Athabasca University Master of Arts - Integrated Studies

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALISM IN/FORMS VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE HOUSING ADVOCACY

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Abstract

Over the last twenty years, poverty and homelessness has dramatically increased in Vancouver's historic Downtown Eastside neighbourhood, fostering an environment that is plagued by extensive drug addiction, disease and privation. The spread of these social ills has also occurred during an age of 'globalization,' whereby, due to technological innovations and the entrenchment of neoliberal economics, transnational capital flows are increasingly targeting urban centers in search of surplus values. This interdisciplinary project utilizes various neo-Marxist and post-structuralist theoretical positions to reveal and describe the connections that can be made between the global primacy of neoliberal ideology, and the local experiences of gentrification. This project also examines the extensive social ills and ongoing gentrification in Vancouver's DTES, and how housing activists and non-profit interests advocate for affordable housing, as a means to remedy the region's abhorrent conditions and prevent further displacement of its residents. This research also demonstrates, however, that the advocacy of certain housing activists continues to appeal to neoliberal ideology. By promoting their agenda with the contention that providing affordable housing will save taxpayer's money through reducing state expenditures related to widespread social ills (judiciary, medical, policing, welfare etc), the neoliberal status quo which has exasperated poverty and gentrification in the DTES remains unchallenged. In other words, appeals from non-profit interests for substantive and redistributive socioeconomic reforms are not made (communal

property, extensive welfare state etc). A critical discourse analysis of texts related to housing advocacy in Vancouver's DTES further reveals that the state (municipal, provincial, and federal) and its partners, in both the non-profit and for-profit sectors, have appropriated the advocacy of housing activists into neoliberal discourse.

Introduction

I embarked on this research in the fall of 2009 with the goal of developing a better theoretical understanding, as to what extent ‘globalization’s’ neoliberal machinations were evident in the ongoing gentrification and increasing poverty in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Further, I hoped to develop a clear idea as to what was being proposed, if anything, in regards to addressing the neighbourhood’s extensive social ills within this neoliberal context. It was determined that a critical discourse analysis would be an effective means to conduct this research, by applying the work’s theoretical findings to texts which speak directly about addressing the Downtown Eastside’s widespread socioeconomic depression. The process was somewhat ‘organic’ and evolved as the project’s work unfolded. Although preliminary research revealed that both activists and the state promoted affordable housing as an effective means to address poverty in the DTES, establishing both the primacy and neoliberal nature of this advocacy, was a conclusion that was eventually reached as the research unfolded.

This project is composed of three separate papers. Each paper can stand on their own and be read independently and each paper represents ‘one step’ in the research process. The first paper explores the relationship between the entrenchment of neoliberal economics and the processes of ‘globalization’ to the local experiences of urbanization. It argues that neoliberal economics are

fostering socioeconomic inequality and increasing gentrification. The second paper then examines these local experiences of urbanization and gentrification by examining the socioeconomic conditions in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where poverty and gentrification continue to increase, despite the 'social legacy' commitments that were made by interests tied to the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The paper also examines how local activists and social justice groups are trying to remedy poverty and combat gentrification in the DTES, concluding that their efforts center on a form of housing advocacy. Finally, the third paper closely examines this advocacy through the use of critical discourse analysis. This paper demonstrates that this housing agenda and advocacy has been appropriated and subsumed by neoliberal discourse.

Paper One

Neoliberalism and Gentrification: Making the Connection

Despite the tendency of some to view ‘globalization’ as solely an international socioeconomic phenomenon, whereby the compression of time and space via technological innovation has facilitated the spread of Western culture and neoliberal economics around the globe, the ramifications of neoliberal ideology are not limited to the ‘developing world,’ nor are its workings confined to federal politics within the ‘developed world.’ In fact, the cause and effects of neoliberalism’s machinations are demonstrated rather vividly on the local stage. By analyzing how neoliberal ideology is integrally tied to the process of ‘urbanization’ and ultimately gentrification, a clearer understanding of how globalization has furthered inequality throughout the world, can be ascertained.

Accordingly, this paper will first provide insights into the Keynesian economic framework that preceded the entrenchment of neoliberalism, and further, how neoliberal ideology differs in theory and in practice. Next, this treatment will explore how the capital logic of globalization is tied to urbanization, whereby urban centers are increasingly providing a focal point for surplus value extraction. Finally, this paper will examine the social cost of neoliberalism’s machinations, to demonstrate that neoliberal economics and globalization are directly tied to urban gentrification.

Keynesian Economics and the Onset of Neoliberalism

Due to the ubiquitous discourse of modernity, the nation-state has risen to near universal prominence as the defining institution for civilization’s socioeconomic

framework. In fact, the defining message of the globalization discourse disseminates the notion, that nation-states are increasingly becoming socially and economically integrated for the better good. For much of the 20th Century, nation-states of the developed world were integrally involved in the economic affairs of their societies. In the aftermath of “The Great Depression” and World War 2, the ideas of the economist John Maynard Keynes were widely accepted as sound socioeconomic policy, which argued that the state and its resources should be utilized to remedy the inherent contradictions of capitalism.

According to Keynesian economics, the state should take an active role in regulating and redistributing capital throughout society, so that the working majority remains an active force in facilitating economic growth. Further, Keynesian economics upheld, that societies with vast income disparity throughout (as had been the case in many nations during “The Great Depression”), will inevitably encounter economic disaster.

> Keynes, located at Cambridge in England, was the embodiment of rational capitalism. He not only perceived contradictions of the system but also believed they were subject to rational management. This was true with regard to both the relations between capitalist states and the regulation of internal contradictions of the accumulation process…For Keynes the key was to get the state to intervene to ensure sufficient effective demand to guarantee full employment. (Foster)

Under the tenets of Keynesian ideology, therefore, nation-states are not only encouraged to engage in deficit spending during times of economic recession, as a means to stimulate the economy (infrastructure projects, subsidies etc), social expenditures are also viewed as an integral component in fostering financial

stability. In other words, through publicly funded social programs (welfare state) like unemployment insurance, workers compensation, healthcare, and social housing, among others, a healthy working majority needed for capital production and consumption is sustained. Naturally, Keynesian economics call for progressive taxation and financial regulation as a means to finance these expenditures, with the view that in the end, the resulting lower short term profits help provide the impetus for long term economic prosperity. Thus, under the widely shared Keynesian view that human rationality could be utilized to mitigate capitalism's accompanying social ills, nation-states around the developed world established redistributive socioeconomic frameworks.

To provide a thorough historical treatment of neoliberalism here is beyond the scope of this paper, however; it is widely held that beginning approximately forty years ago capital interests increased their efforts to circumvent Keynesian (redistributive) economic policies, as a means to accumulate more profits. Due to vast improvements in telecommunications and transportation technology, the ability for capital to accumulate profits around the world continued to improve. As geographer David Harvey notes:

> "The intensity of time-space compression in Western capitalism since the 1960s, with all of its congruent features of excessive ephemerality and fragmentation in the political and private as well as in the social realm, does seem to indicate an experiential context that makes the condition of postmodernity somewhat special…as part of a history of successive waves of time-space compression generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time…"(Condition of Postmodernity p. 306)

In other words, the vast distances and times which in previous decades had prevented capital from attaining substantive surplus values through foreign production and consumption, no longer remained. New modes of shipping allowed commodities to be produced and transported quickly around the globe, and transnational capital investments could now occur instantaneously through modern telecommunications; as Harvey notes, the turnover time to accumulate capital had been drastically reduced. Time and space, in relation to how civilization had been able to engage them, had been substantially compressed. As a result the Fordist compromises and Keynesian welfare states of the developed world, which hindered capital's ability to accumulate surplus values both domestically and abroad, had to be circumvented and undercut if even higher profits were to be attained.

In order to ensure that redistributive socioeconomic policies were not enacted in more nation-states, institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, at the behest of capital interests, tied the developing world's debt financing to neoliberal conditions (low tax rates, less stringent labour and environmental regulations, limited state expenditures etc) that encouraged higher levels of capital accumulation. These 'pro-business' conditions internationally, became one of the defining points within globalization's domineering discourse, as to why Keynesian economics and the welfare state were no longer a viable option for capital interests within the developed world. Reducing federal debts via the destruction of the state's redistributive institutions, rather than hindering

capital accumulation, became the universal mantra of globalization. It is this positivist-capital-logic that has largely defined socioeconomic policy around the globe for nearly thirty years. As Wendy Brown states:

> In popular usage, neo-liberalism is equated with a radically free market: maximized competition and free trade achieved through economic de-regulation, elimination of tariffs, and a range of monetary and social policies favorable to business and indifferent toward poverty, social deracination, cultural decimation, long term resource depletion and environmental destruction. (2003)

Entrenching the processes of capital accumulation as the primary goal for society, particularly throughout liberal democracies, requires more than the technological means to compress time and space. Populations across the developed world have to be convinced (or coerced) that in fact, individualist capital accumulation, rather than collective socioeconomic cooperation, is the key to prosperity in a 'post-industrial' world. The voting public has to be instructed that the Fordist and Keynesian compromises of the past, have indebted society; that in an age of global competition and economic integration, the state can no longer be counted on to provide a substantive social net. This requires the dissemination of a powerful discourse steeped in positivist rationality, and aside from alternative media outlets and networks of more progressive citizens (liberal academia, social movements, non-profit sector etc), or until the serious economic downturn of 2009, the assumptions of neoliberalism has gone largely unquestioned.

Neoliberal Governmentality

The question of how specifically the ruling order entrenches a society dominated by capital-logic was taken up by Louis Althusser. In keeping with the work of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Althusser, like critical theorists Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, also contends that the ubiquitous presence of capitalist ideology, explains why the inherent contradictions of capitalism have not fostered a socialist revolution as Karl Marx predicted. According to their arguments, capital interests, through the aid of the co-opted state, have disseminated a discourse which has convinced the masses that acquiring commodities and gaining wealth are the keys to a happy life.

Althusser builds upon orthodox Marxist ideas regarding the state apparatus, and argues that there are in fact two, which work to preserve the status-quo. The first is the Repressive State Apparatus, which, in keeping with orthodox Marxist theory, maintains that the state and its various branches (military, judicial, administrative etc) serve the bourgeoisie to continue the exploitation of the working class. The second, Althusser argues, is the State Ideological Apparatus, which fosters a culture throughout society that believes capitalism serves their best interests.

> Althusser included among state ideological apparatuses the schools, the family, religions and religious institutions, and the mass media. They worked less by power and politics (as did the RSAs) and more by ideology. They inculcated children and adults in specific ways of imagining - thinking about and thus understanding – their places within and relationships to the societies within which they lived (Wolff pg.4).

Through these ideological apparatuses, Althusser argues that individuals are infused with identities “that make them at least accept and at best celebrate capitalist exploitation” (Wolff pg.5). Due to the fact that the state apparatus (judiciary, legislative, executive branches etc) is increasingly viewed with cynicism and suspicion by the voting majority, indeed, in many respects due to neoliberal ideology which looks to ‘free’ citizen’s from state influence, ideological apparatuses (various media, academic and political interests etc) have become a key source for the dissemination of neoliberal discourse. This has been particularly marked through the alarming growth in influence and scope of the mass media, whereby through corporate mergers and technological innovations, challenges to neoliberal ideology have scarcely been heard.

Here one can also apply the ideas of Michel Foucault, in relation to how the neoliberal state fosters an environment in democratic societies, where the citizenry is pacified and widely convinced that the people’s institutions (the state) should not interfere in the processes of capital accumulation. This pacification or ‘education’ of the masses is what Foucault described as governmentality.

> The thrust of Foucault’s work on government can perhaps be best brought out by focusing for a moment on his concept of governmentality. He seeks to draw attention to the emergence of new and distinctive mentalities of government, or “government rationality”, which involved a calculating preoccupation with activities directed at shaping, channeling, and guiding the conduct of others. (Hunt,Wickham 26)

Foucault wrote in length about the dissemination of power, and how the state and or its ruling interests, were able to disperse discipline and order throughout society. Unlike orthodox Marxism, Foucault did not agree with the concept of

class homogeneity, but rather, believed that the status-quo was largely maintained by all people, regardless of income or status.

Governmentality, according to Foucault, is largely achieved through disciplinary power, whereby the majority, in addition to the ruling minority, monitors society to ensure that its laws, norms and practices are upheld. The exercise of more explicit and forceful power by the state is typically reserved for those accused of serious economic, violent, or political crimes; in a liberal democratic society, the justification for the utilization of juridical power must meet a high burden of proof, one that is costly for the state both in terms of financial and human resources. According to Foucault, the status-quo is therefore largely held together by more implicit forms of disciplinary power, one “that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come” (Foucault). Thus, while each citizen monitors the other to ensure that they are following societies’ conventions (adhering to workplace regulations, obeying figures of authority, maintaining expected social roles etc) they are aware that all along, any disobedience or dissidence on their behalf will also likely be observed.

Disciplinary power is so effective, according to Foucault, because not only does it exercise order through the active participation of countless actors, it also preserves the status quo through passive governance of the self. In other words, we follow society’s conventions, largely without thinking; our behaviors and views

are shaped by discourses so that they conform to the dictations of the ruling order. Governmentality is achieved, therefore, not only through the supervision of fellow citizens or the policing of the state, but through the governance of ourselves. Thus, as Giosue Ghisalberti notes:

> Governmentality pervades the totality of social life, submitting the subjects of its rationality to specific ways of being and acting, an always ordered and disciplined being-historical while controlling the possibility of change or, even, that most fragile of political initiatives, revolution. (The Limits of Governmental Rationality)

Within such an environment, society is largely, self-policing. Individuals, through their own will, obey society's laws and conventions, regardless of whether or not the status-quo is just or equitable. The state's withdrawal fosters illusions of a citizen's autonomy, when in fact the actions of the individual, are limited to the ruling order's discursive constraints. Governmentality is achieved on almost a subconscious level.

In our age of globalization, therefore, neoliberal's ubiquitous discourse has fostered a governmentality where the processes of capital accumulation are to be an individual's primary concern, and as a result, the state has been removed from having substantial responsibility for its citizen's socioeconomic wellbeing. In keeping with Foucault's theories, ensuring that individuals obey the 'rationality' of the marketplace, rather than addressing the needs of their community, has become the focal point of disciplinary power. Through this capital logic, the individual has been 'freed' from the demands of the wider majority, the encumbrances of the state. As Brown notes:

> This mode of governmentality (techniques of governing that exceed express state action and orchestrate the subject's conduct toward him or herself) convenes a "free" subject who rationally deliberates about alternative courses of action, makes choices, and bears responsibility for the consequences of these choices. (2003)

Thus, as a means to circumvent the regulatory properties of the state, capital interests have disseminated a neoliberal ideology worldwide, which claims that humanities liberation is directly tied to unfettered capital accumulation. Within this govermentality, the Keynesian notions that the public, vis-à-vis the state, should look to mitigate capitalism's contradictions are no longer accepted. Rather, such ideals are viewed as an infringement upon an individual's liberty, who, according to this discourse, should be the sole benefactor of their earnings and labor.

Just as Foucault's ideas regarding disciplinary power draw connections between globalization's neoliberal paradigm and the individual, from the state to the individual, the intellectual's concepts regarding biopower further develop ties between neoliberalism and urbanization. Foucault argues that nation-states increasingly intervene in and regulate the physical processes of their human populations, as a means to harness the productive capacity of the human body. Through enacting laws which often determine how and where an individual can utilize their body, (immigration, property, marriage, health, labour, immigration, criminal code etc), the state has a powerful influence on how this biopower can be used in facilitating capital production.

> The control of society over individuals is not conducted only through consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society biopolitics is what is most important, the biological, the somatic, the corporeal. (Foucault 1994 p. 210)

Thus, as Foucault notes, not only is a capitalist govermentality fostered through neoliberal ideology, which limits the individual's mind to the processes of capital accumulation, the co-opted state also has a decided influence on one's physical experience. The state's regulation of biopower is particularly evident in urban centers, where not only is society regulated to fit the processes of capital production and consumption (hours of business, transit access, loitering-pan handling laws etc), key public services (emergency services, government administration etc) are increasingly limited to urban centers. Further, in a time of "roll back" neoliberal ideology, in relation to state expenditures for social causes, municipalities frequently exercise "roll out" policies, whereby tax dollars are spent on infrastructure projects or subsidies are granted, to facilitate corporate relocation to the city (Peck, Tickell). Just as globalization has been driven by the demands of capital, urban centers have also been marked by an increasing concentration of biopower.

Thus neoliberalism is not solely tied to the workings of international trade deals or agreements between transitional corporate interests and state actors. Nor is it an ideology which liberates humanity as it claims. In reality, is a domineering ideology that permeates throughout the world, from individual to individual, in hopes of fostering an environment which will allow for the unhindered pursuit of surplus values. Neoliberalism, despite its global reach, is in fact, empowered by capitalism's local experience.

Neoliberalism: Fostering Urbanization and Gentrification

While the nation-state was for decades the defining institution of a population's socioeconomic identity, the city has for centuries, been the focal point of capital interests. After all, it is in cities where large populations congregate to live, providing a center for resource allocation, production, and trade; in other words, a location to accumulate more capital. As Harvey notes:

> Urbanization has always been, therefore, a class phenomena of some sort…This general situation persists under capitalism, of course, but in this case there is an intimate connection with the perpetual search for surplus value (profit) that drives the capitalist dynamic. To produce surplus value, capitalists have to produce a surplus product. Since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product an inner connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanization. (Right to the City pg.2)

In order for a capitalist economy to provide, surplus products must be absorbed so that surplus values can be accumulated. Thus the city performs a vital role in capitalism, as often, due to its population density, it provides a focal point for capital absorption.

As Harvey argues in *The Right to the City* essay, capital interests are frequently having difficulties finding populations to absorb their surplus product, a halt in capital accumulation, which often leads to one of capitalism's frequent and almost circular crises. Over the last few decades, urban markets around the world have opened up to transnational capital via technological innovations and neoliberal economics, providing capital with prime locations in which surplus product can be absorbed. Particularly in disinvested urban property, as in many

cities, affluent residents relocated from the downtown core to the suburbs during the post World War Two era, resulting in capital flights from urban centers. As the middle and upper classes return to these city centers, due to concerns over commuting, aesthetics, biopolitical legislation etc, disinvested urban property can be purchased and then developed for remarkable surplus values.

> "The building booms are evident in Mexico City, Santiago in Chile, in Mumbai, Johannesburg, Seoul, Taipei, Moscow, and all over Europe (Spain being most dramatic) as well as in the cities of the core capitalist countries such as London, Los Angeles, San Diego and New York… Astonishing and in some respects criminally absurd mega-urbanization projects have emerged in the Middle East in places like Dubai and Abu Dhabi as a way of mopping up the surpluses arising from oil wealth in the most conspicuous, socially unjust and environmentally wasteful ways possible" (Right to the City pg. 7).

As populations around the world continue to migrate into urban centers, capital's opportunities for surplus value extraction via urbanization, have not been overlooked. Particularly in an age of neoliberal govermentality, where the social costs of such development, are not just denied, frequently they are endorsed by the state.

As noted, cities have always been focal points for commercial exchange and production, but prior to the onset of globalization; the more social democratic minded policies of Keynesian economics were far more evident throughout many urban centers. As Neil Smith states:

> The Keynesian city of advanced capitalism, in which the state underwrote wide swaths of social reproduction, from housing to welfare to transportation infrastructure, represented the zenith of this definitive relationship between urban scale and social reproduction…Equally a center of capital accumulation, the Keynesian city was in many respects the combined hiring hall and welfare hall for each national capital. (432)

Due to Keynesian policies impoverished neighborhoods were often the recipients of state spending, providing the means for social housing, rent subsidies / controls and public transportation, which facilitated socioeconomic security for less affluent populations. The marketplace that existed within these neighborhoods was also a reflection of the resident's socioeconomic standing, whereby the services and products which were exchanged throughout these areas, naturally corresponded with lower income citizens.

As neoliberal ideology gradually erased Keynesian policies throughout the 1980's and 1990's, the social net that protected less affluent urban neighborhoods from exploitative capital extraction were removed, ushering in an age of "re-development" in downtown urban neighborhoods. The term "re-development" is often tied to gentrification, whereby a less affluent class is displaced from their residences and neighborhoods, so that a wealthier demographic can move in. The process of gentrification is certainly not confined to our current times, nor is it limited to urban centers, but with the state's subservience to neoliberal ideology, the displacement of the working poor via property acquisition and rising rents, is more easily facilitated. To accumulate more surplus values, capital interests do not limit their gentrifying activities to land acquisition, but rather, they completely 'remodel' neighborhoods with services and products, to replicate suburban living levels of consumption. Under neoliberal ideology, the value of land is not determined by what its social production is or could be, but purely what its profit margin can be. Capital extraction must be maximized.

> These new landscape complexes now integrate housing with shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities (cf Vine 2001), open space, employment opportunities—whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure, as well as residence. Just as important, gentrification as urban strategy weaves global financial markets together with large- and medium-sized real-estate developers, local merchants, and property agents with brand-name retailers, all lubricated by city and local governments...(Smith pg. 443)

The displacement of the poor and marginalized is therefore facilitated in two respects, not only are less affluent populations forced to relocate due to rising rental and or property costs, the new marketplace that is created via 'development' (gentrification) throughout the neighborhood, is also not affordable.

In keeping with neoliberal ideology, the fate of these displaced populations is not considered, despite the fact that gentrification often "leads to adverse psychological, physical, economic, and social effects" which often foster "intense social conflict," as well as "social polarization, segregation, and inequity." (American Journal of Health Studies) These populations must relocate to a new community altogether, putting lower income individuals at severe socioeconomic risk, due to a loss of employment or lack of affordable housing. For more marginalized populations, gentrification can result in homelessness and privation, which ushers in other accompanying social ills such as crime, disease, and drug use (that in turn accompany those that are displaced). According to neoliberal logic, the responsibility for the social ills, and human displacement that accompanies gentrification, lies squarely with those who did not acquire enough capital to prevent their exclusion. This is what Smith characterizes as "revanchism", whereby class power is exercised to retake territories, frequently

urban centers, which in a previous era were under the control of elites. Neoliberal urbanization has fostered new authoritarian practices and beliefs, where a “zero tolerance” policy is enacted for those that have been displaced through gentrification (442). To ensure that more marginalized population’s are completely excluded from their gentrified neighborhoods, public and private security forces are increasingly being called upon to enforce strict anti-loitering and panhandling laws. The ‘freedom’ that neoliberalism espouses for these populations is but a mirage; capital accumulation, rather than civic responsibility and communal coexistence, is the dominant discourse which permeates throughout gentrified communities.

Conclusion

Despite the images and thoughts that the term ‘globalization’ often evokes (nation-states forming closer cultural and economic bonds), globalization’s underlying machinations of neoliberal economics are very much tied to the local process of gentrification. Ultimately globalization has been driven by the processes of capital accumulation, which through technological advancements and the entrenchment of neoliberal practices, has fostered an environment where surplus values are to be extracted, no matter the social or environmental cost. In a world where increasingly populations look to settle in urban landscapes, rather than rural, unregulated capital cannot ignore the profits that are to be made through gentrifying urban property. Unfortunately for displaced marginalized populations, in an era where capital-logic dominates the majority of each

society's national and municipal governing institutions, the means to effectively alleviate the social ills that stem from gentrification are not provided.

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Paper Two

Gentrification and Housing Advocacy in Vancouver's DTES

The abhorrent socioeconomic conditions which exist in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have long been the focal point of conjecture and debate, and as property values continue to rise throughout one of Canada's more affluent urban centers, gentrifying pressures throughout the historic neighborhood have increased substantially. Due to the coming 2010 Olympic Winter Games, the search for surplus values via disinvested property in the Downtown Eastside has continued unabated, fostering concerns from progressive non-government organizations that the neighborhood's 'revitalization' is displacing its social ills rather than remedying them. Accordingly, many activists from the non-profit sector have campaigned for governments to not only fund more social housing projects, but to also ensure that the neighborhood's affordable housing stock is not further reduced. According to these socially progressive advocates, housing is viewed as a crucial means to address the tragic socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood, as well as, a way to diminish the gentrification that is currently underway in the DTES. Ultimately, however, this advocacy calls for reformative and Keynesian like socioeconomic policies, which promotes an agenda that does substantively diminish the processes of capital accumulation and therefore maintains the neoliberal status-quo.

Thus, this paper will provide a brief outline of the economic conditions and widespread social ills that exist within Canada's 'poorest postal code,' before examining why many progressive organizations contend that housing provides a foundation, to empower the indigent and marginalized residents of the

increasingly gentrified DTES. Next, this treatment will examine the context of how the housing agenda is framed by many of its advocates, to demonstrate that these proposed reforms make an appeal to society's entrenched capital logic, by stressing that social housing in fact reduces state expenditures.

Socioeconomic Conditions and Social Ills in the DTES

As Vancouver grew over the last 30 to 40 years, and technological innovations reduced the economic primacy of the coastal city's railway station and shipping yards, development shifted from the DTES region to Vancouver's western fronts. Due to the neighborhood's proximity to industrial areas and its working class infrastructure (single-room-occupancy hotels, temporary lodging etc) gentrifying pressures continued to push and confine economically depressed populations to the DTES, fostering its eventual label as "Skid Road." As Vancouver developed into one of Canada's more affluent urban centers, disinvestment throughout the DTES continued, as capital interests pursued markets in the city's richer neighborhoods and outlying suburbs. By 2009 the average income of a single resident, who lived on their own and was over the age of 15 in the DTES, (minus government subsidies) was $6, 282. The national average income for the same demographic is nearly $15,000 higher (Brethour The Globe and Mail). In addition, only a shocking 38% of the DTES population aged over 15 is considered to be part of the labour force. 67% of the population in metro Vancouver is either working or actively seeking employment (Brethour).

Often extensive social ills, such as crime, drug use, privation, disease and homelessness accompany abject poverty, and it is these issues in particular, which have captured much of the media and public's attention in the DTES. Most notably, the neighborhood's extensive drug problem has often been the focal point of local, national and even international coverage, as for years now, the use of cocaine, crack cocaine and heroin has been widespread throughout the DTES. According to a 2003 study, by Vancouver Coastal Health, approximately 4,700 residents of the DTES are injection drug users (Vancouver Drug Use Epidemiology). The report also cites statistics from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, which states that 30 to 40% of injection drug users in the DTES are HIV positive and 90% are infected with Hepatitis C. Despite Canada's extraordinary wealth and resources, these are infection rates that according to the United Nations, are on par with Botswana's (Vancouver Sun: "Vancouver a Scarred Paradise UN Says").

The DTES also includes a disproportionate number of Aboriginals and mentally ill people in comparison to the rest of Vancouver and Canada. Due to the fact that historically these populations have also been socially and economically oppressed, it's not surprising, that extensive gentrifying influences throughout the Vancouver region have resulted in higher concentrations of these groups in the DTES. It has been estimated that 40% of the drug addicts in the DTES also suffer from mental illness, and as a result, many who are in desperate need of

psychiatric and medical care, lack the faculties and or resources to access treatment (Culbert). Status Indians make up 9% of the DTES population; throughout Canada, Aboriginals that are considered Status Indians account for just 2% of the population (ibid). Thus, similarly to the dire socioeconomic situations in many First Nations' reserves throughout Canada, an alarmingly high number of Aboriginals residing in Vancouver are also living in 'Third World' like conditions.

In addition to other widespread social ills throughout the DTES, the homeless population in the neighborhood is also disproportionately larger than the rest of Vancouver. According to a count done in 2008 by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, there were 659 homeless people in the DTES, accounting for 54% of the total un-housed population throughout the city. The study concluded that there were approximately 2,660 homeless individuals in the entire Lower Mainland region, while also adding, that the report's findings likely "underestimated" the actual homeless population (Carnegie Community Action Project: Over 600 DTES Residents Are Homeless). It should also be noted that from 2005 through 2008, the number of homeless people throughout the Greater Vancouver region grew by 22%, further demonstrating that the socioeconomic conditions for many of the city's impoverished individuals, continued to deteriorate (Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count).

Housing Agenda of NGOs and Activists

In response to these abhorrent conditions, many non-government organizations and activists have called for the construction of more affordable housing units, as a means to empower DTES residents that are being adversely affected by the region's extensive social ills. According to their arguments, through housing, poverty-stricken individuals are provided with a safe and secure environment, so that consistent employment can be attained or additional social and educational services can be accessed, to facilitate a higher standard of living. In other words, it is often only through housing that poverty, privation, addiction, and mental or physical illness can finally be addressed. As Gordon Laird wrote in a report on Canada's homelessness from the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership:

> Housing First, properly applied, assumes that housing is a prerequisite to economic, social and personal well-being. Therefore, shelter – independent, social, supportive– comes first in any successful recovery from homelessness. (p. 10)

Accordingly, many social justice advocates view affordable housing as a crucial first step that must be implemented, if there is to be any hope of remedying the extensive social ills that exist in Vancouver's DTES.

In addition to addressing the adverse effects of poverty, social justice advocates view affordable housing as a bulwark against continued gentrification, whereby increasing property development in the DTES is attracting affluent populations to the neighbourhood and displacing its low income residents. The neighborhood is not only home to thousands of economically depressed individuals in a city

where low-incoming housing is declining, but it is home to a rather unique social and cultural environment; a community that is at risk of being dispersed on account of gentrifying pressures: As the Carnegie Community Action Project states:

> The DTES is also a place where people who live in some of the 5000 social housing units feel that they have a strong base and network of support, where the green spaces are greatly appreciated, and where there is a lot of empathy for people who are homeless or have health and addiction issues. And it is a place where many people who experience human rights violations work for social justice. (Unlimited Condo Development Could Wipe Out Good Things About DTES)

In other words, for many residents, and non-profit interests advocating on their behalf, “The DTES is a real community where low-income people feel accepted” (Ibid). It is the neighborhood’s current residents that confront the region’s socioeconomic conditions on a daily basis, and thus, these members are in a favored position to determine how their socioeconomic needs can best be served. Despite the fact that outsiders may not recognize this community, it exists nonetheless, and thus, the resident’s voices must be heard and considered. Activists and non-profit interests understand, however, that unchecked gentrification will ultimately displace the vast majority of the neighborhood’s current population, marking the end of a unique community that truly understands the experiences and needs of its own people.

For activists and DTES residents alike, the need for housing has never been more apparent, as early fears that the processes of gentrification throughout the neighborhood would intensify due to Vancouver’s successful bid for the 2010

Winter Olympic Games, now appear to have been validated. Originally, in an attempt to address these concerns as a component of Vancouver's bid, the 2010 Winter Games Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement promised to ensure that Games organizers would "protect rental housing stock…ensure people are not made homeless as a result of the Winter Games", and further, "provide an affordable housing legacy and start planning now" (p3).To achieve these goals, the Inner-City Inclusive Housing Table, a committee created to work in concert with the Games governing and organizing "partners", made several core recommendations in March, 2007. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure the construction of 3,200 social housing units over the next 4 years, 250 social housing units should be included in the newly constructed Olympic Athletes Village, and in addition, the city must acquire or lease at least 800 additional low-income rental housing units over the coming 4 years (Report of Inner City Inclusive Housing Table p. 6).

Although the Game's organizers, in partnership with the Vancouver and British Columbian governments, took some steps to meet the above recommendations, (by acquiring several single-room occupancy hotels and investing in the creation of social housing units) the evidence in 2009 and early 2010 demonstrates that the Game's housing commitments will not be met. According to a Olympic Games Impact Pre-Games Report, led by University of British Columbia Prof. Rob VanWynsberghe, it concluded that "The construction of new affordable housing and social housing units has not kept pace with the number of homeless

people" (UBC). The Pivot Legal Society found that from 2007 to date, Vancouver has lost 448 units of low-income housing units, due to the closing of 9 buildings. The vast majority of these buildings were located in the DTES (Backgrounder). Further, a study by the Carnegie Community Action Project in 2009 concluded that over the preceding 12 months, nearly 700 hotel rooms had become inaccessible to DTES residents on welfare, disability or a standard senior's pension due to rising rents (CCAP: Still Losing Hotel Rooms p. 5). In addition to these markings of continued gentrification throughout the DTES, city officials decided not to include any social housing units in the Olympic Athletes Village, citing that the project is 100 million dollars over budget and therefore non-market units would further contribute to its debt (Dyck). According to CCAP representatives, although the city has tabled plans to construct approximately 1,200 new social housing units by the arrival of the Olympics, they believe only 600 or so will be completed (Taylor). That is over 2,000 less than the amount that the Inner-City Inclusive Housing Table's report recommended the Game's "housing legacy" include.

In addition to the housing recommendations that were made by the Inner City Inclusive Housing Table to Olympic organizers and various levels of government, other appeals have been made by non-government interests, for the public sector to invest far more substantively in affordable housing throughout the DTES. Organizations, like the Pivot Legal Society, have also petitioned governments to introduce or enforce pre-existing policies which will protect

economically depressed individuals in the DTES. In the Pivot Legal Society's 2006 report "Cracks in the Foundation", the organization recommended that governments "must actively protect, maintain, and improve the existing low income housing stock," adjust welfare rates to match rising rental and cost of living rates, improve the residential tenancy dispute resolution process, and create "market incentives" for developers to include affordable housing in new real estate projects (pg.6) All in the hopes that such measures, if implemented, will revitalize the DTES without fostering further gentrification.

Advocacy and the Maintenance of the Neoliberal Status Quo

Some non-government organizations, like the Pivot Legal Society, advocate for policies that despite the fact they are designed to remedy social ills, they remain within the limits of neoliberal ideology. By asking that the public sector implement "market incentives" to foster capital investment for affordable housing, advocacy of this nature appeals to the domineering neoliberal logic of our age, whereby the processes of capital accumulation take precedence over all other social and environmental concerns . In other words, although campaigns from the Pivot Legal Society, or similar interests like the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, document the socioeconomic tragedies that exist in neighborhoods like the DTES, their advocacy is largely based on the contention that social housing will in fact save society money. The appeal to fund social housing, solely out of humanitarian concern or notions of civic responsibility, is

not made. Nor is a structural critique or analysis of how neoliberal capitalism may contribute to social ills provided.

For example, the Sheldon Chumir Foundation's 2007 report on homelessness, throughout Canada, cites the fact that the social services, criminal justice and healthcare expenditures that are attributed to homelessness cost Canadian taxpayers between 4.5 and 6 billion dollars annually (Laird pg. 5). The study concluded that despite a significant reduction in social expenditures, including the Federal Government's decision to cut the affordable housing strategy in 1993, approximately 49.5 billion public dollars were spent from 1993 to 2004 on account of government "inaction" regarding homelessness (Ibid). In the Pivot Legal Society's "Cracks in the Foundation" report, the organization cites a BC Government cost assessment, which found that it costs governments an average of $40,000 annually in emergency, policing and social services for each homeless individual. The study goes on to state that the price of providing supportive housing per homeless person annually is between $7,300 and $13,370, while constructing housing units for the homeless (including building costs) would cost between $22,000 and $28,000 per person per year (Cracks in the Foundation pg. 4). In both cases listed here, the fiscal savings that could be achieved by having the state invest in social housing, and thus, reduce costs that taxpayers incur as a result of homelessness, were integral components to these organization's proposals.

Many non-profit interests that look to remedy poverty and its corresponding issues, in fact, advocate for reformative and limited Keynesian like policies, rather than promote agendas that would substantially alter Canada's neoliberal landscape. Prior to the entrenchment of neoliberal economics in the 1980's, and the subsequent reduction of Canada's welfare state, the theories of John Maynard Keynes were highly influential in Canadian governance. According to Keynes' arguments the state should utilize its resources to maintain a healthy working majority, which in theory, will facilitate both commodity production and consumption, and thus, ensure economic growth. Accordingly, many developed world states like Canada, publicly funded social programs like healthcare, unemployment insurance, and social housing, among others, as a means to sustain a prosperous working class.

> Characteristic of the use of the Keynesian macro framework was the familiar argument by trade unionists that increased wages would increase aggregate demand, stimulate job creation and new investment... What marked this as social democratic in essence was the consistent theme that workers could gain without capital losing—(Lebowitz)

As Lebowitz notes, the appeal of Keynesian economics was the contention that by rationally allocating public funds into the social sector, the processes of capital accumulation continue, and thus, 'everybody wins'. To foster this communal prosperity, however, Keynesian economics called for substantive redistributive taxation and economic regulation, to facilitate the necessary state capacity. These were 'restrictive' policies that ultimately capital interests looked to circumvent globally, via technological innovations and neoliberal economics

(lower taxation, reduced government regulation, diminished state social expenditures), as a means to acquire higher profits.

As a result, in an era where neoliberal discourse promotes “self-reliance” and “entrepreneurship,” rather than more communal orientated efforts as the most effective means to facilitate economic prosperity and social stability, many housing advocates stop short of calling for the revitalization of a Keynesian welfare state. Rather than advocating for dramatic increases in state expenditures and structural changes to remedy social ills across the board (welfare, healthcare, education, charities etc), many non-profit interests focus instead on the need to publicly fund affordable housing, as an effective and inexpensive means to foster more social stability. In other words, according to their more reformative arguments, taxes do not have to increase nor do extensive regulations that control capital flows have to be reinstated, to alleviate capitalism’s contradictions. In fact, the private sector is often invited to be an active partner in constructing new social housing and revitalizing low-income neighborhoods, and thus, in keeping with neoliberal discourse, the prospect of accumulating capital is even tied to the issue of affordable housing.

Part of the reason for this is that many non-government organizations are heavily reliant upon funding, and in an era where state expenditures have been reduced (including funding towards NGOs), competition amongst the non-profit sector to acquire resources has increased. Although a full treatment of how various

interests within the non-profit sector have adapted to these cutbacks is beyond the scope of this essay, it is reasonable to assume that promoting radical alternatives that directly challenge Canada's neoliberal status-quo (via calls for communal property, state owned industries, redistributive taxation, widespread unionization etc) , would drastically diminish an organization's ability to acquire operating funds.

> In many countries, cutthroat competition developed among NGOs for funding. Those that succeeded were too often those which took a more compromising, apolitical stance, if not openly right-wing, and those which met the development agenda of their funders, or, at least, did not directly challenge it. (Klees pg. 50)

Thus by advocating for more reform-minded policies, like state funds being allocated to private interests to construct affordable housing, rather than calls for substantive state intervention in the economic sector, non-profit-organizations are promoting agendas which do not diminish the processes of capital accumulation. As a result of this form of advocacy, NGOs remain within neoliberalism's ideological limits, and thus, retain access to capital's much needed resources.

In many respects this line of thinking is in keeping with "Third Way" economics, or what others like Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell have described as "roll-out neoliberalism." As Peck and Tickell cite Loic Wacquant stating in their 2002 essay, "Neoliberalizing Space," this latest "mutation" of neoliberalism is one where the state has agreed to fund expenditures that will "mask and contain the deleterious social consequences" of neoliberal economics, but at the same, the

state's intervention does nothing to alter the current neoliberal status-quo. In other words, while sometimes "roll out neoliberalism" is marked by state expenditures that are utilized to mitigate some of capitalism's more glaring contradictions, the 'social work' is conducted by for profit interests; the state's intervention is only acceptable if it is to facilitate capital accumulation for the private sector (Peck and Tickell 389). As Iain Ferguson notes, despite the fact that the "Third Way" is cited by its proponents as an effort to find the middle ground between "statist social democracy on the one hand" and "unbridled free-market capitalism on the other," ultimately its adherents believe that "Globalization is seen as having made anything other than total submission to the world market both utopian and foolish" (Ferguson 9). In keeping with many contemporary social housing advocates, "Third Way" proponents also turn to capital interests and or the marketplace as a means to alleviate capitalism's inherent contradictions; to do otherwise is not proposed.

Conclusion

The abject poverty and widespread social ills in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have rightly been cited as Canada's 'black eye.' In a nation that ranks amongst the world's wealthiest and best places to live, the reality that it is home to a neighborhood that has comparable HIV and Hepatitis infection rates to those in developing nations, is a glaring indictment of Canada's socioeconomic policies. In an age where neoliberal economics have drastically limited the state's capacity to remedy social issues, thousands throughout the DTES, continue to suffer

needlessly. In addition, it appears as though the city's acquisition of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games has only exasperated gentrifying pressures throughout the neighborhood, rather than facilitate progressive actions to improve conditions in the region as originally hoped. Although pressure from non-profit interests for governments to fund and preserve affordable housing in the DTES is clearly a step towards fostering socioeconomic recovery, it remains to be seen whether advocacy of this 'business friendly' nature, will be able to halt or alter the ongoing processes of gentrification.

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Paper Three

Housing Advocacy in Vancouver's DTES: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Affordable housing is consistently heralded by activists and non-profit interests alike, as an effective means to alleviate the extensive poverty and subsequent social ills which currently plague Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Further, this advocacy argues that state expenditures towards housing impoverished individuals actually saves taxpayers money, due to the fact that housing reduces emergency service and judiciary costs that public coffers incur on account of homelessness. A critical discourse analysis of housing advocacy pertaining to Vancouver's DTES demonstrates, however, that this housing agenda from non-profit interests has been appropriated into neoliberal discourse. Due to the fact that housing advocacy of this nature appeals to the domineering economic rationality of our age, and does not call for structural socioeconomic or political reforms; this agenda has been co-opted by Canada's prevailing neoliberal order. As a result, limited housing projects have been introduced by the Municipal and Provincial Governments, who claim that these expenditures are designed to alleviate the poverty of Downtown Eastside residents. Through the consistent utilization of terms like "independence" and "transition" in texts related to these housing projects, the state and its "community partners" are linguistically framing their 'Housing Matters' policies with neoliberal ideals. Within this neoliberal discourse social policies must be tied to the processes of capital accumulation, as well as ensure, that the state's intervention is not indicative of, nor will it usher in, a new era of substantive redistributive economics.

Accordingly, this paper will provide a brief outline of the theoretical issues tied to this paper's critical discourse, in respect to how language is utilized to disseminate ideas and values throughout society. In addition, the relationship between discourse and ideology, and particularly that which is neoliberal in nature, will be explored. After outlining the methodology which I utilized to conduct this paper's critical discourse analysis, this treatment will examine the 'Housing Matters' agenda of the state and its 'community partners' in Vancouver, and how it shares common ground with the housing advocacy of progressive non-profit interests. Through the process of critical discourse analysis, this paper will demonstrate that neoliberal ideals are evident in texts from both activists and state interests in regards to affordable housing, casting doubt as to whether or not advocacy of this nature, will be able to foster substantive socioeconomic progression in Vancouver's DTES.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Issues

There is no consensus as to how critical discourse analysis should be conducted, nor set guidelines as to subjects of inquiry. According to Van Dijk "CDA is not a specific direction of research" and as a result "it does not have a unitary theoretical framework ("Critical Discourse Analysis" p.353); in other words, various theoretical and methodological approaches can be employed while engaging in the process. The objectives of CDA, however, are more defined, as consistently it has been employed as a means to uncover and understand how discourse entrenches social, political and economic inequity.

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk: Critical Discourse Analysis p.352)

Due to the fact that this research endeavors to understand if and how neoliberal has had an effect on housing advocacy in Vancouver's impoverished Downtown Eastside neighborhood, it was determined that engaging in a critical discourse analysis would be an effective way of proceeding. Before outlining the methodology and subsequent findings of this project's CDA, I will outline some of the additional theoretical considerations that are tied to my approach.

Often the discourses which rise to prominence throughout society are those which disseminate from centers of power. Individuals and organizations that have extensive logistical, technological and financial resources (multinational corporations, the state, oligarchs etc) are naturally in a favored position, to widely disseminate discourses which promote social practices and representations that serve their best interests. In other words, discourses entrench authority, legitimate or not. Discovering how certain texts promote domineering social orders, is particularly important, due to the fact that oppressive discourses are often disseminated through more implicit exercises of power (media, advertising, education etc), which may not be as readily evident or alarming, as more explicit displays of authority (warfare, genocide, apartheid etc).

Ideology is a collection of various ideas and texts that extol and promote a specific view on how society should be organized socially, economically and or politically. In this respect, ideology is one kind of discourse; not all discourses constitute ideological agendas like conservatism, socialism or neoliberalism, however, ideology is consistently communicated through discursive means.

> Ideologies have been defined as foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups. These representations are in turn the basis of discourse and other social practices. It has also been assumed that ideologies are largely expressed and acquired by discourse, that is, by spoken or written communicative interaction. When group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they typically do so in terms of ideological discourse. (Van Dijk: Ideology and Discourse p. 120)

Thus, through critical discourse analysis, one can often uncover and discern the presence of ideology. In an age where neoliberal ideology is continually evident in policies conducted by the public, private and even non-profit sector, it becomes interesting to find out if and how neoliberal ideology is evident in texts related to housing advocacy.

Beyond the simple fact that ideologies are frequently disseminated and entrenched through discourse, the relationship between neoliberalism and language is particularly strong, as neoliberal ideology looks to the power of linguistics in itself as the basis for its influence. In other words, as Fairclough notes, neoliberalism has risen to prominence based on the contention that advanced nations have grown their economies beyond the ‘limits’ of industrial production, to markets that produce ‘knowledge based’ commodities.

> There is a sense in which language (and more broadly semiosis, including ‘visual language’) is becoming more central and more salient in the New Capitalism than

> in earlier forms of capitalism. This is implied for instance in descriptions of the New Capitalism as 'knowledge-' or 'information-based'…Thus, in so far as the restructuring and re-scaling of capitalism is knowledge led, it is also discourse led, for knowledges are produced, circulated and consumed as discourses. (Language in New Capitalism p.164)

The primacy of language in contemporary capitalism (which is dominated by neoliberal practices), is therefore twofold: one, according to neoliberal ideology, 'globalization' has ushered in an aforementioned new economic era, where advanced economies must produce knowledge based products (branding, various forms of intellectual property via scientific and technological expertise, financial consulting and lending etc) to ensure continued economic prosperity. Industrial production will now be undertaken by developing nations, which will subsequently (in theory), reduce poverty in the developing world. Two; due to this capital imposed socioeconomic shift from industrial to post-industrial production throughout the West, a neoliberal discourse had to be widely disseminated insisting that economic liberalization must be embraced. Affluent populations had to be convinced (or instructed) by corporate and state interests through neoliberal discourse, that by ignoring 'globalization', developed nations will cease to be prosperous. Language which evokes notions of this 'emancipatory' project is an integral part in maintaining the world's neoliberal order.

Due to this need to entrench and sustain the ideological foundations of neoliberalism in cultures around the world, a belief system which also contends that materialism and consumption are humanities motivating principles, terms

that promote the primacy of individual interests and financial independence, are consistently tied to neoliberal discourse.

> In an era of triumphant neoliberalism, the strictly imposed corporate language works not only to reflect the prevailing market order and its ideologies, but also to produce a positivistic discourse that obliterates public concerns about the social and the political. (Gounari: Contesting the Cynicism of Neoliberal Discourse p. 78)

Thus, neoliberal ideology is designed to serve constant reminders that the public sector no longer has the capacity to provide long term socioeconomic aid for individuals, and in addition, that the state will no longer hinder entrepreneurial pursuits with bureaucratic regulations and redistributive economics. The individual is finally 'free' of society's constraints to pursue and accumulate whatever he or she desires. Accordingly, as Gounari notes, capital friendly words like 'opportunities,' 'investment', 'innovation', and 'flexibility', now rule the day, disseminating linguistic reminders that economic prosperity can only be attained through individual pursuits, rather than those of a communal nature.

Methodology

The critical discourse analysis undertaken for this MAIS Final Project involves reading and interpreting texts that are tied to housing advocacy in Vancouver, and particularly the Downtown Eastside. Accordingly, my research was conducted on the internet, whereby I searched for articles and reports that included terms like 'social housing,' 'affordable housing,' 'poverty', 'Vancouver' and 'DTES.' This process revealed that there are essentially two 'camps' of housing advocacy in the DTES, one which involves partnerships between the state and non-profit-organizations, while the other is comprised of activists whose

advocacy is independent from, and is often critical of the state. Due to the fact that this particular paper aimed to discover if and how neoliberal ideology is evident in texts produced by DTES non-profit housing advocacy organizations, texts promoting and announcing government sponsored housing projects, as well as those texts which stem from housing activists calling for more state action were reviewed.

A review and analysis of these texts revealed that the more substantive theoretical basis for the Provincial Government's endorsement of affordable housing are found in texts posted on the government's housing website, www.bchousing.org. Through reviewing these materials, it became readily apparent that in keeping with advocacy from other housing activists, the B.C. Provincial Government also extols housing as an effective means to alleviate poverty. Further, press releases related to tabled housing projects are available at the B.C. Housing website, and due to the fact that this paper largely focuses on housing advocacy related to the DTES, the following releases were reviewed: "Province Buys Six Hotels to Expand and Protect Housing," 14 February, 2008, and "85 New Units to Reduce Downtown Eastside Homelessness," 07 February, 2007, and "$14 M Reopens Supportive Housing in Downtown Eastside," 07 January, 2009. In addition, while searching for government sponsored housing projects in the DTES, the following press release was located at the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's official site (www.cmhc.ca) : "$22 M Supportive Housing Opens in Downtown Eastside", October 2009.

These texts were chosen for analysis because they build upon the Provincial Government's "Housing Matters" agenda, as they include reasoning from government officials and their NGO partners as to why and to what extent affordable housing should be implemented. In addition, these press releases are formally announcing projects which are to be facilitated by sectoral convergence which also drew my attention, due to the fact that this is a neoliberal framework for contemporary governance (whereby the state partners with non-profit and for-profit interests to enact social policy).

I also found many articles and reports which included comments from housing activists that do not partner with Provincial or Municipal Governments, and due to the fact that the Carnegie Community Action Project, Pivot Legal Society and Citywide Housing Coalition advocate strongly for housing in Vancouver's DTES, an effort to focus on texts related to these organizations was made. Accordingly, just as this paper examines the reasoning behind the state's endorsement of housing advocacy, the following texts offering advocacy from these three housing activists were reviewed: "Cracks in the Foundation," Pivot Legal Society (www.pivotlegal.org), September, 2006, "Homelessness in Vancouver," Citywide Housing Coalition (www.my-calm.info/) April 2009, and a speech made by CCAP representative, Wendy Pedersen, which was published in an online article from the Georgia Straight in October, 2009 (http://www.straight.com/article-261360/housing-activist-wendy-pedersen-demands-more-premier-campbell).

“Housing Matters”

Social housing advocacy from non-government organizations, like the Carnegie Community Action Project and the Pivot Legal Society, contends that by providing affordable housing for the homeless, destitute individuals are provided with the means to rise out of poverty. According to this line of thinking, through being housed, impoverished individuals are much more likely to access mental or healthcare services; enter into drug rehabilitation or participate in vocational training, which will ultimately lead to gainful employment and subsequently raise their socioeconomic standing. By alleviating poverty through affordable housing, not only are social ills that are tied to socioeconomic depression reduced (drug use, crime, disease, etc), so are the expenditures that the state incurs as a result of poverty’s deleterious effects (emergency services, healthcare, policing, correctional costs etc).

> Pivot Legal Society’s housing initiative is based on the proposition that safe, affordable shelter is a basic human right. All of society benefits when every person in society is properly housed: disorder, crime and tax burdens decrease, while healthcare, employment and outreach opportunities increase. (Cracks in the Foundation p.8)

While the humanitarian face of poverty is consistently included in the housing advocacy of some progressive non-profit interests like the Pivot Legal Society, so is an appeal to capital logic, whereby, assurances are provided to the public and or the state, that “tax burdens” will “decrease” through affordable housing projects. In this adherence to neoliberal ideals, which posits capital accumulation over social concerns, housing should be implemented not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because it also saves both the poor and rich money.

Further evidence of this neoliberal ideology can be found in texts from other housing activist organizations, including the Citywide Housing Coalition and the aforementioned Carnegie Community Action Project. In 2009 campaign literature from the Housing Coalition, calling for all three levels of government to substantially increase funding for affordable housing, empirical claims that B.C. taxpayers could save millions of dollars through social housing was featured prominently: “By providing permanent housing and supports, BC tax payers would save $32.8 million annually” (Homelessness in Vancouver). Campaigning for socialized housing based solely on humanitarian reasons is not enough; advocacy must demonstrate that remedying social ills saves money for all parties concerned, rather than encourage ‘unsustainable’ spending.

This capital logic is not only evident in respect to the fiscal savings that activists continually cite, as a positive which can stem from the state’s funding of affordable housing, it is particularly strong in advocacy related to the coming Olympic Winter Games. Vehement and widespread criticism has stemmed from social justice and housing activists, in regards to the fact that billions of taxpayer dollars will be spent on holding the 2010 Olympics. The argument, being of course, that in an age where state spending is supposed to remain at a minimum, over 6 billion public dollars are being allocated to the Games and its corporate partners, while hundreds continue to suffer from abject poverty in Vancouver’s DTES and the rest of British Columbia (Daphne Branham). As

CCAP representative Wendy Pedersen stated at a housing protest in October, 2009:

> In terms of spending, that trade and convention centre cost almost a billion dollars. A billion dollars would buy 4,250 deluxe, inner-city homes for people who cannot compete in the hyper real-estate market…Why did we get all of the Olympic projects on time and why don't we get our miniscule housing projects on time? We're not even getting minuscule. (Housing Activist Wendy Pedersen Demands More of Premier Campbell)

Although appeals of this nature direct attention to the ethics of allocating billions of tax dollars to the Olympics, rather than towards remedying the region's growing poverty and widespread social ills, the issue of capital retains primacy. Society is not being asked to allocate capital towards social issues regardless of the cost; because it is our humanitarian obligation. This is in keeping with neoliberal ideology, which stipulates that socioeconomic aid can only be fostered, if profits remain unaffected and taxation levels remain the same. In other words, providing substantive financial aid, even if it means altering the neoliberal status quo through redistributive economics, is not to be considered.

Although some housing and social justice activists call for modest economic reforms like a higher minimum wage or increased welfare payments, (see the rest of Pedersen's speech) appeals for redistributive taxation that might facilitate such spending, are not readily evident in their campaigns. This does not mean that advocacy from organizations, like the CCAP, aren't steeped in progressive ideals (social justice, environmental sustainability, gender equality etc) or that all activists are working to sustain the neoliberal order, far from it. What it does mean, however, is that by consistently tying housing advocacy to the issue of

capital, and whether or not more conscientious spending from the state can in fact save tax dollars, a space is created for neoliberal appropriation. As the Gounari quote stated above, we live in an era of “triumphant neoliberalism”, and one could argue that the discursive power of neoliberal ideology has not only co-opted the public and private sector, its machinations are active and evident amongst the citizenry (Contesting the Cynicism of Neoliberal Discourse p. 78). As a result of this far reaching and influential neoliberal discourse, many individuals maintain that social ills can only be remedied if it makes ‘economic sense’; to frame housing advocacy in a more communal manner and beyond this neoliberal constraint, activists could risk funding and support.

As a result of this housing advocacy, neoliberal proponents like the current British Columbia Provincial Government, have subsequently verbally endorsed affordable housing as an effective way to remedy the Downtown Eastside’s extensive social ills. By doing so, the public sector can claim it is being proactive in addressing the abhorrent poverty throughout the neighbourhood, while endorsing the construction of a few social housing projects, does not promote a substantive socioeconomic agenda that fundamentally challenges the neoliberal status quo. Under the current leadership of the British Columbia Liberal Party, the Provincial Government’s housing policy is titled ‘Housing Matters,’ which according to the government’s website, states that shelter “is the first step” in removing impoverished individuals from the street in order to foster socioeconomic stability (Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness). In keeping with

the advocacy of housing activists, the government also contends that by providing housing for the socioeconomically depressed, these individuals can access the vital services and support that they need to become productive members of society.

> Through homeless outreach efforts, the Province of British Columbia is connecting people with the housing and support services necessary to leave the streets…People are homeless for a variety of complex reasons. Many individuals struggle with abuse, mental illness, or drug and alcohol addiction, sometimes in combination. (Break the Cycle of Homelessness: Off the Streets)

Notice that the effects of state implemented neoliberal economics (continued gentrification due to a lack of affordable housing and the acquisition of the 2010 Olympics, substantive reductions in social expenditures, closure of the Riverview Mental Hospital, etc) that dramatically increased homelessness throughout the Province, and particularly Vancouver, are not cited as one of the "complex reasons". Further, in keeping with the advocacy of housing activists, none of the aforementioned redistributive and structural socioeconomic reforms listed in this paper are mentioned, which could drastically diminish the Downtown Eastside's extensive poverty.

The debate as to the effectiveness of the Provincial Government's "Housing Matters" policies (many of which are implemented through partnering with municipal governments) continues to rage on, as many progressive non-profit organizations and social justice activists claim that the state has failed in its responsibilities to address the region's abhorrent poverty. Demonstrated by activists like Pedersen, who asked in her aforementioned speech; "I want to

know what the premier, what he plans to do, with the 700 people who are homeless in my neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside?" (Housing Activist Wendy Pedersen Demands More of Premier Campbell). According to government statistics, the Province has increased its expenditures towards affordable housing by 70% over the last five years, reaching over 200 million dollars annually. (Housing Matters: Message from the Minister p.3) The governments concedes that despite this increase, "some British Columbians continue to have difficulty in meeting their housing needs" (ibid), a statement which drastically understates the reality that despite these expenditures, homelessness in Metro Vancouver doubled from 1,121 persons in 2002, to 2,660 in 2008. (Homelessness Doubled Ahead of Vancouver Olympics, Report Shows)

Neoliberal Sectoral Convergence and Housing Advocacy

Incorporated into neoliberal ideology is the aforementioned contention that due to 'globalization,' and the entrenchment of economic liberalization, the state no longer has the funding capacity to provide substantive socioeconomic aid to its citizenry. As a result, according to neoliberal ideology the public sector must look to partnerships with private and non-profit interests, to facilitate an affordable and 'sustainable' delivery of social services. This is a contemporary neoliberal form of governance which has been widely referred to as 'new public management.'

> Developing partnership relationships within government, between governments and with the private (profit and not-for-profit) sector has been a recurring theme in central agency reports and in departmental and agency studies since the early 1990's…there is a need to spread the financial burden of public programs and services, and to have access to expertise and other resources found in order of government or in the private sector. (Perkins, Shepherd, p. 98)

Due to this neoliberal shift to sectoral convergence, housing projects tabled under the Provincial Government's "Housing Matters" agenda, consistently include interests from both the private and non-profit sector. In other words, while some housing activist continue to deride the government's inability to provide enough affordable housing, other non-profit interests like Rain City Housing and Support Society, work in concert with the various levels of government in respect to housing initiatives. Just as certain corporate interests benefit from the neoliberal state allocating public funds to the private sector to enact neoliberal policies, many NGOs are also ensured funding through participating in this sectoral convergence.

This distinction between certain housing activists and non-profit organizations that partner directly with the state is important to make for two reasons. One; it demonstrates the influence of neoliberal economics upon certain non-profit interests, in that, clearly, those organizations that partner with the state can only advocate for policies that are compliant with neoliberal logic. In a neoliberal era where state funding towards social issues has diminished, NGOs are not only increasingly called on to provide services for widespread social ills, but due to the relative scarcity of funding opportunities, many organizations have little choice but to operate within the confines of 'new public management.' Two; through partnering with non-profit interests and non-government organizations that advocate for progressive causes, state policies like "Housing Matters" gain the

valuable endorsement of their non-profit partners, nurturing a perception throughout the public that the concerns of housing activists and social justice groups are in fact being addressed.

This neoliberal sectoral convergence is readily evident in government sponsored texts announcing housing projects, disseminated through the constant use of terms like “community partners” and “partnerships.” For example, in a October, 2009 press release announcing 92 more units of supportive housing in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside Lux apartment complex, it states that the project “demonstrates the positive outcomes from all levels of government uniting with community partners to help those most in need ” ($22 M Supportive Housing Opens in Downtown Eastside). The non-profit Rain City organization, which was hired to operate and manage the facility, added “Thanks to our great partnerships with all levels of government, we are able to further promote our mission and facilitate hope, opportunity and change for the most vulnerable people” (ibid.). Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson added that “The Lux demonstrates the positive outcomes from all levels of government uniting with community partners to help those most in need” (ibid). In a February, 2007, press release announcing 85 new housing units in the Downtown Eastside’s Salvation Army Grace Mansion, B.C. Housing Minister Rich Coleman described the project “as a remarkable illustration of what partnerships can achieve” (85 New Units to Reduce Downtown Eastside Homelessness).

In a press release from January, 2009, all three levels of government announced a partnership with the private land developer, Concord Pacific Group, to facilitate the reopening of supportive housing units in the Downtown Eastside's Pennsylvania Hotel. The release included a quote from Concord's CEO Terry Hui stating, that the company "is pleased to support and work with leading Downtown Eastside community groups and the various levels of government to help solve the homelessness problem…" ($14 M Reopens Supportive Housing in Downtown Eastside) In Hui's comments, the words 'support' and 'work' replace terms like 'partners' and 'partnerships', as the CEO's comments extol the ability of neoliberal sectoral convergence, to alleviate the region's extensive homelessness.

The consistent use of words like 'partnerships,' reinforces the neoliberal ideological contention, that social policies like affordable housing requires the resources and abilities of numerous interests. The state remains a factor in governance, but its capacity remains limited; the non-profit and private sectors are 'co-workers' rather than subordinates. In addition, terms like 'community' and 'partners' fosters the idea that the state and its partners are indeed actively involved in society, implicitly disseminating the notion that neoliberal economics are in fact capable of addressing social ills. Housing projects fostered through sectoral convergence provide "remarkable illustrations," that concerns regarding rising poverty within Canada's neoliberal order are misplaced; on the contrary, according to neoliberal logic, these partnerships continue to demonstrate the

‘flexibility’ and fiscal ‘responsibility’ required in modern society to deliver socioeconomic aid.

The state’s endorsement and subsequent ‘partnership’ with other interests to facilitate affordable housing, is not indicative of a return to the welfare state. Just as the state has formed ‘partnerships’ with interests from other sectors due to fiscal constraints, the role of the state in this capacity is not only limited, it is temporary; these housing projects are initiated on a case-by-case basis, they are not structural, long term government commitments to social housing. This temporal element to neoliberal policy is also consistently represented in texts related to housing projects, through the use of the word ‘transition.’ Just as the state has temporarily engaged in ‘community partnerships’ to apparently address poverty, this neoliberal discourse also dictates that the individual cannot rely on sustained public support; the individual is to take responsibility for him or herself.

In the aforementioned press release announcing the Lux housing project, a representative of Coastal Health was quoted saying “Partnerships between government and community are the cornerstones that help people most in need transition into a more independent living situation,” while Housing Minister Rich Coleman stated that the units will help impoverished individuals “forge a path towards long-term health and independence,” ($22 M Supportive Housing Opens in Downtown Eastside). The terms ‘transition’ and ‘independence’ support the same implicit contention, the state’s endorsement and financial support for

housing remains limited and temporary; the needy will eventually have to fend for themselves. In a February, 2008, news release announcing the Provincial Government's purchase of several single-room occupancy hotels in the DTES, Premier Gordon Campbell noted that the acquisitions mean "a brighter future for people who will be able to have housing with support services to stabilize their lives and regain their independence" (Province Buys Six Hotels to Expand and Protect Housing). In keeping with all housing advocacy which stems from the state and its partners, justification for providing socioeconomic relief is given in conjunction with this discursive reminder: individuals cannot expect sustained government intervention; a successful person is someone who is economically independent.

Sectoral convergence, not only reduces socioeconomic reliance on the state, it promotes the allocation of public funds to profit and non-profit interests who are contracted out to enact various social policies. This is in keeping with neoliberal ideology, as the state's extension into the economy is only acceptable, if it is facilitating economic activity. For example, in the case of the Lux project mentioned above, all three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal) directed public funds to the project, with the British Columbian Government allocating over $12 million dollars of the total $22 million dollar cost to constructing and maintaining the building. Further, as sectoral convergence dictates, the operation and management of the units is being carried out by the aforementioned Rain City Housing and not the state ($22 M Supportive Housing

Opens in Downtown Eastside). A project like the Lux demonstrates sectoral convergence of a nature, whereby, capital is being allocated to non-state interests to facilitate social policy, who according to neoliberal logic, are much more cost effective.

Thus a connection is made within neoliberal discourse between sectoral convergence, fiscal responsibility and the promise of economic growth. Through framing the implementation of social housing in this way, other interests, beside just the socioeconomically depressed, stand to gain substantially economically. While the advocacy of housing activists cites the aforementioned tax benefits of providing more housing, it also promotes the capital accumulation that the state's partners will incur through constructing more housing. For example, while appealing to the British Columbian Government to honor its commitment of investing $250 million dollars in a housing endowment fund, the CCAP's Pedersen stated:

> That $250 million would buy 1,200 units of decent, wonderful housing right now. It would help the economy. It would help jobs. And it would be decent and humane for the people who need them. (Housing Activist Wendy Pedersen Demands More of Premier Campbell)

Here again an appeal for social housing is presented on grounds that remains within the parameters of neoliberal discourse; state expenditures towards housing will benefit "the economy" and "help" create "jobs" for interests that participate in neoliberalism's sectoral convergence. The humanitarian need to build the units is mentioned, however, Pedersen's advocacy also points out that

others, beside just those in need, stand to gain economically through housing action.

Conclusion

An examination of texts stemming from both non-profit and state interests demonstrates that housing advocacy, which posits affordable shelter as an effective means to remedy poverty and social ills in the DTES, has been appropriated into neoliberal discourse. Due to the fact that advocacy of this nature does not call for substantive and structural socioeconomic change, and further, because it attempts to appease neoliberal concerns in respect to conducting social policy, affordable housing has been incorporated into neoliberalism's sectoral convergence. Now framed with neoliberal ideals, housing advocacy is being utilized as a means to disseminate the 'business friendly,' ideological dictation, that economic prosperity cannot be attained through communal or humanitarian pursuits.

In closing, it would be interesting to see what sort of findings a more expansive and broader CDA might find in regards to housing advocacy in not only Vancouver's DTES, but other locations across Canada (or for that matter the world). Due to time constraints this project was somewhat restricted in respect to how many texts could be rigorously reviewed. Further, due to the fact that this paper focused on housing advocacy in a contemporary sense, research aimed at studying how housing advocacy was framed during the primacy of more redistributive Keynesian economics might yield intriguing insights. As could a

CDA of texts tied to housing advocacy which existed, while neoliberal ideology attained dominance throughout Canada in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

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