Business Improvement Areas and the Justification of Urban Revitalization: Using the Pragmatic Sociology of Critique to Understand Neoliberal Urban Governance

by

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ABSTRACT

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF URBAN REVITALIZATION: USING THE PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY OF CRITIQUE TO UNDERSTAND NEOLIBERAL URBAN GOVERNANCE

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Business Improvement Areas (hereafter BIAs) have become a central feature of urban revitalization across North America, Australia, Western Europe, and South Africa. Urban scholars describe BIAs as a neoliberal form of urban governance insofar as these quasi-state organizations use private sector strategies to make changes to public spaces. Despite growing literature highlighting BIAs’ neoliberal form of power, there is little understanding of the influence these organizations have during urban revitalization decision-making processes. Drawing on interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from two BIAs in London, Ontario, I use the pragmatic sociology of critique to study interactional settings where BIAs engage in normative and morally-laden discussions about urban revitalization. I specifically focus on the Downtown London BIA’s involvement in the revitalization of a four-block downtown street called Dundas Place as well as the Old East Village BIA’s involvement in the neighbourhood’s residential development planning process. I argue that the production of BIA spaces is contingent on interactional settings where social actors engage in dialogue, debate, and negotiation. This is not to discount BIAs’ political and economic forms of power; rather, I argue these forms of power cannot be separated from socio-cultural forms of power enacted during interactional decision-making processes. In addition to showing the justificatory strategies used by BIAs, I show how BIA-related decision-making processes are influenced by their organizational interests and limited by certain institutional arrangements.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)
Downtown London Business Improvement Area (DLBIA)
Old East Village Business Improvement Area (OEVBIA)
Live Work Learn Play (LWLP)
Pragmatic Sociology of Critique (PSC)
Targeted Leasing and Casting (TLC)
London Affordable Housing Foundation (LAHF)
Housing Development Corporation (HDC)
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
Community Improvement Plan (CIP)
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1. Introduction

Imagine a revitalized neighbourhood with people walking from their upscale high-rise apartments to local coffee shops, parks, and outdoor patios. The sidewalks and streets are freshly paved and have newly installed benches, street signs, and flower-beds for people to use and enjoy. Some people walk along the sidewalk to shop along the busy commercial corridor while others head towards an outdoor arts festival with musical performances and ethnic food vendors. Now imagine this neighbourhood just five years prior to its revitalization when an abandoned factory occupied the site of the upscale high-rise apartment, homeless people panhandled in the space around the arts festival, the storefronts and street furniture were covered with graffiti, and the sidewalks and streets were devoid of pedestrian activity as the stores were boarded up and vacant. While this is an anecdotal description of neighbourhood revitalization, city politicians and urban planners hope to achieve these types of transformations.

The urban revitalization process takes years of planning before construction crews are able to make tangible changes to a neighbourhood. Before tower cranes appear in the sky and construction cones fill the streets, city councillors and urban planning staff engage in lengthy, normative discussions about the best way to revitalize a particular urban area. These discussions often include, but are not limited to, the viewpoints of urban planners, city councillors, members of the community, business and non-profit organizations, private developers, and consultants. However, consensus on the best way to transform an area is difficult to reach because urban revitalization is ultimately a normative process involving multiple groups engaging in moral discussions about the “appropriate” or “right” way to revitalize urban space. Eventually some viewpoints and interests will prevail while others will be ignored given that city councillors must make a final decision on a revitalization plan. But how does the urban revitalization process come down to a single plan that is ultimately put into practice?
1.1 The Role of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)

Today’s urban spaces are produced by an array of groups that coordinate and implement revitalization projects in a variety of ways. Among one of the more “intriguing and controversial” organizations, as Briffault (1999, p. 366) argues, are Business Improvement Areas which have become central in urban revitalization across North America, Australia, Western Europe, and South Africa. These organizations are commonly known as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the United States and go by many other naming conventions around the world.\(^1\) Originating in Toronto during the 1970s (Briffault, 1999; Charenko, 2015; Government of Ontario, 2010; Houstoun, 2003; Hoyt, 2008), Business Improvement Areas (hereafter BIAs) emerged as a small-scale urban beautification strategy led by business owners. In their most basic form, BIAs comprise business/property owners within a designated geographical area who pay an annual levy to provide supplemental services to their commercial district. These services include day-to-day tasks like security and crime control, beautifying city streets and sidewalks, and marketing the neighbourhood (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2001a, 2008; Ward, 2007).

BIAs were created to give businesses the legal authority to secure financial contributions from local businesses in order to revitalize commercial spaces for middle-class consumption (Briffault, 1999; Davies, 1997; Hoyt, 2008; Mallet, 1993, 1994; Morçöl & Zimmerman, 2006; Morçöl et al., 2014; Symes & Steel, 2003).\(^2\) Municipal governments in Ontario, for example, collect an annual levy from all

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\(^1\) Rather than using the word “business”, other countries use words like economic, capital, commercial, general, municipal, neighbourhood, city, downtown, public, and special (see Morçöl & Gautsch, 2013; Ward, 2007; Hoyt, 2003). I will refer to these organizations as Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) throughout this study because it is the legal and conventional name in Canada.

\(^2\) While most BIAs’ funding comes from the annual levy (Briffault, 1999; Hoyt, 2003), they have increasingly been able to attain funds from tax-exempt property owners and public funds from various levels of government (Hemphill et al., 2014).
businesses within the BIA boundary and transfer those funds back to the BIA to fund local services (Government of Ontario, 2010). Most importantly, the annual levy ensures a steady source of funding while preventing “free riders” from reaping the benefits of revitalization without having made a financial contribution (Briffault, 1999; Gorodnick, 2000; Lippert, 2007; Mitchell, 2008). That is, all businesses within the boundary are legally required to pay the annual levy or else they face penalties. Simply put, BIAs allow business communities to legally collect funds from local businesses to fund small-scale revitalization projects.

BIAs are intriguing because they play a key role in urban revitalization decision-making processes. Although they have the legal authority to advance their particular vision, there is no guarantee their vision will come to fruition insofar as city councillors must consider different perspectives during the decision-making process. Nevertheless, BIAs have the local authority to take part in urban revitalization discussions and to make changes to urban spaces.

BIAs are controversial because, although they are accountable to municipal governments, they are privately-funded organizations that have, according to Mallet (1994, p. 281), “bought the right to say what should and what should not happen on public streets”. With approval from the municipal government, they have the legal right to make changes to public spaces within their boundary such as sidewalks, streets, alleyways, parks, and public squares. It is therefore unsurprising that urban scholars describe these organizations as a neoliberal form of urban governance. In the simplest terms, this a form of governance where the state has tasked the private sector with planning, organizing, managing, and

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3 In Ontario, the levy is determined by dividing a property’s realty assessment by the total business realty within the BIA boundaries and then multiplying by the total BIA annual budget. For example, if the assessment of a business property represents 1% of the total realty assessment of all businesses within the BIA boundary, the owner of the property must pay 1% of the total BIA levy (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 48). Municipal council also has the power to set a minimum and maximum charge or a special charge on properties that gain greater benefits from the BIA.
controlling urban spaces to intensify capital accumulation (Ward, 2007, 2008; MacLeod & Ward, 2002; Mallet, 1994) (the term neoliberalism will be defined more thoroughly in Chapter 3). For example, scholars have noted BIAs in Canada enact punitive strategies meant to exclude marginalized groups (e.g., the homeless, prostitutes, drug users, etc.) from public spaces (Lippert, 2010, 2012; Sanscartier & Gacek, 2016; Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Huey et al., 2004). Other scholars have shown how, following Richard Florida’s (2002) popular creative cities agenda, BIAs selectively draw on historical and cultural identities to construct symbolic boundaries around desirable and undesirable consumers (Ward, 2008; Rantisi & Leslie, 2006). In sum, BIAs are quasi-state organizations that have the legal authority to enact private sector approaches to public spaces.

1.2 This Study

Many Marxist-inspired urban scholars argue urban space is a product of neoliberal ideology enacted by coalitions of elite actors (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Castells, 1983; 1989; Harvey, 1989; Sassen, 2002). More recent conceptualizations of urban space, however, argue such spaces are the product of ongoing processes enacted by an array of social actors who negotiate and contest the production of urban space (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Keil, 2009; McFarlane, 2009, 2011; Farias & Bender, 2010). As such, scholars are calling for more “place-based investigations” of how neoliberalism unfolds in everyday local politics (Peck et al., 2013, p. 1096; see also Jacobs, 2012; Ward, 2006; Allen, 2011; Brenner et al., 2011). This dissertation responds to these calls by focusing on interactional settings where various social actors engage in normative discussions about the production of BIA spaces.

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4 It should be noted that Florida (2017) has recently reconsidered his creative cities notion by acknowledging that cities with a high concentration of the “creative class” also have large disparities between the rich and the poor. I will expand on this in Chapter 3.
Drawing on interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from two BIAs in London, Ontario (the Downtown London BIA and Old East Village BIA), this dissertation asks: how do these BIAs justify their approaches to urban revitalization during deliberation processes? Using the pragmatic sociology of critique, specifically Luc Boltanski’s various works (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski, 2011), I argue that the production of BIA spaces is contingent on interactional settings where social actors engage in dialogue, debate, and negotiation. This is not to discount BIAs’ political and economic forms of power; rather, I argue these forms of power cannot be separated from socio-cultural forms of power; that is, as I will explain in chapter 3, interactional settings where social actors discursively construct taken-for-granted definitions of reality.

In addition to showing the justificatory strategies used by BIAs, I show how BIA-related decision-making processes are influenced by their organizational interests and limited by certain institutional arrangements.

Overall, this study shows how the pragmatic sociology of critique advances our understanding of the production of urban space. Using two BIAs as case studies, I show how the outcomes of urban revitalization discussions do not follow a singular, monolithic, or cohesive “neoliberal” ideology; rather, the outcomes are contingent on interactional settings where social actors justify and contest urban revitalization plans. Rather than discounting the concept of “neoliberalism”, the pragmatic sociology of critique allows us to see the context-specific ways that neoliberal urban policies are discussed, justified, and critiqued during critical decision-making processes. My study also contributes to the scholarship on the pragmatic sociology of critique. As I will explain in chapter 5, my study provides a methodological approach to study the justification process. By focusing on BIAs, my study also contributes to urban studies rooted in the pragmatic sociology of critique by introducing new forms of justifications, conflicts, and compromises that unfold during the urban planning process. Lastly, by engaging with Boltanski’s
three main works (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski, 2011), I provide a unique theoretical framework to study the justification process. In particular, I argue the process of justification should be examined through three interrelated areas of focus: (1) interactional settings where social actors draw upon socio-historically created grammars of worth; (2) role of contemporary capitalist organizations in shaping members’ goals, motivations, and values; and (3) the institutional contexts within which interactions are located.

1.2 Research Site

Located between Toronto and Detroit, London is a mid-sized Canadian city with a population of 383,822 (Statistics Canada, 2017). London was chosen as the research site for this study because of my familiarity with the city (I have been a resident since 1992) and because two local BIA were actively involved in revitalization discussions. At the time of this study, there were three active BIAs in the city (Downtown London BIA, Old East Village BIA, and the Argyle BIA) and two more awaiting municipal approval (Hyde Park BIA and the Hamilton Road BIA). I focused exclusively on the Downtown London BIA and Old East Village BIA because they were actively involved in ongoing urban revitalization discussions.5

First, the Downtown London BIA is London’s largest BIA in terms of its geographic space, board membership, and financial capital. During this study (2015-2019), they were involved in the planning process of a City-led $16 million redevelopment of Dundas Street. Coined as the Dundas Place redevelopment, this four-block stretch of downtown Dundas Street was designed to be “curbless” to create a wide-open pedestrian space during scheduled festivals/events that would operate during car-free

5 While the Argyle BIA has an active and functioning board of directors, they were not involved in any major revitalization discussions during the course of this study. In fact, during an interview, a City employee explained to me that he was unsure what the Argyle BIA does outside of coordinating their annual Santa Claus parade.
times. As I will explain, tense moral discussions ensued between the Downtown London BIA, city councillors, urban planners, and a placemaking consultant about the good, proper, and right way to revitalize Dundas Place.

Second, the Old East Village BIA operates in a smaller geographic space, has fewer board and staff members, and has a limited budget compared to the Downtown London BIA. During this study, they were involved in the planning of two separate residential developments in the neighbourhood. As I will explain, they played a significant role in the development of these plans. An analysis of two local BIAs allowed me to compare their justificatory practices and examine the different moral debates that unfolded regarding their respective revitalization discussions.

Chapter Outline

Chapters 2 and 3 provide an in-depth look into BIAs. Chapter 2 presents detailed background information about BIAs, including how and where these organizations originated, how they form, the role of BIA boards, the types of services they provide, and how they evaluate success. While mostly description, this chapter provides socio-historical context as well as basic information about their organization and operations. Chapter 3 examines how urban scholars, mainly sociologists, geographers, and criminologists, have conceptualized BIAs. It first explains how BIAs have been defined as a product of a neoliberal political-economic logic that treats urban space as a commodity for sale. This chapter contrasts the traditional “neoliberalism-as-policy/ideology” perspective with an emerging “urban assemblage” perspective. Instead of viewing neoliberalism as a monolithic and top-down force, I argue neoliberalism should be understood as an ongoing political-economic process that is continually negotiated and constructed by various social actors. It is therefore important to study interactional settings where various social actors engage in normative discussions about the “best” way to revitalize
urban space. The rest of the chapter describes strategies and policies commonly implemented by BIAs, in particular, order maintenance strategies and the creative cities agenda. While existing literature importantly highlights the punitive and exclusionary way BIAs organize, control, and manage urban space, I argue that it is important to understand how they stigmatize urban space and construct “creativity” to justify their revitalization visions.

Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical framework for understating justificatory processes. This study is rooted in a relatively new research program coined the “pragmatic sociology of critique”. This is an emerging subfield of sociology that takes seriously the ways social actors categorize and evaluate social life along various moral orders (see Barnett, 2014; Lamont, 2012; Fourcade & Healy, 2007). This chapter expands on Luc Boltanski’s various contributions to the “pragmatic sociology of critique”, in particular The New Spirit of Capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005), On Justification: Economies of Worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), and On Critique (Boltanski, 2011). Taken together, I argue the process of justification should be examined through three interrelated areas of focus: (1) interactional settings where social actors draw upon socio-historically created grammars of worth; (2) role of contemporary capitalist organizations in shaping members’ goals, motivations, and values; and (3) the institutional contexts within which interactions are located. This chapter ends with a discussion of important contributions made by existing urban studies rooted in the pragmatic sociology of critique.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of this study’s methodology. Given that the pragmatic sociology of critique emphasizes the way social actors see, understand, and interpret their social world, qualitative methods are the most appropriate way to understand the justification process. I borrow from the well-established constructivist research tradition because of its focus on social actors’ reflexivity. The chapter contrasts the epistemological principles of constructivism and the pragmatic sociology of critique before
explaining the empirical focus of this study; specifically, socially constructed “proofs” actors draw upon to justify their viewpoints. The Chapter also outlines the specific data-collection strategies, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, as well as the steps taken during the data analysis stage.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the findings from the Downtown London BIA. More specifically, Chapter 6 explains the Downtown London BIA’s role during the planning process of Dundas Place. It analyzes their justifications to help pay for a private Toronto-based placemaking company, called Live, Work, Learn Play (LWLP), to attract “unique and experiential” retailers to the downtown. Chapter 7 then analyzes LWLP’s justification to hire a Dundas Place Manager, a person tasked with enacting placemaking strategies in various downtown spaces. While this may appear to be an innocuous role, I argue the Dundas Place Manager represents a new form of order maintenance intended to make the presence of the urban poor more tolerable.

Chapter 8 focuses on the findings from the Old East Village BIA. Rather than engaging in conventional BIA practices, this BIA was mostly involved in discussions about residential development in the neighbourhood. By analyzing two separate residential development plans, I argue that the Old East Village BIA attempted to control and frame the community’s critiques of these developments. In the first case, I show how they emphasized less contentious community critiques in an effort to legitimize the developer as collaborative and mindful of the community’s feedback. Despite the BIA’s effort to ignore contentious discussions about incorporating affordable housing units, I show how local community residents successfully convinced city councillors to incorporate the provision of affordable housing as part of a development condition. In the second case, I show how the Old East Village BIA justified various Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies and ground-floor
commercial units to a mid-rise affordable housing development. I show how their justifications were based on stereotypical claims about low-income tenants.

The discussion and conclusion in Chapters 9 and 10 provide an overview of the empirical, theoretical, and methodological significance of this study. The discussion Chapter explains the contribution of this work to the literature on BIAs, neoliberal urban governance, and urban studies rooted in the pragmatic sociology of critique. The concluding Chapter summarizes my findings, provides suggestions as to how future research should study BIAs, and presents some limitations of my study.
2. An Introduction to Business Improvement Areas

This chapter provides detailed background information about BIAs before delving deeper into more substantive issues raised by urban scholars. In particular, it discusses where and how BIAs originated, how they form, the role of BIA boards, the types of services they provide, and how they evaluate success. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explains how BIAs emerged as key actors in the beautification of North American downtown commercial districts during the post-World War Two era. In short, BIAs reflect a shift in urban planning ideology from large-scale modernist redevelopment to a small-scale beautification approach. I show how the dominance of suburban living and retailing during the 1950s played a significant role in the origination of the BIA model in North America. The second section of this chapter moves beyond their socio-historical emergence and highlights how contemporary BIAs operate. This section provides insights about who is involved in BIA organizations, what types of projects they are involved in, and how they measure success.

Before describing BIAs, it should be noted the term “revitalization” is used throughout this study. As will be explained in this chapter, revitalization in the context of BIAs refers to physical improvements to sidewalks, streets, street furniture, security and crime control, and marketing/advertising (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2001a, 2008; Ward, 2007). This contrasts with large-scale redevelopment that is often enacted by local governments and private developers (e.g., building development, road/highway construction, land clearance, etc.). In other words, BIA-led revitalization refers to the implementation of small-scale beautification services in commercial districts.6

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6 There are also some alternatives to BIAs according to the provincial BIA handbook (Government of Ontario, 2010). For example, Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) perform similar functions as BIAs but focus on large-scale development like public transportation systems, site acquisition, parking facilities, and provision of culture and heritage systems. Municipalities also create small business programs (or business incubators) to provide mentoring assistance,
2.1 The Socio-Historical Emergence of BIAs

The suburbs offered an escape from the supposed filth, smoke, disease, and crowding of North American industrial city centres into newly constructed “bourgeois utopias” located in the fringes (Fishman, 1987). Between the late 19th and early 20th century, living in the fringes of urban centres remained an exclusive privilege of the affluent. It was not until the post-World War Two era (1945-1960) that the suburbs became a viable option for middle-class consumers due to the availability of cheap land, government subsidies, and Fordist construction techniques that created characterless “cookie-cutter” homes (Garreau, 1992; Kunstler, 1993; Short et al., 2007). The revived optimism about long-term development coupled with a strong post-war economy set the stage for suburban living. This was characterized by an era of domesticity and conformity where the middle class bought into a pre-packaged suburban lifestyle and engaged in widespread consumption of new consumer products such as automobiles and household appliances. In the absence of simultaneous development of public transit infrastructure, this period was also marked by dependence on automobiles for ordinary routines. For example, while women’s routines were mostly restricted to domestic duties, men’s daily routines involved driving to work from suburban homes, parking in an underground lot, and eating lunch within an office complex without stepping foot onto city streets (Kunstler, 1993).

While suburbanization continues to be a dominant global process (see Keil, 2018), downtowns nevertheless regained prominence by the early 1970s. As Bell (1973) observed, the expansion of the knowledge economy during this time had a drastic effect on North American downtowns. As cities began to deindustrialize, an emerging middle-class began settling in downtown areas to be close to their counselling, financial advice, and training to small businesses. Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) also perform similar tasks as BIAs but focus more on effectively using and restoring land, buildings, and infrastructure.
workplaces and new cultural amenities. In Canada, this included recent university graduates and people working in the public and non-profit sector such as teachers, professors, social workers, architects, and lawyers (Caulfield, 1994; Broadway, 1995; Ley, 1996). There was also increased participation of women in the workforce, many of whom chose to reside in downtown areas proximate to accessible child care, schools, and amenities (Rose, 1989; Villeneuve & Rose, 1988; Markusen 1980; Bondi 1991). The transition from an industrialized economy to a knowledge economy laid the roots for downtown living among a new Canadian middle-class.

The 1970s also marked a shift in consumer ideals towards more postmodern sensibilities characterized by distinct “taste cultures”. In addition to consuming functional products of the mass market, middle-class consumers acquired a taste for commodities with more distinct symbolic/cultural meaning (Ley, 1996). Although shopping malls were becoming more prominent in North America, downtown retail spaces provided an alternate shopping experience where customers could bypass the standardized merchandise of chain stores in favour of culturally distinct products from independent retailers. This included the downtown housing market which served these distinct tastes by offering lofts with attractive architecture and history as well as other cultural amenities like vibrant underground dancehalls and independent commercial shops selling self-produced crafts and organic goods (Birch, 2002; Brooks, 2004; Caulfield, 1996; Hae, 2012; Ley, 1996; Lloyd, 2006; Zukin, 1982).

In the aftermath of mass suburban development of the early post-World War Two era, downtowns became attractive places for industries and middle-class consumers during the 1980s. Thus, local governments began investing in an array of downtown planning strategies such as constructing expressways, new corporate headquarters and commercial buildings, mega-sports complexes, and performing arts and convention centres (Mitchell, 2008). However, downtown business communities
criticized these large-scale urban planning strategies for lacking a focus on the more intricate aspects of downtown spaces (e.g., sidewalks, streets, lampposts, gardens, flower baskets, signs, banners, etc.).

Rather than just investing in large modernist infrastructural projects, urban planners and business leaders suggested BIAs could help revive North American downtowns by enhancing the aesthetic of commercial districts. As will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, the earliest BIAs closely resembled Jacobs’ (1961) classic urban planning principles which rejected large modernist urban planning and emphasized nostalgic conceptions of intimacy, diversity, sociability, and interaction reminiscent of smaller rural communities.

**BIAs and Suburban Competition**

Commonly referred to as “malls without walls” (Mallet, 1994), some of the earliest BIA spaces resembled indoor suburban shopping malls. Like suburban malls, BIA organizations provide area-wide management services within a specific boundary (e.g., sanitation, security, maintenance), address area-wide concerns rather than the interests of particular businesses, and maintain a consistent and coherent theme/aesthetic made possible through staff uniforms, logos, and street furniture (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2008). The main purpose was to attract suburbanites to their commercial districts by resembling the successful suburban retailing management model, albeit with the added pleasure of walking outdoors while shopping, enjoying distinct and historical architectural building designs, and offering a sense of outdoor public life not offered in suburban malls (Mitchell, 2008).

The establishment of world’s first BIA – Toronto’s Bloor-Jane-Runnymede neighbourhood, known today as the Bloor West Village – is a prime example of BIAs being a direct response to suburban retailing (Briffault, 1999; Charenko, 2015; Government of Ontario, 2010; Houstoun, 2003;
The opening of various Toronto malls, particularly Yorkdale mall, Cloverdale mall, and Sherway mall, and the development of the Bloor-Danforth subway line in 1967 negatively impacted the Bloor-Jane-Runnymede commercial area. The neighbourhood was losing its pedestrian traffic and family-run businesses as malls successfully enticed shoppers with a large selection of products and services, year-round climate-controlled buildings, quick access via the subway line, and an abundance of free parking.

It was at this point that members of the voluntary Bloor-Jane-Runnymede Business Men’s Association asked Toronto’s municipal council to design legislation that would ensure businesses in their neighbourhood pay a mandatory annual levy to fund urban revitalization projects. Their efforts eventually paid off on December 17th, 1969 when the City of Toronto crafted legislation that formalized the BIA and, on May 14th, 1970, the Ontario government passed Section 379g of the Municipal Act which formed the world’s first BIA (Charenko, 2016). With a budget of $47,500 in its first year, the BIA spent most of its funds on beautifying the commercial district by installing flowerboxes, new interlocking bricks on sidewalks, and fairy lights on trees. Calling it “The Miracle on Bloor Street West”, local newspapers praised the dramatic changes in the area (Charenko, 2016, p. 7). Today, the provincial government and the City of Toronto consider the Bloor West Village a success story with over 400 local shops contributing more than a quarter-million dollars to local revitalization projects (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 87). In an effort to compete with suburban retailing, the Bloor West Village was given

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7 It should be noted that Morçöl and Gautsch (2013) disagree that Bloor-Jane-Runnymede was the world’s first BIA. They argue the BIA model can be traced back to legislation enacted prior to 1970 in Virginia, Nevada, California, and Pennsylvania which precede the Toronto model. Nevertheless, Toronto is widely recognized for popularizing BIAs.

8 The first BIA in the U.S. formed just five years later by the Downtown Development Corporation in New Orleans in 1975 (Houstoun, 2003; Mitchell, 2008).
legislative power that ensured all local businesses made financial contributions for small-scale revitalization projects.

After the success of Bloor West Village, BIAs began to form across Canada as federal and provincial governments encouraged their formation through various government grants and incentives (Hoyt, 2003, 2006; Ward, 2006; for U.S. context see Billings & Leland, 2009). These organizations continued to spread across Canada throughout the 1990s to combat declines in downtown retail sales, the demise of the Eaton Company, and the dominance of new U.S. retail developments located in the suburbs such as Wal-Mart, The Home Depot, Costco, and Best Buy (Hernandez & Jones, 2005). With over 270 BIAs currently operating in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2010), they have become widely accepted as a vital aid to urban revitalization in Canada.

The BIA model has even expanded across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Japan (Hoyt, 2003; Ward, 2007). In fact, many European countries (mostly Spain, the U.K., Germany, Ireland, and Sweden) began replacing a similar European version called Town Centre Managements (TCMs) with the BIA model (see Page & Hardyman, 1996). Business owners and politicians believe BIAs are superior to TCMs insofar as they give businesses clearly defined geographical boundaries, are managed and financed by businesses rather than the local government, and give business owners more autonomy and power to beautify their areas (Espinosa & Hernandez, 2016; Cook, 2008, 2009; Hogg et al., 2003, 2007; Lloyd et al. 2003). Popularized by the Canadian model, BIAs have become commonplace organizations across many advanced capitalist societies.

2.2 Current BIA Operations

BIAs have changed significantly since the 1970s. They are no longer restricted to downtown districts and can be found in smaller inner-city neighbourhoods and suburban commercial areas. For
example, BIAs in Toronto operate in many areas like the popular cultural and entertainment district on downtown Yonge street; the hip and eclectic neighbourhood on Queen Street West; “ethnic”
neighbourhoods like Little Italy, Little Poland, Greektown, and the Indian Bazaar; the thriving gay and lesbian community at Church and Wellesley; the old industrial manufacturing neighbourhood in Liberty Village; and predominately recent-immigrant suburban neighbourhoods in Mount Dennis and Weston (Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Espinosa & Hernandez, 2016; Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Rankin and Delaney, 2011; Rankin & McLean, 2015). Today’s BIAs no longer exist to simply combat suburban retailing but have spread across cities.

Despite their geographic spread, BIAs still share many characteristics. This includes who makes up their organization (BIA steering committees and board of managements), what the organization does (service provisions), and how the organization measures success (performance indicators). The first subsection highlights how, from their initial legal formation, larger and more reputable businesses play a significant role in establishing the original formation and delivery of services because these businesses tend to acquire BIA decision-making power. The second subsection highlights the types of services BIAs typically provide within their commercial districts. I argue that, in addition to understanding the power dynamics between businesses within a BIA, it is also important to consider power dynamics between BIAs themselves; that is, the ones with larger budgets and greater geographical scope tend to have more power and influence in the revitalization process compared to those with smaller budgets located in more modest commercial districts (as I will show, this is the case with the two BIAs examined in this study). This means larger BIAs may have the resources and skills to justify urban revitalization and leverage their competitive advantage compared to smaller ones. The third subsection explains the measures BIAs use to justify their success. As I argue, evaluating success is problematic because there is a lack of
government oversight, unclear guidelines regarding who BIAs are accountable to, and their data tends to be subjective and anecdotal.

**The BIA Formation Process**

To be legally recognized as a BIA, local businesses must justify the need to form a BIA to their city councils. Municipal governments in Ontario, for example, must pass a local by-law that designates the BIA as an official organization governed by Section 204-214 of the Municipal Act, 2001. Businesses must agree to form a “steering committee” which is responsible for submitting a proposal to the municipality, including an outline of the territorial boundaries where the levy will be enforced, a list of goals and objectives, and a preliminary budget (Government of Ontario, 2010). Steering committees in Ontario must justify the need for a BIA by identifying various signs of commercial decline such as poor economic development, negative public perceptions, deteriorating physical appearance, or a lack of marketing/promotional infrastructure. In fact, research in Germany shows that a successful BIA formation depends on their ability to demonstrate signs of urban decay, crime, and violence (Stein et al., 2015). Given the time and effort required to formalize the organization, steering committees typically comprise larger flagship business owners because they are willing and able to spend the time and effort to go through the legal formation process (Brooks & Strange, 2011; Cook, 2009; Lee, 2016a).

Although BIA formation may appear to be an easy task given municipal councils rarely object to their formation, this process may take anywhere from two to five years. During this time, businesses need to form the steering committee, canvass for local support, wait for municipal hearings, allow opportunities for written protests, engage in community outreach, and make subsequent revisions to the proposal (Briffault, 1999). The greatest challenge steering committees face throughout this process is persuading smaller businesses within the proposed boundary to support legal formation. Smaller
businesses typically object to formation because they are reluctant to pay levies in *addition* to taxes (Briffault, 1999; Brooks & Strange, 2011; Cook, 2009). Steering committees therefore spend most of their time convincing smaller businesses that a BIA will increase their profits, provide better services, and allow local businesses greater decision-making power (Cook, 2009). While businesses in Ontario may file an objection to BIA formation by having signatures of at least one-third of business owners in the proposed boundary (Government of Ontario, 2010), successful opposition is rarely well organized and hostility is restricted to “intra-organizational mutterings” or a discarded vote on the ballot (Cook, 2009, p. 938).

Once it is legally formed, business members must elect the BIA board of management. This is often the same business members who comprised the steering committee. Typically made up of six to ten members in Canada (Hoyt, 2003), the board of management has the delegated power to make important decisions that shape their commercial district. This includes tasks such as overseeing revitalization planning, hiring staff, budgeting, and evaluation (Government of Ontario, 2010). BIA boards in Ontario must have at least one director appointed directly by the municipality (typically the local city councillor representing the ward where the BIA is situated), with the remaining directors selected by a vote from all BIA members (Government of Ontario, 2010). The length of the term for the board of management is the same as the term of the municipal council that appointed them, meaning the board of management is established every four years shortly after municipal elections (with eligibility for re-appointment every four years).

Depending on their size and overarching goals, BIA boards typically establish two committees; one dedicated to beautification and another dedicated to marketing and promotion. While the former oversees mundane tasks like graffiti removal and garbage collection, the latter focuses on complex tasks
like policy advocacy, branding, and networking with city council, municipal departments, and local community groups/institutions. While the board of management establishes overarching goals and responsibilities, the day-to-day management of these services is usually the responsibility of a manager or small group of professional staff who are accountable to the board members (Mitchell, 2008). Once they are formally established, the board becomes the key decision-making body for all BIA-related activity.

Like the steering committee, board members are not necessarily elected based on their expertise in urban revitalization; rather, they are often elected based on their reputation within the commercial district. BIA boards are therefore represented mostly by larger and well-known flagship businesses because they are considered more legitimate and trustworthy in advancing the future vision of the commercial district (Cook, 2009). Although, in theory, boards represent the voices of the entire business community, board decisions ultimately reflect the interests of more powerful business stakeholders while smaller business members have little or no voice in decision-making processes (unless they are a board member). This is not to say boards act on their own self-interest insofar as their decisions reflect their particular style of leadership. As Mitchell (2001b) notes, some boards may have a more entrepreneurial approach that focus on strategic goal setting and innovative programming. Other BIAs may practice a public servant approach that focuses on collaboration with local community groups to advocate for the public interest. Lastly, other BIAs may be solely focused on the technical supervision of activities such as budgeting, evaluation, and organizational design. In any case, BIA board decisions will ultimately reflect their particular leadership style and organizational goals/objectives.


**BIA Service Provision**

Once a BIA is formally authorized by the municipal government, it can begin paying for private services to enhance the commercial district. While property values tend to increase during the formation process, these increases fall once a BIA is officially formed as early optimism of its formation amongst residents/businesses begins to wane (Ellen et al., 2007). In fact, it generally takes about five years before BIAs show any signs of increased income and investment potential (Goppal-Agge & Hoyt, 2008; Hemphill et al., 2014). Much of this, of course, depends on how well their service provisions operate.

Although BIAs may be considered private organizations (because they are funded directly by local businesses), most of their investments go into the public sphere such as making improvements to city streets, sidewalks, public squares, and parks. Typically coined “public-private partnerships,” BIAs are simultaneously autonomous and interdependent with local governments (Grossman, 2010a; Justice & Goldsmith, 2006; Mitchell, 2008). That is, while BIAs provide privatized services to public spaces, their existence and power derives from local governments to whom they must be accountable. In this sense, BIAs are neither completely private nor completely public organizations. They do not necessarily take direct control of public space nor do they engage in a democratic process of urban revitalization since ordinary citizens have little formal role (Briffault, 1999). BIAs therefore pose challenging questions about accountability given they operate as both a public and private entity. While they must be accountable to the businesses and municipal councils they serve, they must also answer to members of the community who occupy their space (Gross, 2013).

BIAs generally provide three types of services: physical improvements, marketing, and security (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2001a, 2008; Ward, 2007). Most BIAs provide physical improvements and marketing campaigns (Hoyt, 2003; Mitchell, 2001a). This includes consistent maintenance of physical
space such as garbage collection, graffiti removal, landscaping, snow shoveling, street sweeping, as well as small-scale street enhancements like upgrading street furniture (e.g., benches, trash receptacles, lights, etc.), sidewalks, roadways, and signage. Their marketing practices are intended to advertise a distinct image for the commercial district and build a positive reputation with locals. This includes the production and distribution of BIA-related materials like maps, newsletters, coupons, flyers, and shopping guides, as well as providing marketing strategies to businesses and landowners to help attract consumers and fill vacant buildings. Although security is not a major BIA focus in Canada compared to South Africa and countries in Europe (Hoyt, 2003), it tends to be more contentious than their other service provisions (see Clough & Vanderbeck, 2006; Walby & Hier, 2013). As will be discussed in the next chapter, many scholars note the use of CCTV cameras and alarm systems, as well as the hiring of additional public police, private security guards, and tourism and hospitality ambassadors, unfairly targets marginalized groups.

This is not to suggest all BIAs provide these three services equally. Their service delivery depends on various factors such as the population of the city, size of the commercial area, types of retailers located within the boundary, and annual budget size. For example, BIAs located in cities with a population under 700,000 typically focus on physical improvements and consumer marketing, while cities with a higher population tend to focus on all three service provisions (Mitchell, 2001a). Their service provisions also depend on the geographical size of the BIA itself, regardless of city size. Large BIAs located in tourist hubs have more advantages than smaller ones insofar as they have larger budgets and businesses covering dozens of blocks including large corporate offices, banks, and major chain stores (Gross, 2005, 2013; Hoffman & Houstoun, 2010; Stokes, 2006). For example, large BIAs are more likely to have board members with professional expertise (e.g., lawyers, property developers,
financial experts), enact large-scale physical improvements, and provide more sophisticated security services (Gross, 2005, 2013).

Smaller BIAs, on the other hand, are often located in older commercial areas and more likely to rely upon their immediate neighbourhood users, rather than tourists, to support local businesses. They tend to have more owner-operated “mom and pop” shops whose owners live in the neighbourhood (Gross, 2005, 2013; Stokes, 2006). They generally struggle to revitalize their areas compared to large BIAs because they are located in declining retail environments with low pedestrian traffic, high crime rates, and aging infrastructure. With limited funds and expertise, smaller BIAs mostly focus on maintenance services to prevent the commercial district from deteriorating further (Ellen et al. 2007; Gross, 2005, 2013; Stokes, 2006). Taken together, BIA service provisions depend on the local context; with larger BIAs having more resources and power to shape urban revitalization compared to smaller ones. Despite the significant differences between small and large BIAs, these dynamics are rarely examined within the literature.

In sum, BIA service provisions depend on the particular services they provide within their locality. Their ability to implement revitalization strategies and convince others of their merit depends on the size of the BIA and the city. That said, the justification of their service provisions may be difficult insofar as the public generally believes BIAs privatize public services, erode democratic accountability, and exacerbate inter-local inequality by allowing service-rich neighbourhoods to insulate themselves from others (Briffault, 1999; Davies 1997; Grossman, 2010a; Lloyd et al., 2003). Most of all, BIAs raise suspicions that business-oriented groups do not share the same community interests as local residents and city government. For example, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, lower-class ethnic minorities and artist groups across many of Toronto’s BIAs do not feel their voices are
represented in BIA decision-making processes (see Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Rankin & McLean, 2015; Rankin et al., 2016). However, there is little understanding of exactly how BIAs continue to deliver services without much direct opposition.

**Evaluating BIAs**

Although BIAs are rarely terminated for poor performance (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2008), they must nevertheless justify the merits of their ongoing service provisions to maintain their legal designation (Government of Ontario, 2010). That said, performance evaluation is more likely to be undertaken by BIAs with larger budgets, as smaller ones find it too costly and time consuming to do so (Caruso & Weber, 2006; Donaghy et al., 2013; Grossman, 2010b). Those that do measure their effectiveness often present data on objective economic performance measures such as changes in property values, occupancy rates, pedestrian counts, and retail sales (Han et al., 2017; Hoyt, 2003; Hoyt & Gopal-Aggee, 2007; Mitchell, 2008).

Although BIAs are technically accountable to local governments, they tend to present generic mission statements to accommodate various objectives for different community stakeholders (Blackwell, 2011; Caruso & Weber, 2006; Hemphill et al. 2014). For example, BIAs may present data on short-term profit maximization like property values and vacancy rates to property owners and local government, smaller businesses may be presented with data enumerating the number of street-level enhancements and the delivery of services, while local residents may be presented with data on housing values. Generally speaking, performance assessment does not appear to be a major concern for BIAs mostly because municipal governments devote more attention to BIA formation, as opposed to checking in on them once they are operational (Briffault, 1999; Morçöl & Wolf, 2010; Wolf, 2006). If BIAs choose to measure
their success, they are usually left to their own devices to do so (Hoyt 2005; Lewis, 2010; Mitchell, 2001a; Steel & Symes, 2005).

Furthermore, the lack of guidelines regarding BIA performance assessment allows them to rely on anecdotal and subjective appraisals (Caruso & Weber, 2006; Donaghy et al., 2013; Grossman 2010b; Hemphill et al., 2004). BIAs in Ontario, for example, do not require any research, surveys, or statistical analysis to demonstrate their success. According to the Ontario BIA handbook, BIAs can be assessed through discussions with merchants, phone calls with realtors, discussions with municipal staff, or newspaper reports (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 42). Since local government oversight is minimal, BIAs unsurprisingly give themselves high performance ratings and produce self-congratulatory reports which portray the BIA as central to the dramatic transformation of the commercial district (Charenko, 2015; Cook, 2008; Hogg et al., 2007).

Conclusion

In the simplest terms, BIAs are legally-bound organizations that guarantee a steady funding source for small-scale revitalization projects within a specific geographic boundary. While BIAs initially formed in North America to compete with suburban shopping mall management model, today’s BIAs are commonplace across cities all over the world.

From the onset, larger and more reputable businesses take on leadership roles within a BIA through the formation of steering committees. These businesses have the time and resources to not only form the BIA but also manage it once it becomes a legally-bounded entity. Moreover, larger BIAs (in terms of budget and number of members) have more advantages compared to smaller ones. They can acquire more financial capital, resources, and expertise to revitalize commercial districts while smaller ones struggle to maintain their commercial landscape. There is therefore a clear imbalance of power
between large and small businesses both within and between BIAs, with smaller businesses and BIAs holding less influence compared to larger ones. These dynamics will be an important part of my analysis insofar as the Downtown London BIA occupies a larger geographic space with flagship and reputable businesses while the Old East Village BIA occupies a small geographic space with smaller businesses with less power to revive their commercial space.

That said, no two BIAs are alike insofar as their revitalization strategies are contingent on the local context. For example, BIAs with high crime rates will likely lobby the public police and local politicians to invest in policing and security services while BIAs with deteriorating physical infrastructure will likely invest in physical improvements (see Ranasinghe, 2013; Stein, Michel, Glasze, & Pütz, 2015; Peyroux, 2012). It is therefore important to consider how BIA members contextualize local problems as this may justify the provision of certain types of services in the area. Although BIAs are required to justify their ongoing existence by measuring their effectiveness, there is a lack of systemic oversight to ensure their local services actually provide a collective good.

Having now developed a basic understanding of the historical emergence of BIAs and a description of how they form and function, the next chapter offers a critical analysis of these organizations. In particular, the next chapter will highlight BIAs’ neoliberal urban governance structure, their crime control logic, and their reliance on the creative cities agenda. Despite the important insights put forth by urban scholars, I will argue BIAs’ influence in key decision-making processes continues to be undertheorized in much of the existing literature.
3. The Dominant Themes in the BIA Literature

As BIAs gained prominence during the 1990s, urban scholars began assessing the role these organizations play in contemporary urban governance. The purpose of this chapter is to review the dominant conceptualizations of BIAs and pinpoint the existing literature’s limitations. The three sections in this chapter are organized around three bodies of literature that I categorize as 1) the urban governance structure, 2) governmentality and order maintenance, and 3) the creative cities agenda. I argue that existing studies fail to consider how BIAs’ pro-market neoliberal urban policies, order maintenance strategies, and creative cities agenda are underpinned by socio-cultural forms of power enacted during decision-making processes.

First, I elaborate on a large body of work that describes the structure and form of urban governance arrangements. In particular, I show how scholars have explained BIAs under four different conceptualizations of neoliberalism: neoliberalism-as-policy, neoliberalism-as-ideology, neoliberalism-as-governmentality, and neoliberalism-as-assemblage. I argue these conceptualizations lack an analysis of how socio-cultural aspects of local urban politics shape political-economic rationality; that is, social actors’ performative actions during urban revitalization debates. The second section expands on the governmentality perspective which defines BIAs as non-governmental organizations that deploy various crime control tactics to regulate undesirable groups in commercial space. While the literature highlights how this crime control logic unfairly punishes the urban poor, there is little understanding of how the justification of these logics are underpinned by symbolic representations of urban disorder. Lastly, the third section expands on Richard Florida’s (2002) popular “creative cities” approach and describes how and why it dominates the shaping of BIA space. While critics of the creative cities agenda highlight the uneven consequences of these policies (i.e., displacement, gentrification, affluent consumer privilege, etc.), there is little understanding of how BIAs (if at all) legitimize and accept these policies as common-
sense approaches to urban revitalization and, more specifically, how certain “creativities” are privileged over others.

Taken together, this chapter presents the dominant themes in the BIA literature while highlighting areas where existing conceptualizations fail to address important socio-cultural processes in the justification of BIA-led revitalization plans. Rooted in the pragmatic sociology of critique, the next chapter will provide a detailed theoretical discussion of how the process of justification can be grasped by examining urban policy debates. In this chapter, I analyze and critique existing conceptualizations of BIA.

3.1 The Urban Governance Structure

BIAs cannot be explained adequately without reference to the political-economic factors that influence urban space; specifically, the process of neoliberalization as described by many critical urban scholars. This section is divided into three sub-sections. I first provide a brief explanation of two conceptualizations of neoliberalism as they relate to BIAs.; neoliberalism-as-policy and neoliberalism-as-ideology. The idea is BIAs are the product of shifting urban policies that benefit the urban elite who endlessly seek profit maximization. The second sub-section highlights a relatively new body of work that conceptualizes BIAs as an “assemblage” of various actors who participate in decision-making processes. The view is that neoliberalism is a bottom-up process that is continually negotiated by an assemblage of different social actors. The third subsection suggests there needs to be a better understanding of how urban governance structures are constructed and maintained through socio-cultural processes that render capitalist motives as a taken-for-granted “common good”. It should be noted I will expand on the neoliberalism-as-governmentality perspective in a separate section below due to its extensive use in the BIA literature.
Following the Marxist tradition, many critical urban scholars explain how capitalism develops new forms, modes, means, and places of production and consumption through urban space. They critique power structures, exploitation, and inequalities that exist in cities by “emphasizing the fractured, broken or contradictory character of capitalism as a social totality” (Brenner, 2009, p. 202). Lefebvre’s (1991, 1996) classic work explaining processes of urbanization and industrialization, for example, positions urban space as a key site for the capitalist mode of production, where the process of urbanization and industrialization represents a form of capitalist rationalism focused on economic development and the perpetuation of capitalism. For Lefebvre, there is a core dialectic tension between conceptions of urban space based on exchange values (economic value) and use values (social and cultural life), where political, business, and administrative elites shape urban space in ways that inhibit human spontaneity and reinforce class inequality. In fact, much of the BIA literature is underpinned by critical urban scholarship arguing these organizations are mechanisms through which political, administrative, and business elites impose spatial representations for capital gain (for example, see Clough & Vanderbeck, 2006; Ward, 2008; Zukin, 1995).

As McCann (2017) notes, the first wave of critical urban scholarship between the 1970s and early 1990s was rooted heavily in Marxist conceptions of urban space which described the emergence of a neoliberal political-economic logic. Scholars began pointing out new political-economic transformations, including an increase in the number of public-private partnerships, the reorganization of the rights and responsibilities of the nation state, and new entrepreneurial strategies aimed at marketing cities as commodities (see Harvey, 1989). As I explain in this section, many take these structural changes to urban governance as the driving forces behind the emergence of BIAs. However, I argue that scholars have paid little attention to the justification of neoliberal political-economic logic. Rather than assuming neoliberalism is an omnipresent force imposed onto urban space, a closer examination of how neoliberal
ideals are discussed, debated, negotiated, and justified during interactional settings can reveal how it is constructed as a common-sense approach or, conversely, how neoliberal ideals are contested and challenged.

The term “neoliberalism” has become somewhat unclear in recent decades. While it often refers to the introduction of free markets, the privatization of the public goods/services, and deregulation, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a neoliberal political economy, let alone how to study its effects, reach, scope, and variegated forms. Despite these drawbacks, I show how scholars have explained BIAs under four different conceptualizations of neoliberalism: neoliberalism-as-policy, neoliberalism-as-ideology, neoliberalism-as-governmentality, and neoliberalism-as-assemblage. Larner (2000) and Springer (2010) provide descriptions of the first three perspectives while the “urban assemblage” perspective – most notably put forth by McFarlane (2009, 2011) – follows a recent body of work grounded in Latour’s (2005) actor-network-theory. These four perspectives can be differentiated as follows: the neoliberalism-as-policy perspective highlights the shift from Keynesian welfarism toward an unfettered operation of markets; the neoliberalism-as-ideology perspective highlights how elite transnational alliances maintain, produce, and control urban space to maintain their class power; the neoliberalism-as-governmentality perspective highlights how urban space is produced by experts, technocrats, and knowledge-elites; lastly, the neoliberalism-as-assemblage perspective highlights a dispersed, decentered, and fragmented form of urban governance as opposed to a single and cohesive political-economic logic. Despite their conceptual differences, these perspectives on neoliberalism, as Ferguson (2009, 2011) explains, typically denounce the powerful elite and arrive at the conclusion that we must oppose neoliberalism because of its negative effects on the urban poor.
Neoliberalism-as-Policy and -Ideology

The neoliberalism-as-policy and -ideology perspectives share similar core ideas; both explain the 1970s withdrawal of state Keynesian urban policies as a key factor of the birth of BIAs. First, the main tenet of the neoliberalism-as-policy perspective is that the state no longer ensures strict market regulation and fair social redistribution; rather, the state has formed a new neoliberal urban governance arrangement that promotes free markets as the best solution for resource allocation (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Smith, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009). This marks the “rolling-back” of the welfare policies and the “rolling-out” of an array of nongovernmental actors who took on the task of containing and disciplining the urban poor (Peck & Tickell, 2002). The new urban governance model is premised on the assertion that public services could be handled more efficiently through private-sector logic. Thus, variously described as public-private partnerships, quasi-governments, parallel states, and private governments (Morçöl, 2006), BIAs resemble this new urban governance model insofar as they allow the private sector to make changes to their commercial landscapes without the barriers of governmental bureaucracy (see Levy, 2001; Garodnick, 2000). The underlying belief is that business leaders, as opposed to the municipal government, are best qualified to develop policies and programs responsible for the well-being of their communities.

However, insofar as their main concern is to foster local economic development and employment growth in select areas of the city, BIAs rarely provide an adequate level of public benefits to local populations (Harvey, 1989; Hall & Hubbard, 1996). Rather than spending funds on public services, BIAs typically focus on image construction and advertising the area to create safe and clean tourist-friendly zones (Bell & Jayne 2004; Hannigan, 1998; Zukin, 1995). In this sense, BIAs effectively encapsulate the “neoliberalization of the city” (Ward, 2006, p. 55) through their entrepreneurial discourses, policies, and practices that market particular areas of the city and encourage market-oriented economic growth. This
marked-oriented logic typically increases local inequality and deteriorates the quality of life for the urban poor who are often excluded from carefully managed BIA spaces.

Second, BIAs have also been criticized from a neoliberalism-as-ideology perspective. The view is that BIAs represent an urban elite who reinforce their ideological power over urban space. As Mallet (1994, p. 281) explains, the BIA model reflects a situation where “businesses have bought the right to say what should and what should not happen on public streets”. In other words, it represents a transfer of power away from publicly elected officials towards a business elite who use BIAs as vehicles for capital accumulation. Many critical urban scholars note the neoliberal economy has created a deepened desire for business elites to seek profits in a new globalized market that has created mega-cities with centralized nodes of trade, finance, media, and information flows (see Harvey, 2001, 2005; Castells, 2000; Sassen, 1991). BIAs maintain and protect these nodes through their coalition of business elite, landowners, developers, builders, and the local state who transform urban spaces into what Harvey (2000) calls “developers’ utopias” (see also MacLeod & Ward, 2002; Ward, 2008). In this way, BIAs are mechanisms through which the wealthy can intensify capital accumulation by dividing the city into discrete and governable “micro-spaces” to maintain the marketability of the area (Ward, 2007, p. 667; see also Garnett, 2010).

In sum, through the neoliberalism-as-policy and neoliberalism-as-ideology perspectives, scholars theorize BIAs as a reflection of a new urban governance arrangement that allows a coalition of elite actors to accumulate global capital while providing few public services for marginalized populations. BIAs are viewed as a reflection of a cohesive, universal, top-down neoliberal political-economic project that imposes its power onto urban space. However, there have been more recent conceptualizations of neoliberalism – what McCann (2017) coins “urban governance studies 2.0” – that move beyond seeing
neoliberalism as a top-down process enacted by state and business elite, but a bottom-up process where policies and ideologies are continually negotiated by numerous actors. The emerging “urban assemblage” perspective provides more detailed explanations of how neoliberal urban policies are enacted and justified in specific interactional settings.

**Neoliberalism-as-Assemblage**

Lefebvre (1991) reminds us that urban space is not just a product of a dominant political-economic policy/ideology but a dynamic interrelationship between three different processes: the visions, images, symbols, and imaginations of ordinary people (representational space); the conceptualized spaces produced by urban planners, scientists, consultants, and the state (representations of space); and the physical/material flow that conditions how space is used (spatial practice). This spatial triad helps us see neoliberalism not simply as an uncontested exogenous “thing” imposed onto urban space; rather, as Peck et al. (2013, p. 1093) explain, “[t]here is always more going on than neoliberalism; there are always other active sources and forces of regulatory change; there are always countervailing interests, pressures and visions”. Instead of treating “neoliberalism” as a noun (an exogenous thing), Springer (2010, 2015) suggests urban scholars should use the term “neoliberalization” because it transforms the concept to a verb that signifies an ongoing political-economic process. This helps us understand urban space as a continual negotiation between different plans, ideas, and visions rather than a dominant top-down political-economic policy/ideology. Such a view brings attention “to the different variants of neoliberalism, to the hybrid nature of contemporary policies and programmes, or to the multiple and contradictory aspects of neoliberal spaces, techniques, and subjects [emphasis in original]” (Larner, 2003, p. 509). In fact, this locally contingent and contested nature of neoliberalism has recently been the focus of an emerging urban assemblage perspective.
Reflecting a wider body of work that conceptualizes urban space as unbounded, relational, and socially produced rather than a fixed entity (Amin, 2004; Massey, 2005), the recent urban assemblage perspective tackles the intricate ways urban spaces are assembled through myriad processes (see Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; McFarlane, 2009, 2011, McFarlane & Anderson, 2011; Farías & Bender, 2010). This perspective is heavily influenced by the philosophical work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and more recently Latour (2005) and De Landa (2006), who picture society as a series of lateral networks with heterogeneous connections rather than a fully formed and structured entity (see Kamalipour & Peimani, 2015 for a brief overview of these works). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed explanation of the theoretical roots of the urban assemblage perspective, in the most basic terms, this perspective provides a non-hierarchal view of the world emphasizing how people and things bind together into finely-grained relationships anchored to particular geographical spaces.

The urban assemblage perspective moves away from the notion of the city as a complete whole produced by neoliberal logic. Instead, it sees the city as an unfinished and incomplete project constantly in the making, held together, and maintained through numerous processes and scales assembling the city in different ways (Allen & Cochrane, 2007, 2010; Farías, 2011). Since BIAs represent a “less formal government that is more horizontally networked and less vertically controlled” (Grossman, 2010b, p. 359-60), it is appropriate to conceptualize BIAs under the urban assemblage perspective. That is, the urban spaces BIAs shape are the product of various actors, institutions, relationships, and objects such as the construction industry, architects, consultancy groups, private developers, municipal by-laws and regulations, competing visions among different BIA members, and so on. It is therefore unsurprising that recent BIA studies conceptualize these organizations as part of a wider urban assemblage (see Bookman
Although there is some uncertainty as to whether the urban assemblage perspective offers an alternate theoretical framework to traditional political-economic perspectives, this perspective nevertheless provides unique methodological tools to examine neoliberal political-economic trends (see Brenner et al., 2011). Seeing urban space as an assemblage helps reorient our thinking of urban “coalitions” and “regimes” (see Logan & Molotch, 1987; Harvey, 1989; Peck, 1995) as multi-layered relationships between various discourses, policies, and actors who operate through multiple sites and locations (Allen & Cochrane, 2007). Rather than conceptualizing a geographically tiered and static hierarchy of decision-making, the urban assemblage perspective emphasizes a new geographical collection of distributed authority where power is continually negotiated between local, regional, and global institutional apparatuses (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Brenner, 2004; Jones, 2001; Sassen, 2006). In this sense, neoliberalism is not a single and cohesive political-economic logic enacted by an urban elite, but a dispersed, decentered, and fragmented urban governance arrangement comprised of urban elite and non-elite alike.

Most importantly, this view opens the possibility of seeing the contradictions, tensions, and disagreements that occur in the assembling of BIA spaces. Brenner and Theodore’s (2002) notion of “actually existing neoliberalism”, for example, provides a framework for understanding the spread of neoliberal ideology into specific urban locations while also recognizing the emergence of tensions and contradictions during local-level politics. In the case of BIAs, these represent “middle-range organizations” that negotiate between the spatial representations of local actors such as residents, the
marginalized, and commercial operators, on the one hand, and extra-local actors such as the media, local politicians, urban planning experts, and state officials, on the other (Kudla & Courey, 2018).

For example, BIAs rely on global circuits of knowledge perpetuated by expert “transfer agents” and “BIA gurus” (e.g., consultancies, intergovernmental agencies, and think tanks) who discursively frame the “best practices” of economically successful BIAs around the world (Cook, 2008; Cook & Ward, 2012; Hoyt, 2006; McCann & Ward, 2010, 2014; Michel, 2013; Peyroux, Pütz, & Glasze, 2012; Ward, 2007, 2011). On the other hand, BIAs can also develop urban space independent of any translocal influence (see Kizildere & Chiodelli, 2017). On a local scale, BIA spaces are shaped by an array of different actors, including commercial property owners, residential association representatives, city councillors and administrators, and not-for-profit organizations (Cook, 2009; De Magalhães, 2014; Lloyd et al., 2003; Kudla & Courey, 2018; Michel & Stein, 2014). Rankin and Delaney (2011), for example, show how BIAs’ streetscape planning and local community arts projects in a Toronto neighbourhood represent multiple and loosely related projects and discourses mobilized by different actors. In this sense, the BIA provides a forum where these various actors can bring about trust and cooperation through “participative decision making” (Lloyd, et al., 2003, p. 304; see also Rankin, 2011) by presenting their visions, issues, and solutions through public deliberation. Taken together, BIAs shape urban space by continually interacting within the BIA assemblage (Kudla & Courey, 2018); that is, extra-local experts, on the one hand, and local community stakeholders, on the other.

In sum, the urban assemblage perspective argues urban space is not the sole outcome of a singular and homogeneous neoliberal political-economic force, but the outcome of complex decision-making processes between numerous social actors with varying levels of social, political, cultural, and economic capital (Gibson, 2005; Rankin & Delaney, 2011). The view is that BIA-related decision-
making is relationally produced through dialogue, negotiation, and conflict between various actors mobilizing different resources, visions, discourses, and knowledge. After all, the outcomes of urban revitalization are rarely predictable insofar as actors often struggle to convince others of the merits of their vision and viewpoints.

**Opening the “Black-Box” of Neoliberalization**

Whether conceptualizing urban space as a product of a policy, ideology, or assemblage, these perspectives lack an analysis of what I consider to be the fundamental basis of neoliberalization: social and cultural processes in specific locations. This does not mean political-economic power is to be ignored, but that attention should be shifted towards “interactional landscapes” (Horgan, 2013) that are sensitive to local meanings while still focusing on the economic and spatial processes organizing urban spaces. Simply put, I argue there needs to be more empirical focus on how urban assemblages *legitimize* certain revitalization plans over others.

Although critical urban scholars routinely call for more “place-based investigations” of how neoliberalization unfolds in different locations (Peck et al., 2013, p. 1096), studies seldom examine what Jacobs (2012, p. 414) calls the “micro-scale activities of policy packaging, communicating and persuading” in specific interactional settings. Despite the growing research on BIAs, it appears Ward’s (2006, p. 71) criticism of these studies remains true over a decade later:

> For if the [BIA] programme does constitute a further example of the urbanization of neoliberalism, then it is the case that critical scholars have a social and ethical responsibility to open up the ‘black-box’ of neoliberalization, to reveal what it means in different contexts, how it is experienced on a day-to-day basis, in part so that it is not portrayed as all-encompassing.

Similar to Allen (2011), I therefore argue that opening the “black-box of neoliberalization” requires a deeper understanding of the content of the heterogeneous, multiple, and contingent relationships that
hold assemblages in place. While the urban assemblage perspective importantly highlights the lateral connections between humans and objects in the shaping of urban space, I agree with the criticism that the urban assemblage perspective fails to explain how humans legitimize the “anchoring” of objects in particular locations, times, and circumstances (see Brenner et al., 2011; Storper & Scott, 2016). As Rankin (2011) notes, while the urban assemblage perspective has the potential to provide a thick description of everyday urban life, it does not offer any methodological tools to explore on-the-ground processes of assemblage. If BIAs are part of a tangle of interactions – between the local, regional, and global, private and public, expert practitioners and local citizens – then how and why do certain ideas, visions, and plans become “common-sense” solutions to urban problems? The answer requires an in-depth exploration of the commonplace disputes during BIA-related revitalization discussions. In one way or another, BIA members must come to some agreement on how their urban space is to look, feel, and be designed. But how are these decisions made and why are some implemented while others ignored? These questions are largely left unanswered.

Following a recent line of work (see Cochrane & Ward, 2012; McCann and Ward, 2010, 2012, 2014), I propose that there needs to be a better understanding of how neoliberal urban policies, ideologies, and assemblages are given meaning through socio-cultural processes in particular locations where BIAs negotiate and contest future visions of urban space. This is especially important in the case of BIAs because their commercial spaces are shaped by multiple actors with varying levels of expertise in different locations (e.g., community residents, local and translocal businesses, city councillors, and global circuits of knowledge experts). Socio-cultural power is an actor’s ability to discursively construct taken-for-granted definitions of reality during key decision-making processes. As I will explain in the next chapter, studying socio-cultural power requires an empirical focus on particular locations where
social actors debate the merits of a revitalization plan; specifically, the way an actor constructs seemingly common-sense solutions to urban problems.

This undertaking requires a methodological focus on the “cultural politics” of local economic development (see McCann, 2002). I argue that the value of entrepreneurial urban strategies is culturally encoded (Jackson, 1991; Hubbard, 1996) and is contingent on appraisals from myriad actors attempting “to define the social processes that produce place as good or bad, moral or immoral, appropriate or inappropriate, worthy or unworthy, and so on” (McCann, 2002, p. 388). Simply put, the cultural aspects of urban politics cannot be divorced from political or economic dimensions of power. It is important to understand how social actors negotiate, argue, and contest certain issues and, more importantly, how taken-for-granted assumptions about the “common good” are constructed in morally-laden language. If local urban politics is, as Amin (2004, p. 39-40) argues, “an arena of claims and counter-claims” where people make temporary agreements that often change after debate and negotiation, then we must have a better understanding of how these fragile, temporary, and heterogeneous agreements are actually legitimized through socially and culturally active processes of dialogue, negotiation, interaction and argumentation. This will be the basis of the following chapter where I outline the theoretical framework for my study. In the next section, I describe the neoliberalism-as-governmentality perspective and explain BIA’s order maintenance strategies.

3.2 Governmentality and Order Maintenance

Now that I have established a basic understanding of BIA’s urban governance structure, the following two sections will explain the specific ways these organizations shape urban space. While they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, this section discusses BIA’s order maintenance strategies while the next section will expand on their implementation of the creative cities agenda. This section is divided
into three sub-sections. I first describe how urban scholars and criminologists use the governmentality
dergative to explain how BIA order maintenance strategies are a form of institutional knowledge
deployed in specific “micro places”. The second subsection highlights how discursive and symbolic
framing is often used to justify order maintenance strategies. I therefore argue that, in addition to
understanding how order maintenance strategies are enacted in urban space, it is important to understand
how the legitimacy of these strategies are grounded in vivid portrayals of urban disorder. The third
subsection expands on a relatively new body of work that explores ways institutional actors provoke
change in modes of governance, policy, and regulation. Rather than assuming BIAs always enact
punitive and exclusionary urban polices to sanitize commercial spaces, I argue an empirical focus on
BIA-related revitalization debates can uncover the extent to which punitive approaches are contested and
reformulated.

Order Maintenance Logic

In response to the filth, smoke, disease, moral blight, and crowding created by urbanization as
evocatively described by Engels (1845/2009), the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century saw a shift to modernist city
planning characterized by functionalism and efficient property management that segregated cities into
compartmentalized uses (e.g., commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential). With increased
urbanization throughout the 1960s, Lefebvre (1991, 1996) argued urban space is represented, produced,
and organized by a new institutional discipline of urban planners such as social engineers, technocratic
workers, environmental scientists, architects, and so on. As Kunstler (1993, p. 61) notes, modernist city
planning was “a sort of blank-slate habitat within which the new industrial man [sic] might create a new
and better culture untainted by the sins of the past.” Urban planning, with its emphasis on organizational
rationalism, became a method to transform chaotic urban disorder into coherent and healthy spaces,
where city life was divided into manageable bits and populations were ordered based on their spatial location (see Cresswell, 1996; Lofland, 1973; Sibley, 1995).

Taking up Foucault’s (1991) argument that the state governs “at a distance” through a heterogenous ensemble of strategies and techniques anchored in various organizations and institutions, many critical urban scholars explain the evolution of the urban planning discipline, and the need to control and manage disorderly populations, under a “neoliberalism-as-governmentality” framework (Barnett, 2005; Springer, 2012). Rather than analyzing macro-processes rooted in the political economy, Foucault describes how neoliberal ideals are deployed through micro-processes that shape subjects’ routines. The emphasis is, “on the how of government, on the specific mechanisms, techniques and procedures which political authorities deploy to realize and enact their programmes [emphasis in original].” (MacKinnon (2000, p. 295).

For Foucault (2007, p. 337), “to police and to urbanize are the same things”; that is, he believed urbanization and order maintenance are inseparable. While he did not propose a general theory of urban space per se, his broader ideas on the “disciplinary society” analyze how power/knowledge has influence over spatial dimensions (Foucault, 1977). He believed the police are a “program of government rationality… a project to create a system of regulation of the general conduct of individuals whereby everything would be controlled to the point of self-sustenance, without the need for intervention” (Foucault, 1984, p. 241). Thus, according to the governmentality perspective, organizations like BIAs represent an institutional form of disciplinary power that, through certain order maintenance strategies, transforms people’s movements, gestures, and activities into orderly, responsible, and obedient docile bodies. BIAs manage urban spaces in a way where, as Barnett et al., (2008, p. 9) describe, “subjectivities are re-fitted as consumers”; that is, BIAs deploy order maintenance strategies to ensure consumers
conform to the norms of the market (to shop, consume, and enjoy commercial spaces). This reflects what MacLeod (2011) calls the principles of a “post-democratic city” where human interactions are aligned along an ethics of consumerist citizenship where only those who properly consume urban space are encouraged and allowed to take part. Thus, as Zukin (2010, p. 142) argues, BIAs maintain “discretely manicured spaces” for middle-class consumers who have internalized the norms of proper consumerist behaviour.

To provide specific examples, studies show how BIAs often deny ethnic minorities from socializing with friends and listening to music in commercial spaces because it detracts from the market-oriented atmosphere of the area (Rankin, Kamizaki, & McLean, 2016; Schaller & Modan, 2005). In the case of the Church Street Marketplace BIA in Burlington, Vermont, Clough and Vanderbeck (2006) show how the BIA regulates activism by posing protests as a threat to public safety. On the other hand, businesses in downtown Vancouver’s east side take on a different form of marketization of space where, rather than controlling and displacing unwanted groups, local impoverished populations are transformed as a cultural product that can be consumed as a form of “poverty tourism” in the city (Burnett, 2014). In any case, BIAs are viewed as organizations activated by the state to ensure visitors consume commercial space along a market-based rationality, while those that fail to do so are regulated through BIA-led policing and security practices.

Most BIA studies rooted in the governmentality perspective argue that police and security strategies represent an array of technologies, logics, and procedures to accomplish neoliberal order maintenance objectives (see Baer & Marando, 2001; Berg, 2004, 2013; Cook, 2010; Eick, 2012). This follows a line of work highlighting how contemporary urban governance is an exercise of power found in the operation of procedures that limits, regulates, and controls movements, choices, and behaviours in
urban space (Beckett & Herbert, 2008; Lippert & Walby, 2013; Zuberi & Taylor, 2017). The argument is that contemporary cities rely on strict crime control strategies that simply manage the presence of the urban poor in public spaces. These have been variously coined revanchist (Smith, 1996), carceral (Davis, 1990), punitive (Wacquant, 2012), and post-justice (Mitchell, 2001) approaches to managing the urban poor. For example, Sanscartier and Gacek (2016) go as far to suggest BIAs enact a form of “socio-economic hygiene” whereby unwanted groups are dehumanized and cleansed from urban space through, as they argue, processes reminiscent of genocidal states.

Rather than seeing security and policing as a hegemonic practice of power enacted by a political, financial, and administrative elite, Foucault’s (1991) governmentality perspective describes urban crime control as a product of a multiplicity of non-state actors with differing capacities and specialization (see Garland, 1996; O’Malley, 1992; Loader & Sparks, 2002; Wood & Shearing, 2007). BIAs’ order maintenance strategies are therefore characterized as part of a system of policing partnerships that, in an attempt to reduce public police service demands in commercial districts, deploy place-based technologies, methods, resources, and knowledge to manage and regulate commercial spaces. Given its uneven deployment across different locations, order maintenance strategies are contingent on the local and regional context rather than a function of a single neoliberal political-economic rationale. For example, Walby and Hier (2013) explain how the implementation of CCTV surveillance systems in BIA spaces has been openly accepted by some Canadian BIAs, while others are “reluctant partners” or outright resistant to its implementation. The governmentality perspective therefore describes BIAs as relatively autonomous organizations that activate context-specific order maintenance strategies.

The shifting of order maintenance strategies from the state to non-government organizations, however, does not mean organizations like BIAs are solely responsible, or interested for that matter, in
reducing the actual incidence of criminal behaviour; especially as they lack the proper tools, resources, and authority to solve crimes in the same way as the public police. Although BIAs focus some of their efforts on traditional law and order concerns like theft and violent crime (Hoyt, 2005; Brooks, 2008; Cook & MacDonald, 2011), albeit without producing any systemic changes of neighbourhood crime (Macdonald et al., 2013), they are more interested in managing the perception of their areas than reducing the incidence of criminal behaviour per se (Mitchell, 2008; Vindevogel, 2005). This entails, in Foucauldian terms, crime control strategies that “conduct the conduct” of people in BIA space using exclusionary techniques that manage urban disorder by criminalizing unpleasant behaviours like panhandling, loitering, littering, solicitation, and street vending (Beckett & Herbert, 2008). For example, this was evident in South Africa where BIAs helped outlaw street vending and unauthorized parking attendants to create an image of an orderly city in the wake of the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Miraftab, 2007).

Despite contextual differences, there is a dominant order maintenance logic often deployed in BIA spaces. These are legitimized by expert “BIA gurus” through pop-sociology/criminology references to broken windows policing (Cook & Ward, 2012). Coined as “the new criminologies of everyday life”, Garland (1996, p. 450) argues these types of crime control strategies are grounded in criminological frameworks including rational choice theory, routine activity theory, situational crime prevention, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). The shared logic of these strategies is the assumption that strategic planning of the physical environment can reduce criminal activity (see Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). By addressing signs of urban disorder through clean-up campaigns, street enhancements, and law enforcement, BIAs claim that they can reduce opportunities of criminal behaviour, thereby enhancing the pedestrian experience (Vindevogel, 2005). Despite criticisms that these strategies are predicated on biased assumptions that high concentrations of ethnic minorities
and/or lower-class people immediately signals urban disorder (Harcourt, 2001; Parnaby & Reed, 2009; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004; Wacquant, 2009), these strategies continue to be commonplace BIA order maintenance strategies.

Order maintenance strategies are increasingly enacted by BIA-hired tourism and hospitality ambassadors (Lippert, 2010; 2012; Sleiman & Lippert, 2010). While lacking the legal authority and tools of the public police, ambassadors monitor and report low-level crime and nuisance behaviour while also being “walking information booths” for visitors to the area. Ambassadors in San Francisco have been heavily criticized for enacting a “stop and frisk” ideology where racial minorities and the homeless are unfairly targeted and in one case brutally beaten for mundane acts such as loitering and soliciting (Clarke, 2015). Outside of these rare violent incidences, ambassadors are best understood as “knowledge brokers” who gather information about consumption practices (Lippert, 2012). While this is often accomplished through more mundane practices like gaining insights into residents’ and visitors’ lifestyle choices, consumer habits, and opinions on downtown living and shopping (Anderson, Chakrapani, & Hernandez, 2009; Marquardt & Füller, 2012), BIAs use ambassadors to gather information about signs of social and physical disorderliness. This includes documenting things like used syringes, dead animals, vomit, blood, broken glass, used condoms, and damaged property (Huey et al., 2005; Sleiman & Lippert, 2010). Some BIAs use ambassadors to count the local homeless population and write “suspect identification forms” to encourage city council to address the problem of homelessness and panhandling (Lippert & Sleiman, 2012; Mallet, 1994; Marquardt & Füller, 2012). While ambassadors conduct much of the “on-the-ground” data collection, the information is eventually compiled by BIA professional staff. Staff then distribute statistical reports to BIA board members, city officials, and local police in hopes to persuade them to enact bylaws, receive additional funding and/or resources, or to increase police
presence in the area (Lippert & Sleiman, 2012). The circulation of information about consumption practices and signs of urban disorder, in other words, is to justify solutions to remedy urban blight.

**Discursive Framing**

Up until now I have explained how the governmentality perspective conceptualizes BIAs along Foucauldian notions of power/knowledge; more specifically as an organization that deploys order maintenance strategies to cleanse urban space of its social and physical ills. That said, there is little understanding of how these strategies are constructed and legitimized through social and cultural processes. Instead, the governmentality perspective boils down to, as cultural sociologists Alexander and Smith (2001, p. 142) argue, “dry models” of technical communication that fail to “identify the broader symbolic patterns, the hot, affective criteria through which policies of control and coordination are appraised by citizens and elites alike.”

BIA order maintenance strategies do not have some pre-existing property that emanates from the state and is dispersed onto organizations and institutions. Rather, as Barnett et al. (2008, p. 632) explain, government strategies are the result of “communicatively mediated, normatively oriented interaction”; that is, order maintenance strategies do not exist prior to social interaction itself but are created and negotiated through communication. Thus, there needs to be an emphasis on the complex social processes that are at work in back-stage settings of BIA decision-making (see Ranasinghe, 2013). Prior to being implemented in urban space, BIA order maintenance strategies must somehow be accepted as the best approach to manage urban disorder. It is only by exploring settings where social actors meet and talk about urban revitalization that we can better grasp the justification of order maintenance strategies.

Some recent scholarship addresses these limitations by highlighting the ways business communities use anti-poor and anti-welfare narratives to help justify urban revitalization and the
elimination of the homeless and drug users (see Barnes et al., 2006; Gibson, 2005; Smith, 2010). Studies show how BIAs use vivid symbolic and discursive framing to convince higher-levels of government and other businesses members to enact crime control legislation/by-laws. Vivid portrayals of urban disorder are often based around broad categorizations of groups along a civil and anticivil dichotomy; thereby justifying the removal of the latter under the guise of “crime control” (see Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Sanscartier & Gacek, 2016). This is especially the case with crime control experts who rely on morally-laden language to persuade their clients to implement crime control strategies by portraying a “foreseeable danger” or by challenging clients’ moral integrity (Parnaby, 2006). In addition to studying the implementation of order maintenance strategies, it is important to understand how the legitimacy of these strategies are grounded in symbolic and discursive portrayals of urban disorder. In fact, numerous Canadian studies have shown how moral panics associated with urban disorder often spur negotiation, argumentation, and justification of urban governing practices (August, 2014; Kennelly, 2011; Parnaby, 2003; Walby, 2005).

In the case of BIAs, research in Germany has shown that the successful formation of a BIA depends on their ability to mobilize strong discourses of urban decay, crime, and violence (Stein et al., 2015). In other cases, vivid portrayals of urban disorder are used to justify legislation that specifically targets homeless populations. As Ranasinghe (2010) explains, to gain support for the Safe Streets Act and various amendments to the Trespass Act in 2006, the Downtown Vancouver BIA wrote letters to government officials and released media reports portraying vivid images of aggressive panhandlers who supposedly use their money to feed their drug addiction. BIA members were found to use repetitive phrasing like “the area has reached its tipping point” and that the enactment of anti-panhandling laws is a “worst case scenario” because “compassion of the homeless has been exhausted.” The enactment of similar policies in Toronto has been controversial insofar as most of these laws are enforced near tourist
areas despite actual declines in panhandling in the city (O’ Grady, Gaetz, Buccieri, 2013). Nevertheless, vivid portrayals of urban disorder have shown to be effective in justifying punitive policies, with BIA commercial districts dominated by trade and commerce more likely to use language citing economic decline, concerns about crime, and the public sector’s failure to fix disorderliness (Peyroux, 2012).

An emerging body of work rooted in Wacquant’s (1993, 2007, 2008; Wacquant, Slater, & Pereira, 2014) “territorial stigmatization” concept highlights how certain groups stigmatize areas of a city to legitimize simplistic spatial solutions (i.e. gentrification, land clearance, demolition, etc.) to solve complex political-economic problems such as homelessness, drug use, prostitution, or job insecurity. However, BIAs do not solely stigmatize their neighbourhood because these organizations are uniquely positioned between local actors who resist negative spatial representations, on the one hand, and translocal actors who typically produce stigma to justify revitalization, on the other (Kudla & Courey, 2018). BIAs’ connections to global networks of experts, dependence on local government, and reliance on the symbolic framing in the media links them to translocal actors who produce territorial stigma to justify revitalization. That said, BIAs may resist territorial stigma given they serve the local constituency of its business membership and local residents and therefore must represent their vision and framing of the community in order to maintain legitimacy. In this sense, it may be unwise for BIAs to stigmatize their own area but, at the same time, they need to display the area’s negative attributes to justify support, funding, and resources for revitalization. BIAs’ unique position as “middle-range actors” makes territorial stigma an ambiguous and messy process as they manage the voices from an assemblage of actors. It is therefore imperative to examine the ways BIAs advance or resist stigma when discussing solutions to urban disorder.
**Challenging Punitive Approaches**

Paying close attention to decision-making processes can demonstrate how social actors may provoke changes in modes of governance, policy, and regulation. This can reveal new possibilities and openings for seeing what social welfare might mean in a world where the tenets of Keynesian welfare state are waning (Ferguson, 2009, 2011). In fact, homeless policies in the U.S. may not be as revanchist as they seemingly appear. Murphy (2009), for example, argues that harsh U.S. homeless policies are being replaced by ambivalent and somewhat softer policies that simultaneously confront problems of social exclusion for those who comply with social welfare mandates while those considered non-compliant are subject to surveillance and control. It is especially important to uncover how these policies unfold in Canadian cities given so-called revanchist urban policies hardly mimic the ones in the U.S. insofar as they tend to take on more welfarist approaches to dealing with the marginalized (see Collins, 2010; DeVerteuil, 2014; Huey, 2007). In other words, rather than assuming urban spaces are dictated by strict policing/security strategies that monitor and control the urban poor, a methodological focus on urban policy debates in specific locations can reveal how responses to homelessness vary across different urban contexts. For example, Brown (2010) found Calgary to have a more “law and order” discourse regarding the regulation of marginalized groups while marginalized groups in Montreal were constructed as victims of political-economic dysfunctions.

Much of the governmentality approach fails to acknowledge the reflexive capacity of institutional actors (Sayer, 2005). BIA members certainly reflect on so-called repressive neoliberal/governmental policies before they are implemented onto commercial spaces. As a response, scholars in the U.K are beginning to highlight how institutional actors resist neoliberal mandates imposed by contemporary governments (see Featherstone, 2015). These studies show how people resist and modify the neoliberalization of the welfare system within an increasingly austere landscape of governance (see
Featherstone et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2011; May & Cloke, 2014; Williams et al. 2012, 2014). Coined as “progressive localism” (Featherstone et al., 2012), these studies exemplify how social-service workers, community members, and non-profit organizations are filling social welfare needs that have resulted from inefficient public bureaucracies, funding cuts, organizational downsizing, and privatization.

For example, third-party homeless service providers in the U.K. (mostly faith-based organizations) are filling the gaps left by the shrinking public service sector by providing social service provisions outside of government enacted policies (May & Cloke 2014; Williams et al., 2012). Other studies highlight how social-welfare service staff subvert the dictates of neoliberal regulation by treating the homeless with dignity through person-centered care rather than following strict governmental sanctions or monitoring their clients (Williams et al., 2014). Although these studies highlight experiences in the social service and the non-profit sector, these studies acknowledge that institutional actors at large have more agency than studies of governmentality suggest. As Barnes and Prior (2009, p. 3) explain, institutional actors have the ability to:

…interpret and reinterpret policy; negotiate their own values, identities and commitments in relation to the way in which they are encouraged and exhorted to act; determine what they consider is the right thing to do in particular circumstances; and challenge or resist identities that are offered to or imposed on them by government.

This view of institutional actors can certainly apply to BIA “stakeholders”. I therefore argue there needs to be a better understanding of the variation and extent to which homeless policies are framed by punitive logic. Rather than simply denouncing BIAs for supporting or enacting punitive policies, it has yet to be seen whether business communities are open to partnering with community stakeholders to provide alternate and more compassionate forms of care for the homeless. In fact, there are instances of BIAs treating the homeless with kindness and respect (Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Lee & Ferguson,
2018). For example, Lee and Ferguson (2018) show how the Downtown Washington DC BIA has a separate unit called the Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST) who are trained by various social services to work closely with the homeless population as well as a program called Ready, Willing, and Working (RWW) which connects homeless people to work opportunities.

### 3.3 The Creative Cities Agenda

Since the 1990s, politicians and urban policymakers have focused their attention on marketing city images and distinctive neighbourhood cultures to advance their entrepreneurial interests (Hubbard, 1996; Paddison, 1993). Similar to other urban policy ideas put forth by Scott (2000) and Landry (2000), Florida’s (2002, see also 2012) “creative cities” agenda has become a dominant urban policy that informs BIA-led revitalization projects as well as city and regional development at large (Ponzini & Rossi, 2010). In fact, Florida has become somewhat of an urban policy celebrity thanks to his international bestselling book and five-figure speaking fees in cities around the world (Peck, 2005). That said, as I will explain below, Florida has recently reconsidered his creative cities notion by arguing that the creative class has created inner-city divides and inequality.

This section is divided into four sub-sections. I first present some of the main tenets of Florida’s (2002) creative cities agenda followed by a sub-section highlighting the common criticisms of the idea. The third sub-section highlights relevant critiques of BIAs’ implementation of the creative cities agenda. The fourth sub-section concludes there is a lack of understanding of how this agenda is legitimized to begin with and, relatedly, how certain “creativities” become privileged and subordinated throughout the urban planning process. I conclude by suggesting the literature fails to explain how the creative cities agenda may take on a different form in smaller cities.
**Developing Lively Urban Spaces**

As BIAs expanded globally throughout the early 2000s (Hoyt, 2003), these organizations became key mechanisms driving the implementation of the creative cities agenda. This urban policy model has become the norm for BIAs because it is relatively easy to implement thanks to simple manuals and recommendations made available through a global circuit of knowledge such as the International Downtown Association (IDA) and, more locally, the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). It is through these channels – as well as its affiliated conferences, training courses, publications, blogs, and email circulation lists – that urban policy experts legitimize the creative cities agenda as the best means for revitalizing BIA spaces (Hoyt, 2006; McCann & Ward, 2010, 2014; Peck 2005; Peyroux et al. 2012).

The basis of Florida’s (2002) argument is that the economic strength of cities depends on their ability to attract a new creative class of relatively young people working in science, technology, education, arts, media, and culture industries. This includes “upperground” formal organizational firms that produce novel products (e.g. video game design, digital media, film, fashion, etc.), “underground” informal artistic and cultural forms of production (e.g. graffiti artists, buskers, extreme sports aficionados, skilled daredevil performers, etc.), and “middleground” organizations, like BIAs and other local-level organizations, who transform the creative ideas from the “underground” to the “upperground” (Cohendet, Grandadam, & Simon, 2010).

The key economic resources driving local development, as Florida (2002) argues, are no longer raw material goods of the industrial era, but rather the minds of creative individuals who value creativity, cognitive and social skills, problem solving, and independent thinking. The creative class encompass an interesting blend of counter-cultural values and the protestant work ethic that Florida (2012, p. 157)
outlines in his aptly titled chapter “The Big Morph” (see also Brooks, 2000; Lloyd, 2006 for a similar concept). In contrast to the traditional “corporate man” whose identity was entirely based on their corporate work environment and material incentives like salaries and consumer goods (see Whyte, 1956), Florida argues the creative class value “work-life balance” and base their identities on the distinctive cultures and lifestyles cities have to offer.

In an attempt to help cities attract the creative class, Florida (2002) offers compact guides to city planners and urban practitioners based around what he coins the four “T’s” of economic development: technology, talent, tolerance, and territorial assets. The first two, technology and talent, simply imply cities should encourage the formation of technological companies because they tend to hire highly skilled, ambitious, and educated people. The latter two, tolerance and territorial assets, directly relate to BIAs and issues of urban revitalization. As he argues, it is not enough to simply attract highly educated individuals in the technology sector (i.e., the “upperground”) because cities must work continuously to retain those individuals by creating urban spaces that embrace diversity and tolerance vis-à-vis “underground” marginalized groups (specifically immigrants, artists, gays, bohemians, racial minorities, and the lower class). Florida (2002) suggests cities should first and foremost work to create culturally lively urban spaces to retain the creative class rather than merely attracting educated people. In this way, Florida values the presence of all kinds of creative individuals, both “upperground” and “underground”, to help create lively urban environments.

This idea reflects Jacobs’ (1961) classic work which offers a powerful critique of suburban homogeneity, automobile congestion, and uninspiring lego-block office structures produced by a modernist urban planning ethos (see also Kunstler, 1993). In contrast to the modernist urban planning vision centered on efficiency and functionalism, Jacobs (1961) emphasizes nostalgic conceptions of
intimacy, diversity, sociability, and interaction reminiscent of smaller rural communities. She argues that city sidewalks should enable casual interactions where a diversity of people can bump into each other and converse. In fact, these characteristics were emphasized by the world’s first BIA in Toronto when the Bloor-Jane-Runnymede Improvement Area rebranded to the Bloor West Village BIA to evoke feelings of neighbourhood intimacy and nostalgia (Charenko, 2016).

Similar to Jacobs’ urban vision, Florida (2002) emphasizes the importance of the “quality of place”; that is, an urban environment with lively and diverse people engaging in outdoor activity. Borrowing from Oldenburg (1989), he argues the creative class enjoys “third places” (Florida, 2002, p. 226) that offer active and participatory recreation, pedestrian-friendly streets, authentic experiences, buzzing nightlife scenes, informal social interactions, and indigenous street-level culture where both the patrons and business owners live close by. The ideal image is of an energetic urban space filled with authentic historical buildings, cafes, small galleries, boutique shops, and bistras that spill onto the street where vendors, panhandlers, musicians and performers are openly welcome to engage with patrons. Cities are therefore urged to tap into the local “experience economy” to make visitors feel inspired, involved, and connected to local cultural events, lifestyles, tastes, and identities (Lorentzen, 2009; Therkildsen, Hansen, & Lorentzen, 2009). Many BIAs follow suit by creating pedestrian-friendly streets, public spaces that draw people together, and creating “cool” and “hip” places for people to hang out (Darchen, 2013a, 2013b; McCann & Ward, 2010; Shaw, 2015; Ward, 2008). However, this does not necessarily mean the creative class is somehow unified by a distinct taste and lifestyle. As Bookman (2014) explains, BIA spaces reinforce middle-class cultural distinctions between different ideas of “creativity”; with some preferring commercially oriented versions of creativity through “boutiquing” while others have an anti-commercial ethic by shopping in second-hand shops and appreciating the local arts scene (see also Bridge & Dowling, 2001). Overall, the creative cities agenda has become one of the
most influential urban policies of the 21st century, one that BIAs embrace throughout their plans and visions.

**Common Critiques of the Creative Cities Agenda**

Given its popularity and omnipresence in city planning in the Global North, the creative cities agenda has drawn extensive criticism from critical urban scholars (see Borén & Young, 2013, p. 1801). I begin with a critique presented by Florida in his most recent work *The New Urban Crisis* (2017). Published fifteen years after *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Florida had time to reflect on the creative cities notion and admits he was “overly optimistic to believe cities and the creative class could by themselves bring forth a better and more inclusive kind of urbanism” (2017, p. xxii). The book highlights a “New Urban Crisis” characterized by five key features: a growing economic gap between cities where a select few “superstar cities” hold disproportionate shares of the world’s creative people and industries; a growing economic gap within “superstar cities” due to unaffordable housing prices; a patchwork of small areas of privilege and large areas of distress that crisscross the city and suburbs; the displacement of the poor and middle class into the suburbs; and the formation of slums in developing countries with little improvement in living standards.

Most relevant to my study are his insights on the clustering of the creative class. He argues cities with the highest wage inequality are also those with the most successful creative economies. He explains there is now a lopsided “winner-take-all-urbanism” where the most talented creative populations cluster in areas with the best schools, transport links, natural and cultural amenities, services, and economic opportunities in a handful of superstar cities around the world, while the service and working classes are pushed to “swathes of concentrated disadvantage” (Florida, 2017, p. xiv). As he explains:

This finding reflects the central contradiction that sits at the heart of the New Urban Crisis: the places that are the most productive and offer the highest wages,
that have the largest concentrations of high-tech industry and the most talented people, that are the densest and offer the most abundant transport options, that are the most diverse, and that are the most liberal in their political leaning nonetheless face the harshest levels of economic inequality and economic segregation. (Florida, 2017, p. 133-4)

While Florida acknowledges the inequalities produced by concentrating the creative class, this urban policy has nevertheless become a taken-for-granted approach that is uncritically implemented by entrepreneurial mayors and business communities in the Global North (MacLeod & Ward, 2002; Peck, 2005; Ponizini and Rossi, 2010). Despite Florida’s (2017) important new insights, the creative cities agenda has achieved a dominant status among urban policymakers. It offers little more than a business-friendly manual based on “pop sociologies of the new-economy era” where creativity is valued for its economic utility (Peck, 2005, p. 741; see also Bayliss, 2007; Gibson & Klocker, 2005; Leslie & Hunt, 2013; Luckman, Gibson, & Lea, 2009). It remains a popular urban policy tool not necessarily due to its economic effectiveness but because it does not “demand radical change by policymakers or disrupt vested interests and existing power structures” (Peck, 2011, p. 62). Despite Florida’s effort to address the “New Urban Crisis”, the creative cities agenda has become common rhetoric to legitimize the gentrification of neighbourhoods.

Many urban scholars have criticized the creative cities agenda prior to Florida’s (2017) recent work. While the creative cities agenda may appear to promote a socially disorganized urban setting welcoming of vagrants, underground creativities, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, local independent shops, and the middle class, many critics claim that, in actuality, it represents a “controlled edge” grounded in a bohemian milieu rather than a genuine inclusion of diverse social groups (Hannigan, 2007, p. 54). Local governments continually reproduce simplistic notions of creativity to make the city attractive for middle-class consumers and investors rather than aiding the lower classes by spending on social welfare, education, healthcare, or supporting alternate forms of creativity. Instead of creating
inclusive and diverse city streets, the creative cities agenda fuels gentrification and displaces older working-class generations from their community (MacLeod, 2002; Peck, 2005). This trend is especially evident in many post-industrial cities that have downsized manufacturing and factory work. In its place, the creative cities agenda proposes that, to spur local economic investment, cities should replace their traditional working-class legacies with new innovative cultural industries like information technology, digital media, television, music, and film (Barnes, Waitt, Gill, & Gibson, 2006; O’Connor, 2000; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010; Vanolo, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008; Zukin, 1995, 2010). While appearing to be an inclusive and diverse model of urban revitalization, the creative cities agenda encourages gentrification by privileging an instrumental understanding of culture where its value is measured only in economic terms.

**BIAs, Creative Spaces, and Exclusion**

Many of these criticisms are applicable to BIAs. In particular, there are two sets of criticisms aimed at BIAs’ implementation of the creative cities agenda. First, it is viewed as a form of symbolic power that controls and regulates undesirable users within the BIA boundary (see Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Huey, Ericson, & Haggerty, 2005; Zukin, 1995, 2010). This criticism closely resembles the ones made by governmentality studies as explained in the prior section. Second, rather than engaging with marginalized groups, the creative cities agenda selectively facilitates urban revitalization discussions with more privileged actors (see Hackworth & Rekers, 2005; Rankin & McLean, 2015; Rankin et al., 2016).

The premise of the first argument is that creative city notions of diversity and inclusiveness represent a corporate-created branding strategy that treats public spaces as private spaces of retail consumption (see Allen, 2006; Goss, 1996; Low & Smith, 2006; Mitchell, 1995; Sorkin, 1992). For
example, Ward (2008, p. 794) argues BIAs use the creative cities agenda to change peoples’ “affective geographies” by selectively drawing on marketable historical and cultural identities to manufacture a preferred image of BIA space. Such policies justify superficial investments in all sorts of street furniture and infrastructure (e.g., banners, street signs, lighting, and storefront façades), all to introduce order and predictability to the commercial area (Rantisi & Leslie, 2006). Notions of pedestrianism and public space become more of a symbolic representation rather than encouraging a mix of creative class members and marginalized groups. This allows BIAs to establish boundaries based on who and what should be visible within the BIA boundary.

BIA brands, often rooted in creative cities notions, are particularly important in creating a spatial discourse that constructs the boundaries around desirable and undesirable consumers. Creativity is more “about nurturing and rewarding creativity, not compensating the creative have-nots” (Peck, 2005, p. 762); thus, representing a “class-based, and capital-privileging notion” that ignores the true creativity of the urban poor who must find creative solutions to surviving in the city with rising costs of living and low-wage working and service jobs (Wilson & Keil, 2008, p. 842). As I explained earlier, these groups are also subject to order maintenance strategies that control and manage BIA space along consumerist ideals. BIAs in Vancouver (Huey, Ericson, & Haggerty, 2005), Winnipeg (Bookman & Woolford, 2013), and Windsor (Lippert, 2010), for example, hire tourism and hospitality ambassadors, private security guards, and loss prevention officers to monitor undesirable behaviours (e.g., loitering, drug use, vandalism, street vending, solicitation) to ensure patrons are properly consuming the corporate-created image of the area. The urban poor play a secondary role in the creative city while the creative class are openly welcome in pedestrian-friendly walkways, funky neighbourhoods, and authentic urban districts.
The premise of this critique is that BIAs shape spatial representations by eliciting positive emotional reactions through creative class notions of community nostalgia, inclusiveness, diversity, tolerance, and civility; thereby justifying the regulation of groups who do not fit into these ideals. In this sense, the creative cities agenda is similar to the “disneyfication” of urban space where the uncomfortable realities of homelessness, social injustice, and unemployment is masked to create an image of a clean and safe urban experience for middle-class consumers (see Ferrell, 2001; Shearing & Stenning, 1984). Rather than openly welcoming and encouraging marginalized groups, critics argue diversity and inclusivity represent more of a branding strategy that encourages conspicuous consumption, gentrification, and the regulation of undesirable groups and behaviours (see Bell & Jayne, 2004; Brown-Saracino, 2009; Hae, 2012). BIAs are therefore viewed as organizations that enact civilizing processes where individuals are categorized based on their ability to consume goods and services.

The premise of the second argument is that, in addition to categorizing and controlling desirable uses of urban space, the creative cities agenda excludes the voices and viewpoints of marginalized local actors from BIA decision-making processes. In this way, BIAs are believed to structure what is “thinkable” in urban policy debates by determining the appropriate operations, solutions, and actors in urban revitalization discussions (see Atkinson, 1999; Hastings, 1999). The BIA governance structure is therefore viewed as an undemocratic process insofar as it only serves the interests of a few privileged actors (see Hoyt & Gopal-Agge, 2007).

Many of these studies highlight the exclusion of ethnic minorities’ viewpoints from BIA decision-making processes in various ethnic neighbourhoods in Toronto. Although many of these practices predate the emergence of the creative cities agenda, these studies still show how certain forms
of creativity, in this case different ethnic lifestyles, are privileged and neglected. For example, BIAs advertise local ethnic identities only if they can be commodified in a way that attracts urban professionals, tourists, and non-resident ethnics to the neighbourhood, like Little Italy and Greektown (Hackworth & Rekers, 2005). Meanwhile, BIAs in lower-class ethnic based commercial districts like Little Poland, Little Portugal, and Mount Dennis’ East African and Latin American neighbourhood make little reference to ethnic identities in their revitalization efforts, thereby ignoring the viewpoints of long-time ethnic merchants (Murdie & Teixeria, 2011; Rankin & McLean, 2015; Rankin et al., 2016; Takahashi, 2016). In these cases, BIAs often portray ethnic neighbourhood streets as “dead space” lacking social activity. Yet, many low-income ethnic businesses are creative insofar as they serve as de facto community gathering places for older retirees, provide informal job opportunities for underprivileged youth, and supply affordable goods and services to the local disinvested immigrant community (Rankin & McLean, 2015; Rankin et al., 2016). Only marketable forms of ethnicity are advertised while the voices and traditions of lower-class ethnic groups are completely erased from gentrifying commercial districts.

In addition to ethnic groups, local long-time artists are similarly excluded from BIA decision-making processes. For example, Catungal and Leslie (2009) show how BIA social and networking events facilitate connections among “upperground” creative class professionals in advertising, media, film, and design, while purposefully excluding local artists from attending these events. In fact, BIAs engage with local artists only when their skills and abilities can be used in creative solutions to urban decay such as neighbourhood clean-ups or mural painting (Rankin & Delaney, 2011). Overall, BIA decision-making processes seldom include discussions with those lacking cultural capital such as ethnic minorities and artists.
Constructing and Reinforcing the Creative Cities Agenda

The creative cities agenda has certainly become a commonplace strategy for BIA organizations. Rather than encouraging diversity, it constructs symbolic boundaries around who can occupy BIA space and take part in decision making. BIA attempts to promote integrative pedestrianism and interactive public spaces represent marketing strategies to attract upscale consumers and creative industries. That said, there needs to be a better understanding of how the creative cities agenda is legitimized within the BIA assemblage and how the implementation of “creativity” differs in smaller cities.

First, as Borén and Young (2013) note, scholars need to move past the dichotomy between policy-friendly literature celebrating the hype of creativity, on the one hand, and critical literature rejecting the creative cities mantra, on the other. While the aforementioned criticisms importantly highlighted the unequal effects produced by the creative cities policy, it is unclear whether BIAs always rely on this policy to shape commercial space and, if they do rely on it, how this policy is legitimized and reinforced to begin with given its many definitions and meanings (see Evans, 2009; Markusen, 2006). If BIAs do indeed enact the creative cities agenda, it is important to understand how and why certain creative visions become a legitimate, common sense, and taken-for-granted approach to urban revitalization as well as what authority ultimately determines who and what can be legitimately deemed “creative”. I therefore agree with McCann and Ward (2010, 2012) who argue researchers need to study how (if at all) the creative city agenda manages to be so persuasive amongst urban planners by examining how, what, and where stakeholders mobilize the popular urban policy.

Second, rather than assuming the creative cities agenda is imposed in a singular and uniform fashion across urban space, it is important to consider the “geographical peculiarities” (Barnes & Hutton, 2009; see also Pratt, 2011) to understand how “creativity” is contingent on local dynamics, industries,
and socio-historical contexts. This is especially important when studying smaller “community” BIAs (those with limited budgets and small geographic space) because they typically can not afford to implement creative city solutions (Gross, 2005; Mitchell, 2001a; Ward, 2010). In fact, smaller deindustrialized cities, especially ones near dominant cultural cities (like London, Ontario which is close to Toronto), have difficulty attracting the creative class; thus, these cities continue to rely on nostalgic industrial narratives which continue to dominate the image of the city (Waitt & Gibson, 2009). Since much of the BIA literature is written in the context of large-metropolitan cities like Toronto and New York, there is little understanding of how (if at all) this policy is enacted and justified in smaller cities. This is problematic because the implementation of this policy differs in smaller cities insofar as they lack a concentration of creative and innovative industries, have difficulty tapping into global economic networks, and are more likely to emphasize local social cohesion and community pride as part of the cities’ self-image (van Heur, 2010). Furthermore, it is important to provide some context for BIAs in smaller cities because they are less concerned with attracting elite consumers/industries as they tend to cater to local populations interested in modest independent shops and cultural amenities (Ward, 2010).

To suggest all BIAs reflect a creative city pro-market ideology may be an oversimplification. I therefore argue that there needs to be a better understanding of the context-specific issues across different BIA sizes and scales, both big and small, rich and poor.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined and critiqued three major bodies of work found within existing BIA literature. First, critical urban studies follow a long political-economy tradition that conceptualizes urban space as a neoliberal policy/ideology that perpetuates the production and reproduction of capitalism. Offering an alternative to this all-encompassing interpretation of neoliberalism, the urban assemblage perspective describes an urban governance arrangement that is more dispersed and heterogeneous. BIAs
are therefore not simply a product of a pro-market neoliberal policy/ideology; rather, they are a messy arrangement where various actors advance their own visions and interests. This view opens new possibilities for understanding how certain ideas, plans, and visions become dominant, not by a top-down ideological force, but through socio-cultural process of negotiation, argumentation, and compromise among an assemblage of different actors.

Second, explaining the micro-processes of neoliberal logic, the governmentality perspective shows how institutional actors enact repressive and exclusionary order maintenance strategies to “cleanse” urban spaces of perceived social ills. I argued that these strategies do not exist prior to social interaction but are created and negotiated through communicative exchanges among an assemblage of BIA actors. It is important to understand how vivid symbolic/discursive portrayals of disorderly BIA space can influence decision-making processes. Moreover, rather than assuming BIAs enact punitive order maintenance strategies, an empirical focus on urban revitalization debates can demonstrate the variation of homeless policies across different urban contexts.

Third, the creative cities agenda has become a dominant urban policy tool for BIAs. Contemporary cities create culturally lively urban spaces in an effort to attract a new creative class of people. However, many critics argue this policy privileges an instrumental understanding of culture measured only in economic terms. In the case of BIAs, those lacking “creativity” are displaced and ignored while more “appropriate” creativities are accepted. But exactly how BIAs legitimize certain creativities over others has been relatively unexplored as well as how the policy is implemented in smaller cities.

Taken together, I argue that these three bodies of work lack a comprehensive conceptualization of how pro-market neoliberal ideals, order maintenance strategies, and the creative cities agenda are
constructed and justified through socio-cultural processes of interaction, dialogue, and value judgements. I do not discount these three bodies of work; rather, my intention is to supplement them with an empirical focus on sites where various actors advance their own motives, narratives, discourses, and visions throughout the BIA revitalization process. As I will explain in the next chapter, the pragmatic sociology of critique offers a unique theoretical framework to understand the socio-cultural processes of urban assemblages as well as how order maintenance strategies and the creative cities agenda are discussed and debated during key decision-making processes. The pragmatic sociology of critique was chosen for this study because it provides a new and emerging perspective within urban studies that helps explain how and why certain revitalization plans and visions are justified over others. Rather than assuming revitalization plans are the outcome of a singular and dominant force, the pragmatic sociology of critique pays close attention to the way power is exercised during interactional settings where social actors engage in normative discussions and moral debates. In particular, this theoretical framework will help demonstrate how neoliberal ideals, order maintenance strategies, and creative cities agenda “unfold” during interactional settings where social actors discuss and debate BIA-related revitalization plans. Given this theoretical framework’s emphasis on commonplace disputes, it can help uncover different types of logics not explained by the urban assemblage, governmentality, and creative cities literature. The next chapter describes the main theoretical tenets of the pragmatic sociology of critique which will then shape the methodology for my study (described in Chapter 5).
4. The Pragmatic Sociology of Critique and the Justification Process

An emerging research program coined the “pragmatic sociology of critique” has been described as one of the most influential and original, albeit sociologically unconventional, contributions to what is known as a post-Bourdieuian French sociology (see Blokker, 2011; Fowler, 2014; Nachi, 2014; Susen, 2014c; Susen & Turner, 2014, Wagner, 1994, 1999). It is categorized as part of an emerging subfield of sociology that takes seriously the ways social actors categorize and evaluate social life along one of many moral orders (see Barnett, 2014; Lamont, 2012; Fourcade & Healy, 2007). While the pragmatic sociology of critique is based on Luc Boltanski’s large body of work, it is Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) On Justification: Economies of Worth that gained considerable attention for being a landmark publication and a manifesto for a renewed vision of the craft of sociology (Lemieux, 2014; Wagner, 1999).

Despite its recent popularity, many readers find the theoretical framework difficult to grasp due to its complicated and convoluted language. It demands readers to understand new and unconventional concepts that are not part of the classical sociological tradition; including terms like “worth”, “world”, “common good”, “polity”, and “test” (Lemieux, 2014, p. 156). This new sociological vocabulary is necessary because, according to Boltanski, classical sociological concepts (e.g., values, culture, individual, interest, habitus, etc.) do not allow sociologists to grasp key aspects of social life (e.g., the justification process, social actors’ critical capacity, reflexivity, etc.). That said, the pragmatic sociology of critique does not present a general social theory, a unified paradigmatic programme, or a new theory

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9 As Gadinger (2016) notes, this theoretical framework goes by many different names, including pragmatic sociology, pragmatic sociology of critique, sociology of critical capacities, sociology of critical practices, sociology of disputes, sociology of conventions, moral sociology, and economy of convention. For the sake of consistency, I refer to it as the pragmatic sociology of critique, or PSC for short.
of society. Instead, it provides a unique theoretical framework to understand the multiple ways people justify, or fail to justify, their actions to others by referring to certain moral principles. In the simplest terms, the pragmatic sociology of critique demands a meticulous study of social actors’ ordinary practices as well as an in-depth exploration of their reflexive practices.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the main tenets of the pragmatic sociology of critique (hereafter PSC) and show how it offers a new way of theorizing the production of urban space. I argue PSC can help explain the process of justification that underlies BIA-related revitalization plans, including its order maintenance strategy and the creative cities agenda as explained in the previous chapter. As I will explain, PSC provides a theoretical framework that explains three important processes: 1) how justification is contingent on specific interactional settings; 2) how organizations (e.g., BIAs) shape members’ motives, interests, and values; 3) how justification and critique is supported and constrained within institutional settings. Taken together, I argue the study of justification requires an overlapping analysis of interactional settings, organizational interests, and institutional arrangements.

The remainder of this chapter is structured in the following way. The first section compares PSC with Bourdieu’s critical sociology. PSC is commonly viewed as an extension of Bourdieu’s sociological tradition insofar as it provides an alternative view of social actors; with Bourdieu viewing people’s actions, interests, and viewpoints as objectively determined and subjectively naturalized dispositions, while PSC views people as having critical competencies to see and challenge seemingly objective orders. I also explain how PSC offers a unique theoretical foundation and methodology that studies

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10 In fact, Boltanski worked directly with Bourdieu between 1965 and 1982 (Susen, 2014b, p. 4). By the early 1980s, however, Boltanski moved away from Bourdieu’s “critical sociology” to formulate what is now known as the pragmatic sociology of critique (see Boltanski, 2011, p 18-49). Thus, comparing PSC with critical sociology is not an arbitrary decision because PSC is typically viewed as an extension of Bourdieu’s classic work.
interactional settings, or “situations”, rather than “individuals” and “structures”. I show how studying situations provides a better understanding of how justifications are made during what Boltanski and Thévenot (1999, 2006) call “reality tests”. The second section describes the plurality of justifications, also known as “grammars of worth”, social actors draw upon in interactional settings. I show how and why agreements, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises occur during reality tests between different social actors. The third section expands on Boltanski and Thévenot’s (1999, 2006) theoretical framework of justification by incorporating Boltanski’s work with Chiapello (2005) called The New Spirit of Capitalism as well as his solo-authored work On Critique (2011). I explain how the justification process is contingent on extra-local powers of capitalism and institutions which often set the parameters for people’s performative operations within interactional settings. Lastly, the fourth section shows how a recent small body of work in urban studies uses PSC to understand urban policy debates.

4.1 Critical Capacity and Interactional Settings

This section is divided into two subsections. I first show how PSC differs from Bourdieu’s classic work by recognizing social actors’ “critical capacity”. I then explain how PSC’s empirical focus is on particular “situations”, rather than “individuals” or “structures”, where social actors engage in a normative debate. Overall, this section provides a basic understanding of PSC’s main epistemological tenets before discussing the intricacies of the normative orders social actors use while debating.

A Response to Bourdieu’s Critical Sociology

PSC builds on Bourdieu’s classic work by giving primacy to social actors’ critical capacity to recognize the normative principles underlying their actions, viewpoints, and interests (Boltanski &
Thévenot, 1999, 2006).\textsuperscript{11} PSC criticizes Bourdieu’s critical sociology for “its overarching character and the distance at which it holds itself from the critical capacities developed by actors in the situations of everyday life” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 43). There are many layers to Bourdieu’s critical sociology. Bourdieu sees people’s actions as reflective of objectively determined and subjectively naturalized patterns (e.g., doxa, fields, habitus, and symbolic power). Unlike Marxist and structuralist explanations rooted in “consent” and “hegemony”, Bourdieu argues people develop a “practical adaptation” to existing hierarchies; these adaptations are established through taken-for-granted assumptions, classifications, and perceptions of the social world (see Swartz, 2013, p. 40-1 for a comparison between Bourdieu and Marxism). Rather than viewing one’s actions and beliefs as a reflection of propaganda or dominant ideology (in the Marxist/Gramscian sense) – or a false consciousness where the actions/beliefs of a proletariat are bound to dominant material, institutional, and ideological forms of power – Bourdieu views power as unconsciously enacted as if it were the “thing to do” or a “natural” response in existing circumstances. For Bourdieu, social structures are not static and all-encompassing but have a “double life” insofar as they exist objectively by the distribution of material resources as well as through systems of classification through which people “make meaningful the world which makes them” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 7). For example, his concept of “habitus”, which is central to his theory of practice, intertwines social structure (objectivity) and human action (subjectivity) by outlining how one’s representations, classifications, and meanings of social reality are embodied dispositions that generate a practical sense for organizing perceptions and actions in the social world (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95).

\textsuperscript{11} It should be noted that this section by no means gives justice to Bourdieu’s large body of work. It merely provides a broad understanding of his ideas to draw out key epistemological distinctions from PSC.
Overall, Bourdieu breaks down sociological antinomies between subjectivist and objectivist modes of knowledge, structure and agency, and the symbolic and the material.

The key distinction between PSC and Bourdieu’s critical sociology is the conception of human action. Bourdieu explains human action in three overlapping but analytically distinct ways: 1) a struggle for different valued resources (e.g., social, political, cultural, symbolic, and economic capital); 2) a struggle over the distribution and definition of capital in specific “fields” of conflict (e.g., artistic field, political field, cultural field, etc.); and 3) structured at the “taken-for-granted” level through systems of domination (e.g., symbolic power/violence and the “misrecognition” of social inequalities). Taken together, Bourdieu describes human action as a reflection of accumulated forms of capital, a struggle for different forms of capital within specific fields, and imposed by symbolic systems of domination.

PSC, on the other hand, argues human action depends on one’s critical competences which are demonstrated in everyday conflicts. In fact, Boltanski directly challenges Bourdieu’s epistemological standpoint:

Another consequence is that preponderant weight is given to the dispositional properties of actors, at the expense of the properties inscribed in the situations into which they are plunged, and an attempt is made to explain virtually all of their behaviour by the internalization of dominant norms… It takes the form of an incorporation, which inscribed these norms in the body, like habits – a process that accounts for the reproduction of structures. However, by the same token, situations are neglected, sometimes in favour of dispositions and sometimes of structures. (Boltanski, 2011, p. 20)

In other words, rather than acting based on some acquired dispositions within a field, or “misrecognizing” the nature of structural inequalities, PSC acknowledges that people draw upon and critique structures. PSC gives primacy to the study of social actions insofar as their framework does not assume “a priori socially pertinent traits for the people it studies [emphasis in original]” (Bénatouïl,
For Boltanski, people are not reflections of their acquired dispositions within a field but are reflexive actors who follow certain moral codes (rather than capital, fields, habitus, etc.) when considering the merits of human actions.

A core distinction between the two perspectives is that PSC emphasizes social actors’ critical capacity to judge the normative validity of social actions. It recognizes that people practice their critical, moral, and judgmental capacities to determine what is right and wrong, good or bad, or legitimate and illegitimate throughout the course of any given situation. In this sense, as Gadinger (2016, p. 188) explains, PSC fills the “normative gap” in Bourdieu’s critical sociology tradition by providing a more detailed analysis of people’s normative practices in everyday situations where moral claims are tested. The unit of analysis is not capital, competing fields, or “misrecognized” systems of domination, but particular situations where people determine the “appropriateness” of one’s actions.

As I will explain in the following sections, PSC provides a detailed description of the objective structures people draw upon and critique throughout the course of a normative debate. These structures resemble Bourdieu’s notion of “symbolic power”; a diffused form of power that legitimates social reality through common and everyday assumptions, or cultural schemas, that people make about the nature of the social world. Symbolic power has both a constructivist orientation where people use symbols to construct meanings of the social world, but also a structuralist orientation where symbols have a legitimizing force. It is not a unilateral form of power because representations of social reality can be contested by people who attempt to change meanings to advance the shape of reality according to their interests. Similarly, PSC argues the justification of human action is based on a plurality of socio-historically created moral orders; that is, deeply held and shared representations of the social world, or
“common goods”, which create meaning for human action and appear natural unless someone challenges their underlying logics.

In sum, PSC provides empirical descriptions of how people justify human actions throughout the course of a normative dispute. This requires an understanding of evaluative moments in their unfolding, where people present judgments of the “appropriateness” of action. It replaces Bourdieu’s emphasis on acquired forms of capital, struggle within a field, and symbolic power with a more detailed exploration of people’s critical capacity in daily struggles. While Bourdieu refers to ordinary people as “social agents” insofar as they are social entities whose behaviours are shaped by the positions they occupy in different fields and by dispositions they obtain through their habitus, PSC refers to ordinary people as “social actors” insofar as they are social entities whose practices acquire meaning in relation to socio-historically constructed common goods (this will be explained in the section below).\textsuperscript{12} As I will explain below, PSC argues ordinary people “act” based on various socio-historically created normative codes rather than within the structured and embodied positions people occupy within the social world. This is not to say Bourdieu lacked an explanation of reflexivity; after all, he argued people are not cultural dopes insofar as they have the capacity to engage in autonomous and strategic actions and transform social structure by transposing schemas and resources to other circumstances (see Sewell, 1992). Rather, I argue PSC provides a more precise theoretical framework to understand the normative processes of everyday life.

\textsuperscript{12} This is the main reason why I use the term “social actors” in the current study. Bourdieu’s tradition implies a structurally determined “agent” while Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) allow more agency to freely thinking “actors”. However, Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) framework does not imply a sort-of unhinged agency on part of social actors. This will be expanded on in the sections below.
**Studying the Situation**

PSC’s main empirical focus is on particular situations where social actors engage in normative discussions and give meaning to their proposed actions. As Boltanski explains, PSC sociologists should be “observing, describing and interpreting situations where people engage in critique – that is, disputes…Sociology achieves its objective when it provides a satisfactory picture of the social competences of actors” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 24-5). Referring to Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) framework, Lemieux succinctly explains this new way of “doing sociology”:

For instance, when examining discursive processes of critique and justification carried out by social actors, the aim is not to uncover their hidden interests, disclose the power relations by which they are determined, or reduce their claims to justice to a matter of social membership. Instead, we need to study how they *themselves* are capable of undertaking acts of unveiling and of adopting perspectives. In other words, the aim is to study ordinary critical operations in order to shed light on their component rules – that is, on the underlying grammar in which they are embedded. (Lemieux, 2014, p. 155)

PSC therefore criticizes the Marxist tradition for failing to explain the importance of social actors’ values and normative principles involved in action. Rather than uncovering hidden structural processes or power relations, PSC urges sociologists to study the “underlying grammar” of what people say to uncover the justificatory logics of people’s actions. It requires sociologists to understand the moral motives in the study of action and to provide better descriptions of how people evaluate and categorize social actions. This is why social theorists refer to PSC as the “study of action” insofar as its ultimate task is to describe social actors’ situated activities which are always in need of interpretation (see Bénatouïl, 1999; Blokker, 2011; Quéré and Terzi, 2014). The unit of analysis is neither the individual or organizational entity but particular “situations” where social actors present various modes of justifications and critiques.
An important aspect of Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) framework is the belief that people have a genuine concern to justify their actions rather than hiding the logic of their rationale. As they explain:

People do not ordinarily seek to invent false pretexts after the fact so as to cover up some secret motive, the way one comes up with an alibi; rather, they seek to carry out their actions in such a way that these can withstand the test of justification…How can social science hope to succeed if it deliberately neglects a fundamental property of its object and ignores the fact that persons face an obligation to answer for their behavior, evidence in hand, to other persons whom they interact? (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 37)

The view is that sociologists should pay close attention to communicative exchanges between social actors to see if their arguments “withstand the test of justification” rather than trying to uncover social actors’ hidden and predisposed motives or interests. PSC therefore studies social actors as they engage in what they call “reality tests” during which social actors embed themselves in various moral orders (these moral orders will be explained in the next section). Social actors literally seek a “test of reality” that permits them to recognize that their ideals are more or less realistic in a given situation (Lemieux, 2014, p. 15). It is throughout the course of a reality test that justification becomes visible. The definition of a reality test is best defined by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005):

The notion of the test breaks with a narrowly determinist conception of the social, whether based on the omnipotence of structures or, in a culturalist perspective, the domination of internalized norms. From the viewpoint of action, it puts the emphasis on the various degrees of uncertainty haunting situations in social life…The test is always a test of strength. That is to say, it is an event during which beings, in pitting themselves against one another (think of an arm-wrestling match between two people, or the confrontation between a fisherman and the trout that seeks to elude him), reveal what they are capable of and, more profoundly, what they are made of. But when the situation is subject to justificatory constraints, and when the protagonists judge that these constraints are being genuinely respected, the test of strength will be regarded as legitimate. (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 30, 31)
PSC therefore requires a research methodology that is attuned to the argumentative logics presented during a reality test. A more detailed description of reality tests will be presented in the following chapter which outlines the research methodology for the current study. For now, the “reality test” concept is important insofar as it emphasizes interactional settings where social actors justify, or fail to justify, the validity of their actions by referring to a multiplicity of morally configured common goods.

For PSC, power is not revolutionary or an expression of material production. Rather, power penetrates all human interaction and experience and therefore has a significant impact on social actors. PSC provides a contextual view of power that views social actors as having the ability to construct and transform interpretations of reality by pointing out injustices in the social world. Thus, in a liberal-democratic society, power must be studied empirically in specific settings where one actor claims another is acting in unjust ways; that is, when someone challenges and questions the common good and proposes new tests and compromises during the course of a dispute. Social actors’ ability to change social actions depends on how well they mobilize proofs, attribute worth to social objects, and advance acceptable versions of the common good during reality tests.

To be clear, not all social life requires social actors to stop and engage in a reality test to determine the appropriateness of their actions. A final point I would like to make about reality tests is that the study of justification only applies when social actors are in a situation of “dispute with equivalence”; that is, situations where people are in a disagreement but have a genuine concern with reaching some form of agreement, justice, or reciprocity (Jacquemain, 2008; Basaure, 2011). This is contrasted with situations considered “peace and equivalence” which resembles Bourdieu’s notion of “doxa” insofar as, when not in a dispute, social actors go about their normal routines without questioning or challenging its reality as it would be onerous and pointless to do so. For the most part, everyday life
requires low levels of reflexivity as people conduct their actions on a “taken-for-granted” level where they do not call into question the normative frames within which they identify their daily situations (Quéré & Terzi, 2014). On the other hand, justification does not operate in situations of “dispute outside of equivalence” because this represents a situation of violence where justice has been bypassed. The basic requirement for justification is that social actors must agree on the way a set of human beings are to be judged to which “every human being is a human as every other” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 74). A situation that lies outside of equivalence means social actors do not believe in a common humanity; thereby viewing some beings as “slaves or subhuman” (ibid.). For example, this means the justification framework does not apply in situations where someone believes a particular race or ethnicity has more value than another because, according to PSC, human beings can only be ranked based on the qualities of a specific moral order. Thus, to understand the process of justification sociologists must examine peaceful means of resolving arguments; that is, situations that do not reach violence but where the normal course of events are interrupted and questioned. In the context of my study, disputes with equivalence occur in several settings where BIA claims can be challenged, including BIA-related city council deliberations, one-on-one interviews with BIA members, BIA public meetings, and BIA-related media releases. Again, this will be explained in the following methodology chapter. The next section describes the specific “grammars” social actors use during a reality test.

4.2 Grammars of Worth

This section provides a detailed explanation of what sociologists variously call “grammars”, “argumentative tool-kits”, or “cultural repertoires” social actors draw upon to justify their viewpoints (Silber, 2003). This resembles Schutz’s (1967 [1932]) phenomenological tradition which argues people classify social reality through “stocks of knowledge” to help interpret, label, and understand the social world. In a similar way, PSC argues social actors draw upon a plurality of normative orders, or
“grammars of worth”, throughout the course of a reality test. I will explain the significance of these “grammars”, explain each one in detail, and describe the ways social actors come to agreements, disagreements, and compromises.

Silber (2003) argues PSC presents one of the most detailed explanations of the “cultural repertoires” social actors draw upon to justify their actions. That is, Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) theoretical framework presents a sophisticated explanation of how social actors draw upon a set of structured “grammars”, which they variously call “worlds”, “orders”, and “cities”, throughout the course of a reality test. Social actors reference a plurality of “worths” each with their own principles, internal structures, and common goods. This follows a somewhat structuralist tradition insofar as social actors select meaning from already established orders which ground critique and justification. The task of the sociologist is to make these interpretations explicit by delineating the grammar used by social actors during a reality test. In this way, social actors demonstrate the universality of their position and interests by drawing upon a multiplicity of argumentative logics in their social environment. Table 1 outlines the particular characteristics of each worth. It should be noted these grammars of worth are applicable only in societies that are complex, differentiated, and with liberal-democratic political cultures. This is because the grammars of worth are rooted in the political-philosophical background of French society.

To provide a brief example of their framework, the mode of evaluating market-based justifications can be made by arguments about price, whereas the mode of evaluation for civic justifications can be made through calls for distributive equality among citizens. The evaluation of justifications requires the categorization of groups (objects or persons) by locating them within one or

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13 For the sake of consistency, I refer to them as “grammars of worth” throughout my study.

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) formulate this framework through various works of classical political thinkers and by applying them to available managerial “how-to guides”. Each grammar of worth represents a “polity” the authors formulate by connecting them to the writings of various classical social and political thinkers. This is supplemented by managerial literature, or “how-to guides”, to locate the characteristics of the described polities and to pin down the objects, subjects, and relations within each worth. These managerial literatures demonstrate the rules for each worth by explaining how generalized principles practically apply. To be clear, a “polity” refers to philosophical texts that represent the axioms that organize a dispute, while the grammars of worth are the concrete situations in which these polities are debated. Each worth is a historical construction as well as an ideal concept representing “grammatical enterprises intended to clarify and fix rules for reaching agreement” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 66). Social actors do not explicitly reference these works of political philosophy but implicitly reference them during a reality test. In short, grammars of worth are historically constituted normative principles that social actors implicitly reference to evaluate the merits of justifications.

There are two important points I would like to make about these grammars of worth before explaining each of them in detail. First, each worth represents levels of generality social actors try to reach to convince others on the merits of their respective justification. Each worth has its own version of the common good that social actors draw upon by making connections between different objects, beings, and qualities that correspond to the respective worth. For a claim to be deemed legitimate, social actors must distance themselves from the particularities and intricacies of their situation to reach an agreement.
defined on general terms, something that is common to all objects brought together under the respective worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 27). This requires social actors to present acceptable forms of evidence to be defined in relation to a particular worth that it is attached to. In the context of my study, BIA members may, for example, try to justify an urban revitalization plan through the market worth by presenting data showing how the proposed revitalization plan will increase property values and the local tax base (I will provide further details below about how each worth relates to BIAs and urban revitalization).
Table 4.1 A summary of the grammars of worth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inspirational</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Reputational</th>
<th>Civic</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Projective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosopher</td>
<td>Augustine</td>
<td>Bossuet</td>
<td>Hobbes</td>
<td>Rousseau</td>
<td>Adam Smith</td>
<td>Saint-Simon</td>
<td>Lafaye and Thévenot</td>
<td>Boltanski and Chiapello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior principle</td>
<td>Inspiration, originality</td>
<td>Tradition, loyalty, personal bonds</td>
<td>Opinion of others</td>
<td>Collective good</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Effectiveness, performance</td>
<td>Environmental friendliness</td>
<td>Short term projects, flexible networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual qualities</td>
<td>Creative, imaginative, passionate</td>
<td>Dedicated, wise</td>
<td>Prestige, public recognition</td>
<td>Representative officer</td>
<td>Defense of self-interest</td>
<td>Dedication to work</td>
<td>Renewability</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of worthiness</td>
<td>Spontaneity, emotion</td>
<td>Hierarchal superiority</td>
<td>Popularity</td>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Value, winning</td>
<td>Efficient, reliable</td>
<td>Healthy environment</td>
<td>Being connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific investment</td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Sense of duty</td>
<td>Pursuit of publicity</td>
<td>Dedication to solidarity</td>
<td>Search for personal opportunities</td>
<td>Investment in progress</td>
<td>Harmony with nature</td>
<td>Long term aims of a company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Introspection, passion</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Popularity, recognition</td>
<td>Equality, solidarity</td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>Competence, reliability, planning</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of evaluation</td>
<td>Creativeness</td>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>Renown</td>
<td>Collective welfare</td>
<td>Price, cost</td>
<td>Technical efficiency</td>
<td>Ecological equilibrium</td>
<td>Durable connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of relevant proof</td>
<td>Emotional involvement</td>
<td>Oral, anecdotal</td>
<td>Semiotic, public support</td>
<td>Formal, official</td>
<td>Monetary</td>
<td>Measurable criteria</td>
<td>Clean and natural</td>
<td>Connection within and across networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthy object</td>
<td>Emotionally invested body or item, the sublime</td>
<td>Rank, title, heritage</td>
<td>Sign, media, brand</td>
<td>Rules, regulations, fundamental rights, welfare policies</td>
<td>Freely circulating market good or service</td>
<td>Technical object, method, plan</td>
<td>Natural habitat</td>
<td>Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthy human beings</td>
<td>Creative being, visionary</td>
<td>Authority, leader</td>
<td>Celebrity, spokesperson</td>
<td>Equal citizens, solidarity unions, officials</td>
<td>Consumer, entrepreneur</td>
<td>Professional, expert</td>
<td>Environmentalist</td>
<td>Networker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time formation</td>
<td>Revolutionary, visionary moment</td>
<td>Customary past</td>
<td>Vogue, trend</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term planned future</td>
<td>Future generations</td>
<td>Flexible, immediate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Based on Boltanski and Thévenot (2006); Lafaye & Thévenot, 1993; Boltanski and Chiapello (2005); Fuller (2013); Blok (2013); Scerri (2014)
Second, these grammars of worth do not represent an inherent value or characteristic attached to persons, institutions, or social structures in a fixed way. Rather, it represents a plurality of common goods any social actor can employ according to the situation (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 19). Each worth can coexist with the others in any given location or setting where social actors engage in a dispute. Social actors are therefore conceived as “plural actors” who, similar to Mead’s (1934) interactionist approach, carry a multiplicity of “selves” in any given situation (Lemieux, 2014, p. 161). While we may anticipate BIA members to justify their actions solely through a market rationale, they will likely draw upon all the grammars of worth in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways.

I will now outline the main tenets of the grammars of worth as described by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), including brief examples of how each worth would justify urban revitalization. As Salminen (2018) argues, each worth has its unique spatial metaphor social actors use as they justify their views. These examples are by no means exhaustive but are presented to give some perspective on how these higher principles apply to practical urban settings.

**Inspirational Worth**

Inspirational worth is developed through Augustine’s work *The City of God* and its superior principle is inspiration and originality. This worth is considered relatively unstable insofar as it values unstructured qualities like creativity, imagination, and passion. Anything considered spontaneous, emotional, or imaginative is valued; which is opposed to the rigid routines and customs of the domestic worth (described below). People should accept risks of failure when pursuing original and creative endeavours. A test of inspirational worthiness is based on one’s own individual introspection and investment in passionate endeavours, with their abilities being evaluated based on their creativity, originality, and imagination. Valid proofs of inspiration are based on emotional involvement. Worthy
beings are creative visionaries while worthy objects are anything that is sublime, beautiful, and pure. These qualities appear through visionary and/or revolutionary moments.

References are often made to inspirational worth throughout urban revitalization plans; perhaps most famously by Jane Jacobs (1963) who emphasized the importance of spontaneous and unique neighbourhoods in contrast to predictable and rational modernist city designs. Specific to BIA spaces, streets are revitalized in such a way to evoke positive feelings, whether through artistic murals, spontaneity of pedestrian activity, or an original/unique urban design. The neighbourhood can be considered “authentic” or “one of a kind” in the sense that local countercultural groups spontaneously shaped the look and feel of the neighbourhood rather than being highly manicured and planned by outside “experts”. BIA spaces, moreover, seek to transform urban space by inspiring people to visit the area and indulge in the unique experiences on offer.

**Domestic Worth**

Domestic worth is developed through the French theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet’s work *Politics* and its superior principle is tradition, loyalty, and personal bonds. In contrast to inspirational worth, domestic worth is founded upon stable and structured characteristics like tradition and hierarchy. In this sense, dedication to ordered hierarchies and a traditional past is essential. Domestic worth resembles a patriarchal household where a wise and dutiful leader must be firm to their subordinates who must follow the customs and conventions imposed upon them. Superiors must ensure their inferiors have instilled in them the proper rules of etiquette, respect, and good manners. Thus, personal arrangements and locally constituted bonds are valued insofar as every person belongs to a local territory. A test of domestic worthiness is based on trustworthiness and dedication to the ordered way of things. Valid proofs are based on oral and anecdotal accounts uttered by superiors. Worthy beings are considered those
in position of authority/leadership while worthy objects are ranks, titles, and heritage which are important to limit uncertainty in personal encounters. Customary pasts are valued insofar as it relates back to historical and traditional ideals.

The organization of BIAs is itself reflective of domestic worth. There are certain ranks and titles with different roles within a BIA that create a harmonious functioning body (e.g. CEO, manager, board member, hired staff, etc.). More specific to urban space, BIAs may justify revitalization to return to a traditional past when the area was supposedly ordered and personal bonds among residents and visitors were strong. The preservation of heritage sites, for example, represents the protection of old identities. Enhancing ones “sense of place” and “territoriality” plays into domestic qualities by ensuring people feel a sense of belonging to an area. BIAs may strategically draw upon stories and/or images of a neighbourhood’s historical past to celebrate its supposed roots.

**Reputational Worth**

Reputational worth is developed through Thomas Hobbes’ work *Leviathan* and its superior principle is the opinion of others. Worth is completely determined by the judgement of others, hence “perception is everything”. The most important individual quality is one’s prestige; that is, their widespread respect and admiration felt by someone based on the perception of their qualities. In this sense, being publicly exposed and recognized is crucial because a person’s reputation reflects a wider audience. Popularity is the main state of worthiness that can be gained and measured through many means, including naming in the media, branding, public campaigns, and widely-read press releases. A test of one’s reputation is based entirely on the opinion of the widest audience which can be measured through various means (e.g., opinion surveys, ratings, brand recognition, etc.). One must invest their efforts in gaining public recognition to achieve a celebrity status. A relevant proof reputation is semiotic
and based entirely on the interpretation of a public audience. A worthy object is any sign, media, or brand that represents a popular thing or person, while a worthy being is a celebrity or spokesperson. Given worth is entirely determined by the gaze of others, one’s worth can easily become a vogue trend that “comes and goes”.

BIAs are heavily involved in increasing the reputation of their urban spaces. Their major task is to brand the neighbourhood through placemaking and advertising campaigns to draw consumers to the area. Part of their investments often go towards advertising campaigns and developing branded maps, logos, and images to create a distinct and marketable identity for the area. BIA members may also benefit by gaining popularity within their social networks to attain resources from city departments, private developers, and so on.

**Civic Worth**

Civic worth is developed through Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s work *On the Social Contract* and its superior principle is the collective good. Civic worth is often in tension with market worth which emphasizes individuality and self-interest. The worthiest are representative officials who unify and act for a rule-governed collective. Civic social actors are dedicated to civil rights and political causes to establish equal rights, policies, and laws throughout the course of a democratic debate. The ultimate goal is to achieve some form of equality and collective welfare for all, thereby abandoning individual interests. Worthy beings are equal citizens while worthy objects are things that solidify/promise equality such as rules, regulations, fundamental rights, and welfare policies. These ideals should be universal and exist perennially throughout time.

Civic issues are often raised in any urban development project. For example, activists may criticize a BIA revitalization project for causing gentrification and/or social polarization, while BIA
members may claim the project benefits the poor in some way (creation of jobs, community facilities, etc.). A successful revitalization under a civic worth is determined by the amount of community supports and facilities created for a diverse urban population. Simply put, civic worth sees the city as a shared public forum inclusive to all people regardless of their social position and/or socio-economic status.

**Market Worth**

Market worth is developed through Adam Smith’s work *The Wealth of Nations* and its superior principle is competitiveness. Market competitiveness is meant to serve individual desires and selfish interests, seeing others as competitors. Market worthiness is measured through “winning” which is determined by the amount of saleable goods that have some sort of value or price. The worthy are those who are considered economic “winners” who successfully exploit opportunities to gain a valued position, status, or goal. Overall, profit is the key determinant of success. This entails, by contrast to the inspirational world, emotional distance from others in order to take advantage of opportunities. A test of one’s market worth is based on a competition where people try to make the best deal to benefit their individual interests. Relevant forms of proofs are monetary; with any freely circulating market good or service considered a worthy object, while consumers and entrepreneurs are considered worthy beings. Market goods only satisfy on a short-term basis until another deal-making opportunity or competition arises.

Market worth is often at the center of critical urban studies. BIAs commonly draw upon market justifications in any given revitalization project. This is unsurprising given the ultimate goal of most BIA spaces is to increase the local tax base, attract more consumers, increase property values, and enhance profits. Success can be measured in different ways, including the number of new development projects.
underway, economic indicators, increases in the local tax base, and so on. A good neighbourhood is one that is economically superior to others and is competitive in the local and/or global market.

**Industrial Worth**

Industrial worth is developed through Henri de San-Simon’s work *Introduction to Scientific Discoveries of the 19th Century* and its superior principle is efficiency and performance. The worthy are dedicated to their work while the unworthy are those who are lazy and inefficient. One must invest their time and effort to improve things and progress into the future, thus getting rid of obsolete ideas and things that hinder progress. A test of one’s industrial worth is based on their level of competence, reliability, and the merits of a plan that can be determined by some form of measurable criteria (e.g., statistics, production outputs, predictions, etc.). A worthy being is any professional, expert, or specialist who properly uses worthy objects such as a plan or a method. The goal is to progress to the future, thinking always about long-term consequences.

BIA revitalization “plans” are often worthy objects insofar as it represents a method for the future. Revitalization plans are diligently planned to achieve a specified goal that can be attained by reaching certain indicators, targets, or specified dates. Justifying urban revitalization by drawing on industrial worth would be based on calls for progress and a need to change the future to improve the functioning of the urban area. BIAs may, for example, rely on performance indicators like the numbers of consumers drawn to the area or attendance at events/festivals to justify its success. They may also rely on outside experts to inform them on the best practices of urban revitalization.

**Green Worth**

The following two worths (green and projective) are not based on specific philosophical texts but have been constructed by various PSC scholars. Green worth is developed by Lafaye and Thévenot’s
(1993) work and its superior principle is environmental friendliness. Worth is measured by one’s ability to advocate for renewable energy sources and defend the natural environment against harm. People must be invested in establishing sustainable environments, harmony with nature, and preserving natural habitats; hence, people’s actions are judged on their willingness to achieve ecological equilibrium. Worthiness is not so much attached to tangible objects but to natural entities such as clean air and water, pollution-free environments, and the well-being of animals. A worthy human being is an environmentalist dedicated to preserving the natural environment, one who creates an environmentally friendly world for future generations.

Concerns about the natural environment are common in most urban revitalization strategies. BIAs often make changes to green spaces within their boundary such as parks, riverfronts, waterfronts, trees, plants, and so on. Depending on the revitalization project, BIAs can be an ally or enemy to environmental concerns. For example, they can support the sustainability of the natural environment by planting trees, maintaining parks, or reducing pollutants. Conversely, they can contribute harm to the environment by eliminating green spaces, creating waste, or polluting.

**Projective Worth**

Projective worth is developed by Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) work *The New Spirit of Capitalism* and its superior principle is based on short-term projects and flexible networking. I will expand on the significance of this work in the following section. For now, the significance of this work is that the authors provided a new moral order that evolved from various critiques aimed at pre-1970s rational-bureaucratic forms of corporate organization reminiscent of the industrial world. Following the tropes of post-Fordist economies, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue contemporary organizations are less hierarchal insofar as they value flexible network patterns to serve economic and organizational
interests. One must be adaptable to change and connected to others to achieve long-term aims of a company. Being connected to things and others is valuable, where a worthy being is a “networker” with high levels of networks and connectivity with other beings and objects. Time is considered flexible and needs to serve immediately to maintain network relations.

Projective worth is evident in contemporary city building. Cities are increasingly moving away from functional long-term planning and technical efficiency, relying more on consultancy and short-term contracts. BIAs, for example, are part of a larger assemblage of actors who work together to implement revitalization plans at the local scale. They therefore rely on extended networks for resources, services, and ideas to enhance the urban area.

**Tensions and Compromises Between the Grammars of Worth**

PSC goes beyond merely explaining the content of justifications. There is nothing significant about describing the content of social actors’ justifications along the aforementioned grammars of worth as this captures a simple description of the general principles social actors draw upon throughout the course of a reality test. Analysis needs to go beyond description and begin to unravel how and why agreements, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises occur. When one draws upon an object or being to a corresponding worth, it is subject to tension, risk, and uncertainty as others can challenge the appropriateness of the worth in question. A seemingly legitimate agreement can be questioned at any moment in the name of another legitimate principle. In other words, more than just explaining the content of justifications, PSC “is especially useful in revealing the different competing or conflicting rationalities in organizations [and the] complex processes involved in justification, critique and attempts to produce compromises in organizations” (Jagd, 2011, p. 344).
PSC argues social actors have a multiplicity of impulses, desires, interests, and points of view about the social world, thereby making uncertainty the root of social relations (see Quéré & Terzi 2014). That said, this does not imply social actors have endless and insoluble disputes. As Boltanski explains, “the social world does not appear to be the site of domination endured passively and unconsciously, but instead as a space shot through by a multiplicity of disputes, critiques, disagreements and attempts to re-establish local agreements that are always fragile” (2011, p. 27). Although the social world is comprised of a multitude of disputes, disagreements, and critiques, social actors work hard to produce consensus despite a plurality of interpretations of social reality.

To reiterate, the pragmatic sociology of critique focuses on reality tests as its core methodological undertaking. These are interactional settings where social actors are plunged into uncertain situations as they try to formalize interpretations of their actions. They do so by embedding themselves in the grammars of worth, thereby making it possible for social actors to reduce uncertainty by reaching some level of agreement based on general principles of a particular worth. As Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) argue:

> When one is attentive to the unfolding of disputes, one sees that they are limited neither to a direct expression of interests nor to an anarchic and endless confrontation between heterogeneous worldviews clashing in dialogue of the deaf. On the contrary, the way disputes develop, when violence is avoided, bring to light powerful constraints in the search for well-founded arguments based on solid proofs, a search that thus manifests efforts toward convergence at the very heart of disagreement. (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 13)

In other words, social actors, at least in differentiated and complex societies, must tolerate contradictions, ambivalence, negotiation, and compromise throughout a dispute. It is impossible to create a state of permanent certainty of the social world because critique can always emerge. To resolve these uncertainties, social actors formulate “context-specific devices in order to circumvent, soften, or conceal
these contradictions, since they cannot be resolved” (Quéré & Terzi, 2014, p. 94). Based on Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) justification framework, I will explain the four specific ways social actors can react to a dispute: 1) by challenging a test’s validity (an argument), 2) introducing a test that is valid in a different grammar of worth (a conflict), 3) reconciling differences by merging two worths together (a compromise), or 4) avoiding the test altogether (relativization).

First, social actors can challenge the way a reality test is set up by bringing attention to characteristics that do not belong to the respective grammar of worth’s test (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 219-20). This represents an internal critique (or corrective test) of a worth insofar as the disagreement rests on the way the worth should be properly tested. While the test may be valid in principle, it is not properly carried out. This can happen in two ways. First, someone can argue the test is unfair because the objects needed for its completion are lacking. In the context of BIAs, this can range from disagreeing on the way creativity and visions are to be valued (inspirational worth), who to consider loyal and dedicated partners in revitalization (domestic worth), how to increase the city’s brand image (reputational worth), how urban space can be inclusive for all (civic worth), the best way to make urban spaces economically profitable (market worth), what plans and methods are most efficient (industrial worth), how to preserve the natural habitat (green worth), and what extended networks should be approached to aid revitalization (projective worth). Second, someone may show the test is unfair because it considers objects belonging to a different worth, thereby a foreign being is disturbing the test. This is considered a “transport of worth” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 220-1) which typically occurs when a person’s worth from another grammar follows them into the original worth the test is taking part in. For example, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, p. 221) describe a situation of privilege where a professor grades a student’s assignment leniently because the student behaves politely in class (the domestic worth influencing an industrial test). In another example, they describe a situation where a co-worker complains a fellow worker was not
punished for tardiness because she is a single parent with a sick child (again, domestic worth influencing an industrial test). In sum, internal tests can take on two forms; social actors can disagree on the validity of a test by asserting the required object needed for its completion is lacking, or the value of a different worth introduces a foreign characteristic to the test, thus rendering the test invalid due to privilege or handicap. In both cases, the goal is to improve the justice of the test by making it stricter and admit only those qualities that are compatible with the definition of the test.

The situation described above is a disagreement with the way the test was carried out but the grammar of worth itself was not subject to challenge. In other situations, disagreements can occur not only with a test’s outcome and distribution, as explained above, but also with the principle that governs the way the test is carried out (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 215). This represents an external critique (or radical test) insofar as one grammar of worth is criticized from the viewpoint of another. These conflicts occur because social actors fail to identify the beings that matter and those that do not. Social actors can challenge the validity of the test by mentioning principles of another worth to distract the original test in which the situation is set up. The very reality of the common good underlying the test is contested, with the parties involved disagreeing about the grammar of worth in which the test must be carried out to be legitimate. In fact, this is the definition of a critique; the presence of beings from a different worth. Especially in situations where one is at a disadvantage during a test, social actors can call attention to beings who do not belong to the worth in which the original test is set up. In this situation, the value of beings in a different grammar of worth introduces characteristics that are foreign to the test at hand, thus rendering the test invalid. This is when people feel a sense of injustice because an unwarranted transfer of worth from another grammar corrupts a test and social actors have a disagreement over the principle that governs the test’s implementation. The goal is not to repeat the test in a purer and more equitable fashion by eliminating privileges and handicaps gained from other worths,
as described above, but rather to “demystify the test as such, in order to place things on their true ground and to institute a different test that will be valid in a different world [grammar of worth]” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 224). Table 2 shows the main critiques that can be aimed at one worth from another. A common contention in urban planning debates, for example, is often between irreconcilable differences of market and civic worths. Pro-development groups typically justify a project based on its ability to increase property values or tax revenue, while anti-development groups criticize these market justifications on the basis that the project will displace socially marginalized populations (see Fuller, 2012).

The third way social actors react to a dispute is by negotiating between two grammars of worth which results in a hybrid form of justification. That is, social actors reach a common good by transcending two contentious grammars of worth by somehow making them compatible with one another (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 277). A compromise is not a true justification but rather a consensus that is acceptable for all involved. The compromise, however, remains fragile and unstable because it does not relate to one specific common good. Table 3 shows how compromises may look like between two grammars of worth. For example, a common compromise in urban redevelopment plans is made between market and industrial worth, whereby a carefully planned out redevelopment project can decrease costs associated with construction.

Fourth, social actors can reach a situation of “relativization” where a private agreement is made between two parties in order to reach mutual satisfaction rather than a common good (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 336). Here, the parties ignore the common good, assume each party benefits with their respective grammar of worth, and no justification is required. In a way, the parties agree nothing
matters and the disagreement is pointless, thereby abandoning the reality test in favour for a return to the circumstances. The situation is treated as if it were inconsequential and purely local.

In sum, PSC can help explain how and why agreements, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises unfold in situational contexts. Uncertainty is the core of life given social actors may draw upon a multiplicity of justifications in any situation. In the context of my study, it will be interesting to see which urban revitalization issues are generally agreed upon, which issues cause internal disagreements, which issues are critiqued based on a different common good, which issues are likely to warrant a compromise, and which issues are avoided altogether.
### Table 4.2 Critiques aimed at other grammars of worth

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<tr>
<th>Inspirational addressed to:</th>
<th>Domestic addressed to:</th>
<th>Reputational addressed to:</th>
<th>Civic addressed to:</th>
<th>Market addressed to:</th>
<th>Industrial addressed to:</th>
<th>Green addressed to:</th>
<th>Projective addressed to:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inspiration causes disorder by disrupting hierarchies and customs.</td>
<td>Inspiration and esotericism ignore the tastes of the public and fails to direct its message to the largest possible audience.</td>
<td>Inspiration is impulsive and individualistic. Inspiration is typical of avant-gardes that are in the minority and cut off from others.</td>
<td>Emotional distance and self-control is necessary to make deals.</td>
<td>Uncertainty and spontaneity inhibits coordination oriented toward the future.</td>
<td>Inspiration and esotericism are detached from crucial environmental concerns.</td>
<td>People are creative when they work with one another, not in isolation and separated from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is stable and fixed is devalued (i.e. norms, habits, routines). Marks of respect are artificial formalities.</td>
<td>Messages/information should not be made in private exchanges but should spread into public opinion and broadcast to a large audience.</td>
<td>One must generalize a private conflict as a collective one, but collective conflicts should not be personalized. Local/personal ties show favouritism and infringe on collective relations.</td>
<td>One must free themselves from personal bonds, routines, and tradition to gain access to an anonymous and borderless market.</td>
<td>Efficiency and progress trumps outdated and old-fashioned ideas. Private life should not be mixed with professional life.</td>
<td>Authority and traditional views constrain environmental action. Localities must consider the impact of future generations.</td>
<td>People should interact with others outside of their immediate locale.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One needs to be humble and not accept external signs of success.</td>
<td>Knowing how to behave should be valued for itself and should not be used to gain approval. Private/local matters should not be made into public spectacles.</td>
<td>Public opinions are important only through processes of voting.</td>
<td>People should follow their own desires rather than popular or fashionable trends.</td>
<td>Popularity and fame is short lived. Building a strong and efficient institution can last for generations.</td>
<td>Vogue trends cause waste and damage the natural environment. Environmental concerns should override the opinion of others.</td>
<td>Links should be established outside of a public audience and not for the sake of enhancing ones reputation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutions are detached from persons.</td>
<td>Personal attachments should be valued over anonymous collectives.</td>
<td>One’s fame should be leveraged to gain a collective audience.</td>
<td>Action in the market world is a private matter.</td>
<td>Collectives/administrations are inefficient.</td>
<td>Institutions constrain environmental action.</td>
<td>Collectives are useful only when others provide a short-term benefit.</td>
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### Table 4.2 Critiques aimed at other grammars of worth (continued)

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<th>Industrial addressed to:</th>
<th>Green addressed to:</th>
<th>Projective addressed to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market</strong></td>
<td>One must be free from concerns about money.</td>
<td>Not everything can be bought. Money is damaging to personal relationships.</td>
<td>Public relations are to be established to maintain good relationships, not to sell something.</td>
<td>Collective concerns are more important than self-serving individualism.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conspicious consumption of luxury items is not useful. Markets are unpredictable.</td>
<td>Profit making should not be valued at the expense of the environment. Conspicuous consumption produces waste and pollution.</td>
<td>Personal relations should not be entirely premised on market exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial</strong></td>
<td>Well-established methods inhibit creative spontaneity.</td>
<td>Experience, habits, and customs are more important than formal methods, instructions, and expertise.</td>
<td>Information should be presented in a sensational way to appeal to the public.</td>
<td>Experts and knowledge should be shared. Knowledge/training is meaningful only if it enriches the collective.</td>
<td>Methods and plans are rigid and disturb the market. There should be room for subjective desires rather than objective ones.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial production produces waste and pollution.</td>
<td>People should not be judged on their productive outputs nor should they work exclusively in specialized departments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td>Ecological values will emerge “naturally” through a pursuit of full humanity.</td>
<td>Environmental concerns do not always reflect local customs and traditions.</td>
<td>It is up to the public to determine the fate of future generations.</td>
<td>Environmental concerns are collective issues and should not be the sole responsibility of environmentalists.</td>
<td>Environmental concerns detract from moneymaking endeavours. Renewability does not produce large profits.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Renewability/sustainability is not efficient and squanders industrial progress.</td>
<td>Short-term activities are more important than perennial concerns about future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projective</strong></td>
<td>Inspiration and creativity should not be circulated within a network but done for its own sake.</td>
<td>One must be loyal to personal attachments and their locale rather than forming superficial connections within a wider network.</td>
<td>Messages/informati on should not be made within a closed network but spread into public opinion and broadcast to a large audience.</td>
<td>Networked connections are superficial and don’t always serve a collective good.</td>
<td>Personal relations within a network should be reduced to a minimum and conducted at a distance. Networks should help maximize profits.</td>
<td></td>
<td>People should be dedicated to their work/task rather than constantly moving/adapting across a network.</td>
<td>The health of future generations is more important that short-term outputs.</td>
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*Notes:* Based on Boltanski and Thévenot (2006); Lafaye & Thévenot (1993); Boltanski & Chiapello (2005).
### Table 4.3 Compromises between grammars of worth

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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspirational</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic</strong></td>
<td>Person with knowledge is a master who should pass this knowledge to others. The master should lead by example.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reputational</strong></td>
<td>A person losing individuality in order to give or receive credit (i.e. a leader is taken as a model for identification)</td>
<td>Opinion is important in personal relations. Hierarchal superior must have a good opinion of his subordinates. Rubbing shoulders with other people is important.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Civic</strong></td>
<td>Spontaneous revolt based on collective consciousness. Passionate anger in the face of injustice</td>
<td>Good manners and polite behaviour is necessary in situations that bring citizens and representatives into direct contact in public settings. Rules and regulations must not always be applied universally but should consider personal circumstances.</td>
<td>Demonstrations/protests are public spectacles. Collective causes need public recognition. The media is needed to reach public opinion. In order to gain support one must campaign and captivate an audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Market</strong></td>
<td>Sudden and unpredictable emergence of new objects offers and opportunity favourable in the market. Taking risks based on feelings.</td>
<td>Commercial activities need to ensure client loyalty. Market services are premised on personal relations. Services can be personalized.</td>
<td>A good image stimulates the price of a thing. Brand images and reputation of a company is important.</td>
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Money can be distributed equally.
### Table 4.3 Compromises between grammars of worth (continued)

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<th>Inspirational</th>
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<th>Green</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial</strong></td>
<td>Passion/energy can translate into creative outputs. Spontaneous outpouring of free expression in brainstorming sessions. Open-mindedness and creative thinking can be innovative.</td>
<td>Division of a company into interdependent units occupies its own space and private arrangements. Deeply rooted customs and the predictability of well-honed tools can be effective. Habits are the memory of skills. Seniors and experienced persons are deemed professionals.</td>
<td>Stability of a brand depends on production methods as well as the durability and effectiveness. Professionals use tools and techniques to control opinions. Images need to be maintained.</td>
<td>The collective has a function, utility, and productive capacity. The dignity of a person should not be anchored exclusively to their work as an “end in itself”. A company’s human investment is the most difficult and fruitful investment.</td>
<td>Products must be efficient. Fordian mass production systems reconcile the demands of efficient production, high productivity, and need to satisfy a demand in the marketplace.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td>It takes creativity and passion to make the environment sustainable/renewable.</td>
<td>Those in a position of authority have the duty to protect the natural environment. People should be loyal to the mother nature.</td>
<td>Protecting the environment needs public recognition. Branding environmentally friendly products/services can help gain environmental supporters.</td>
<td>Strict rules/regulations should be put in place to protect the natural habitat. People have a fundamental right to a clean and sustainable environment.</td>
<td>Green technologies, materials, and services can be profitable. Investment in sustainable/renewable things should reflect consumer demand.</td>
<td>Environmental experts can develop specific plans and methods to protect the environment.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projective</strong></td>
<td>One must be creative to form quality links with others. Leaders of a project should inspire creativity in others.</td>
<td>Personal relations, direct dealings, and trust are essential in work environments.</td>
<td>The expansion of networks depends on one’s reputational status. One must adapt to different audiences.</td>
<td>A leader of a group should help its members enhance their connections with others.</td>
<td>One must establish solid connections to enhance deal-making opportunities. Social interactions are best kept short-term.</td>
<td>One must find different forms of knowledge by extending into networks. Organizations should outsource some of their operations to experts/specialists.</td>
<td>People must be flexible and adapt new practices to avoid creating waste.</td>
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*Notes: Based on Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).*
4.3 Extra-Local Forms of Power

Up until now I have described how PSC views social actors as having the critical capacity to draw upon a plurality of common goods within specific interactional settings. I described the specific grammars of worth and the way social actors form agreements, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises. However, PSC has been criticized for being “too amorphous” and for neglecting the institutionalized context within which debates are located, thus leaving the impression that any grammar of worth can be evoked at any point by anyone (Honneth, 2010, p. 388). That said, Boltanski has addressed this criticism by explaining the role capitalism and institutions play in establishing the parameters around reality tests, justification, and critique.

This section is divided into two subsections that describe Boltanski’s theorization of extra-local processes of justification; 1) the spirit of capitalism and 2) discursive institutions. This is based on Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) work *The New Spirit of Capitalism* and Boltanski’s (2011) work *On Critique*, respectively. The purpose of this section is to supplement the previous discussion about critical capacity, situations, and grammars of worth by acknowledging larger systemic and institutional forces that structure local-level, interactional processes. Simply put, in addition to studying the specific “grammar” social actors use throughout the course of a debate, PSC requires an empirical study of capitalist and institutional forms of power.

*The Spirit of Capitalism*

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe how and why capitalist ideals (e.g., free enterprise, private property, competition, material progress, productivity, and efficiency) are legitimized as an ideal “order of things” in Western societies. While Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) *On Justification* – which has been the basis of this chapter thus far – emphasized justificatory operations performed by social actors on a situational, everyday, and case-by-case basis, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) explain how
societal critiques of capitalism eventually formed a new normative order called the projective worth. Reality tests, justifications, and critiques are therefore not confined within specific interactional settings but can also coalesce into larger societal arrangements and collective interactions where local dissatisfactions become political/social movements that challenge the common good of capitalist enterprise. In relation to my study, this work helps explain how contemporary organizations like BIAs reflect a particular “spirit of capitalism” that justifies organizational models and its members’ motivations, values, and norms. It shows us how social actors’ justifications are not simply localized encounters but reflect wider socio-historical processes that have shaped a distinct spirit of capitalism. I first describe what is meant by the “spirit of capitalism” and the role “critique” has played in changing its form. I will then identify three distinct states of capitalism before describing key characteristics of the current spirit of capitalism as it relates to BIAs; specifically, how the current spirit follows the tropes of post-Fordism (e.g., flexibility, adaptability, networking).

Drawing upon Weber’s (1905) classic work The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005, p. 8) define the spirit of capitalism as “the ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism [emphasis in original]”. The spirit establishes moral relationships between human beings and their work, one that gives people “good reasons” for devoting themselves to capitalist activities. They argue capitalism can survive only if it is attractive and stimulating for people, gives them exciting life prospects, guarantees them some sense of security, and assures them that their actions are morally acceptable. In other words, capitalism requires ethical motives of involvement to justify individual actions involved in its processes.

Their analysis focuses specifically on the organizational model of capitalist firms; that is, organizations that expect a return on capital investment. They argue capitalist firms are “the main sites in which the spirit of capitalism is inscribed… as a medium offering the most direct access to the
representations associated with the spirit of capitalism in a given era” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 57). Firms create meaning for shared goals and establish rules of conduct that define, normalize, and motivate social actors. The authors therefore study management literature addressed to managers of a firm because these texts provide details about the latest developments in operating firms, managing human beings, providing new methods of profit-making, and creating more efficient and competitive organizations. They chart the evolution of the spirit of capitalism by comparing management literature between the periods of 1959-1969 and 1989-1994 to understand how the ideal image of a “manager”, and therefore the “spirit of capitalism”, has evolved to its current “projective” form. As organizations focused on enhancing the profitability of commercial areas, BIAs are structured similarly to the capitalist firms described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005).

They argue that changes in the operation of capitalist firms are influenced by broader societal critiques aimed at capitalist ideals. Thus, critique is the “motor” that alters the spirit of capitalism because, as they explain, capitalism “needs its enemies, people whom it outrages and who are opposed to it” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 27). Capitalism evolves and is legitimized by incorporating its critiques and subsequently developing a new normative order that gives people new assurances bound up with distinct historical states of capitalism. They identify two main critiques of capitalism that have remained relatively consistent over the past two centuries; the artistic critique and the social critique. First, the artistic critique (often supported by bohemians and members of countercultures) views capitalism as a source of disenchantment and inauthenticity of objects, persons, and emotions. The idea is capitalism strips away human meaning and creativity for the sake of standardization and commodification, thus oppressing individual freedom and autonomy. Second, the social critique (often supported by socialists and Marxists) argues capitalism causes poverty and inequality among workers as well as encourages opportunistic and egoistic behaviour that is destructive to social bonds and collective
solidarity. These critiques forced capitalism to change its form throughout three distinguished states of capitalism each with its own justifications for the organization of work: the first spirit of “family capitalism” prevalent in early modern societies; the second spirit of “Fordist industrialism” which emerged in response to the 1929-30 Great Depression; and the current third spirit of capitalism which is linked to the rise of neoliberalism and more flexible/adaptable free market systems. I will briefly describe the first two spirits of capitalism before emphasizing the third spirit of capitalism and its relevance to describing BIA’s organizational structure.

The first spirit of capitalism, also characterized as “family capitalism”, grew out of a critique of rigid social, political, and economic structures of the feudal era. The emergence of commerce and entrepreneurial activity allowed people to choose their social condition (e.g., occupation, social relations, lifestyle, consumable goods, etc.) rather than being fixed by birth to a village. Owners were personally known to their employees and the firm was closely associated with members of a family. The labour market was a site of liberation insofar as it replaced a system of obligation/duty to a king with a system regulated by price where no one was obliged to sell or buy.

Typically coined an era of “Fordist industrialism”, the second spirit of capitalism developed in the aftermath of the Great Depression between the 1930s and 1960s. This spirit promised people security through career prospects, strengthening living-conditions for wage-earners, and a newly formed Keynesian welfare state. Security was also promised by a faith in rational, efficient, and productive large-scale bureaucratic firms that followed a Fordist division of labour. The second spirit of capitalism saw the emergence of “institutional solidarity, the socialization of production, distribution, and consumption, and collaboration between large firms and the state in pursuit of social justice” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 18). More importantly, this spirit was epitomized by the creation of “managers” tasked with supervising and ordering academically qualified staff. Firms operated in a hierarchal fashion
where workers were evaluated by clear and reliable “objectives/targets” as opposed to the first spirits’ emphasis on personal judgements which were viewed as arbitrary and nepotistic.

The mass protests of May-June 1968 in France (similarly the hippie/countercultural movement and Vietnam War protests in the U.S.) is seen as a key moment where the second spirit of capitalism was transformed to the current projective spirit of capitalism. Critiques of the second spirit came from both the artistic and social critique in various institutional settings by a young educated class, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and organizational managers. In short, the social critique demanded greater distributive justice on matters of authority, inequality, and power in the workplace, while the artistic critique demanded autonomy, self-realization, and human creativity in the workplace. People wanted liberation from repetitive and meaningless tasks, the scientific organization of work, and the rationality and hierarchal order of large bureaucratic organizations. Although Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe a wide array of characteristics associated with the current spirit of capitalism (see Chapter 2, p. 103-163), I will expand on three key characteristics of contemporary firms as they relate to BIAs’ organizational function: its anti-hierarchal form, dependence on outside experts, and importance of short-term projects.

First, the new spirit of capitalism adapted to the anti-hierarchal critiques of the second spirit. Contemporary firms no longer have rigid systems with ranked orders but are now comprised of equal knowledge experts who are judged by their contribution to a common task. Today’s firms are therefore organized as a “team” (rather than boss and subordinate) who is mobilized and inspired (rather than directed) by a leader’s vision. The leader of a team is not a boss who gives orders but an inspirational and creative “coach” who can develop skills and potential of people in their team. Rather than giving their team “extrinsic motivations” for performing their work (based on sanctions-rewards), members of a team are expected to be “intrinsically motivated” by having a personal desire to perform work which
they feel inspired to complete alongside a charismatic and enthusiastic leader (see Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 76-80). This is not to say employees fully embrace this new organization of work; rather, organizational leaders often struggle to convince employees to adopt these qualities.

Second, today’s firms are comprised of a “slim core” of in-house teams but are surrounded by a conglomeration of outsourced experts, consultants, services, and subcontractors (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 74). The boundaries of a firm are now blurred as tasks occur in a network of contractual links. It is now valuable to locate sources of information by establishing connections, networks and links with others who have experience in a different domain. It is therefore imperative to put people in contact, redistribute information, integrate into networks, and support/enrich other’s assignments.

Third, people are no longer fulfilled from loyalty and long-term commitment to an organization. Rather, the new spirit of capitalism requires people to adapt and be versatile to a multitude of duties, or “projects”, where they can develop their skills in a way that makes them “employable” (as opposed to possessing an occupation with established qualifications). The new spirit of capitalism does not promise a secure and long-term career but a passage from one project to another; where the success of one project allows people to access different and more interesting projects led by an exceptional leader. Since projects are transient in form, people must multiply their networks to find a succession of projects to work with different people and prove themselves to be open, flexible, and adaptive to new circumstances. The creation of networks is highly valued to the point where people should always have something in the “pipeline” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 110). Those who fail to explore networks are excluded and, in a sense, cease to exist as they cannot locate sources of knowledge from other domains.

In sum, while Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) On Justification provides a theoretical framework to help understand how social actors justify urban revitalization in specific interactional settings,
Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) provide an explanation of how contemporary capitalist organizations like BIA shape its members’ goals, motivations, and values. In addition to studying interactional settings of BIA-related urban policy debates, it is important to understand BIA’s organizational structure insofar as its members’ justifications will be shaped by an organizational logic which reflects the current spirit of capitalism. In this sense, urban policy debates cannot be understood without the larger context of the current spirit of capitalism; specifically, its emphasis on the non-hierarchal organization of work, the knowledge of outside experts, and the endless series of short-term projects. An empirical study of the justification process must therefore consider BIA’s “projective” organizational structure as well as the specific situations where an assemblage of actors come together to discuss the merits of urban revitalization.

**Discursive Institutions**

Critics also argue PSC neglects an analysis of the institutional arrangement of reality tests. It does not explain the fact that social actors do not have equal access to debate because critical capacity is unequally distributed and, in some cases, constrained by institutions (see Bénatouïl, 1999; Holden, Scerri, & Owens, 2013; Lemieux, 2014). This is certainly the case with urban policy debates dominated by privileged social actors (e.g., experts, managers, political representatives) who set and follow institutionalized rules/formats. Boltanski’s (2011) recent book *On Critique* addresses this criticism by somewhat reformulating his and Thévenot’s (2006) *On Justification* framework. It explains how institutional experts have a non-coercive power of legitimacy that constructs reality, limits critique, and sets the parameters for performative operations.

Rather than following the Marxist tradition that conceptualizes institutions as dominant, repressive, and authoritative forms of power, Boltanski (2011) argues institutions are communicative, interwoven with human actors, and subject to critique and contestation. Institutions have a dual role of
providing “semantic security” and imposing “symbolic violence”; that is, they possess a definitional power that attempts to reduce the uncertainty of human experience by establishing, in Boltanski’s (2011, p. 86) words, “the whatness of what is”. For Boltanski, institutions are normatively oriented social arrangements that attempt to fix meanings and values, define and categorize human behaviour, and confirm “what matters” as well as prescribing “what must be done”. In this sense, his conception of institutions extends from Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic violence” where institutions attempt to construct a naturalized, taken-for-granted reality.

However, despite their attempts, Boltanski argues institutions are never able to fully impose reality because they are subject to “the contingency and uncertainty inherent in situations” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 91). Within a liberal democracy, it is impossible to exercise complete control over all contexts and social actions because social actors can contest normative legitimacy and identify injustice arising from the symbolic violence of institutions. This is the crux of what Boltanski (2011, p. 84) calls the “hermeneutic contradiction”; institutionally constructed reality is fragile and unstable because it must cope with a plurality of interpretations of the social world. While institutions desire to speak with authority to solidify reality and restrain alternate standpoints, they can never definitively state “the whatness of what is” insofar as there is continual tension between institutional authority, on the one hand, and the plurality of different points of view, on the other.

The core of the hermeneutic contradiction is that, to make statements about “the whatness of what is”, an institution must be a being without a body. Reality cannot be attributed to any one individual because one’s viewpoint is bound by their own physical body which can never provide a final authoritative answer to whatever is at stake in any given situation. We therefore rely on bodiless entities – that is, institutions – to act as a third party to construct reality and confirm what matters in the social world. However, institutions only exist through people; specifically, those who are authorized to speak
for an institution and are embodied in time and space. For Boltanski, institutions are fictions that are embodied in a situated spokesperson – social actors holding some form of symbolic sign (e.g., uniform, rhetorical phrases, titles, etc.) – who speak in the name of an institution. A spokesperson’s task is to endlessly re-confirm reality through “instances of confirmation”, or “truth tests” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 98). In other words, there is always unease about institutional orders because they endlessly circulate between confirmation (the justification of the status quo) and critique (the mobilization of disputes).

The dominant spokespersons in contemporary institutions, according to Boltanski, are experts, specialists, and managers who attempt to construct reality, on the one hand, and laypersons and ordinary actors who often critique and contest these constructions, on the other. While they claim to engage in open-ended debate, experts control the framing of critiques through a “complex and managerial form of domination” (Boltanski, 2011, p.127); where meaningful conversations and critiques are constrained by claiming there are no alternatives to expert-established rules, technical directives, monitoring systems, audits, and benchmarking. Reflecting the current spirit of capitalism, government leaders claim they have no option but to listen to the advice of experts; thus, offloading responsibility to experts for defining and testing reality. To provide an example, Fuller (2017) explains how institutional experts, specifically city senior and mid-level municipal managers and councillors, successfully justified austerity measures in England. Using Boltanski’s (2011) conceptualization of institutions, Fuller argues these experts formed “discursive institutions” that constructed austerity measures (i.e., reducing the role of the state and imposing financial constraints) as a realistic and practical solution to solving the national debt crisis. Oppositional voices failed to challenge the industrial and market principles of austerity insofar as institutional experts situated themselves as the only ones who understand the complex trends of the market. Furthermore, critique failed because social actors did not highlight the actual impacts of austerity on vulnerable communities in particular places.
Boltanski’s conceptualization of institutions shows how experts attempt to construct and perform historically and spatially configured discursive institutions. That said, he provides little guidance on how PSC sociologists are to study the parameters of an institution. As Susen (2014a) argues, it is unclear whether Boltanski sees institutions as structural entities, relational arrangements, cognitive projections, or some combination of these. For the purpose of my study, I define an institution as a relational arrangement of spokespersons (e.g., BIA Manager/CEO, city planners, expert consultants, etc.) and ordinary actors who endlessly circulate between the constructed realities of experts, on the one hand, and the views from laypersons/ordinary actors, on the other. As Boltanski et al. (2014) explain, a bad institution is one that has lost all connection with ordinary people’s local experiences and reality, while a good institution recognizes its limitations and is open to alternative viewpoints. In my case, I will examine the extent to which the BIA assemblage enhance or restrict institutionally-created reality tests (e.g., community consultations, public participation meetings, etc.) and whether the voices of ordinary people are acknowledged during the revitalization decision-making process. Rather than assuming social actors have equal access to practice their critical capacity within specific situations, Boltanski’s (2011) On Critique supplements the PSC framework by providing key insights on how institutions set the parameters for social actors’ performative operations.

4.4 Urban Studies and Pragmatic Sociology of Critique

Reflecting a wider “normative turn” in human geography (see Barnett, 2014), there is an emerging group of urban scholars who use PSC to understand how “sociospatial relations are constructed and produced” through deliberative processes of argumentation (Fuller, 2014, p. 654). There are now several studies that examine the tensions that unfold around city development projects across numerous countries, including Canada (Holden & Scerri, 2015; Scott, 2016), England (Fuller, 2012; Giulianotti & Langseth, 2016), Australia (Holden, Scerri, & Esfahani, 2015; Scerri, 2014), Russia (Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013), Poland and Germany (Kurnicki & Sternberg, 2016), Finland (Eranti, 2017; Gladarev &
Lonkila, 2013; Salminen, 2018), and Denmark (Blok & Meilvang, 2015). While urban scholars are embracing PSC to help explain contemporary urban issues, these studies are almost exclusively grounded in Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) *On Justification* framework and rarely engage with Boltanski’s insights on the spirit of capitalism and discursive institutions. Nevertheless, this section describes the existing literature that incorporates PSC with urban studies. More specifically, these studies focus on two urban conflicts: 1) land-use conflicts concerning the redevelopment of natural environments (namely green spaces, parks, and waterfronts) into apartments, highways, dams, and post-industrial waterfront complexes; and 2) the redevelopment of publicly-owned land (namely public housing and community facilities) into more privatized and gentrified areas. After describing these two bodies of work, I conclude by offering insights on how PSC can help analyze BIA-related urban policy debates.

**Land-Use Conflicts Over Green Space**

The first body of literature uses PSC to understand the unfolding of land-use conflicts, mostly involving the redevelopment of the natural environment and, hence, the study of green justifications in particular. These studies argue land-use conflicts are prominent because developments in “pristine” and remote “natural” areas often mobilizes activist groups across a wide range of national boundaries who challenge the merits of the development, thus requiring pro-developers to justify their actions (Thévenot, Moody, & Lafaye, 2000). For example, unlike the traditional NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) literature that portrays local activists as acting on selfish and individualistic interests (see Wexler, 1996), Eranti (2017) shows how letters written by local residents to local officials in Finland challenged the development of a luxury high-rise apartment by arguing on domestic and civic principles. That is, residents based their criticisms by arguing green space draw locals together (domestic worth) and that not all voices and interests have been taken into account throughout the decision-making process of the proposed development (civic worth).
Other studies show how different grammars of worth in land-use conflicts are played out across national boundaries (Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013; Thévenot, Moody, & Lafaye, 2000). For example, different grammars of worth were presented in separate land-use conflicts in Russia and Finland; with activists in Russia challenging the legality of developing an apartment complex with no permit and that the green space was originally developed by local residents (civic and domestic worth), while activists in Finland disputed with city officials about alternative ways to develop an efficient highway through a park (industrial worth) (Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013).

While these studies importantly show how these so-called NIMBY debates are premised on more than selfish and individualistic interests and, in fact, involve various appeals to broader common goods, the studies describe the content of justifications and simply conclude that competing justifications exist in land-use conflicts. It is more useful, as Jagd (2011) suggests, to provide an analysis beyond mere descriptions of justifications and begin to unravel how and why some worths are more readily justified, why some worths are more open to critique, and why some worths are formed into compromises.

A few other studies provide an analysis of land-use conflicts that go beyond mere description by providing a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis. These studies argue the redevelopment of green spaces often result in fragile compromises between green and market justifications (see Nyberg & Wright, 2012). This is because cities are increasingly redeveloping green spaces in order to be internationally perceived as clean and green so as to attract consumers and investors; thereby transferring the green worth into a market worth where environmental sustainability initiatives are assessed in terms of profits and shareholder value (Blok, 2012; Nyberg & Wright, 2012). This is why land-use conflicts are common insofar as green worth is often compromised with market worth, thus opening the door to criticisms as the compromise remains fragile. For example, Blok and Meilvang (2015) show how a post-industrial waterfront development in Denmark was open to conflict as developers justified the project on
a basis of a green, market, and civic compromise. This opened the door for grassroots and non-
governmental organizations (namely outdoor enthusiasts, cyclists, and environmentalists) to criticize the
development on the basis that it threatens the local habitat (green worth) and disturbs local urban habits
like morning walks and sunset viewing (domestic and inspired worth). Activists posted various images
on social media to portray the site as a natural green space, including images of wildlife, beautiful
grasslands, and people enjoying sunsets (Blok & Meilvang, 2015, p. 27-29). These images allowed
activists to express residents’ embodied attachments to the current site, qualities that would be ruined by
the development. Despite their efforts, however, the conflict between the developers and activists
revolved around industrial tests where only the coordination of plans and standards were discussed and
debated, thereby limiting activists’ criticisms.

While Blok and Meilvang (2015) show how activist efforts were ultimately constrained by
industrial processes, Holden and Scerri (2015) present an example of a land-use conflict where local
activists successfully achieved a compromise with developers. Using a waterfront development in
Vancouver as a case study, they show how local activists successfully formed a resident coalition into a
working group where they engaged in monthly meetings to provide opportunities of dialogue with the
City Planning Department (a compromise between civic and industrial worth). In other words, they
successfully mobilized a civic test that challenged the development’s pro-market values by attaching
various grammars of worth to the plans. This allowed the group to challenge who the development was
being built for; with the innovative design (inspirational world) being questioned for its functionality
(industrial worth), while others challenged whether these designs benefit local residents (domestic
worth) or merely support business interests (market worth). In the end, the groups reached a compromise
where the design made room for affordable housing and more environmentally friendly infrastructure. In
sum, these studies importantly show how arguments are constrained, how some establish fragile compromises, and how some are successfully challenged.

**Redeveloping Public Space**

The second body of literature uses PSC to understand the redevelopment of public spaces into more privatized and gentrified areas. These studies emphasize how market justifications often dominate over others. Although these are still characterized as land-use conflicts to some extent, they do not involve debates over the use of green space and, therefore, green justifications are, for the most part, nonexistent. Instead, the focus is on the heterogeneous and contextualized values that underpin processes of argumentation of urban governing practices (see Fuller, 2013). These debates tend to involve calls to enhance social-welfare to make lives better for marginalized populations who are increasingly silenced by pro-market justifications.

Tensions between civic and market justifications are common in many urban planning settings. As Fuller (2012, 2013) explains, private economic actors, on the one hand, tend to justify urban revitalization plans using market values (e.g., pro-growth, individual responsibility, risk-taking, and competition), while, on the other hand, anti-development groups voice their counterarguments by advocating for civic values (e.g. the reduction of social polarization, enhancing public services, and supporting social-welfare policies). For example, focusing on state-led gentrification of a lower-class neighbourhood in an anonymous English city, Fuller (2012) shows how state actors present arguments justifying the role of the free market for creating the best benefits for existing lower-class residents. The free market is framed as providing social housing, community facilities, and public services at a much larger and efficient way than the nation state can deliver, despite the redevelopment reducing social housing by about 700 homes and introducing more expensive owner-occupied units. In this sense, the state presents a “deconcentration thesis” (see August, 2014; Imbroscio, 2008) by asserting that
introducing a more affluent class to the neighbourhood brings in “good citizens” who can civilize the poor.

Along similar lines, Scerri (2014) shows how the development of a private school on public land was met with opposition in Melbourne, Australia. While pro-development groups argued the school would provide after-school programs that would benefit the local community (namely book groups and language classes), anti-development groups struggled to justify their abstract arguments that pro-developers were sucking public funds and stealing public space for an emerging Australian middle-class. Giullanotti and Langseth (2016) similarly show how civic justifications are simply ignored during Olympic bidding processes. As the authors argue, the national government, event sponsors, and sport bodies during the bid for the London 2012 Olympics strategically incorporated possible criticisms from other grammars of worth in their original justifications. When discussions took place, they were mostly held at the market, reputational, and domestic grammars of worth, while avoiding civic discussions in order to avoid activists’ concerns regarding the actual collective good the Olympics would bring to the city. As these studies show, urban governance debates are often dominated by market tests and justifications that tend to silence civic calls for social equality, fairness, and welfare.

With that said, not all urban governance debates are dominated by state and private-led actors with market concerns. Holden, Scerri, and Esfahani (2015), for example, argue a new test of “urbanity” arises after a redevelopment plan is considered a “neoliberal failure”. This new “urbanity” worth becomes a way to evaluate actions toward a common good in the wake of publicly deemed urban failures. They show how new kinds of compromises and tests arise by which future development projects are to be judged. In their case example of the docklands in Melbourne, Australia, the authors show how local residents criticized the development in the following ways: its sole focus on short-term profits (market critique), that the developments’ efficient processes lacked civic representation (civic critique),
that developers ignored residents and, instead, privileged visions for tourists and the business class (domestic critique), that the development became a soulless place apart from an otherwise thriving city (inspirational critique), the emphasis on making Melbourne a global stage was deemed an insufficient criterion for success (reputational critique), not being a genuinely environmental friendly area but simply marketed as such (green critique), and preference given to global capitalism over local needs (projective critique). In short, these criticisms create a demand for new compromises and revisions of future urban plans.

To provide another, perhaps more unconventional, example of how market justifications do not always prevail in urban policy debates, Kurnicki and Sternberg (2016) show how residents in three Polish-German border towns reconciled their national differences by transcending national conflicts through grassroots cooperative place-making strategies. For decades, the local populations of these mixed-nationality border towns faced uncertainty and seemingly irreconcilable differences at a general institutional level insofar as urban redevelopment stalled due to a long history of physical division, ongoing economic stagnation, and previous failed attempts to resolve tensions at the national level (what the authors coin “arrested conflict”). Local residents of both nationalities, however, overcame these constraints by forming commonly acceptable socio-spatial relations through the preservation of various heritage sites. The Polish-German residents overcame their national differences by developing their own situations of conflict and renegotiation to create novel approaches to local circumstances. Rather than relying on larger powers to solve their local disputes, residents demonstrated their critical capacities by engaging in constructive disputes and negotiating a common ground to change the urban setting in times when institutional/state support was absent. In sum, this body of literature emphasizes how and why market world justifications often dominate during urban governance debates. That said, other studies
paint a more positive picture where social actors were able to successfully challenge urban governance arrangements.

Despite the growing number of urban studies using PSC, none of them focus on BIAs. What is novel about my study is not that it presents BIAs as a new object of study, but that it introduces new forms of justifications, conflicts, and compromises that may unfold as a result of different objects, beings, and qualities social actors draw upon. As explained in the previous chapter, BIAs may present new types of moral issues that social actors struggle over, including the “proper” treatment of urban poor and the implementation of the creative cities agenda. However, these are unexplored in the existing PSC urban studies research.

BIAs may also bring about interesting compromises and tensions among an assemblage of actors working to revitalize urban spaces. BIAs are just one actor in a network of consultants, city administration, private developers, residents, and businesses who come together to discuss the merits of their respective visions and interests. The relationships within these networks may pose new and interesting conflicts that have been largely unexplored in the literature. More than just land-use conflicts between pro-development and anti-development groups, urban politics involving BIAs are sure to involve complex and socially sensitive issues. Although discussions about urban revitalization may not typically spark the type of activism described earlier, it will be interesting to see if any type of collective movements are aimed against BIA revitalization efforts.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to present a theoretical framework to understand the process of justification. I argued PSC can help explain the justificatory logics that underly BIA-related revitalization discussions. It can explain how the wider BIA assemblage form agreements on the proper course of action for managing homeless people and the implementation of the creative cities agenda.
Rather than assuming social actors have predisposed interests and values that shape their views and behaviour, PSC demonstrates how urban policy debates are never predictable insofar as people have the critical capacity to evaluate the merits of one another’s plans and visions by referring to a plurality of common goods. In this sense, PSC’s overriding theme is that social actors are not deluded or passive agents, but conscious social actors capable of denouncing everyday injustices of capitalist societies or, conversely, advancing the interests in capitalist enterprise.

As I explained, I will analyze the justification process by focusing on three interrelated processes in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. First, I will study interactional settings where social actors discuss the merits of their proposed actions. This entails an understanding of the specific grammars they use during the course of a debate. However, this analysis must move beyond mere descriptions of justifications and begin to explain how and why agreements, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises unfold. Second, the process of justification cannot be studied in isolation from extra-local processes that shape human actions and motivations. I will therefore examine the extent to which BIAs reflect the characteristics of the current spirit of capitalism; specifically, its emphasis on the non-hierarchal organization of work, the knowledge of outside experts, and the endless series of short-term projects. That is, I will examine how BIA members form ethical motivations to engage in neoliberal urban production (e.g., profit maximization, responding to consumer demand, commodifying urban space, etc.). Third, I will consider the extent to which the BIA assemblage form discursive institutions where experts attempt to construct appropriate solutions to urban problems while simultaneously restricting alternative visions. Rather than assuming social actors have equal access to engage in dispute, it is imperative to understand the opportunities they have to exercise their critical capacity within institutional settings. Taken together, PSC demands sociologists analyze the macro-institutional arrangement as well as performative micropractices.
Contemporary urban studies grounded in the PSC framework demonstrate the framework’s theoretical and methodological utility to urban studies. While some studies describe the content of various justifications mobilized by certain social actors across national boundaries (Eranti, 2017; Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013), other studies offer a more robust analysis that highlights how compromises are made and under what circumstances debates and conflicts unfold (Blok, 2012; Blok & Meilvang, 2015; Holden and Scerri, 2015; Fuller, 2012; Nyberg & Wright, 2012) among many others). It is important to grasp not only how different grammars of worth are embodied in urban disputes but also how public forums, city council deliberations, urban policy reports, and the media have tangible effects upon urban redevelopment plans. Public issues and arguments may bring about different results, different justifications, and different frames of reference. All in all, the pragmatic sociology of critique offers an innovative framework to understand how justifications are made, why conflicts occur, how compromises are formed, and why some issues are ignored altogether.

Now that I have established my theoretical framework, the next chapter provides practical methodological tools to study the justification process. It will also explain the specific data-collection methods and mode of analysis used in this study. This will be followed by case studies documenting the revitalization in two BIA spaces in London, Ontario (Downtown London BIA and Old East Village BIA).
5. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological approach used to study the justification process. Given the emphasis PSC places on the way social actors see, understand, and interpret their social world, qualitative research methods are most appropriate for my study. Because few practical methodological guidelines for studying justification are found in existing PSC work, much of this study’s methodology is borrowed from the well-established constructivist research tradition, particularly symbolic interactionism and grounded theory (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2001, Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Similar to PSC, constructivist methodologies provide a micro-oriented perspective that acknowledge social actors’ reflexivity and their ability to interpret and practically engage with the social world. This is not to suggest these research traditions are entirely compatible with the PSC’s epistemological premises. The first section of this chapter therefore contrasts the epistemological principles of constructivism and PSC. I show how the former treats justifications (and most social processes for that matter) as localized, situation-specific achievements while the latter argues justifications are contingent on socio-historically constructed orders (i.e., grammars of worth) which are mobilized within but transcend situational contexts. This is a key distinction that must be considered throughout the data collection and analysis stage. The second section provides a brief explanation of this study’s key empirical focus; that is, socially constructed “proofs” actors draw upon during reality tests. Proofs are social objects (e.g., physical objects, human beings, ideas, time formation, etc.) people use to solidify their viewpoint in accordance to a specific grammar of worth. The third section outlines this study’s sample as well as the specific data-collection strategies, including participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. The fourth section explains the steps taken throughout data analysis to uncover the general principles of the respective grammars of worth.
5.1 Epistemological Considerations

While sociologists often present detailed descriptions of their data-collection methods, few actually explain how their methods are tied to the epistemological assumptions embedded in their theoretical framework (Avis, 2003; Carter & Little, 2007). As Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain, theoretical frameworks reflect four paradigmatic belief systems/worldviews that guide data-collection techniques: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Each has distinct ontological (the form and nature of reality), epistemological (the sources of knowledge), and methodological (techniques used to discover “the known”) assumptions that lay the foundation for any research study. As I explain, PSC incorporates key elements from critical theory and constructivism. Although scholars argue PSC’s epistemological premises resemble constructivism given the emphasis on human agency, language, and sense-making (see Basaure, 2011; Gadinger, 2016; Nachi, 2014; Silber, 2003), PSC also has a structuralist orientation insofar as social actors’ interpretations are structured by the grammars of worth.

Perhaps not directly stated, the previous chapter described some of PSC’s core ontological, epistemological, and methodological precepts. While PSC emphasizes its ontological and epistemological standpoints, there is little discussion about practical data-collection techniques to examine social actors’ critical capacities.14 This likely reflects Boltanski’s skepticism of privileging scientific inquiry over the critical capacities of ordinary actors. I argue, however, there should be well

14 The only time they mention methodology is in relation to the way they developed the justification model. This does not offer practical data-collection techniques but rather broadly explains that their justification model is based on the reading of various philosophical and theological traditions as well as behavioural and managerial handbooks. This provides the details of how they formulated their research program rather than a detailed methodological description of how to study the unfolding of reality tests.
defined methods to capture and understand social actors’ critical capacities. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) avoid discussions about methodology by claiming that, to fully understand the process of justification, sociologists should not create an epistemic break between ordinary and academic knowledge. Thus, any claim that sociologists can develop methodological techniques to study social interactions implies that they can disconnect themselves from practical settings and act as objective observers. Interestingly, Boltanski’s (2011) later work develops the notion of “metacritique”, arguing sociologists can and should critique the social order by assuming a standpoint apart from social reality to delve deeper into the way social actors draw upon grammars of worth during a reality test. In this sense, Boltanski (2011, p. 43) makes “critical sociology and sociology of critique compatible” by allowing sociologists to unmask oppression, exploitation, and domination to reveal and denounce the arbitrary character of social reality. That said, he does not propose any practical methodologies to achieve these tasks.

Social scientists must certainly move beyond daily, on-the-ground practices of ordinary social actors in order to adopt an external point of view to assess the unequal distribution of critical capacity and reality tests. As a sociologist, the fact that I recognize the socio-historically constructed grammars of worth, the spirit of capitalism, and discursive institutional power suggests that I have an academic standpoint in contrast to ordinary knowledge. Having specific data-collection methods can strengthen metacritique by providing a systemic way to examine the justification process; thus, providing methodological tools to help social scientists shift between theory (grammars of worth, spirit of capitalism, discursive institutions) and practice (commonplace disputes between social actors).

From a methodological standpoint, metacritique requires sociologists to be attentive to social actors’ critical capacities. Any metacritique of social reality must therefore be embedded in the ordinary practices of actors. These cannot be understood from an objective standpoint alone but must be internally
related to social actors’ interpretations. Thus, researchers need to understand the content of what social actors say during a reality test. At the same time, social actors’ critical capacities are shaped by existing socio-historically constructed grammars of worth which, according to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), social actors can change by collectively critiquing existing orders and forming new ones. That is, sociologists must engage in a metacritique that simultaneously considers practical social interactions as well as the multiplicity of grammars in which social action is shaped, thereby combining elements of structuralism and pragmatism. As Boltanski explains:

> Are actors thrown into an already constructed world, in which possibilities of action are extremely limited (as in structuralism)? Or, should we start from the actors’ perspective and their situational world-constitutive practices (as in pragmatism and ethnomethodology)? Both descriptions are correct. Of course, actors experiencing concrete situations are not only exposed to an already constructed world, but they also change it. (Boltanski et al. 2014, p. 571)

The study of justification therefore requires sensitivity to both structuralist and constructivist orientations. On the one hand, PSC is similar to ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism insofar as they all place epistemological primacy on social actors’ agentic potential (see Prus, 1996). For example, the notion of “reality test” resembles Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionist premise that social actors are active agents capable of constructing and reconstructing meanings as they interact with one another. On the other hand, PSC resembles structuralism insofar as grammars of worth are socio-historical structures that are external to social actors. Unlike the Marxist tradition, the grammars of worth do not represent a dominant ideology where social actors are inhabited by forces that escape their consciousness; rather, social actors can successfully challenge, critique, and change grammars of worth (although not all social actors are equally equipped to do so). Highlighting their dual constructivist and structuralist focus, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005, p. xii) explain that PSC acknowledges the “supra-individual entities” that affect a large number of people over a long period of time (i.e., the spirit of capitalism and institutions), as well as intentional actions and normativity.
In sum, similar to Bourdieu’s critical sociology, PSC sees structures as having a “double life” where they exist objectively through systems of classification and subjectively through social actors’ critical capacity. While PSC’s starting point is everyday situations that are open to negotiation and contestation, these are never just localized, situation-specific achievements arising out of social interactions; rather, they are always linked to macro-structural elements that are mobilized within but transcend situational contexts. That is, the justifications and criticisms social actors present during reality tests are contained within eight grammars of worth that have emerged in liberal democracies. While constructivist methodologies can help examine social actors’ critical capacities in localized/situational settings, the data-collection and analysis process must take into consideration that justifications are always tied to historically-rooted orders, a specific state of capitalism, and institutional arrangements that structure social action.

5.2 Proofs and Social Objects

PSC’s main empirical focus is on socially constructed “proofs”. As I explain, these closely resemble the phenomenological notion of “stocks of knowledge” and social constructivist view of language. In brief, social actors use socially constructed proofs to justify their actions and defend against alternative viewpoints. This does not imply a relativist premise where social actors have endless and insoluble relations; rather, social actors attempt to form consensus in order to reduce uncertainty. Thus, social actors attempt to establish “truth” during a reality test by attempting to convince others that their interpretation of reality is “right”, “legitimate”, “correct”, and so on. Each grammar of worth has its own unique set of proofs social actors draw upon during a reality test. The presentation of an acceptable proof must be tied to a generalized principle of a specific worth (e.g., originality of the inspirational worth, loyalty of the domestic worth, etc.). It is the task of the sociologist to be attentive to the unfolding of these proofs, tie them to their respective grammar of worth, and see how social actors form disagreements, agreements, and compromises during a dispute. The sociologist must also decide which
interactions are appropriate to study in order to capture successful justifications and critiques. In the context of my study, city council deliberations, public participation meetings, and community consultation meetings are appropriate to study because these are interactional settings where social actors justify and critique revitalization plans.

Proofs closely resemble Schutz’s (1967 [1932]) notion of “stocks of knowledge.” As he explains, social actors draw upon common stocks of knowledge while navigating their way through various situations. Berger and Luckmann (1966), whose work reflects Schutz’s phenomenological tradition, provide a succinct explanation of this notion:

Language is capable of “making present” a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally and socially absent from the “here and now”… Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of “bringing back” these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements of everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents to the reality of everyday life and the commonplace apprehensions of this reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 39-40).

The close connection to social constructivism is unsurprising because, as Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, p. 17) explain, their justification framework “aims at dynamic realism in that it seeks to bring the work of construction to light without reducing reality to a purely labile and local agreement about meaning”.

Both social constructivism and PSC treat language as a medium of interaction. However, more than just a local activity, PSC sees language as always tied to socio-historically created grammars of worth that exist beyond the particularities of a situation. Using Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) words, grammars of worth are specific sets of language that are “highly abstracted from everyday experience”. Social actors attempt to “bring back” abstract principles by demonstrating their practicality through “objectively real elements of everyday life”. The main task of a sociologist using PSC is to examine how social actors use proofs to solidify their viewpoint and manage different interpretations. This does not mean all proofs are
equal in value; the weight of a particular “proof” depends on the reality test in question, how well a social actor can defend against criticisms, and the institutional setting under which the reality test is taking place.

While proofs are socially constructed during a reality test, successful justifications/critiques (ones that are unquestioned and/or mobilize material changes) can make these social constructs appear as objective facts. This is done by drawing upon various social objects throughout the course of a reality test. These can range from physical objects, human beings, individual qualities, ideas, or time formations; each depends on the particular grammar of worth in question. For example, a relevant market proof can be demonstrated through things like a budget or contract (tangible objects), a consumer or entrepreneur (human being), a concern with short-term profit gains (time formation), a search for personal opportunities (specific investment), or when one stresses the importance of general principles like having a competitive marketplace or defending self-interests (individual qualities). Given their focus on local economic development, BIAs’ ultimate goal is to create an economically competitive commercial area measured by various market proofs such as retail sales, property values, and increases in the tax base. Since social actors will not explicitly refer to the grammars of worth, it is the task of the researcher to engage in metacritique to uncover and interpret how social actors draw upon these proofs during a reality test.

Proofs are therefore “facts” that are true for a particular grammar of worth. Given the multiplicity of justifications social actors can draw upon at any moment, the validity of proofs can be challenged, as explained in the previous chapter, internally within a grammar of worth (an argument), externally from another world (a critique), or by merging the qualities of proofs from two separate worths (a

15 A detailed summary of social objects for each grammar of worth is presented in the tables in the previous chapter.
compromise). Since proofs can be contested and negotiated, social actors must attribute an appropriate degree of "worth" to their respective proofs to solidify justifications/critiques. This relies on "the way in which one expresses, embodies, understands, or represents" social objects (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, p. 132). In other words, the validity of proofs depends on the sophistication and critical capacities social actors employ during a reality test.

To summarize, a research study grounded in PSC must be attentive to the way social actors practice their critical capacities to solidify their proofs. Despite their epistemological differences, PSC can borrow from the well-established methodologies advanced by the constructivist tradition as it provides practical and systemic ways to empirically examine proofs during localized social interactions. However, unlike constructivism, these locally produced meanings must be tied to the socio-historically constructed grammars of worth.

5.3 Data-Collection Methods

Ethnographic research methodologies allow sociologists to achieve intimate familiarity with the life-worlds of those under study (Prus, 1996). These are appropriate methods for a study rooted in PSC because, as Gonzalez and Kaufmann (2012, p. 59) explain, "only a fine-grained ethnographical approach can account for the concrete, practical adjustments, improvisations, micro-inquiries and critical disagreements that characterize the pluralist way persons deal with the world around them". I use "ethnography" as an umbrella term that combines various methodological elements to study social interactions, including participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis (Prus, 1996). Combining these methods allowed me to not only understand the actual unfolding of critique and justification, but also how the grammars of worth were employed in different social contexts.

Before describing my sample and three data-collection methods (participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis), I would like to make a quick note about how my positionality has
influenced my study. I acknowledge that I have my own views and experiences that have shaped the decisions I made throughout the research process. While my empirical focus is on the ways BIA members make normative claims about urban revitalization, I also have my own personal moral stance on the urban revitalization process which influenced my analysis. Growing up in a low-income immigrant family has made me sympathetic toward marginalized populations. Through my various volunteer positions at community organizations across London, I have also seen the difficulties and barriers marginalized groups face on a day-to-day basis. I therefore tend to support a social-welfarist approaches aimed at reducing the structural roots or urban marginality. This viewpoint has certainly influenced my interpretation of BIAs’ role in urban governance as well as my expectations of how marginalized groups should be treated.

The Sample

I used a purposive sampling strategy to examine the justification process of BIA members in two commercial neighbourhoods; the Downtown London BIA (DLBIA) and the Old East Village BIA (OEVbia). In the case of each neighbourhood, I contacted three different groups for my study. The most important group was the BIA board whose members are elected by the local business constituency. This also includes the local city council member and, in some cases, a municipal urban planning expert. The second group was the BIA professional staff whose sole job is to manage the day-to-day operations of the organization, including finance, marketing, and public relations. Staff work closely with the board to establish the direction and future of the BIA. The third group was community association members who often work closely with BIAs on various revitalization strategies (see Rankin & Delaney, 2011). These are usually non-profit organizations representing the residents of the community or, in other cases, city staff working in community development.
With my sample selected, I then identified situations where these various groups engaged in reality tests. First, the most obvious setting was city council deliberations where BIA staff routinely interacted with city councillors for various purposes, including annual updates and requests for funding and resources. Another setting includes public consultation meetings such as when BIAs revealed their revitalization plans or consulted the public on proposed future developments. For example, BIA leaders often spoke at city council meetings to persuade councillors to fund a project or support a BIA-related initiative. It is in these settings that BIA leaders, councillors, and city staff disputed the appropriateness of funding a project and/or the merits of a BIA-led initiative. Similarly, public consultation meetings also constituted reality tests insofar as members of the public could dispute a BIA plan by writing their comments on a “comment card”. These settings allowed me to document justifications through any images, videos, and general information presented by the BIA. Second, I created my own reality test among BIA members by conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Interviews constitute reality tests insofar these provided an opportunity for me to challenge and question BIA visions, plans, and interests, thereby requiring BIA members to justify their standpoint. Interviews also allowed me to gain a better understanding of BIAs’ organizational logic and values. Most of all, interviews allowed me to speak directly with research participants and gain insight on issues that may not have been addressed in other data. Third, I examined various BIA-related documents. While documents are not reality tests per se, they are constructed materials (e.g., urban planning reports, brochures, images, videos) that attempt to justify the merits of a future plan. I will describe each of these data-collection strategies below.

A list of my data is provided in table 5.1. It should be noted my participant observation at the listed city council meetings, community consultations, and public information meetings were not random. These were all in relation to ongoing urban revitalization discussions involving the respective BIA (between 2015-2018); specifically, the Dundas Place redevelopment in downtown London and the
residential planning process in the Old East Village. I then gathered urban planning documents and PowerPoint slides which were attached to the respective city council meeting minutes webpage as well as online media articles that were relevant to these revitalization discussions. Some interviews took place a few months before the actual decision-making process at city council while others took place a few months after.

**Participant Observation**

As Holden et al. (2013, p. 6) explain, the justification process occurs in “the backdrop of a spatially, temporally and socially situated reality.” In my study, these realities occurred in two main settings: public meetings and city council deliberations. Observing these situations was superior to merely interviewing participants or analyzing documents because it allowed me to observe the situation as it actually unfolded (Becker & Geer, 1957). There are three main benefits of using this approach. First, it allowed me to observe situations where justifications influenced key decision-making processes over material resources (e.g., funding, expertise, by-law enactment, tangible changes to the urban environment, etc.). In other words, it allowed me to observe settings where “winning” or “losing” the justification game had real consequences. Second, it allowed me to observe any potential critiques advanced by non-BIA groups within the situation (e.g., city council and community members). Third, it gave me detailed content I could refer to during the interview process.

Public meetings and city council deliberations are ideal settings to study the circuits, networks, and webs where urban policy and associated discourses are made visible (McCann & Ward, 2012). Indeed, these settings are:

…situations in which policy knowledge is mobilized and assembled… They are relational sites where the past, present, and potential future of a policy can coexist. Past ‘successes’, current ‘problems’, and future ‘scenarios’ are discussed comparatively, conditioning and shaping the paths or tracks along which policies will move (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 47)
In other words, these social settings are ripe for studying the justification process. I will explain public meetings and city council deliberations separately given I used different techniques to observe these settings.

First, while the BIA formally organized some public meetings, other meetings included BIA stakeholders but were put together by local non-profits, private developers, or the municipality. Finding out about these meetings was difficult as there was not a central forum where they were announced, nor was it obvious if the BIA was involved to begin with. Thus, it was necessary for me to search multiple forums to find out about BIA-related public meetings. One of the best sources was BIA Facebook group pages which periodically posted announcements on upcoming public meetings. In other cases, the local news media occasionally announced these events. I attended all public meetings between January 2017 and June 2018 that discussed urban policy issues in the respective BIA jurisdiction.

There was no standard BIA-related public meeting. Some meetings were facilitated by third-party organizations while other meetings were organized by the city and/or BIA staff who presented detailed information to the public about a BIA-related revitalization project. Given these meetings were open to the public, I blended in with the natural flow as there were many community members present. That said, while I maintained a low profile at the first few public meetings, this was increasingly difficult once I built rapport with BIA members through interviews. Many BIA members recognized and approached me to ask about my ongoing research. Rather than awkwardly writing field notes in front of BIA members, I chose to write them once I returned to my vehicle and would type them out on my laptop when I returned home.

Second, city council meetings were another setting where BIA members engaged in reality tests. Most of these discussions took place with the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee or the Planning and Environment Committee. It was in these settings BIA leaders either received delegation status to
## Table 5.1. List of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>Downtown London BIA (DLBIA)</th>
<th>Old East Village BIA (OEVBIA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>3 BIA staff members</td>
<td>2 BIA staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 BIA board members</td>
<td>4 BIA board members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 community association members</td>
<td>2 community association members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Observation</strong></td>
<td>Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (October 26, 2015)</td>
<td>Planning and Environment Committee (March 2, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (March 21, 2016)</td>
<td>Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (September 26, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (October 25, 2016)</td>
<td>Community information meeting for 100 Kellogg St. (September 14, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Belong Downtown, workshop facilitated by the Canadian Urban Institute (November 6, 2017)</td>
<td>Public participation meeting for 1039-1047 Dundas St. (January 31, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dundas Place public information meeting (November 8, 2017)</td>
<td>Community information meeting for 809 Dundas St. (March 29, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning and Environment Committee (April 3, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community information meeting for Old East Village Dundas Street Corridor Secondary Plan (June 27, 2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
present to city councillors, spoke during public participation meetings, or made legally required annual BIA updates. Unlike BIA-related public meetings, I observed city council deliberations through videos posted on the municipal website. While being present at these meetings would have been ideal, this was not always practical because these meetings spanned close to five hours without much indication as to when BIA members would be speaking. The municipal website was quite handy in this regard it provided a direct link that took me to the exact moment when BIA members were speaking. Unlike first-hand observations and field notes, watching videos provided the flexibility to replay certain parts of the interaction that may have been missed in first-hand observations (Grimshaw, 1982). It also allowed me to gather verbatim quotations as I could simply replay and transcribe the recording. As Erickson (1982) recommends, rather than transcribe the entire video, I made copious notes and reviewed smaller segments that were relevant for analysis.

In addition to observing BIA leaders speak at council meetings, I observed citizens who spoke during public participation meetings. These are regulated by the Ontario Planning Act and by policies in the City’s Official Plan. Public participation meetings take place at the Planning and Environment Committee whenever it considers a development application, including amendments to the City’s Official Plan or amendments to Zoning By-laws. According to the Ontario Planning Act, municipal councils must give the public as much information as possible when preparing official plans and must hold a public open house to let the public review, ask questions, and provide suggestions about the plan. Council must hold at least one public meeting and provide a copy of the proposed plan in advance of the

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16 https://www.london.ca/pages/meetingresults.aspx?s=council
17 See https://www.london.ca/business/PlanningDevelopment/participating/Pages/PublicInput.aspx
public meeting. Notice about public meetings must be given at least 20 days ahead of time through local newspaper or by mail.

Anyone can attend the public participation meeting and speak and/or provide a written comment about the proposed plan. The City planning staff present the planning report prior to the public participation meeting. The applicant (the developer or its consultant) then describes the proposal and explains the rationale for wanting to carry it out. The Chair of the Planning and Environment Committee then invites input from members of the public in attendance. Speakers are asked to provide their name and address and to identify any group they may be representing (e.g., community association, business organization, non-profit organization, etc.). Their comments become part of the public record and placed on a public agenda made available electronically through the City of London website. After public input has been received, the applicant has the opportunity for rebuttal. The planning staff then clarify matters that have been raised. Lastly, the Committee votes on the proposal. If the public is not happy with the final decision, the public can appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal for a public hearing.

Accessing the Sample for Interviews

One-on-one interviews allowed me to directly ask BIA members about their justifications for revitalization. I made initial contact with a professional staff member from the DLBIA named “Megan” (pseudonym) in June 2016. After explaining that my project intended to shed light on BIA revitalization, she seemed eager to participate in my study. After conducting my interview with her at the DLBIA main office, she introduced me to her BIA staff colleagues. She explained to them that I just finished interviewing her for my dissertation and she recommended I interview them as well. Two BIA staff

18 See https://www.ontario.ca/document/citizens-guide-land-use-planning/planning-act#section-0
members handed me their business cards (Cindy and Rachel) and told me to contact them to schedule an interview for the following week.

I was pleased how seamless it was to gain interview participants from the DLBIA professional staff. After conducting interviews with other staff members, I contacted DLBIA board members via email. After interviewing a few board members, it became clear my ongoing research project was well known within the DLBIA board of management. One of my participants even said my name was mentioned in a recent board meeting. Overall, my experience accessing participants from the DLBIA was relatively straightforward. BIA members seemed excited I was shedding light on their BIA.

After interviewing and transcribing these interviews, I contacted OEVBIA members in January 2017. Unlike my experience with the DLBIA, tracking down the list of active OEVBIA members was a less straightforward process as they did not have an operating website. I nevertheless attained the list by searching the 2014 City council minute reports that explicitly listed the names of the appointed board members. After attaining their contact information via web search, I was able to secure just two interviews from active board members; one of them being a short telephone interview with “James” and a face-to-face interview with “Alexandra” (pseudonyms).

My interview with Alexandra provided some important insights about the OEVBIA. It became evident that there were deep-seated tensions among the members; a somewhat unsurprising finding given smaller BIAAs tend to have more internal discord compared to larger ones (Gross, 2005, 2013). She said most of the OEVBIA board was represented by a small network of family members and close friends who are generally skeptical of “outsiders” to the neighbourhood. Thinking back to my interview request email, it was no surprise why I received just two responses insofar as my status as a PhD student from

19 They have since developed a website: https://www.oldeastvillage.com/
the University of Guelph solidified me as an outsider (despite the fact that I have been a Londoner since 1992). I knew I needed to take another approach to gain access to OEVBIA members.

I decided that building rapport with OEVBIA members at public meetings might be a better option. As I eventually became a regular at these meetings, I felt my presence was known among some of the BIA board and staff members. There were also a few major redevelopment plans in the neighbourhood that I used as leverage to gain interview participants. Attending public information sessions on upcoming developments allowed me to make small talk with various BIA members. Once I established some rapport, I asked if they would be interested in a one-on-one interview to discuss revitalization in the area. Gaining rapport at these meetings proved useful as I was able to secure six interviews with staff and board members.

**The Interview Process**

Conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with BIA members allowed me to understand their justifications for revitalization. Unlike their interactions in public and political settings, interviews did not necessarily constitute a reality test where BIA members imbedded themselves in the grammars of worth to gain funding or political support. They had no incentive to persuade me on the merits of BIA-led revitalization given there were no material resources at stake. Interviews were conducted in private social settings that had no influence over decision-making processes.

With that said, interview participants did not simply shut off their critical capacities outside of public settings. It is safe to assume social actors would present similar grammars of worth in different situations, with interviews being no exception. As Ranasinghe (2013) found, BIA members often maintain an orchestrated and choreographed “business voice” to ensure a harmonious collective front-stage persona. In this sense, interview data likely reflects justifications presented in other settings and can help uncover BIAs’ organizational logics and interests.
This is not to say interview data would mimic what was said in city council, public meetings, or BIA-produced documents. Interviews allowed me to directly challenge taken-for-granted assumptions in order to encourage research participants to diverge from their “business voice.” In fact, they sometimes presented contradictory and/or new information not mentioned in other situations. Rather than being an aberration, the different justifications presented in different settings was an important part of the analysis. To encourage participants to speak beyond their “business voice”, they were promised confidentiality. Thus, pseudonyms were used throughout the analysis. This decision was also made because the BIA community in London is relatively small and participants may not have wanted their individual thoughts tied directly to the BIA.

Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were completed between January 2016 and September 2017. The duration of these interviews varied from 17 minutes to 103 minutes, with the average length being 42 minutes. Interviews with BIA members took place in their private offices or boardrooms. These were ideal settings as they provided a quiet atmosphere without the presence of others. In cases where interview participants did not have private offices, interviews took place in public spaces such as coffee shops or food courts. While interviews in public spaces were less ideal given the noise and potential distractions, I made sure to arrive early to choose a quiet table away from others. All interview participants were sent a two-page letter of information prior to the interview (see appendix A). Using plain language, it explained the purpose of the study was to evaluate how Londoners talk and feel about revitalization and to compare how it differed between the downtown London area and Old East Village community.

While it is important to establish rapport with interview participants through “small talk” (also known as phatic communication) (Liamputpong, 2013, p. 61), this was crucial for my study to dispel any concerns that I was critical of ongoing or future revitalization plans. Prior to the formal interview with
BIA members, I typically engaged in small talk about current and/or future revitalization plans. This built a sense of trust with BIA members and set the mood for the interview process. Some BIA members were curious why a PhD student from the University of Guelph was interested in revitalization in London. I would therefore disclose I have been a Londoner for most of my life. This often led to discussions about where I grew up and how often I come to the neighbourhood. These informal chats established much-needed trust prior to the formal interview.

Once consent forms were signed, I began recording the interview. The interview then followed a semi-structured format which gave participants the opportunity to digress from the original question and into unpredicted topics (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 60). While interviews began with several “throwaway questions” meant to develop rapport, I transitioned to a broad question along the lines of “what does revitalization mean to you in the downtown/Old East Village” (see appendix B for my interview guide). This would immediately tap into their ideal vision of the community as well as their implicit conceptualization of the term “revitalization”. The answers to these broad questions often sparked spontaneous and rich descriptions while allowing them to choose what they deemed to be important local issues. In many cases, participants began explaining significant barriers in achieving their idealized vision. I then followed with specific questions asking them to think through why past, present, and future revitalization plans have been, are, or will be beneficial to the area and city as a whole.

This is not to suggest I maintained the same line of questioning for all interviews. As Charmaz (2015, p. 1613) recommends, rather than treating interview guides as “recipes to follow,” it is imperative to scrutinize and critique them to gain richer data for subsequent interviews. Although Charmaz recommends this approach for the purpose of theoretical sampling (a grounded theory approach), I nevertheless found it useful to update my interview guide as participants raised new topics and issues I wanted to explore further in subsequent interviews.
As interviews progressed I began to challenge interview participants’ taken-for-granted assumptions. It was important for me not to appear antagonistic to the point where interview participants felt uncomfortable with my questioning. Simply asking “why” and “how come” were often enough to challenge their taken-for-granted assumptions. For example, it was interesting to see how BIA members responded when I asked why local economic development was an important goal. It was obvious to me that many of them never thought this through and acted as if the answer to the question was self-evident. For example, when they responded with broad claims saying economic development is “good” or “important” for the city, I asked them to elaborate on what they meant by these terms by clarifying who it was good/important for and in what specific way. In PSC terms, this shifted the interaction from “peace with equivalence” (where actions go unquestioned) to “dispute with equivalence” where BIA members had to justify the merits of their assumptions about the “good” of the city.

After interviews were complete, they were transcribed verbatim and reviewed line-by-line throughout the coding process. This allowed me to engage with the data, formulate ideas, and move beyond the descriptive content. I stopped conducting interviews once the data reached a saturation point; that is, when subsequent interviews added little to the properties of my analytic codes. I will describe the details of data analysis in the subsequent section.

**Document Analysis**

Publicly accessible content produced by the BIA supplemented data gathered from participant observation and interviews. This included urban planning reports, news articles, PowerPoint slides presented to city council, images/posters, and promotional materials such as brochures, videos, and advertisements produced both online and in hardcopy for public viewing.

A document analysis entails a careful, detailed, and systematic examination and interpretation of the content to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings (Lune & Berg, 2017; Neuendorf,
Unlike data obtained from participant observation and interviews, content analysis is an “unobtrusive” and “non-reactive” research method that does not require active participation with another (Liampcutong, 2013, p. 98; Kellehear, 1993). In this sense, it is not an analysis of a situation where social actors are engaged in a reality test. However, BIA content is a deliberately and collectively crafted product imbued with social and cultural meaning. In the context of urban policy, these materials are reflective of a “communicative policy act” insofar as they intend to present a shared vision of how the locality should be revitalized (Norton, 2008). As Atkinson (1999) argues, the language used in urban policy plans structures what is “thinkable” by creating symbolic boundaries around who and what should be legitimately included in urban policy debates. In other words, the language, slogans, brands, and images found within these materials are proofs that attempt to justify who and what is appropriate for a future revitalization plan.

Given my study is grounded in PSC, a directed content analysis (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was most appropriate insofar as it allowed me to connect my codes, and the relations between them, to the specific grammars of worth. While coding data, I considered what documents did rather than what they contained (Charmaz, 2014). That is, the content revealed what the BIA intended to accomplish, what social objects were important, who they believed it affected, and how local issues should be problematized. Overall, these materials provided significant insights into the justification process.

5.4 Data Analysis

Once data are collected, it must be organized in a meaningful way. Despite being presented as the last section of this chapter, data analysis was by no means the final stage of the research process. In fact, it is ideal to start analysis early in the research process to allow researchers to move “back and forth between thinking about existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 50; see also Braun and Clarke, 2006). In fact, many qualitative studies do
not follow a linear process but rather a recursive one where every step forward potentially leads to taking a step back before proceeding further. Data analysis often opens more questions than answers; sometimes leading researchers to return to the literature, revise the research question, or collect additional data. For example, while it appears PSC was deliberately selected as a theoretical framework for this study, this decision came only after a preliminary analysis of interview data. I began to see contradictory justifications rooted in different types of rationalizations that did not fit neatly into one overarching moral order. After consulting my academic supervisors, we agreed PSC was an appropriate theoretical framework because it provided a systemic way to explore the justification process. This theoretical framework then laid the foundation for data analysis.

The analysis of the grammars of worth can borrow from the practical and well-established data analysis strategies advanced by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2001, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theorists provide numerous helpful suggestions for summarizing and categorizing large chunks of data into specific codes which are then collated into larger themes (see Charmaz, 2015). A few points are in order, however, before connecting grounded theory methods to my study’s data analysis process. Unlike grounded theory methods, my analytic codes did not arise out of the data because I entered the data analysis stage with a theoretical framework with its own pre-established codes (the eight grammars of worth). In this sense, my study uses a “theory-driven” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 83-4) thematic analysis given Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) theoretical framework provides the necessary codes to understand the justification process. By contrast, grounded theorists use an inductive approach by deriving their theoretical framework from data to ensure analytic codes and categories are not “contaminated” by pre-conceived ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 37). This is not to say the theory-driven approach cannot be informed by grounded theory data analysis techniques. While some researchers stay close to grounded theory’s main premise to build theory
inductively from data, others use it as a “generic inductive qualitative design” that allows for the use of existing theory but allowing the use of grounded theory’s coding strategies to interpret data (see Hood, 2010; Maxwell, 2005). In other words, this study borrowed from grounded theorists’ coding strategies rather than their epistemological practices.

Similar to grounded theory methodology, PSC requires researchers to move beyond the surface level of social actors’ spoken words or written texts. Social actors will not literally state the core principles of each grammar of worth but will refer to them implicitly through proofs they draw upon to reach the general principle of their respective grammar of worth. The task of the researcher is to uncover and interpret the latent meanings of proofs. This requires abstracting analytic levels towards transcontextual general principles of the grammar of worth in question. The previous chapter outlined the social objects and general principles that correspond to each grammar of worth (see tables).

I used qualitative analysis software NVIVO 10 throughout the analysis stage. This allowed me to categorize and analyze interview data, participant observation notes, and documents in an orderly fashion. I identified patterns by thematically analyzing data using NVIVO’s node feature. Nodes were labelled along the eight grammars of worth (inspirational worth, domestic worth, reputational worth, etc.) to capture the specific language social actors used to justify urban revitalization. In addition to analyzing justifications, I looked for instances where social actors critiqued and formed compromises. Table 5.2 provides an example of the NVIVO coding process.

In addition to examining the specific language social actors used during a dispute, I compared justifications between various actors (e.g., BIA representatives, city council members, city urban planning staff, consultants, etc.) across different settings such as one-on-one interviews, city council meetings, and planning documents. These comparisons were made through the memo-writing process which allowed me think beyond my specific analytic codes to understand justifications across different
settings. It is not enough to simply comprehend the content of justifications. It is also important to see how social actors switch, borrow, and mix grammars of worth in various ways. For example, a developer may justify a project simultaneously in terms of job creation (market worth) and an alignment with planning goals (industrial worth), while opponents may denounce this project simultaneously in terms of potential environmental impacts (green worth), the unpopularity of the proposal (reputational worth), and lack of opportunity for citizen participation in the review process (civic worth) (see Holden et al., 2013, p. 13). Rather than solely interpreting data to reach a higher level of abstraction, PSC requires researchers to trace the various justifications presented as well as the unfolding of critiques and compromises. Doing so will exemplify which social objects and actors are privileged, which are ignored, and how meanings change over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Example Interview Quote</th>
<th>Grammar of Worth (NVIVO Node)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>“We need more investment because the downtown is the economic engine of the city. It represents just 0.2% geographic space but 9% of the city’s tax base.”</td>
<td>Market worth</td>
<td>Market worth demonstrated by referencing the downtown’s economic value. Statistics used as a proof to demonstrate the downtown’s financial contribution to the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>“Other neighbourhoods in the city need attention too. The downtown has had its fair share of investment.”</td>
<td>Critique of market worth using civic worth.</td>
<td>Investing in the downtown (market worth) is criticized for unfairly privileging the downtown and neglecting other areas of the city. The suggestion is city neighbourhoods should be treated equally (civic worth).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>“The profits made in the downtown go towards programs and infrastructure across the entire city.”</td>
<td>Compromise between market and civic worth.</td>
<td>Market and civic worth are blended by suggesting downtown profits (market worth) benefit the entire city (civic worth).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

While Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) theoretical framework provides a detailed explanation of its ontological and epistemological premises, they say little about how researchers can empirically study the justification process. This methodology chapter explained that the well-established constructivist research tradition can help inform studies rooted in PSC, albeit with a slight modification. Its data-collection methods must consider the way social actors make references to socio-historically constructed proofs that transcend local interactional settings. Data gained from participant observation, interviews, and documents must show how localized meanings are reflections of the transcontextual grammars of worth which inform all social actions. This chapter also highlighted my study’s sample, data-collection methods, and analysis strategies.

The next three chapters present my findings from the Downtown London BIA and Old East Village BIA. Chapter 6 and 7 focus specifically on the Downtown London BIA’s involvement in the redevelopment of Dundas Place while Chapter 8 focuses on the Old East Village BIA’s involvement in the neighbourhood’s residential development planning process. Throughout these chapters, I show how the two BIAs use certain justificatory strategies to convince city councillors to follow their particular revitalization plan. I also expand on these BIAs’ organizational logics as well as the institutional arrangement of reality tests.
6. Justifying the Pied Piper for Downtown London

In 2015 the City of London began planning a $16 million redevelopment of a four-block stretch of downtown Dundas Street (between Ridout St. and Wellington St.). Coined as “Dundas Place” (also known as “flex street”), the purpose was to improve hydro, water mains, and sewers as well as to install new lighting, flower gardens, and street furniture. The street was designed to be “curbless” to create a wide-open pedestrian space during scheduled festivals/events that would operate during car-free times. Construction began in the spring of 2018 and is expected to be completed by late 2019.

Although Dundas Place was a City-led redevelopment project, the Downtown London BIA played a key role during the planning process given the redevelopment was within their geographical boundary. They planned to hire a Toronto-based placemaking firm called Live Work Learn Play (hereafter LWLP) to attract new commercial tenants to the downtown. The DLBIA’s hope was that these new tenants would have the necessary placemaking skills to transform the downtown to their “unique and experiential” creative cities vision. The total cost to hire LWLP for an 18-month contract was $1.9 million. Rather than paying for it with their own funds, the DLBIA asked city council for $540,000 to help reduce their costs by 28% of the total bill. Despite their attempt to secure municipal funding, city councillors rejected the funding proposal with a close 8-7 vote.

The decision-making process to fund LWLP presented several empirically rich reality tests where city councillors and the DLBIA CEO discussed the proper course of action for downtown revitalization. On the one hand, the DLBIA CEO tried to secure taxpayer money to fund a private placemaking organization for their revitalization expertise. On the other hand, city councillors considered whether it was appropriate to use taxpayer money to aid the DLBIA in their revitalization vision. Needless to say, tense moral discussions ensued about the “good”, “proper”, and “right” way to revitalize Dundas Place.
Drawing from two Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee meetings (October 26, 2015 and March 21, 2016), DLBIA-produced documents, and interviews with DLBIA members, this chapter analyzes the DLBIA’s justifications to fund LWLP. I argue, despite the DLBIA’s attempt to affirm downtown’s reality, city councillors and the DLBIA were unable to agree on the proper course of action for Dundas Place. Thus, the DLBIA and city councillors were unable to form a discursive institution – that is, to construct a naturalized, taken-for-granted reality about the best way to revitalize Dundas Place – because city councillors contested the DLBIA’s funding request. However, I show how city councillors’ criticisms and compromises were aimed entirely at the vehicle (hiring LWLP) rather than the method (creative cities) of revitalization; more specifically, councillors questioned the fairness and appropriateness of funding LWLP rather than the DLBIA’s simplistic creative cities placemaking logic. Despite failing to convince city councillors on the merits of funding LWLP, the DLBIA successfully affirmed placemaking as a practical and realistic strategy to manage the downtown’s urban poor.

I will first explain how the DLBIA affirmed downtown’s reality by presenting “retrospective critiques” and constructing a “revitalization threshold”. I then explain how their creative cities vision was framed as a practical and realistic solution to the downtown’s urban problems; specifically, by constructing a “targeted and non-targeted” binary and affirming LWLP’s “deal making” expertise. Lastly, I show how city councillors contested the DLBIA’s proposed solution and formed compromises to resolve disagreements.

6.1 Affirming the Downtown’s Reality

Boltanski (2011) argues contemporary organizations rely on experts to construct reality and limit critique. Acting as a spokesperson for a particular organization, experts attempt to provide semantic security and impose symbolic violence through a definitional power that constructs a naturalized, taken-for-granted reality; or, in Boltanski’s (2011, p. 99) words, to establish “the whatness of what is”. Experts
endlessly re-confirm reality through “instances of confirmation”, or “truth tests” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 98), to reduce uncertainties that may arise during a dispute.

In the context of my study, the DLBIA CEO (Janette MacDonald) was the sole spokesperson for the DLBIA during two Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee meetings. As I explain below, she had the power to define downtown’s reality by constructing its ongoing problems and appropriate solutions. During a committee meeting, she used the pied piper German legend as a truth test to help construct the downtown’s reality. As she explained, “LWLP is the pied piper of retailers who have a great following…. If we don’t hire them then we will not be able to attract the quality of targeted uses we are seeking”. This instance of confirmation demonstrates the way the DLBIA portrayed the downtown; that is, without the help of a reputable outside organization, the downtown would supposedly lack “quality”. The specific reference to the pied piper was a figurative portrayal of a city infested with vermin and in desperate need of a solution. It implied the City could solve its vermin infestation by paying an outsider to play his magical flute to lure vermin into a river to drown.20

The pied piper legend was not an irrelevant figurative story but an attempt to affirm downtown’s reality. I therefore draw on the pied piper analogy throughout this chapter to demonstrate how the DLBIA constructed LWLP as downtown London’s much-needed pied piper. In particular, I show how LWLP’s (the pied piper) trademarked “Targeted Leasing and Casting” program (the magical flute) was constructed as an appropriate solution to rid the downtown of homeless people, vacant properties, and undesirable commercial tenants (the vermin).

20 It should be noted that, according to the legend, the mayor refused to pay for the piper’s services. The piper eventually took revenge by luring the town’s children into a cave where they were never seen again. Needless to say, the DLBIA CEO did not mention this part of the analogy.
The State of the Downtown

Before presenting my analysis, I would like to provide a brief history of Dundas Street, and downtown London more broadly, as well as the city’s homeless population. Dundas Street is one of London’s oldest streets that was constructed to connect the city to the western shores of Lake Ontario in the late 1700s (Armstrong, 1986). When the district courthouse at Vittoria burnt in 1825 (near Long Point on Lake Erie), London’s Dundas Street by the forks of the Thames River was chosen as the new location due to its central location in the growing southwestern Ontario. In the following decades, the courthouse attracted taverns, blacksmiths, general stores, banks, real estate offices, and a post office. A public market was built in 1842 which provided a centralized trading centre for local farmers who supplied meats and produce. These developments made Dundas Street the civic and commercial heart of London during the early 1800s (Novak, 2010).

The arrival of the railroad in 1853 made a significant impact on Dundas Street as it opened access to more distant markets. This led to a specialization of retailers along Dundas Street as raw material goods, finished goods, and fashionable clothing were imported from larger cities like Toronto, Montreal, and New York. By the turn of the 20th century, streetcars brought people into the core from small hamlets and villages along the city’s outskirts. Dundas Street retailing was at its apex between 1880-1930 as building values were higher than elsewhere in the city and customers flocked by foot, streetcar, horse, and bicycle to the busy Dundas and Richmond intersection (Novak, 2010).

Built in 1960, downtown London’s Wellington Square, later called Galleria Mall and more recently rebranded to Citi Plaza, was North America’s first indoor mall located in a downtown and Canada’s first enclosed shopping centre (Fry, 1961). While the downtown mall drew customers and high-end stores to the downtown from 1960-1980, the mall and surrounding downtown retailers began to struggle as its stores and customers relocated to newly developed White Oaks Mall and Masonville Mall.
as well as power centres dominated by chain stores located in Hyde Park and Wonderland Road (Novak, 2010). The Downtown London BIA therefore formed in the late 1970s to beautify and market the Dundas Street commercial corridor.

By the early 1990s, the downtown had many retail vacancies as the mall no longer produced spin-off customers to Dundas Street (Novak, 2010). The City began investing in larger downtown projects such as the London Regional Art Gallery (now Museum London) in 1989, the reconstruction of the Victoria Park Bandshell in 1990, the city’s tallest high-rise office building in 1992, the Convention Centre in 1993, the reopening of the Covent Garden Market in 1999, the London Central Public Library in 2002, and the entertainment stadium called the John Labatt Centre (now Budweiser Gardens) in 2002. Today, the downtown mall (now called Citi Plaza) is a mixed-use centre containing an array of retail stores, office space, and post-secondary satellite campuses. Despite these large investments, there continues to be high retail vacancies along Dundas Street as the downtown struggles to attract and retain commercial operators.

According to the City’s recent statistics (see Counting Our Way Home, 2018), there are 406 homeless individuals found in 15 locations across the city. 63% identify as male, 34% as female, 2% as gender expansive, and 1% transgender. 29% identified as Indigenous and 32% had been in foster care and/or a group home. 57% identified as having an addiction and 59% reported having a mental health issue. The City has many active initiatives and programs aimed at reducing homelessness. They take a “Housing First” approach intended to move homeless people quickly into housing with support (treatment and sobriety is not a requirement for accessing/maintaining housing) and to encourage community integration and belonging in the neighborhood where individuals reside. London Cares, a

21 See https://www.london.ca/residents/homeless-prevention/Pages/be-involved.aspx

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collaborative City and community-based organization, provides housing selection workers who identify private-market landlords and property groups interested in making apartments available to individuals experiencing homelessness. London Cares also provides syringe recovery services, stationary needle bins, and Street Outreach Workers who engage individuals experiencing homelessness. The City also supports emergency shelters intended for immediate/overnight accommodation and basic needs for the homeless, including Mission Services of London, The Salvation Army Centre of Hope, Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness, Anova, and the Zhaawanong Shelter. Marginalized groups can also use various Drop-In Centres across the city, including the Canadian Mental Health Association, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Mission Services, Atlohsa Family Healing Services, the London InterCommunity Health Centre, and the Ark Aid Street Mission.

Before defining the downtown’s problem and respective solution, the DLBIA CEO presented several truth tests to construct downtown’s reality. She portrayed a strong economic state of the downtown through a justificatory strategy I call “retrospective critiques”. As I explain, this was an attempt to legitimize the DLBIA’s funding request by referencing decades-old downtown revitalization investments that supposedly became economically successful. Once the downtown’s strong market worth was established, she then highlighted unjustifiable decades-old criticisms of these economically successful municipal investments. In this sense, recalling unjustifiable criticisms from past reality tests (i.e., decades-old revitalization discussions) was a justificatory strategy to secure municipal investment.

During a committee meeting, the DLBIA CEO affirmed the downtown’s strong economic state by reminding councillors of the economic success of past “game changing” municipal investments. As figure 6.1 shows, this included investments in key downtown anchors like Budweiser Gardens (a sports/entainment arena), the Covent Garden Market, the Central Library, and the Forks of the Thames River. These were deemed “game changers” because, according to the DLBIA CEO, they facilitated
business growth and increased the taxable assessment of the downtown (see figure 6.2). Unsurprisingly, the success of downtown investments was defined through market worth.

![Figure 6.1 The DLBIA referencing prior city investments in the downtown.](image1)

DLBIA members commonly referenced Budweiser Gardens (formerly known as John Labatt Centre, the home of the local Ontario Hockey League (OHL) team the London Knights) as a catalyst in revitalizing the downtown and attracting residential development. Cindy, a DLBIA professional staff, argued Dundas Place would have the same impact on the downtown. As she explained during an interview:

> I call it [Budweiser Gardens] the jewel in the crown in our downtown revitalization. If we hadn’t built that then we wouldn’t have the Renaissance
Towers or the Harriston [upscale downtown residential high-rises]… That was catalytic in revitalizing the downtown. Dundas Place is a capital investment that will also be that transformational.

Cindy’s suggestion was that, given the success of a past DLBIA-related revitalization project, the City should trust the DLBIA would continue to produce downtown game changers. The statement on the PowerPoint slide that “The City has invested in game-changers before” implied LWLP would be a continuation of these transformational, game-changing investments. In fact, the DLBIA CEO argued the LWLP investment would supplement these prior investments. As she explained to city councillors:

That’s your cake [referring to prior investments]. We’re trying to give you the cherry on top, the whip cream, and icing. We’re going to give you the right retail mix that is going to compliment those assets.

The argument was that, while past municipal investments helped revitalize the downtown, LWLP would continue to boost the downtown’s marketability by attracting “the right retail mix”.

Immediately following the DLBIA’s portrayal of an economically thriving downtown, the DLBIA CEO recalled decades-past criticisms of these game-changing investments. In this sense, she used retrospective critiques (criticisms from past reality tests) to dispel any current criticisms of their LWLP funding request. For example, she presented headlines from the 1999-2000 London Free Press criticizing the construction site of the now economically successful Budweiser Gardens (see figure 6.3). She highlighted an image of a large cheering crowd of London Knights hockey fans at Budweiser Gardens to juxtapose the now unjustified criticism that, as the quote read, “The downtown arena will sit quietly empty most nights”.

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Figure 6.3: Presenting retrospective critiques.

To further demonstrate unjustifiable critiques of Budweiser Gardens, the DLBIA CEO explained how the local music scene evolved since the construction of the arena. As figure 6.4 shows, she contrasted the downtown’s past underground/low-key music scene with a current music scene at Budweiser Gardens with jam-packed audiences and star performances. Not only was the arena an economic success (market worth), but, according to the DLBIA CEO, it also increased the city’s reputation by drawing major musical performances (reputational worth).
By characterizing an economically successful state of the downtown, the DLBIA was able to recall what now appear as unjustifiable criticisms of game-changing investments. These retrospective critiques served two purposes: to encourage city councillors to disregard any potential criticisms of LWLP and to portray the DLBIA as a legitimate partner in downtown revitalization. Most of all, this was a justificatory strategy to affirm downtown’s strong economic state.

*The Downtown’s Vermin*

If the downtown was considered an economic success, then what grounds did the DLBIA have to justify hiring LWLP? Despite affirming downtown’s strong economic state, the DLBIA and its supporters kept referring to a threshold that needed to be surpassed for the downtown to be fully revitalized. For example, while speaking directly to city councillors, Mayor Matt Brown, a vocal supporter of LWLP, explained how LWLP would push the downtown over the threshold:

> We have a vision for a more vibrant, exciting, and more successful downtown. We know how bad it can get because we saw what it looks like in the mid-1990s and early-2000s. We know we are seeing signs of recovery, but we also know that *we are not there yet*. We have the ability to *build on this massive momentum* that we are building upon. We’re about *halfway there* [italics added].
The mayor suggested that, although the downtown has seen “signs of recovery”, the City needed to continue building off the momentum from previous investments by implementing a more vibrant and exciting downtown vision. While previous investments fulfilled only half of their vision, the suggestion was LWLP would push the downtown past the revitalization threshold and complete their idealized vision.

A “threshold” means that something needs to be exceeded for a certain reaction to occur. DLBIA members frequently used phrases like “we’re on the cusp of something great” and “we’re almost there” in order to justify LWLP as a seemingly final solution to the downtown revitalization plan. They argued there was a major barrier preventing it from being fully revitalized. Using the label “vacancies and non-targeted uses”, the DLBIA CEO identified homeless squatters, vacant properties, and undesirable commercial tenants as a “gap” preventing the downtown’s “continued growth of the current value assessment (tax base)” (see figure 6.5). For example, she explained to city councillors that LWLP would not only help fill vacant commercial properties but also displace existing undesirable commercial tenants:

The only guarantee I can offer you is that if we don’t do it [hire LWLP] then we will not be able to attract the quality of targeted uses we are seeking. When I say targeted uses, I mean really solid and positive uses that people are going to visit a lot. I don’t mean headshops and things like that, they are springing up as well. We want to make sure the value of our properties is much better so that the headshops can’t afford to be here… We can no longer have variety stores, bong shops, headshops, etcetera, etcetera.

In this sense, the justification to hire LWLP was that they would push out undesirable commercial tenants (e.g., variety stores, bong shops, and headshops) because these were not considered “positive uses” of the downtown.

The “non-targeted” label was also used to identify homeless squatting as an undesirable use of downtown space (see figure 6.6). The label allowed the DLBIA to speak about the removal of homeless
people in a less punitive/exclusionary way by, similar to Blomley (2007, 2010), defining them as undesirable objects (non-targets) occupying the downtown. Instead of suggesting homeless people needed to be displaced to create a more marketable downtown, the DLBIA softened their language by using industrial labels (targets vs. non-targets) to identify appropriate and inappropriate uses of space.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 6.5: Identifying barriers to downtown revitalization.**

In this way, vacant properties, undesirable commercial tenants, and homeless squatters were constructed as the proverbial vermin preventing the downtown from surpassing its revitalization threshold; as “gaps” that needed to be addressed.

Taken together, the DLBIA walked a fine line between celebrating the downtown’s economic success and stigmatizing particular spaces. On the one hand, defining the downtown as a complete economic success would debunk their justification for more investment. On the other hand, defining the downtown as a site of urban disorder would taint the DLBIA’s reputation and raise questions about their past revitalization efforts. Thus, to justify funding LWLP, the downtown was constructed between these two extremes; that is, it was doing economically well but needed an extra push to achieve ultimate success. The portrayal of a nearly revitalized downtown is unsurprising insofar as market worth is satisfied on a short-term basis. The satisfaction of former market goals (e.g., attracting a certain number
of new businesses, achieving a certain level of taxable assessments, etc.) is followed by the creation of new market goals, resulting in an endless chase to become economically successful. The DLBIA needed to identify urban problems to convince councillors to invest in the downtown.

Figure 6.6: Homeless squatting identified as a non-targeted use of downtown space.

6.2 Constructing the Downtown’s Solution

This section explains how the DLBIA constructed a simplistic placemaking solution to the downtown’s proverbial vermin infestation (i.e., non-targeted uses). Originating from Jane Jacobs’ (1961) urban vision and, more recently, Florida’s (2002) creative cities agenda, placemaking is an urban revitalization approach that values lively and sociable public spaces, participatory recreation, walkability, and community attachment. In what follows, I show how the DLBIA portrayed commercial tenants with placemaking skills (ones that are coachable, adaptable, and collaborative) as an appropriate solution to eliminate downtown’s homeless squatters, vacant properties, and undesirable commercial tenants. I begin by explaining the DLBIA’s placemaking vision, what they coined “unique and experiential retailing”, before describing their representation of the ideal commercial tenant to fulfill this vision (projective commercial tenants). I then describe how the DLBIA attempted to justify LWLP’s
“Targeted Leasing and Casting” program – the pied piper’s magical flute – as a necessary method to attract these commercial tenants.

Unique and Experiential Retailing

The DLBIA CEO explained to city councillors that non-targeted uses could be eliminated by simply attracting more “targeted businesses”. As figure 6.7 shows, she shared many images of desirable businesses such as an upscale clothing store (Hanger9), a fair trade coffeeshop (Fire Roasted Coffee), a comic book store (Heroes Comics), and a kitchen cookware store (Jill’s Table). In addition to defining appropriate and inappropriate uses of the downtown, the “targeted and non-targeted” binary allowed the DLBIA to present a simplistic argument that, to surpass the revitalization threshold, the downtown needed to attract small-scale, independent shops to eliminate homeless squatters, vacant properties, and undesirable commercial tenants.

These targeted businesses were desirable because, as I argue below, they reflected the tropes of the creative cities agenda. However, the DLBIA CEO said little during the committee meeting about why these types of businesses were preferred over others as well as where these new commercial tenants would be located. She simply explained to city councillors that these targeted businesses would eliminate the undesirable non-targeted uses. It was only in DLBIA-produced documents and interviews with DLBIA members that the logic behind this simplistic solution emerged.
For example, a DLBIA brochure outlining the 2016-2010 vision for the downtown painted a picture of the DLBIA’s idealized downtown. Interestingly, it directly referenced Jacobs’ (1961) urban vision as well as Florida’s (2002, p. 226) notion of “third places” (although it referenced the Wikipedia page of Ray Oldenburg’s theory of “third place”) (see figure 6.8). In the most basic terms, the brochure’s message was that the downtown should be a vibrant, playful, and social place that connects people to the neighbourhood and elicits a sense of community. As the brochure explained, this downtown vision would be fulfilled by placemaking strategies that “focus on the creation of spaces and experiences that are unique, welcoming, beautiful and livable” and by creating third places that elicit “an emotional attachment to the landscape and its people”. The expectation of commercial tenants, therefore, was to create this type of downtown experience.
Interviews with DLBIA members revealed more details about their expectations of commercial tenants. In contrast to impersonal department stores and shopping malls that merely sell consumable products, the DLBIA wanted to attract local commercial tenants (unique to the city) who valued relationships with customers as well as encouraged participatory recreation (experiential retailing). In this sense, the DLBIA sought commercial tenants with domestic and inspirational qualities (localness/social bonds and experiences, respectively) rather than market qualities (“just transactions in a store” as the DLBIA CEO explained to city council). This was the crux of their unique and experiential vision.

For example, Glen, a DLBIA board member, used “Jill’s Table” as an ideal example of an existing commercial tenants that valued relationships with its customers:

Jill sells cookbooks and she’s known in the community. You are going there because you’ve developed a relationship with that business owner, right?... You can get kitchen stuff anywhere, like at The Bay [a large Canadian department store]. But because of the experience happening at Jill’s, and knowing the staff there, people are coming in to buy stuff there specifically. It’s a developing relationship [italics added].

Jill’s Table was often used as an exemplar of DLBIA’s downtown vision. In contrast to impersonal transactions found at large department stores (market worth), Glen privileged local commercial tenants who valued personal connections, strong social bonds, and relationships with customers (domestic worth). This represents domestic worth insofar as Glen values personal arrangements, locally constituted bonds, and harmonious social relations as opposed to impersonal commercial exchanges between buyers and sellers. In the case of Jill’s Table, in addition to buying kitchen products, customers form close bonds with the owner (Jill Wilcox) by taking her cooking classes, listening to her culinary advice, and taking part in her in-store demonstrations. This follows the tropes of the creative cities agenda insofar as Florida (2002) encourages cities to create third places that foster social interactions among community members.
Designing cities for people: the art and science of placemaking

Recognizing our success to date, London’s downtown still has significant opportunity to create a consistent and inspiring connection between its spaces and its people.

From 1959 on, urban matrich, Jane Jacobs, advocated for more vibrant and diverse neighbourhoods and public spaces. Her then-transformative notion of designing

neighbourhoods, in particular urban centres, for more than cars and shopping centres, is now at the heart of downtown revitalization movements around the globe.

Entering: “the Third Place”

Space describes physical land. Place equals an emotional attachment to the landscape and its people.

Put simply, “third places” are where we spend our time when we’re not at home or work. Historically, these might have been a local tavern, a community centre, or general store, but today, a well defined and engaging downtown is home to a multitude of modern “third places”.

Defining our Opportunity

The following strategy outlines Downtown London’s role in carrying forward the unique, energized and impressive home for “third places”. To do so, it details the values, strategies and objectives that will guide the organization in fulfilling our commitments to members and to the community at large.

It does not change or pre-empt any of the important strategies of the Downtown Master Plan, or any other infrastructure investments, rather defines how Downtown London will support and enhance this work, and how we will measure our progress toward creating this important home for “third places” in our community.

It’s time to put people at the centre of the conversation about downtown’s next evolution.

This plan does that.

Figure 6.8: The DLBIA’s placemaking strategy.
DLBIA members also gave examples of business owners that create participatory recreation. Megan, a DLBIA professional staff, provided a few examples of these types of businesses:

The holistic yoga centre sells yoga clothes but also teaches the classes and also rents your thing [building] out for tango lessons, those are going to be the unique experiences. People are looking for experience. You can buy stuff anywhere like online or the mall.

In addition to forming relationships with customers, the DLBIA expected commercial tenants to provide customers with an active and emotionally fulfilling experience (inspirational worth) rather than a consumable material product (market worth). Megan values yoga and tango dancing because both offer customers an experience rather than a product that could be purchased anywhere else.

Other DLBIA members highlighted what they considered culturally-distinct experiences specific to London such as indulging in local craft beer, drinking local free trade coffee, discussing superheroes at the local comic book store, playing board games at the board game cafe, and going to an escape room. These represent inspirational worth insofar as DLBIA members value commercial tenants that offer customers an exciting and unique experience not found outside the downtown. Similar to the creative cities agenda, the DLBIA values participatory recreation and unique local experiences.

Taken together, so-called non-targeted uses of the downtown, according to the DLBIA, could be eliminated by placemaking commercial tenants who value the creative cities mantra; specifically, commercial tenants who create intimate, sociable, and interactive urban environments reminiscent of smaller rural communities (domestic qualities) as well as local experiences and energetic urban spaces with active/participatory recreation (inspirational qualities). To further illustrate the DLBIA’s idealized commercial tenants, figure 6.9 summarizes the DLBIA’s idea of “the right uses” of downtown space, including local independent operators (a domestic quality), neighbourhood conveniences (a domestic
quality), experiential retail (an inspirational quality), and unique regional experiences (inspirational and domestic qualities).

Figure 6.9: The DLBIA’s unique and experiential vision for downtown London.

DLBIA members, however, argued many existing downtown commercial tenants, apart from a few like Jill’s Table, lacked the necessary placemaking skills to implement their creative cities vision. Unlike shopping malls, BIAs cannot selectively choose a particular business to occupy a commercial space because any business can rent a building as long as the landlord allows. The DLBIA’s hope was, once hired, LWLP would mimic the shopping mall model by attracting these desired placemaking commercial tenants. As the DLBIA CEO explained in a London Free Press article, “[LWLP] will create a plan for the downtown similar to a mall plan, to make sure the retail mix is the right mix” (Maloney, 2016a). As I explain below, it became clear during interviews that these placemaking commercial tenants had to have projective qualities (coachable, adaptable, and collaborative) to be able to successfully implement the creative cities vision according to DLBIA standards.
First, the DLBIA valued coachable commercial tenants. As an assemblage of actors operating in a horizontal rather than top-down organizational fashion, contemporary capitalist firms like BIAs no longer have rigid systems with ranked orders but are comprised of equal knowledge experts (or teams) who are to be inspired by a leader’s vision. The leader of a team is not a boss who gives orders but an inspirational “coach” who develops skills and potential of people in their team. Leaders must successfully communicate the importance of an organizational vision in a way that gets employees to internalize it rather than follow it by order. The DLBIA professional staff viewed themselves as coaches while commercial tenants were part of their team. That said, it was clear the DLBIA was frustrated with existing commercial tenants who resisted coaching by professional staff. For example, Rachel, a DLBIA professional staff, spoke about her frustration with business owners of a local sex store who were unwilling to relocate to a more “appropriate” area:

Their windows sort of border on objectionable, so that’s even less of an incitement for someone to go inside. It feels like people on the street are judging you because not only are they not softening up the front of their store but it’s because they have no real business interests. Like, it’s two students actually… They just thought it would be fun to have a store in this area because they are both fairly active in the local community. It’s not going well for them. But if they had called us [the DLBIA professional staff], we would have said “listen, you may want to be on a side street off of Richmond Row and take a different approach to your clientele”.

In this particular case, the sex store owners failed to take the DLBIA’s suggestion to move their store to what was deemed a more appropriate side street. Even though the sex store, in a sense, reflects the DLBIA’s unique and experiential vision insofar as it is operated by locals who, one could argue, inspire customers to enhance their sexual experiences, Rachel took issue with the owners’ unwillingness to be coached by DLBIA professional staff. The root of her frustration was that the sex store operated on what she believed is an inappropriate street. It would be desirable, for Rachel, if the store owners understood
how to “soften up” their storefront windows or how to “take a different approach” to their clientele. Her suggestion was that a “real business” would be willing to be coached on these matters.

Cindy, another DLBIA professional staff, went as far to suggest these types of uncoachable commercial tenants were not worth the DLBIA’s time and effort. For example, she expressed her frustration with commercial tenants who complained about poor sales:

The ones [commercial tenants] who don’t want to be informed and just want to bitch about it, like we’re never going to change that. So, you have to take a step back and play with the 20% that want to play with you and hopefully they can leach out into the negatives. We got some fantastic people in the downtown, some fantastic business owners and building owners…That’s what keeps us going.

In this case, Cindy attributed poor sales to commercial tenants’ unwillingness to be informed by DLBIA professional staff. The DLBIA is motivated only by the supposed 20% of coachable business owners who “play with” the DLBIA professional staff. Rather than trying to coach the other 80%, Cindy suggested the success of coachable business owners will “leach out” to them. In this sense, Cindy portrayed most existing businesses as uncoachable and, therefore, illegitimately occupying downtown space. Coachability is important insofar as the DLBIA could persuade business owners to enact placemaking strategies; in this case, to be strategically located near a desired clientele.

Second, the DLBIA valued adaptable commercial tenants. To survive in contemporary free market systems, organizations must adapt quickly to change, new circumstances, and customer demands. According to DLBIA members, existing downtown business owners lack these qualities because they have traditional business practices incongruent with the current economy. As Rachel explained:

It’s hard to open a closed mind. For some people [commercial tenants], we know that they will never change but we don’t focus on that. We work with the people who are open to trying new things.
In this case, Rachel chose not to work with commercial tenants who were unwilling to be innovative.

DLBIA members commonly referred to these commercial tenants as having outdated marketing practices reflective of some obsolete decade’s past. For example, they variously explained these business owners had a “1950s” or “1970s” approach to business operations because they merely opened from 10am-5pm and never adjusted their operating hours in accordance to downtown foot traffic. To provide another example, Rachel explained many commercial tenants did not have innovative business plans:

> When I ask people [commercial tenants] “can I see your business plan?”, it surprises me how many people don’t have one because you really need to think differently about how you’re going to promote yourself and how to build relationships with customers. The business environment is so different now than it was 20 years ago when people were not shopping on the internet or when we didn’t have big regional malls and power centers that we have today.

According to Rachel, an updated business plan is necessary because businesses in the current economy must compete with internet retailers and large regional malls. Megan, another DLBIA professional staff, provided a more specific example of outdated business mentalities by referring to a new social media campaign where customers take pictures of their recently purchased product and tag it online for others to see:

> The “take a photograph of your product” thing, chances are you’re going to buy it. The merchants get exposure on that. There is always a couple of weird merchants who don’t want any pictures of what they sell online in case someone copies them. But that speaks back to the fact that you’re not a business person, you’re a hobbyist who has a store. Those are challenging.

According to Megan, these traditional-minded business owners are “weird”, “challenging”, and “hobbyists” because they do not use social media to market their products, thereby failing to adapt to current marketing practices.

Lastly, the DLBIA valued collaborative business owners. Contemporary capitalist firms expect employees to work on a multitude of short-term projects alongside other team members. Without being
prompted, the DLBIA expects business owners to collaborate on small revitalization projects with nearby commercial tenants. As Rachel explained:

> What we find is the people who are more positive, collaborate, and change adaptive are the ones that succeed. Those are just the behaviours and characteristics that we need more often for success; entrepreneurial, unafraid of trying new things, and reaching out when they need help. Not just sitting in the background, but actually getting in the game to take advantage of all the resources and opportunities we have to offer.

For Rachel, being collaborative is akin to being “positive” and “successful”. The onus is on businesses to “take advantage” of DLBIA resources and opportunities and to use their network to coordinate a certain plan. Megan similarly explained that, while the DLBIA cannot force businesses to collaborate with one another, they nevertheless try to “move them along the collaborative continuum” and “make synergies happen” by connecting like-minded business owners.

For example, DLBIA staff were delighted when a small group of business owners started the “Dundas Place Arts Festival”; a weekend event where a downtown block was filled with artists and musicians (see figure 6.10). A DLBIA staff member spoke about the event in a local media article:

> According to Andrew Sercombe, marketing coordinator at Downtown London, the event was the brainchild of Jonathon Bancroft-Snell, owner of the Jonathon Bancroft-Snell Gallery who, along with gallery manager Brian Cooke, travelled up and down the street chatting with his fellow merchants, eager to collaborate. Once word of mouth had spread and more businesses got on board, Downtown London was brought in to help make some connections and fill in the blanks. Needless to say, they were thrilled. (South, 2018)
As the article explained, the DLBIA marketing coordinator was thrilled when a business owner took the initiative to connect with other businesses along the street, especially because the business owner did so autonomously without being persuaded by the DLBIA. Rather than “sitting in the background”, as Rachel explained, these collaborative business owners created a downtown festival that reflected the DLBIA’s creative cities vision where artists and musicians performed on the street.

That the DLBIA strives to create a unique and experiential downtown is unsurprising insofar as, since their inception, BIAs compete with the shopping experience offered at department stores and malls (Briffault, 1999; Mitchel, 2008). What is more interesting, however, is the way their creative cities vision was presented as a seemingly clear-cut solution to solve undesirable uses of the downtown. In short, the DLBIA’s logic was coachable, adaptable, and collaborative commercial tenants would somehow create a unique and experiential downtown and eliminate homeless squatters, vacant properties, and undesirable commercial tenants. Rather than acknowledging the complex structural causes of downtown’s commercial vacancy and homeless problem (e.g., deindustrialization, suburbanization, austerity measures, etc.), the “targeted and non-targeted” binary helped construct a simplistic logic that placemaking would solve the downtown’s problems. The core of the DLBIA’s
frustration was that their organization did not reflect the organizational model of the new spirit of capitalism; that is, they supposedly have existing commercial tenants that do not have projective values. The solution, therefore, was to attract projective commercial tenants because they have the necessary placemaking skills to revitalize the downtown.

*The Pied Piper’s Magical Flute*

After defining the state of the downtown, its problem, and solution, the DLBIA attempted to justify LWLP’s trademarked “Targeted Leasing and Casting” (hereafter TLC) program as a necessary approach to attract projective commercial tenants. Using the pied piper analogy, TLC was the proverbial magical flute that would lure away the downtown’s vermin. That is, LWLP would make deals with their supposed extended network of projective commercial tenants. As I explain below, the DLBIA CEO constructed LWLP’s TLC program as superior to past revitalization approaches because, as she argued, it involved “deal making” rather than consulting.

During the presentation to the committee, the DLBIA CEO distinguished LWLP from past business recruitment strategies by emphasizing LWLP’s “deal making expertise”. She constructed a consultant-practitioner dichotomy to distinguish LWLP as a superior alternative to past business recruitment strategies. This was apparent in a DLBIA letter sent to city council as well as a quote from a local media article:

In our research, we have discovered that *while there are many consultants* that specialize in specific types of recruiting work, *only LWLP offers* the full vertical integration of advisory services combined with *implementation of places and deal making expertise*. LWLP offers a far more integrated approach to recruitment than we have undertaken in the past [italics added]. (Downtown London, 2015a)

MacDonald [the DLBIA CEO] bristles at the word consultant — “they’re not writing a report” — and instead calls Toronto-based LWLP a “practitioner” that will work with her group to attract unique street-level tenants. (Maloney, 2016b)
The distinction between consultants and practitioners was a key topic of discussion during the committee meeting. LWLP was portrayed not as just another consultant who would simply write a report, but a practitioner who would attract commercial tenants through their deal making expertise. In this sense, the DLBIA argued deal making (a market worth) was more important than consulting (a projective worth). She reiterated this point on many occasions as city councillors kept referring to LWLP as “consultants” during the committee meeting. For example, she emphatically responded to one city councillor:

This is implementation, make no mistake about it! This is not consulting. They [LWLP] are practitioners and they are going to go out and work for us through their Targeted Leasing and Casting program. They are very intentional about activating spots and secondary uses. We need the right uses in the right places… We don’t want a report, we want action.

Some city councillors asked Jim Yanchula, a city urban planner and DLBIA board member, to confirm her characterization of LWLP. As he explained:

What ends up happening with plans often is they become bookshelf ornaments instead of being actual roadmaps to success…LWLP breaks the barrier that BIAs can’t do what malls can with their private space. Only those in the top-tier can play that game, those that aren’t there yet get run over.

It is through these instances of confirmation that the DLBIA affirmed LWLP’s market worth. This was done by contrasting LWLP’s services with past revitalization plans which supposedly failed to be successfully implemented because they became “bookshelf ornaments”. The suggestion was that, through their TLC program, LWLP would mimic the shopping mall management model by convincing “top-tier” business to locate in downtown London.

Shortly after these instances of confirmation, most city councillors began referring to LWLP as practitioners rather than consultants. For example, Deputy Mayor Hubert corrected himself as he spoke to the committee:

I think what we’re hearing from this council is that we want less said and more done. I did review the website of the consultant organization. I don’t want to use
the word consultant. What’s the right word? [someone yells practitioner]. Practitioner! Thank you. I saw a lot of words like “develop” and “plan” and that made me really nervous because I want more done than said.

Despite being hesitant that LWLP differed from prior business recruitment strategies, Deputy Mayor Hubert deliberately sought out the “correct” way to classify LWLP.

Interestingly, LWLP’s deal making expertise was constructed as a purchasable intellectual property. In this sense, the DLBIA was not hiring a consultant but purchasing a much-needed trademarked TLC product (LWLP’s deal making expertise) that would supposedly attract desirable commercial tenants (see figure 6.11). The DLBIA CEO ensured this was different than hiring a consultant insofar as LWLP would transfer this product to the DLBIA by teaching them these deal-making skills. As she explained to city councillors:

Give a man a fish, he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, he’ll eat forever. They are going to teach us how to do this on our own… They’ll teach us how to continue. They’ll leave us in a situation where we will go fishing by ourselves. So, it’s great education for us as well.

According to the DLBIA CEO, this would ensure LWLP would not simply produce a “bookshelf ornament” plan because they would teach the DLBIA the necessary skills to attract new commercial tenants. In this way, the solution to the downtown’s urban problems was to simply purchase a trademarked product (TLC) which would become an invaluable tool for the DLBIA.

In sum, LWLP’s TLC program was constructed as a purchasable product that would attract placemaking commercial tenants and, therefore, lure away the downtown’s non-targeted uses. LWLP was viewed as a different approach because they would not just write a report but would use their deal making expertise to make tangible changes to the downtown.
Summarizing the DLBIA’s Constructed Reality

To summarize, the DLBIA constructed the downtown’s reality through numerous truth tests that affirmed the downtown’s current state, ongoing problems, and appropriate solution. The pied piper legend served as an appropriate comparison to their constructed reality. The DLBIA’s suggestion was the City needed to hire a pied piper (LWLP) to lure away downtown’s vermin (vacant properties, undesirable commercial tenants, and homeless squatters) by playing his magical flute (TLC program). This solution would supposedly transform the downtown into the DLBIA’s unique and experiential vision and, therefore, enhance the downtown’s marketability.

To be more specific, by presenting retrospective critiques and constructing a revitalization threshold, the DLBIA affirmed the downtown’s reality by portraying an economically successful but not yet fully revitalized downtown. This legitimized the DLBIA’s past revitalization projects and justified a need for continued municipal investments. The use of the “targeted and non-targeted” binary allowed the DLBIA to soften their language about excluding the homeless and undesirable commercial tenants from the downtown as well as present placemaking as a seemingly simple and practical solution to these issues. According to
DLBIA members, projective commercial tenants (those that are coachable, adaptable, and collaborative) would implement placemaking strategies to transform the downtown into their unique and experiential vision. However, since the downtown lacked these projective tenants, the DLBIA constructed LWLP as a much-needed deal making practitioner that, through their purchasable and transferable TLC program, would attract these types of tenants.

This is not to suggest city councillors accepted the DLBIA’s downtown reality at face value. While the DLBIA attempted to establish *semantic security* by imposing their definitions and solutions as reality, this reality was subject to “the contingency and uncertainty inherent in situations” (Boltanski, 2011, p. 91). That is, despite her attempts to confirm reality through truth tests, the DLBIA CEO could not, of course, make a final authoritative statement about the downtown’s solution insofar as city councillors could contest her justifications, point out injustices, and form compromises. The final section of this chapter explains the core tensions and compromises that emerged during the committee question/debate period.

### 6.3 Contestations and Compromises

City councillors were not entirely sold on the DLBIA’s funding proposal. As this section explains, they criticized LWLP’s reputational worth, identified a projective-domestic contradiction in LWLP’s TLC program, and introduced a civic test by claiming the funding would be unfair to other areas of the city. Other councillors, however, were willing to form a civic-industrial compromise to resolve these critiques. Nevertheless, they ultimately denied the funding proposal with a close 8-7 vote. I show how contestations and compromises were confined to the *vehicle* of revitalization (LWLP) rather than the simplistic *method* (creative cities agenda) the DLBIA proposed to solve downtown’s urban problems.
Contesting the Vehicle of Revitalization

City councillors contested the DLBIA’s constructed reality in three ways. First, some councillors argued LWLP did not have a reputation of attracting small-scale, independent commercial tenants that the DLBIA was seeking. To demonstrate LWLP’s reputational worth, the DLBIA CEO showed a PowerPoint slide listing LWLP’s previous work in other cities (see figure 6.12). As she explained, “LWLP’s reputation is what we are banking on here. Their reputation depends on their last one [previous work] and they have fulfilled them in a meaningful way”. She also used vague anecdotal examples of LWLP’s past success without presenting specific data:

Downtown Mississauga, we got a glowing recommendation from them. They [LWLP] actually helped them build a downtown that didn’t exist… Rockford Illinois had a reputation for being the worse city in America and they certainly helped them make a plan to make it not the worst city in American. In fact, now it’s one of the best.

In other words, rather than presenting specific market data demonstrating the economic success of LWLP’s prior work, she relied on LWLP’s reputational worth (recognition, fame, opinion of others) to justify their revitalization expertise.

Councillor Zaifman challenged her reputational justification by arguing LWLP did not have a reputation for attracting the small-scale, independent commercial tenants. For example, the councillor directly challenged her by asking, “So, where is their experience of bringing in those actual businesses to town where these independents are?”. She responded by saying, “I don’t honestly know. But I know the success at the Pan Am Games, that was all unique retailers…At the end of the day, I can’t answer your questions because I haven’t cut them a cheque yet”. In other words, highlighting LWLP’s reputational worth did not address how their expertise would be useful for attracting the type of retailers the DLBIA was seeking.
Second, some councillors pointed to the contradiction of attracting small-scale, local commercial tenants from other cities rather than finding them in London. As two city councillors explained:

All we have to do in London to get unique tenants is to go down to the Old East Village. Yesterday I was at the Root Cellar buying beer from the London Beer Co-Op. That’s a unique use of a property that’s inherently grown from the city of London and the neighbourhood. I would rather see it come from the ground up rather than hiring someone. (Councillor Squire)

Where do these independent businesses come from? I look at King street and Talbot where local businesses have spurred in the last little while. Where are these networks that they are going to find businesses that exist and bring them to London? (Councillor Morgan)

These councillors pointed to the contradiction in attracting small-scale, local businesses (domestic worth) from LWLP’s extra-local networks (projective worth). Councillors argued these commercial tenants should be grown from London rather than relying on LWLP’s TLC program. The justification to hire LWLP was therefore rooted in a fragile projective-domestic compromise which opened the DLBIA up for criticism. When confronted with this contradiction, the DLBIA CEO replied, “I haven’t exactly asked them that question yet. But I know they have a massive network of people and places they have
been successful in”. She therefore continued to reiterate LWLP’s reputational worth without resolving the projective-domestic contradiction.

Third, many councillors argued that funding LWLP did not meet the civic test because it was unfair to prioritize investments in the downtown over other areas of the city. Interestingly, the DLBIA CEO was prepared for the civic test by emphasizing downtown investments would benefit the rest of the city. In fact, as figure 6.13 shows, she dedicated an entire PowerPoint slide to emphasize this point. She argued the downtown represented just 0.2% of the city’s geographic space but generated 9% of the city’s taxes. As she explained:

When you have a healthy downtown the rest of the city will prosper. Better roads, cleaner parks, and safer neighbourhoods. The entire city benefits from a strong downtown… The health of the downtown is good for the city. The more taxes we bring into the downtown, the more goes into the city coffers.

The implication was that downtown investment served a civic virtue insofar as it would help fund other neighbourhoods’ infrastructure.

Figure 6.13: Preparing for the civic test.
Many city councillors, however, took issue with what they thought was an expensive $540 000 funding proposal given, as mentioned earlier, the DLBIA received numerous investments over the past decade. For example, councillors argued the downtown had already received its fair share of investments and that their constituents did not support the funding proposal:

We have done it from our part over and over and over again. I look at my good colleague over here [points at councillor Van Holst representing ward one], I look at the Old East Village, and so on; we need to start investing in those areas because there is only so much money to go around… I don’t see other areas of the city coming to us to say they want to hire company X to help lease space. Why is it different for downtown? Why does the downtown need this and other areas don’t need it? (Councillor Squire)

I received dozens of emails and all of them are against this proposal… Everyone speaks about how the downtown is the economic engine of the city, and it absolutely is…But there comes a time when we do have to look at other areas of the city…It’s time now to cast our eyes on other parts of the city and spread investments out as much as we can. (Councillor Cassidy)

In this case, councillors evaluated the DLBIA’s funding request with a civic test of the good; that is, whether the funding was equitable and fair to other neighbourhoods in the city. The DLBIA’s earlier emphasis on “game changing” downtown investments seemed to backfire as some city councillors used these prior investments as proofs of the DLBIA’s privileged position.

The civic fairness of DLBIA’s funding proposal became a major topic of discussion throughout the committee meeting as other councillors disagreed with these civic critiques. For example, Councillor Usher reiterated the DLBIA’s argument that downtown investments benefit the entire city:

I keep hearing many of us talk about our constituents and our environment. You know something, I was elected by ward 12 constituents to come and sit at this area [points at his desk] to make decisions for all of London. And if we don’t keep the downtown lively and vibrant, all of our areas will go down and I want all of them to go up. They are going to go up because people are going to come see what our downtown is like and they’re going to invest in other areas of the city.
There was clear tension between councillors regarding the civic fairness of the funding proposal. On the one hand, some councillors believed downtown investments were unfair to other areas of the city. On the other hand, others argued the downtown was the economic engine for the entire city and, therefore, deserved to be privileged over other areas.

Since there was no public consultation process, the DLBIA and city councillors were the only social actors involved in determining the civic fairness of the funding proposal. Members of the public could not voice their opinion on whether $540,000 of taxpayer money should go towards hiring LWLP. One particular citizen, however, took issue with the lack of public consultation when he began shouting from the public gallery during the committee debate period, “We [the public] were not included and this is something that occurred three-days ago!”. The remainder of his shouting was inaudible as Mayor Brown, clearly knowing who the man was, addressed him directly:

Mr. Brock, I’m going to have to ask you to stop interrupting the meeting. This isn’t a public participation meeting. You are entitled to be here and observe but you’re not entitled to speak at this time [Man continues yelling]. Mr. Brock, I’m going to have to ask you again to respect the decorum of this council chamber and I’m going to ask you to stop speaking at this time.

As the man continued shouting, the mayor told security to escort him out of the building. In this sense, members of the public were excluded from the reality test, leaving only city councillors and the DLBIA CEO to debate the civic merits of hiring LWLP.

**Forming a Civic-Industrial Compromise**

Some city councillors proposed two separate civic-industrial compromises to resolve disagreements. Councillor Van Holst was the first to introduce this compromise when he proposed that, if LWLP were to be hired, the City should set evaluative criteria for the investment. As he explained:

We talk about how the downtown brings in 5% of our taxes. I do want to point out that 95% comes from outside of downtown and people are concerned about that. However, I don’t want to make a moralistic decision. That’s not how I’m
making this decision… This should be just a business decision. We should be able to look at this pretty well and decide if it’s a good risk. Are we likely to get back this money if we do this?

He attempted to resolve the civic concerns (what he called “moralistic”) through a rational evaluation of the investment (whether it was a “good risk”). This sparked discussion about how the City could develop metrics to determine the impact of their investment. Deputy Mayor Hubert suggested that, in the event the City decided to fund LWLP, they should develop specific outcomes to determine if they made a return on their investment. As he explained:

I want to see outcomes for whatever comes back. I want us to tie it back to the things we’re measuring… I want us to increase our ability to track our investments and the impact they are having.

The DLBIA CEO, however, had no specific answer on what type of metrics could be used to evaluate LWLP’s effectiveness. Councillor Park, DLBIA member and city councillor representing the downtown ward, responded to Deputy Mayor Hubert by revising the original motion of the funding request. Rather than giving the DLBIA the entire $540,000 to hire LWLP, Councillor Park proposed the City give them $200,000 up front with the condition that the DLBIA report back to the committee by the end of 2016 with a detailed explanation of LWLP’s progress. If the progress was deemed appropriate, the City would then give another $240,000 to continue LWLP’s contract (thereby decreasing the original funding request from $540,000 to $440,000). The hope was that the lowered funding request along with a progress report would reduce city councillors’ civic concerns by attaching specific criteria to measure LWLP’s impact on the city. This revised motion was subsequently passed, thus changing the DLBIA’s original funding proposal. The revision to include a required progress report demonstrates Boltanski’s (2011, p. 127) “complex and managerial form of domination” insofar as technical derivatives, monitoring systems, and benchmarking was a response to civic issues.
The second civic-industrial compromise was raised by Deputy Mayor Hubert. He suggested the knowledge/skills gained from LWLP (industrial worth) should be shared equally with other BIAs in the city (civic worth). As he explained:

I want this to be exported knowledge, intellectual capital, that we as a city are buying. Downtown London is the application site of it, Downtown London is the laboratory if you will. But I want this to be intellectual capital for the Old East BIA, for the Argyle BIA, the SOHO community association, the Hyde Park BIA. Because the way this is playing out, the city of London is paying for the practitioner, therefore the practitioner’s expertise…So, how do we take that expertise and make it usable and supportable to all of the business areas in the city of London?

His suggestion, in other words, was civic concerns could be resolved if the DLBIA promised to share its “intellectual capital” with other BIAs. The DLBIA CEO agreed this was a fair compromise. Councillor Zaifman, however, identified an issue with the proposed civic-industrial compromise. He suggested LWLP’s services were context-specific and would not apply to other BIAs in the city. As he explained, “These are very area-specific projects with plans tailored to those areas…When these are very specific on an area, I don’t necessarily see the potential benefit from that”. In this sense, he argued specialized knowledge could not be shared insofar as it would only apply for one particular locale; that is, he argued downtown’s creative cities vision may not reflect other BIAs’ visions. He therefore challenged the fragile compromise between civic-industrial worth by highlighting the common industrial good (expert knowledge) is inconsistent with civic worth (equality).

City councillors eventually voted 8-7 against DLBIA’s funding proposal. While we can speculate city councillors’ respective votes based on their aforementioned viewpoints, there were several city councillors who voted but did not speak during the 3-hour long committee meeting. However, it is not my intention to describe each councillors’ rationale for their vote; rather, my intention is to show city councillors used their critical capacity to contest, negotiate, and form compromises. Councillors did not
necessarily take the DLBIA’s justifications at face value insofar as they critiqued LWLP’s reputational worth, identified a projective-domestic contradiction in their TLC program, and introduced a civic test by claiming the funding would be unfair to other areas of the city. Interestingly, councillors were more concerned about the DLBIA’s vehicle of revitalization (hiring LWLP) rather than the logic of their method (unique and experiential vision). That is, councillors never questioned the DLBIA’s simplistic creative cities solution to the downtown’s urban problems.

Conclusion

Boltanski (2011) argued institutions face a “hermeneutic contradiction”; that is, institutionally constructed reality is fragile and unstable because it must cope with a plurality of interpretations of the social world. While institutional experts possess a definitional power that attempts to construct reality, what Boltanski (2011, p. 99) explained as “the whatness of what is”, they are never able to fully impose reality insofar as it is subject to a plurality of interpretations. Institutionally constructed realities are therefore never imposed in a dominant, repressive, and authoritative fashion because, according to Boltanski (2011), institutions are communicative, interwoven with human actors, and subject to critique and contestation.

In the context of my study, we did not necessarily see the emergence of a singular, cohesive “discursive institution” that successfully portrayed an outside placemaking organization as an obvious solution to the downtown’s urban problems. Instead, we saw the emergence of an uneasy, fragile assemblage of actors engaging in normative discussions about the “good”, “right”, and “proper” approach to downtown revitalization. Interestingly, the DLBIA had both its supporters and critics. On the one hand, its supporters tried to form compromises to help justify the DLBIA’s funding request. On the other hand, its critics were quick to point out injustices and contradictions in their funding request.

That said, city councillors’ concerns were confined to the appropriateness of hiring LWLP –
specifically, questioning their reputation, pointing out a contradiction in their method, and judging the fairness of the funding request—rather than the DLBIA’s simplistic logic of fixing urban problems by bringing placemaking commercial tenants to the downtown. Rather than acknowledging the structural causes of the downtown’s urban disorder, a simplistic projective solution— to attract coachable, adaptable, and collaborative commercial tenants—was constructed as a panacea to the downtown’s problems. Thus, councillors were primarily concerned with the vehicle rather than the method of revitalization.

It is important to note members of the public were excluded from the decision-making process as there was no public consultation meeting. It was entirely up to city councillors to determine whether the funding proposal met the civic test of the good; that is, whether taxpayer money should go towards hiring a private placemaking organization to aid downtown revitalization. This is reflective of what Boltanski (2011, p. 127) calls a “complex and managerial form of domination” insofar as privileged actors (i.e., city councillors, urban planners, DLBIA members) controlled the framing of reality and critique. For example, councillors attempted to resolve civic concerns by establishing benchmarks to determine if the City would make a return on their investment. As Boltanski (2011) argues, these types of industrial metrics (e.g., benchmarking, progress reports, risk assessment, etc.) represent a contemporary form of domination that constructs expert opinion as the most appropriate way to determine justice and fairness.

Despite failing to convince councillors to fund LWLP, the interactions between the DLBIA CEO and city councillors show the various moral viewpoints that emerged throughout the decision-making process. Rather than being a cohesive and unified urban assemblage, the DLBIA and city councillors formed a fragile and disjointed arrangement with no definitive answer on the proper way to revitalize Dundas Place. What remained constant, however, was that the creative cities agenda was viewed as
appropriate solution to transform the downtown into the DLBIA’s unique and experiential vision. That is, councillors never questioned the DLBIA’s desire to treat the downtown like a mall. The next chapter expands on how this creative cities vision was eventually justified and implemented as the solution to manage homeless people in the downtown.
7. **Justifying the Dundas Place Manager**

As explained in the previous chapter, the DLBIA could not convince councillors to fund LWLP for an 18-month contract. Nevertheless, two months later the DLBIA used their own funds to hire LWLP for a four-month contract beginning in May 2016. During this time, LWLP conducted a SWOT analysis of the downtown to propose a way to move forward.\(^{22}\) Speaking on behalf of the DLBIA, LWLP presented their study’s findings to the Strategic Priorities and Policies Committee on October 25, 2016, a year after the DLBIA’s funding request. This chapter focuses on LWLP’s presentation of their study’s findings and recommendations. As I explain, their main recommendation was for the City to hire an “Urban Core Coordinator”, later called the “Dundas Place Manager”, who would be tasked with activating and programming Dundas Place.\(^{23}\) After city councillors voted unanimously to create this position, Savanah Sewell was hired as the Dundas Place Manager in September 2018.

This chapter analyzes the moral justifications for creating the Dundas Place Manager. I show how LWLP utilized their definitional power to successfully justify the need for this position which, I argue, represents a subtle and non-punitive order maintenance strategy enacted by a quasi-state actor. In particular, I show how the Dundas Place Manager’s task of activating and programming downtown space was justified as an appropriate and humane solution to manage homeless people in public space. Similar to the previous chapter, the simplistic creative cities placemaking solution was constructed as a practical and realistic strategy to manage urban disorder. In this case, however, city councillors enacted a material change by creating a new quasi-state manager who would directly plan, organize, and coordinate public space.

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\(^{22}\) SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This is a standard approach many organizations use to identify factors that are favourable and unfavourable for achieving a specific objective.

\(^{23}\) For the sake of consistency, I will refer to this as the “Dundas Place Manager” throughout the chapter.
I begin by explaining how and why the DLBIA relied on LWLP’s definitional power (i.e., their expert opinion) to make more authoritative claims about the downtown. Through their SWOT analysis, I show how LWLP justified a simplistic creative cities strategy to manage the presence of downtown’s drug users and homeless population. I then describe how, despite their criticisms of LWLP’s characterization of marginalized groups, councillors ultimately agreed that creating a Dundas Place Manager was an appropriate solution for downtown’s urban disorder. Lastly, I show how the Dundas Place Manager’s task of activating and programming downtown space is a creative cities strategy that attempts to make the presence of marginalized groups more tolerable in public space.24

7.1 LWLP’s Definitional Power

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue contemporary capitalist firms are comprised of a “slim core” of in-house teams but are surrounded by a conglomeration of outsourced experts. As I explained in the previous chapter, the DLBIA wanted to hire LWLP (an outside expert) to persuade placemaking commercial tenants to locate in downtown London. However, since councillors rejected the funding request, the DLBIA could not afford to pay for LWLP’s “deal making” expertise. In response, they hired LWLP for a short four-month contract to conduct a SWOT analysis of the downtown. As I explain below, the purpose of this was for LWLP to make more authoritative claims about downtown’s problems and convince councillors that creating a Dundas Place Manager position was an appropriate solution. Given city councillors voted against funding LWLP, it appeared the DLBIA nevertheless had strong belief in LWLP’s expert services.

It was clear the DLBIA relied on LWLP to make more convincing claims about the downtown. For example, DLBIA members routinely explained it was difficult to persuade city councillors because

24 It should be noted this chapter does not describe the actual enactment of this social control strategy because the Dundas Place redevelopment has yet to be completed. Rather, this chapter explains the moral justifications behind creating the Dundas Place Manager position.
“you are never a prophet in your own land”. The meaning behind this biblical phrase is that a local prophet’s (the DLBIA) advice is not taken seriously because it is difficult to gain followers from people one has close familiarity with (city councillors). Thus, a prophet from another land (in this case, LWLP) holds more authority because their knowledge and experience were gained from outside the local context. As DLBIA members explained during interviews:

Because you are never prophet in your own land, we are always armed with opinions from other people. They [LWLP] are going to call in on those things [Dundas Place and Bus Rapid Transit] on behalf of us. Again, you’re not a prophet in your own land. So, we list these experts who seen these things in other cities. (Cindy, DLBIA professional staff)

If we can get a third-party voice to speak on our behalf, it carries greater weight. Particularly if, when talking to councillors, they believe that the information was researched by themselves. It’s kind of a bit of a psychological game as well, whether you can get up and say the exact same thing. Like, “oh here is my expert”, you think it’s knowledge which they came by way of their own investigation [laughs]. (Megan, DLBIA professional staff)

According to Cindy and Megan, being armed with an expert third-party (LWLP) is beneficial because they can make more convincing claims on behalf of the DLBIA. In this case, LWLP had more legitimacy because they had experience in other cities and could therefore make more authoritative claims to councillors. Megan took it a step further by suggesting LWLP could play “psychological games” with councillors by making LWLP’s knowledge appear so natural that councillors would believe it was their own idea. Thus, in addition to learning revitalization tactics, the DLBIA relied on LWLP’s definitional power – their ability to gain support and speak with authority – to create consensus about downtown’s problems and appropriate solutions.

After conducting their four-month SWOT analysis, the LWLP project manager, Joseph Milos, received delegation status from city council which allowed him to speak on behalf of the DLBIA to the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee. In other words, LWLP went through the required municipal process to receive permission to present their findings and recommendations. This is unsurprising given,
as Boltanski argues (2011), experts often have privileged access to institutionalized reality tests – in this case, a municipal committee meeting. It was in this particular interactional setting that the LWLP project manager attempted to justify the need for the Dundas Place Manager.

Similar to the DLBIA’s presentation described in the previous chapter, LWLP constructed downtown’s reality by highlighting its problems and solutions. However, they used a specific method (SWOT analysis) to give more legitimacy to their constructed reality. For example, the title of the presentation, *Reconnaissance & Strategic Assessment: Evaluation & Recommendations to Advance London’s Downtown*, implied LWLP were trained objective observers of the downtown (Live Work Learn Play, 2016). The use of the term “reconnaissance” meant LWLP took a tactical approach by extracting information and strategically evaluating downtown’s ongoing problems. This so-called reconnaissance was executed through their SWOT analysis (short for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats); a strategic planning technique that identifies factors that are favourable and unfavourable for achieving a specific objective. In the most basic terms, the purpose of this method is to identify the downtown’s advantages (Strengths) and disadvantages (Weaknesses), elements that could be exploited to produce more advantages in the downtown (Opportunities), and elements that cause trouble in the downtown (Threats). LWLP highlighted this fairly standard organizational method in order to convince councillors that their claims were backed by a legitimate industry method as opposed to anecdotal comments. In actuality, this method was not as complex and sophisticated as they made it appear. In addition to conducting various statistical reports, LWLP simply spoke with various downtown stakeholders about their perceptions of the downtown, including DLBIA board and staff members, a few city councillors and administration workers, four social services, several property developers and relators, representatives from Fanshawe college and the Convention Centre, among many others.
Diagnosing the Downtown

Based on their SWOT analysis, the LWLP project manager showed detailed market proofs to demonstrate the current state of the downtown retail and commercial sectors. After briefly noting a few positive aspects of the downtown, such as the growing technology and creative sector, good stock of unique heritage buildings, and affordable real estate, he noted the downtown’s main problem was the high supply but low demand for commercial buildings. He explained this was creating an “economic development problem” for the entire city. To justify this claim, he used various market proofs from the SWOT analysis to demonstrate, despite growth in the downtown’s residential sector, there was a lack of growth in the retail and office sectors (see figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: LWLP illustrating market proofs of downtown’s declining retail and office sectors.
As his presentation proceeded, he identified “drug use and street culture” as the major cause of the declining retail and office sector. Despite identifying eight other issues in the downtown, most of the presentation was spent prescribing a solution to the downtown’s drug use and street culture problem as this was, according to the LWLP project manager, “the defining issue in the downtown” (see figure 7.2). In this sense, drug use and homelessness were problems insofar as they affected the downtown retail and commercial sectors, thereby constructing urban marginality as a market problem. As he explained, “The drug and street culture is something that needs to be tackled because it creates an economic development, real estate, and investment problem in the downtown”.

Figure 7.2: Identifying the downtown’s main problems, with specific emphasis on the drug use and street culture.

This sentiment was also shared by DLBIA members. For example, when asked about the DLBIA’s role in providing social care for the marginalized, DLBIA members frequently framed homelessness as a market problem:
We know what needs to be done, but social issues are beyond our mandate. Although the health unit was quite surprised that we had an interest in it. Well, we have businesses here that are losing clientele because of social issues right on their doorstep. Of course we are interested in it. Is it our job to fix it? No, but let me tell you the impact this is having and it may help shape the decision you are going to make in the future with the drug strategy, poverty panel, whatever. (Cindy, DLBIA professional staff)

There are lawyers who make their livelihood defending their [the homeless] right to the street. Well, other citizens and businesses have every right to a safe environment so let’s see all perspectives…What right do they [the homeless] have? Their right to loiter, to what? You have a number of people who end up congregating in public places like the library or loitering around businesses on Dundas and driving all the business out. (Victoria, DLBIA board member)

In both cases, DLBIA members framed homelessness as a problem insofar as businesses lost clientele. Cindy implied social services should consider the impact homelessness had on the business community, while Victoria believed homeless rights have been unfairly privileged over business interests. In short, both LWLP and DLBIA members viewed social issues as a concern insofar as they impacted the downtown’s marketability.

Interestingly, rather than acknowledging systemic issues that cause drug use and homelessness, the LWLP project manager blamed this issue on several “weaknesses” identified from their SWOT analysis. This included many spatial weaknesses such as the concentration of social services, lack of “eyes-on-the-street” during evening hours, centralization of downtown bus stops, and institutions/businesses failing to occupy public spaces. In other words, drug use and homelessness were constructed as simplistic spatial problems that could be solved by planning, managing, and controlling the ebbs and flow of downtown space. Thus, hiring a Dundas Place Manager appeared an obvious solution to this spatial problem insofar as the person would be tasked with managing downtown public spaces in a more methodical and purposeful fashion.
To justify the need for the Dundas Place Manager, the LWLP project manager used an example of what he deemed a failed City-led revitalization attempt on Market Lane. This was a City-led attempt to revitalize a small downtown alleyway (between downtown’s Fanshawe College campus and Market Tower) in time for the 2013 World Figure Skating Championship. Local news media, for example, described the revitalization attempt as the “laneway learning moment” for the Dundas Place redevelopment because the alleyway became a “foyer of drug use” (Stacey, 2017). Similarly, DLBIA members argued the City failed to properly maintain the alleyway:

We call them “UD” for undesirables, that is who seems to have taken over there. All the benches have been ground by skateboards, people sleep on them, the gardens are crap – I mean literally. It’s just a place where you and I would not feel very comfortable. (Cindy, DLBIA professional staff)

They [the City] are famous for building stuff and walking away from it and never doing anything with it. Market Lane is a good example. It won the international design competition, great design. And they build it and walk away from it, right? Nobody was maintaining it. It’s the broken windows theory, right?... If you take care of that stuff right away people treat the space better, right? (Glen, DLBIA board member)

Despite the City’s efforts to redesign the alleyway, this spot continued to have a high concentration of drug trafficking, loitering, and homelessness because, according to Glen, the City failed to successfully implement broken windows strategies. Interestingly, as Cindy explained, the DLBIA used the short form “UD” to identify undesirable groups who occupy public space. It should be noted these sentiments were shared privately during interviews rather than being directly addressed to city councillors. Nevertheless, these quotes demonstrate the general thoughts about the City’s attempt to manage a problematic alleyway.

During the presentation to city council, the LWLP project manager mentioned Market Lane and described it as London’s “orphan child” because “it was just turned over without an idea of how it will
be run or operated in a holistic sense”. He warned councillors that Dundas Place could not be managed like Market Lane or else it would be another failure. As he explained:

That is something very real and a concern for something like Dundas Place… If you don’t have an idea of how you’re going to activate it as well as keep it operating and safe, then there is a failing. Because on day one you’re going to turn it [Dundas Place] out to the public and they are going to use it like Market Lane which is a place that is not necessarily the best aspects of programming happening.

According to the LWLP project manager, the City needed to take a more strategic approach to Dundas Place or else it would resemble the supposed failed Market Lane revitalization. He suggested Dundas Place should be “activated” and have the best aspects of “programming” before turning it out to the public.

LWLP recommended the Dundas Place Manager should be tasked with activating and programing public spaces in select “green zones”; specifically, in downtown’s main greenspace (Vitoria Park) and the four-block stretch of the future Dundas Place. It was in these specific areas the City needed to, as the title of the PowerPoint slide read, “disarm drug use & street culture” (see figure 7.3). As the PowerPoint slide further explained, these were considered critical areas in the downtown “that, in tackling the drug and street culture issue, have removed features that would make them safe and pleasant to occupy”. In this sense, marginalized groups were represented as obstacles needing to be removed to ensure people consume the downtown in a “pleasant” manner (see Blomley, 2007, 2010).
But what did activation and programming *actually* mean? In the simplest terms, this referred to sanctioned events, festivals, or activities that would draw people to a specific urban space. As figure 7.4 shows, LWLP provided a long list of examples of how to activate and program urban spaces. This included sports and physical activities, relaxation activities, food festivals, arts and entertainment, among many others. The idea was drug use and street culture could be “disarmed” if urban spaces were filled with pedestrian traffic and crowds.

That said, the LWLP Project Manager gave little details about how this process would work. It was not until I spoke with DLBIA members that the logic behind this placemaking tactic became apparent. For now, my main point is that, compared to the DLBIA’s presentation described in the previous chapter, LWLP made more direct claims about the downtown. For example, they blamed social services, City administration, and local institutions/businesses for exacerbating the concentration of
marginalized groups, they directly criticized the City for their failed Market Lane revitalization, and used tactical language that treated marginalized groups as obstacles needing to be disarmed. Since the DLBIA must work alongside the City to attain resources and political support, they cannot make these types of direct claims or else they would face scrutiny from locals and councillors. Thus, they relied on LWLP’s definitional power, which is legitimized through their SWOT analysis, to construct the downtown as a site of urban disorder in desperate need of a spatial solution.

Critiques and Compromises

This is not to say councillors accepted LWLP’s characterization of the downtown. While councillors said little about the DLBIA’s characterization of homeless people being “non-targeted uses”
(described in the previous chapter), they were quick to criticize LWLP’s proposed solution to disarm drug use and street culture in select green zones. For example, Councillor Squire spoke vocally about LWLP’s portrayal of street people:

I represent many of the people you are talking about that sit in Market Lane. They are my clients. They suffer severe mental disabilities. They come downtown because they are lonely, and their lives have very little meaning…The steps that are suggested will get us no closer to solving the difficulties of my clients…If I say to them, “oh, we passed a motion that we are going to clean up Market Lane”, they’re going to say “well, what’s wrong with Market Lane. I sit in Market Lane. I know I’m kind of scruffy, but I sit in market lane”.

Councillor Squire took offense to the proposed solution to “disarm” the drug and street culture. In particular, he criticized LWLP’s green zone idea by emphasizing marginalized groups’ civic worth; that is, their right to interact in public space. Similarly, other councillors criticized the specific use of the word “green zone” throughout LWLP’s presentation:

I know some of you know I have a military background. So, when I hear “green zone”, that is a little too strong for me. I’m sure you can make those connections about what green zones look like in other parts of the world. For me that sounds like a very aggressive approach and not the one I want to see. That terminology puts people off I guess. (Councillor Salhi)

I don’t want us to rush into market lane and start chasing people out... I want us to be very very careful that we’re not chasing people away from anywhere whatsoever because all we’re going to do is chase them off to another street not too far away. (Councillor Usher)

I hear a lot of bureaucratic speak, with all due respect. What I am hearing between the lines is that we have people there that we don’t want there and we want to find a way to get everyone together to move the people. So, if I am incorrect I need to be clarified. (Councillor Ridley)

Taken together, many councillors were concerned the proposed green zone solution was a punitive approach that would simply displace marginalized groups from the downtown. In this sense, LWLP’s industrial logic (activating and programming green zones) did not meet the civic test insofar as councillors defended marginalized groups’ right to occupy public space. Just a day after LWLP’s
presentation, many local social service representatives shared similar civic concerns. For example, they were quoted in the London Free Press saying “I’m disappointed by the language, about cleaning up the downtown. We’re working really hard to reduce the stigma around the homeless and the suffering” and “To suggest that some people belong and others do not is shameful” (De Bono, 2016). In other words, LWLP’s framing of the downtown was not well received as four of fourteen councillors (29%) as well as local social service representatives defended marginalized groups’ civic worth.

Although a group of councillors were clearly concerned about implementing a punitive approach that would displace marginalized groups from the downtown, they nevertheless viewed LWLP’s recommendation to activate and program urban spaces as a civic approach to manage the downtown. This was made clear by Deputy Mayor Hubert’s response to the aforementioned councillors:

We don’t want to move people around, we want people to become part of the fabric... They are people, and we need to enhance our sense of their peopleNESS, if I could use that word, and their humanity. That being said, activation of the street is the way we get there. It’s not about moving a group of people or addressing a particular target, but it’s about activation.

In this case, Deputy Mayor Hubert contrasted displacement from activation, implying the latter was a more civic approach because it acknowledged marginalized groups’ humanity. As figure 7.5 shows, the LWLP project manager reiterated this was indeed a more “holistic” approach rather than a “crime and punishment and militarization of the streets”. In this way, activation and programming was portrayed as an alternative to displacement and criminalization insofar as it was taking a more “holistic view of the whole downtown”. The routine use of the word “holistic” was interesting insofar as LWLP’s proposed creative cities placemaking solution, as I will explain in the next section, was far from a comprehensive approach to solve downtown’s drug use and homeless problem.

Councillors eventually voted unanimously to create the Dundas Place Manager position. The DLBIA made the job posting available on July 5, 2018 and filled the position two months later. While
activating and programming downtown spaces through festivals, events, and activities seems like a harmless task, part of the strategy’s rationale was to deter marginalized groups from occupying these areas. Although some councillors defended marginalized groups’ rights and challenged LWLP’s green zone language, the logic of the proposed placemaking strategy was never challenged insofar as it was deemed a more humane approach.

Figure 7.5: LWLP proposing the Dundas Place Manager as a more “holistic” approach.

7.2 Placemaking Order Maintenance

This section draws on data from interviews with DLBIA members, DLBIA-produced materials, and participant observation at a public information meeting to examine the logic behind activating and programming urban space. I argue these creative city “buzzwords” represent a non-punitive order maintenance strategy enacted by a quasi-state actor (a dual City-DLBIA role). In particular, I show how the purpose of this strategy is to blend, and in some cases displace, marginalized groups in public space to make panhandling tolerable.
Other than briefly presenting a list of examples, LWLP said little about what activation and programming *actually* meant and how it should be implemented. Since I interviewed DLBIA members during and shortly after LWLP’s four-month contract, they shared many details about the logic of this placemaking process. It became clear the DLBIA quickly adopted LWLP’s placemaking rhetoric as they routinely expressed the need to activate and program downtown spaces to make the homeless tolerable; that is, less threatening in public space. This seemed to replace the DLBIA’s “targeted and non-targeted” dichotomy which was absent throughout LWLP’s presentation and interviews with DLBIA members. Thus, in addition to using LWLP for their definitional power, they also provided the DLBIA with urban revitalization knowledge.

For example, Rachel, a DLBIA professional staff person, explained how Vancouver’s Gastown neighbourhood was an ideal example of a programmed urban space:

The real secret to make it work [Dundas Place] is you have to *program* it. Stuff has to be happening. You need to draw the crowds that you want so those kind of people [the homeless] become a little bit more invisible in it… I went to Vancouver a couple of summers ago and went to Gastown. I have never been so vigorously panhandled in my life. But because there were so many regular shoppers and tourists and people just out there enjoying themselves, the panhandler thing didn’t seem like such a big deal… There was more traffic so, yeah, they blend in more [emphasis added].

According to Rachel, urban spaces should have heavy pedestrian traffic to mask marginalized groups’ unpleasant behaviours and make consumers feel more comfortable. Moreover, her direct reference to the word “program” demonstrates that she adopted LWLP’s creative cities rhetoric. In fact, as I will show, DLBIA members routinely used these catchphrases during interviews and their Dundas Place design plans.
Tolerating Urban Marginality

In addition to adopting LWLP’s rhetoric, the DLBIA implemented these strategies over the summer of 2016 and 2017. DLBIA members referred to this as providing “realized demonstrations” to show Londoners the potential of Dundas Place. As Rachel explained, they worked with the City planning division, the City culture department, local businesses, and musicians for a “demonstration project”:

We also take part in demonstrations because you can tell people till you’re blue in the face and they might not believe you. But when you show them it is way more powerful… So, we had it activated. We had plants on the street, benches, popcorn machines, kids playing basketball, and restaurants brought patios out to the street. It showed them what a flexible street might look like. We worked really hard, really hard, with all of the businesses to make sure it was a very well realized demonstration… It just showed what we can accomplish. So, we feel very firmly that you don’t win hearts and minds by talking at people, but you need to show them too. Communication is part of it, but demonstration is more powerful [emphasis added].

In this sense, kids playing basketball, outdoor popcorn machines, and restaurant patios were “realized demonstrations” of activated spaces. Rather than just speaking about the need to activate and program the downtown, the DLBIA implemented these strategies prior to the construction of Dundas Place to “win the hearts and minds” of Londoners.

The purpose of these demonstrations was not only to draw people to the downtown but, as Megan explained, to blend the urban poor with middle-class consumers. She explained this logic using the example of “Free Comic Book Day”, an event where superhero enthusiasts meet on Dundas Street outside of the popular Hero’s Comic Book store:

It was probably the same amount of panhandlers asking them for money. But because it’s in a different context it doesn’t feel like a terrible thing… So, we created an event to demonstrate what you can do with a flexible street. It showed how the entire community can live together quite nicely. We had homeless people there and people with other drug or mental health issues behaving a little bit erratically. But still, they kind of fit in with the flow.
Thus, according to Megan, programming urban space is a civic approach insofar as homeless people and the community can “live together”. The underlying purpose is to mask the unpleasantries of panhandling by making homeless people “fit in with the flow”. Tina, a DLBIA board member, made a similar point:

> When you build it [Dundas Place] and you just don’t do anything with it then it becomes a place for the “other”. There is this park in Montreal and it was a cesspool for people coming off the bus and doing their drug deal and prostitution in a park in the neighbourhood. The community got around it and they started programming the heck out of the space. They brought in festivals, outdoor concerts, and other events. You know, regular programming. It became a space for everyone, including the drug addict and the homeless person. But it was also a place for families to put down a blanket and enjoy the space [emphasis added].

According to Tina, Dundas Place needed to be strategically programmed or else it would become a space for deviant “others”. Rather than proposing a punitive or exclusionary approach to eliminate marginalized groups from public space, she proposed that programming Dundas Place would make it “a space for everyone”; for both middle-class consumers and the urban poor.

The activation and programming of downtown space became more apparent in the summer of 2017 when the DLBIA’s Facebook group page promoted various events along Market Lane. As figure 7.6 shows, these events included salsa dancing, a giant checkboard game, and theatrical performances organized by the London Fringe Festival. In fact, the word “activation” was used in one of the Facebook posts.
Figure 7.6: Programmed DLBIA events along Market Lane.

Taken together, it was clear the DLBIA was piloting various activation and programming ideas before the construction of Dundas Place. Salsa dancing, artistic performances, and games not only served as activities for people to enjoy, they were also meant to make marginalized groups’ behaviours tolerable and make regular consumers feel more comfortable in downtown space. While the DLBIA was taking
Activation and programming were not only spoken about during interviews, they were central in the DLBIA’s Dundas Place design plans. Just months before the Dundas Place construction began, the DLBIA presented their design plans at a public information meeting. These plans made direct references to the activation and programming language. For example, two posters were featured during the meeting which directly referenced the two terms [emphasis added]:

A robust event programming and management strategy is important to the success of Dundas Place. Dundas Place should be managed as a public place, with a defined mandate and operating budget.

Dundas Place must be purposefully activated to provide a draw for people to come to the space as well as a reason to stay in the space and not just walk through. Activation will include events and festivals, as well as day-to-day activities and amenities.

The argument that “Dundas Place should be managed as a public place” and “purposefully activated” suggested public space (a civic worth) needed to be “managed”, “defined”, and “mandated” (industrial worth). This does not necessarily represent the privatization of public spaces but rather a subtler approach where public space is planned and controlled through sanctioned events, festivals, and activities that make marginalized groups tolerable. Figure 7.7 is an example of the DLBIA’s vision of an activated and programmed Dundas Place.
It is important to note the logic behind activation and programming was never explained to city council. The logic of this placemaking strategy was made discernable only during interviews with DLBIA members. At face value, salsa dancing and musical performances are enjoyable activities that add excitement to an otherwise uneventful downtown (at least during the summertime, DLBIA members did not have any specific activation/programming plans for the winter). Beneath the surface, however, we see the latent purpose of these types of activities is make the unfortunate realities of urban marginality more tolerable for middle-class consumers.

**Displacing Undesirable Loiterers**

According to DLBIA members, simply activating and programming downtown spaces would not prevent marginalized groups from loitering for an extended period of time. Following the logic of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) (see Newman, 1972; Parnaby, 2006; Jefferey, 1971), DLBIA members mentioned three tactics to ensure marginalized groups “move along”: designating Dundas Place as a park, changing bus routes, and installing uncomfortable street furniture.

First, many DLBIA members mentioned that they planned to designate Dundas Place as a park through a municipal by-law to regulate people’s movements and behaviours:
There is an issue with a concentration of people that regular people don’t want to deal with. What we’ll probably do is designate it as a park. Then we’ll program it with buskers and make it a cute little place, but you don’t have the people that literally sit there all-day long. (Megan, DLBIA professional staff)

If we get our way with Market Lane and Dundas Place, we will close parts of it down so they can clean it and maintain it to make it better. So, it will be difficult for people to hang out at. (Cindy, DLBIA professional staff)

What I would like to see is when they put in the flex street the city can define it as a park, say from Wellington to Ridout street…It allows them to say, “we’re going to close this area to clean it”, or whatever, because it is a park and so people have to be moving along. That is going to be a little bit of an issue with the homelessness coalition. I’m sure they are going to get a little pissy about that. (Fred, DLBIA board member)

Taken together, the DLBIA planned to designate Dundas Place a park which would then give the City the legal right to move loiterers along. Interestingly, Fred acknowledged that this may be a contentious issue with the homelessness coalition who, according to him, are oversensitive about these types of issues. However, at the time of this study, there are no active plans to designate Dundas Place as a park. Nevertheless, similar to the existing BIA literature (see Huey et al., 2005; Lippert, 2010), these quotes demonstrate the DLBIA had a desire to strategically control people’s movements through local by-laws.

Second, DLBIA members said they constantly advocate to the City to move the transit bus route off Dundas street and onto the one-way roads just a block north and south (King Street and Queen Street). As they explained, this was to ensure people did not just loiter on Dundas Place claiming they are waiting for a bus:

We have been lobbying to move the busses off Dundas street because it encourages loitering. Those waiting areas, they seem to be dirtier. That is ground zero, it really is the targeted area, right? (Rachel, DLBIA professional staff)

The police can’t approach people to say, “what are you doing there?” because they can say they are waiting for the bus. They walk around the corner and come back to continue with loitering and drug dealing and whatever they are doing. It is a perfect storm because we have Ontario Works there in the Market Tower and having the busses converge there. It is that busyness that masks an awful lot of bad behaviour. (Cindy, DLBIA professional staff)
According to DLBIA members, the concentration of bus stops along Dundas street is detrimental because it provides an excuse for undesirables to loiter and deal drugs. They labeled these areas as “ground zero” and “the perfect storm” because the pedestrian traffic in the area masked undesirable behaviour. Interestingly, this contradicts the DLBIA’s activation/programming logic which seeks to bring more pedestrian traffic to make the urban poor less visible. Since the Dundas Place construction began in early 2018, the bus routes have moved off of Dundas street and onto a block north and south of Dundas street.

Third, while never admitting it to city council or in private interviews, another approach to ensure people would not loiter along Dundas Place is through “bum-proof benches”. While the design of the future Dundas Place street furniture is aesthetically pleasing, the concrete-like blocks do not appear to be comfortable seating areas (see figure 7.8). This is a clear example of CPTED insofar as uncomfortable street furniture is meant to detract undesirable groups from sleeping or excessively loitering (Davis, 1998).

In sum, in addition the activating and programming public spaces to make the presence of marginalized groups more tolerable, the DLBIA ensured these groups did not loiter for too long by manipulating their movements and behaviours through environmental design. While regular consumers would come and go to a Dundas Place festival or event, these CPTED tactics ensured marginalized groups had no legitimate reason to occupy the area during non-event times.
Conclusion

Savanah Sewell was hired as the Dundas Place Manager in September 2018. The creation of this position was the result of a year-long process that began when the DLBIA requested the City to fund LWLP. While the original plan was to hire LWLP to help attract placemaking commercial tenants, LWLP was used to justify the need for a Dundas Place Manager who would implement the same types of placemaking strategies as the commercial tenants they were supposed to attract. In this way, the ultimate decision to hire the Dundas Place Manager followed a messy and unanticipated decision-making process as an assemblage of social actors negotiated the best means to revitalize Dundas Place. What remained
constant throughout the entire processes, however, was that creative cities placemaking – the method of revitalization – was deemed an appropriate and just approach to revitalize the downtown.

While the Dundas Place Manager seems like an innocuous position, I argue it represents a quasi-state order maintenance strategy hidden behind the creative cities placemaking mantra. As I have shown, her task of activating and programming Dundas Place are strategies that attempt to make marginalize groups more tolerable in public space while creating comfortable and pleasant experiences for desirable consumers. Although the DLBIA started to enact these strategies prior to the Dundas Place construction, it has yet to be seen the extent to which it will resemble the strategies enacted by the Dundas Place Manager.

As I have shown, LWLP played a key role in justifying the creation of this position. They enacted their definitional power to construct the “drug use and street culture” as the cause of the downtown’s declining retail and commercial sector. Compared to the DLBIA, LWLP made more direct statements about the downtown and City administration. While their use of the term “green zones” received criticism from councillors, activation and programming was nevertheless justified as a more humane approach to managing public spaces. Most importantly, activation and programming did not appear as a punitive approach in the eyes of city councillors. In actuality, this placemaking tactic was not only intended to create energetic and busy downtown spaces, it was also meant to make the unfortunate realities of urban marginality more tolerable for regular consumers. Not only did LWLP help the DLBIA justify the creation of this position, they also supplied the DLBIA with the placemaking knowledge to enact activated and programmed spaces prior to the construction of Dundas Place.

Up till this point my analysis has focused on the DLBIA which is a geographically large organization with a big budget. As I have shown, they played a key role in discussions about the revitalization of the $16 million Dundas Place redevelopment. The next chapter focuses on the
revitalization discussions in the Old East Village, a commercial corridor with a geographically smaller BIA with a limited budget. As such, the BIA’s revitalization discussions and justificatory strategies differed from the DLBIA.
8. Justifying Residential Development in the Old East Village

The Old East Village BIA (hereafter OEVBIA) is located on one commercial block along Dundas Street, just 700m east of the DLBIA. Compared to the DLBIA, the OEVBIA has a limited budget, minimal staff, small geographic boundary, and ageing infrastructure/building stock. Like many small “main street” BIAs (see Gross, 2005, 2013), the OEVBIA struggles to revitalize its commercial core insofar as they lack the resources and funding for conventional BIA practices such as streetscape improvements, maintenance, security, and marketing. Unlike the downtown, the Old East Village was not undergoing any major redevelopments to the scale of Dundas Place. Instead, given the lack of pedestrian traffic on the commercial corridor, the OEVBIA focused almost exclusively on attracting residential development to the neighbourhood in an effort to bring more “feet on the street”. Although there were several other City-led revitalization projects in the neighbourhood during the time of this study (e.g., parking lot improvements, façade improvements, redevelopment of the abandoned Kellogg’s factory into an entertainment complex, among others), residential development has been the OEVBIA’s top priority since the early 2010s.

This chapter explains the OEVBIA’s involvement in the neighbourhood’s residential development planning process between 2015-2018. In particular, I examine their involvement in the planning process of a twin 24-story high-rise development proposed by a private developer and a five-story affordable housing development proposed by a non-profit organization. Given the OEVBIA was tasked by the municipal government to conduct a thematic analysis of the community consultation feedback, I argue the OEVBIA controlled and framed the community’s critiques (local residents and a non-profit representative) of these two residential developments. In the case of the twin 24-story development, I explain how, despite the community’s demand for the provision of affordable housing, the OEVBIA emphasized less contentious urban design and aesthetic concerns during committee
meetings. I show how a local non-profit representative was able to successfully incorporate the provision of affordable housing in the final plans. Although the OEVBIA claimed to represent the “community’s voice”, it was clear they selectively chose to emphasize less contentious design criticisms of the development which the developer was willing to negotiate. In the case of the five-story affordable housing development proposed by a local non-profit organization, I explain how the OEVBIA dominated the community consultation process with concerns about the building’s safety features and lack of commercial units. I show how they stereotyped low-income tenants as a homogenous group needing to be protected from local criminal activity. As a result, the final plan incorporated various Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies as well as ground-floor commercial units to ensure tenants shopped in the area. Taken together, both cases demonstrate how the OEVBIA strategically controlled and framed the community’s critiques in a way that advanced their “feet on the street” market logic.

I begin by presenting a brief historical background of the Old East Village to explain how the local BIA became the main spokesperson for the wider community. I explain how, rather than focusing on conventional BIA revitalization practices, the OEVBIA focused on attracting residential development to give their commercial corridor more “feet on the street”. This is followed by two sections that focus on the OEVBIA’s involvement in the planning process of the aforementioned residential developments.

8.1 Attracting “Feet on the Street”

It is important to provide some historical context of the Old East Village to understand how and why the OEVBIA was tasked with representing the community’s voice during revitalization discussions as well as how and why they followed a “feet on the street” revitalization logic. The Old East Village is one of London’s oldest neighbourhoods, dating back to the mid-1880s when it had a strong working-class tradition rooted in oil refining, cigar manufacturing, and chemical and train-car production
(Lutman, 1982). However, the post-WWII era of urban sprawl and deindustrialization had a negative impact on the neighbourhood. Since then, locals often refer to the neighbourhood as “East of Adelaide” (EOA for short); a pejorative term that delineates London’s working-class east end from the more affluent west end (Mejia, 2013). Compared to the west side of the city, the east end experienced heavy disinvestment as railway transportation declined and the rising trucking industry forced the area’s factories to locate to industrial parks along the main expressway (Highway 401). The closing of the Canadian National (CN) rail car shops in 1966 signified the end of the neighbourhood’s industrial base and by the 1970s most working-class residents moved to new suburban developments (Lutman, 1982).

By the early 1970s, half of the housing stock was said to be in poor condition (London Ontario Neighbourhood Improvement Program Administrative Committee, 1974) and the neighbourhood was thought to have little hope for any sense of community (Family and Children’s Services, 1972).

The local business community has attempted to revitalize the commercial corridor since the 1970s. The 1990s was a particularly contentious period for the BIA as they attempted to manage the area’s stigmatized status as a post-industrial ghetto (Kudla & Courey, 2018). In particular, the commercial corridor had a heavy concentration of drug trafficking, prostitution, and social services. The BIA, named Centretown BIA at the time, became more active during the mid-1990s by facilitating community consultation and focus groups to develop a community-oriented plan to revitalize the area. It was at this point that the neighbourhood was rebranded from Centretown to Old East Village in an effort to resist the tainted “East of Adelaide” label (City of London, 1998, p. 5).

By the early 2000s, the OEVBIA established connections with urban planners, marketing consultants, private developers, and civic engineers (mostly from the Ontario Professional Planners Institute) who put together a local Planners Action Team (PACT) to assess the proper course of action for commercial revitalization. This plan set the framework for the future vision of the neighbourhood and
gave the OEVBIA the task of overseeing the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which, to this day, extends significantly beyond their official BIA boundary (City of London Planning Division, 2005). It was at this point that the OEVBIA began to play a larger role in revitalization discussions as the municipality gave them the authority to speak on behalf of the community.

Compared to the DLBIA, the OEVBIA lacks money to implement conventional BIA strategies such as capital improvements, security, and marketing. For example, according to their respective 2018 budgets, the OEVBIA had an annual revenue of $156,562 while the DLBIA had a revenue of $1,861,711 (Corporate Services and City Treasurer, 2019ab). Given their limited financial capital, OEVBIA members spend their time liaising between the community, the City, and private developers. As Jason, an OEVBIA board member, explained, they are “agents of the city” who help business/property owners and private developers navigate the City’s application process and facilitate provincially mandated community consultation meetings which are required for any application process.

For example, the OEVBIA helps business/property owners access the City’s financial incentive programs. This point was emphasized by Alexandra, an OEVBIA board member and local business owner, who explained the OEVBIA does not necessarily revitalize the commercial corridor directly but rather aids business/property owners throughout the process:

Dan: Any function of a BIA is to revitalize, what does….

Alexandra: We don’t do a lot of that.

Dan: What does revitalization mean for the BIA?

Alexandra: I think that through businesses choosing to locate here, it’s been the business owners, with help from the BIA, who facilitated upgrade to building code and façade, right? Through the City they started to make changes here. If you look in this block, it is being improved by the landlords with help from the City who is providing really great loans, interest free. I think that we help to
facilitate that, but I don’t know how much the BIA itself in this instance is responsible for revitalization from a beautification standpoint.

In this case, Alexandra argued the OEVBIA does not actually implement revitalization strategies; rather, the organization helps existing business/property owners take advantage of the City’s financial incentives programs such as the “Forgivable Upgrade to Building Code Loan Program” and the “Forgivable Façade Improvement Loan Program” which offer interest free loans to improve existing building stock in the commercial corridor. These programs were originally created in 2008 “to encourage pedestrian-oriented rehabilitation and redevelopment” as well as to “protect and improve upon” the existing building stock (Community Improvement Plan Financial Incentives, 2018). The OEVBIA’s task is to simply help business/property owners fill out necessary paperwork to access the programs. As Jason explained, these programs are “carrots we can dangle for potential business owners in the area”. In this sense, the OEVBIA does little to directly revitalize the commercial corridor insofar as their main task is to act as a liaison for the City.

The OEVBIA also plays an intermediary role between private developers and the City to help the former navigate the application and proposal process. For example, many OEVBIA members explained this has been their key focus since the early 2010s because they want to bring more desired “feet on the street” for the commercial corridor:

We do that because we realize that more residents in the area will support the commercial corridor. More people in the area, more people shopping, more customers for different restaurants. (Jason, OEVBIA board member)

Developers have come in to build residential towers. That’s feet on the street. It doesn’t always translate immediately, but over time it hopefully will. It’s about getting more people into the Old East and increase the reach of our customers to help businesses thrive. (Evan, OEVBIA staff member)

It’s not getting rid of or moving, but about bringing in more people in who aren’t necessarily addicted to drugs, selling drugs, or doing crime. (Alexandra, OEVBIA board member)
In this sense, the OEVBIA focuses on residential development because it provides a desirable consumer base to their historically struggling commercial corridor. As I will explain below, the OEVBIA routinely constructed residents along a desirable-undesirable binary. For now, my point is that the OEVBIA’s “feet on the street” market logic influences their organizational practices.

**Defending Development Exemptions**

The OEVBIA is quite active at city council and committee meetings. The manager speaks often during public participation meetings to provide the OEVBIA’s view on a particular issue. As Jason explained:

> We write letters to council, we meet one on one with city councillors and staff, we come to meetings and speak about the budget at planning meetings. We are here all the time talking about all kinds of issues that come up; probably more than Downtown London [BIA] which is hard. We are here regularly every time something is coming up and we don’t miss opportunities to give our input.

In addition to their mediating role, OEVBIA members spend much of their time and resources advocating to councillors. In fact, during the course of this study, the OEVBIA advocated for keeping the City’s development charge exemption. OEVBIA members explained that this has been crucial in attracting three high-rise apartments since the early 2010s. These charges are typically imposed on new developments to fund new infrastructure and services provided by the municipality such as water pipes, stormwater ponds, fire stations, and road improvements. It was therefore unsurprising the OEVBIA advocated to keep the development charge exemption.

For example, during a Planning and Environment Committee meeting on March 2nd, 2015 the OEVBIA defended the continued use of the exemption despite some councillors’ criticisms that there was a lack of evidence demonstrating its economic benefits. This was clear in an exchange between Councillor Squire and John Fleming, the City’s Managing Director of Planning:
While a scientist would say this is not a direct causal relationship, it would be prudent to understand that these financial incentives are generally found to lift the assessed value of the property and create jobs from the development. Although I recognize, from a purely scientific perspective, it takes more work than we are going to go into. We won’t go much beyond that. (John Fleming, Managing Director of Planning)

Councillor Squire responded by saying the City needed something more concrete to measure the effectiveness of financial incentives:

It seems to me that if we are doing an exemption or grant and we don’t know right now if it is providing a benefit then how can I as a councillor support something like that. That’s my problem. If you’re saying, “well I think it might be working. Perhaps it’s working anecdotally”, then I’m having some difficulty until I see something concrete saying that it works. (Councillor Squire)

The OEVBIA Manager and Jesse Helmer, the councillor representing the Old East Village, defended the continued use of the exemption during the public participation meeting. The councillor explained the exemption had been instrumental in attracting three residential high-rises. He argued: “without it, it would not have happened. The hundreds and hundreds of units have made a huge impact on the area”. The OEVBIA Manager stated they would be willing to assist the City with a “cost-benefit analysis” on its effectiveness by demonstrating its impact on attracting customers to the area.

The OEVBIA Manager returned over a year later (September 26, 2016) with several industrial metrics to demonstrate the benefits of the development charge exemption. She contrasted customer activity in the Old East Village from 2011 and 2015 with a map of their customer base in London (see figure 8.1). However, there was no correlation made between the implementation of the development charge exemption and the increased customer base. Nevertheless, she continued to present various metrics, including dropped vacancy rates (35% in 2002 to 14% in 2015), a doubling of municipal parking revenue from 2008-2015, and a 41% increase in tax assessments from 2002-2012, explaining that every $1 public investment translated into $6 of private investment. On their own, these numbers are difficult to interpret without comparing with other parts of the city or other cities. This is consistent with
existing literature which explains BIAs often present broad data on objective economic performance measures (Han et al., 2017; Hoyt, 2003; Hoyt & Gopal-Aggee, 2007; Mitchell, 2008). It could be the case that the development charge exemption had no direct effect on increasing the local customer base. Nevertheless, my point is that the OEVBIA offered to present data in an effort to support the City’s development charge exemption. This demonstrates that the OEVBIA’s “feet on the street” market logic is a core organizational value they actively defend.

In sum, the OEVBIA operates in an economically struggling commercial corridor with little money to implement conventional BIA revitalization strategies. Instead, OEVBIA members work behind the scenes to ensure business/property owners and private developers can access the City’s financial incentive programs which, according to OEVBIA members, have been crucial for attracting more “feet on the street”. In this sense, the OEVBIA’s overarching goal is, perhaps unsurprisingly, aligned with market worth insofar as they depend on residential development to boost their commercial corridor. As the next two sections explain, this organizational logic influenced two separate residential development plans. I first focus on the decision-making process of a twin high-rise development proposed by a local private developer before focusing on the planning process of a mid-rise affordable housing development proposed by a local non-profit organization.

Figure 8.1: The OEVBIA providing industrial metrics to justify the municipal development charge exemption.
8.2 Private Residential High-Rise Development

Paramount Development Inc., a local private property developer, proposed a twin 24-storey residential high-rise development with 480 units on 809 Dundas Street. The developer needed an amendment to the municipal “Zoning By-law” because their proposed 24-storeys and 710 units per hectare exceeded the by-law limit of 15-storeys with 250 units per hectare. Exceeding these limits required several “bonusing” conditions to be met which originally required the developer to have an “enhanced urban design” and construct underground parking (Planning and City Planner, 2018a). There were several community consultation and public participation meetings prior to councillors’ final decision on the proposed development.

The OEVBIA was tasked with advertising and hosting the March 23rd, 2018 community consultation meeting as well as conducting a thematic analysis of the community’s feedback. In this case, the OEVBIA was tasked by the municipality to manage the public consultation process which is required by law for any land use planning application.25 As figure 8.2 shows, the OEVBIA Manager promoted the meeting through an OEBIA-branded image file on the Old East Village Community Association Facebook group page. They also placed an advertisement in a local newspaper, The Londoner, a month before the meeting (on February 28, 2018). The wording of the invitation implied the meeting was a civic test of the good that would “provide an opportunity for the public to review and provide comment”. They directly contacted local business/property owners via email and telephone as well as through their “individual networks” with OEVBIA board members (Planning and City Planner, 2018a). They also sent a “Notice of Application” to 71 nearby property owners and reached out to 114 local business owners over a 10-day period. In other words, it was clear the OEVBIA was in charge of

advertising the reality test and analyzing the community’s critiques of the proposed twin high-rise development.

The community consultation meeting was held at the OEVBIA head office which is located a few kilometers south of the Old East Village neighbourhood. There was no visible sign that a community consultation meeting was taking place in the building; in fact, the door was locked as I attempted to enter. An OEVBIA staff member rushed over to unlock the door from the inside. He immediately asked “what are you doing here?”, as if it was inappropriate for me to attend the meeting. After engaging in
small talk for several minutes, he swiped his building access card to allow me to take the elevator upstairs where the meeting was taking place. As I got off the elevator there were two people sitting behind a desk asking if I had RSVP’d for the meeting. After giving them information, they checked my name, gave me a comment card, and directed me to go inside a small conference room where the meeting was taking place. Inside there were several development consultants lingering around posters with the blueprints, plan layouts, and pictures of the buildings’ design (see figure 8.3 for an example). As I looked at the development plans and images on the posters, one of the consultants approached me to see if I had any questions. After asking a few generic questions about the plan details, I asked him what the OEVBIA’s role has been throughout this planning process. He said that the OEVBIA has been instrumental for providing the forum for developers, City staff, and residents to discuss the proposal and added that they “do a good job weeding out negative voices and getting positive input”. The suggestion was that the OEVBIA strategically emphasize “positive input” while ignoring “negative voices”.

![Figure 8.3: Renderings of the proposed development.](image)

Participants were encouraged to ask questions and submit comment cards to the OEVBIA staff at the front desk (see figure 8.4). Thus, critiques of the proposed development were submitted to and vetted by the OEVBIA prior to presenting them to city council. In total, 29 people attended the meeting with 16 comment cards submitted (Planning and City Planner, 2018a).
The content of the community’s feedback was summarized into several categories outlined in Appendix A of the City report (Planning and City Planner, 2018a). The OEVBIA highlighted seven criticisms of the proposed development: (1) lack of affordable housing (civic critique); (2) shadowing on a nearby building with solar panels (green critique); (3) poor building design elements such as unattractive exterior walls and lacking consistent façade with the business corridor (inspirational and domestic critique, respectively); (4) excessive height of the building makes it stick out in the neighbourhood as well as bring too many residents into a quaint area of the city (inspirational and domestic critique, respectively); (5) lack of connectivity with public transportation, the Western Fair, and
local sidewalks (industrial critique); (6) lack of parking (industrial critique); (7) and negative impacts of construction on local businesses (market critique).26

A City planning staff member, Sonia Wise, presented these critiques to the Planning and Environment Committee on June 18, 2018. In this sense, the OEVBIA acted as an intermediary between community members and the City by collecting and analyzing responses from the community consultation meeting. It should be noted the developer, Paramount Developers Inc., used a development consultant, Harry Froussios from Zelinka Priamo Ltd, to speak on their behalf during the committee meetings. As discussed in the previous chapters, this reflects contemporary organizations’ dependence on consultancy and outside experts.

The community’s concern about the lack of affordable housing was apparent in the feedback. Based on the verbatim quotations in the OEVBIA’s thematic analysis, it was clear people were upset the development had no requirement for affordable housing units:27

Can the inclusion of some affordable housing be contemplated as a condition of exceeding the present standards in terms of both height and density?

I am involved @ lifespin @ Ontario and Dundas site. We work with families at or near the poverty line. I would like to see more of the units used as affordable housing for people. We are a community that care about our neighbours. What a good opportunity for this development to consider and act upon.

There is no guarantee that this development has at least 20% affordable housing units, which should be in place no matter how high you negotiate.

Would be great to see some % of units as affordable housing. We need building [sic] that integrate affordable & market rent units.

Despite the obvious community concerns about the lack of affordable housing, the OEVBIA and consultant focused on less contentious issues around the buildings’ design and shadowing. For example,

26 The appendix also included letters sent by nearby business owners who had concerns about the impacts of construction on their day-to-day operations as well as traffic congestion and parking issues.
27 There were no names attached to the comments.
the OEVBIA Manager, Jen Pastorius, emphasized the community’s critiques about the buildings’ design. These included the following:

The blank wall facing the dental building (east elevation) can be a canvas for wall art similar to the east wall of the London Clay Arts Centre. This would create a wall art theme in [the] OEV.

It is really important that the commitment to design storefront facades using materials that replicate the variety of storefront facades on the corridor is followed through.

The key consideration in my view, in light of the character of the OEV neighbourhood, is distinctive treatment of each of the store fronts.

In other words, there were concerns about an unappealing wall design (an inspirational critique) and the design being inconsistent with the architecture of the neighbourhood (a domestic critique) (see figure 8.5). During the public participation meeting, the OEVBIA Manager argued the developer had appropriately addressed these concerns:

The thematic analysis showed majority of the comments focused on the design of the façade, the portion of the buildings on Rectory [Street] and the podium between the two towers… The comments submitted at the community consultation regarding those specific design elements had been noted and utilized in the new renderings. This was a clear sign that the developers were listening and integrating local feedback into the project.

The consultant later responded by thanking the OEVBIA for raising the community’s concerns:

We appreciate the comments that were presented by the Old East Village BIA. They are an important neighbour. They have a vested interest in this community and we look forward to working with them on this project. Their comments have been presented in terms of the design of the building and the site design, we believe we have addressed.

Despite the community’s concern about the lack of affordable housing, neither the OEVBIA Manager or consultant mentioned this issue during the public participation meeting. Instead, the OEVBIA Manager argued the key concerns from their thematic analysis was the design of the building. As she explained, the developer “listened” and “integrated” the community’s feedback and have since changed the design.
Although the OEVBIA argued this demonstrated the developers’ collaborative efforts, in actuality, they only collaborated with the community on uncontentious aesthetic and design issues. That is, the OEVBIA emphasized inspirational and domestic critiques rather than the more contentious civic critique about the lack of affordable housing. This was an attempt to portray the developer as “collaborative” on design elements while ignoring the issue of affordable housing.

Figure 8.5: Renderings of the contested aesthetic design of the building.

A second critique, shadowing on a nearby building with solar panels, was addressed by the developer’s consultant during their presentation to committee. Shadowing studies are required for large developments that exceed a certain height. However, despite six other community critiques of the proposed development, this was the only critique that was directly addressed by the consultant. In fact, most of their presentation (10 out of 27 PowerPoint slides) was spent describing the results of their shadowing study. These slides featured detailed aerial pictures of their study which showed projected shadows throughout all months of the year. They concluded there would not be any shadowing on nearby solar panels between the peak sunny months of March and September.
Despite being addressed by the OEVBIA’s thematic analysis of the community feedback, the concern about affordable housing, or any other of the five unaddressed critiques, was never mentioned by the OEVBIA during the public participation meeting. Although the consultant claimed their plans were “a product of ongoing discussions with City Staff, Old East Village BIA, and members of the public” (see figure 8.6), they only addressed the shadowing critique (which is legally required) and never addressed the public’s concern about the lack of affordable housing. While claiming to be “part of ongoing discussions” with the public, the OEVBIA and consultant addressed critiques that were more manageable; that is, aesthetic and design concerns which, according to the OEVBIA, were easily negotiated (projective test) and the shadowing concern which was addressed through a legally required “shadowing study” (an industrial test).

Figure 8.6: Consultant highlighting the community consultation process.
With a long list of community critiques, the OEVBIA and consultant had the benefit of addressing the ones that made them look favourable to the committee. In fact, the OEVBIA Manager and consultant never mentioned the community’s concerns about the provision of affordable housing. This did not come up until the executive director (Jacqueline Thompson) of LIFE*SPIN, a local non-profit organization that serves low-income citizens in London, spoke about it during the committee’s public participation meeting. She argued London had an “affordable housing deficit” that needed to be addressed, and that there should be a requirement in the bonusing condition for the provision of affordable housing units in the proposed development. As she explained:

For many Londoners, paying market rents comes at a cost of grocery budgets and too many people are thrown back on such expedients as “couch surfing”. The Planning Committee should make the inclusion of affordable units a requirement for all major residential developments as per the bonusing provision… There is no good reason that a number of affordable units could not be included in the 480 units proposed.

Coincidently, LIFE*SPIN was the organization concerned about the casting of shadows on its solar panels located on the roof of their building. It is therefore unclear whether LIFE*SPIN would even speak to the affordable housing issue if it was not for their shadowing concern. Nevertheless, her civic concern was addressed by city councillors who requested the City’s planning staff to collaborate with London’s Housing Development Corporation (HDC) and the developer to negotiate an appropriate number of affordable housing units. The city councillor for the Old East Village, Jesse Helmer, was grateful for LIFE*SPIN’s work in the community and for bringing affordable housing into the discussion. As he explained:

There is a real strong desire in the community to have well-designed affordable housing in the community. I think this is a good opportunity to make some headway on that front and I really appreciate LIFE*SPIN…Now is a good time to give some direction to our staff as we’re going through the bonusing discussion and to give a good indication that we want to see a portion of those units as affordable housing.
The committee’s motion was revised to include affordable housing as a condition for the bonus zoning (the number of units was to be negotiated at a later date); that is, to exceed the height and density limit of 15-storeys with 250 units per hectare to allow for 24-storeys with 710 units per hectare. Interestingly, even though the OEVBIA and consultant failed to mention affordable housing during the meeting, city councillors nevertheless credited them for their support. As councillors explained:

I think that this is a great opportunity to help local developers become part of the solution to our housing crisis here in London… I also just want to say that the neighbourhood consultation was very well done in my view; recognizing that the BIA and neighbourhood has been at the table. All in all, I think what we will see is a good proposal at the end of the day. So, keep up the work everybody and keep those conversations going. (Councillor Park)

I want to thank the developers. I know there was a curve ball with the affordability piece, so I want to thank you for your support. (Councillor Helmer)

Despite remaining silent on the topic of affordable housing during the committee meeting, the OEVBIA and consultant were praised for simply “keeping the conversations going” and for adapting to the “curve ball” thrown at them. In this sense, the act of consultation was enough to legitimize the OEVBIA and the developer as caring and collaborative organizations that address the needs of the community. Simply being “at the table” (projective worth), as opposed to supporting affordable housing from the onset (civic worth), was enough to gain acceptance from city councillors.

Although it is unsurprising that a business organization was unconcerned about the provision of affordable housing, it is interesting how the OEVBIA selectively highlighted a less contentious critique (façade and design) that made the developer appear collaborative while ignoring ongoing concerns about the lack of affordable housing. It was clear the OEVBIA attempted to control the framing of critique throughout the City’s decision-making process.
The Fragile Compromise and the Projective Justification

LIFE*SPIN’s executive director successfully persuaded councillors to incorporate the provision of affordable housing units as a bonusing condition. Councillors tasked City planning staff, Paramount Developers Inc., and the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) to negotiate the provision of affordable housing units over the summer and early fall of 2018. This process took place behind closed doors and did not involve the OEVBIA or community representatives. The details of the bonusing conditions were outlined in the City’s report and were discussed at the Planning and Environment Committee on November 12, 2018 (Planning and City Planner, 2018b).

The Housing Development Corporation (hereafter HDC) played a significant role during the negotiation process insofar as they produced the report summarizing the details of the bonusing condition. The HDC is a “wholly-owned subsidiary” created by the City of London in 2015 to advance and create new affordable housing in London.28 Their task during the affordable housing discussions was to be “a third party to support information, facilitate negotiation, and assist in the provision of a fair recommendation” (Planning and City Planner, 2018b: n.p), thereby signifying their role as a projective organization acting as an arbitrator in the negotiation process. They were ultimately tasked with determining the level of “fairness” in the implementation of affordable housing.

Their report recommended that, in exchange for allowing the developer to exceed the height and density limits, the developer should have 25 single (one bedroom) units at 95% average market rate for a 25-year period. This meant just 5% of the total 480 units of the proposed development would be affordable housing units where residents would pay 5% less the average market rate. It is unclear how this recommendation was negotiated given the discussions took place behind closed doors. The only

28 https://www.hdclondon.ca/working-with-hdc/
mention of a negotiation process was that the final recommendation was modified from the initial recommendation of 30 affordable rental housing units for a 20-year period. The difference between the initial and final recommendation was 5 fewer units in exchange for 5 extra years. The only explanation was that the final recommendation met various analytics and market data:

The recommended Bonus Zone considers local affordable housing needs and demands, local industry measures including CMHC rental market and housing analytics, City neighbourhood profiles, labour market data, as well as a review of the bonusing policies and practices of other major urban centres. (Planning and City Planner, 2018b: n.p)

In other words, the civic test of the good (i.e., the provision of affordable housing) was evaluated by industrial criteria (i.e., industry measures, market and housing analytics, labour market data). As such, this civic-industrial compromise was open to critique during the public participation meeting. In fact, two of the three speakers criticized the HDC’s recommendation; the executive director of LIFE*SPIN and a local resident. Both argued the recommendation had a limited number of affordable units at an unaffordable 95% market rate. As they explained:

I appreciate the effort, but that is minimal. Considering our affordable housing crisis we are finding ourselves in as time goes on, this isn’t really a step to address that. It’s really just bypassing it… 95% market rate, how is that affordable to anybody? That’s only affordable for a certain class or economic status. Its not affordable for anyone who needs affordable housing. (Mel Shean, London resident)

Further to the last speaker [Mel Shean], the average rent in London as of October, according to CMHC, was $841 a month. 95% is $799 a month. A family of four people who receive Ontario Disability would have to share one bedroom at this rate… Since families receiving Ontario Works won’t be able to afford these units without serious overcrowding, we must assume the target renters of these units are working poor families. It is laudable that Paramount Development agreed to work with City staff to address affordability as part of negotiating for many extra floors. However, in this report, it is not clear who is benefiting. But it is not London’s low-income families. It’s not a fair trade for our neighbourhood. (Jacqueline Thompson, Executive Director of LIFE*SPIN)
In both cases, the speakers criticized the final decision for failing to meet the civic test because, while the developer’s participation in these discussions was laudable, the 95% market rate was deemed unaffordable to marginalized families.

Local residents also voiced their criticisms in a Facebook plugin comment section at the bottom of a London Free Press article describing the development plans.29 As of December 2018, there were nine comments in total, all of which were critical of the lack of affordability. For example:

Seriously, 25 out of 480 and at 95% of $800! Do you realize just how much [money] people get who are on assistance? It also doesn’t state whether hydro is included or not. The article doesn’t indicate if they are one or two bedroom units being offered either. This would help as individuals could share the rent. I'm sorry, but I don’t think this is going to make any kind of significant impact for those needing affordable housing. (Deborah Jane Coley)

The argument of what is affordable housing at City Hall seems to keep trying the same tired ideas. Allowing developers to build obscenely large developments that effectively hand one landlord a monopoly on rental accommodation for an entire neighborhood is bad urban planning. (SOHO Community News)

I agree with the other comments – 25 out of 480 units are lower income and the rent is 95% of the usual rent??? This is a farce, only a showpiece to try to show the developer and the City are trying to provide help to our needy but the effort is pitiful. (Brad McMurray)

WoW! So 25 units out of 480 units, looks like the developers are planning this city. Good for the developers. Enjoy. (Sh Chokhani)

Although these Facebook comments demonstrated the community’s criticisms of the bonusing condition, it is important to note only three members of the public attended the public participation meeting to voice their concerns. Nevertheless, it was clear the community opposed the HDC’s final recommendation because it was deemed unaffordable and a “farce” insofar as the City gave the developer too much power.

During the committee meeting, City planning staff and councillors challenged the public’s civic concerns by explaining they did not appreciate the financial costs to the developer (criticizing civic worth using market worth) and that they did not understand the definition of “affordable housing” (disagreement of civic worth). As they explained:

I want to point out that the difference between the 95% of average market rent and what would otherwise likely be charged for the rent of these units. We think [it] is in the order of $300-$400. If you look at 25 units times 25 years that’s $300 of forgone revenue per month. That’s in the order of $2.25 to $3 million dollars that the developer is putting forward to provide those units. (John Fleming, the Managing Director of Planning)

I want to make a comment about how we talk about affordable housing. As we talk more about it, which is really good thing, I am starting to realize the public might not know what affordable housing means… I wonder if we [the City] could do a better job about how we talk about affordable housing and what it means. (Councillor Hopkins)

Interestingly, the Managing Director of Planning failed to mention the amount of money the developer would make on the remaining non-affordable housing units over the 25-year period. Using his logic, this would amount to $109 million (455 units X $800 X 12 months X 25 years = $109,000,000). In this way, the developer was portrayed as being generous to the community because they were not maximizing their return on investment (see Hyde, 2018). Councillor Hopkins implied the public was misinformed about “what affordable housing means”, thereby delegitimizing their civic concerns by suggesting there is a universal definition that could be better communicated by the City.

Despite the public’s criticisms, the HDC’s recommendation was eventually passed by the Planning and Environment Committee. It became clear councillors deemed the recommendation appropriate not because it met the civic test of the good; rather, because the recommendation was a “collaborative effort” (projective worth). In fact, the OEVBIA Manager emphasized this during the public participation meeting:
There are also a lot of comments from the community about affordable housing. So, it’s great to see the developer and City staff were able to come together and make that happen. London’s vacancy is 1% to 2%, depending on the report you read, so this development will create more housing generally for Londoners and will contribute to the spectrum of affordable units available in the Old East Village and city wide. In closing, community feedback on this project was provided and welcomed early on and on more than one occasion from a variety of stakeholders.

This was the first time the OEVBIA manager spoke directly about affordable housing. The only comment was that this final recommendation was appropriate because people “came together” and acknowledged “community feedback” from the onset of the planning process. In this sense, despite the public’s ongoing civic concerns, the fact that the decision was a collaborative effort was enough, according to the OEVBIA Manager, to justify the HDC’s final recommendation. In fact, City planning staff and councillors continued to justify the recommendation on projective grounds. For example, the developer’s consultant and City planning staff emphasized this justification during the committee meeting [emphasis added]:

The applicants, planning staff, and the Housing Development Corporation have worked really collaboratively to develop an appropriate number of affordable housing units and duration. (Sonia Wise, City planner)

There was significant discussion and a lot of collaboration that went on relative to this application. I just wanted to make that point and express my appreciation to the applicants. (John Fleming, Managing Director of Planning)

What’s before you is the culmination of several months of ongoing discussions with staff, the Old East Village BIA, the Old East Village community, the Housing Development Corporation, and the Urban Design Peer Review Panel. What that has done is allow us to bring a development forward that is going to be not only a benefit to the Old East Village community but the entire city of London… It’s going to provide a necessary form of housing, like you said it will provide 25 affordable units within the development. (Harry Froussios, Zelinka Priamo Ltd., consultant)

Thus, collaboration itself became the main justification despite the public’s ongoing civic concerns. The fact that the different groups worked “collaboratively” meant the recommendation provided an
“appropriate number of affordable housing units” and a “necessary form of housing”. Simply because the recommendation was a collaborative effort, rather than appeasing the public’s civic concerns, was enough to justify it. However, it should be noted the actual negotiation process did not involve members of the community or non-profit organizations. Thus, while these groups were able to convince councillors to implement affordable housing units, members of the community and non-profit representatives were excluded from the final decision-making process. 

To be fair, councillors and City planning staff acknowledged that 25 affordable housing units in a 480-unit apartment was minimal. However, rather than criticizing the developer and/or HDC for negotiating a low number, they were content that this was a “step in the right direction” given this was just the second time the City established a requirement for affordable housing units under a bonusing condition. Thus, councillors and planning staff argued this was a good compromise at these early stages. As they explained:

It’s early days for integrating affordable housing through bonusing, but I think this is a big step forward. We are working with our partners at the Housing Development Corporation and they’ve been instrumental and our conversations with the developer and others. We expect to have those conversations moving forward. (John Fleming, the Managing Director of Planning)

I know that this isn’t going to solve all the issues, right? This is a very small thing that is making one dent in affordability for a small number of people... There is a lot more that needs to be done. I have to say, though, that it’s because the community was asking for affordable units that this is happening. I know Ms. Thompson [Executive Director of LIFE*SPIN] had something else in mind; probably deeper affordability that is going to help more people in a more significant way. But I think this is going to make a difference... This wasn’t happening at all until we started talking about it in this Committee. So, I can understand the frustration that it’s not deeper and it’s not more. As we work through inclusionary zoning I think we will be dealing with a lot more units. I think for this particular building this is helpful… I think overall that this is a good balance. (Councillor Helmer)
In other words, the argument was that this was a good start for these discussions and that this could set
the foundation for the provision of affordable housing units moving forward.

To summarize, the planning process for the twin residential high-rise development demonstrates
how the OEVBIA attempted to frame critique as well as how a civic critique (provision of affordable
housing) was successfully incorporated in the final plan. As I explained, the OEVBIA was the main
gatekeeper of critique insofar as they facilitated community consultation and analyzed community
feedback. In this sense, a business organization was tasked with representing the voice of the entire
community. Rather than acknowledging the community’s salient demand for the provision of affordable
housing (a civic concern), the OEVBIA spoke only to less contentious urban design and aesthetic
concerns (domestic and inspirational concerns) which, according to the OEVBIA, the developer had
sufficiently addressed. This was an attempt to portray the developer as collaborative and mindful of the
community’s requests.

The concern about affordable housing was introduced only when a local non-profit representative
spoke during the public consultation meeting at city council. Interestingly, despite being silent on the
issue, councillors credited the OEVBIA and consultant for introducing affordable housing to the
discussion. Despite the final recommendation being criticized for being unaffordable, councillors and
City urban planners justified the decision insofar as it was a “collaborative” effort. The final
recommendation was therefore justified based on its projective worth (collaboration) as opposed to its
civic worth (affordable for marginalized groups). Although councillors acknowledged the final
recommendation did not necessarily meet the civic test of the good as it was still relatively unaffordable,
they nevertheless believed this was a “step in the right direction” for future affordable housing
discussions. While laypersons (i.e., non-profit representative and local residents) played an important
role negotiating the provision of affordable housing, experts (i.e., the HDC, the developer’s consultant,
and City planning staff) ultimately had the final say on the appropriate number of affordable housing units. The next section explains the OEVBIA’s involvement in the planning of a non-profit mid-rise affordable housing development which took place during the same time as the twin high-rise development.

8.3 Non-Profit Mid-Rise Affordable Housing Development

The London Affordable Housing Foundation (LAHF), a local non-profit/faith-based organization, proposed a five-story residential apartment geared entirely for affordable housing (41 one-bedroom units at 80% average market rent). The mid-rise building was planned to be developed on vacant land between 1039 and 1047 Dundas Street just west of the former Kellogg’s factory. Seventy percent of the funding came from affordable housing programs provided by all three levels of government, while the remaining 30% would be funded by paid rents from tenants. Compared to the twin high-rise development described earlier, the entire mid-rise development was geared to affordable housing and, rather than a private developer, the proposal was spearheaded by a local non-profit organization serving low-income clients. Despite the mid-rise being only five-stories, it had 16 more affordable housing units than the twin high-rises (41 units vs. 25 units). The Planning and Environment Committee met on April 3, 2018 to discuss the proposed plan. As this section explains, the OEVBIA played a key role enacting CPTED strategies and ground-floor commercial units in the building’s design.

The proposed mid-rise development required zoning changes from a “Business District Commercial Zone” to a “Business District Commercial Bonus” (Planning and City Planner, 2018c). The bonusing condition required the development to have an “exceptional building design” and the “provision of affordable housing”.\(^{30}\) From the onset, the City imposed a compromise that allowed the

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\(^{30}\) The developer also requested to reduce the parking requirement to 22 spaces from the required 52 as part of the bonusing condition. This was discussed briefly during the Committee meeting when a local business owner voiced his concern about tenants parking in his lot due to the minimal spots available for 41 housing units.
development of affordable housing on the condition the construction had an “exceptional building
design” and a “high quality form of development”, thereby proposing a compromise between the civic
and inspirational worths (affordable housing in exchange for an aesthetically pleasing design).

A community consultation meeting took place on January 31, 2018 to allow the public to provide
input. However, unlike the twin high-rise developments, the OEVBIA did not play an active role in
facilitating the community consultation process because the proposed development was technically
outside the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) boundary. Instead, the meeting was held at the
Canadian Corps Association (adjacent the proposed development) and was advertised by the City of
London. Similar to the way the OEVBIA promoted the community consultation of the twin high-rise
development, the City sent a “Notice of Application” to 92 local property owners and published it in the
“Public Notices and Bidding Opportunities” section of The Londoner newspaper on December 21, 2017
(Planning and City Planner, 2018c). Jesse Helmer, the city councillor for the Old East Village and
OEVBIA member, also posted the details of the meeting on the Old East Village Community
Association Facebook group page on January 25th, just six days before the meeting took place (see figure
8.7).
I did not attend the community event given the proposed development was located outside the OEVBIA’s jurisdiction and it appeared as if the OEVBIA was uninvolved in the community consultation process. It was only after the City’s report was released that I realized the OEVBIA conducted the thematic analysis of community responses. Even though community responses were submitted to the London Affordable Housing Foundation, the City of London Planning staff, and the HDC, the OEVBIA was tasked with analyzing the feedback and providing a summary report. Again, the community’s critiques were collected and analyzed by the OEVBIA.

**Protecting Tenants and Commercializing the Ground Floor**

It became clear from community feedback that the OEVBIA used the community consultation process to emphasize their safety concerns and demand ground-floor commercial units. Although the
OEVBIA said little about the affordable housing units of the proposed twin high-rise developments, they were more direct about their stance on the mid-rise development insofar as they cited crime as a key concern. There were only eight comment cards submitted during the community consultation meeting which were attached to Appendix C of the City’s report (Planning and City Planner, 2018c). Half of these were from OEVBIA-related members, including the board vice chair, a board member, a local business owner, and a family member of the two board members. Two of the respondents argued the building would attract undesirable groups:

Make sure residents are properly screened. [I’m] Concerned with low income residents being taken advantage by drug dealers in area. How to protect them? Even with cameras will they be monitored live? [Make it] as aesthetically pleasing as possible. Fencing may make it look like a jail? Also[,] areas where drug dealers could thrive between fence and building should be addressed. Tunnel area should be monitored for drug activity. (Marcel Hajik, OEVBIA member, 665 Dundas St)

As long as it charges reasonable rent and checks applicants’ background and income, it might work ok. It will [be] better to have commercials on the floor though. (Satomi Chandler, unknown affiliation)

The suggestion was low-income residents were risks to the neighbourhood and should therefore be screened before allowing them to rent a unit. Marcel added that low-income residents should be protected because they may be easily manipulated by local drug activity. He therefore suggested various CPTED strategies to deter criminal activity such as cameras and fencing.

The other two respondents argued that rezoning the area to allow residential development was a poor decision:

I don’t think rezoning for this project is good. Dundas’s commercial corridor is improving and new developments should focus on commercial development. This kind of large residential development should happen on a residential street. The city should not approve this change. (Aaron Chandler, local business owner, 1036 King St)
I don’t think [the] Main Street corridor should be used for social housing. It is short sighted to change it from commercial zoning. (Dave Chandler, OEVBIA board vice chair, 610 Dundas St)

In this case, both respondents implied commercial units (market worth) were sacred while affordable housing (civic worth) was profane. Aaron’s comment about attracting commercial rather than residential development was interesting insofar as it contradicted the OEVBIA’s “feet on the street” logic. Moreover, this was not a concern during the planning process of the twin high-rise development which is located just one block west. Although the mid-rise development was much smaller and had just 16 more affordable housing units than the twin high-rise developments, OEVBIA members nevertheless constructed safety as a key issue of the mid-rise affordable housing development.

During the committee public participation meeting, the OEVBIA Manager continued to reference the OEVBIA’s safety concerns on the proposed development. In fact, the OEVBIA attached a two-page letter to the City’s report which summarized community responses from a “Community Open House Feedback” meeting which took place on March 9, 2018. According to the report, this feedback was “provided to and by the Old East Village BIA” (Planning and City Planner, 2018c). It appeared that this supposed “Open House” meeting was exclusively for OEVBIA members insofar as it was not publicly advertised, and no comment cards or thematic analysis was included in the report. The only explanation of this meeting was that six OEVBIA members and the manager were in attendance with two additional board members submitting feedback via email. In total, criticisms of the proposed mid-rise affordable housing development were dominated by OEVBIA members; four out of eight community responses, two email responses from OEVBIA members, and a closed-door meeting among seven OEVBIA members.
The OEVBIA’s two-page letter expressed their members’ concerns about attracting undesirable groups. As the letter explained, they wanted to “provide local context and perspective” and a better understanding of “the area context and activity”. For example:

It was articulated by those who provided comment what is critical is that developers understand the context of the existing neighbourhood area activity, and its potential impacts on their tenants…Much of the commerce in the area is positive and supportive of local entrepreneurs. However, there still exist notable daily illegal activities just to the east and west of the proposed development…. Comments expressed significant support for a generous mix of at-market and affordable rents to ensure a varied tenant population.

The OEVBIA Manager also emphasized a similar point during the public consultation meeting:

We are supportive of a mixed housing approach. We have a large concentration of different kinds of services including affordable housing. I’m not saying that we don’t need more, but we would love to be able to see mixed housing complex which allows for all different folks to live in the same building together.

These statements by the OEVBIA implied that a building dedicated to affordable housing would negatively impact the “positive” local commerce insofar as low-income tenants attract and are vulnerable to criminal activity. A better solution, according to the OEVBIA, was for the mid-rise development to be mixed use rather than entirely affordable housing. Low-income residents were portrayed as a homogenous “other” in contrast to a diversity of people who would contribute to the “positive” local commerce.

Due to the local drug activity, the OEVBIA argued the development should measure “potential impacts on their tenants”. They therefore recommended the building to have an “on-site property manager” to mitigate anti-social behaviour. As the letter explained:

Specific building design components were suggested that could improve the safety of the tenants, if implemented; an on-site property manager was recommended to deter anti-social behaviour on the property. There is particular vulnerably [sic] when living in close proximity to anti-social and illegal activity, the potential risk of negative impacts to tenants cannot be understated.
The recommended “on-site property manager” was an attempt to supposedly protect low-income residents from the local “anti-social behaviour”. This made the OEVBIA appear compassionate towards low-income residents by suggesting security strategies to protect them from being victimized.

The City report noted these issues raised by the OEVBIA. However, rather than discussing a mixed-tenant approach or an on-site building manager, the discussion revolved around enhancing CPTED strategies on the site. As the report explained:

During the consultation process the Old East Village BIA raised some site-specific safety concerns that relate to the physical development of the site. Both interior side yards create narrow, dark spaces between the proposed building and future fencing on the site. It is recommended that these issues be considered through the Site Plan Approvals process to consider some form of fencing, lighting or alternative site design to ensure these spaces are protected from the public being able to access them for inappropriate uses.

The [Urban Design Peer Review] Panel is supportive of the openings added to the driveway wing wall, supporting the building above. Additional visual surveillance and transparency from the building is recommended by adding windows along the side walls at grade and at the corners (e.g. stairwells and the building’s driveway wall)

The OEVBIA ultimately convinced the planning department to implement CPTED strategies to “protect” the site from local criminal behaviour. Figure 8.8 shows the contrast between the original design and new design renderings. Compared to the original design, the new design addressed “safety concerns” by enhancing natural surveillance; specifically by installing larger windows, moving the interior meeting space to the front of the property, and changing the wing wall to several pillars to improve “sight lines”.

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In addition to implementing CPTED strategies, the OEVBIA wanted to ensure the building had ground-floor commercial units. As they explained in the attached letter in the City’s report, the OEVBIA welcomed the affordable housing development because “more residential units bring more customers to our existing businesses and create a greater need for additional shops and retail services” (Planning and City Planner, 2018c: n.p). This reflected a compromise between civic and market worth insofar as low-income residents were welcome on the condition that they shopped in the local business corridor. This of course reflected the OEVBIA’s “feet on the street” market logic. They also suggested ground-floor commercial units would enhance the building’s “institutional and bland” appearance, thereby implying commerce (market worth) would somehow make the building more aesthetically appealing (inspirational worth). In fact, they were able to negotiate a more appealing front façade for the building to, as the City staff member explained, “help create a focal point for the building” and to establish a more “Main Street feel”.
As explained earlier, OEVBIA members requested the area to be geared to commercial rather than residential development. Interestingly, the OEVBIA framed it as the “community’s” concern. As the OEVBIA explained in the report:

Business owners shared that commercial activity is vitally important to any business district and residential buildings provide the feet on the street to shop in the retail sector. With the exception of Tony’s Pizza and McHardy Vacuum, the most eastern end of the Old East Village commercial corridor was once void of the growing concentration of businesses that you see today. Investment data gathered by the BIA and the upcoming developments in previously empty factory sites like Kellogg’s and McCormick’s demonstrate that commercial interest is growing in this area of Dundas St. Property owners and residents stated that commercial spaces will be important assets as the corridor develops over the coming years and will create more walkable neighbourhoods and connectivity to the existing business community [emphasis added].

While OEVBIA members were the only ones to demand commercial units during the community consultation process, the OEVBIA Manager framed this as a concern for both “property owners and residents”.

However, the 2005 Community Improvement Plan (CIP) report, which established the planning framework for the neighbourhood, labelled the proposed development area as an “Area in Transition” that “is not envisioned as a long-term part of the pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor” (City of London Planning Division, 2005). That is, the area was not planned to support commercial activity because it was not considered a “pedestrian-oriented” space. During the public participation meeting, the OEVBIA Manager argued the area had since “surpassed the expectations as it is now a thriving commercial and pedestrian corridor with long-standing and new businesses creating an anchor at the east end of the village”. Without any specific evidence to support this argument, the OEVBIA argued the eastern-most section of the corridor should no longer be considered an “Area in Transition” but an “Emerging Area” because commercial spaces were growing in the area. Councillors and planning staff agreed the affordable housing development would fill a much-needed “gap” in the neighbourhood’s
“isolated pockets of street-level commercial”. In this way, the lack of ground-floor commercial space on the proposed affordable housing development sparked the OEVBIA to request changes to the Community Improvement Plan which would require commercial spaces in future developments in the area. These changes were enacted only because the OEVBIA wanted to capitalize on new customers from the mid-rise development.

While the developer could not commit to ground-floor commercial units, the OEVBIA Manager was pleased the development would retain its commercial zoning, meaning there would not be any barriers to convert ground-floor units into commercial use in case, as the OEVBIA Manager explained, “market demands more retail in the future”. The potential for future commercial units was a major win for the OEVBIA. Both the city councillor and former OEVBIA Manager spoke to this during the public participation meeting:

Relating to the commercial component, we understand that, at this point in time, this might not be something that is necessarily achievable, but I think that the fact that the developers were willing to design their building in such a way that, if at a future date, there was an opportunity for commercial development that would hopefully benefit the residents. (Sarah Merrit, former OEVBIA Manager)

There is a lot of support for affordable housing in the city and in this area in particular…People have been paying close attention and they are support of it. I know that their [London Affordable Housing Foundation] business is affordable housing and that’s their focus and mission, but I think we need to figure out how we can get commercial on the ground floor in the future because I think it’s needed. (Jesse Helmer, city councillor and OEVBIA member)

In this sense, the OEVBIA played a key role in commercializing the affordable housing building. They viewed low-income residents as “feet on the street” who would contribute to the local economy. While the OEVBIA supported CPTED strategies to supposedly “protect” low-income tenants, there was no discussion about “protecting” the ground-floor commercial units from criminal activity. Instead, discussions about crime control focused exclusively on low-income tenants who, according to OEVBIA members, are vulnerable to local criminal activity.
In sum, by dominating the community consultation process, the OEVBIA successfully negotiated CPTED strategies and future ground-floor commercial use for the affordable housing development. They played a key role transforming a civic issue (provision of affordable housing) into a market issue (attracting criminal activity in an emerging commercial area). In contrast to the planning process of the twin high-rise development, the OEVBIA framed crime as a central concern for the mid-rise affordable housing development despite having just 16 more affordable housing units. As I explained, their recommendations were rooted in stereotypes about low-income people’s “vulnerability” to criminal activity and need to be protected. This resulted in the justification of various CPTED strategies and commercial units in the building’s design. Simply put, the OEVBIA was able to change the final plan to align with their “feet on the street” logic.

Conclusion

As of the early 2000s, the OEVBIA was tasked with overseeing the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which established them as the main spokesperson for the community. This gave them the power to facilitate community consultations on various revitalization plans as well as control the framing of the community’s critiques to city councillors. Unlike conventional BIAs that take a more hands-on approach to commercial revitalization, the OEVBIA worked behind the scenes by mediating between multiple actors within their assemblage (e.g., City administration, local residents, business/property owners, and developers). Although they claimed to represent the community’s voice during the residential planning process, the two case studies showed how the OEVBIA’s “feet on the street” market logic guided their organizational values and goals.

By speaking at public participation meetings and conducting a thematic analysis of community feedback, the OEVBIA was the main gatekeeper of critiques; that is, they had the ability to emphasize certain critiques that emerged during OEVBIA-facilitated community consultation processes. In the case
of the twin high-rise development, the OEVBIA failed to address contentious civic concerns about affordable housing and, instead, focused on uncontentious aesthetic and design elements that the developer was willing to negotiate. This is not to suggest the OEVBIA had full control to represent the community’s critiques. In fact, a local non-profit representative was able to convince city councillors to incorporate the provision of affordable housing as part of the bonusing condition. Members of the public could join in on the reality test – in this case, public participation meetings – to advance their own viewpoints. In this sense, the OEVBIA did not restrict critique, but they remained silent on salient community concerns about the lack of affordable housing in the proposed twin high-rise development. Nevertheless, despite their attempt to ignore civic concerns, the OEVBIA-facilitated consultations created an opportunity for members of the community to demand the provision of affordable housing.

In the case of the mid-rise affordable housing development, the OEVBIA was able to guide the framing of critiques insofar as its members dominated the community consultation process. While OEVBIA members did not raise any concerns about crime in the twin high-rise development planning process, crime and safety became a central issue during the planning process of the non-profit affordable housing development. Despite having just 16 more affordable housing units, the OEVBIA claimed they wanted to protect these low-income tenants from local criminal activity. Moreover, the OEVBIA convinced councillors to change the area’s designation to allow ground-floor commercial units on the development. In this sense, the OEVBIA successfully enacted crime control strategies and commercialized the ground floor on an affordable housing development. Thus, the OEVBIA successfully controlled critiques to align with their “feet on the street” market logic.

The findings from my analysis lead to several important questions about BIAs’ role in urban revitalization discussions. As BIAs continue to grow in popularity across North America, these organizations will play a more significant role in planning, organizing, managing, and controlling urban
spaces. The following discussion chapter will critically evaluate BIAs’ role in contemporary urban governance before offering some concluding thoughts in the final chapter.
9. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how BIAs justify their urban revitalization plans during interactional decision-making processes. Many urban scholars argue that BIAs represent a neoliberal form of urban governance (see Clough & Vanderbeck, 2006; Ward, 2006, 2007, 2008; MacLeod & Ward, 2002), and my study provided an in-depth understanding of how neoliberal market ideals were not simply imposed, but were discussed, contested, and negotiated during urban revitalization planning processes. My study used the pragmatic sociology of critique to examine how two BIAs in London, Ontario engaged in normative discussions about the “right” way to revitalize BIA space. Despite a few roadblocks where other social actors (e.g., city councillors, residents, and non-profit representatives) contested BIA plans and negotiated alternative revitalization visions, the BIAs nevertheless achieved their underlying organizational goals (e.g., to hire a Dundas Place Manager, to develop high-rise apartments, and to secure and commercialize an affordable housing development) by successfully controlling the framing of reality and critique.

This discussion chapter reviews my findings within the context of the existing literature. In particular, I make three main arguments in this chapter. I first argue the DLBIA and OEVBIA used different strategies to justify their respective organizational market goals. I draw out some differences in the justificatory strategies between the larger and more affluent DLBIA and the smaller and cash-strapped OEVBIA. In the second section, I argue neoliberalism needs to be theorized as a socio-cultural process rather than a unilateral and monolithic ideology. While there were some cases where the two BIAs successfully justified their neoliberal order maintenance goals, the planning process was devoid of punitive and exclusionary tactics and anti-poor rhetoric. I also show how the BIAs did not always “cleanly” accomplish their neoliberal ends insofar as they faced roadblocks along the way, albeit roadblocks they easily overcame. In the third section, I argue PSC provides a unique theoretical
framework to explain not just the unfolding of moral debates in particular situations, but also an understanding of how the justification process is contingent on organizational interests and institutional arrangements.

9.1 Comparing Justificatory Strategies

While the BIA model was originally created to compete with suburban shopping malls and department stores by giving businesses the legal authority to secure financial contributions to pay for small-scale revitalization projects (Briffault, 1999; Mallet, 1994), their role in the shaping of contemporary seems to be evolving. In addition to their typical service provisions outlined in the literature – that is, physical improvements, security and crime control, and marketing (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2001a, 2008; Ward, 2007) – my study shows how the DLBIA and OEVBIA were, similar to Ranasinghe (2013), heavily involved in framing and producing their “business voice” in the “back region” of municipal decision-making processes. That is, in addition to making tangible changes to their commercial areas, these BIAs spent much of their time advocating their commercial interests during city council deliberations. Since my findings are based on two BIAs in one city, future comparative studies will only tell if this is a common trend or an atypical case.

BIAs’ influence over urban space, however, varies depending on their geographic size, budget, and level of expertise. On the one hand, the DLBIA is a “corporate BIA” (Gross, 2005, 2013) insofar as it has a large geographical boundary located in the downtown core. They have an annual revenue of over a million dollars, board members from the downtown’s major anchors and flagship stores, and a team of professional staff who guide the vision and planning of the downtown area. The DLBIA played a key role in a major City-led $16 million redevelopment of downtown Dundas Street. Their involvement in the redevelopment is unsurprising given BIAs typically focus on creating “cool” and “hip” pedestrian-friendly streets (Darchen, 2013a, 2013b; McCann & Ward, 2010; Shaw, 2015; Ward, 2008).
On the other hand, the OEVBIA is a “community BIA” (Gross, 2005, 2013) with a small geographical boundary located in an economically struggling commercial area. They have a limited budget and small board of directors comprising mostly local independent business owners. Interestingly, the OEVBIA rarely engages in conventional BIA revitalization strategies, focusing instead on attracting residential development to bring more customers to their commercial corridor. This is unique insofar as existing literature has yet to document BIAs’ participation and influence in the residential development planning process.

As I showed, both BIAs influenced the planning process of their respective commercial corridors. As a more affluent organization, the DLBIA was able to hire an outside expert (LWLP) to frame the “best practices” for urban revitalization. This resembles many other BIAs around the world who rely on global circuits of knowledge experts to help shape commercial space (see Cook, 2008; Cook & Ward, 2012; Hoyt, 2006; McCann & Ward, 2010, 2014; Michel, 2013; Peyroux, Pütz, & Glasze, 2012; Ward, 2007, 2011). As an organization with limited finances, the OEVBIA did not have the benefit of using a third-party expert to speak on its behalf. Instead, the OEVBIA shaped their commercial space by controlling the framing of the community’s feedback gathered from community consultations and speaking on behalf of the community during public participation meetings at city council. While the DLBIA established connections with extra-local experts, the OEVBIA established connections with members of the local community. This does not mean financial capital and connections to knowledge experts are needed to successfully convince councillors to make changes to BIA spaces. On the contrary, I showed how the cash-strapped OEVBIA was able to convince councillors to enact CPTED strategies and ground-floor commercial units to an affordable housing development. Rather, my study demonstrated corporate and community BIAs employ different justificatory strategies during decision-
making processes. The following sections will expand on the significance of my findings in relation to the literature on neoliberal urban governance and urban studies rooted in the PSC.

9.2 The Neoliberal Process

Many urban scholars describe BIAs as a neoliberal form of urban governance insofar as municipal governments have given the private sector the power to make changes to public spaces (Clough & Vanderbeck, 2006; MacLeod & Ward, 2002; Mallet, 1994; Ward, 2006, 2008). Rather than assuming BIA spaces reflect a cohesive, universal, top-down neoliberal political-economic force, the theoretical premise of this dissertation was that neoliberalism is a bottom-up process where policies and ideologies are continually negotiated by various actors during interactional settings. As I showed, while neoliberal policies face resistance from groups that are unsupportive of these agendas, this resistance was overcome by BIA political lobbying.

While the emerging “urban assemblage” perspective provides a useful theorization of how urban spaces are relationally produced by a dispersed, decentered, and fragmented urban governance arrangement (see Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; Farías & Bender, 2010; McFarlane, 2009, 2011, McFarlane & Anderson, 2011), I argued alongside other scholars who say there continues to be a lack of understanding about the socio-cultural processes that underpin the “assembling” of urban spaces (see Brenner et al., 2011; Rankin, 2011; Storper & Scott, 2016). To understand how neoliberalism is given meaning through socio-cultural processes, I therefore studied interactional settings where various social actors engaged in normative and morally-laden disputes about the merits of a particular urban revitalization plan. This would answer urban scholars’ calls to study “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002), to provide “place-based investigations” of the process of neoliberalization (Peck et al., 2013, p. 1096), and to uncover the “black-box” of neoliberalization (Ward, 2006, p. 71).
My findings support the idea that BIAs operate within an assemblage of social actors (see Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Kudla & Courey, 2018; Kudla, 2019; Lippert, 2010; MacLeod, 2011; Michel, 2013; Rankin & Delaney, 2011; Rankin & McLean, 2015; Ward, 2008). For example, the planning process for Dundas Place involved the DLBIA CEO, a private placemaking company (LWLP), and city councillors and administration, while the planning process for the Old East Village’s residential development involved the OEVBIA Manager, city councillors and administration, community representatives, business owners, a private developer and its consultant, and the Housing Development Corporation. In this sense, rather than being completely dominated by an urban elite, the BIA revitalization process involved numerous social actors who “assembled” urban spaces in different ways (Allen & Cochrane, 2007, 2010; Farías, 2011). That said, despite some resistance to BIA plans from city councillors, local residents, and non-profit representatives, BIAs achieved their underlying neoliberal market goals. Thus, while there was an assemblage of different actors involved in the planning process, BIAs’ organizational market logic ultimately prevailed.

Justifying Neoliberal Goals

As I showed, the DLBIA and OEVBIA successfully justified neoliberal order maintenance strategies. In particular, the DLBIA, with the help of LWLP, justified hiring a Dundas Place Manager while the OEVBIA justified incorporating CPTED strategies to an affordable housing building. A key reason these were successfully justified was because city councillors viewed these as more ethical and compassionate approaches to manage urban marginality. I will expand on the justification of the Dundas Place Manager in more detail than the justification of CPTED strategies because it was a more central part of my analysis. As I explain, both cases demonstrate the justification of less punitive strategies than those cited in the BIA literature, thereby demonstrating BIAs use softer and less controversial language during the planning process to justify their idealized revitalization visions.
The Dundas Place Manager certainly reflects neoliberal market ideals insofar as a quasi-state actor, one hired by the DLBIA but accountable to the municipality, was tasked with managing public space. However, I will explain how this role does not necessarily represent conventional neoliberal approaches that scholars variously call revanchist (Smith, 1996), carceral (Davis, 1990), punitive (Wacquant, 2012), or post-justice (Mitchell, 2001) strategies to manage public space. Rather, the Dundas Place Manager represents a softer approach through creative cities placemaking strategies. While the overall effects of this role are yet to be seen given Dundas Place is currently under construction, my findings demonstrate that less punitive language is used during the planning process to justify neoliberal ends.

Although existing studies highlight how BIAs control and criminalize the behaviours of the urban poor who occupy commercial spaces (Cook & Ward, 2012; Huey et al., 2005; Miraftab, 2007; Vindevogel, 2005; Walby & Hier, 2013), the planning process for Dundas Place did not involve discussions about security or policing. This may be because, as Mitchell (2001a) argues, BIAs in cities with a population less than 700,000 (like London) are more likely to invest in marketing and physical improvements as opposed to security and crime control. It may also be the case that discussions about policing and security may take place after Dundas Place has been fully constructed.

However, this is not to say the DLBIA did not enact order maintenance strategies; rather, these strategies were implemented through LWLP’s proposed creative cities placemaking strategies as opposed to conventional BIA partnerships with private security and/or public police as described by Cook (2010). This is similar to strategies found in other cities where BIAs produce marketable brands to create symbolic boundaries around desirable and undesirable consumers (Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Huey et al., 2005; Wee, 2016; Zukin, 1995; 2010). Aligned with the images often produced in smaller cities (Barnes et al., 2006; Bell & Jayne, 2004; Ward, 2010), the DLBIA produced nostalgic images of
neighbourhood intimacy and sociability reminiscent of rural communities. These visions of a purer and simpler downtown “urban village” were then juxtaposed with portrayals of an existing downtown characterized by urban disorder. Thus, rather than suggesting the elimination or criminalization of the urban poor through punitive policing and security strategies, the DLBIA used creative cities rhetoric to justify who and what should be visible in BIA space. That said, it is too early to tell if harsher and more punitive measures will be implemented if these softer approaches fail to make the downtown more appealing to middle-class consumers. At this stage, the DLBIA only spoke about softer creative cities order maintenance strategies at the planning phase of Dundas Place.

This is not to say activation and programming represent a kinder or more respectful approach towards marginalized groups as described by Lee and Ferguson (2018), nor do they represent a punitive approach resembling those of genocidal states as described by Sanscartier and Gacek (2016). It also does not resemble the inclusivity promoted by Florida’s (2002) creative cities agenda or “controlled edge” (Hannigan, 2007) or “poverty tourism” (Burnett, 2014) where the harsh realities of urban marginality are commodified for middle-class consumption. Rather, my findings demonstrate that the DLBIA proposed a softer approach during the planning phase in order to justify the creation of a quasi-state role tasked with making urban marginality tolerable. The urban poor are not treated with compassion nor are they criminalized and excluded from public space; instead, they simply exist in the background of a highly manicured and choreographed BIA space. Only those that loiter for too long are subject to a range of CPTED strategies which subtly displace them from public space. Thus, the Dundas Place Manager’s task of activating and programming urban space was a creative cities placemaking strategy that had a latent function of, similar to the “Disneyfication” of public space (Ferrell, 2001; Shearing & Stenning, 1984), masking the uncomfortable realities of drug use and homelessness to create an image of a clean and safe urban experience for middle-class consumers.
That said, it has yet to be seen how the DLBIA will *actually* manage the urban poor on Dundas Place given the space has yet to be fully redeveloped. It could very well be the case that the DLBIA will eventually follow the same strategies used by BIAs across Canada, including hiring the police, tourism and hospitality ambassadors, security guards, or installing CCTV surveillance (see Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Huey et al., 2005; Lippert, 2010; Walby & Hier, 2013). However, the purpose of this dissertation was to understand the justification process rather than the enactment of order maintenance strategies in BIA space *per se*. Overall, I found the DLBIA used softer language to justify their neoliberal ends. Since Dundas Place has yet to be complete, it is too soon to argue that their softer language was rhetoric to justify more punitive approaches in the future.

Interestingly, I found the DLBIA’s creative cities placemaking strategy logic was unchallenged throughout the entire decision-making process because it was perceived as an ethical and humane approach to manage the presence of the urban poor. In contrast to existing literature (Barnes et al., 2006; Gibson, 2005; Kudla & Courey, 2018; Ranasinghe, 2010; Smith, 2010), the DLBIA, LWLP, or city councillors never used anti-poor and anti-welfare narratives to justify placemaking solutions. Instead, they used industrial language (e.g., targeted-non-targeted uses, disarming, green zones, activation and programming) that portrayed drug users and homelessness as simplistic spatial problems that could be solved by planning, managing, and controlling the ebbs and flow of downtown space. City councillors ultimately deemed activation and programming as a more humane approach that respected marginalized groups’ humanity and acknowledged their presence in public space. Unlike Blomley (2010; see also Blomley, 2007) who argues politicians engage in “Safe Streets Talk” by appealing to people’s right to move freely on city sidewalks, I found politicians actually defended marginalized groups’ right to occupy and interact in public space. Thus, the Dundas Place Manager was viewed as a more ethical approach compared to the alternative of displacement, exclusion, and criminalization of homelessness.
Simply put, the creative cities agenda is a popular approach because urban policy experts (in this case, LWLP) successfully frame it as a simplistic and humane approach to manage urban disorder; thus, as Peck (2011) argues, not requiring politicians and policymakers to make radical changes to solve the structural roots of urban marginality.

Another example of the successful justification of neoliberal market ideals was in the Old East Village. As I showed, by dominating the community consultation process and public participation meetings, the OEVBIA successfully persuaded city councillors to incorporate CPTED strategies and ground-floor commercial units to an affordable housing development. The OEVBIA therefore incorporated their market interests by securing and commercializing an affordable housing building; a development that was originally intended to serve civic/social welfare interests.

While the DLBIA relied on a third-party expert to help construct the downtown’s problems and solutions, the OEVBIA constructed the Old East Village’s problems and solutions by co-opting the community’s voice. Although most of the recommendations came from OEVBIA members who dominated the community consultation process, the OEVBIA Manager argued these recommendations came from the Old East Village “community” at large. Thus, as the existing literature shows (Ranasinghe, 2013; Davies, 1997; Kudla & Courey, 2018), the BIA justified their neoliberal ideals by equating their business interests with the wider community’s interests.

Even when their commercial interests were masked through this community voice, the OEVBIA did not advance anti-poor narratives; rather, they appeared compassionate towards low-income tenants by wanting to “protect” them from local criminal activity. Although the OEVBIA originally recommended the building to have an on-site security guard, the committee discussions focused on enacting CPTED strategies such as installing larger windows, moving the interior meeting space to the front of the property, and changing the wing wall to several pillars to improve “sight lines”. The
OEVBIA ultimately justified crime control strategies and ground-floor commercial units to an affordable housing development that was intended to serve civic interests.

Taken together, my findings from these two BIAs show instances where both organizations successfully justified order maintenance strategies by using softer language during the planning process. This is not to suggest BIAs are *actually* becoming more compassionate towards marginalized groups or are resisting neoliberal ideals by challenging the legitimacy of punitive and exclusionary tactics. Rather, my point is that the way BIAs speak about social issues may be changing because they recognize municipal governments, at least in Canada, do not want to appear punitive or exclusionary towards the urban poor given the pervasiveness of homelessness and drug abuse as well as the growing unaffordability of housing. Although a quasi-state actor managing public space and a BIA organization securing and commercializing an affordable housing building represents a neoliberal form of governance, *their proposed strategies* do not follow neoliberal tropes described by previous scholars. In fact, the strategies used by these BIAs appear non-neoliberal insofar as marginalized groups are actually accepted in urban space, albeit as long as they shop in the Old East Village and go unnoticed along Dundas Place. Again, this is not to say these BIAs are shifting to a humane approach towards urban marginality; rather, it demonstrates that BIAs may be becoming more sophisticated and strategic by using softer language during the planning stage to appease city councillors and the community but may, if necessary, attempt to enact more punitive measures when plans are implemented.

Lastly, by focusing on the BIA planning process, my findings support Walby and Hier’s (2013) argument that BIAs activate context-specific order maintenance strategies. As Lippert (2012) similarly argues, assigning the neoliberal designation to BIA practices overlooks the “lower-level” strategies that operate on the ground. In the case of the DLBIA, the Dundas Place Manager position and the activation and programming of urban space emerged as a strategy that has not been described in the existing
literature. Similarly, the OEVBIA’s involvement in securing and commercializing an affordable housing building was a surprising finding insofar as the existing literature has not documented BIAs’ influence in residential development. These results were tenable insofar as I examined the justification of urban revitalization strategies rather than assuming BIA practices reflect a universal neoliberal approach.

*Encountering Roadblocks to Neoliberal Ends*

The DLBIA and OEVBIA did not always “cleanly” achieve their market ideals insofar as other social actors contested their views and negotiated alternative plans. The fact that the DLBIA successfully convinced city councillors to create a Dundas Place Manager position does not mean they accomplished their preferred neoliberal goals. As I showed, their original goal was to hire LWLP for their Targeted Leasing and Casting (TLC) services to attract placemaking commercial tenants to the downtown. However, some city councillors contested the DLBIA’s request to use taxpayer money to hire a private placemaking company. Despite the DLBIA’s attempt to construct downtown’s reality and appropriate solutions, some city councillors had issues with LWLP’s reputation, pointed out the contradiction of attracting local commercial tenants from other cities, and argued it was unfair to prioritize downtown investment over other areas of the city. Nevertheless, the DLBIA eventually hired LWLP with their own funds for a shorter contract. Thus, rather than being hired to attract placemaking commercial tenants, LWLP was hired for a short-term contract to convince councillors to create a Dundas Place Manager position. LWLP’s role was therefore reduced because the DLBIA could not afford their full services. The creation of the Dundas Place Manager position was the result of the DLBIA’s readjusted market goals as city councillors rejected their funding request. This demonstrates BIA connections with third-party urban policy experts are not necessarily predetermined insofar as BIAs face barriers and roadblocks along the decision-making process. This is not to say that non-BIA members successfully contested BIA plans insofar as the DLBIA ultimately achieved their neoliberal goals by adjusting their plans along the way.
In the Old East Village, we saw the successful contestation of market ideals and the negotiation of alternative plans by ordinary/non-state actors, albeit resulting in a rather minor compromise that allowed the developer to exceed height restrictions by providing a small amount of affordable housing units. While the OEVBIA attempted to control the framing of the community’s critique, a local non-profit representative was able to convince councillors to incorporate the provision of affordable housing to a private twin high-rise residential development. However, this required the non-profit representative to persistently advance her civic concerns during public information meetings given the OEVBIA, while claiming to speak on behalf of the community, did not raise this issue to city councillors. It should be noted the actual discussions about the provision of affordable housing did not involve community representatives as the discussions were only between urban planning staff, the Housing Development Corporation, and the developer. This led to what many considered to be a negligible amount of affordable housing units at an unaffordable rate. Nevertheless, city councillors approved the final decision of 25 affordable housing units at 95% market rate because they thought it was a “good start” for affordable housing discussions in the city. While this may not be an inspiring subversion of neoliberal ideals, this case demonstrates small fissures where community representatives can successfully impose their civic ideals (affordable housing) into a market-based project (private residential development). Similar to Holden et al. (2015), citizens can reference this “neoliberal failure” in future affordable housing discussions and, therefore, make more convincing appeals to provide better affordable housing in the city.

Overall, I showed how the BIA assemblage did not have unified market goals insofar as the assemblage was a fragile arrangement of social actors with different views of the common good. While there were some cases where BIAs easily achieved their market ideals, there were other cases where these ideals were not achieved “cleanly” because the planning process was replete with complications.
and roadblocks for the BIAs. Moreover, my findings show how BIAs do not simply enact the government’s neoliberal goals “at a distance”, rather they actively shape and produce neoliberal ideals alongside, and sometimes in opposition to, government authorities. This was discernable because of the in-depth empirical focus on commonplace disputes and contestations that occurred in day-to-day, local level politics.

9.3 The Pragmatic Sociology of Critique’s Contribution to Urban Studies

This dissertation also showed how the pragmatic sociology of critique, specifically Boltanski’s various contributions (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999, 2006; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Boltanski, 2011), adds a unique and useful perspective to the “normative turn” in urban studies (Barnett, 2014). In basic terms, my findings demonstrated how BIA spaces are constructed and produced through deliberative processes of argumentation. Unlike some existing urban studies that use PSC to describe the content of justifications during urban planning disputes (see Eranti, 2017; Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013), I followed Jagd’s (2011) suggestion that studies need to explain how and why some grammars of worth are justified, critiqued, and negotiated.

Given my study focused on urban revitalization in BIA spaces, it provided an alternative to PSC urban studies (although see Salminen, 2018) which focus mainly on the redevelopment of social housing estates (Fuller, 2012, 2013), schools (Scerri, 2014), heritage sites (Kurnicki & Sternberg, 2016) green spaces (Eranti, 2017; Gladarev & Lonkila, 2013; Thévenot, Moody, & Lafaye, 2000), and water fronts (Block & Meilvang, 2015; Holden & Scerri, 2015; Holden, Scerri, & Esfahani, 2015). As such, my study revealed different types of reality tests, justifications, and conflicts that emerged during the BIA-related urban revitalization planning process; specifically, the planning of a pedestrian-friendly street and affordable housing. Despite an emerging urban studies literature rooted in PSC, it rarely engages with work outside Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) *On Justification*. By incorporating Boltanski and
Chiapello’s (2005) *New Spirit of Capitalism* and Boltanski’s (2011) *On Critique*, my study acknowledged organizational interests of contemporary capitalist organizations as well as the institutionalized context within which urban revitalization debates are located.

This is not to say I ignored the content of normative debates within particular interactional settings. In fact, my two case studies showed many interactional settings where social actors engaged in normative and morally-laden conversations about the best, right, good, and appropriate way to revitalize BIA space. I showed how BIA leaders used multiple grammars of worth to justify their claims rather than basing their justifications solely on market values (e.g., profit maximization, economic development, etc.). However, their justifications during decision-making processes were always tied to their organizational market goals. For example, the DLBIA’s ultimate goal was to create a unique and experiential downtown to increase the local tax base and enhance local economic development. Similarly, the OEVBIA’s ultimate goal was to increase feet on the street to draw more consumers to the commercial corridor. In this sense, BIA leaders’ justifications cannot be understood simply within the context of localized interactions but must be understood within the context of their organizational values which are rooted in the current spirit of capitalism. While BIA leaders used non-market justifications, I argue these were ciphers to achieve their organizational market interests. This is not to say studying moral discussions has no empirical value. On the contrary, these can reveal the strategic ways organizations draw upon various moral arguments to justify their underlying organizational market goals.

That said, BIAs’ organizational values did not always prevail during urban revitalization discussions. In the Old East Village, for example, we saw a similar situation described by Fuller (2012, 2013) and Scerri (2014) where, on the one hand, private organizations attempted to justify a development by drawing on market values while, on the other hand, anti-development groups voiced
their counterarguments by advocating for civic values. However, unlike these studies, the OEVBIA’s organizational market value – that is, their “feet on the street” logic – did not entirely prevail insofar as local citizens persuaded city councillors to implement the provision of affordable housing units to a private high-rise development. Thus, similar to Holden and Scerri’s (2015) study, local community members were able to form a compromise (albeit a minor one) with private actors during the planning process of a residential development. In this sense, ordinary actors negotiated organizational market logics by demanding lowered rents for the city’s marginalized population. Although community members did not necessarily achieve their desired civic demands insofar as the final decision resulted in a negligible number of affordable housing units at an unaffordable rate, this case nevertheless demonstrates that capitalist organizations do not entirely impose their neoliberal agendas insofar as they form compromises, albeit unpopular ones, to reduce tensions with the community. Overall, these findings demonstrate that municipal partnerships with private developers are not very effective public policy strategies insofar as private interests prevail over the public good.

My study also found the institutional arrangement of reality tests (i.e., committee meetings, community consultations, and public participation meetings) does not provide equal opportunities for social actors to engage in dispute. While PSC was originally a response to Bourdieu’s critical sociology which, according to Boltanski (2011, p. 43), neglects the “critical capacities developed by actors in the situations of everyday life”, the positions social actors occupy within institutional settings matters during urban planning debates. For example, discussions about using taxpayer money to fund a private placemaking company involved only the DLBIA CEO and city councillors as there was no public participation meeting or community consultation process to allow members of the public to voice their concerns. In fact, a local resident expressed his frustration at the lack of community consultation by yelling from the gallery during a committee deliberation. In this sense, opportunities were unequally
distributed insofar as only the DLBIA CEO had the opportunity to construct downtown’s reality and appropriate solutions; in Boltanski’s (2011) terms, only they were able to fix meanings and values, define and categorize human behaviour, and confirm “what matters” and “what must be done”. However, given city council contested the DLBIA’s portrayals and ultimately denied their funding request, this does not represent a “discursive institution”; that is, an authoritative institutional arrangement that successfully constructed a naturalized, taken-for-granted reality of the downtown. Rather, there was continual tension between the DLBIA’s claims, on the one hand, and city councils’ contrasting viewpoints, on the other.

In the case of the Old East Village, the public actually had the opportunity to voice their concerns about residential development by submitting their feedback during community consultation meetings and by speaking at public participation meetings during committee deliberations. However, I showed how this resembled what Boltanski (2011, p. 127) calls a “complex and managerial form of domination” because, while claiming to engage in open-ended debate, experts and managers (in this case, the OEVBIA Manager) controlled the framing of critiques. As I showed, the OEVBIA were the gatekeepers of the community’s critiques as they had the institutional authority to facilitate community consultations, analyze the feedback, and speak on behalf of the wider community during public participation meetings. The OEVBIA not only facilitated reality tests, they also vetted critiques that emerged during these reality tests and addressed less contentious criticisms. In one case, OEVBIA members dominated the community consultation process, thereby ensuring their viewpoints were heard during the residential planning process. Thus, the representation of community critiques was either filtered or dominated by

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31 Interestingly, downtown business owners have recently criticized the DLBIA board and staff for failing to represent their voices on important downtown issues such as LWLP, Bus Rapid Transit, bike lanes, and safe injection sites. As a result, business owners have formed an ad hoc committee that has called for a review of the annual budget and even the DLBIA CEO’s resignation. These tensions have been made public in the local news media towards the end of my study in late 2018 (see Brown, 2018; Ghonaim, 2019; LeBel, 2019)
the OEVBIA. The community’s critiques failed not because, as Fuller (2017) describes, ordinary actors failed to advance a convincing counterargument; rather, because their voices were strategically excluded from reality tests altogether. In addition to constructing reality during institutionally created reality tests, BIA leaders limited critique and set the parameters for performative operations.

Based on my results, I disagree with the notion that BIAs represent a “more horizontally networked and less vertically controlled” urban governance arrangement (Grossman, 2010b, p. 359-60). Far from the “participative decision making” described by Lloyd et al. (2003, p. 304), ordinary actors did not have an equal opportunity to have their voices heard during BIA-related planning processes; thus, supporting similar findings in other BIAs (see Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Rankin & McLean, 2015; Ranasinghe, 2013; Rankin et al., 2016). Using the PSC framework to study the justification process, I showed how BIAs have the institutional authority and experience to successfully justify and limit/control critiques in a way to achieve desired organizational goals. Although there are small fissures where social actors can negotiate alternative plans, the BIA assemblage does not have an equally distributed authority where power is continually negotiated between various social actors. I therefore agree with Brenner et al. (2011) who suggest, while the urban assemblage perspective provides a useful methodological tool to examine neoliberal political-economic trends, it needs to consider notions of structure, capitalism, and power relations; in my case, the spirit of capitalism, organizational interests, and institutional arrangements.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how my findings contribute to the existing literature on BIAs, neoliberal urban governance, and the pragmatic sociology of critique. I argued that, in addition to understanding the way BIAs make physical improvements, enact security and crime control tactics, and market commercial areas, it is important to understand how these organizations advance their interests during key decision-
making processes. Doing so can help reveal the influence these organizations have in the shaping of contemporary urban spaces. For example, it was surprising the OEVBIA was involved in, and had influence over, the neighbourhood’s residential development planning process. This was discernable only because I paid close attention to interactional settings where BIAs engage in normative discussions about the “right” way to revitalize urban space.

I also argued an empirical focus on local level decision-making can help reveal how neoliberalism is given meaning through socio-cultural processes. I showed how the BIAs used softer language during the planning process to justify non-punitive order maintenance strategies. In other cases, BIAs did not “cleanly” accomplish their neoliberal ends insofar as other social actors negotiated alternative revitalization plans. Thus, I showed how neoliberalism does not impose itself onto urban space in a unilateral and monolithic way; rather, it unfolds in different ways depending on the local context. While there was resistance to neoliberal ideals, the BIAs ultimately achieved some variation of their market goals by successfully constructing reality and controlling the framing of critique.

Lastly, I argued that, in addition to understanding how social actors practice their critical capacity during interactional settings, it is important to consider how the winners and losers of urban revitalization outcomes may be contingent on institutional arrangements and the power of organizational interests. As I showed, BIAs enact a complex/managerial form of domination where critique is strategically limited and controlled in a way to advance organizational market interests. In this way, using the pragmatic sociology of critique revealed the specific strategies BIAs use to advance their neoliberal interests.

The next and final chapter will conclude the dissertation. I will provide a brief summary of my study and a general overview of the main contributions of my work. I will also highlight some limitations of my work and areas for future research.
10. Conclusion

Drawing on interviews, participant observation, and document analysis from two BIAs in London, Ontario, this study offers insights on the influence these BIAs had during the urban revitalization planning process. This chapter is divided into five brief sections. I first conclude the main findings of my study before providing suggestions for BIAs moving forward. I then provide suggestions on how future research should study BIAs and the process of neoliberalism as well as how urban scholars can utilize the pragmatic sociology of critique. Lastly, I present some limitations of my study before presenting my final thoughts.

10.1 A Brief Overview

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I examined the justification process to gain an in-depth understanding of how the DLBIA and OEVBIA justify, or fail to justify, the merits of their respective revitalization plans. My premise was that power is exercised during socio-cultural, interactional settings where many social actors draw on a multiplicity of moral principles to justify their respective visions, viewpoints, and interests. I showed how these two BIAs faced complications and roadblocks during the revitalization planning process as well as how they used softer language to justify neoliberal ends during the planning process. By being attuned to the way social actors discussed, contested, and negotiated BIA-related urban revitalization plans, I revealed the qualities of a different BIA order maintenance strategy (activation and programming by a placemaking “manager”) and uncovered a BIA’s involvement in, and influence over, the local neighbourhood’s residential planning.

My findings demonstrate different types of justificatory strategies used by the DLBIA and OEVBIA. Chapter 6 and 7 focused on the DLBIA’s involvement in the planning process of Dundas Place, a four-block redevelopment of downtown London’s Dundas Street into a curbless pedestrian-friendly “flex street”. Chapter 6 explained the DLBIA CEO’s attempt to persuade city councillors to use
taxpayer money to help pay for a private placemaking organization (LWLP). The DLBIA claimed LWLP would attract commercial tenants with the necessary placemaking skills to properly revitalize Dundas Street to their desired “unique and experiential” vision. I showed how the DLBIA CEO presented “retrospective critiques” and constructed a “revitalization threshold” to portray an economically successful but not yet fully revitalized downtown. This was an attempt, I argued, to justify creative cities placemaking strategies as the best course of action to fix the downtown’s urban disorder. Despite the DLBIA CEO’s attempt to construct downtown’s reality and appropriate solutions, some city councillors contested their representations and ultimately council voted against the funding proposal; in particular, council criticized the vehicle (LWLP) rather than method (creative cities placemaking) of revitalization. These discussions demonstrate municipal governments and BIAs may not necessarily have consensus about revitalization insofar as some outspoken councillors have opposing moral views about what is the best approach for urban revitalization.

Chapter 7 showed how the method of revitalization (creative cities placemaking) was ultimately justified as the best approach for Dundas Place. Even though they failed to secure municipal funding, the DLBIA eventually hired LWLP (albeit for a shorter contract and different services than originally desired). Instead of attracting placemaking commercial tenants through their trademarked TLC program, LWLP simply conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the downtown to determine the best course of action moving forward. I argued the DLBIA relied on LWLP’s definitional power – that is, their ability to speak with authority – to persuade city councillors to hire a Dundas Place Manager, a quasi-state actor tasked with managing public space. Rather than speaking about the intricacies of this position or the logic of their placemaking strategies, LWLP justified the need for this position by speaking mainly about the downtown’s supposed “drug use and street culture” problem. In contrast to the more punitive and exclusionary strategies used by BIAs in
other cities, I argued LWLP’s recommendation to “activate and program” Dundas Place represents a softer approach intended to make the unpleasant realities of urban marginality more tolerable by creating pedestrian activity. City councillors ultimately approved this recommendation insofar as they viewed this as a more ethical and humane approach in contrast to punishment, exclusion, and criminalization.

While the purpose of the Dundas Place Manager is to enact placemaking strategies to attract consumers and mask urban marginality, it has yet to be seen how this creative cities placemaking strategy will be actually implemented insofar as Dundas Place is currently under construction and planned to be finished by late 2019. For now, by empirically studying the decision-making process for the Dundas Place revitalization, my study reveals the emergence of a new and seemingly innocuous quasi-state actor (the Dundas Place Manager) tasked with managing public spaces. Although this is not a punitive approach, it remains a simplistic spatial solution that ignores the complex structural causes of urban marginality. It also shows how the DLBIA had to somewhat readjust their neoliberal goals given their denied funding request. Rather than attracting an array of placemaking commercial tenants to fill Dundas Street, the DLBIA hired LWLP to convince the municipal government to task just one actor (the Dundas Place Manager) to enact placemaking strategies.

Chapter 8 focused on the OEVBIA’s role in the neighbourhood’s residential development planning process. In contrast to the DLBIA, the OEVBIA is a smaller organization with a limited budget and fewer board/staff members. As a result, they rarely took part in conventional BIA revitalization strategies such as physical improvements, security, and marketing; rather, they worked behind the scenes by mediating discussions between city councillors/administration, local residents, business/property owners, and developers. Rather than relying on third-party experts to frame the “best practices” for urban revitalization, I showed how the OEVBIA justified their market interests (their “feet on the street” logic) by controlling the framing of the community’s critiques. I argued that, as the gatekeeper to the
community’s voice, the OEVBIA controlled and vetted the community’s critiques regarding two residential developments. In one case, despite the community’s demand for affordable housing, the OEVBIA only emphasized the community’s less contentious building design and aesthetic concerns which, according to the OEVBIA, the developer had since integrated to the design plans. In another case, OEVBIA members dominated the community consultation process with their concerns about securing and commercializing an affordable housing development. Taken together, this demonstrates BIAs’ surprising role and influence in the residential development planning process.

Overall, my analysis highlights the centrality of BIAs in planning, organizing, managing, and controlling contemporary urban spaces. In Chapter 9, I discussed how it seems these organizations have certainly evolved from their humble beginnings. My two case studies show how these organizations play a key role during municipal decision-making processes, even on matters outside of their particular jurisdiction. An empirical focus on these decision-making processes, I argued, helped reveal how neoliberalism is given meaning through socio-cultural processes. In my case, I showed how the DLBIA successfully justified their neoliberal order maintenance goals, although their proposed strategies did not resemble the punitive and exclusionary ones used by BIAs in other cities. I also showed how the DLBIA did not “cleanly” achieve their neoliberal ends insofar as other social actors successfully rejected or negotiated alternative revitalization plans. This does not necessarily represent a democratic form of urban governance because, at least in my cases, BIAs limit and control critique in order to achieve their organizational market goals.

Rather than explaining the production of urban space under an all-encompassing “neoliberal” ideology, PSC helped explain the context-specific ways that social actors justified and contested BIA-related urban revitalization plans. My theoretical framework for studying the justification process showed not only the content of justifications and critiques but also the way the two BIAs constructed
reality and limited critique of their proposed revitalization plans. My specific focus on BIAs introduced new types of justifications, conflicts, and compromises that unfolded during the BIA planning process; specifically, discussions about managing the urban poor and developing affordable housing units. This was discernable because of my methodological focus on interactional settings where social actors engaged in normative discussions about the revitalization of BIA space. Moreover, my methodological and theoretical framework contributes to the PSC literature by providing practical methods and a unique theoretical framework to study the justification process within urban policy settings.

10.2 Moving Forward

As BIAs continue to form in cities across the world, it is important to ensure their private interests do not prevail over public interests; especially because they have the authority to plan and make changes to public spaces. To be clear, I am not suggesting BIAs must always support public interests or that they have the moral responsibility to solve the structural conditions of urban marginality. After all, these organizations first and foremost represent the interests of private business/property owners who simply want to attract customers to their stores. I also acknowledge BIAs play just a small part in the shaping of urban spaces next to more powerful influences such as municipal governments, provincial and federal states, global politics, trans-national private organizations, and so on. Nevertheless, as I have shown, BIAs do have some power and influence to make changes to urban spaces. Based on my findings, I therefore offer five suggestions for BIAs, municipal governments, and community members.

First, municipal governments must create better opportunities for community representatives (e.g., local residents, non-profit organizations, community associations, etc.) to voice their concerns on BIA-related revitalization plans. Since BIAs represent the business community, they should not be able to represent the interests of the wider community. Local community members certainly have a right to have their viewpoints heard without any institutional barriers or distortion from private interests. Given
BIAs’ main interest is to enhance local economic development and increase the tax base, it is imperative to allow community members the opportunity to speak about the potential negative effects of BIA-proposed plans and defend the rights of the marginalized of society. While it may be efficient for municipal governments to skip public participation meetings and/or task BIAs with facilitating and analyzing community consultations, this does not represent a democratic form of urban governance insofar as community members’ voices are either ignored or distorted. This is not to say the onus should be entirely placed on municipalities to make these changes. Provincial acts must ensure municipalities create open spaces for the public to engage in democratic discussions about the provision of services within BIA jurisdictions.

Second, municipal government must also be cautious when BIA leaders speak about the state of their commercial district. As I showed, it is in BIAs’ interest to emphasize signs of urban disorder in hopes to secure external funding/resources to supposedly fix these issues. This is not to say municipal governments should ignore BIA claims about the presence of urban problems like homelessness, drug use, and prostitution; rather, municipal governments should corroborate these claims with their own data and listen to the perspectives of community/social service representatives before implementing BIA approaches.

Third, it should be a requirement for BIA boards to have at least one non-business/government representative from the local community association or social/community service. Since some BIAs have large boundaries, the decisions and changes they make often impact local residents, institutions, and non-profit organizations who occupy BIA spaces. These groups should therefore have a voice not only in municipal decision-making processes, but also within the BIA organization itself. Although this suggestion may seem inappropriate given BIAs first and foremost represent the interests of the business community, the fact these organizations influence, at least in my study, decisions about managing the
urban poor and the provision of affordable housing demonstrates that they play a larger role in community development. Having at least one non-commercial actor as a BIA member may provide a much-needed alternative voice within the BIA organization.

Fourth, in Ontario there is currently no set guidelines to measure the impact BIAs make to their areas. As I explained, municipal governments devote more attention to BIA formation opposed to checking in on them once they are operational. It is concerning that the onus is placed on BIAs themselves to measure their own success by speaking with business owners, relators, and municipal staff (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 42). I am not suggesting there needs to be more rigorous statistical analysis to measure BIAs’ impact; rather, I suggest city councillors should think more critically about whether BIA-led services and programs contradict any existing municipal objectives/initiatives such as reducing homelessness or providing affordable housing. In other words, councillors should evaluate BIAs based on civic worth just as much as their market worth.

Fifth, it would be mutually beneficial for BIA leaders to form genuine relationships with local social services to create collaborative approaches to manage urban marginality. On the one hand, social services could learn something from street-front businesses that often witness and manage homelessness on a daily basis. After all, business owners often make early contact with some of the most marginalized members of society, including the homeless, drug users, and sex workers. Any approach to tackle these social issues could therefore benefit by considering the viewpoints of local business owners; especially as not all business owners have harsh views about urban marginality. On the other hand, BIAs could learn from the experiences and suggestions from local social service workers who serve marginalized clients. Rather than enacting temporary spatial solutions to manage urban marginality (i.e., displacement, criminalization, etc.), it would benefit BIAs to learn about the complex structural causes and solutions to these problems from the local social-welfare sector.
10.3 Future Research

Given the lack of literature exploring BIAs’ influence during key urban revitalization decision-making processes, I encourage researchers to examine the justification process to better understand BIAs’ role in shaping contemporary urban spaces. It would be useful to know if BIA practices in other cities resemble or contradict the justificatory strategies, organizational interests, and institutional arrangements described in my study. Given my focus on two BIAs in a mid-sized Canadian city, it would be interesting to see how my results compare with BIAs in larger Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Montreal, or Toronto. For example, do other BIAs play a role in discussions about the provision of affordable housing or is the OEVIBA an atypical case? Do other BIAs enact non-punitive order maintenance strategies or is this unique to downtown London?

I also encourage scholars to provide more place-based understandings of the unfolding of neoliberalism. Rather than assuming the existence of a unilateral and monolithic neoliberal political-economic force, it is useful to closely study local politics to see if and how social actors are capable of contesting market ideals and negotiating alternative plans. Doing so can provide optimism and hope by uncovering the small ways social actors can influence decision-making processes. Otherwise, we will continue to produce studies with the same conclusion about the omnipresence of neoliberalism and the inability to subvert its logic. Moreover, we need to question the boundaries of so-called neoliberal order maintenance strategies. At what point do these strategies resemble alternative, non-neoliberal logics?

Lastly, future studies should consider the utility of using the PSC framework to understand local urban politics. As Holden and Scerri (2015, p. 362) argue, PSC provides a much-needed alternative to neoliberal theorizations of urban space by highlighting the “more fluid, interactively and discursively constructed forces that actors mobilize in public disputes”. I also recommend future PSC urban studies incorporate Boltanski’s work outside of On Justification to better understand the power of organizational
interests, capitalist ideals, and institutional arrangements in shaping urban space. In particular, the theoretical framework can be used to explain how certain social actors and organizations strategically limit and control critique during key decision-making processes. However, this is not to say PSC is without its drawbacks. Given PSC’s unique epistemological standpoint, scholars need to develop more specific and robust methods to study the justification process.

10.4 Limitations

While my study provided an in-depth look into the justification of BIA-related urban revitalization plans, I did not have an opportunity to see whether the actual implementation of BIA ideas closely resembled or diverged from their original plans. For example, it would be interesting to know if the DLBIA will eventually enact punitive and exclusionary order maintenance strategies similar to BIAs in other cities. Although this can be examined once Dundas Place is fully constructed, it is currently unclear how Dundas Place will be actually managed. It would also be useful to see if and how these BIAs’ proposed revitalization strategies change over time.

My specific focus on London, Ontario is another limitation of this study. It could be the case, for example, that the justifications, organizational interests, and institutional arrangements are unique to the city. Although I did not suggest my study would be generalizable to other BIAs, it would be useful to see if similar patterns emerge in other urban spaces. As suggested earlier, future studies will only tell if my findings are atypical or emerging trends in BIA urban governance.

There are a few limitations of my sample and methodology. First, saturation of interview data often occurs when subsequent interviews add little to the properties of analytic codes. For my study, I could not continue conducting additional interviews because my sample was limited by the amount of active BIA board and staff members. The DLBIA had five staff members and 15 board members (20 total) while the OEVBIA had three staff members and 10 board members (13 total). I was able to attain
11 interviews from the DLBIA (55% of all board and staff members) and six from the OEVBIA (46% of all board and staff members). Thus, my interview data does not include 45% of DLBIA board and staff members and 54% of OEVBIA board and staff members. Despite my numerous attempts to contact non-respondents, I was unable to secure interviews from these BIA members. Nevertheless, attaining interviews from approximately half of BIA board and staff members from the two BIAs helped supplement the data gathered from participant observation and document analysis.

Second, my findings were limited to the viewpoints of BIA staff, board members, and city councilors. I did not interview business/property owners who operate within the BIA boundary. Doing so may have revealed even more contradictions and opposing views within the BIA assemblage and provided a better understanding of whose voices BIA leaders privilege and neglect on BIA-related decisions. My interviews, however, specifically focused on BIA board and staff members because these members are the key decision makers on BIA-related revitalization plans. While the viewpoints of business/property owners would have provided an in-depth understanding of the BIA organization, conducting these additional interviews would not have been feasible within the timeline of this study.

Third, I was unable to observe BIA board meetings because these took place behind closed doors and did not allow members of the public to attend. The discussions at these meetings would have provided more context for understanding BIAs’ organizational interests and demonstrated how BIA leaders attempt to produce consensus among its members.

Final Thoughts

There is no doubt the DLBIA and OEVBIA played a major role in shaping urban spaces in London, Ontario. If BIAs continue to expand across the world, it is important to understand how these quasi-state organizations participate in, and have influence over, key decision-making processes that effect the public sphere. The public should have more opportunities to challenge their motives and
ensure these organizations provide opportunities for, rather than limit, democratic debates about the shaping of urban space. To be clear, I am not suggesting municipal governments must abandon the BIA model simply because these organizations advance private interests. After all, business communities have a right to have their voices heard on matters pertaining to the spaces in and around their businesses. Rather, my point is that municipal governments must ensure these organizations’ private interests do not prevail over public interests during urban revitalization decision-making processes. Given their political, economic, and legal power, it is easy for BIAs to persuade municipal governments to follow their plans and visions. Thus, city councillors and administration must think critically about the merits of their proposed plans and consider whether BIA interests align with the interests of the wider community.

As I have shown, the urban revitalization process is replete with social actors advancing their moral views about what is best, right, good, and appropriate for the city. Discussions about the design of a public street or residential building is not limited to its aesthetic features or functionality, it also involves tense debates about who and what can legitimately occupy these spaces. When we think about the production of urban space, we must consider the lengthy normative discussions that take place prior to tower cranes appearing in the sky and construction cones filling the streets. It is in these interactional settings that we can observe how and why plans are justified, contested, and negotiated as well as the power and influence certain people and organizations have in shaping contemporary urban spaces.
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Appendix A: Letter of Information to Interview Participants

This research is being conducted by Daniel Kudla under the direct supervision of Dr. Patrick Parnaby in the Sociology and Anthropology department at the University of Guelph located in Guelph, Ontario.

What is this study about? This study has been designed to evaluate how Londoners talk and feel about downtown urban revitalization. The intention is to compare how discussions about urban revitalization are similar and different between the downtown London area and the Old East Village community. As the City of London is making major decisions to revitalize the downtown core in the coming years, this study intends to provide policy implications for London and other mid-sized Canadian cities. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, confidential interview with Daniel Kudla (student researcher). The interview will require no advanced preparation and would consist of questions that explore your thoughts and opinions regarding London’s revitalization. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded so the researcher can eventually transcribe the recording for research purposes (audio recordings will be deleted after transcription). The research presents no foreseeable physical or psychological risks to those involved. In the event that the interview questions make you feel a sense of unease or discomfort, you may choose not to respond to some questions or withdraw from the research.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes. Although your participation is greatly appreciated, you are under no obligation to participate and you may withdraw at any time.

What will happen to the information you collect? All data collected during the interviews will be stored securely by the research team as per University of Guelph policies. Only the research team will have access to this information. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings by emailing the research team after the completion of the study.

What are the benefits of the study? The results of this research will be shared with the scientific community and will help further our understanding of downtown urban revitalization processes in a mid-
sized Canadian city. There is currently little understanding of how downtowns located in smaller cities differ in comparison to large metropolitan cities like Toronto and Vancouver. This distinction is important because many downtowns in mid-sized Canadian cities are located in comparatively weaker economic environments, have declining retail and commercial sectors, and struggle to attract pedestrian traffic and consumers.

**What if I have concerns?** If you have any questions of concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Dr. Patrick Parnaby at 519 824 4120 ext. 53941

Dr. Bill O’Grady at 519 824 4120 ext. 58943

Dr. Mervyn Horgan at 519 824 4120 ext. 56373

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. If you have any questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB# 16MR017), please contact:

Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph
reb@uoguelph.ca
519-824-4120 ext. 56606.

You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study.

Again, thank you. Your interest in participating in this research study is greatly appreciated.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

**Descriptive**

Can you describe your role as a BIA board member?
- How long have you been involved with the BIA?
- What are your main obligations/responsibilities?

**Revitalization**

A major function of BIAs is to revitalize neighborhoods. What does “revitalization” mean to you?
- What type of image pops into your head?
- What do you hope to change in the area?
  - What is it about those areas that require more attention?

**City Administration**

What is the relationship between the BIA and the municipal government?
- What type of barriers does the BIA face in attaining city resources?
  - How does the BIA overcome these barriers?
- In what way does the BIA try to convince the city for more funding/support?

**Merchants**

To what extent does the BIA face difficulties persuading business within the BIA to support revitalization efforts?
- No difficulties: How does the BIA minimize merchant issues?
- Difficulties: Why are businesses reluctant to revitalize?
  - What does the BIA do to persuade these businesses?
- Are there certain issues that cause tensions between business members?
- How does the BIA come to a consensus on any given issue?

**Social Services**

Typically Market Tower/Dundas East is considered a “trouble spot” in terms of revitalization.
- What in particular is troubling about this area for the BIA?
- What type of relationship does the BIA have with social services?
  - Is there tension between BIAs’ mandate to revitalize while also supporting social services?
**Media**

Do you find that the local media portrays the neighborhood fairly?
- How do you respond to the negative image portrayed by the media?
- In what other ways does the BIA promote the area?
  o Why are these important?

**Londoners**

What does the BIA do to try to attract Londoners to the area?
- Why do you think Londoners are hesitant to come to the area?
- Is it easy or difficult to get the message out about revitalization? Why is it important?

**Community Residents**

What type of relationship does the BIA have with the local community?
- Do you think residents think positively about the business corridor?

**Concluding**

The BIA has played a major role in facilitating downtown revitalization in London.
- What has been one of your greatest challenges along the way?
- What do you hope to see in the future?