. This recognition suggests, in some cases, potential interest on the part of community organizations in mitigating the displacement and affordability challenges that this investment can produce. However, the seemingly problematic aspects of City revitalization

policies and projects with respect to equity, affordability, and inclusivity were not always emphasized or framed as challenges to be addressed.

This mix of perspectives was also evident in broader discussions of changes occurring at the neighbourhood level in inner city Hamilton. While informants consistently positioned aspects such as rising housing costs and residential displacement (and often gentrification itself) as challenging realities, some did not fully recognize the potential implications of certain changes or instinctively connect them to gentrification. Additionally, discourse on gentrification, whether implicit or explicit, did not feature highly in neighbourhood plans and other documents presented by community organizations, with a couple of exceptions. Often, an influx of new investment or residents was perceived as a welcome change to past and current experiences of stagnation and decline:

“...people complain about the Toronto developers that come in and buy up the abandoned, derelict buildings and then they fix them. Where, I’m like, it sat there for 20 years, no one had the vision or the money or the initiative to take care of it, and now you’re condemning the guy that is, you know. He’s improving our neighbourhood. And because he fixes the façade of a building and opens a bookstore does not mean that all of a sudden, the whole area is going to become high end rentals and whatever.” (Informant C, neighbourhood association)

Indeed, in contrast to discussions of the increasing vulnerability of low-income residents in a changing neighbourhood context, as emphasized by certain community organizations, informants from a few organizations downplayed the current extent of gentrification pressures in their communities. In doing so, these informants pointed to less expensive adjacent neighbourhoods and a lack of evidence of direct displacement, despite other elements of their discussion indicating, as per Hackworth (2002), “the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users”. Such narratives suggest (and help to justify) limited action on the part of these community organizations to interfere with existing trajectories of neighbourhood change.

The ways in which representatives of community organizations approach gentrification and related concerns also highlight the different meanings that these concepts hold. While about half of informants implicitly or explicitly applied a critical lens to the concept of gentrification, the underlying drivers were not always problematized in the same way. Interestingly, a few informants framed certain impacts of gentrification as inequitable but maintained the process of gentrification itself as natural and potentially positive.

“I have actually no problem with...the process of gentrification is as normal as anything else, it happens, right? To me, the issue is whose interests are being served by gentrification.” (Informant F, neighbourhood association)

“...or they get pushed further into the peripheral neighbourhoods, away from services, away from transit, um, they just become more vulnerable. So, and I’m not anti-gentrification, I think that it can be a dirty word and it can be a positive thing, but I think that there needs to be a really, really intentional fine balance between the needs of all people that want to live in one place.” (Informant K, neighbourhood association)

The ways in which certain informants view gentrification as not inherently negative while emphasizing concerns for continued diversity and affordability in a neighbourhood appears contradictory and does not quite mesh with the predominant framings of gentrification in the literature. Indeed, mechanisms and processes of gentrification are commonly recognized as exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities or creating new ones, including by certain informants in the Hamilton context. While the perspectives highlighted in the above quotes do appear to reflect this understanding, and recognize the embedded challenges, they also approach gentrification as a process that can be reshaped to be more equitable rather than something that needs to be halted.

Affordability is also conceived in different ways by representatives of the community organizations. Indeed, while many informants mentioned both the high costs of renting and homeownership or specifically emphasized renters’ challenges when discussing affordability, a few informants focused primarily on the costs of home ownership. These variations are

important to note given their equity implications, as organizations whose leaders emphasize affordable home ownership are unlikely to be addressing the housing needs of the most vulnerable populations in their actions.

5.1.2 The Double-Edged Sword of Neighbourhood Change

While there exist a clear range of perspectives on current processes of neighbourhood change in inner city Hamilton, from those more critical to those less so, representatives' views are nonetheless complex and embedded with tensions. Indeed, many informants did recognize in their narratives different sides to the activities and transformations broadly clustered under a revitalization discourse, regardless of their overarching position with respect to the changes underway. Certain representatives who emphasized the challenges of gentrification and its impacts also identified positive elements of the changing dynamic in the city, as captured by Informant A (city-wide organization):

“Yeah, so there’s been that [displacement, commercial gentrification]. But there’s also been, like, a lot of amazing things coming out of the new people coming to the community and bringing new ideas and new businesses. So, it’s not all bad. But, yeah, there is just this sense that the community is, like, slipping away.”

Similarly, several informants who generally demonstrated more support for the nature of change in central Hamilton, celebrating the breadth of new ideas, amenities, and investment, also recognized “another side to it” (Informant B, city-wide organization). For instance, informants from neighbourhood-level organizations highlighted the benefits of an influx of homeowners with respect to housing rehabilitation and pride of ownership, but contrasted this with the challenges of losing affordable rental units, a tension that is captured in the following quote:

“...we don’t think that the neighbourhood is for homeowners only, but we definitely recognize the impact that homeowners have on neighbourhood improvements...so yeah, it’s difficult, we don’t like that we’re losing rental units because we believe that the neighbourhood is for everybody...” (Informant J, neighbourhood association)

Regardless of the extent to which representatives of community organizations emphasized challenging and inequitable elements of the nature of change in central Hamilton, change in and of itself was often seen as inevitable and not something to be villainized. As such, community organizations have adopted different positions with respect to working to shape the direction of this change, with some motivated to pursue certain actions and priorities in response to affordability and displacement concerns:

“...we’re advocates of revitalization without displacement, so we’re not anti-change, anti-growth, anti-development...if we can carve away some properties and preserve from uses that are important, then that means we don’t have to fight change.” (Informant A, city-wide organization)

This approach to change is repeated by informants and in plans from a few other organizations. It echoes the assertion by Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) that community organizers concerned with impacts of gentrification may not be “against revitalisation in and of itself, but rather opposed to certain strategies of revitalisation” incompatible with the needs of existing, lower-income residents” (p. 416). A number of other informants, however, recognized the increasingly precarious position in which residents are placed, but questioned whether addressing the impacts of gentrification or its perceived root causes is their responsibility or within their scope. One informant captured this perspective in stating:

“It’s positive, but there’s always negative with it. It’s tough, because do you hinder the development of a street and community because you don’t want people homeless? And no, I don’t want people homeless, but is that the street’s issue to deal with, or is that a City issue to deal with, right?” (Informant D, business improvement association)

Responses in this vein are particularly tied to those organizations whose actions can be predominantly read as advancing or accepting local revitalization narratives, a notion I will continue to unpack in the following sections.

5.2 Perceived Roles and Impacts of Community-Based Action in Gentrifying Hamilton

Community needs and the pressures of externally imposed redevelopment and revitalization initiatives clearly influence the actions and direction of the community organizations, as portrayed through informant interviews and organizations' plans. However, this direction is rarely centred first and foremost on addressing gentrification and its impacts, with the majority of organizations, particularly the neighbourhood associations, encompassing a wide array of priorities. Indeed, both the informant interviews and neighbourhood plans indicate that other challenges of a changing neighbourhood context are seen as bigger issues or, at least, share focus with concerns of affordability and displacement. Complete streets and traffic safety, parking, crime prevention, enhancement of public space, heritage protection, food security, education, and employment are among the most common issues that community organizations are looking to continue to advocate for and address in inner city Hamilton. This is not to say that addressing these priorities and addressing concerns of gentrification are mutually exclusive, to which a couple of informants allude with respect to pushing for heritage designations to prevent speculation and decreasing residents' precarity by providing skills training opportunities. However, such actions do not necessarily come across as being intentionally connected to a robust or multi-faceted strategy to tackle the impacts of gentrification. Additionally, as I will continue to explore, some of these priorities may have less positive implications with regard to the equitability of neighbourhood change.

Nevertheless, as previously alluded to, concern over the impacts of gentrification is clearly an impetus for some community-based action. Indeed, several organizations see their actions as centred around equity, inclusivity, preserving affordability, and mitigating displacement:

“...we kind of recognized that with the arts driven revitalization that was happening, that real estate prices were going to start to rise...and so the idea was that [the organization] could...acquire some of these properties before the real estate values got out of hand and preserve them for affordable and community-driven uses.” (Informant A, city-wide organization)

“Anyone who has bought a house in [the neighbourhood] in the last ten years has seen it double, my friends who are in their mid-20s are not planning to live here. I don’t know where they’re going to move, Woodstock? Like, Fort Erie? So, that becomes a priority in terms of what does housing look like...” (Informant G, neighbourhood association)

The range of priorities and initiatives presented by community organizations emphasizes the complex nature of community-based action in central Hamilton. The differing ways in which community organizations see themselves as shaping neighbourhood change is also defined in part by varying degrees of capacity. Indeed, informants from five community organizations emphasized realities of limited budgets and relatively low levels of participation, while neighbourhood associations’ plans in particular highlight a drive to make concrete impacts in a limited time frame. These factors make smaller-scale actions, such as beautification projects and community events, much more attainable than addressing the forces and structural issues behind gentrification, displacement, and affordability. As emphasized by Informant O (neighbourhood association): “the City can do certain things that we can’t do, but then there are things that we can do, like community art projects and gardens, like, those are the things that we can do.”

Nevertheless, the organizations consistently frame their priorities and initiatives within value statements on inclusivity and diversity, a notion that emerged in discussions with representatives. Informants from several organizations emphasized the importance of their neighbourhood or broader community being welcoming and accessible to everyone, valuing socio-economic, cultural, life-stage, and household diversity. In many instances, such discussions with informants extended to community participation, including involving and capturing a diversity of voices within the activities of community organizations. Community

organizations' plans are also peppered with mention of inclusive community engagement, leadership, and environments.

Looking to achieve this ideal, organizations are translating this celebration of diversity and inclusivity into specific priorities: “we like keeping the diversity, so that’s something we try to work for...providing places for that to exist” (Informant I, neighbourhood association). However, there exist clear tensions within and across organizations in the ways in which community-based initiatives and framings of inclusivity may contradict this shared goal. Indeed, in “making sure there’s room for everyone” (Informant H, neighbourhood association), only certain informants emphasized the sentiment of “not forgetting who lives here and who lives on the margins” (Informant G, neighbourhood association). This theme of inclusivity, and its associated tensions, is a common thread within three areas where community organizations see themselves as having a substantial impact within the context of Hamilton’s “renaissance” narrative: connecting community, shaping reinvestment, and developing neighbourhood identity.

5.2.1 Building Community Connections

One of the most important roles organizations, and particularly neighbourhood associations, see themselves playing in central Hamilton is in creating connections within and across communities. Almost all informants discussed their organization’s contributions to, and intentions of, reaching out to residents and bringing (diverse) communities together, including through the rehabilitation of green space, developing community gardens, and running a range of inclusive events. The theme of facilitating interactions and belonging through activities, neighbourhood ambassadors, and establishing places to gather is also repeated across many of the plans and other documents produced by the organizations. While connecting with hard-to-reach sections of the community is often a driver, informants’ insight also suggests multiple

organizations place particular importance on building social cohesion given the context of neighbourhood change and arrival of many new residents.

Several community organizations link (re)establishing a connected community to building capacity among residents, with opportunities to gather “giving space and place for people to...engage, participate, have access to other people, learn to build skills...” (Informant M, city-wide organization). Organizations also see themselves as building local capacity through acting as a resource that can connect individuals to information and other groups or institutions, and enable them to engage in community action:

“...I think that as an information source, we get the community involved and, you know, when they know what’s going on, it’s easy for them to say hey, this bothers me, I can step in with this” (Informant J, neighbourhood association)

“I’d like to say that we will solve all the traffic problems, we will have the best area for affordable housing, but that’s not realistic. So, the greatest impact that I think we can make is with the people that live in the community and giving them the tools to build the future or the community that they want. And whether those tools are information or resources or just building up their sense of worth and self-esteem. Those are tools that are going to make them, sort of, decide what the future is going to be.” (Informant C, neighbourhood association)

In positioning themselves in this role, community organizations emphasize not only building connections between community members, but also between the organization and its constituents in an effort to increase and broaden participation in guiding neighbourhood change.

However, in supporting a connected and engaged community that is empowered to enact change, community organizations produce or experience certain challenges with respect to inclusivity and diversity. While informants’ discussions and community organizations’ plans predominantly support the notion of creating community events and gathering spaces accessible and welcoming to diverse populations, some narratives also suggest the exclusion of certain community members. This tension is captured in contrasting two informants’ discussions of the

revitalization of their organizations' respective local parks, places highlighted by multiple informants as productive to social interactions:

“...and it has had a substantial impact in reframing the park, as a matter of fact, now it's had a makeover, people are using the park...the right people are using the park, not that the wrong people...” (Informant E, neighbourhood association)

“...so, basically, the re-framing, so activating the park and getting investment for it, but then while doing that, also being the folks who say, you know, the people who use this park are completely valid, it's not about upgrading the people who use the park, it's just getting more people to use the park.” (Informant G, neighbourhood association)

While a narrative of “othering” is not the prevailing sentiment among representatives of community organizations, the first quote nevertheless represents evident occasions in which people embodying certain realities are either implicitly or explicitly excluded from community trajectories. In this way, community organizations' discourse on “sense of community” is nuanced by the understanding that not everyone is necessarily included in this vision.

Additionally, while organizations may intend to engage a wide range of community members in their initiatives and in guiding change, and are sometimes quite successful, the representation of voices is often not as diverse as is desired. This theme confirms similar findings from recent research surrounding the dynamics of select neighbourhood associations involved in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (City of Hamilton, 2016). Indeed, while community organizations' plans emphasize the importance of shaping actions based on community members' insight, several informants from neighbourhood associations discussed the difficulties they have faced in attracting engagement from a variety of backgrounds. Aside from challenges of growing beyond a small group of active members, multiple informants noted a relative lack of representation from renters and ethnically diverse populations in particular:

“...As members of the [organization], we carry a voice...so, it does create a space where people can be represented. Whether it fully represents the community is a fallacy...it’s unfortunate that we’re not able to...many of us are not able to breach those cultural, ethnic, diversity barriers...” (Informant E, neighbourhood association)

“...so we found that while we’re able to engage homeowners and make them interested in the neighbourhood and what’s going on, it’s hard to get to the renters...so, yeah, it’s mostly homeowners...” (Informant J, neighbourhood association)

While organizations are looking to address these challenges of representation, there is a recognition of barriers with respect to language, access to residential buildings, insufficient resources, power imbalances, and the personal challenges faced by many residents. As a result, the direction of certain community-based action in central Hamilton may continue to be shaped by a limited number of voices who experience gentrification and neighbourhood change in particular ways.

5.2.2 Shaping New Investment and Development

The majority of community organizations working in inner city Hamilton neighbourhoods also view themselves as helping define the direction of change in these areas with respect to redevelopment and other forms of investment. Many organizations achieve this impact by “shaping development that’s coming into the neighbourhood” (Informant J, neighbourhood association) through commenting on proposals, advocating for changes to plans and policies, and establishing more equitable development models and agreements. With respect to the first action, informants from four neighbourhood associations emphasized the role their association plays in reviewing and negotiating aspects of development proposals based on their vision for the neighbourhood:

“...we work with our neighbours and developers to find common ground for the development...someone will come in and say, ‘we want to build an eight storey building’ and we say, ‘that’s lovely, but can you keep it to six’...[later in conversation]...we’re in the process of working with the City to develop our own neighbourhood plan that will be

used to inform developers and the City as to what [the neighbourhood's] main goals are..." (Informant H, neighbourhood association)

"...we've tried to work really closely with developers to, sort of, tell them what we want and what we expect...certain heights and what we wanted, you know, certain things to look like...so, we've had a strong hand or presence in development, and I think we've been pretty successful with that...[later in conversation]...we would love to see the City implement some sort of inclusionary zoning...that's also something that, you know, is part of the negotiation with developers that we, sort of, try and influence..." (Informant I, neighbourhood association)

"...we've been asking developers to include, in their rentals, family-sized units or affordable housing. So, that's something that we're dealing with our...development subcommittee." (Informant J, neighbourhood association)

An alternative or simultaneous tactic adopted by community organizations is to influence the content of municipal and provincial plans and policies that guide development:

"...so the inclusionary zoning regulations that the Province published in December....they're just garbage, so we made submissions...[later in conversation]...and then the Downtown Secondary Plan....they did consultation with the development industry and lo and behold, a number of blocks that are currently single-family in [the neighbourhood] are suddenly zoned for 30 storey towers. So, we're pushing back really hard..." (Informant F, neighbourhood association)

"...we've been doing a complete inventory of houses and things like that in the neighbourhood...the goal of that is actually to create some sort of overlay on the bylaw, the zoning, to make sure that any future infill would be in line with our character...[later in conversation]...we're very active at City Hall, we're submitting comments on different policy proposals and things like that." (Informant I, neighbourhood association)

"I think the first part, making an impact, would be pursuing better policies with the City as a group in [the ward], so whatever [the association] can contribute to making that [affordable housing, family housing] part of City policy as far as development and projects are concerned, making sure that all people are represented and cared for." (Informant K, neighbourhood association)

"We are pushing for, eventually, for policy for new developments to have family-friendly units...we're at a point where it's really transitioning fast, but we're trying to get out ahead of it, it's just whether we can achieve it soon enough." (Informant L, neighbourhood association)

In undertaking both types of action, many community organizations identify one of their focuses as maintaining inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods through a push for housing

affordability and accessibility. In some instances, the actual influence organizations are exerting behind their sentiments is unclear, while other organizations are evidently involved in shaping the inclusivity of development through multiple avenues. However, in most cases, housing affordability and accessibility is not community organizations' sole or even primary focus with respect to new development in central Hamilton. Indeed, as reflected in the above sets of quotes, organizations also emphasize mitigating impacts of development and intensification with respect to neighbourhood character (visual quality, height) and infrastructure and amenities.

A limited number of community organizations also look to shape development by instituting development models or agreements that provide community benefits. Strategies include establishing the collective ownership of underutilized land to be redeveloped for “affordable and community-driven uses” (Informant A, city-wide association), such as affordable housing and community spaces. Others look to achieve specific benefits through private development in the form of agreements that place responsibility on the developer to either provide certain community amenities or advocate the City for these amenities in exchange for the organization's support.

Other community organizations, including some of those undertaking initiatives to shape redevelopment, are actively looking to encourage new investment in Hamilton's central neighbourhoods. While multiple organizations are pushing for public investment in things such as walking and cycling infrastructures, greater emphasis is placed overall on facilitating private investment, particularly along commercial corridors:

“...we definitely want to bring investment into the neighbourhoods....we would love to see more small businesses pop up, we would love to see, you know, buildings that have been left sitting dormant repurposed and used.” (Informant B, city-wide organization)

“The buildings are vacant and the storefronts are boarded up. But, and we've worked, we had a team that was instrumental in the repeal of tax [rebate] for vacant properties, so

we're working towards that. And we're seeing slow, steady improvements.” (Informant C, neighbourhood association)

“I think as the commercial areas fill, which is something we are pushing for, it will completely change this area, because people will be able to shop on this street. It will feel much more connected, it will feel safer.” (Informant D, business improvement association)

“...I think working on behalf of the developers, in some cases, and I don't say that as like, we're eager to please them...but we're also so tired of the empty lots and the parking lots and the speculation that we want to help small-scale developers when they actually have a thing.” (Informant F, neighbourhood association)

This drive for private reinvestment also comes through clearly in certain organizations' neighbourhood plans, particularly those in which the City of Hamilton has had a hand in shaping through the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. One such plan contains repeated references to promoting the neighbourhood as a “strategic investment opportunity” (with respect to brownfields, “based on its location”, for “affordable home ownership”), while others discuss bringing new businesses to commercial corridors. An emphasis on facilitating and shaping investment and development in central Hamilton neighbourhoods is interwoven with discourse on decline, including high vacancy rates, empty lots, and challenging social contexts, which is used to frame and justify action. Many informants positioned their organizations as responding to perceptions, realities, and frustrations of decline, including by pursuing the repurposing of vacant or “underutilized” land, the renewal of commercial corridors, and addressing mechanisms of speculation.

5.2.3 Neighbourhood Identity

Connecting in many aspects to shaping new development and facilitating investment, community organizations also position themselves as alternatively preserving and redefining the identity of central Hamilton, highlighted by both informants and in organizations' documents.

Indeed, within rapidly changing neighbourhood environments, certain organizations aim to help protect an existing sense of place or community perceived as being at risk of disappearing as long-term businesses are displaced and redevelopment continues. Informants from a few organizations spoke of a desire to preserve valued community spaces and uses or to protect neighbourhood character through the development process:

“I mean, in a perfect world, if we could have done, if we could have a lot more properties under our belt, our vision would be to be able to preserve spaces like Homegrown [a former cafe and community art and live music space]...being able to just provide a few spaces like that [affordable and inclusive community spaces] throughout the city has a huge impact on being able to preserve what’s important to the community.” (Informant A, city-wide organization)

“And it’s not in a way that we want to make it hard to live here, it’s just something we want to help protect...because we have seen people buying places and ripping them down...I mean, we’re not opposed to modern architecture, but it’s just, it needs to fit with the neighbourhood.” (Informant I, neighbourhood association)

Other informants emphasized conserving an identity of (residential) diversity by influencing the nature of redevelopment and looking to “make it affordable, make it so that it doesn’t become another Liberty Village” (Informant G, neighbourhood association).

Several community organizations also look to redefine the neighbourhoods in which they are working, undertaking beautification projects and other initiatives to counteract negative perceptions (both internal and external), territorial stigmatization, and narratives of decline. Many of these organizations align their efforts to change perceptions most strongly with instilling an improved sense of place and community pride in existing residents, whether through public art projects, public space rehabilitation, or increased activity on commercial streets:

“...I think people are rediscovering that they love the neighbourhood, that it’s actually a great place to live. And that’s because of the [public space revitalization] and I think the garden club, and also, you know...the changes on [the commercial street]...” (Informant N, neighbourhood association)

“Art and the artistic culture have played a major role in the revitalization of [the commercial street]. To continue this and allow our community to benefit even more from this culture we want the City to allow and even commission more public art. Public art like murals or statues create a sense of pride and draw people to the neighbourhood...” (Neighbourhood Action Plan (2012-2017), neighbourhood association)

In a few instances, organizations are (also) framing and “showcasing” neighbourhoods through a lens of opportunity to specifically encourage new interest and investment:

“...there are a lot of illegal residences in those storefronts which should not be there, not appropriate...we’re putting, or we’re pushing, to get the correct use into commercial space...[later in conversation]...there’s not many commercial districts that have such high vacancy, that is, and I hate to say it, but almost a blank canvas. Just in the fact that, for example, the empty storefront across the street, anything could go in there.” (Informant D, business improvement association)

“We are a destination for music festivals, culture, arts, [etc.]...[the neighbourhood’s] assets are Hamilton’s assets, and as such there are opportunities for the City to leverage [the neighbourhood’s] successes to everyone’s benefit...residents are used to being a welcoming multi-use neighbourhood and expect that opportunities be pursued that enhance the quality of life of existing residents and businesses.” (Neighbourhood Plan 2017, neighbourhood association)

While the latter quote emphasizes continued benefits for current community members, the advancement of a conceived neighbourhood image or identity may nevertheless exclude those who do not resonate with or do not have a place in the overarching vision. This challenge is reflected in the first quote above, in which achieving an imagined vibrant commercial corridor, a common goal across organizations, is seen as at odds with a reality of precariously housed individuals in ground-floor residential.

Reflecting previous sentiments of neighbourhood change as a double-edged sword, many community organizations, as in the second quote above, recognize this tension between facilitating and promoting a “revitalized” identity and experiencing inequitable or undesirable consequences. With respect to reestablishing commercial vitality, Informant D admitted “it’s a little bit of a balancing act because there is the whole worry with gentrification and so forth”,

while Informant C (neighbourhood association) embraced existing community assets and emphasized avoiding a diminished sense of place:

I don't know that I ever want to see the whole area fixed up, it'd look like you're driving through...you know, I don't want to be Ancaster or Dundas... I just want to be the community where we are with people taking pride in what they have and building on the resources and the strengths that are already there in the neighbourhood.”

In response to these and other complications of undertaking action in a changing neighbourhood context, community organizations' plans and documents in particular emphasize community engagement processes to realize shared values and desires. While the presentation of community members' sentiments in documents frequently shows concern for issues of gentrification and displacement, this concern is reflected to differing extents in the direction of the community organizations.

5.3 Placing Community-Based Organizations within Trajectories of Gentrification and Neighbourhood Change

Despite discussion and recognition of affordability and displacement as key challenges, community organizations working across central Hamilton neighbourhoods respond to a range of concerns, as seen in 5.2. As a result, the ways in which these organizations align their direction in response to the impacts of gentrification is often limited. In many cases, organizations do not see themselves as having a role in contesting the gentrification process or addressing its root causes or impacts:

“I think, you know, what we kind of focus our attention on is getting people involved, and there's not a lot we can do about gentrification, I mean, how do you stop it, you know...the policy issues around gentrification, about protecting people in their homes and making sure that homes stay affordable is well beyond any levers that we have...the [association] isn't supposed to be political, so to me there's a huge contradiction...the mandate...is to engage and create active residents...but the Neighbourhood Action Strategy pretty much prohibits political activity...for example, gentrification is about housing, it's also about transportation, it's about access to services. These are all political

issues, these are all policy issues, and so if we can't engage around those politically, then what are we supposed to do about them?" (Informant N, neighbourhood association)

"So, gentrification in the sense of economic uplift also has extremely positive...now, how you balance that is through housing...and housing is not a community issue, I mean, it is partially, but it cannot be solved directly by a community, it has to be solved via introduction of housing policy..." (Informant E, neighbourhood association)

Indeed, narratives such as these from multiple representatives and one plan indicate that organizations are not confident in their ability to affect change in this regard given a sense of limited capacity and influence. In some instances, organizations perceive responses to gentrification and displacement as needing to be addressed at a higher level, such as through policy, and do not identify their actions as helping to shape such policy or recognize substantial limits in this regard. For other organizations, funding issues hinder responses, whether it be a lack of resources or constraints in using funding for advocacy purposes.

Other organizations do see themselves as playing a role with respect to challenges of affordability, inclusivity, and displacement:

"Rather than just about families, because, I mean, families can take so many different shapes, it's been more about complete communities and offering affordable housing and family housing - larger units, accessible units, geared-to-income, so advocacy is one of our other major goals in partnership with the other [ward] neighbourhood associations." (Informant K, neighbourhood association)

While this work is rarely explicitly positioned as resistance to gentrification, about half of the organizations interviewed and a couple more whose documents were reviewed engage or intend to engage in action that can be considered a form of resistance. As captured in the above quote, several informants saw this (and other) action as facilitated by and strengthened through collaboration among community organizations looking to address similar challenges, such as the affordability and inclusivity of central Hamilton neighbourhoods. In line with the understanding developed in 5.1 and 5.2 with respect to community organizations' varying priorities, these

organizations resist the impacts of gentrification to different extents and typically as one of many focuses.

In a broad sense, these community organizations are resisting threats to the inclusivity and diversity of inner city Hamilton neighbourhoods as they are increasingly reshaped in the interests of smaller, more affluent households. However, the organizations both implicitly and explicitly translate this overarching goal to address issues of direct residential displacement and exclusionary displacement in a context of declining affordability and increasing precarity of lower income residents. A small number of organizations can also be seen as resisting place-based displacement in striving to retain community spaces and elements of neighbourhood character perceived as holding meaning to long-term residents and contributing to their sense of place. Reflecting themes of resistance identified in the gentrification literature, the community organizations responding to such challenges employ a range of actions that broadly fall within two categories. While some actions more directly and immediately help community members cope with the implications of gentrification, others contest the production of gentrification and growing inequality at a higher level.

Organizations predominantly engage in “coping” forms of resistance through providing support to tenants, both proactively and reactively, and facilitating new or maintaining existing affordable housing units (e.g. through developer agreements or community ownership of land):

“...[a developer’s] looking to knock down a bunch of low-rise apartment buildings...but it's actually one of the last really affordable apartment complexes in the neighbourhood, so we've helped the residents organize a meeting...we're trying to organize another one because the developer has sort of taken steps without letting the residents know, so we're helping to try and facilitate that and kind of help protect the residents and help them get the information they need so that things don't just happen when they shouldn't.”

(Informant I, neighbourhood association)

“...on the tenant support side, looking at displacement in our communities, and gentrification, and what tools we can give to both service providers and residents so they can push back against the impacts of gentrification by lobbying and advocating...” (Informant M, city-wide organization)

“...a Toronto developer bought them [low-income buildings] and wanted to take all the three and two-bedroom, make them one bedroom, renovate them, jack the rents. We ended up in a quasi-legal proceeding...the deal was, is that we would let them go through Committee of Adjustment...in exchange for them keeping 35 three-bedroom units, keeping 25 percent of the units in the total building mix to two-bedroom, and that they would write a joint statement with us to Council asking for a study into inclusionary zoning in Hamilton, like a policy.” (Informant F, neighbourhood association)

Such actions, which also encompass organizations’ efforts to negotiate affordable housing in new builds, aim to help residents remain or find space in gentrifying neighbourhoods, as well as to empower them to advocate and protest on their own behalf against displacement.

Community organizations also engage, often simultaneously, in actions that contest the impacts of gentrification at a broader scale. This is captured by the fourth quote above with respect to pressing for a municipal inclusionary zoning policy alongside addressing immediate displacement concerns. These actions include providing public commentary on identified challenges and reporting data that expose issues and needs, as well as advocating for policy changes or alternatives and different development models:

“...I think what we can do right now is provide a tangible, just a tangible example of a different model, right? Like, we can show that it’s possible to do things differently and that’s what I think this first project is doing. That we don’t have to accept that the way the real estate market works now is the only way that it can work.” (Informant A, city-wide organization)

“...evidence and data to show what is needed to help with neighbourhood development in the first place, to ensure that the data is collected in ways that are reflective of the community, so ensuring that all voices are heard...” (Informant M, city-wide organization)

“Especially with the new condos and apartments and rentals coming, we are going to work as hard as we can to, I mean, within reason, within whatever our power is...is to work with those other neighbourhoods continuously until there is a percentage that’s identified where this is a reasonable percentage of rentals, this should be affordable, this

should be that...we're seeing that people want to see that in the policy..." (Informant K, neighbourhood association)

Indeed, this type of resistance, in contesting structures of planning and development that reinforce inequitable neighbourhood change, encompasses the actions of many of the community organizations working to shape redevelopment at the policy level, as discussed in 5.2.2. This category of resistance can also encompass the work of a couple organizations looking at systemic issues that directly interact with challenges of gentrification and displacement, such as poverty and exclusionary language of community development.

Again, it is important to emphasize that these actions resisting threats to inclusivity and diversity in a gentrifying context are often not recognized as "acts of resistance" to gentrification. In one instance, an organization that does not see itself as "standing in the way of anything" with respect to neighbourhood change (Informant I, neighbourhood association) is nevertheless involved in providing support to tenants facing displacement. Looking in combination at all the ways in which organizations are striving to address inequities of neighbourhood change, it is difficult to evaluate the success of these actions, particularly as many are still underway or positioned as long-term strategies. While certain representatives noted limitations in extensively preventing displacement, due to landlords' aggressive tactics, or facilitating new affordable housing, due to lack of funding, these actions are nevertheless building awareness of inequities surrounding neighbourhood change.

Interestingly, a couple informants from organizations not involved in resistance-related actions provided their perspectives on the ways in which gentrification and displacement has been visibly and actively contested in recent years outside of community organizations. While pursuing housing affordability is widely accepted and supported, resisting gentrification through

direct action tactics, such as inflicting damage to businesses aimed at affluent clientele, is demonized:

“...certain people in the community feel stronger, especially anarchists, with regards to the gentrification piece. And I feel sometimes they look for a fight rather than a cause, if you know what I mean...like, if they really wanted to do something about it, go and fight for affordable housing, don't go and fight the small businesses and say get out of that illegal residential, because that's not the right way to support it...” (Informant D, business improvement association)

“...we haven't given it any heed only because the type of protestors or individuals that we're dealing with...they're not interested in conversation, they're not interested in education, their pursuits have been quite irrational and actually quite destructive...our engagement is with those individuals who are willing to engage in a productive manner with us as well.” (Informant B, city-wide organization)

These two sentiments reflect an interesting disconnect, also identifiable at a broader scale among Hamilton community members, in which the violence of certain responses to gentrification are condemned over the violence of the gentrification process itself. Nevertheless, the aggressive and destructive nature of coercive tactics to displace vulnerable, lower-income residents were emphasized in discussions with several other informants. These different perspectives highlight the challenges of discussing and addressing such a divisive and complex subject, as recognized by two informants, where gentrification's diverse and polarizing connotations make collective responses very difficult. This is particularly true for the organizations whose representatives noted existing difficulties in finding common ground given diverse interests.

While a number of community organizations do not see themselves as playing a role in addressing gentrification and its impacts, there is nevertheless concern, uncertainty, and frustration surrounding their role in advancing the process:

“I think the [organization] sees itself as an agent of change and it's kind of a tricky area because there's also the question of gentrification, and we don't necessarily want to be agents of gentrification.” (Informant N, neighbourhood association)

“Well, you know, there’s the whole topic of gentrification. So, if I plant tulips in the green space and it looks beautiful, am I gentrifying my neighbourhood? You know, if...I don’t see it the same way as other people do, I see it as improving where you live so that you’re inspired to build yourself up.” (Informant C, neighbourhood association)

“...so they did nothing to increase the value of their property, everyone else around them, I did and my neighbours did through [the organization] by working on things like crime, needles in the park, drug addiction, this made it a nicer place to live, and then they can sell and be like, “well, that’s nice, I just made 200,000 bucks or 300 percent because someone else did the hard work of trying to make this place more livable...” (Informant F, neighbourhood association)

Indeed, sentiments from multiple informants reflect consideration of the potential for their organizations’ actions to produce exclusivity by contributing to more attractive neighbourhoods, an issue that has been raised with regard to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (City of Hamilton, 2016; Neighbourhood Action Evaluation, 2017). A few representatives also discussed and reconciled actions perceived to be in tension with realities of gentrification by emphasizing the number of forces at play, other explanations, and engaging with the dichotomy of decline and gentrification:

“I want to make a place that’s beautiful for everyone to enjoy, whether or not they, you know, I don’t want people to leave, but I mean, market forces I think are bigger than any one individual. I don’t know, I don’t want to feel like it’s contributing, but I don’t know how...I don’t want to not do anything for my neighbourhood and just ignore the problems, right?” (Informant O, neighbourhood association)

In addition to casting doubt on the role of community-based action in gentrification processes, this sentiment reflects a (reluctant) acceptance of potential inequities given a perceived alternative trajectory of continued decline through disinvestment and inaction. While certain actors depicted in the gentrification literature often use a similar rationale to justify and advance revitalization strategies, these informants expressed greater and more genuine concern over the potential impacts of their actions. However, many ultimately perceived that their organizations

lack the capacity or scope to seek an alternative path balancing envisioned neighbourhood improvements with strategies to actively protect inclusivity.

As a result, certain organizations may be advancing inequitable neighbourhood change and the vulnerabilities gentrification produces by accepting or supporting aspects of gentrification, particularly in their attitudes toward new investment. Many community organizations are pushing for or welcoming an increase in commercial amenities and the redevelopment of underutilized lots, but only some of them demonstrate an intention of actively challenging or addressing the inclusivity of new businesses or development. Organizations' participation in "revitalizing" commercial corridors without helping to preserve or create affordable components risks the indirect displacement of existing (lower-income) residents, with reconceived, higher-end environments potentially decreasing their sense of place and belonging. In a few cases, where organizations are working to return commercial uses to "underutilized" spaces currently housing "illegal" residences, without addressing the fate of the current tenants, there are clear implications with respect to the direct displacement of vulnerable residents. However, this situation is somewhat more complex in that some of the mechanisms being used by organizations to increase commercial concentrations, such as advocating the removal of property tax rebates for vacant properties, also work to combat issues of property speculation, as noted by one informant.

Given the City of Hamilton's stake in community-based action through the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, an interesting dynamic also emerges regarding the potential for certain organizations' initiatives to be encompassed within broader processes of municipal-led gentrification. Representatives' insight suggests multifaceted relationships with their municipal government, with some discussing a lack of collaboration and divergent priorities with respect to

neighbourhood change. However, a number of informants also spoke to the ways in which their initiatives are aligned with municipal revitalization priorities and supported by councillors and municipal staff, identifying instances of the City of Hamilton expanding on their efforts. Within this context, there are examples where the municipality's bid to formalize or build upon community-based action speaks to gentrification, particularly with respect to beautification projects:

“In 2015, local resident...and members of the [neighbourhood association] brought art to the street...designs were created on street planters...to deter their misuse as trash receptacles...Building on this momentum, the City's urban renewal team has developed two new incentive programs...to help transform vacant storefronts into vibrant businesses and contribute to the revitalization of this corridor. When residents are able to dream the ideas and staff are able to respond with innovative solutions, Hamilton's neighbourhoods are at the centre of facilitating courageous change.” (Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy, 2016 Annual Update)

In this instance, a community-driven streetscape beautification initiative is framed as an initial step in the more extensive transformation of a commercial corridor, with foreseeable consequences in terms of gentrification and displacement. By co-opting these smaller-scale projects to further municipal revitalization and reinvestment strategies, the City of Hamilton also places community organizations as unwitting actors of gentrification.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Equity Implications of Community-Based Action in Gentrifying Neighbourhoods

The research findings discussed above highlight community-based organizations as complicated actors in processes of gentrification and neighbourhood change in central Hamilton. Many representatives of community organizations share concern over the prospect and reality that broader forces and/or community-based action are decreasing the inclusivity and diversity of Hamilton's central neighbourhoods, qualities on which they and their organizations discursively place substantial value. Nevertheless, organizations' impacts on gentrification and displacement pressures and trajectories of neighbourhood change are multi-faceted. Actions within and across organizations often work in tension with each other with respect to preserving and potentially compromising the inclusivity of lower-income and more marginalized populations in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

For instance, many organizations frame increased housing costs, displacement, and other impacts of gentrification as important issues to be addressed, as least in discourse if not also through concrete actions. However, several of these organizations are also looking to redefine neighbourhood perceptions and erase evidence of dereliction and decline, with potential to exacerbate current displacement pressures and produce threats to inclusivity and diversity depending on the nature of the approach. There are also tensions between the extent to which community organizations focus on building community capacity and sense of belonging through events and other initiatives versus the extent to which they focus on addressing the impacts of gentrification. Evidence of organizations prioritizing the former but placing little to no emphasis on the latter introduces concerns that this fostered sense of community will be disrupted as

gentrification progresses and vulnerable residents are pushed to other neighbourhoods or find themselves out of place in their own community.

These challenges can be further understood with respect to the different forms of displacement discussed in the literature, each of which represent the compromised inclusivity of less affluent populations. While direct, exclusionary, and indirect forms of displacement (Marcuse, 1985) are all resisted in certain capacities in the Hamilton context, they may also be furthered through organizations' support for private investment and commercial vitality that manifest in diminished affordable housing and high-end environments. Community organizations' frequent drive to reimagine local identities as a response to existing conditions and stigmatization or as a place marketing strategy also speaks to indirect displacement, specifically displacement as a loss of place and belonging (Davidson, 2009; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015).

While non-gentrifiers may experience a disconnect with spaces of affluence produced through new investment in their neighbourhood (Davidson & Lees, 2010; Hodkinson & Essen, 2015), those who do not conform to the ideals of community organizations' visions may also be excluded, as discussed in the findings. This possibility was captured in representatives' discussions on reframing public spaces, in which some emphasized creating a welcoming space for everyone while others discussed reenvisioning the space for appropriate users. This theme was also repeated in representatives' discussions of "illegal" residential units in ground floor retail spaces, the language of which criminalizes its inhabitants and positions them at odds with a conceived identity of how the neighbourhood should be. These examples provide a different lens to existing discussions on how non-gentrifier residents' amenities, activities and uses of space are explicitly limited and controlled in gentrifying neighbourhoods, including by landlords and

the state (e.g. Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Hochstenbach, 2015; Kennelly & Watt, 2011; Stabrowski, 2014).

Alongside tensions surrounding inclusivity and diversity within Hamilton's gentrifying inner city neighbourhoods, there is also the question of the inclusivity and diversity of the organizations themselves (also City of Hamilton, 2016). While representatives consistently expressed a desire to involve a wide variety of community members in their initiatives and decision-making, they also recognized substantial barriers in engaging certain populations, particularly those typically marginalized within community processes. Thus, despite efforts and intentions to increase diversity, the individuals currently driving community-based action do not necessarily reflect the range of perspectives of the broader population with respect to neighbourhood change. This challenge speaks to Lefebvre's Right to the City question (1996), in that only certain community members with certain lived experiences and priorities have the ability to shape the direction and nature of change within their urban environments. In this context, there is a risk that the needs and interests of those most vulnerable to displacement are overlooked given the recognition that their voices are underrepresented in many community conversations. This uneven representation, which August and Walks (2012) also uncovered in the Regent Park context, underlies the potential for community organizations to reinforce the current trajectory of change in Hamilton toward more exclusive spaces.

The role of inclusive representation in maintaining inclusive environments can be understood in relation to community organizations' efforts to preserve and redefine neighbourhood identities in inner city Hamilton, particularly when conceptualized using Lefebvre's Spatial Triad (1991) (as discussed in Section 2). Organizations' actions with respect to identity appear to, on the one hand, reinforce "representational space" (lived space) and

existing “spatial practice” (perceived space) by protecting residents’ place meanings and gathering spaces that pre-exist revitalization narratives. On the other hand, organizations also expand “representations of space” (conceived space) by establishing a neighbourhood vision potentially at odds with some residents’ day-to-day patterns and lived identities associated with their neighbourhood. However, this understanding may be complicated by the level and diversity of engagement in decision-making and visioning processes. With respect to preserving “representational space” and certain spatial practices, a lack of diverse engagement may mean representatives’ perceptions of important place meanings diverge from the places and aspects of neighbourhood character valued by residents. Additionally, in the case of establishing a vision for a neighbourhood’s future, high participation and substantial engagement may mean that lived and conceived identities are more closely aligned, producing a more inclusive vision.

Within these discussions of inclusivity, it is also important to reflect on the ways in which community organizations employ related terminology. While many informants emphasized the importance of fostering welcoming and diverse communities, these terms were used in relation to both gentrifier and non-gentrifier residents. In many cases, this language clearly reflects community organizations’ intentions of ensuring that all residents can find a place within their neighbourhood, regardless of their background. However, this framing also suggests the possibility for these terms to be repositioned to justify socio-economic changes indicative of gentrification (e.g. on the basis of increasing the diversity of residents). Representatives’ differing conceptions of affordability, with some focusing predominantly on affordable home ownership, also speak to instances in which more vulnerable residents are not encompassed within language of inclusivity, with implications for effective advocacy.

While some organizations explicitly discuss ensuring benefits for existing residents within Hamilton's changing context, including through their actions and priorities, these equitable intentions are faced with challenges. Given the multiplicity of factors that advance gentrification and displacement (e.g. Slater, 2006), the "equity" piece of revitalization is undoubtedly harder to achieve than other, less complex initiatives, such as small-scale improvement projects. This discord is emphasized by perceived and real limits to community organizations' capacity, including those who are focused primarily on addressing gentrification and its impacts. Additionally, there is the possibility for well intentioned and fairly benign community-based efforts to be encompassed into more detrimental and pervasive mechanisms of municipal-led gentrification, as in the case of grassroots beautification initiatives being co-opted to advance broader revitalization strategies.

As a result, there appears to be an overall imbalance between the drive to transform neighbourhood landscapes and the provision of supports for those who may be disadvantaged by such initiatives across the work of the community organizations and other actors of change in Hamilton. This imbalance emphasizes the complexity of discussions of "equitable" revitalization in the literature (e.g. Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016), as those advancing more just frameworks are met with other forces and objectives of neighbourhood change. Thus, while certain organizations' initiatives may achieve an aim of equitable revitalization in and of themselves, this outcome is not necessarily realized at a broader scale (neighbourhood, city) depending on the influence and priorities of other actors of change.

6.2 Responsibility for Addressing Inequitable Neighbourhood Change

As revitalization projects continue to unfold, including at the municipal level, there is potential for existing inequities and displacement pressures to be exacerbated. This challenge

raises the question of who is ultimately responsible to address determinants and impacts of gentrification in Hamilton, as well as in other cities in which narratives of revitalization are replacing narratives of decline. As previously discussed, representatives of community organizations in Hamilton often recognize the inequitable trajectory of change in the inner city neighbourhoods but doubt their organization's (response)ability to address these concerns or identify constraints to more extensive resistance. Beyond issues of capacity, representatives' differing perceptions of Hamilton's revitalization process explain instances of hesitancy or a lack of urgency to mitigate its impacts. For some, the perceived emancipatory qualities of upgraded neighborhood landscapes and lack of alternatives to continued decline justify the current direction of change, reiterating the logic of certain government actors and academics identified in the literature (e.g. by Hochstenbach, 2015; Slater, 2006, 2014).

Community organizations' (perceived) ability to effect change with respect to gentrification and its impacts also appears dependent on the network of support available, including the ability to collaborate with other organizations or receive municipal assistance. This factor, in combination with many organizations' lack of capacity or perceived responsibility, underline the importance of substantial involvement from other actors of change, particularly government policymakers and decision makers, in addressing gentrification. Nevertheless, community organizations in Hamilton can still play a valuable role in this regard, as illustrated by those currently undertaking acts of resistance. While the complexity of gentrification suggests the need for multi-faceted strategies at different levels (neighbourhood, municipal, provincial, national), the current breadth of responses in the Hamilton context is limited. There are actors engaged in issues of housing affordability and inclusivity to some degree at each level of

influence, with direct or indirect implications for Hamilton, but the combination of efforts are not yet sufficiently extensive to ease concerns of displacement as “revitalization” progresses.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in a global context of state-led gentrification (e.g. Lees et al., 2016), governmental actors have not been particularly effective in taking responsibility for social welfare challenges related to neighbourhood change, despite having greater capacity to do so than community organizations. While the City of Hamilton has been proactive in facilitating private investment and neighbourhood improvements in line with revitalization narratives, there appears to be a disconnect with respect to addressing the implications of these actions (e.g. City of Hamilton, 2016, p.16; Neighbourhood Action Evaluation, 2017). Proposed inclusionary zoning regulations released by the Province of Ontario at the end of 2017, while much anticipated, have been widely criticized as insufficient given the minimal requirements placed on developers with respect to the provision of affordable units (e.g. Crawley, 2018). The federal National Housing Strategy unveiled in late 2017 contains promising rhetoric but relies predominantly on band-aid solutions and delays the bulk of its programs and investments until following the next federal election in 2019 (Doucet, 2017; Zimonjic, 2017). Thus, while there are some more progressive advancements and decision-making, these examples capture an underwhelming commitment to addressing determinants and impacts of gentrification at the scales that have the potential to be most impactful, such as provincial and federal policy. Without direct or indirect support for community-based action that resists gentrification, or to balance initiatives that threaten inclusivity, it will be difficult to realize the oft-repeated vision of “equitable revitalization” in Hamilton. Given the scope of influence of government actors at the federal and provincial levels, as well as the pervasive nature of neoliberalism and urban

entrepreneurialism, this conclusion likely applies to other cities experiencing gentrification both within and outside of Ontario and Canada.

6.3 Applicability of Themes to Other (Mid-Sized) Contexts

While this research focuses on one case study, both existing gentrification literature and emergent trends across municipalities suggest themes regarding the complicated nature and impacts of community-based action in Hamilton have applicability to other cities, mid-sized or otherwise. Importantly, the research setting is not particularly anomalous, as broader economic and political changes have produced similar narratives and realities of post-industrial decline and/or contexts of municipal entrepreneurialism in many cities, both within Canada and internationally (e.g. Doucet & Smit, 2016). Indeed, strategies of municipal-led gentrification that emphasize images of dereliction and reinforce existing place-based stigma to justify neighbourhood transformation and reconceptualization are widespread, from Toronto and Edinburgh to Amsterdam and Berlin (August, 2014; Hochstenbach, 2015; Kallin & Slater, 2014; Teernstra, 2015). Additionally, other municipalities in Canada, such as Calgary, Toronto, and Kitchener, have adopted neighbourhood strategies that emphasize the role of community-based action in initiating local improvements and advancing social well-being (City of Calgary, n.d.; City of Kitchener, 2017; City of Toronto, 2017). Like the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) in Hamilton, these strategies outline a promising direction of collaborative community development on paper. However, the dynamics of community-based action in Hamilton, both within and outside of the NAS, suggest potential complications in achieving more socially-focused goals, with respect to both capacity and the influence of broader narratives of revitalization.

The complexities and equity implications of community organizations' priorities and initiatives in the Hamilton context also complement current understandings of community-based organizations as actors of neighbourhood change. Indeed, the Hamilton case study exemplifies and extends, in one setting, the multiplicity of ways community-based action can be seen to shape (more or less equitable) trajectories of neighbourhood change across a combination of existing studies (e.g. Bunce, 2016; Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016; Keatinge & Martin, 2016). At the same time, it also nuances this understanding by considering tensions produced with respect to gentrification and displacement pressures through the interplay of these different roles of community organizations and the varied perceptions of their representatives.

Returning to discussion by DeFilippis (2004) and Elwood (2006) on the changing face of community-based action in a neoliberal context, the nature of community organizations' work in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods often embodies this recognition of increasingly multi-faceted approaches "that sometimes cooperate and sometimes disrupt" (Elwood, 2006, p.337). However, while Elwood frames organizations' apparently contradictory actions as a intentionally employed to navigate a neoliberal environment, the contradictions that emerge in the Hamilton context appear to be less strategic and more a product of diverse priorities and constrained capacity. As a result, this research also emphasizes the centrality of both perceived and real capacity in dictating the impacts and equity implications of community-based action with respect to neighbourhood change, expanding on challenges in this regard noted by Koschman & Laster (2011).

Additionally, as highlighted above, the notion of inadequate collective responsibility among relevant actors to address gentrification and its impacts is another theme that undoubtedly extends beyond the Hamilton case study. While the nature and dynamics of community

organizations' roles and responses in other gentrifying contexts may differ, it is reasonable to assume they experience similar challenges with respect to their capacity to address gentrification and displacement without support from other governmental actors. However, the neoliberal frameworks of governance that persist within Ontario, across Canada, and internationally suggest insufficient responses to processes of gentrification unfolding across a variety of settings.

6.4 Policy Implications and Recommendations

The study findings suggest policy implications for different levels of government, as well as recommendations for the practices of both planners and community organizations. As discussed above, community organizations in Hamilton generally want to see neighbourhood revitalization occur but want this change to be equitable, echoing sentiments of other organizations in the literature (e.g. Collins & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2016). However, they often lack the tools or capacity to address gentrification pressures and ensure continued inclusivity in the midst of revitalization initiatives, a challenge that can be presumed to extend to community organizations in other (gentrifying) contexts (e.g. Koschman & Laster, 2011). As a result, there are clear roles for governmental actors to play in supporting community organizations and mitigating impacts of gentrification in areas facing reinvestment and redevelopment.

For the City of Hamilton and other municipalities, there is a need to (continue to) rethink, or at least balance, overarching entrepreneurial strategies through a more equitable lens. While municipalities are increasingly aware of this need, as demonstrated by the inclusion of policies for the on-site replacement of demolished rental units in Hamilton's new Downtown Secondary Plan, the challenges must be approached more robustly from many different angles. Support for more inclusive trajectories of change may be achieved in part by strengthening existing or enacting additional provisions for new affordable rental units, with greater concern for residents'

well-being than maintaining development interest. One example of this shift would be to focus incentives specifically on projects that incorporate a substantial percentage of affordable housing, rather than simply incentivizing any type of development (including those that contribute to more exclusive communities).

Additionally, even when potential tools within (Ontario) municipalities' purview are integrated into planning policy in Hamilton and elsewhere, the language used often displays a weak commitment to actively pursuing these strategies. Where enforceable, there is a need for municipalities to shift policy language from "encourage", "promote", or "may seek" to use more decisive terms, such as with securing affordable housing benefits through density bonusing and inclusionary zoning. It is also important that the ways in which affordability is defined and discussed is inclusive of, and prioritizes, the lowest-income residents most vulnerable to direct displacement. As mentioned by one representative, there is also a need for municipalities to increase the flexibility of their zoning bylaws and building codes with respect to more innovative solutions to affordable housing, such as allowing smaller unit sizes and secondary units.

It is also crucial for municipalities, such as Hamilton, to (continue to) actively support alternative models of revitalization promoted by community organizations, including by shifting more parcels to community ownership for the development of affordable housing and inclusive spaces. Following from this point, municipalities, alongside other governmental and non-profit sources, should strengthen the resources, financial or otherwise, available to community organizations to build their capacity to address gentrification and its impacts. Indeed, regardless of their mandate, community organizations should engage in ongoing reflection on the potential impacts of their actions and ways in which they can be part of solutions for more equitable neighbourhood change. Involvement in more equitable trajectories of neighbourhood change

may be achieved in part by continuing to leverage collaboration, as well as by considering and framing activities around a broader constituency, if not already doing so.

Planners and associated decision-makers have a particular role to play in supporting community members to negotiate the space between decline and gentrification and mitigate direct and indirect displacement impacts. It is not a simple task, but requires continued respect for, and reflection on potential impacts to, existing residents and internally valued neighbourhood qualities when developing policy direction and strategies intended to revitalize and shape new urban identities. Thus, the goal of revitalization should not be to redefine communities to facilitate private investment (or visa versa), but to consider ways to facilitate local amenities and improvements desired by current populations in ways that are inclusive, including by supporting community land ownership.

While the implications for policy and practice at the local level are important to consider, the most meaningful solutions to challenges of affordability and displacement require collaboration across different levels of government. Indeed, higher levels of government have the greatest financial and political capacity to address structural inequalities and dynamics of investment that produce and intensify impacts of gentrification, such as real estate speculation and unequal access to affordable housing and well-paid employment. In Canada, immediate action is required by provincial and federal governments to respond to these issues, including by providing greater financial and policy-related support to municipalities (e.g. more robust inclusionary zoning regulations) to increase their capacity to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. As emphasized by Doucet (2017), multi-scalar collaboration and support is particularly required to increase the provision of social housing and other types of affordable, non-market housing removed from speculative interests, as opposed to housing “solutions” that

are complicit in the logic of the private market. Challenges of gentrification and displacement can also be approached from other angles, including by establishing a national basic income program or bringing the minimum wage on par with a living wage to provide more stability to low-income households.

7.0 Conclusion

In order to provide a final reflection on community organizations as actors of change in gentrifying contexts, I return to my research questions introduced in Chapter 1, which were explored through semi-structured key informant interviews and document analysis:

1. How do representatives of community organizations perceive neighbourhood change and understand their organizations' roles and impacts in gentrifying Hamilton neighbourhoods?
2. In what ways do the actions of community-based organizations in Hamilton shape and respond to the current trajectory of change in inner city neighbourhoods? What are the equity implications of these actions with respect to gentrification and displacement?

The relevance of these questions is emphasized by the limited attention to date on community organizations as actors in gentrifying contexts, including on their potential to resist, as well as on dynamics and processes of gentrification and neighbourhood change in mid-sized cities.

Considering the first question, my findings demonstrate that representatives of community organizations often recognize inherent challenges in the progression of change in Hamilton's inner city neighbourhoods but may position their organizations as lacking the scope or ability to address these challenges. Indeed, the representatives I interviewed consistently viewed neighbourhood change as a double-edged sword, with celebration of new amenities and vibrancy mixed with concern for growing affordability constraints and displacement. However, reflecting overarching discussions of Hamilton's revitalization process, informants ultimately placed greater emphasis on the perceived benefits of continued reinvestment, as well as on other identified pitfalls of change, such as threats to neighbourhood character through intensification. The potential for certain dynamics of neighbourhood change, such as reinvestment, to intensify

gentrification and displacement was not always (fully) recognized, and existing pressures were occasionally downplayed. Overall, representatives' perspectives on neighbourhood change in Hamilton appear varied, multi-faceted, and occasionally contradictory. These perspectives in combination can be seen to simultaneously problematize, accept, and dismiss gentrification as an outcome of revitalization.

Just as representatives' perspectives are multi-faceted, so are the priorities of their organizations. While some informants strongly associated their work with addressing affordability, displacement, and other impacts of gentrification, others implicitly placed these concerns as low priority by emphasizing a myriad of other focuses. The ways in which representatives define their organizations' roles appears to be a function of perceived capacity as much as of perceived community need, making actions that meet both these criteria, such as projects to create more convivial environments, appear most viable. Nevertheless, reflecting on both the first and second questions, many community organizations are positioned or can be read as shaping and responding to neighbourhood change in both smaller scale and larger scale ways.

For instance, a common priority of community-based action in Hamilton, as per this study, is facilitating connections and building capacity among evolving neighbourhood populations through smaller scale projects, such as running community events and enhancing community gathering spaces. At the same time, many organizations are involved in larger undertakings, such as shaping development and investment in the central neighbourhoods, including by negotiating with developers, advocating for policy changes, and encouraging new commercial activity. The potential for community-based action at different scales to influence community life is also captured by the ways in which organizations shape neighbourhood identities. While some strive to protect or replace displaced neighbourhood qualities through

community land ownership or zoning overlays, others look to redefine perceptions of dereliction, including through smaller beautification and public art initiatives, to improve community pride and facilitate new interest. Thus, although their capacity may be constrained, even community organizations' smaller scale initiatives can have quite profound impacts in shaping trajectories of change, whether or not these trajectories are equitable, particularly if they are subsumed into larger municipal revitalization strategies.

Community organizations' overarching directions are interwoven with intentions to maintain neighbourhood inclusivity and diversity, including by fostering neighbourhood belonging, advocating for affordable and family housing in new developments, and working to preserve important community elements. However, aspects of community-based action in Hamilton also contradict these common goals of fostering inclusivity and diversity. These contradictions are seen in the ways in which certain populations are excluded or at risk of exclusion in the reframing of community spaces and neighbourhood images, as well as in the uneven representation of community members' voices in decision-making processes. Indeed, as emphasized in Chapter 6, the equity implications of the ways in which community organizations shape neighbourhood change are not one dimensional. Instead, there are tensions within and across organizations in the ways in which community-based action alternatively maintains and potentially compromises the inclusivity of more marginalized community members.

These tensions are illuminated when community organizations' priorities and initiatives are specifically placed within and connected to the progression of gentrification, providing instances in which the process and its impacts are both resisted and facilitated. While representatives of community organizations rarely explicitly discussed resistance, some nevertheless engage in actions that help community members cope with the implications of

gentrification or contest the creation of increasing exclusive environments at a higher level. At the same time, however, some organizations may (also) be advancing gentrification and displacement by, for example, providing fairly uncritical support for private reinvestment or developing neighbourhood identities and visions in which not all community members have a place. Beyond these risks, what is immediately evident across several organizations is a degree of acceptance of the overarching direction of “revitalization” in Hamilton, often paired with a (perceived) inability to meaningfully address emerging inequalities. Considering these different responses as a whole, an imbalance emerges in community-based action between acceptance of and support for reinvestment and redevelopment, on the one hand, and resistance to inequities produced by these strategies of revitalization. This imbalance requires that many actors across different scales take action, in an era where responsibility for social welfare concerns is lacking, in order to achieve a trajectory of change that resembles broader calls for “equitable revitalization”.

Evidently, the nature of community-based action in Hamilton may not exactly represent that of other gentrifying cities. However, parallels can be drawn between these findings and themes on community organizations and neighbourhood change in existing research, as well as between the context of Hamilton’s “renaissance” and the generalized push to reimagine other cities that have similarly experienced deindustrialization. In addition to the prevalence of similar types of community organizations in other settings, these factors suggest the themes, lessons, and policy implications drawn from this case study are more widely applicable. Nevertheless, further research should explore the roles and responses of community organizations within other gentrifying settings, both within and outside of larger centres, in order to continue to expand and nuance this body of knowledge. Comparing experiences across multiple cities could be

particularly fruitful given the current predominance of single case studies in this area of the literature. Additionally, involving representatives of community organizations and other related actors more meaningfully in the research process through the use of participatory methods may strengthen the impact of the findings “on the ground”.

Some complementary research directions also emerged from this study, which could be applied within Hamilton or in other relevant contexts. One such direction is the exploration of tensions between representatives’ positionalities with respect to gentrification processes (e.g. as “gentrifier” or “non-gentrifier”), the initiatives they are advancing, and their perceptions of neighbourhood change and their place therein. The dynamics and relationships between community organizations and municipal actors is also an important area for further investigation, particularly with respect to the potential cooptation of well-intentioned, community-level initiatives to more insidious ends. These findings help provide a basis for such research in further extending discussion of actors in gentrification processes beyond the usual suspects, with a view to contributing to more equitable trajectories of neighbourhood change.

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9.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide for City-Wide Organizations

1. What are your organization's overarching goals?
2. How does your organization view its role within the community and with regard to neighbourhood change?
3. Who do you involve in your activities or initiatives?
 - a. How are they involved or consulted?
4. What are some of the needs or issues that your organization has identified within Hamilton's neighbourhoods?
 - a. Accordingly, what are some of your organization's current or ongoing priorities within the community?
5. What types of community initiatives is your organization currently undertaking?
6. What have been some of your most successful community initiatives or programs to date?
 - a. What made these initiatives successful?
7. And conversely, what are some of the challenges your organization has experienced in guiding change within the community?
8. What types of support, if any, have you received from other sources (e.g. municipal policymakers, other organizations)?
9. In what ways, if any, do you perceive a connection between your organization's initiatives and the City of Hamilton's neighbourhood-level (revitalization) strategies and policies?
10. What kinds of changes have you observed in central Hamilton neighbourhoods over the past years?
 - a. How would you classify these changes and their impacts on life in these neighbourhoods (e.g. positive, negative)?
 - b. How do you perceive the contributions of your organization with regard to these changes?
11. Are there any concerns or discussions within your organization on gentrification and its impacts (e.g. decreased commercial/housing affordability, displacement) in Hamilton?
 - a. If yes, is anything being pursued by your organization to address these concerns?
12. Where do you see the organization making the most impact?
13. What would be your organization's vision for Hamilton in the next 10 years?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Neighbourhood-Level Associations

1. What are your organization's overarching goals?
2. How does your organization view its role within the community and with regard to neighbourhood change?
3. Who do you involve in your activities or initiatives?
 - a. How are they involved or consulted?
4. Can you describe the character of and specific landmarks in the neighbourhood in which your organization is working? Are they something that your organization is looking to preserve or redefine?
5. What are some of the needs or issues that your organization has identified within the neighbourhood?
 - a. Accordingly, what are some of your organization's current or ongoing priorities within the neighbourhood?
6. What types of neighbourhood-level initiatives is your organization currently undertaking?
 - a. Does there tend to be a focus on certain considerations (e.g. physical social, economic, cultural)?
7. What have been some of your most successful initiatives or programs to date?
 - a. What made these initiatives successful?
8. And conversely, what are some of the challenges your organization has experienced in guiding change within the neighbourhood?
9. What types of support have you received from other sources (e.g. municipal policymakers, other organizations), if any?
10. In what ways, if any, do you perceive a connection between your organization's initiatives and the City of Hamilton's neighbourhood-level (revitalization) strategies and policies?
11. What are the characteristics of those who are involved in your organization and in guiding change within the neighbourhood (e.g. business owners, homeowners, renters, long-term residents, more recent residents)?
12. What kinds of changes have you observed in the neighbourhood over the past years?
 - a. How would you classify these changes and their impacts on life in these neighbourhoods (e.g. positive, negative)?
 - b. How do you perceive the contributions of your organization with regard to these changes?
13. Are there any concerns or discussions within your organization on gentrification and its impacts (e.g. decreased commercial/housing affordability, displacement) in the neighbourhood or in Hamilton more generally?
 - a. If yes, is anything being pursued by your organization to address these concerns?
14. Where do you see the organization making the most impact?
15. What would be your organization's vision for the neighbourhood in the next 10 years?