Re-Working Community: Industrial Restructuring and the Challenge for Sustainable Development

by

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ABSTRACT

RE-WORKING COMMUNITY: INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND THE CHALLENGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Many communities are looking to respond and adjust to a myriad of significant socio-economic and environmental changes fundamentally altering longstanding patterns of interaction and attachment to place. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the renewed interest in urban regeneration and sustainable communities. Yet the prospect of decline haunts some places. With de-industrialization, the connection between where people live and work is becoming increasingly disjointed, and this threatens to undermine the viability of older neighbourhoods and industrial districts left behind in the aftermath. While the bulk of public concern and academic research on globalization and industrial restructuring tends to focus on major metropolitan centers, this study brings analytical attention to how these trends play-out in smaller communities on the urban edge of Ontario’s rural heartland. Through an analysis of four community case studies, the dissertation examines processes of restructuring leading to the abandonment of brownfield sites in older places while identifying new spaces of urbanization in greenfield areas, highlighting how both unfold within a common regional spatial-scale. By critically engaging the literature discussing the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, the thesis makes the argument that this broader transformation impacts urban and rural places alike, and problematizes conventional approaches to planning from the perspective of sustainable community development.
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CHAPTER ONE

- INTRODUCTION: RE-WORKING COMMUNITY

Communities across the globe are looking to respond and adjust to a myriad of significant socio-economic and environmental changes fundamentally transforming longstanding patterns of interaction and attachment to place. Population settlements have always been dynamic places whereby individuals come together on common terrain to form a loosely defined social entity of togetherness. For much of modern history, community as a place-of-settlement gave rise to towns and cities, and their conglomeration constituting the very foundation upon which the nation-state is built. With the advent of de-industrialization, the connection between where people live and work has become increasingly disjointed, and this threatens to undermine the viability of older neighbourhoods and industrial districts. The period following World War II was unique and unprecedented in terms of the economic development and social optimism it helped engender (Hall, Jr. and Porterfield 2001). In the North American frame-of-reference, mass industrialization co-evolved with rapid urbanization, and, as shall be explored in greater detail herein, rural places too were fundamentally impacted by this overall transformation. Yet the boom creating so much economic prosperity and population growth for several successive generations within living memory, eventually began to show signs of exhaustion and decay. Many leading researchers note the early symptoms of decline were already apparent by the 1970s (Harvey 1990; Amin 1994; Jessop 1999; Teeple 2000). Globalization is the buzzword touted to describe the epochal shift taking place and driving the new economy, once again re-working community
mores. The congruent spatial relationship between community and work once archetypical of the modern era has since become subject to re-invention and re-articulation. There is little doubt we are in the midst of a major reorganization of human connections and economic activity on a global scale. The difficulty lies instead in how to go about understanding the consequences of such change for communities and the ecosystems ultimately sustaining life on the planet.

Globalization is often thought to be a primarily urban-based phenomenon characterized by the dismantling of socio-spatial boundaries, increased interconnectivity and the rising influence of a post-industrial economy. Proponents claim the world has become a smaller place, national divisions made irrelevant as capitalist markets internationalize and technological advances facilitate the emergence of a level global playing field where the industrious and highly driven can thrive (Ohmae 1990; Friedman 2007). For many analysts and advocates alike, the triumph of global capitalism is seen to be an unequivocally desirable historical outcome (Fukuyama 1992). Among more critically inclined researchers, however, empirical findings and analysis reveals a far more contradictory, problematic and increasingly unsustainable process at work (O’Connor 1994; Winson and Leach 2002; High 2003; Shalla and Clement 2007; Sousa 2011). David Harvey (1990, 284) suggests the “intense phase of time-space

1 Daniel Bell (1974) was an American sociologist who is perhaps best known for his pioneering contributions describing the rise of a post-industrial society in developed nations like the United States, arguing that the once dominant manufacturing sector would soon be eclipsed by a new economy that was to be more information-driven and service oriented. Since its initial publication, a significant debate has arisen exploring the degree to which the transformation described by Bell materialized as anticipated, and whether or not the phenomenon can be considered a step forward for economically developed societies (see for instance: Harvey 1990; Amin 1994; Shalla and Clement 2007).
“compression” brought about by globalization “has had a disorienting and disruptive influence on political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life.” Echoing this view, Alessandro Bonanno and Robert Antonio (2000) emphasize the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist model of production is the underlying motivational logic giving shape and expression to the current global order. The main outcome of this transition, these authors caution, is a reassertion of capital’s dominance in the world economy, which as shall be discussed later, is better understood as a reactionary strategy against previous modes of government regulation. As the initial euphoria surrounding globalization and unfettered markets as the undisputed basis for prosperity subsides, a new reality of socio-economic polarization, environmental degradation and communities confronting decline must now be reckoned with. This doctoral study is an exploration of how these global trends play-out in the localized context of small town Ontario.

In recent years, a growing number of empirical case studies on globalization and the transformation of work have emerged in North America highlighting its uneven and place-based impacts (Fink 1998; Nelson and Smith 1999; Winson and Leach 2002; High 2003; Falk, Schulman and Tickamyer 2003; Buchanan 2006; Sousa 2011; Gibbs, Leach and Yates 2012). This research offers a useful counterbalance to more aggregated and generalized discussions that all too often overlook regional variation and local specificity. Community focused research can provide poignant insight into how seemingly monolithic forces unfold on the ground, and offer a more nuanced perspective regarding how people encounter and respond to rapidly altering contexts of work and attachment to place. These research studies, my own effort here included, depict a troubling picture
where employment instability, derelict urban spaces and fragmented communities are challenging once mainstream understandings of unregulated capitalist development as a socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable process.

Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of Canadians now live and work within a relatively small number of census metropolitan areas—Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver alone accounting for just less than half the nation’s total population—rural and small town Ontario continues to be an important place of settlement and economic activity (Statistics Canada 2011). To many community researchers, municipal planners and small town residents alike, this suggestion of importance may seem peculiar given the numerous difficulties and challenges to have confronted smaller communities during the past few decades. The decline of traditional livelihood opportunities afforded by agriculture, compounded by low population growth rates and high youth out-migration has long raised concerns about the long-term viability of such communities. Although many of the underlying factors contributing to these issues have not been resolved, this research highlights evidence of significant new job creation and burgeoning housing developments taking place on the urban edge of the province’s rural heartland. These research findings are supported by recent Statistics Canada (2011) data noting the significance of urban sprawl, which is the major factor influencing the development of smaller, nearby communities.

Small town Ontario appears to be globalizing rapidly as new investment flows seek out unspoiled locales to establish productive infrastructure, reshaping the socio-environmental landscape in its aftermath. Automotive component producers and a new
generation of food processors in particular are looking toward smaller communities in rural southwestern Ontario as preferred destinations to set-up new flexible, ‘just-in-time’ production facilities. The community case studies that are the focus of this investigation—Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston—can be seen as representative of many other communities across the region. New places of employment and a boom in the residential housing market for localities once thought to be in decline might seem like grounds for renewed optimism, yet as will be discussed further, this outlook needs to be tempered given that many of the jobs created are tied to an emergent generation of firms guided by ‘lean and mean’ management practices, and their structural reliance on a highly contingent and hyper-mobile workforce. Taken together, the thesis makes the point that these trends should be considered a bellwether to a broader transformation impacting urban and rural communities alike, and this requires more in-depth understanding as to why and how transnationalized capital flows influence local development priorities, and the resultant connections people come to have with place.

**Research Goals and Objectives**

This research study investigates how the reconfiguration of industry in a globalized world impacts community development opportunities and attachment to place in the heartland of southwestern Ontario. More specifically, the research objectives are outlined as follows: (1) Review the relevant literature and develop a framework for socio-environmental inquiry suitable toward understanding multiple facets of how industrial restructuring impacts social outcomes and community development patterns; (2) Undertake four community case studies to demonstrate how the de-centralization and de-
industrialization of communities fundamentally disrupts longstanding social structures and economic fortunes; (3) To articulate and map-out key socio-economic and environmental trends impacting community well-being and how these processes evolve over time; (4) Identify the consequences of changing labour market dynamics on working conditions within smaller communities; and, (5) Synthesize research findings and assess the implications of new growth patterns for future community planning initiatives and the prospects for more sustainable development.

An examination of four community case studies is deployed to help sketch-out commonalities as well as unique responses to uneven development trends. The dissertation looks to provide in-depth discussion of relevant contributing factors and presents research findings detailing the changing context of work and its relationship to place, highlighting the predominance of a cut-throat economic paradigm and its impact on the built environment. Based on these case studies, I argue that while some communities appear to have benefited from new opportunities unleashed by the global marketplace, the full-scale implications of this profound transformation have yet to be taken into consideration, especially with regard to the goal of achieving more socially and environmentally sustainable forms of community development. The recent economic crisis to befall most of the industrial world helps expose the shortcomings of the traditional approach to urban planning and underscore the need for a more sustainable alternative. The specter of community decline is perhaps the most salient consequence to de-industrialization brought about as a result of globalization.
A central theme discussed throughout the thesis is the significance of community, both as the context for social phenomenon and as a unit of analysis. The notion of community has a long and rich history within the social sciences. Demographers have sought to count people and places as a way to quantify its objective existence. Anthropologists and sociologists on the other hand, following in the tradition of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, tend to regard community as a fundamental building block of society and the outcome of complex social processes. Both of these aspects help identify two essential elements of community – its concreteness and malleability. The concept of community, consequently, refers to an outcome of complex social interactions that can be defined in time and space, yet its reality subject to continuous negotiation and change. This understanding of community applies to both rural and urban areas. In the thesis, the focus is primarily on communities as places, although as it will become evident, this territorialized dimension is becoming unraveled. Communities that thrive do so because they are able to satisfy several important and interconnected functions related to the needs of its inhabitants. Those functions generally revolve around work, commerce, sociability and habitation. When the delicate balance is overturned, dysfunction can lead to decline.

As the signs of neglect and deterioration become all too apparent in many older industrial communities across North America and elsewhere around the world, people and their governments are looking for new ways to think about community and the relationship human beings have to the built environment. Since its inception, the concept of sustainability has sparked a great deal of heated debate, which is not entirely surprising given the enormous stakes at risk. For many, the discussion has become too polarized
between those concerned solely with advancing anthropocentric goals of human
development and others focused narrowly on ecological matters. This lack of basic
agreement over the concept’s definition and purpose, rather than constituting a basis for
rejection, as some have suggested, actually reflects the need for greater intellectual
scrutiny and engagement. To do otherwise, as Drummond and Marsden (1999, 1) make
note, “is to tacitly accept all that is unsustainable.” This dissertation takes a different
path advanced by proponents of sustainable development calling for the need to consider
human welfare and environmental issues within a shared and more integrative
perspective (for instance see, Harvey 1996; Redcliffe 1997; Roseland 1998; Drummond
and Marsden 1999; Glasby 2002; Suzuki 2002; Raco and Dixon 2007; Florida 2010).

Recent efforts to incorporate the idea of sustainability into community planning
reflects a growing acknowledgment that human well-being can no longer be
contemplated in isolation from the bio-physical world, especially when natural capital is
being degraded and depleted at an alarming rate. Given this context, the analytical
framework utilized in the thesis builds upon contributions from the political economy and
sustainable communities’ literature (Benello et. al. 1989; Deléage 1994; Faucheux et. al.
1998; Roseland et. al. 1998; Goldfrank et. al. 1999; Daly and Cobb Jr. 1999; Roberts and
Grimes 1999; Boyce 2002; Brown et. al. 2002; Shutkin 2005). The intent is to identify
and incorporate useful insights from distinct yet complementary research traditions and
overcome the commonplace tendency to hide behind disciplinary boundaries. As Winson
and Leach (2002, 43) suggest, sustainable community development “…cannot be
disentangled from the wider political economy, [nor at the same time] can it be detached
from ecological concerns.” Taking heed to this observation becomes increasingly
relevant as human society pushes-up against the planet’s biophysical limits and more frequently experiences the destructive consequences of unsustainable practices. Moving toward sustainable communities requires a new kind of synthesis capable of incorporating an environmental awareness into the design of population settlements, and a commitment to a new planning paradigm better suited toward reconciling the desire for development with the need for sustainability.

Informed by critical realist theory (Bhaskar 1979, 1989; Marsden, Lowe, and Whatmore, 1990; Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Jessop 1999; López and Potter 2001; Ben-Joseph and Szold 2005) and the analytical framework developed by the broader political-economy literature more generally (Sayer and Walker 1992; Harvey 1996; Winson and Leach 2002; Stanford and Vosko 2004; Bonanno and Constance 2006; Shalla and Clement 2007), the dissertation examines major socio-economic forces impacting community and work in rural places within close geographic proximity to major transportation corridors and large urban centres. The nexus between rurality and urbanization, oftentimes referred to as the *rurban* fringe, is a particularly interesting site to explore how processes of globalization and localization meet face-to-face, reflecting the places where people find themselves engaged in daily practices of sustaining households and making life meaningful. I consider how contemporary waves of transnational capital investment, which ironically mediated by government intervention, comes to reshape the geography of production and influence local community development priorities. Following Falk, Schulman and Tickamyer *et. al.* (2003), my investigation is influenced by their concept of communities-of-work, and I consider it to be a useful analytical insight to link dichotomized notions of global/local, macro/micro,
structure /agency, materialism/culturalism and outsider/insider into a more encompassing perspective, avoiding the trap of privileging one dimension of this complex interaction at the expense of the other. Unlike laissez-faire economists and some social constructionists who tend to artificially separate notions of community formation and identity construction from economic relations and the natural environment, this research study lends support to the idea that communities are formed and indeed sustained by work, which is itself shaped and reshaped by broader socio-spatial patterns of interaction.

The critical analysis detailed below questions the progressive developmentalism that is assumed to take place in much of the literature on community planning and development.

Critical realism serves as the principal theoretical lens guiding the exploration and analysis of the community case-study research discussed throughout. Best understood as a mid-range or grounded epistemology critical realism maintains that while there are discernible realities subject to rigorous observation and scientific inquiry, the processes influencing the observable realm are themselves historically situated and the outcome of human interventions. This not only acknowledges the centrality of human action shaping social as well as bio-physical outcomes, but consequently suggests the inappropriateness of trying to disentangle ethical evaluation from scientific reasoning and judgment. In other words, neither the social nor natural sciences can claim to be entirely value-free in diagnosis or prognosis. A critical realist epistemology seems to be particularly useful overcoming what Goodman and Leatherman (1998) describe as an all too problematic “chasm separating biology from culture”. While the authors’ main focus lies at the interface of human biology and culture, the call to devise a bio-social synthesis can be extrapolated to include the natural environment more generally. Within the
epistemological umbrella of the critical realist paradigm, what follows is an applied effort to explore the co-evolving relationship between human communities and the built environment.²

**Overview of the Dissertation**

To help carry-out the research objectives, four communities were selected for more in-depth study and help illustrate the story of how work and community are so fundamentally intertwined. Industrial production has always been an important sub-sector of the local economy for many small and mid-sized Canadian communities, remaining so today. Indeed, three of the four communities identified can trace back this heritage for more than a century. With the advent of globalization, industrial transformation has come to redefine where production takes place, and with structural change its impact on community morphology is notable. To a large extent, de-industrialization has taken a tremendous toll on manufacturing dependent communities in recent years, only partially off-set by new investment in greenfield areas. This dynamic of decline and growth unfolding within a common spatial scale is not at all coincidental, and should be considered a facet of a broader response by hyper-mobile capital to seek out the most advantageous conditions for re-deployment. Perhaps more troubling, the proliferation of abandoned and derelict brownfield sites highlights the downside of a wasteful economic system that turns a blind eye and allows land-based resources to be consumed and discarded with impunity.

² My understanding of co-evolution is informed by the work of Durham (1991).
In pursuing the aforementioned research interest, the dissertation systematically reviews and synthesizes literature from several academic traditions, an undertaking that is elaborated upon further in chapter three (literature review). The purpose is to sketch-out an interdisciplinary approach to rural and urban studies and move beyond the sectarianism that is all too pervasive at the intersection of the social and natural sciences. It is intended to provide an original contribution to how human and environmental systems can be understood in a more holistic fashion, along with deriving lessons relevant to both the academy and public policy circles. From an anthropocentric viewpoint, environmental research is essentially applied social science within its physical setting. To overcome existing limitations and tackle significant problems confronting our society that abide to no boundaries, greater dialogue and collaboration is required in diverse fields including civil engineering, environmental studies, transportation design, land-use planning and community development. To date, the space for cooperation remains significantly underdeveloped. Although reflecting a modest step in the right direction, this research project looks forward to addressing that potential.

All research is ultimately about making informed choices and following through on these decisions to uncover their logical outcomes. My dissertation originates, as I believe the best of academic inquiry always should, from an ethical conviction to pursue the truth and a belief in the potential for evidence based research to contribute toward positive social change. A commitment as such is not to suggest there is a singular path to achieve this end, or to propose an ultimate goal by which all must conform. Rather, it is a moral stance encouraging greater self-awareness and interpersonal dialogue, and using knowledge acquired to better comprehend our place in the natural order of life. But as
with any program of research, ambition is inevitably checked by the limitations of the study. The material gathered for this project included a variety of published sources, government archival documents, industry reports, statistical and GIS data along with in-depth interviews undertaken with key informants in each of the communities selected. While I have attempted to be thorough and systematic in my approach, the observations articulated and the conclusions drawn remain partial and impressionistic. This is not to suggest the endeavor falls short of stated goals, or that lessons learnt are inconclusive, indeed, further refinement and efforts in the area are warranted.

In order to address the research problem articulated in this introductory section, the dissertation is organized into several discrete components to help outline the theoretical framework informing the project and provide pertinent background information before moving on to address the central thesis with a series of analytical chapters. The next chapter examines important theoretical and methodological considerations before detailing the research methods adopted in the study. Homage is given to the theoretical contributions underpinning the epistemological assumptions influencing the study. While the dissertation can be considered rightfully as applied community research, the interpretive lens informing analysis is influenced heavily by critical realism, and certainly resides within its ontological schema. The emergence of a critical realist paradigm reflects a relatively recent and lesser known development in socio-scientific thinking and provides an alternative theoretical grounding to either positivism or post-modernism, particularly suitable when examining the crossroads of the social and environmental sciences. On the one hand, it provides a basis to overcome positivism’s inability to account for the human driven capacity for choice and variation (agency) when shaping
the bio-physical world, yet at the same time refuses to surrender to the notion that reality itself is a complete figment of the imagination. Critical realism helps bridge the gap between ‘what is’ from ‘what could be’ in the quest for sustainability – the research detailed below follows along that path.

Chapter 3 offers a comprehensive literature review of the main theoretical and applied research relevant to the study. It begins by looking at the role of the state as an agent of social reform and regulator from a historical sociology perspective. The narrative seeks to provide an overview of how governments have traditionally sought to promote social welfare and the reaction by ‘big capital’ with the onset of globalization. A broad swath of published work from the social sciences is reviewed before moving on to discuss how the concern for sustainability becomes increasingly more pertinent. Although a late comer to academic and public policy discourse on social reform, the concern for environmental sustainability is not only a welcomed addition to the debate, but as shall be argued, it provides a much needed correction to addressing matters long too overlooked.

What follows in Chapter 4 is a description of southwestern Ontario as the regional context of interest and the introduction of the four community case studies. The community profiles provide important details about present day demographics, labour market trends and unfolding economic developments. Chatham, St Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston were purposively selected because they are localities grappling with the challenges associated with de-industrialization while also reflecting strategic places for recent greenfield investment. The community profiles are intended to provide important
baseline information and ground the subsequent analysis, which beginning in this chapter tells the story of how small town Ontario is responding to the pressures of globalization. It is also suggested that these case studies are reflective of many other manufacturing dependent communities in the region who are struggling to redefine themselves in the so-called new economy.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the main underlying factors leading to de-industrialization in North America generally speaking, then examines how all this plays-out in southwestern Ontario. The chapter explores various aspects of how globalization impacts work and community highlighting the differential spatial impacts to result from the transformation. Despite evidence of significant industrial restructuring taking place and mass job losses in the sector, manufacturing nevertheless remains an important driver of the regional economy. Here, I make the argument that the growing problem of abandoned factories – also known as brownfield sites — is very much linked to a related concern with how to make sense of an incessant demand for greenfield development to accommodate new growth demands in the industrial, commercial and residential sectors. The section concludes by suggesting that the uneasy coexistence of both brownfields and greenfields is one of the key defining features of the post-industrial landscape.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the interrelationship between urban decay on the one hand, and the pressures associated with urban sprawl on the other. Each of the case study communities examined have been dealing with growth and decline in one way or another, and is otherwise referred to as the ‘paradox of growth’. These communities have benefited from new growth opportunities made possible by a globalizing economy while
simultaneously paying the price for past negligence. The section seeks to establish some understanding as to the scale of the brownfields problem in small-town Ontario, then goes on to demonstrate how greenfield development is primarily responsible for driving significant morphological changes to the built form of each of the communities under study. Research findings are presented to better illustrate the micro-dynamics of globalization unfolding at a grass-roots level, as well as revealing how local decision-makers have sought to address the paradox of growth. The chapter concludes by arguing that conventional understandings of economic welfare that uncritically promote greenfield development as a panacea to local development needs, are not only short-sighted in the diagnosis of the problem, but the solutions offered are in themselves an impediment to longer-term community sustainability.

In the final substantive section, Chapter 7 reframes the problem of community abandonment and de-industrialization and examines critically how planning as a field of inquiry and professional practice responds to emerging challenges. Once again interview data are presented to ground analysis of how industrial restructuring impacts local planning priorities, along with helping to assess the prospects for a more sustainable alternative. The ways in which local decision-makers, municipal planners, community developers and local residents are impacted by, and come to respond to broader forces of change, are considered. Some of the implications and insights drawn here are far from encouraging. The chapter makes the argument that the policy framework overseeing community planning in Ontario is no longer adequate to address the main challenges confronting smaller communities and their rural hinterlands. From this critic, the chapter concludes by suggesting that the planning field would be better served by a shift away
from a paradigm focused exclusively on managing and promoting growth at any cost, to one that is better able to integrate insights from the emerging sustainable community development field.
CHAPTER TWO

- BETWEEN A ROCK AND AN IDEAL PLACE: TOWARD A CRITICAL REALIST UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL INQUIRY

All interpretation of meaning, like all scientific observation, strives for clarity and verifiable accuracy of insight and comprehension. The basis for certainty in understanding can be either rational, which can be further subdivided into logical and mathematical, or it can be of an emotionally empathic or artistically appreciative quality. (Max Weber, 1913)

It is conceivable that, by analyzing social life, we may be able to discover, and to understand intuitively, how and why any particular event came about; that we may clearly understand its causes and effects –the forces which occasioned it and its influence on other events. Yet we may nevertheless find that we are unable to formulate general laws which would serve as a description, in general terms, of such casual links. (Karl Popper, 1957)

All forms of research, in its purest sense, are essentially an endeavor to discover, interpret and better understand the unknown. The aim to systematize, validate and communicate insights learnt to a broader audience reflects a communicative rationality implicit to all academic research. Yet the research process, despite the noblest of intents, is neither innocent of prejudice nor undertaken in an epistemological vacuum. Among other complicating factors, the ever growing corpus of research studies, competing theoretical paradigms and concepts can often serve to obscure more than clarify. With the multitude of interpretive lenses available for specialization, it is far too easy to lose sight of inter-connections. This chapter explores the space between a biophysical realism and the humanistic concern for sustainable communities. With the objective of providing an account of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underpinning the study, this chapter outlines key methodological decisions taken. I begin with an abstract discussion on epistemology and the theoretical framework utilized in the project. Following this, the focus shifts to highlight the growing interest in sustainable community research and concludes with a discussion of the methods utilized in data collection.
Theoretical Paradigms and Methodological Choices

The conflict between ‘social’ and ‘naturalistic’ explanations of human-environmental interactions is perhaps nowhere more evident than at the nexus of the social and natural sciences. This longstanding tension could be said to lie at the center of the current paradigmatic crisis (Lyotard 1979; Bhaskar 1979; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Habermas 1996; López and Potter 2001; Latour 2004). The roots of discord can be traced back to the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ when the emergence of critical consciousness set-off a process of radical demystification placing science and human emancipation on a collision course. Despite important differences, figures as diverse as Nicolaus Copernicus, Francis Bacon and John Locke were united in the belief scientific rationality based upon systematic observation – as opposed to religious dogmatism or traditional appeals to authority — were instrumental to understanding the world and the place of human beings within it. These early pioneers of the scientific revolution, like those who followed, assumed science would be a force of unyielding good. The emergence of a scientific worldview is often credited for advancements in human well-being; however, more recently it has also become implicated with environmental problems.

The contested nature of sustainability stems from the mingling of social and biophysical elements and the inherent challenge of devising an appropriate methodology capable of addressing complex interactions. There has been a longstanding unresolved tension between social and naturalistic explanations of social reality. Roy Bhaskar (1979: 1) has posed the dilemma in the philosophy of science in the following way: “to what extent can society be studied in the same manner as nature?” To this, we might add another question; to what extent can the study of society continue ignoring nature? Those
inclined toward the naturalistic tradition claim the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sciences are essentially unified in their methods and positivist principles. Positivism, posits that both the social and biophysical world are subject to universally identifiable laws that play a definitive role structuring all outcomes, and it is the aim of scientific inquiry to uncover what these are so as to improve human prediction and control. Emerging in reaction to this approach, socio-cultural explanations look to counter the deterministic logic often prevalent with naturalistic approaches, emphasizing the role human-beings play in constructing their real and imagined contexts. Both epistemological paradigms exert considerable influence within the university system in general and the social sciences in particular.

My aim in this chapter is to build upon a theoretical approach developed in part by key figures within the political-economy tradition looking to establish a bio-social synthesis and more adequately address the need for sustainability when contemplating how best to achieve community development (Bhaskar 1989; Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Goodman and Leatherman, 1998; Drummond and Marsden, 1999; Brown et al, 2002; Murphy, 2004). The interest in sustainable development can be considered a relative latecomer to academic discourse. It reflects a growing acknowledgement that human welfare cannot be examined in isolation from a bio-physical world where natural capital is being degraded and depleted at an alarming rate. Conceptually at least, what is required is an integrative epistemological framework and methodological approach that refuses to disentangle social equity concerns from a bio-physical realism. Here, I argue that critical realism provides a useful alternative theoretical grounding to either
positivism or the postmodern challenge to science when it comes to understanding socio-environmental problems.

Researchers concerned with sustainable development have much to gain from a critical realist orientation. Much of the literature examining community development tends to fall into one of two epistemological camps. At the positivist end of the spectrum—ontological realism—advocates accept there is a biophysical reality independent of human interpretation and claim scientific methods can uncover truths, or laws, about the ‘real’ world. These laws, which are thought to govern both the natural and social world, are considered to be immutable and universally valid across time and space. Pure science, or hard science, as it is also sometimes described, is often said to be inherently beneficial to human society. Positivists tend to agree with the notion that scientific experts should be called upon by decision-makers to provide science-based information that can be applied to ‘real’ world situations. Most environmental scientists privilege this epistemological starting point and associated research methods, assuming environmental challenges are the end result of design flaws, or can be rectified with the right technological fix.

Certain variants of ‘social constructionism’ have emerged as a reaction to, and in general disillusionment with, classical positivism. Modern science, far from being an emancipatory and progressive force within the world, can at least be held partially responsible for many problems confronting contemporary society—for example, facilitating the widespread over consumption of natural resources and environmental degradation. The rationality underpinning science is seen to breed arrogance and nurture
a misguided certitude, which can lead to unchecked domineering. All knowledge can be thought as a form of power, and used to justify the establishment of dominance at the expense of other subjugated possibilities (Foucault 1965; see also Lyotard 1979, Searle 1995). Because of these apprehensions, some schools of thought within the social constructionist camp embrace an unabashedly post-positivist stance. Post-positivists generally reject the classic scientific method in favour of more interpretivist approaches. While the research perspective does provide a useful counterbalance to deterministic variants of realism, critics have come to fault this sort of ‘soft’ social science research as unable to adequately address environmental issues.

Critical realism attempts to move beyond these diametrically opposed epistemological starting-points and forge a bio-social synthesis (see Goodman and Leatherman, 1998; Drummond and Marsden, 1998; Brown et al 2002; Murphy, 2004). If the theory and practice of community sustainability is to move forward in a meaningful direction, it will require a more holistic understanding as to how the plasticity of human invention co-evolves within the concrete confines of a bio-physical world. Alternatively, critical realism incorporates the constructionist insight that human beings are purposive and creative agents, yet tempers this appreciation with a qualified understanding of constraints and causality.

Brown et al (2002: 4) suggest critical realism “can supply the full-blown philosophy of science” lacking in many political economy accounts. At the core of the critical realist position is a more nuanced understanding of how power operates in society, and how these forces shape both social and biophysical outcomes (Smith and
Thomas 1998; Murphy 2004). Positivists have tended to conceptualize causality in terms of deterministic laws so that whenever $x$ is set in motion, $y$ will be the end result. While strict laws of cause-and-effect may in fact be derived in the natural world, social constructionists rightfully point-out this notion begins to break down once human behaviour is introduced into the equation. Surprise, complexity, evasion, manipulation, and unpredictability characterize human social relationships and their interactions with the environment. Critical realists have sought to develop a modified position salvaging an appreciation for causality without essentializing the chains of causation. In this way, critical realism shares an affinity with the political economy framework by incorporating an analysis of class power and a critique of the neo-liberal state, yet abstains from making any deterministic judgments about the coherency or cohesiveness of social groupings within society. The implication for researchers is to think about social processes in terms of tendencies, not empirical realities in the positivist sense. As Brown et al (2002: 5) explains:

Because of the openness of socio-economic systems, results, consequences, or outcomes cannot be successfully predicted, but the mechanisms, social structures, power relations that causally govern the flux of events can, however, be uncovered and explained…. [Tendencies reflect] dispositions, capacities, potentials and abilities to act in certain ways… A power exercised is a power that has been triggered, and is generating an effect in an open system. Due to interference from the effects of other exercised powers, one can never know a priori, what the outcome of any particular power will be (2002: 5).

Understanding how class power and other social inequities contribute to unsustainable outcomes is crucial to properly diagnose the unfolding environmental crisis and a necessary starting point whenever contemplating alternative options. From this epistemological standpoint, then, the goal of socio-scientific research is to provide causal
explanation and greater understanding of socio-environmental exchanges, and use that knowledge as “the basis for informed action to remove the sources of structural oppression” (López and Potter, 2002: 63, see also Nader 1996; Harvey 1996; Goldfrank et al 1999; Smith 1999).

From a critical realist perspective, something is real to the extent to which it is ‘causally efficacious’ – for instance, resource depletion, toxic contamination or economic decline. Structural factors, be they of a bio-physical (e.g., resource limitations), or social nature (e.g., political-economic arrangements), inevitably produce perceptible impacts on human behaviour and the built environment. A sound appreciation of this reality, it is suggested, requires an examination of both tangible (i.e., economic and environmental indicators) and intangible (i.e., the neo-liberal state and class power) factors. This is not to suggest, however, as some post-positivists claim, that social outcomes and realities are in the end, structurally determined. Rather, critical realism holds social processes are ‘rule governed not determined’ (Bhaskar, 1998: 122-123, see also López and Potter, 2002: 60-65). And since all communities are embedded within a finite resource context, sustainability demands that we examine ways to make population settlements more attuned to environmental considerations. Achieving this awareness requires consideration of both social and bio-physical factors.

The value of a critical realist mode of inquiry lies in its ability to transcend reductionism. While traditional positivistic approaches often provide useful insight into the structure, function and overall dynamics of social and biophysical systems, they often fall short of accounting for unexpected social transformations and outcomes.
Indeterminism has proven to be the rule, not the exception, to the human condition. The emergence of post-modernist thinking has undoubtedly questioned the capacity of the scientific method to explain all facets of social reality, let alone constitute the sole measure of truth about the world. If social science research is to claim any pretension to be something other than a form of esoteric sophistry, then it cannot abandon the quest to understand the natural world alongside the social one.

The critical realist paradigm offers to provide the necessary epistemological foundation required to connect the abstract with the concrete, and, what is, with what could be. It reaffirms the need to carry out empirical research that can inform social intervention, but does so with a greater degree of humility and appreciation for the limits of science. As a research approach it overcomes the limits of reductionist tendencies to either focus exclusively on social processes, or alternatively, solely on biophysical realities. Although critical realism and its associated theoretical insights do not provide easy answers to current challenges, it does point us toward a more difficult path of having to address competing and sometimes conflicting priorities. The urgency of adopting a more holistic approach to the study of community development is made all the more apparent by the seriousness of environmental degradation and the unraveling of the social fabric in many communities around the world as a result of the neo-liberal restructuring of the state and economy (Harvey 1996; Glasby 2002; Wright, 2004; Shalla 2006).

The Sustainable Communities Research Agenda

During the 1980’s, a new wave of environmental thinking emerged seeking to conceptualize ways to make human social development more compatible with
maintaining overall ecological integrity. This project received its most famous expression with the U.N.’s publication of Our Common Future in 1987 (WCED, 1987). The Brundtland report, as it is also commonly referred to, reflected a major international effort to address issues of human development while being committed not to exceed the planet’s regenerative and sink capacities. Sustainable development was the key concept put forth as a way to bridge the conceptual gap between the desire for human development with the need to achieve environmental sustainability. The report itself defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987; 43). The choice to use the term ‘development’ rather than ‘growth’ reflected a value shift from quantitative goals of increasing aggregate production levels and gross domestic product (GDP), previously the dominant mode of thinking within economic development circles, towards qualitative concerns of improving value, quality, equity and long-term viability. For the architects of the sustainable development agenda, the aim was to encourage future policy efforts to address the interconnections between economy, environment and justice in relation to the overall goal of sustainability, and promote long-term planning over short-term opportunism. Since this important document was initially published, a proliferating volume of work has attempted to operationalize, refine, flesh-out, extend, reinterpret and even criticize core ideas originating from the report (Costanza 1991; Doob 1993; Hawken 1993; Lawn 2001; Raco and Dixon 2007).

A central defining feature, and indeed lasting contribution to the WCED’s report, is a refusal to sever the link between environmental health and demands for social development. The Brundtland report has become both a rallying cry and recognition that
environmental problems are a major source of concern for many communities. They cite for instance how “one fifth of households in many countries hold 50% of the wealth, while the bottom fifth holds just 7%” (WCED, 1987: 50). They go on to note never before in human history has so much wealth and comfort coexisted with such widespread inequality and hardship. It is precisely because of power asymmetries that the majority of the world’s population is often forced to barely make a subsistence living –and sometimes add further stress to— already marginal or degraded ecosystems while the well-to-do over-consume and produce a disproportionate share of waste, both reflecting ecologically unsustainable practices. In the report, the WCED goes as far as to suggest it is the distribution of power and influence in the world economy that is at the root of the environmental crisis. In other words, it is not anthropocentrism per se that is to be blamed, but rather, forms of anthropocentric thinking and acting which fail to take environmental and human considerations into coherent practice. For their part, the authors recommend economics and ecology become more integrated into the decision making process not only to promote community development, but also safeguard the environment.

The U.N.’s WCED report therefore provides a basic framework for tackling sustainable community development. On the one hand, it suggests priority must be given to the satisfaction of basic human needs everywhere, particularly in regions of endemic poverty where the need is acute. This means economic growth and development may be required in some parts of the world so that legitimate human aspirations are met –for instance, access to jobs, food, clothing and shelter. In fact, the commission’s authors do assert “sustainable development requires that society meet human needs both by
increasing productive potential and by ensuring equitable opportunities for all” (WCED, 1987: 44). Beyond this basic minimum, however, human consumption standards should adhere to principles of long-term sustainability, which includes among other things, limiting population growth and conspicuous consumption. Thus, on the other hand, the idea of biophysical limitations on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs must be understood and respected. While the report acknowledges the fact technological advancement and accumulated human knowledge may indeed “enhance the carrying capacity of the planet’s resource base,” there is also recognition of ultimate limits, and sustainability requires the equitable accessibility of natural resources within these broad parameters.

Since its initial publication, the concept of sustainable community development has gained widespread currency. Despite the WCED’s broader goal of encouraging integration, many people continue to use the term sustainable development to essentially mean either greater environmental protection or efforts to ensure sustained economic growth. Although final consensus may not have been reached on the precise definition of sustainability, nor how to go about its implementation, the concept has nevertheless succeeded in encouraging the need to re-think the relationship between human society and the environment. Researchers interested in community planning have much to gain from developments in the sustainability literature. Influenced by these debates, the interpretive framework adopted in the dissertation looks to build upon the connections already established between the political-economy tradition and the sustainable communities’ research agenda.
Research Methods – Data Collection

Having examined the epistemological and philosophical context informing the research study, the following section discusses the concrete steps taken to collect data and organize this material to facilitate analytical interpretation. The identification of suitable community case studies was an important first step toward establishing a basis to link ‘theory-talking’ with an observable reality appropriate for analysis. This grounded approach to research helps avoid the twin pitfalls of overly speculative conjecture or seemingly pointless description, and reflects an important application of the critical realist school of thought. At the beginning of the research phase, statistical profiles were compiled for 25 mid-sized communities across southwestern Ontario targeting settlements with a significant manufacturing presence – ≥20% of the total labour force—based on 2006 census data. Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston were then identified as illustrative case-study locations because of sharing numerous commonalities with regard to location within province, size, relative proximity to major urban centers, access to transportation infrastructure and the existence of automotive assembly plants.

Despite sharing many similarities recent socio-economic fortunes are surprisingly divergent. While Chatham and St. Thomas are communities confronting economic adjustment and possible decline, the outlook for Woodstock and Alliston appears to be more promising. Subsequent analytical chapters examine and attempt to explain how one can account for the discrepancy. Previous research studies have sought to document and better understand the macro-level forces and trends contributing to a community’s development and under-development (Bluestone 1982; Winson and Leach 2002; High 2003 Collins and Quark 2006), however, less common is an exploration of the
differential socio-spatial outcomes arising among communities located within a common regional context. The selection of the four previously mentioned case study locales, consequently, was a deliberate and purposive decision undertaken to help uncover which aspects of community development can be said to be generalizable, and which factors may be more context specific.

Another important practical application of the critical realist approach is a reliance on mixed methods and multiple lines of evidence to help uncover and validate research findings and facilitate analytical interpretations. This integrative perspective combines quantitative and qualitative techniques for the purpose of determining the main factors contributing or impeding sustainable community development. As pragmatic as this may sound, the approach advocated does stand in contrast to the two prevailing research paradigms most common within the social sciences and outlined previously: positivism and postmodernism. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2000: ix-xvii) suggest a ‘quiet methodological revolution’ has taken place over the past 30 years whereby “[t]he social sciences and humanities [have drawn] closer together in a mutual focus on interpretive, qualitative approaches to research and theory.” The ascendancy of a ‘qualitative revolution,’ as the authors put it, while certainly proving a refreshing rebuttal to the limitations of an overly dogmatic and formalistic positivism, has been accomplished at a considerable cost. The new vogue with post-positivist constructivism and its exclusive focus on ideology and textuality expunges any concern with an empirical reality, and so comes to replace mindless quantification with groundless abstractionism. Rather than siding with either extreme, an alternative research strategy was adopted which required the collection and examination of empirical materials while
acknowledging the role of external power structures and interpretation in both the research phase and analysis.

An extensive literature review was undertaken drawing upon distinct academic traditions to help provide important background context. This initial phase of research also played an important role establishing a frame-of-reference that would guide subsequent field data collection, interview questions and analysis efforts. Another component to the research project took advantage of recent advances in GIS technology to derive reliable metrics and thematic land-use mapping data pertaining to the selected case study sites in order to facilitate a morphological analysis of community growth patterns. Photogrammetry—the use of aerial photography—provides a powerful macroscopic perspective enabling researchers to quantify the outcomes of land-use practices overtime. Orthorectified digital imagery in a useable GIS format was obtained from planning departments at the municipal level, and then imputed into an Arc-Map project along with other relevant context layers—e.g., road and rail systems, parcel-property fabric and other pieces of descriptive geo-coded data. With these tools in place, various static map projections were created for each of the case study sites with the purpose of identifying community growth patterns and industrial lands in relation to already established urban settlements. The use of other GIS based applications was carried out to create additional graphics to aid in the interpretation of local land-use maps. Some of these thematic maps are based upon data obtained from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH). More detailed community based maps incorporating localized land-use data was acquired through consultation with municipal staff.
Once the four community case studies were identified more in-depth statistical portraits were developed drawing upon 2011 Census and National Household Survey data. These data provide useful descriptions and help identify key socio-economic trends taking place within the communities over the past decade (1996-2011). Because Statistics Canada uses a consistent approach to gathering information on a wide number of variables, this data-set can be considered the most comprehensive and best available source of demographic and socio-economic information at the community level.

The final phase in the study consisted of a field work component. Primary data collection was undertaken over a three year period between May 1, 2005 and November 30, 2008 and includes extensive semi-structured interviews with key informants from various stakeholder groups ($n=50$), numerous site visits along with plant tours of major local employers, and a review of pertinent municipal archival documents. In an effort to obtain a representative sample of key decision makers within each of the communities, careful attention was paid to ensuring spokespersons representing industry, labour and government were identified and selected to participate in the interview process. Within each of the community case studies, I was able to interview representatives from the largest 5 local employers along with some of their employees, municipal administrators, development planners and local labour leaders. In addition to these, interviews were also

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3 I would like to thank Prof. Tony Fuller and the Sustainable Rural Communities research program of the Ontario Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the University of Guelph for financial support through my involvement as a research assistant in a previous study examining the role of the auto-parts industry in rural southwestern Ontario. Likewise, I am also grateful to Prof. Belinda Leach and her guidance as the principal investigator of this project. A subset of the interviews conducting from this project are drawn upon and utilized in the dissertation.
carried out with provincial officials, executives from the Canadian automotive industry and members of CAW national office. Interviews typically lasted anywhere from 1 to 2 hours and were based initially upon an interview guide (Appendix 1), with respondents encouraged to draw upon unique experiences and steer the conversation according to their particular areas of knowledge. These interviews were initially captured on a recording device and later transcribed and stored electronically for ongoing reference. As Winson and Leach (2002: 49) emphasize, this approach to qualitative research encourages interviewees to ‘individualize’ the process and thereby “allow[ing] unanticipated themes and concerns to emerge” beyond the initial scope of the project.

All research participants were asked and provided expressed written consent to take part in this study, as is required by the University of Guelph’s policies on ethical research practices. While many of those interviewed are prominent figures within their respective field of practice and did not object to being identified in relation to this project, others opted to remain anonymous. For each of the community case studies, I was successful in establishing contact and obtaining the participation of representatives from a broad cross-section of stakeholder groups. Because of the complexities uncovered, not all the themes arising from the interview data are discussed in the dissertation, especially insights articulated by ordinary community residents and workers. After the interviews were conducted, a conscious decision was made to focus analysis efforts on those individuals

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4 In 2013, the Canadian Auto Workers and Communication, Energy and Paperworkers union merged into a single organization and re-branded as Unifor (Union for Canada). During the research phase, interviews carried out with union officials were done prior to amalgamation, and so the reference to the CAW is maintained throughout the study.
who by virtue of their professional role held an explicit public accountability in local
decision making. An important limitation to the thesis therefore is that the perceptions
and insights of average citizens are not explored in any great detail, as doing so would
certainly entail more in-depth ethnographic research and can be considered beyond the
scope of the study. Consequently the dissertation reflects only a partial account of the
ways in which industrial restructuring impacts community, albeit a view that does focus
on local level leadership. Some of the information gathered over the course of field
research can be considered sensitive and efforts were made to ensure that individuals
would not be linked to specific situations or companies. In a few situations, those
interviewed decided afterwards that they no longer felt comfortable being involved with
the research project. This material was not used in the analysis and the original
recordings have been destroyed.
CHAPTER THREE

- PUTTING GLOBALIZATION IN ITS PLACE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The crisis persists precisely in the fact the old is dying and the new cannot be born. (Antonio Gramsci, 1932)

Each time history repeats itself, the price goes up. (Ronald Wright, 2004)

Part of the task of undertaking a literature review requires identifying key research findings, highlighting major contributions and providing a comprehensive summary of a given field of inquiry. This task becomes substantially more complicated when the subject of investigation spans several different academic disciplines and transgresses the natural/social science divide. One of the main challenges of undertaking interdisciplinary research is to make connections between often inward looking traditions, and transcend the rift imposed by intellectual fragmentation. This doctoral study endeavors to move beyond these constraints and contribute toward the cause of building greater conceptual synthesis. Chapter 3 begins with an exercise in historical sociology, to provide important background context to the development of modern industrial capitalism and highlight early regulatory efforts at public welfare reform. The chapter examines the role of states and markets during industrialization leading to the rise of welfare-states in the immediate Post-War period. The purpose of this section is to draw attention to key developments in the evolution of industrial societies and highlight how democratic governments traditionally respond to social problems encountered. The review discusses pertinent information to make sense of how current attempts to restructure political-economic arrangements work to undermine regulatory capacity and how this threatens the environment. Drawing upon a broad cross-section of research the chapter moves on to
address the notion of sustainability as a new development within the public regulation tradition. Lastly, the literature review concludes by looking at how more recent community focused research is looking to critically examine global problems from a local point-of-view.

What is globalization and is this something new we need to be concerned with? And if so, what are the implications for our understanding of community, the economy and the environment? The answers to these questions are of course complicated and require proper framing of the issue at hand. The vast and growing literature on globalization, generally speaking, looks at how fairly recent innovations in production capabilities, transportation systems, communication technologies and political-economic arrangements have come to fundamentally re-define social relations on a global scale. The late 1970s and 1980s can be regarded as a watershed moment in history, when under the auspices of Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) and Ronald Regan (1981-1989), neo-conservative forces responding to broader changes in society launched a sustained attack on government interventionism —a reaction to the welfare state— culminating in what many analysts refer to as the final triumph of capitalism (Fukuyama 1992; Teeple 2000). Since this point in time, the re-ascendancy of free market global capitalism, whereby a narrow economic rationality comes to eclipse most other considerations, seems to pervade all aspects of contemporary societal conditions.

There is a well covered debate between those who argue globalization is a relatively new phenomenon unleashing, for better or worse, a new set of forces upon society (see for instance, Albrow 1997; Carnoy et al 1996; Friedman 2007) and those
who suggest the concept is somewhat misleading, and in fact rooted in a much older process of European capitalist expansion (see Wallerstein 1974; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001). Related to this debate is a discussion on the extent to which market forces have prevailed over the government’s capacity to manage and condition those imperatives according to democratic deliberations (Ohmae 1990; Strange 1996, Weiss 1998). This exchange, however insightful, may in fact raise more questions than it ever resolved. As Herman Schwartz (2000) makes note, both sides of the debate tend to understate the symbiosis between markets and states, especially the role played by some governments creating favourable market conditions for global capitalist penetration. Globalization certainly implies change, but the important questions that need to be considered is what exactly is being changed, what is driving this, and what are the implications and consequences for community and the environment?

But what is wrong with change in the first place? Does much of the literature on globalization hold an implicit assumption that change is negative and therefore to be avoided at all costs, perhaps reflecting an aversion to risk, uncertainty or the possibility for new opportunities? Environmental scientists would remind us that change, and the subsequent adaptive responses, make up the very basis of all ecological systems, and by extension, should be seen to underpin socio-environmental systems. C.S. Holling (2001, 392), for instance, argues that natural systems and social systems are interlinked and co-evolve together under a ‘panarchy,’ a concept denoting a hierarchical structure characterized by never-ending adaptive cycles of growth, consolidation, restructuring and, eventual decline and renewal. This heuristic model – Holling’s Lazy-8 (∞) – is said to provide us with a fundamental understanding of the functional dynamics inherent to
complex systems ranging from cells, to ecological systems, and is applicable to entire societies and even cultures.\textsuperscript{5} It describes a cyclical and adaptive process comprised of long periods of accumulation and transformation of resources, or forms of capital, punctuated by shorter moments of collapse and reorganization enabling the creation of new opportunities for innovation and future growth. Just as some species are able to adapt and thrive under particular ecological niches, ‘agents-of-disturbance’ can, and quite often due, alter this environment creating new conditions for life, allowing other previously maladapted organisms to grow and thrive, and so too do human societies come to exhibit a similar type of adaptive response (Holling 2001, 394-395).

Holling (2001) and others cite Joseph Schumpeter’s (1950) characterization of capitalism as a dynamic process driven by natural-like forces of ‘creative destruction,’ which devour the old and make way for the new, as a clear indication of how human systems mimic natural processes. While this view certainly provides an eye-opening account of the tenacity inherent to all biotic life, it ultimately remains silent on a number of important matters of concern to both researchers and decision-makers alike. Simply put, do things just happen, or do they happen for a reason? And if systemic-altering events do take place because of a certain set of circumstances, do human beings retain capacity to steer bio-social systems according to desired ends? While the natural world may be governed by value-free and self-organizing law-like forces, human societies are in fact distinguished by dependence on socially constructed conventions that make

\textsuperscript{5} Interestingly enough, Holling’s Lazy-8 is also the symbol used to represent the concept of infinity, which seems to imply an infinitesimal or unbounded property to his model’s explanation of socio-ecological system functioning.
organized collective living possible, and these are inherently value-laden (Searle 1995). Perhaps more problematically, cultural codes cannot be inferred from the natural order without giving into a sleight-of-hand. Recognizing this compels observers to confront a complicated and not so easily resolvable ontological dilemma: how to devise a holistic appreciation of the natural world while simultaneously acknowledging the myriad of ways human beings make and re-make the socio-environmental basis for life.

**Industrialization and its Early Social Critics**

The industrial revolution marks a major turning point in human history, comparable in significance perhaps only to the domestication of plants and animals and the rise of early sedentary societies. With the introduction of automation to the production process—first with the invention and application of the steam engine, later with the use of the coal fired and internal combustion engines—output levels for manufactured products increased significantly and yielded never before seen productivity gains. The rise of British hegemony in the 19th century is largely attributable to these advances coupled with their ability to export surplus goods to distant colonial markets via newly established maritime trade routes. Latecomers were faced with the more formidable challenge of trying to industrialize looking mostly from within, and of course faced the added obstacle of established competition. As production practices evolved and became reliant on more sophisticated infrastructure—i.e., railway systems, roadways, canals, ports, etc.—the cost of industrialization increased to the point where state support for financing infrastructure developments became a practical necessity. Most social scientists
generally agree industrialization was an important factor contributing toward the rapid urbanization of society.

While the shift toward modern industrial society brought forth numerous advances, including greater productivity, higher *per capita* incomes, more and varied consumer goods for the average person, labour saving technology and machinery, faster and more reliable communication and transportation systems, among many other advances now taken for granted, the transition itself engendered a great deal of social turmoil and conflict. In England, artisanal producers like the Luddites, who were displaced by factory production in the textile industry, protested vehemently against industrialization, often destroying machinery and interrupting production processes sporadically until finally put down by the British Royal Army (Thompson 1963, 67). Throughout much of what is referred to as the underdeveloped world, industrialization often meant the arrival of the railway, which although facilitating the exchange of commodities to and from distant markets, also tended to position subordinate economies into the role of exporters of natural resources and agricultural products and importers of manufactured goods (Asad 1973; Wallerstein 1974; Wolf 1982). Unequal exchange between undervalued primary commodities and higher valued manufactured goods, reinforced by state power, contributed significantly to the rise of global economic disparities (Wolf 1982; Escobar 1995). Legitimate economic grievances often fueled violent anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles plunging much of the so-called Third World into turmoil throughout the twentieth century. Even within countries like Canada and Australia where the transition to independent statehood was accomplished peacefully, a neo-colonial relationship certainly hampered industrialization and fermented nationalist efforts to
overcome the stunting effects of dependency (Innis and Plumptre 1934; Marr and Paterson 1980).

Despite initial promise, the transition to a modern industrial society did not emancipate human society from hardship nor put an end to poverty. Reflecting upon the historical record, one could argue that the transition to modernity created its own set of problems, especially with regard to environmental issues. With the benefit of hindsight, historian Eric Hobsbawm (1998) comments that modernity stands out and is notable as an era of extreme ideological polarization and conflict, which bore witness to never before seen violence and destruction. For this reason, others have argued not only has modern industrial society failed as a social project, they go on to suggest a totalitarian rationality, modernity’s dark side, is in fact what is to blame for shortcomings (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944; Lyotard 1979; Docherty 1993). The desire to understand, control and ultimately manipulate the social and natural world for human gain, these critics claim, is what lies at the root of modernity’s betrayal. Setting aside a deeper exploration of these themes as beyond the scope of the thesis, the developed world’s transition to a modern industrial society was anything but a perfect accomplishment, and certainly not without detractors.

Even as early as the mid-nineteenth century, influential social critics began to question the presumed progressiveness of industrial society (for instance: Dickens 1836, 1843; Proudhon 1846). The most profound, radical and arguably enduring critique of modern industrial capitalism, however, emerges with the political and philosophical work of Karl Marx (1818-83). While Marx marveled at capitalism’s ability to create wealth
and free [hu]man[ity] (sic) from the ideotimus of rural life, he drew considerable attention to the negative consequences inflicted to society and the working class (Marx and Engels 1848, 65). More than any other classical theorist, Marx is rightfully credited for bringing the concept of class conflict to the forefront of sociological thinking. For Marx, history is driven by antagonistic class interests and these forces play a fundamental role shaping social outcomes. One of the definitive features of modern industrial society is said to be a basic opposition between the owners of capital —*haute bourgeoisie*— and the non-owners —the proletariat— who must sell their labour power to make a living. As Edward Grabb (1997, 14) points out, “[w]hat Marx found so disturbing about capitalism, both in England and elsewhere, was that so much surplus wealth could be produced by this system and yet be distributed to such a small group of people.” The problem for Marx of course, stemmed from the fact that while workers contributed significantly to the generation of wealth through the labour process, they reaped little of the reward. The contrast between well-to-do industrial capitalists and the working poor was especially stark during Marx’s lifetime, as wage rates and working standards lacked meaningful minimal standards. What makes Marx’s analysis relevant today as it was then is the idea that social inequality, far from being a ‘natural’ outcome of achievement and circumstance, is to a large extent determined by broader socio-economic forces, which in theory can be reconstructed in the same way as they are socially constructed.

Marx’s philosophical and theoretical contribution to the concept of ‘work’ continues to be insightful and well worth rescuing from the ‘dust-bin’ of history. It is through the process of work, Marx tells us, that people most clearly exhibit their unique qualities as a species, and it is because of this capacity that human beings can be
differentiated from all other forms of life. Unlike other species that do in fact carry-out productive work, human labouring is the end result of purposive actions and conscious objectives that are culturally learned and transmitted, which stands in contrast to the genetically determined and instinctual drives that are largely unlearned among lower-order animals. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (1978 [1844], 75-76) carefully points out:

[Hu]man[s] (*sic*) lives on nature – means that nature is his[/her] body, with which [s/]he must remain in continuous intercourse if [s/]he is not to die. That [hu]man[ity’s] physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for [hu]man[ity] is a part of nature…. For in the first place labour, life-activity, productive life itself appears to [hu]man[s] merely as a means of satisfying a need – the need to maintain the physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species – its species character— is contained in the character of its life-activity; and free, conscious activity is [hu]man[ity’s] species character…. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly … whilst man produces even when [s/]he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom…. Through and because of this production, nature appears as his[her] work and his[her] reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of [hu]man[ity]’s species life: for [s/]he duplicates [her/]himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore [s/]he contemplates [her/]himself in a world that [s/]he has created.

This excerpt from Marx’s early writings is noteworthy for at least two important reasons, especially when we keep in mind how such a position would have stood apart from either the Christian or Positivistic worldviews dominant during his lifetime – the former exalting humanity from the natural order, the latter externalizing nature from the social order.
First, we are reminded of how *Homo sapiens sapiens* are distinct in their ability to both conceptualize and carry-out work that is not immediately linked to any kind of biological imperative, and because of this capacity for both mental and physical work, human beings are indeed able to develop as both individuals and as members of communities. Second, and as a consequence of the transformative potential inherent in work, human society is at once embedded in a natural environment and equipped to inevitably alter this context according to purposive needs and desires in any number of indeterminate ways. From these basic insights, and with observations made of the ramifications associated with the onset of early industrial capitalism, Marx went on to suggest the link between mental and physical work would eventually become estranged, leading to the emergence of a revolutionary subclass of disenfranchised workers demanding the reunification of mental and manual labour in a new synthesis.

According to Marx, productive work becomes fragmented under a capitalist mode of production and subject to ever growing degrees of alienation. Human society, he insists, can and should be seen as a collective undertaking and dependent upon a complex division of labour. Even those fundamentally opposed to Marx would be hard pressed to deny the social, organized, and interconnected nature of capitalism as a system. With capitalism, Marx argues, work begins to be artificially individualized and the social dimension undermined with the introduction of private property and self-seeking economic behaviour. As a result, capitalists and proletarians alike come to see

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6 It is of no coincidence that the classificatory term *Homo sapiens sapiens*, which denotes the *sapiens* variety of the mammalian species *Homo sapiens sapiens*, is derived from the Latin root *homo*, or human, and *sapiens*, meaning knowing, which is combined to the effect of referring to modern humans as ‘knowing humans,’ the most cognitively evolved of all the primates.
themselves as primarily motivated by personal goals and aspirations rather than their relationship to a common system (Marx 1973 [1844]: 238). Under the capitalist mode of production, he notes how the capitalist class is able to leverage its dominant position in society to maximize the amount of surplus capital accumulated during the production process. Under capitalism, the division of labour was said to be heavily skewed in favour of bourgeois interests, which is the reason behind the emergence of class-based inequalities. Not only are workers systemically exploited under this kind of economic arrangement, but he also suggests, their entire outlook on work is distorted. Work rather than being a source of fulfillment and reward is transformed into drudgery, to be avoided as much as possible. Marx introduces the concept of alienated labour to describe the negative aspects related to the division of tasks and the externalization of work during early modern industrial capitalism (1973 [1844]: 272).

For Marx, the alienation of work and the growing emiseration of the working class at the onset of industrialization signaled the beginning of the end for capitalism. And for a moment in history, it looked as though the 19th century political philosopher’s insights might be proven correct, or at the very least, he seemed to have articulated a narrative that inspired a great deal of hope and fear alike. The turbulent period between 1789 and 1848 reflected a phase of rapid and significant social transformation, and the European Revolutions culminating in 1848 as a time of instability and class-based uprisings that sought to overturn the ancien regime and thwart the ascendancy of industrial capitalism. The industrial revolution helped bring about many breakthroughs, yet it was also accompanied by widespread social conflict and growing inequality. European historians note these troubling times were often aggravated by autocratic rule, migratory diasporas
and periodic armed conflict further destabilizing an already fragile order and fermenting social unrest (Hobsbawm 1998).

The social rumblings which gave birth to what historians refer to as the ‘age of revolution’ (1789-1848), ultimately ended in utter defeat, at least from the point-of-view of those who took up arms. Throughout the European continent, reactionary forces managed to quash revolutionary uprisings with apparent ease (Hobsbawm 1998). Reflecting on the aftermath of the Second French Republic (1848-1852), Pierre Joseph Proudhon is noted to have remarked: “[w]e have been beaten and humiliated… scattered, imprisoned, disarmed and gagged. The fate of European democracy has slipped from our hands” (Ibid). Karl Marx saw the struggles of 1848 as clear evidence of class conflict, but felt the revolution had been betrayed by bourgeois socialists and anarchists who failed to effectively take-up the interests of the working class.⁷ Gary Teeple (2000, 12) points out astutely that “class conflict of one sort or another, or at least the potential for class conflict, has been the common context for all social reform.” It is in opposition to early industrial capitalism, that many early discontents attempted to remake the social world to allow for a better tomorrow. Yet one must always keep in mind history is not a linear narrative.

⁷ Interestingly, Marx found early intellectual inspiration and friendship in Proudhon, but was later in life to distance himself from the anarchist and philosopher, and in fact came to mount a scathing criticism of the Frenchmen in The Poverty of Philosophy, which was published on the eve of revolution back in 1847. To a certain extent, this personal dispute mirrors the internal conflict taking place within the fledgling workers’ movement at the time, and tellingly foreshadows some of the disputes and sources of division that was to latter plague other working class-based social and political movements.
From Revolt to Reform: Rise of the Welfare State

Out of the turmoil and social unrest forged by early industrialization, political institutions evolved to better respond to calls for reform, although never eliminating societal conflict entirely. With the emergence of modern democratic states, governments seek to channel and mediate discontent in ways that diffuse violence and allow for social progress. Rather than conceiving ‘the state’ as a static, externalized, monolithic, undifferentiated and taken for granted entity that acts upon society, it is helpful to regard ‘governance’ as a contingent historical outcome. Public regulatory capacity is the product of countless social struggles and competing interests, and due to internal variation, the state often comes to function with multiple rationalities. A more nuanced view of government builds upon theoretical insights of political economists and historical-institutionalists alike, who emphasize the autonomous, variable and indeterminate nature of the state’s role in society (Weber 1922; Poulantzas 1978; Giddens 1984; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Esping-Andersen 1990; Habermas 1996; Peck 1996; Clarke 2004). From this perspective, the ‘state’ is considered a work in progress, a social construction undergoing constant reinvention and modification.

This view of the state owes a great deal of intellectual debt to British historians of the state (Thompson 1963; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Corrigan and Sayer 1985). The work of Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985), who themselves follow a path established by E.P. Thompson, are particularly noteworthy. In their classic study, The Great Arch, Corrigan and Sayer (1985) stress how state formation, which they see as instrumental to paving the road for subsequent capitalist development, also involved a wholesale cultural revolution over the span of many decades. Reacting against more
orthodox readings of Marx, who typically reduce the role of the state as an organ of coercion, or alternatively, consider it to be an illusory construct propagated by the bourgeoisie, Corrigan and Sayer (*Ibid, 2*) called for a need to re-think the idea of the state so as to better comprehend the various ways in which it ‘orchestrates’ the “constitution and regulation of social identities, [and] ultimately of our subjectivities….” Their call to re-theorize the state was influenced by a particular reading of Antonio Gramsci and interest to incorporate Weberian insights, part of a broader ‘cultural turn’ taking place in mainstream political-economy. Rather than assume the state to be an imposition from above, they sought to take seriously Weber’s notion of the state as a claim to legitimacy, “which confers authority on power” (*Ibid, 3*). Recognizing this, Corrigan and Sayer tell us, we should not neglect “the degree of mutuality between consensus and coercion in state formation….” (*Ibid, 2*). Of course, the authors were making explicit reference to the English case and warn against over generalization. What they do suggest, is that greater analytical attention needs to be paid to the idea of ‘agency’ and how the ‘total repertoire’ of the state and all that it encompasses—its policies, interventions and regulations—should be seen as a common framework structuring behaviour among rulers and ruled alike.

Before moving ahead, it is helpful to look to the past to better appreciate the space for alternative endings. The history of the state originates in Europe and then is exported around the world with varying degrees of imposition and coercion. Again in the mid-to-

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8 Similarly, there is a tendency in Foucauldian analysis of governmentality to imply as much, and in so doing disemboby—or de-center—power from its material and social contexts, which ironically, I would suggest, serves to blur complex lines of causality and accountability rather than clarify the actual dynamics of domination and subordination.
late nineteenth century, a constellation of societal forces and trends came together and shaped what we today often take for granted: the socio-spatial boundaries of the political entities we know as nation-states. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) emphasize the invented nature of certain customs surrounding the state reflects a concerted effort to naturalize social artefacts, while Benedict Anderson (1983) underscores the ideational dimension to imagined communities. The conjunctural coupling of state-bureaucratic systems with notions of nationhood led to a particular outcome—the nation-state—with the end result of channeling capitalist relations within its legal-rational framework. Nation-states exist all over the globe, although not all nation-states act in the same way. While the focus of this study will lead us to consider how the localized ‘state’ is being re-worked within the Canadian context, some general remarks on a sub-class of nation-state—the Welfare-State—is relevant if we are to make sense of what is being re-imagined.

State-building efforts in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions served to help consolidate the first period of liberal capitalism. Colonial domination and economic exploitation of the global periphery by core nation-states in Europe stabilized the delicate balance of power established with the Westphalian system, and provided early states with the necessary wherewithal to engage in armed conflict resolution (Wallerstein 1979; Tilly 1990). At this point in history one could argue capitalism undergoes a process of nationalization, notwithstanding the actual international linkages sustaining national economies. Along with military expenditures and subsidizing basic public infrastructure, national governments played a growing role nurturing a domestic class of bourgeoisie and building a social order influenced by liberal ideals. The parallel development of
state-societies and market relations under the ideological umbrella of nationalism would become hegemonic and yield at least two important outcomes worth highlighting. First, nation-states pursued a variety of de facto economic policies based on a unique combination of Ricardian trade strategies and Kaldorian development initiatives with the intent of improving the standing of the domestic economy within an international economic order.\(^9\) Second, the legitimate resolution of social conflict becomes mediated through, and in time monopolized by the state’s bureaucratic apparatus, which sought to address everything from economic policy matters in response to so-called market failures, to issues pertaining to healthcare, social welfare, public safety, universal education and community development. With increased sophistication, interests within civil society sought to influence state interventionism over time. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2000, 112-122) is correct to point out that law in the broad sense of the term, as a normative-rational means to create, adjudicate and prevent disputes, becomes equated and eventually trapped within the logical orbit of the nation-state. The subsequent development of national legal systems, and exemplified by the ascendancy of legal positivism, as he goes on to argue, serves to further codify and nationalize the idea of legality, and in so doing begins to insulate law from its sociological underpinnings.

\(^9\) As Schwartz (2000, 123-127) makes note, successful Ricardian strategies – trade based on the principle of comparative-advantage— always depended upon a degree of state intervention to position exporters advantageously in world markets given that agricultural and primary commodity led growth proved to be crisis prone. Likewise, Schwartz (2000, 60-62) introduces the concept of Kaldorian development, named after the Hungarian born economist Nicholas Kaldor, to address the advantages to industrial growth and the utility of partially ignoring existing factor disadvantages and advantages to stimulate the manufacturing sector. He goes on to suggest industrialization very often required significant government involvement – i.e., policies to subsidize domestic production.
Early calls for social reform, historically speaking, reflect a concerted effort by pioneering segments in civil-society to address grievous circumstances confronting the lower and working classes, namely social inequality, public health, illiteracy, and the need for social development. In many cases, early calls for reform expressed clear class-based demands (i.e., working-class parties and unions) or sought political emancipation within the state (i.e., the general suffrage movement and first wave feminism). Given that initial demands for reform tended to lack coherent organizational capability and were limited by internal divisions, the ability to garner broader-based support often encountered substantial challenges. Consequently, the implementation of public reforms became an incremental and ad hoc process that varied considerably across temporal and spatial domains. Despite variability, however, two historical paths pursued by agents-of-change can be identified: (1) revolutionary and (2) reformist. When the initial revolutionary upheavals noted earlier were put-down and repressed, revolution soon gave way to reformism. The historically contingent split emerging between the revolutionary and reformist paths to social transformation, which was further polarized by Cold War complexities, came to a have an enduring influence over the subsequent development of government planning initiatives (Friedman 1987). This chapter of course cannot hope to cover adequately the full gamut of historical variation associated with state formation, but attempts instead to address how some government’s came to address, what Marx referred to as, the ‘social question’.

Resistance to industrial capitalism helped inspire public calls demanding social reform. Although fragmented, segments of the working class did manage to organize trade unions and lobby effectively for fair pay and safer working conditions. Oftentimes
labour-based organizations entered into strategic alliances with other societal forces wanting greater social inclusion, and offered support to political parties that eventually constituted an effective counterforce to prevailing free market interests. In many industrialized nation-states, class-based movements ended-up achieving concrete gains for the general population and precipitated public investment in community development. Although gradual and framed in the language of reform, these struggles ensured the rewards achieved by industrialization were more widely distributed within society. Yet as Teeple (2000, 12) reminds us diligently, it was due to the threat of class-based extra-parliamentary struggles, real or otherwise, that democratic governments became willing to negotiate and strike compromises. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to suggest populist-inspired demands for social equality, reinforced by legitimate government rule, reflects an unprecedented historical check on free-market ideology (Roseberry 1997; Stanford and Vosko 2004).

Social reforms that first took root among Western nation-states were often a source of contention and backlash. General strikes and episodic public outbursts accelerated the adoption of some measures, while the desire for stability or charitable sentimentalities facilitated the acceptance of others. Over time, income support, universal healthcare, public education, employment generation and old age pensions would become commonplace and basic pillars of the social welfare state. Laissez-faire advocates always maintained the creeping intrusion of the state into the social sphere was both undesirable and undermined individual freedom—negative liberty—whereas other reactionaries simply dismissed these as part of a communist conspiracy. Alternatively, liberal reformers claimed government intervention was needed to moderate negative
externalities resulting from unfettered market activity and ensure that the conditions necessary for freedom—positive liberty—were in place.

At its most basic level, a welfare-state describes a form of government that deploys a number of regulatory strategies to ameliorate overall societal conditions. Interventions attempt to redress social problems and protect the public interest without fundamentally altering the established economic order. While social welfare measures initially targeted the so-called reproductive functions vital to capitalist societies, they have since come to play a pervasive role in society, including supporting the development of cultural, leisure and scientific pursuits (Dahrendolf 1959; Clarke 2004). Unlike centrally planned societies, welfare states do not displace market forces but rather use taxation measures to fund government administered planning initiatives and redistribute wealth. By maneuvering the levers of state power, early government planners intended to minimize the potentially destabilizing impacts resulting from industrialization and rapid urbanization (Friedman 1987).

The historical development of the social welfare state reflects the partial success of the reformist path to social transformation. Throughout much of the industrialized Western world, a consensus emerged as governments of varying political stripes embraced the full-scale adoption of welfare policies in the decades following the Second World War, ushering in a so-called golden age. Without glossing over the tribulations of the era, analysts generally concede the post-war period to be a time of unprecedented growth and rising living standards. T.H. Marshall (1950), a renowned British sociologist, argues the acquisition of citizenship rights was the outcome of a long evolutionary
process culminating with the official recognition of social rights, a final generation of rights granted with the consolidation of the liberal-democratic welfare state. This obligation placed on ‘society’ to ensure a minimal standard of living and basic quality-of-life for the citizenry, however, should not be seen as an inevitable historical outcome, nor one that is irreversible.

The Transformation of Work and Community in a Globalizing World

If the beginning of the twentieth century gets underway by trends that include increased state intervention in society, the broadening of citizenship rights and the expansion of social development, the end of this tumultuous century bears witness to a sharp reversal in circumstances. For many analysts, the unexpected collapse of the Communist Bloc signaled the symbolic end of the revolutionary path to social transformation and the decisive ideological victory of liberal welfare states over other historical possibilities (Fukuyama 1992). Yet even among those nations who opted for the reformist path, the assault on state-led social reform has been relentless (Teeple 2000; Strange 1996). In a strange twist of irony, the social welfare-state came under sustained attack shortly after it managed to achieve undisputed hegemony. How does one explain the gradual, albeit persistent undermining of social reform measures in much of the western world since the 1970s and 1980s?

In an effort to address the conundrum, Gary Teeple (2000, 20) suggests “social reforms are compromises [and due to this] they embody the contradictions from which they constitute a temporary reprieve.” As he goes on to explain, they are not a permanent solution to the tensions and conflicts that engender such measures in the first instance,
but rather speak to a momentary settling of grievances and the negotiated adoption of terms acceptable to the interests involved, which is itself a reflection of the relative strength of participants. To avoid instability and the possibility for revolution, many governments in the industrial West opted for a ‘third way’ to resolve endemic class conflict and social unrest. The historical emergence of the welfare-state, as I have argued, reflects a social compromise that sought to ameliorate social conditions through a modest degree of wealth redistribution via taxation. The solution, however, appears to be dependent on a number of preconditions, none of which remain unaltered at present.

First, subordinate classes—or interests, if one prefers to avoid an explicit class analysis—need to be well organized and capable of making credible demands for greater social equity. This requires a high degree of collective identification and solidarity, programmatic coherence and the willingness to act politically. Second, those with taxable capital need to ‘buy in’ to the idea of forfeiting a portion of private wealth to finance the broader public good. It is worth stressing here that the tacit acceptance of taxation must be equally applicable to business as well as the citizenry overall, the unspoken quid pro quo of the Fordist paradigm. Lastly, the state needs to be sufficiently autonomous and responsive to the demands of civil society to play the role of honest broker and social mediator. If we can accept the notion that social reforms are the provisional solution to a conjunctural crisis, it is apparent that the terms and conditions underpinning the postwar social compact are becoming unraveled, the consequences of which have yet to be fully examined.

Many leading researchers inform us that the golden age in welfare capitalism did succeed in bringing about broad based improvements to social conditions throughout the
industrial world; however, this in itself did not translate into reduced class conflict or social harmony. On the contrary, the evidence would appear to suggest the expansion of social welfarism was accompanied by an intensification of political awareness, which in turn contributed to more frequent outbursts of popular discontent, especially during the 1960s and 1970s (Offe 1984). Contrary to hard-line arguments claiming reformism served only to pacify the rebellious ‘classes’, Teeple calls attention to how welfare measures seemed to achieve the exact opposite end, namely, they helped raise consciousness and expectations leading to further calls for social reform. Yet to dismiss welfare reforms as bourgeois appeasement, as Teeple and others argue, trivializes its practical importance to maintaining legitimate social order and overlook the very real challenge posed to capitalist interests. For many in the business community and their intellectual allies, any degree of state interventionism for the purpose of social redistribution was considered to be a form of creeping socialism and an affront to freedom (Hayek 1944; Friedman 1962; Nozick 1974). With this in mind, it is not an overstatement to claim the social rebellions and counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, along with increased state activism, constituted an unacceptable threat to capitalist interests, leading many to contemplate a new response to stem the tide of emboldened populist insurrection.

To understand why and how welfare-states begin to breakdown, it is useful to go over the literature examining the crisis of Fordism and the debate concerning the ascendancy of a new capitalist paradigm, referred euphemistically as post-Fordism. Beginning in the early 1970s, researchers within the political-economy tradition call attention to a profound process of restructuring taking place among core industrial nation-
states in the Western world (Braverman 1974; Habermas 1975; Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Harvey 1990; Sayer and Walker 1992; Amin 1994; Jessop 1994 and 1999; Bonanno 2000; Peck 2001; Clarke 2004; Stanford and Vosko 2004; Shalla 2007). In a well known study published by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982), the authors note how at this juncture, ‘Big Capital’ launches a revolt against expanding state-society intrusion into the domestic economy, and begins to systematically divest productive infrastructure from higher cost, more intensely regulated regions in favour of lower cost substitutes elsewhere. The capacity to exploit jurisdictional cleavages, enhanced by innovations in communication and transportation technologies – what is commonly understood to be globalization—fundamentally re-define the constraints faced by capital and labour within the national political community, with the former taking advantage of new options to reorganize production processes. Once ‘national’ business interests underwent a complex process of de-nationalization, inter-nationalization, and trans-nationalization, they were no longer compelled to abide by, or even operate within, the regulatory environment governed by the nation-state. David Harvey (1996) stresses the underlying impetus to re-spatialize operations and take advantage of emerging global opportunities reflects a concerted effort by ‘Big Capital’ to reassert managerial authority over the labour process, circumvent union militancy in urban centers and perhaps most significantly, undermine the capacity for national governments to enact costly social welfare measures.

If the immediate postwar period can be characterized by reinforcing linkages between the functional dynamics of the Fordist production regime and the governance of welfare-states, this symbiosis is undone with the onset of globalization. The reaction by
capital to the welfare-state in the post-Fordist era has been a gradual albeit persistent shift to globalize operations and ‘seek out’ the most advantageous conditions for re-investment. Research reveals most indicators of globalization –i.e., foreign direct invest, international financial transactions and trade flows— began trending upwards in the late 1970s, maintaining that pattern ever since (Carnoy et al 1993; Albrow 1997; Sassen 1998; Nef 1999; Schwartz 2000). Susan Strange (1996, 16-30) explains one of the longer term consequences of globalization and the structural transformation of the economy has been to tilt the balance of power between states and markets back in favour of market interests. As Strange (1996, 44) makes clear:

[i]f there is one change, above all other, which has affected politics at the highest inter-state level and, at the other extreme, the life chances of individuals throughout the world, it is change in the production structure of the world economy. That is to say, what goods and services are produced, how, where and by whom? This change is not so much the emergence of the ‘multinationals’ so-called—they have been around for a long time; it has been the change from production mostly designed and destined for one local or national market, to production mostly designed and destined for a world market, or at least several national markets…. Production for the larger world market has transformed innumerable national or local enterprises into transnational corporations (TNCs).

The increasing hyper-mobility of capital not only serves to moderate calls for social reform, but it also fundamentally undermines the state’s capacity to regulate and tax corporations, effectively re-negotiating the tolerance for market interference (O’Connor 1994).

Early research exploring globalization and the impact of technological advances emphasized the potential of new innovations and prophesized the coming of a post-industrial age (Bell 1974; Piore and Sable 1984; Ritzer 2007). This optimistic outlook
was shortly afterwards challenged by a more sobering critical assessment of the actual outcomes impacting community. The political-economy tradition in particular has been at the forefront of calling attention to how the rules of engagement for business, labour and civil-society are being re-worked. For Jamie Peck (1996), the enhanced structural power of capital diminishes the state’s capacity to regulate market activity for the public good, and the welfare-state is being eclipsed by what he refers to as the neo-Schumpeterian workfare-state. David Harvey (1996) describes this transformation as a shift toward the adoption of ‘flexible accumulation’ strategies, which is characterized by the relentless search for flexible labour markets and new geographies of production. Other research in this vein explores the subtleties and nuances differentiating post-Fordism from its predecessor, and the widening rupture taking place between market dynamics and the conditions required for sustainable communities (Haughton et al 2000; Boje and Furåker 2003; Clarke 2004; Ben-Joseph 2005; Collins and Quark 2006; Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2011).

At the center of the post-Fordist economy lays a profound re-articulation of the conditions, relations and context whereby work takes place. Shalla and Clement et al (2007) make note of a sizeable body of literature examining changing labour market relations and the degradation of work resulting from a globalizing economy. As Shalla (2007, 5) herself puts it, “following a long period when critical studies of work were the exception rather than the rule, the mid-to late 1970s and the 1980s were marked by a blossoming of theoretically informed empirical studies that questioned the dominant relations of work and steadfastly questioned the management-orientated concerns that guided the large majority of organizational and industrial relation studies.” The
contributors provide compelling evidence suggesting the implementation of information and communication technologies, automation processes and new management practices has facilitated capital’s ambition to weaken workplace regulations, scale-back previously achieved labour and social rights, and has led ultimately to growing precariousness in core labour markets once considered to be bastions of well-paying full-time jobs. Overall, the prognosis should be seen as troubling as observers highlight declining labour standards, wages and expectations among the most vulnerable segments of the working population. Compounding matters, deteriorating economic conditions not only aggravate longstanding social cleavages arising from class, race, ethnicity, gender and age-base divisions within society, but also serve to further undermine the basis of community solidarity.

In the literature, post-Fordism is said to have precipitated a crisis of the state, and stunted the capacity to regulate key facets of business activity (Habermas 1976; Held 1989; Steinmetz 1999; Bonnano 2000). As major operations restructure to take advantage of cheaper labour costs and less regulated jurisdictions, once previously protected segments of the working class have become subjected to a harsh new reality of declining living standards and environmental conditions (Nelson and Smith 1999; Leach 1998; Winson and Leach 2002; Stanford and Vosko 2004). The consequences of capital flight are being documented and have been devastating for affected communities, and should be seen as the primary culprit contributing to deindustrialization and urban decay (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Nash 1989; Moore 1996; Winson and Leach 2002; High 2004; Winson and Leach 2002; Sousa 2011). With high unemployment, employment instability and a declining tax base, the state’s ability to mitigate the worst contingencies
arising from economic restructuring is eroded at precisely the same time when need is on rise. The looming ‘fiscal’ crisis of the state, however, does not mark the end of government planning schemes, nor signal its retreat from society. Rather, certain interest groups have attempted to re-invent the very idea of government. It is against this backdrop that new public management prescriptions acquire widespread currency in today’s new world order (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). Under the guise of promoting efficiency, post-Fordist champions embrace the notion of a ‘state’ more aligned to the promulgation of market rationality, rather than a potentially more cumbersome role as independent guardian of public welfare.

Thus, the crisis of the state refers not to a breakdown of state rule, but rather a revolt against a particular kind of government interventionism –namely the welfare-state. As market processes trans-nationalize, it becomes increasingly difficult for any single nation-state to manage socio-economic relations that have a direct bearing on the health and well-being of its citizenry. And yet the ability for large corporations to move between and beyond nation-states was in no short measure a reflection of their ability to capture and re-work the domestic political agenda. Put somewhat differently, the freeing of capital from national constraints was itself an act of political will. Once achieved, the shift to global post-Fordism, as Bonanno (2000) calls it, provides corporate interests with considerable latitude to “by pass” regions with unfavorable business climates more freely and punish jurisdictions with systemic disinvestment if the regulatory agenda deviates too widely from the new global standard.
As Bob Jessop (1999, 394) reminds us, despite changes brought about by globalization, the ‘state’ retains an important function of securing social cohesion and maintaining order within society. What has changed is the state’s unfettered ability to enact public policy measures without being subject to an economic backlash. The emerging disjunction between market forces and societal needs questions the presumed congruency once taken for granted between the economy and community. Alessandro Bonanno (2000) makes note that “[b]ecause the state is increasingly unable to control economic and non-economic environments, the directions it receives from its community of citizens cannot be fully implemented as assumed by Liberal theory.” As he goes on to explain, democratic political communities are undermined when powerful economic actors pick-and-choose which rules and policies apply to them while the rest of civil society is hard pressed to do anything about it. The widening gulf between localized governance structures and globalizing economic systems has led influential academics like Ulrich Beck (1995, 45) to conclude: “we are already in the initial stages of a global social culture and economy…. [artificially disconnected] from global dependencies (see also Nef 1999). What remains to be seen, is who will ultimately pay the price for disequilibrium?

**A Question of Sustainability**

Concern for sustainability is a relatively new development within society in general, and the academic and political arenas in particular. Prior to thirty years ago, most researchers focused on matters from a purely anthropocentric point-of-view, a tendency that continues to be problematic in some quarters. Since the 1960s, however, a
growing number of environmentally aware activists and academics alike are questioning humanity’s long taken-for-granted relationship with nature. Decades of unrestrained industrial growth and so-called technological progress have taken a heavy toll on the biophysical environment, raising pertinent questions as to how much longer destructive human practices can go on unabated. Many ecologically attuned thinkers are coming to the realization that human impact on the planet is approaching a level where it is seriously threatening the future health and sustainability of human and non-human populations alike.

Environmentalists articulate a philosophical position and political stance that challenges deeply held values and assumptions underpinning most modern epistemological paradigms and traditional world views. For eco-thinkers, anthropocentrism—the view human beings and their welfare alone should constitute the sole measure of value and concern for justice—is seen to breed a misguided arrogance that sanctions human society to treat nature as a means to its own ends. Consequently, some eco-critics conclude conventional socio-scientific approaches to understanding the economy, society and nature, including those guided by humanistic ideals—liberal reformism as a case in point—ultimately condones the destruction of the biophysical world to satisfy human needs and desires. Furthermore, as Sessions (1998, 171) asserts, modernist concerns for social justice can reflect an anthropocentric distraction that “shouldn’t be allowed to take precedence over the issue of dealing realistically with the urgency of the global ecological crisis. It comes down to a question of priorities…."

With increasing acceptance, eco-philosophers like Arne Naess (1989) advocate the need for a paradigm shift and the adoption of an eco-centric environmental ethic. To deal
adequately with the pending environmental crisis, proponents suggest, human society must begin a deep questioning of the sustainability of our current industrial-growth oriented models of socio-economic development, and not just fixate on the symptoms (i.e., poverty reduction, pollution abatement and resource depletion). A ‘deep’ approach to addressing the environmental problem would require the widespread acceptance of ecological egalitarianism and the general recognition that human population pressures are placing an unsustainable burden on the planet’s fragile and finite ecological systems.

For the ‘deep’ environmentalist, sustainability requires a completely new mindset toward the natural environment and the radical overhaul of the current economic system. Perhaps most importantly, the dualistic logic inherent to modern society must be supplanted with a more holistic understanding of the inter-relationship between humans and nature. Human communities must be seen to be embedded within an ecological context, and not somehow existing artificially apart from nature. Yet some currents within the environmentalist movement are highly skeptical of the scientific approach. Modern science is thought to breed a ‘Frankensteinesque’ mentality, often justifying destructive practices under the guise of rationality. The positivistic tendency to treat all natural phenomenon as governed by identifiable laws of cause-and-effect, and its corollary notion that once such laws are discovered humans can intervene and manipulate variables so as maximize benefit, must be replaced by complex ecosystems thinking, which sees all living and non-living phenomenon as inherently connected and interdependent, thereby problematizing reductionist understandings of causality. Despite a high degree of internal variation, environmental reasoning has succeeded challenging researchers to think about ways to create a more sustainable society based on two
propositions regarded as fundamental: (1) the overall scale of human impact on the planet needs to be drastically reduced; and, (2) human communities must orient activities so as not to degrade or deplete remaining stocks of natural capital.

Growing environmental awareness has certainly placed greater critical scrutiny on the devastating costs our growth-oriented economic system can inflict on the biophysical environment. Carbon emissions, land-use contamination, toxic dumping, loss of agriculturally productive land, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, natural resource depletion and declining biodiversity, are all outcomes of humanity’s out-of-control desire to produce and consume conspicuously. In response to eminent threats, the environmental literature warns that governments must establish new priorities and take leadership to protect biodiversity and conserve what is left of the planet’s natural systems (Naess 1989; Zimmerman et al 1998; Glasby 2002).10 Those influenced by ecological thinking go on to suggest that governance structures and the artificial boundaries erected by nation-states need to be supplanted by the eco-centric notion of bioregions to better address environmental issues and respect ecological processes (McKenzie 2002, 30-31). Failing to take action on the environmental front, advocates warn, will result in the irreversible destruction of vital life sustaining ecological functions, and ultimately contribute to the downfall of human populations (Douthwaite 1992; Doob 1995; Boyce 2002; Kovel 2002; Suzuki 2002).

10 To highlight one relevant policy proposal, members of the Sierra Club under David Brower’s leadership, as well as many other like-minded conservationists, call for greater international efforts to expand existing wilderness protection zones along with interconnecting wildlife corridors (Sessions 1998, 172-177).
While the emergence of an environmental consciousness within the academy can be considered a positive development overall, some offshoots to the movement are decidedly authoritarian. As Bruno Latour (2004, 25-49) warns, by freeing humanity from anthropocentrism, radical ecologism requires that we embrace a kind of naturpolitik—a concept modeled after realpolitik—and in so doing, raises the possibility of eco-fascism. He insightfully points out a problematic contradiction prevalent among radical environmentalists:

[by claiming] to defend nature for nature’s sake—and not as a substitute for human egotism—but in every instance, the mission it has assigned itself is carried out by humans and is justified by the well-being, the pleasure, or good conscience of a small number of carefully selected humans…. In short, these few elect, as they themselves see it, are endowed with the most fabulous political capacity to speak, tell the truth without ever being challenged, put an end to the interminable arguments through an incontestable form of authority that would stem from things themselves (Latour, 2004 14-20).

The basis of authoritarianism stems from the fact that early figures associated with the deep ecology movement stress the irreconcilability between social development and the requirements for sustainability, noting the creation of a more egalitarian society may in all likelihood come at the expense of the environment (see Botkin 1995; Naess 1989). Despite growing recognition of the need to incorporate aspects of ecological thinking into mainstream socio-economic practice and government planning, the path toward sustainability is fettered by numerous ambiguities and sources of conflict, not least of which is the common place assumption human development and sustainability are locked in a zero-sum game (Sessions 1995; Zimmerman et al 1998; Glasby 2002).
In recent years, researchers working within the political economy tradition have come to respond to some of the limitations of the approach and incorporate environmental insights into the research agenda. What has ensued is a systematic attempt to more explicitly link political-economic analysis with environmental concerns. This renewed effort to cross-fertilize the social and natural sciences has been dubbed by some as green political economy. Political ecology can be defined as the examination of human/environment relations within contexts of power and historical contingency. As a unique approach, it challenges the ‘natural sciences’ typically apolitical way of looking at environmental problems and breaks their monopoly over prescribing solutions to current ecological dilemmas. It suggests we must de-naturalize the environment, instead looking to the myriad of ways human beings condition, and are conditioned by, the biophysical environment (see for instance, Hvalkof and Escobar 1998; Escobar 1995; Bryant 1992). Conceptual approaches that naturalize the biophysical world, green

11 Classical political economy of the Marxian variety sought to make more explicit the origin and functioning of modern capitalism, highlighting among other things, how workers and other marginalized segments of society bear most of the negative costs of production and development (Marx 1844; Polanyi 2001 [1944]; Hobsbawn 1994; Thompson 1963). With the passage of time, this research approach matured and various nuances began to emerge, reflecting both new developments in social theory and social reality. H. Braverman (1974), for instance, examined the role of technological innovations and new industrial organization techniques in generating greater efficiencies at the expense of workers’ productive autonomy. In a different vein, Immanuel Wallerstein’s (1974) world-systems theory sought to explain the material conditions of those living in the periphery of modern society as a direct consequence of actions by those in the core of the global social system. Much of the dependency school of development articulated a similar thesis (Frank 1969; Chilcote 1984). Though not a complete overview of the tradition, each of these selected classic studies provide a brief sample of the kinds of work carried out under the political economy banner. The common theme running throughout all of these works is a general concern for the dialectical relationship between social structures and the economic system, and how this dynamic relates to the issue of social inequality.

12 Throughout the dissertation, I will use the terms ‘political ecology’ and ‘green political economy’ interchangeably.
political economists claim, often obscure the very processes that make it up in the first instance, and in so doing, mask how ‘nature’ can be influenced by social processes. Thus it would follow that solutions to the environmental crisis do not necessarily reside solely in the realm of scientific thinking and technocratic innovation, but also, and just as importantly, within the manner in which power is distributed and how society is organized. In this way, political ecology has directly taken up the call sounded in the WCED’s report regarding the need for integrated socio-scientific analysis.

Immanuel Wallerstein, for instance, revisited his influential world system theory to better account for the pending environmental crisis. He admits the omission of ecological issues from political-economic analysis was an unfortunate oversight, though not necessarily a terminal flaw, and maintains that political-economy can continue to play a key role informing us of the relationship between society and nature and how this relates to development/underdevelopment. Wallerstein (2004, 7) notes “the environmental dilemmas we face today are directly the result of the fact that we live in a capitalist world economy.” As a social system, he maintains, capitalism requires not only perpetual growth and expansion in order to sustain the endless accumulation of capital, it also exhibits a troubling tendency to externalize the negative costs associated with economic development. Powerful economic interests have historically profited from development while successfully coaxing governments to underwrite expansion and transferring the consequences of environmental degradation to society at large, not just in the past and present, but also to future generations as well. Wallerstein (2004) argues since the beginning of the sixteenth century, capitalist interests in the world economy have sought simultaneously to exploit the biophysical environment and a complex division of labour.
J. Roberts and Peter Grimes (1999, 59) also suggest core tenets of the political economy approach are compatible with a new environmental awareness. They advocate the adoption of an eco-sociological perspective to better examine the complex linkages between world systems functioning and ecological integrity. They argue since the current degradation of the latter is fundamentally connected to the former, it becomes crucial for analysts not to artificially separate the two during the research process. Furthermore, rather than ‘naturalizing’ the social, as some ecologists tend to do, researchers must come to ‘socialize’ the natural, if we are to properly understand the intricate inter-relationship between society and nature. To overcome the limits of a narrowly conceived anthropocentrism and avoid advocating an unattainable eco-centric utopianism, researchers must regard human communities as nested in biophysical contexts and look for ways to coexist on a non-destructive basis (see also Morito 2002; Suzuki 2002). A truly sustainable and integrated approach requires a refusal to decouple analysis of human social relations from ecosystem well-being, social justice from eco-justice and human development from environmental stewardship.

At the heart of political economy’s new critique of contemporary eco-politics, be it under the banner of political ecology or eco-sociology, is a direct challenge to the notion the individual’s unrestrained pursuit of self-interest will somehow yield socially desirable outcomes at the aggregate level. In other words, it questions the market’s ability to establish the best allocation of resources and strike an optimal balance between competing ends, a basic assumption underpinning laissez-faire economics. The reality of the matter is roughly two centuries of blind faith in the market mechanism has culminated in an unprecedented degree of environmental damage and human suffering. Figures like

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Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr. (1994), O’Connor (1994) and Kovel (2002) are quick to point out the market’s fundamental inability to recognize costs—both social and environmental—or capacity to function within ecologically sustainable limits. Instead, unregulated capitalism regards nature’s bounty to be virtually inexhaustible, postponing the more problematic question of how to deal with the consequences of environmental degradation and natural resource depletion indefinitely. An environmentally grounded political economy, these authors conclude, must confront the perverse logic inherent in our economic system and encourage economic actors to take full account of the burdens shifted onto communities and ecosystems. Inevitably, this course of action will require the imposition of limits and standards on economic behaviour, which necessitates ongoing social reform and effective government regulation.

Proponents of political-ecology, therefore, envision a role for state regulation that limits capitalism’s self-destructive tendency to undermine the very basis of its own existence. Surely, the argument goes, some measure of protective legislation will be required to curtail the most rampant abuses of capitalism’s internal contradictions—the tendency to overexploit human and natural capital stocks (O’Connor 1994, 154). Yet careful attention has also been paid responding to some of the traditional shortcomings of ‘previously existing’ state-socialism. Jean-Paul Deléage (1994, 46), for instance, notes how state ownership of the means of production in the Second World promoted a mentality akin to what Marx referred to as ‘the abstract capitalist,’ which rendered the macro-economic functioning of so-called communist regimes to be indistinguishable
from their First World counterparts, at least in the sense that growth was encouraged irrespective of ecological limitations and social costs.\textsuperscript{13} The challenge to be addressed by political ecologists, Deléage points out, is how to go about establishing the right balance between individual freedom and collective responsibility. For their part, Daly and Cobb Jr. (1994, 4-15) suggest a paradigm shift must take place in economics so that the rationality legitimizing the maximization of self-interest comes to be replaced by one more supportive of other-regarding behavior, or community. Rather than embracing an atomistic world-view where human beings are conceived to be isolated from each other and free of ecological constraint, economics must re-think its basic assumptions from the point-of-view of person/s-in-community and come to appreciate our mutual vulnerability to the planet’s finite life support systems (see also Nef 1999). This shift in perspective need not be antagonistic to many of the axioms associated with unregulated capitalism, Daly and Cobb Jr. (1994) remark in a more conciliatory tone, only that a greater recognition of limits be appreciated. They go on to suggest such a change will necessarily:

“involve correction and expansion, a more empirical and historical attitude, less pretense to be a ‘science,’ and the willingness to subordinate the market to purposes that it is not geared to determine…. Our position is that centralized economic planning is inefficient, that allocations are better effected in the market than by bureaucratic planning. The role of government is to set fair conditions within which the market can operate. \textit{It is also responsible for setting the overall size (scale) of the market}” [Italics, my emphasis (1994, 12-14)].

\textsuperscript{13} In the current political environment, consider for instance the peculiar way in which capitalism and communism coexist in China’s recent transition towards a mixed economy, the so-called one ‘country, two systems political strategy’, or what other commentators describe simply as state capitalism.
In the aftermath of the failed Soviet experience, many green political economists are trying to rebuild a viable alternative to the current economic order by calling for greater local self-sufficiency and grassroots participation while re-affirming the need to reform statecraft along socially and environmentally sustainable lines (Roseland et al. 1998; Drummond and Marsden 1999; Kovel 2002; Fingleton 2003).

Other green political economists are decidedly more pessimistic about the prospects for sustainable communities within the existing economic order (Harvey 1996, 430-434; see also O’Connor 1994, 171-173). Since the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, governments of every political stripe around the world have turned to free market reforms as a panacea to their economic problems. Despite mounting evidence of growing ecological catastrophes and widespread social unrest, free market capitalism has continued to expand and push the limits of the earth’s carrying capacity, showing little sign of reforming itself in the foreseeable future. Tragically, these researchers note, progressive alternatives to the status quo have never before seemed so unattainable. Part of the problem, they maintain, stems from the fact while many intellectual currents, political parties and social movements have arisen in recent years criticizing the destructive tendencies inherent to capitalism, sometimes rather adroitly, the opposition remains fragmented and politically weak, while the social reform agenda overall is undermined by capitalism’s global triumph. David Harvey (1996, 430) explains:

[T]his opposition, though militant, often remains particularist (sometimes extremely so), often unable to see beyond its own particular form of uneven geographical development…. These movements lack coherence and unified direction. Political moves and actions on one terrain may confound and sometimes check those on another, making it far too easy for capitalist processes and interests to divide and rule.”
To overcome today’s debilitating state-of-affairs, many green political economists, along with other progressive voices, are calling increasingly for labour rights activists, feminists, environmentalists and other rural and urban social justice movements to strategically ally themselves along a common front to more readily confront and transform prevailing tendencies under the current socio-economic order. “The last thing in the world we need,” James O’Connor (1994, 173) remarks in frustration to the current political environment, is continued “factionalism, sectarianism, ‘correct lineism’ – instead, we need to scrutinize critically all time-worn political formulae and develop an ecumenical spirit, and to celebrate our commonalities or ‘new commons’ as well as our differences.” Only by organizing and creating a more coherent political-economic alternative, political ecologists reason, will progressive elements of civil-society be able to act as an effective counter-bloc to dominant interests, and carry out the work necessary to change the profoundly unsustainable path our economy is presently headed-on.

**Community Research at the Global/Local Nexus**

Researchers interested in local community development and sustainability have drawn inspiration from the broader green political economy tradition while making the case to be more sensitive to issues of locality and specificity. The work of David Harvey (1990) and Jamie Peck (1996) is a crucial turning point in this respect. Although influential figures like Wallerstein (1974), Barry Bluestone and Bennet Harrison (1982) certainly called attention to how capital has sought to relocate to rural and peripheral regions in the quest for new markets and greater profitability over a decade earlier, these
Studies tend to focus mostly on macro-level structural dynamics rather than micro-level processes of differentiation and co-determination. Alternatively, David Harvey’s (1996) work suggests Fordist industrialization is being eclipsed by flexible geographies of production, which actively seek to exploit locally situated assets and characteristics in the quest for continued capitalist accumulation, and is a phenomenon taking place in core and peripheral societies alike. And it is because of the uniqueness of people and place that differing social traditions and institutional forms arise in the first instance. Likewise, Peck’s (1996, 05) study examining the social regulation of labour markets builds upon political economy’s central preoccupation with power and historical contingency, but argues also for the need to pay greater attention to how geographically situated regulatory regimes constitute an autonomous influence in their own right. The existence of various strains of capitalism throughout the globe today, ranging from the highly coordinated market economies of the E.U. to the relatively less coordinated North American regime, is indicative of the extent to which local decision-makers and societal forces come to play re-shaping broader capitalist relations (see Kitschelt, Lange, Marks and Stephens 1999). Consequently, understanding the significance of local and institutional variability is important if we are to be able to explain how and why development ‘happens’ in the first place.

Community focused studies have been successful documenting how seemingly exogenous and homogenizing processes actually embody local characteristics and influences upon closer scrutiny. Unlike an earlier generation of community studies, which assumed localities to be isolated and mostly unaffected by broader developments, more recent scholarship has focused instead on the interconnections and
interrelationships between rural and urban places (Lucas 1971). Eric Wolf’s (1982) seminal work *Europe and the People Without History* dispelled decidedly the myth that even the remotest of communities could somehow exist independent of the broader world economy. In fact, Wolf argued, somewhat counter-intuitively, that regions on the rural frontier actually constituted the cutting-edge of an expanding global economy. Since this important study was initially published, a rich body of literature has emerged in the social sciences looking to clarify the complex relationships between local, national and global contexts, and perhaps more significantly, noting how recent reconfigurations to socio-spatial boundaries reflect a new wave of development, placing rural regions once again in the forefront of change (see for instance, Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Dewees *et al* 2003; Lem and Barber 2004; Flora *et al* 2004). Interestingly, these studies are also beginning to blur the conventional boundary separating disciplines.¹⁴

Perhaps one of the more peculiar developments taking place in rural areas highlighted by a new generation of political economists is the (re)emergence of new types of industry into some rural spaces. Researchers in Canada and the United States note while more remote rural regions are undergoing significant hardship and even decline, those located closer to major urban centers and transportation corridors are experiencing an economic revival (Marsden, Lowe, Whatmore 1990; Cloke and Goodwin

¹⁴ Historically, anthropology arose as the study of ‘traditional’ peoples in non-western societies while sociology emerged as the study of western society in a modern industrial age. The boundary separating these two disciplines, however, has narrowed significantly as spatial and temporal distances between human societies decrease in the so-called ‘global village’ and researchers begin explore the implications of this new reality. Today, for instance, there is very little distinguishing the subject matter of a rural sociologist from what an anthropologist interested in development issues might examine.
argues these rural areas are able to attract such new investment primarily because they are able to offer certain cost saving advantages to industries seeking to implement ‘flexible’ production strategies. In this current period of global restructuring, union avoidance has become a key corporate strategy to keep labour costs down and profits high, explaining in part the large migration of industry to rural greenfield sites. For their part, some communities are promoting rural industrialization by utilizing public resources to market and financially underwrite local economic development. Today, on both sides of the border, it is not uncommon for a municipality or state government to contribute up to a third of start up capital in order to secure a major new investment. As a consequence of all this, a new breed of ‘lean and mean’ enterprise can be seen to be targeting rural greenfield sites as suitable alternatives to low-wage production zones offshore. A sizeable body of empirical work is emerging looking at the state’s changing role in an age of regulatory devolution and detailing the specific ways in which localities contribute to larger processes of economic development and globalization (Sabel 1994; Goodwin 1998; Buchanan 2006; Winson and Leach 2002; Dewees, Lobao and Swanson 2003; Macdonald 2004; Sousa 2011).

While manufacturing has always had a presence in rural areas—particularly in central Canada, the U.S. mid-west and south—new investment patterns are extremely tied to international market conditions and forces.\(^{15}\) Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the

\(^{15}\) Traditional manufacturing industries in rural and small town Canada supplied regional markets with a variety of durable goods and food products—for example, furniture, clothing, tools and
food processing and automotive industries in particular expanded significantly with many new production facilities locating in rural greenfield sites throughout central Canada and the U.S. mid-west and south, giving local residents renewed hope for areas long thought to be in decline (Kingsolver 1992; Fink 1998; Sousa 2011). What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which industries can contribute positively to rural revitalization, community cohesion and sustainable development. Although there is an emerging literature looking at the ruralization of both industries in the U.S., fewer studies examine this topic in the Canadian context (with the notable exception of Leach 1998; Winson and Leach 2002).

Other researchers call attention to how the rural economy is becoming racially and/or ethnically segmented in addition to being divided along class and gender lines. Michael Broadway (2000), for instance, notes how recruitment practices in the meat processing industry in rural Alberta has encouraged the rapid influx of ethically diverse immigrants, most of whom ultimately end up taking some of the most demanding and precarious occupations. He goes on to note how language barriers, cross-cultural misunderstandings and a general lack of community planning have led to mounting tensions between the heterogeneous newcomers and the mostly homogeneous long-term

machinery, and, canned fruits and vegetables. Over the course of the twentieth century, however, these traditional industries went into decline as a result of the growing availability of more cheaply produced goods from elsewhere and were eventually superseded in importance by the arrival of transnational branch plants (see for instance, Winson 1997). Since the early 1980s, the automotive and food processing industries have come to dominate the rural economy, especially within the regional context of this study.
The residents.\textsuperscript{16} Drawing upon a comparatively similar U.S. case study, Deborah Fink (1998) brings to light how racism and ethnic discrimination has not only weakened working class solidarity—a tendency that has not gone unnoticed by unscrupulous employers—but has also lead to the creation of new forms of inequality and oppression. These studies highlight the importance of examining non-class based groupings such as gender, race and ethnicity, along with a class-based perspective, so as to better appreciate the complex and multifaceted dynamics of rural social life. Such developments in the political economy literature help contribute to a fuller, more nuanced, analysis of how power operates in society and the various micro-processes of social inclusion/exclusion.

In summary the research exploring globalization and its impact on community and the environment points clearly to a growing trend of divergence and differentiation, particularly in the rural economy. Today, rural areas differ more from each other than in any other period of human history. They are home to the most idyllic aspects of country life as well as the site of the most advanced forms of industrial production. Rural communities differ in terms of their character and composition as much as they do in the realities they face. Yet the multiplicity of these experiences do not negate the fact that rural regions are undergoing, and attempting to deal with, a profound process of change resulting from a more singular process of globalization. The literature reviewed above calls attention to how globalization and localization go hand-in-hand; they are two sides

\textsuperscript{16} It is of interest to note here that workers from Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta, the community examined in Broadway’s study, walked off the job on Wednesday, October 13, 2005, after negotiations with the employer broke down. The strike has been marked by considerable violence and racial tension, as strikers, a significant portion being visible minorities, clash with other workers attempting to cross the picket line, many of whom are reported to be local ‘white’ residents.
of the same coin, so to speak. More significantly, however, this research suggests rural development is a historical product, the outcome of power relations unfolding in society. The research explored in this section begins to illustrate the social and environmental costs associated with a particular kind of capitalist development. For the most part, the record seems to indicate that rural communities have fared rather poorly in the new economy, subjected to a greater degree of hardship as ‘footloose’ capital seeks to exploit socio-spatial disparities and capitalize on locally situated attributes. There is also mounting evidence to suggest ‘community’ is being redefined on an increasingly exclusionary and fragmented basis. Notwithstanding the pessimistic diagnosis, the silver lining offered by many political economists is that by stressing the degree to which the contemporary state of affairs is a product of human agency, they also raise the prospect human society can improve upon current conditions through enlightened social intervention.
CHAPTER FOUR

- REGIONAL CONTEXT AND COMMUNITY PROFILES

*Ut Incepit Fidelis Sic Permanet/Loyal she began, Loyal She Remains. (Provincial Motto)*

This chapter describes southwestern Ontario as the regional context of interest and discusses the main development trends impacting rural and small communities alike.

The four communities which are the focus of the study are then introduced to provide pertinent baseline data and inform the subsequent analysis, which beginning in this chapter tells the story of how small town Ontario has fared in the aftermath of global economic restructuring. Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston, like other small and medium sized communities in southwestern Ontario, have been subject to oscillating economic fortunes punctuated by episodic bouts of downturn over the past few decades. Overtime, this ever-changing economic environment has left a noticeable imprint on the physical landscape of communities, and creates a unique set of challenges for residents and planners to consider when contemplating the prospects for more sustainable community development. The community profiles detailed below is intended to provide a useful point-of-reference in order to facilitate discussion and ground the analysis of broader socio-economic trends.

Ontario is commonly thought to be both the literal and figurative centre of Canada, and is the nation’s second largest province in total land area and most populous with approximately 12,851,821 residents according to the 2011 Census (Statistics Canada 2011). Given its enormity, it is helpful to think of the province as geo-socially divided into two distinct entities: northern and southern Ontario. Northern Ontario comprises the
bulk of the land mass with a lower population density and an economy dominated by natural resource extraction activities. Southern Ontario, which is the regional focus of this study, is notable for a number of reasons, not least of which is its unique geographic landscape features and higher population density. Circumscribed on all sides by large lakes and river systems except for a narrow patch of territory to the northeast, the peninsula, as a region, is home to the single largest concentration of people, industry and productive agricultural cropland in the country. While the rest of Canada might seem vast and limitless, the natural physical contours of southwestern Ontario ensure that rural spaces and urban places are much more linked together and confronted by each other’s presence than might otherwise be expected (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Reference Map - Geographic Context of Study**
Agriculture and manufacturing have deep historical roots in the area, and periodically expose competing priorities and conflicting interests taking place within the broader society. Whereas farming once reflected the central economic pillar for many communities and helped nurture an early vibrant manufacturing industry, today, advanced manufacturing –particularly in the automotive sector- dominates the regional economy while agriculture has since taken a back seat. The communities under investigation here were selected because of their geographical dispersion within southern Ontario, especially in relation to major metropolitan centers, the 400 series highway corridors, and the presence of both agri-food producers and automotive manufacturers. These communities were also chosen because of the important function they play as a sub-regional hub for the numerous other smaller rural settlements that scatter the locality. In this respect, the case study sites identified reflect key nodal points in a regional economic network, which itself has become highly integrated into a broader globalized economic system.

Although rural and small town Ontario may conjure images of relative isolation and an economy dominated largely by agriculture, this is not an entirely accurate picture. Even as early as the mid-19th century, pioneering industrialists established scores of small-scale manufacturing plants, foundries, mills and food processing plants throughout rural southwestern Ontario to service growing local market needs along with taking advantage of available export opportunities. As Winson and Leach (2002, 52-54) make note, this era of early industrial capitalism was led by a generation of entrepreneurs distinguished by pride in local ownership and engagement in community building. The arrival of the railway served not only to accelerate this economic activity, but its
influence shaping early community development patterns cannot be overstated. Smaller settlements quickly grew into bustling towns and cities after the arrival of the railway. Railway stations and loading yards themselves reflected key focal points within the community, with subsequent phases of development taking place around this core. In the immediate post-war period, this pattern of socio-economic development continued somewhat with foreign capital—primarily from the United States—growing in prominence over local investment.

Prior to the advent of the automobile, railway lines served as the primary means of connecting people and goods to and from destinations. Historically, gaining access to a railway stop often played a critical role determining a settlements’ viability (Innis 1929; Innis and Plumptre 1934; Caldwell 2011). As Figure 4.1 helps illustrate, railway connectivity helped diffuse industrial activity throughout southwestern Ontario’s rural hinterland. Even after the mass introduction of motor vehicles into modern society, railway transportation remained an important conduit for transporting locally produced goods to Canada’s largest market south of the border. Early settlement patterns and economic development activity throughout the pre-war era had the happenstance of creating mixed-use districts clustered around a central railway junction and primary commercial district. Factories, commercial establishments and residential quarters were built alongside—or on-top—each other, creating reinforcing economic linkages in the process, which promoted more compact urban form and efficient land-use rationalization when compared to today’s standard. Mostly as a consequence of necessity, early community development evolved at a pedestrian scale to better facilitate economic interaction and human circulation prior to the advent of auto-culture. This form of
community development was prominent in small town Ontario well until the Second World War, and continues to be evident in the built heritage of the ‘ole downtowns’.

**Figure 4.2: Industrial Land Use Patterns in Southwestern Ontario**

The creation of mixed-use districts in small town Ontario was achieved largely due to the complete absence of zoning ordinances, which would later come to regulate land-use development options and restructure community growth patterns. After the arrival of the railway, but prior to the advent of zoning restrictions, local community development in southwestern Ontario underwent a phase of rapid growth and expansion within an

17 Source Data: Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH), Land Use Designations, August 2010.
overall context of minimal regulatory constraints. The development of the railway system acted not only as the major impetus for industrialization and urbanization, but it also began to break down the traditional rural/urban distinction which had characterized the region up to this point-in-time. As the pace of industrialization continued to gain momentum at the start of the twentieth century, smaller settlements grew into larger communities, and in so doing began encroaching relentlessly onto the surrounding countryside (refer to Figure 4.2).

This early period of community development also engendered a growing degree of land use incompatibility. While housing workers near industrial areas came about as a matter of convenience, the negative health impacts associated with residing near noxious polluters became all too apparent in time. Early public health advocates played an influential role lobbying government officials and local planners alike on the desirability of protecting residential neighborhoods from the negative impacts associated with heavy industrial uses. It also became quite apparent that major industrial facilities often limited, and even more problematically, undermined the property values and desirability of nearby neighbourhoods. In Ontario, villages, small towns and cities began taking more active roles guiding the physical development of their communities as early as 1917, by preparing generalized official plans that sought to demarcate particular areas, or zones, as appropriate for residential, commercial and industrial development. Such powers were enshrined and further enhanced with the passing of the province’s first Planning Act in 1946. These measures, along with the parallel emergence of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) as a province-wide dispute resolution mechanism, reflected early efforts by local government to separate conflicting land uses –for example, industrial activities from
residential neighbourhoods—and gradually evolved into playing a significant role protecting the residential character of established neighborhoods (Chipman 2002, 12-21).

In the immediate postwar period, traditional community development patterns would come to be fundamentally altered as a result of the Fordist production revolution. Fordist industrialization and a growing appetite for ‘bigger’ and ‘better’ helped create conditions ripe for unprecedented growth and expansion. Overall growth in general affluence within society meant that most people could afford more luxurious forms of housing and a broader array of consumer goods, not least of which was the automobile. The rising influence of automobiles within society meant that people and industry were no longer constrained by the impediments of place as was the case previously. Not surprisingly, the 1950s gave birth to a trend whereby a growing number of people sought to leave the crowded and often polluted urban core to seek refuge and enjoy a more tranquil pace of life in what would eventually become known as suburbia. For the last half century or so, suburbanization has come to define contemporary community growth patterns, shifting the primary focal point of community development from the center to the periphery (see Figure 4.3). In the planning literature, commentators refer to this transition as the proliferation of urban sprawl (Hall Jr. and Porterfield 2001). Although discussions about urban sprawl are often complicated by the difficulties associated with defining and measuring the prevalence of sprawl, there is a general acceptance that the concept refers to the outwards movement of development activity toward the urban fringe, along with the low density consumption of ‘greenfield’ or ‘vacant’ land.
The consumer demand for suburban homes was given a significant boost with the demographic explosion linked to the baby-boomer cohort (1948-1955) and the high rates of immigration that was to be the norm in southwestern Ontario throughout the post-war period. The preference for low density housing, idealized by the mainstream notion of a quaint home with a white picket fence has driven various waves of residential development, decisively shifting population concentrations away from traditional community centers, as well as consuming large tracts of land at the expense of the open space environment and depleting the overall stock of agricultural cropland. This period of time also marked the steady transition in human settlement from rural-to-urban communities, so much so that by 2001 only 15% of the province’s population base is considered to reside in rural areas (Statistics Canada 2011). Growing rates of automobile usage coupled with the steady expansion of roadway infrastructure added further to this trend by increasing the distances that could be reasonable travelled, essentially eliminating any spatial asymmetry that may have existed between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ in southwestern Ontario.
What was the case for the residential sector would eventually exhibit a similar influence on commercial and industrial development activity as suburban malls overshadowed mainstreet, and greenfield industrial parks eclipsed old industrial districts as the principal drivers of local economic development. As older community centers reached their full build-out potential, new economic actors began looking outwards for other economic opportunities. The development of strip-malls and suburban shopping centers, often dominated by the presence of ‘big box’ retailers, provided alternative commercial space to the traditional downtown environment, and gradually came to undermine the economic viability of the latter. Unlike older commercial areas, new format establishments were designed and purpose built to accommodate substantial parking capacity, appealing to a consumer culture preferring the convenience of automotive travel. Likewise, as industrial activity expanded in the province, site-locators looked increasingly to the fringe of communities as preferred locations to establish new,
often larger production facilities that could also accommodate large amounts of parking for an expanding workforce. For these key reasons, postwar community and local economic development can be said to be characterized by the steady outward expansion of built-up areas and the growing reliance of automobile travel in the day-to-day lives of Ontarians. As I shall discuss later on, these new patterns of economic development have not only been widespread, but they have also occurred at a pace that is increasingly being recognized as unsustainable.

While it could be said that postwar development activity in Ontario took place within a broader socio-economic milieu that was generally pro-growth, it also took place, somewhat counter-intuitively, under context of expanding local government involvement in land use regulation. How can this apparent contraction be explained? The rapid growth that took place in the late nineteenth century and throughout much of the twentieth century inevitably led to increasing occurrences of land use conflict within many communities. Local frustration and concerns over the growing incompatibility of residential, commercial and industrial uses within close proximity of each other prompted municipal officials to look for new ways to guide development and devise mitigating measures to prevent property value devaluation, particularly with regard to prime residential areas. The desire to protect the neighbourhood character of residential areas from the nuisances of commercial and industrial activities was a major factor behind the adoption of Euclidean zoning practices in Canada, which sought to promote the segregation of land uses into specifically designated areas or zones –namely low, medium and high density residential, commercial and industrial districts. As John Chipman (2002, 112) contends, “since then, the scope of zoning control has been widened to
include all land uses; [however] the protection of residential areas… remain[s] an
important component of planning….” One of the main unintended consequences to arise
as a result of adopting this system of land use regulation was the promotion of auto-
dependence and sprawl by encouraging the spatial separation of residential areas from the
main centers of commercial and industrial activity. Because of this legacy, one could
argue that government intervention in land use planning and development is both a partial
culprit and possible solution to the challenges created by unsustainable forms of
development. Furthermore, significant government involvement in local land-use
regulation does not in itself thwart economic development from taking place. In fact, the
historical record seems to suggest otherwise.

To complicate matters further, the trend toward suburbanization took place within
as well as between communities in southwestern Ontario. Decades of unabated growth
and unfocused planning at the regional level, influenced largely by the laissez-faire
ideology, resulted in a problematic and unsustainable situation we now commonly equate
with sprawl, as some communities have expanded geographically well beyond traditional
boundaries. Yet the outcome of recent economic expansion has not been expressed
uniformly across southwestern Ontario. In fact, as I shall uncover in greater detail,
symptoms of growth and decline coexist problematically, which is itself indicative of a
more complex socio-economic process taking place.
The community of Chatham is the largest settlement within the amalgamated municipality that makes up Chatham-Kent. Chatham is located less than 100 kilometers east of Detroit and approximately 288 kilometers southwest of Toronto. Historically, proximity to the American border and the presence of the Big Three automotive manufacturers (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) made the community an attractive investment destination, and reflected an important source of local economic development. Despite this early legacy of industrialization, population growth within the community has stagnated in recent years, declining by 0.5% per annum during the last inter-censal period. The employment base of the community is rooted heavily in the primary (9 percent) and secondary (26 percent) sectors of the economy, which is well above both the provincial and national averages (Statistics Canada, 2011). This economic base is reflective of the community’s historical strengths in the agricultural and automotive

18 (Photo #1) Downtown Chatham, circa 1880s (Photo #2) Downtown Chatham, circa 2008. Municipal Archives.
production. Notwithstanding the relative decline of the agriculture sector as a source of employment in the national economy, it continues to play a major role within the community. There are roughly 2,352 farms surrounding the area of Chatham, making it Canada’s largest producer of seed corn, tomatoes and sugar beets.\(^{19}\) The well established agricultural sector has also nurtured significant growth in related areas of food-processing, greenhouse production, bio-fiber production and renewable bio-fuel production.

**Table 4.1: Chatham Population Trends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chatham</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>5 year Annualized Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>43,632</td>
<td>43,409</td>
<td>43,690</td>
<td>45,282</td>
<td>44,074</td>
<td>-0.53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistic Canada: 2011 Census Data

The origin of large scale manufacturing dates back to the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century when William Gray & Sons began producing carriages in 1855, later supplying ‘built bodies’ for the Ford Motor Company in nearby Walkerville –today part of Windsor. In 1907, the ‘Chatham’ became Canada’s first domestically produced automobile (Rhodes 1987, 84). More recently, Chatham continues to be a major center of automotive production and is home to International Truck & Engines (Navistar), Dana Canada, Meritor Suspensions and Siemens Automotive among others.

\(^{19}\) Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Planning Department Archival Document.
Chatham was an already well established center by the time the railway arrived in 1853; nevertheless the arrival of the Great Western Railway would play a fundamental role in shaping subsequent community development. Today, Chatham is serviced by the trunk lines of three major railways: Canadian National Railway, Canadian Pacific Railway and the CSX. While the Thames River exerted an early influence on the initial founding of the community, the parallel rail lines running to the south of the old downtown encouraged the community’s steady outward expansion. Overtime, Chatham’s industrial district developed along an east-west axis between the major rail lines, whereas residential areas developed primarily to the north and south of this core. Even a casual observation of Chatham’s urban morphology via aerial photography would suggest the community’s physical development has been somewhat centrifugal. More recently, the development of a new industrial park on the southern periphery of the municipality’s built-up area provides further evidence of a ‘leap-frog’ pattern of community development (see Figure 4.4).
Chatham’s historical center lies on either side of the Thames River bounded by Grand Avenue to the North and Wellington Street to the south. A great deal of Chatham’s early industrial, warehousing and commercial establishments was located within this district, particularly along King Street West. With the arrival of the railway in the 1850s, however, newer and larger industrial firms began concentrating in the area.

Figure 4.4: Industrial Zones in Chatham$^{20}$

20 Source Data courtesy of Chatham-Kent Municipal Archives, Planning Department.
between the two railway lines running parallel to Richmond Street and Park Avenue. However, even by the end of the Second World War, most of the community’s major industrial establishments were no longer located in the historical center. To a large extent, much of the original building stock that housed early industrial and warehousing activity, at least those that avoided demolition over the years, have been converted successfully into mixed-use commercial and residential structures. The emergence of modern land-use and zoning controls helped disentangle heavy industry from residential areas and pushed these more noxious activities to the communities southwest and southeast.

The period between 1960 and 1987 has been referred to as a ‘golden age’ for the community of Chatham. It has been suggested by one local historian that “jobs could be found without a great deal of effort and the economy was expanding and flourishing” (Rhodes 1987, 129). Indeed, throughout this period, the industrial sector fueled local growth as existing firms expanded and new ones set-up operations in town. Firms like International Harvester Co., Motor Wheel Corporation, Pioneer, Campbell Soup Co. and Siemens Automotive Inc., each with a labour force numbering in the hundreds, underwent major plant investments and expansions. Dozens of other manufacturing plants, food processors and packaging firms followed suit establishing new facilities in the burgeoning industrial lands sandwiched between the two railway lines. This strength in the industrial sector helped support a thriving commercial district in the downtown, including the redevelopment of an older property into the Downtown Chatham Center in 1982. Throughout this so-called golden age, Chatham’s diverse and robust local economy helped make it a stalwart of Ontario’s thriving industrial heartland.
By the late 1980’s, Chatham’s economy, like other parts of the province grappling with the fallout of recession, began to show signs of fragility and decline. Plant shutdowns and mass lay-offs exacted a heavy human cost, whereas a more visible scourge would become imprinted on the community’s built form. Abandoned and underutilized industrial properties within the community reflect a long-term issue that is not going to be easily resolved. Visual blight not only projects’ an unflattering image of decline, issues of potential contamination beneath the surface ensures that the re-development of such lands will be a risky and potentially problematic undertaking. It is difficult to estimate the full extent of the so-called brownfield problem within Chatham. What is certain is that derelict sites are overwhelmingly clustered in the old industrial core of town, decaying vestiges of a once thriving district. As the local economy rebounded in the 1990s, and then again in the early 2000s, renewed economic growth did little to remedy the problem of abandoned industrial properties in the community. In fact, most new investment took place outside the older established industrial areas altogether, locating alternatively in a new 40 hectare ‘greenfield’ industrial park on the community’s southern periphery.
St. Thomas is a community located in the center of southwestern Ontario, almost of equal distance from Detroit (185 Km), Toronto (205 Km), and Buffalo (215 Km). Like Chatham, its proximity to the United States provided an early impetus for growth. Over the time span of a century-and-a-half, St. Thomas has evolved from an agricultural community, to a railway town, to an important industrial centre. In the last 5 years, Statistics Canada (2011) reports that the community has grown at an annualized rate of 1%. Until recently, nearly a third of the local labour force (32 per cent) was employed in the secondary sector, with automotive manufacturing being of particular significance. St. Thomas was home to two major automotive manufactures – Ford Motor Company and Sterling Trucks- employing over 4,000 workers combined. In late 2008, Sterling Trucks shut down operations permanently while Ford Motor Company announced plans to shutter its sprawling production complex in 2011. Although the community has experienced oscillating economic fortunes in the past, the severity of job loss in this most recent downturn is certainly unprecedented. During my final research phase between

21 (Photo #1) Downtown St. Thomas, circa 1890s (Photo #2) Downtown St. Thomas, circa 2009. Municipal Archives.
2008 and 2009, I recorded notices of job loss and lay-offs in the area totaling some 6,500 fulltime positions, which amounts to roughly 38% of the area’s total labour force. It would not be an overstatement to suggest that St. Thomas has been the hardest-hit community in Canada by the ‘Great Recession of 2008.

**Table 4.2: St. Thomas Population Trends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. Thomas</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>5 Year Annualized Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>30,332</td>
<td>32,275</td>
<td>33,236</td>
<td>36,110</td>
<td>37,905</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics Canada: 2011 Census Data

Historically, the main throughway in St. Thomas developed along Talbot Street with a significant industrial area emerging to the south parallel along Wellington Street, bounded by Ross Street to the east and Fairview Avenue to the West, after the arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1853. Within a couple of decades, two important east-west lines connected St. Thomas with other major Canadian and American cities. As its peak, St. Thomas was a hub for eight different railways and would see up to 100 trains pass through on any given day (Paddon et al. 1981, 14-33). The railways brought jobs, prosperity and growth to the community. Given its significance to local community development, St. Thomas was referred to at the time as the “Railway City”. By the end of the First World War, however, the prominence of the railway industry began to decline steadily. St. Thomas also developed an early manufacturing base producing all types of products including: agricultural implements, furniture, shoes and bicycles. More significantly, in the modern postwar era, the community developed into an important
centre of automotive production, and was home to two major assemblers as well as numerous other large scale component producers. As the community’s industrial base expanded, new plants tended to gravitate eastwards along the rail tracks while residential areas developed to the north and south of the old downtown.

The first half-century of rapid growth that took place in St. Thomas can be mainly attributable to the coming of the railways and its economic impact, however, subsequent economic development was to be moderate and a consequence of more careful planning. There was actually very little growth taking place in the community once the railway industry began declining, and by the end of Great Depression, the community’s population base actually contracted. In an effort to off-set troubling trends, municipal authorities sought to take a more decisive role in shaping the community’s economic future. As early as 1922, municipal Council purchased 16 hectares of land on the north side of Talbot Street bounded by First Avenue and Fairview Avenue, with the intent to create an industrial park and secure lands for future industrial growth. This bold step would eventually attract new investment and stimulate further economic growth. U.S. based Timken, along with numerous other manufacturing firms, would come to set-up new production facilities on, or adjacent to these industrially designated lands. Throughout the post-war period and up until the present, a significant concentration of heavy industry located within the general vicinity of the community’s first industrial park (see Figure 4.5).
The toll of various waves of economic downturn and economic restructuring that took place over the last few decades has certainly impacted the community and its built environment. The railway dockyards in the old industrial core lie mostly vacant and

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22 Source Data courtesy of St. Thomas Municipal Archives, Planning Department.
likely contaminated. More recent plant closings have left numerous large parcels of land abandoned or under-utilized. Yet at the same time, municipal authorities continue to try and attract new industry by phasing-in a greenfield industrial park on the community’s northeastern fringe. Given the magnitude of this most recent economic slump, many retail establishments have also struggled and closed their doors as well, further blighting the old downtown commercial corridor.

Community Profile: Woodstock

The community of Woodstock is located 128 Km southwest of Toronto and just northwest of where highways 401 and 403 intersect. Historically, the community developed as an important agricultural center and over time acquired the reputation as being the ‘dairy capital’ of Canada. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the local economy had already diversified significantly, with numerous food processors and manufactures producing for local and export markets. In more recent years, while the

23 (Photo #1) Downtown Woodstock, circa 1910s (Photo #2) Downtown Woodstock, circa 2007. Municipal Archives.
agricultural sector declined in relative terms, the community continues to thrive as an important manufacturing hub with nearly a third of the labour force (32%) employed in the secondary sector and an overall unemployment rate well below the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2011). Although population growth over the last 5 years has been somewhat modest at an annualized rate of 1.6%, current trends and population projections suggest future growth to be more robust (refer to Table 4.3). The decision by Toyota Motor Corporation – now the world’s largest automotive producer – to set-up a new assembly plant facility appears to confirm Woodstock’s future as expanding community.

Table 4.3: Woodstock Population Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodstock</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>5 Year Annualized Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>30,075</td>
<td>32,086</td>
<td>33,061</td>
<td>35,480</td>
<td>37,362</td>
<td><strong>1.06%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics Canada: 2011 Census Data

Like other small communities in Ontario, Woodstock’s early development was profoundly influenced by the advent of rail. Originally a small agrarian village, the arrival of the Great Western Railway in the 1850s prompted rapid growth and industrialization. By the early 20th century, the community had numerous established industries and was considered an important producer of rope, barrels, candles, harnesses, furniture, musical organs and carriages. This diverse industrial base helped Woodstock gain the notoriety of being ‘the industrial city’. In the post-war period, the once thriving locally oriented manufacturing base was gradually replaced by a growing number of
American based manufacturing branch plants. In the past few years, major investments by the Toyota Corporation and Hino Motors have remade Woodstock into one of the leading automotive manufacturing centers in Canada.

Early community development activity initially took place within the lands to the north and east of the railway lines that converge in Woodstock (see Map 1.3). The community’s mainstreet developed along an east-west trajectory on Dundas Street, which runs parallel to the old Great Western Railway line to the south. Much of Woodstock’s early manufacturing activity took root on the land lying south of Dundas Street and north of the tracks. Although no longer the epicenter of the community’s manufacturing activity, glimpses of this industrial past are evident in the buildings that scatter the area. The establishment of larger scale manufacturing facilities during the boom years of the postwar period took place on land adjacent to the railway line running north-south and just west of Tecumseh Street, creating another larger industrial area within the community (see Figure 4.6). This phase of economic development was part of a broader pattern of growing American investment and influence in the Canadian economy. By the 1980s, however, decades of steady economic growth began to show signs of deterioration. As the effects of the recession took place within the community, several prominent firms closed down permanently and facilities left abandoned. After a period of recovery in the late 1980s, the local economy would face another bout of plant closings in the recession that was to take place in the 1990s, further blighting the industrial landscape.
In the aftermath of the most recent economic downturn confronting the region, the community of Woodstock, like other industrial centers in the province, has been adversely impacted by instability in the manufacturing sector and some plants.

Fortunately, these job losses have been partially offset by the expansion of the new Toyota plant and the arrival of several new automotive component producers. Toyota for

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24 Source Data courtesy of Woodstock Municipal Archives, Planning Department.
instance, shortly after opening, added 800 new jobs in 2009 to help meet demand for its RAV4 vehicle. Other firms like Aisin, Boshoku and Tsusho Canada, seeking to locate near the Toyota assembly plant, have established new facilities and created hundreds of new jobs in the process. This recent wave of mostly Japanese investment is playing a significant role reshaping the community’s industrial landscape. As I shall discuss further, firms today demonstrate a clear preference to establish new production facilities on greenfield land lying on the outskirts of town.

While other manufacturing communities in southwestern Ontario have seen their industrial employment base erode steadily over the last number of years, the experience of Woodstock proves to be an important counterpoint to the broader trend. Despite major turmoil in the global economy and significant restructuring taking place in the automotive sector, the community of Woodstock is managing to maintain, if not expand, its manufacturing footprint. Researchers have noted that manufacturing employment is an important source of ‘good jobs,’ ones that provide employees with wages and benefits that allow for a reasonably comfortable lifestyle (Duffy, Glenday and Pupo 1997; Winson and Leach 2002). These jobs are also important for the overall vitality of a community. Eamonn Fingleton (2003, xviii) argues that “manufacturing’s falling share in total employment in [North America] correlates closely with a pattern of stagnant middleclass income growth…” taking place for the last number of years. Fingleton goes on to argue that a strong manufacturing sector is crucial for overall economic prosperity and provides numerous advantages, including a positive contribution to a nation’s trade balance, significant multiplier effects in the local economy and the creation of a wide range of jobs for varying degrees of skill capacities. It is for this reason that the strength of a
community’s manufacturing sector is often a useful gauge whenever assessing local economic wellbeing. From this perspective, Woodstock appears better positioned to emerge from this most recent economic crisis favourably when compared to other communities in southwestern Ontario where manufacturing job losses might prove to be a more permanent reality.

**Community Profile: Alliston**

Alliston is a growing settlement within the amalgamated community of New Tecumseth, which also encompasses the former centres of Beeton, Tottenham and Tecumseth Township. The community is located 80 kms north of Toronto and west of highway 400 in Simcoe County. Given its close proximity to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Canada’s largest and fastest growing metropolis, New Tecumseth’s development has been inextricably interconnected, particularly within the last two decades. Historically, the community of Alliston was an agricultural center famous for potato

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25 (Photo #1) Mercer Manufacturing Company (Farm Implements), built 1889 (Photo #2) Gibson Arts Centre, circa 2007. Municipal Archives.
production. Whatever industry developed locally tended to serve the demands of the nearby farming community. Railway connectivity did not reach the town until 1905 when the local population base was less than 1,500 residents according to the national census of the time. Among the case study localities examined in this study, Alliston is certainly the ‘youngest’, least industrialized, and fastest growing of the communities selected (see Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4: New Tecumseth (Alliston) Population Trends**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>20,344</td>
<td>22,902</td>
<td>26,141</td>
<td>27,701</td>
<td>30,234</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics Canada: 2011 Census Data

For much of its history, Alliston was fairly typical for a small rural community in southwestern Ontario. As the settlement grew, a commercial district and small number of artisan-type producers emerged clustering around mainstreet on Victoria. Elegant residential neighbourhoods developed to the north and south of the community’s historic center. Then in 1986, the town gained widespread notoriety when Honda of Canada Mfg. established its first assembly plant in the community. A decade or so afterwards, Honda expanded its presence and established a second plant in 1998. Today, Honda operates two automotive assembly facilities and an engine plant employing more than 4,600 employees, making it the largest employer in Simcoe County. Within a relatively short time frame, the small town of Alliston has evolved into one of North America’s largest auto-producing centres. Not surprisingly, the community has undergone tremendous
growth over the last 5 years, growing at an annualized rate of 1.8% (Statistics Canada 2011). Although Honda attracts its workforce from all over the area and as far away as Toronto, as it was discovered during the research phase, nearly 1/3 or 32% of the community’s labour force is directly employed in manufacturing. At 4.7%, New Tecumseth has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Most standard measures of economic development would suggest the community of Alliston to be in the midst of an unprecedented phase of economic boom and prosperity.

Figure 4.7: Industrial Zone in Alliston (New Tecumseth)²⁶

²⁶ Source Data courtesy of New Tecumseth Municipal Archives, Planning Department.
Unlike the other communities examined previously, the development of a large scale modern industrial district within Alliston has been a fairly recent accomplishment. In fact, one of the key distinguishing features of the community is the relative absence of an older industrial core, and many of the problems associated with urban decay. Honda’s large manufacturing complex was built entirely upon 182 hectares of greenfield land on the southeastern fringe of the settlement and remains surrounded by agricultural cropland (see Fig. 4.7). While other older industrial communities grapple with a declining manufacturing base and the problematic issue of how to deal with abandoned and potentially contaminated properties, Alliston is being confronted with the challenge of sudden economic expansion and the need to implement growth management policies. Even with the turbulence of the recent economic downturn, Alliston appears to have weathered the storm relatively unscathed. After laying off upwards of 800 temporary contract workers in 2009, the company has since re-hired half of those previously let-go. Indeed, Alliston and Japanese automotive producers are often cited as a counterpoint to older North American industrial cities undergoing decline and the ills faced by the Big Three U.S. based auto-manufacturers.

There is a growing body of literature examining the ‘ruralization’ of the automotive industry and the reasons why large multinationals look toward smaller greenfield communities to establish new production facilities (Kingsolver 1998; Winson and Leach 2002). Much of this literature suggests weaker regulatory measures and union avoidance strategies as the key motivators influencing locational decision-making. In this regard, the case of Alliston appears to reinforce this argument. As we shall discuss further, my own research also suggests that the availability of cheaper industrial land, new
infrastructure and other ‘hidden’ public subsidies plays a key role courting this type of new investments. The case study of Alliston provides an interesting example of how some communities can struggle with issues of rapid economic growth, and not just problems related to economic decline. In fact, as I will explore later, rapid growth taking place in some localities in southwestern Ontario is more closely related to urban decay taking place in other communities than what might otherwise appear. Both of these troubling tendencies pose a significant challenge toward the achievement of more sustainable forms of community development.

**Small Town Ontario: ‘The Times They Are a-Changin’**

Throughout its short history, a great deal of change has taken place in southwestern Ontario. Troughton and Quinlan (2009, 163) suggest in many areas of the region, as much as 90 percent of the natural vegetation has been cleared for human settlement, agricultural production and transportation purposes. Along with major transformations to natural ecological systems, significant cultural changes have taken place as well. Once thriving rural communities have slipped into decline or grow at the expense of becoming bedroom-villages devoid of traditional social vitality. Other larger centers, such as those identified here as community case studies, have grown considerably at the cost of urban decay or community disintegration. Central downtown districts have tended to diminish in stature while distinctive traditional neighbourhoods have become overshadowed by homogenizing suburban housing developments. Today, the need to better understand the interrelatedness of urban and rural contexts, greenfield development and brownfield decay, natural and human systems, is both urgent and complex. Rapid development
associated with unabated sprawl that takes place alongside the steady urban deterioration of many communities seems to condemn us to an undesirable situation whereby natural areas and farmland are consumed relentlessly as older existing built-up areas appear to become less attractive places for human habitation and industry.

The community case studies discussed above were purposively selected because they serve as useful examples highlighting some of the major challenges and contradictions facing the region. In Ontario today, growth and prosperity coexists with decline and increasing impoverishment. One of the goals this section endeavors to accomplish, is argue that both conditions are more interconnected than conventionally understood, and by implication, solutions to undesirable excesses must tackle both simultaneously. There is a growing realization that current patterns and practices of community development are becoming increasingly unsustainable from a social, economic and ecological perspective (Harvey 1996; Winson and Leach 2002; Fingleton 2003). Urban sprawl, traffic congestion, inner-city decay, environmental and health hazards are all symptoms of a much larger problem that impacts the quality of life and well-being of all Ontarians. Achieving more desirable outcomes will require urgent action and new directions to follow as the cost of maintaining the status quo continues to rise. Trying to figure out where we as a community need to go, however, requires that we step-back for a moment and consider where we went wrong.

Building and sustaining healthy communities requires foresight, careful planning and soundly executed implementation strategies, along with ongoing consistent effort. It is about leveraging local assets and capabilities wisely, as well as utilizing available
resources efficiently so as to enhance the quality of life and long-term well being of all. As will be discussed later, the issue of sustainability is fraught with complications, with several facets often competing for priority. Suffice it here to say that building sustainable and healthy communities is ultimately about balancing conflicting interests and tendencies, and exercising local control over the multitude of forces that can impact a community. Perhaps as a result of hardship or necessity, early community builders in southwestern Ontario seemed to have understood at least part of this challenge. For this reason, it is worth looking back to see how these communities in southwestern Ontario were planned and built in order to re-discover the principals and practices that served them so well in the past.

Certainly, ideas about community planning date back in human history to the origins of the first sedentary societies. In southwestern Ontario, community founding and development was heavily influenced by the British planning and design tradition prior to the Second World War. The physical manifestation of this notion of community is often referred to in the literature as ‘traditional neighbourhood development’. As Hall Jr. and Porterfield (2001, xx) make note, the geographic center of traditional neighbourhood development accommodates places to work, shop and gather in public for recreation and amusement. The rest of the community develops and is oriented around this ultimate focal point. Generally, and depending on the size of the community in question, the physical layout is sized so that most dwellers are within a fifteen-minute walk of the built-up core. Historically in small town Ontario, factories, warehouses, commercial establishments, offices, schools and churches were all found within close proximity of each other, functioning together as the heart of the community. Residents lived, worked
and mingled within these mixed-use districts, only venturing rarely outside these confines in their day-to-day lives.

These design practices, of course, took place in a context prior to the advent of the automobile. To ensure a viable and vibrant settlement, early community architects recognized the importance of ensuring that all of life’s basic necessities were provided for, and that residents were able to circulate easily to obtain these essential elements. And of course when the so called ‘market’ was unable or incapable of delivering these goods and services, government stepped-in to fill the void. In modern Canadian society, taxation was justified and legitimized as a way to fund the provisioning of basic infrastructure within and as well as between communities, which was particularly evident since none was in existence. Free market ideologues often criticize government intervention as a source of distortion in the marketplace, however, the Canadian experience, as is the case with all former frontier and colonial societies, demonstrates that government intervention was and is absolutely critical to enabling the ‘free’ functioning of markets in the first instance. Early community planning and development in small town Ontario was quite literally preoccupied with the task of building the basic physical elements of community, namely buildings, transportation networks and institutions, while at the same time, ensuring the constant flow of settlers to boost population densities.

The role of constructing public transportation infrastructure in the Canadian nation-building process cannot be overlooked nor overstated (Innis 1929; Lucas 1971; Marr and Paterson 1980). Railways in particular were fundamental in giving ‘life’ to communities, along with uniting the country into a more cohesive entity. Given its strategic
significance to the national economy, railway transportation was considered to be an important matter for colonial administration, and after confederation, Canadian public policy. The development of a nationwide railway system transformed Canada from a land of dispersed settler outposts into a modernizing nation with bustling communities. Stops along the railway line gave birth to some communities while other pre-existing settlements lobbied hard to ensure that the railway passed through town. Railway lines served as the critical conduits linking local dwellers to the outside world, and not surprisingly, the communities examined above thrived and developed around the railway. By 1900, most of southwestern Ontario had become connected by rail. As a mode of transportation, the railway system was extremely efficient at transporting people and goods to and from markets, and helped make southwestern Ontario the productive heartland of Canada.

Between 1850 and 1900, railway connectivity ushered in an era of rapid economic expansion. As a matter of government policy intervention, the building of a national railway system did succeed in stimulating endogenous economic development. This early industrial and commercial activity was given another major boost when the Dominion of Canada instituted a tariff wall to better protect fledgling Canadian business interests from American competition. These tariffs, known as the ‘National Policy’, were instrumental in promoting a domestic manufacturing sector and diversifying an economy once dominated by agriculture and natural resource extraction activities. Growth in the manufacturing sector, in turn, helped stimulate other areas of economic activity and supported a growing population base, creating a virtuous cycle of mutually reinforcing linkages allowing communities to grow and thrive. It was during this era that the
historical centers of many small towns in southwestern Ontario were built and flourished; including the communities identified in this chapter as case studies.

Manufacturing activity is often thought to be a modern and urban-based occurrence. The economic history of southwestern Ontario, however, illustrates the unique role small scale manufacturing played in the early development of smaller rural communities. For the most part, this productive output tended to serve local needs as well as was marketed abroad for additional economic viability. This inward-outward model of local economic development helped create the demand, capability and output that allowed small towns to flourish as vibrant places to live and work. Perhaps all too apparently, the economic model that served small town Ontario so well at the turn of the twentieth century no longer functions as it once did, yet as was noted earlier, its vestiges remain evident in the built downtowns and neighbourhoods of the era. In the early post-war period, the modernization that came along with new mass production techniques – what came to be known as Fordism— undermined and soon replaced much of the smaller artisanal producers that had previously thrived. But even with the advent of large-scale modern industrial production, small town Ontario remained a manufacturing stalwart. Communities like Chatham, St. Thomas and Woodstock in particular, grew and evolved into important industrial centers within the province. A number of researchers have noted the significance of the modern manufacturing sector in smaller rural communities throughout southwestern Ontario and elsewhere in North America (Lucas 1971; Nash 1989; Gertler 1993; Kingsolver 1998; Nelson and Smith 1999; Winson and Leach 2002). More recently, a great deal of restructuring has taken place in the last two decades, especially since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the demise of
the U.S.-Canada Autopact Agreement, once again fundamentally altering the economic environment and growth context influencing many communities in the region. The outcome and consequences of this most recent phase of economic transformation have yet to be fully explored, particularly within the Canadian context. This dissertation attempts to fill the gap by documenting and analyzing some of the key developments taking place within the four communities identified in this chapter with the broader objective of making sense of the contradictory process of growth and decline taking place at the same meso-level geographic scale.

There is a substantial body of literature that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s examining globalization, deindustrialization and socio-economic change at the community scale (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Nash 1989; Harvey 1996; Peck 1996; Rinehart, Huxley and Robertson 1997). Much of this scholarly work suggested the deindustrialization of North America’s traditional industrial centers was taking place as a result of a shifting geography of production, aided by the emergence of the neoliberal state. The so-called ‘elimination of borders’ brought about by the globalization movement allowed large corporations to re-source productive capacity to lower cost nations – primarily in the developing world — all-the-while maintaining access to more lucrative ‘home’ markets. Within the North American context, the neoliberal state both encouraged and facilitated this process, which resulted in widespread job losses, manufacturing decline and social disruption in what came to be described as the rust-belt region. For a variety of reasons, Canada managed to avoid the brunt of this initial round of restructuring, primarily because Ontario served as a lower-cost jurisdiction relative to its neighbour south of the border (High 2003). While the deindustrialization thesis
proved to be influential and a relevant description of what was taking place, arguably the
process did fall short of being a *fait accompli*, especially within the Canadian context.
Today, southwestern Ontario continues to attract major investment in the manufacturing
sector despite signs of de-industrialization (Leach, Leadbetter, Preibisch, Sousa and
Yates 2007). Although employment levels have slipped from historical highs, nearly
20% of the province’s workforce remains linked to the sector, with many communities
like those highlighted in this study well above the provincial average.

As economic activity and growth continues to take place in the region, new
challenges and dilemmas also arise. Perhaps the single most relevant indicator of this
current economic dynamism, along with the pressures exerted, is made evident by overall
rates of greenfield land consumption. Yet understanding the full extent of the problem is
not a straightforward process, and ripe with potential conflict. Part of the difficulty of
establishing even a reasonable estimate on the amount of ‘greenfiled land’ being
converted into new industrial, commercial, institutional and residential purposes in the
Province stems from the complexities associated with establishing valid and acceptable
definitions, boundaries and baselines figures to be used in calculating overall stock and
depletion rates. For this reason, the full extent of the problem can only be inferred
indirectly from ongoing efforts to institute growth management initiatives and protect
rural lands from urban encroachment. The Ontario Greenbelt protection area, which was
created by provincial statute in 2005, reflects, arguably, the first major province-led effort
to tackle the issue of urban sprawl, at least in the immediate area surrounding the Golden
Horseshoe region. Elsewhere in the province, a number of municipalities have sought to create urban growth boundaries in order to draw a line in the ground, so to speak, as a way to halt further encroachment into the countryside and direct growth towards existing built-up areas.

As major growth takes place on limited greenfield land, elsewhere in the region, older, primarily urban-based lands lay derelict, underutilized and potentially contaminated. The concern with how to address the existence of brownfield land - properties once utilized for industrial purposes but then left abandoned- is a relatively recent development in the academic literature. Once again, the full scale of the problem remains unknown and only sporadic data is available documenting the prevalence of brownfield sites. For the most part, brownfield lands tend to be overwhelmingly concentrated within the ‘urban’ core of many communities, clustered along railway lines and former industrial districts. As is the case with Chatham, St. Thomas and Woodstock, brownfields constitute a major source of blight within the community, which serves to discourage interest in redevelopment opportunities. The next chapter will examine in greater detail the issue of greenfield development and brownfield decay, and suggests that these two processes are more connected than generally understood. Current growth trends and patterns of disinvestment reflect a new spatial geography of development and underdevelopment taking place in southwestern Ontario. These changes are significant

27 The Ontario Green Belt Act (2005) essentially shuts-out any form of developmental activity from taking place within the demarcated areas stipulated in the legislation by denying development approvals and the issuance of requisite building permits. As a consequence, lands that are designated as open green space, agricultural land, woodlots and other sensitive environmental features are protected from being converted to other purposes, thereby freezing-out urban encroachments (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing).
and will inevitability impact the quality of life and long term sustainability of small town Ontario.

Building and sustaining healthy communities under the current political-economic order requires us to re-think old habits and devise new directions to follow. Although the task ahead is considerable, it is also not beyond human ambition. Part of the task of making positive systemic change requires that we understand what does not work for communities, and then consider policy alternatives and implementation strategies that can promote more sustainable forms of community development. These necessary steps are examined further in the chapters that follow. More specifically, they describe and interpret major development challenges confronting small town Ontario, and look to offer pragmatic options that can work for communities.
CHAPTER FIVE

- BROWNFIELDS, GREENFIELDS AND THE POST-INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE

One constant in the history of capitalism is the ever-more-intensive use of land, as mercantile towns replaced agricultural villages, major industrial cities replaced those towns, and massive complexes of suburbs, exurbs and edge cities expanded the boundaries of those cities. (Richard Florida, 2010)

Human beings, like all other organisms, are ‘active subjects transforming nature according to its laws’ and are always in the course of adapting to the ecosystems they themselves construct. It is fundamentally mistaken, therefore, to speak of the impact of society on the ecosystem as if these two are separate systems in interaction with each other. (David Harvey, 1996)

The industrial revolution helped transform Canada from an economy based predominately on natural resource extraction activities and agriculture to one where Canadian workers came to produce a wide variety of durable goods for national and export markets. In the immediate post-war period, the preeminence of the manufacturing sector became firmly established in central Canada, particularly among communities in south-western Ontario and southern Quebec situated along the 401-corridor. As Yates and Leach (2007, 167) make note, “[t]he regional dimension of Canada’s manufacturing history draws our attention to the way capital makes selective decisions about where to locate different kinds of economic activity… thus contributing to the uneven development of the country.” The historical development of central Canada as the nation’s industrial heartland meant that it would attract a significant share of overall immigration and sustain rapid population growth throughout the twentieth century. It would also help transform the country from a rural-based to an urban-centered society. Industrialization propelled Canada into the status of one of the world’s largest and most developed economies, affording its citizens with a high standard of living.
Within the province of Ontario, the role of the manufacturing sector in driving economic expansion and generating postwar prosperity cannot be overstated. The mass production of goods destined for export to the U.S. market created hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs, which in turn helped spur development in other sectors of the domestic economy. In particular, the significant growth of the Canadian automotive industry that took place during this period is one of the major underlying factors contributing to this economic success story. At its peak, Canada shipped over $65 billion worth of automobiles and $35 billion in automotive components with 90% of these goods exported to the U.S.—amounting to approximately 15% of total automobile production in North America (Industry Canada, 2008). It is estimated that the automotive industry directly creates half a million jobs—97% of which are located in Ontario—and is responsible for creating significant multiplier effects. Ontario is indisputably the nation’s automotive manufacturing leader with thirteen of fourteen car and light truck assembly plants located in the province. In addition to this, and prior to the most recent economic downturn in the Fall of 2008, the province was also home to 5 heavy-duty truck manufactures, making it the second largest motor vehicle producing jurisdiction in North America after Michigan (Industry Canada 2008).

The automotive sector was instrumental in stimulating other manufacturing related industries, namely steel production, casting, tool and component manufacture. Wealth generated in the industrial sector also encouraged growth in the service sector of the economy, and helped foster diversification over time. Manufacturing companies were pivotal players in the development of many communities in Ontario, providing the economic pull-factor attracting thousands of migrants from the countryside and elsewhere.
in the world. These early industrial plants were located in the geographic centre of such communities, usually within close proximity to railway transportation lines. This spatial patterning of industry, as I have discussed, influenced significantly the subsequent morphological development of communities, which tended to ‘grow-up’ around this central core. Within Ontario, industrialization and urbanization occurred in tandem, reflecting a mutually reinforcing process that characterized community development for much of the immediate postwar period.

If the manufacturing sector was the central economic pillar underwriting North American postwar prosperity, its influence has long since waned. As early as 1973, Daniel Bell (1973) called attention to the decline of manufacturing and the coming of a post-industrial age. With the cyclical downturns that would jolt the North American economy like clockwork on a decade-by-decade basis since the 1970s, Bell’s early foresight appears to have become an apocalyptic reality, particularly in the older industrial regions of the U.S. northeast. Writing in the context of the 1980s recession in the United States, Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982) introduced their influential ‘de-industrialization’ thesis to describe the unprecedented restructuring that was then taking place in the manufacturing sector. According to more recent OECD (2008) data, industrial production in the U.S. did recover somewhat, rising throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, however, employment in the manufacturing sector remains at or below levels reported in the 1980s. With the most recent downturn in the global economy, the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2010) notes that industrial activity has fallen once again, and suggests the current decline to be the most pronounced since the Great Depression. In scarcely over a quarter-century, it would not be an exaggeration to
say that the industrial sector—the manufacture of durable goods specifically—no longer holds a preeminent position in the American economy. For a variety of reasons that I will discuss in greater detail, Ontario’s manufacturing sector managed, until fairly recently, to avoid the full brunt of this broader socio-economic transformation.

Chapter 5 looks at some of the major underlying factors contributing to ‘de-industrialization’ in the North American context, then shifts the focus of our attention to the experience of small town Ontario within this broader frame of reference. Recent and ongoing changes taking place in the economy are altering fundamentally the availability and quality of work, which has enormous repercussions for the fortunes of communities and workers alike. This section seeks to establish greater conceptual order to a chaotic and uneven process of economic restructuring that is taking place in the North American marketplace, highlighting both the causes and consequences of this transformation.

Although there is a substantial body of literature examining the effects of globalization on industry and workers, much of this macro-oriented research tends to overlook the differential spatial impacts taking place (Piore and Sabel 1984; Moody 1997; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001; Anastakis 2005). On the other hand, micro-level studies, often looking to promote local economic revitalization and encourage the redevelopment of abandoned industrial properties often remain oblivious to the broader trends and processes that nevertheless influence the outcome of such efforts. This chapter seeks to avoid both shortcomings by adopting a middle-range analytical perspective, making the connection of how global forces shape local realities, as well as the ways in which local decision-making can and does fit-into the bigger picture. Despite massive and profound changes that are occurring in the manufacturing sector, it is, and will likely continue to be, an
important sector driving the economic well-being of many communities in south-western Ontario. At the same time, the social and physical context of manufacturing work has changed dramatically. I argue here that much of the private sector of the economy—industrial producers, commercial retailers and even some institutional entities—have been undergoing a process of respatializing capacity, shifting production and development activity away from the traditional growth centers within and between communities throughout the province. I move on to suggest that the growing problem with how to handle abandoned ‘brownfield’ properties is fundamentally linked to a related concern with how to implement growth management practices in greenfield areas, both reflecting different sides of an interrelated process that has come to define much of the North American post-industrial landscape.

The Crisis of Fordism and the Changing Geography of Production

For much of the pre and post-war period, North American manufactures utilized ‘Fordist’ production methods as the standard means to organize industrial processes. In the academic literature, ‘Fordism’ as an analytical concept, refers to a distinctive mode of production characterized by the mass production of standardized goods for mass consumption. The term is coined in recognition of the American industrialist Henry Ford’s then revolutionary method of producing automobiles by combining principles of instituting a detailed and repetitive division of tasks—also referred to as Taylorism28;

28 Similarly, ‘Taylorism,’ named after the American mechanical engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor, refers to the scientific management of the labour process so as to standardize work flows into discrete and carefully thought out steps with the ultimate goal of increasing overall
integrating labour power and mechanization into a singular productive process subject to centralized control –the assembly line; and, pursuing the full utilization of productive capacity in order to benefit from economies of scale. Also, crucial to the notion is the practice that production workers would be paid a decent wage so that they in turn could become the consumers of the goods produced. Although initially used in reference to the auto-sector, the concept of Fordism has since come to summarize, more generally, systems of production based of these characteristics (Amin 1994; Bonanno and Antonio 2000). The large scale and centrally located factory became the focal point where the production of standardized goods took place. Within the auto-sector, during the hey-day of the Fordist era, manufactures tended to produce most of a vehicle’s content –that is to say all the components that make-up a vehicle- ‘in house’ along with the final assembly of automobiles for final market – a production process, as we shall see, gradually being re-thought and re-worked.

The era of large-scale mass production is generally credited to have been ushered in by Henry Ford at the beginning of the 19th century, propelling the United States into the status of a global manufacturing powerhouse. Yet the geography of American manufacturing has changed over time. Initially, as a result of historical settlement patterns, the American eastern seaboard led the way towards industrialization. By 1914, however, there was a perceptible shift towards the Mid-West, with Detroit becoming a major centre of manufacturing production. The westward movement of industry in the

efficiency. ‘Fordism’ and ‘Taylorism’ would come to define modern industrial production practices for much of the twentieth century.
USA can certainly be attributed to the role played by Ford and other key individuals linked to the U.S. automotive industry—for instance, Ransom Olds (Oldsmobile), W.C. Durant (Buick) and the Dodge brothers—who happened to be Michigan natives. As Riley (1973, 184) suggests, “had these men lived elsewhere in the broad area of the Mid-West, lower Michigan would not have developed the way it did.” Largely as a result of such historical circumstances, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois developed as an early cluster of automotive production. Despite this early concentration of manufacturing capacity in the Mid-West, however, automotive production gradually evolved over time to become more spatially dispersed, especially after the 1950s.

Looking to avoid the over concentration of production plants within a single region, large manufacturing firms often looked to other ideally situated communities for strategic expansion goals. Because labour costs and union strength was considerably lesser outside Lower Michigan at the beginning of the twentieth century, many firms quickly realized the economic benefits of diffusing operations to other geographic locales. U.S. government policy also played an important role dispersing manufacturing capability to other areas as well. In the United States, the National Industrial Dispersal Program initiated in 1951, actively sought to encourage the scattering of new industrial plants away from established industrial centres. To a considerable degree, Cold War paranoia was an underlying motivation for wanting to diffuse production capability to other localities, thereby mitigating vulnerability, but it was also acknowledged that industrial plants played a positive role in overall community development (Riley 1973, 193).
Although the Fordist system of production took root in Canada during the pre-
World War years, the industry only came to full maturation after the signing of the 1965
Auto-Pact agreement, largely as a result of massive American branch plant investment
that soon followed.\footnote{Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and President Lyndon B.
Johnson signed the Canada-United States Automotive Trade Products Agreement (Auto Pact) into
effect on January 16, 1965. The agreement provided a framework to rationalize the automotive industry on a
continental basis and incentives to manufacturers who met minimal Canadian content requirements. It was made
somewhat obsolete with the ratification of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 1989 and its
successor, the North American Free Trade Agreement (1993). However, the trade accord was
dealt a final blow in 1999-2000 when the World Trade Organization deemed the agreement to be
in violation of international trade rules. For a comprehensive examination of the history and
significance of the Auto Pact (see Anastakis 2001 and 2005, Holmes 2004).}
Two of the community case studies highlighted in this dissertation —Chatham and St. Thomas-can trace key periods of industrial development to this era. In
Chatham for instance, one of Canada’s earliest automotive producing communities,
Navistar International Corporation began producing trucks as early as 1912. Shortly after
the Auto-Pact agreement was signed, the community of St. Thomas received a boost to its
industrial development efforts when Ford Motor Company established a major assembly
plant in 1967. Five years after the Auto-Pact agreement was implemented, total vehicle
production in Canada rose by an impressive 85%, with growth taking place in the auto-
parts sector as well (Holmes 2004, 262-265). The expansion of Ontario’s manufacturing
sector—which was driven primarily by the production of automotive vehicles for
export—would continue to grow throughout the 1970s, 1980s and well into the 1990s,
though periodically interrupted by cyclical downturns in the economy. Throughout these
decades, ‘Fordism’ helped increase Canada’s industrial output and the Big Three
American auto producers —Ford, General Motors and Chrysler—dominated the regional
production market. Autoworkers in the province benefited considerably as well from a booming industry with a strong union presence, seeing real wages and working conditions improve steadily throughout this period. In fact, Canadian autoworkers came to occupy a privileged position atop the labour market hierarchy, with production workers earning well over the Canadian average annual income.

As a mode of production, Fordism’s success was supported by a government regulatory regime generally guided by Keynesian inspired developmental principles, both at the federal and provincial level. Keynesianism can be understood as a form of government intervention that sought to actively encourage internal development by pursuing initiatives intended to promote full employment, mediate conflict between capital and labour through collective bargaining, and propping up aggregate demand to moderate destructive downswings in the economy. Canada’s negotiation of the Auto-Pact agreement, and the concern to stimulate the domestic automotive sector, is but one expression of this broader policy orientation. Jamie Peck (1996) and Bob Jessop (1999), among others, note how the conjunctural coupling of Fordism and Keynesianism was instrumental to create the stable macro-economic climate necessary to encourage industrialization, rising profits, rising wages and ultimately, sustained economic growth throughout most of the post-war era. Although one needs to be careful not to embellish this period in Canadian economic history, as problems with environmental degradation and social inequality remained latent, Ontario’s manufacturing sector did expand significantly under these conditions and was responsible for underwriting the nation’s trade surplus (Statistics Canada 2011).
In the United States, the manufacturing sector began to show signs of trouble and decline as early as the 1970s, the after-shocks of which continue to reverberate today. Beginning with the oil crisis of the 1970s, rising inflation and the initial penetration of Japanese vehicle imports into the North America market, traditional American industry giants were caught ill prepared, leading many major firms to re-examine and re-structure operations in the hopes of restoring profitability. Early U.S. scholarship examining the crisis of Fordism and the restructuring of manufacturing sector that took place, focused on massive job loss and the unprecedented wave of capital migration to lower cost regions outside America’s troubled industrial heartland. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982: 9) estimate between 32 and 38 million jobs were lost permanently during this period, with Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin hardest hit. Not surprisingly, manufacturing as a percentage of total employment in the U.S. declined to 20% by 1980 (High 2003, 92-97). This deteriorating macro-economic environment encouraged a relentless drive by many corporations to look for new ways to lower both operating and labour costs. Bluestone and Harrison (1982) argue that large U.S. corporations began to pursue a variety of strategies to deal with these new competitive pressures and reduce costs, including (1) the systematic de-investment of productive capacity from higher cost zones and its redeployment to lower cost greenfield sites; (2) ‘union avoidance’ whereby firms began to subcontract, outsource or shift production work to non-unionized operations; (3) where union avoidance was not possible, exert pressure to extract concessions from collective bargaining agreements; and, (4) a growing reliance on a lower paid and contingent workforce. For America’s once mighty industrial heartland, these changes have resulted in the net loss of hundreds
of thousands of well-paid manufacturing jobs and the permanent closure of numerous industrial plants, a social cost borne by displaced workers and affected communities.

In the aftermath of the first major economic crisis to confront the United States since the Second World War, it became painfully obvious to American manufactures that they were at a competitive disadvantage relative to foreign producers, particularly the Chinese and Japanese. Faced with declining market share and decreased profitability in an increasingly globalized marketplace, the American manufacturing sector entered into protracted decline. In some sub-sectors like electronics, appliances and the garment industry, American producers sought to de-nationalize operations altogether by moving production to cheaper offshore locations, then shipping products back for sale into the lucrative North American market. Within these sectors, the decline in manufacturing capacity was structural and permanent. In the automotive sector, manufacturing capability became more geographically dispersed as a result of intra-firm re-organization, with Canada, Mexico and the U.S. south emerging as new major centers of automotive production.

In sharp contrast to the fate encountered by America’s traditional automobile manufacturing regions, Canada’s automotive sector emerged in the 1980s stronger than ever before. Although the Big Three auto-producers did announce massive layoffs in Canadian branch-plant facilities, these slow-downs tended to be temporary and workers recalled once the economy picked-up. In fact, by the mid-to-late 1980s, the industry was once again in expansion mode. There are a number of key factors unique to the Canadian context that helps explain why restructuring in the manufacturing sector was less severe.
north of the border. First, despite the economic turbulence experienced in the 1980s recession, a significant amount of new Japanese investment took place during the decade, which helped offset job losses in other areas. This investment was to some extent linked to federal and provincial efforts to attract foreign investment by offering generous financial incentives.\textsuperscript{30} For their part, Japanese manufactures were eager to invest in Canada in order to qualify for Auto Pact status and thereby secure market access to the United States (Holmes 2004, 12-19). Also, and just as significant, not only did the Big Three manage not to permanently shut down any of their Canadian operations, production levels and labour force commitments actually increased. Maintaining, and indeed shifting production northwards to southwestern Ontario made good economic sense for two important reasons: (1) production and labour costs were cheaper due to the lower value of the Canadian dollar relative to the American greenback; and, (2) lower health insurance premiums paid by employers as a result of Canada’s socialized healthcare system. Because of these spatially rooted jurisdictional advantages, Canada managed to avoid a considerable degree of de-industrialization because it served as a viable lower cost alternative to America’s traditional manufacturing heartland.\textsuperscript{31} While Canada’s automotive industry was able to weather this first wave of globalization, like its American counterpart, it too would become fundamentally transformed by the arrival of Japanese manufacturing practices and the impact of deindustrialization processes.

\textsuperscript{30} For example, Toyota (Cambridge) received $144 million, CAMI (Ingersoll) received $107 million and Honda (Alliston) received $120 million in co-investment towards the construction of their facilities in the province of Ontario.

\textsuperscript{31} For excellent comparative analysis of the automotive industry and differing responses by governments and labour to economic restructuring in the late 1970s and 1980s, see High 2003.
There is a sizable body of literature examining the arrival of Japanese manufacturers to the North America continent and the subsequent impact of their distinctive methods of producing automobiles (Mair, Florida and Kenny 1988; Rinehart, Huxley and Robertson 1992; Yanarella and Green 1996; Wells 1996). The debate that ensued was principally about clarifying the emergence of a new model of industrial production, often dubbed Japanese Production Techniques (JPTs) or lean production, and the extent to which this development transformed the Fordist system of production in North America. The exchange was mirrored by a more theoretical debate taking place about the transition to a post-Fordist, or post-industrial economy, and whether or not this was a positive development (Piore and Sabel 1984; Amin 1994, Harvey 1989, Jessop 1990; Cloke and Goodwin 2002). At issue, was a discussion whether or not the emergence of a new production paradigm constitutes more of a discontinuity than continuity with Fordism, and more significantly, the desirability of the coming of a post-industrial age? Although this debate is characterized by a variety of perspectives and nuances, it is useful to highlight some of the central positions that lie at the center of the post/Fordist debate, in order to help establish background context for the argument being made later in this chapter about the changing geography of Ontario’s post-industrial landscape. Piore and Sabel (1984), for instance, take the position that such a transition has indeed occurred, and this reality has lead to the rise of a second industrial divide. They call attention to the trend whereby the mass production of standardized goods by a semi-skilled labour force is being eclipsed by the flexible specialization, or craft production, of customized goods by more highly skilled workers. The work of Dosi et al (1988), while sharing certain similarities, differs to the extent to which the authors
attribute the emergence of a new industrial paradigm as being primarily technological induced. They suggest the Fordist model with its accompanying socio-institutional framework—Keynesianism—became incapable of delivering growth in the context of maturing industries and was increasingly out-of-sync with innovations and technical advances needed to restore profitability. Contrasting these views that assume implicitly the inherent desirability of such a transition, David Harvey’s (1989) work associates the emergence of post-Fordism with the notion of ‘flexible accumulation’ strategies, which is to say the growing tendency for ‘Big’ industry to rely upon both flexible labour markets and flexible geographies of production to enhance viability. Harvey’s argument helps validate Bluestone and Harrison’s (1982) initial deindustrialization thesis, calling attention to how capital manages to redefine time-space constraints according to its own interests in an increasingly globalized world order.

The arrival of Japanese automotive manufacturers in Ontario during the late 1980s ushered in a new era of significant expansion in production capacity. This new investment helped offset some of the pain associated with industrial restructuring taking place in other primarily urban manufacturing jurisdictions. The arrival of Honda, and soon afterwards Toyota, not only came to transform the traditional system of Fordist manufacturing practices, these firms also led the way in establishing a new geography of automotive production in the province. As older industrial plants closed down in nearby urban centers—contributing to the problem of a growing number of abandoned brownfield sites plaguing communities—the arrival of Japanese firms appeared to offer the prospect of a more prosperous future, and indeed helped fuel the boom in greenfield development that took place throughout the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century.
Mair, Florida and Kenny (1988, 353) note that while the Fordist model of production adhered to a ‘just-in-case’ philosophy, the Japanese sought to implement a ‘just-in-time’ system of lean production practices. To build upon this analogy, Japanese production techniques look to streamline the manufacturing process so that earlier stages only supply latter stages with materials and components when required – virtually eliminating the need for large inventories and thereby avoiding the Fordist habit of constantly ‘feeding the machine’. As stockpiles are trimmed down to reduce overproduction and eliminate waste, supplier firms come to play a more important role in the overall production process. Japanese assembler-supplier relationships are modeled according to a principal of managed decentralization. Suppliers are awarded relatively stable supply contracts in exchange for sharing product innovation and cost saving responsibilities. This allows assemblers to reap efficiencies of more tightly managed operations and avoid some of the costs associated with large bureaucratic management systems all the while retaining overall control of product innovation and development. As a result of this organizational strategy, Japanese assembly facilities tend to be smaller in size than their North America counterparts, but more reliant upon an extensive supplier network located within close geographical proximity of final assemblers.

A key distinguishing feature of the Japanese system of automotive production that has been adopted widely and become mainstream throughout the manufacturing sector in Ontario, is a greater reliance on ‘just-in-time’ shipping and logistical practices, primarily carried out by freight truck transportation. Because the production of durable goods is ultimately ‘pulled’ by final consumer demand, the need to stockpile inputs and inventory in-house is reduced considerably, however, dependence on automotive infrastructure
increased substantially as trucks and highways function as a sort of mobile warehouse. And since automotive assemblers have come to rely on more frequent shipments of supplies to match streamlined output demands, transportation logistics comes to play a more prominent role in the overall production process, leading to ever increasing truck traffic volumes on highways. Many researchers tend to agree that the adoption of lean manufacturing practices in the automotive sector has succeeded in eliminating various inefficiencies from the production process. Less well understood, however, are the environmental problems – CO₂ emissions related to traffic congestion- and increased transportation infrastructure costs associated with a growing reliance on trucking. More problematically from a sustainability viewpoint, freeway transportation corridors are now providing the gravitational pull factors railways once offered nearly a century ago, and in doing so are influencing the morphological development of communities in very specific ways. The end result of which leads to growing auto-dependence. As a consequence of this shifting locational preference for heavy industry, and older factories shut-down or lay idle, adding to the number of brownfield properties left derelict in many city centres, industry and workers alike are gravitating towards greenfield sites on the periphery of communities as new places to establish production activities and find employment.

Despite initial uncertainty as to the transferability and viability of JPT’s, a large body of research confirms the growing presence and significance of Japanese-style manufacturing practices in the North American market (Mair, Florida and Kenny 1988, Kingsolver 1992; Rothstein and Blim 1992; Saltzman 1995; Maynard 2003; Sousa 2011). While pioneering firms like Honda and Toyota were the first to introduce principles of lean production to the continent and played a leading role reshaping the geography of
industrial production, other manufacturing firms, along with so called ‘big box’ retailers have pursued a similar strategy. Also, in the early 1990s, the Big Three U.S. automotive producers began to mimic processes introduced by Japanese firms as a strategy to enhance their own competitiveness. For example, the establishment of mixed ownership, or hybrid plants like CAMI helped facilitate the adoption of new production practices, and new production facilities have been established primarily in greenfield locations along major highways. Independent component manufactures like Magna, Linamar and Valiant have prospered largely because of their ability to deliver cost savings and reduce the Big Three’s exposure to a unionized workforce. In fact, by the end of 1990s, US auto manufactures’ relied on outsourcing production of vehicle content –automotive components- to supplier firms as a way to increase production output levels while reducing costs and avoid dealing with the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, this union avoidance strategy explains in part why we are able to see the steady growing influence of the auto-parts sector while employment levels in the more heavily unionized assembly sector remains stagnant since the 1990s. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession, plant closings and employment loss has been more concentrated in the assembly sector, with both Chatham and St Thomas experiencing permanent plant closures.
Although the auto-parts sector expanded significantly since 1992, and many smaller communities in southwestern Ontario appear to have gained from this growth, the automotive sector itself is facing big challenges as the demand for automobiles softens with the demographic transition currently taking place, along with intensified international competition. As a result of these trends, the automotive sector is faced with growing issues of ever increasing over-capacity. The World Trade Organization’s 2000 ruling striking down the 1965 Canada-U.S. Auto Pact has added further concern regarding the future US investment commitments in Canada (see Holmes 2003, Anastakis 2001). Furthermore, the federal government’s initial ratification of the Kyoto Protocol required significant reductions in tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide and noxious gases in the years to
come. All of these factors combined will likely reduce operating margins once again, prompting automotive manufactures to once again look for ways to innovate, reduce costs and rationalize production capacity globally in order to restore profitability. According to leading automotive analysts, four major trends will continue to dominate the industry in the years to come as OEM’s respond to these challenges, and in doing so, alter once again the way in which automobiles are produced: (1) integration of ‘cutting edge’ technology into vehicle design and production; (2) outsourcing production of vehicle content to parts suppliers; (3) adoption of more versatile production platforms; and, (4) mergers and consolidations of operations to strengthen global positioning (Bélis-Bergouignan, Bereave and Lung 2000,). Evidence collected for this dissertation and presented above supports such an outlook.

The recent arrival of foreign manufactures onto the North America scene has certainly played a decisive role shifting productive capacity from traditional industrial regions toward new sites of production. Specifically, Japanese manufacturers have pursued a strategy of locating production plants on greenfield land situated on the outskirts of smaller communities, often with a considerable amount of government subsidy. This remaking of the industrial landscape should be seen as tied to the declining fortunes of older urban areas and at least partially responsible for fuelling the rise of so-called ‘edge cities’ (Hall Jr. and Porterfield 2001). Urban geographers have long noted the steady exodus of manufacturing from city cores and the relentless outward expansion of cities into the suburban fringe (Harvey 1990 and 1996; De Sousa 2006). The shift to the periphery has been particularly pronounced in the last two decades in the aftermath of deindustrialization processes, as highly mobile capital and a growing tide of individuals look to flee,
somewhat ironically, the problems associated with what are perceived to be ‘decaying’ urban city centers. There is a sizeable body of work looking at the problem of urban sprawl, however much of this literature tends to focus exclusively on the residential sector (Kaplan and Austin 2003, Power 2001). This study calls attention to the growing significance of industrial sprawl – along with the role played by big-box retailers and institutions- as principle drivers influencing morphological change in communities throughout southwestern Ontario.

The relationship between industrial development and community well-being in southwestern Ontario is a complex and evolving issue. In the literature, traditional explanations regarding industrialization and the locational decision-making context of firms has tended to provide descriptive or overly simplified generalizations that overlook key elements influencing the spatial patterning of industry. In particular, early discussions on industrial location theory were dominated by individuals heavily influenced by neo-classical economics, who tended to focus narrowly on firm-level rationality and place-based advantages. These explanations generally emphasized the role of local market conditions and transportation infrastructure as primary drivers of industrialization. This literature, however, remains silent when it comes to explaining how or why economically established cities undergo processes of de-industrialization and subsequent decline while nearby smaller centers grow rapidly.

The post/Fordist debate alluded to earlier is a useful lens to begin to understand some of the transformations taking place within the manufacturing sector in Ontario. Harvey’s argument in particular is helpful to understand the underlying economic motivations linked to Bluestone and Harrison’s (1982) initial deindustrialization thesis. This
chapter lends support to the position put forth by Bluestone and Harrison and Harvey, among others, that argues changes taking place in manufacturing sector are driven to a large extent by capital’s desire to increase profitability and redefine Keynesian style capital-labour relations in a new era of austerity and constraint. But this dissertation also seeks to emphasize another dimension to the overall process, which tends to be overlooked in much of the political-economy literature addressing de-industrialization. As will be discussed later, the de-industrialization process has allowed many large corporations to divest some of their most toxic liabilities while carrying-on, or even expanding, core economic activities. The environmental damage left behind and the associated costs needed to clean-up these abandoned plants adds a further hardship to communities already dealing with job loss, reflecting a major obstacle undermining subsequent efforts to revitalize and rebuild the local economies.

Despite the relatively favourable economic prospects facing many smaller communities in Ontario today, some important questions need to be asked: Why has the auto assembly sector stagnated while component producers gained in relative significance? Moreover, why do certain municipalities seem more adept at attracting new manufacturing investment compared to other nearby jurisdictions? Or still yet, what are the long-term consequences associated with unabated sprawl for workers and the quality of life in these communities? The answer to these questions will in large part help explain the underlying logic driving restructuring in Ontario’s manufacturing sector as well as clarify how these changes relate to broader processes of globalization and deindustrialization taking place concurrently. Understanding the full implication of these questions for the
quality of livelihoods and the sustainability of smaller communities more generally in the years to come, will be even more significant.

‘Workin on the Go’: From the Centre to the Periphery

One of the anachronisms of the so-called post-industrial economy appears to be the re-emergence of new types of manufacturing activities taking place in many smaller rural communities throughout southwestern Ontario. Researchers in Canada, the United States and Europe note while more remote rural regions are undergoing significant economic hardship and even decline, communities located closer to major urban centers and transportation corridors are experiencing an economic revival (Hart 1997, Kingsolver 1992, Statistics Canada 2011, Marsden, Lowe, Whatmore 1990, Winson and Leach 2002). Terry Marsden et al (1990, 1-9) has argued many of these rurban areas are able to attract new investment primarily because they are able to offer real cost saving advantages to industries seeking to implement ‘flexible’ production strategies. In the Canadian context, these locational advantages have been sufficient enough to preserve the manufacturing sector’s economic footprint in the province of Ontario while broader processes of deindustrialization unfold elsewhere. One of the guiding research questions taken up in this dissertation is to help explain why smaller rural communities in southwestern Ontario have become the preferred sites for large transnational manufactures to establish new production plants. And related to this, why do some communities succeed in attracting new investment opportunities while others apparently to lose out?
During the field work stage of the study, executives from major automotive manufacturers, along with municipal economic development officials from each of the community case studies, were asked directly: what are the key factors influencing a firm’s investment decision-making and long-term viability options from a locational standpoint? The answers offered were remarkably similar, regardless of the respondents’ background in the manufacturing sector or municipal government. In each of the communities selected, the top five reasons consistently given for why rural southwestern Ontario is an attractive investment location for industry were as follows: (i) availability of cheap land suitable for industrial development; (ii) proximity to major urban centers and markets; (iii) lower union densities; (iv) lower average labour costs; and, (v) less traffic congestion than the GTA. Individuals connected to the manufacturing sector were of course asked to comment on why their particular firm had chosen the community as a place to do business. On the other hand, municipal officials interviewed were keenly aware of the criteria prospective firms often look for when considering major plant expansions and relocations. What became evident throughout these discussions with major community employers and municipal staff was that in many respects, rural and small town Ontario offered large manufacturing firms distinct advantages compared to other jurisdictions.

This rural advantage, as it was sometimes referred to, can only be fully appreciated once a variety of socio-spatial considerations unique to small town Ontario are taken into consideration. First and foremost, many communities in southwestern Ontario allow
people and industry alike to enjoy the best of both worlds, rural and urban.\textsuperscript{32} Regardless of one’s location in rural southwestern Ontario, it is possible to transport people and goods to and from major urban centers in Canada and the United States within a very short timeframe, which is absolutely critical to maintaining just-in-time production and logistic systems. A second and related feature is that industrial employers are also able to draw upon a large and diverse labour pool, including farmers and their offspring who are no longer able to make a living solely in agriculture, recently laid-off or underemployed urban workers –many of whom previously employed in auto or other manufacturing industries— willing to commute in order to secure better job prospects and new Canadians eager to get established and begin building their lives. Since rural regions often lack a history of organized labour relations, wages and work expectations tend to be less restrictive compared to nearby urban centers that are more heavily unionized. In an overall economic context of growing unemployment and heightened job insecurity, this precarious segment of the workforce is thought to be particularly well suited for the kind of employment opportunities offered by lean production facilities, or at the very least, less likely to object to working conditions than their relatively better-off urban counterparts. Lastly, this research also found that many communities are promoting ‘rural industrialization’ by drawing upon state resources to underwrite transportation infrastructure development, finance land servicing costs, and undertake direct marketing

\textsuperscript{32} In fact, it is difficult to tell sometimes in southwestern Ontario where the ‘rural’ ends and the ‘urban’ begins, especially as industrial and residential enclaves sprout-up in the countryside; cities annex surrounding farm land to enable residential, commercial and industrial expansions; and affluent urbanites move beyond the ever expanding suburbs to get a little taste of country living. This reality makes devising any kind of clear-cut distinction between urban and rural problematic.
efforts to promote local economic development opportunities. In addition to local
government resourcing, on both sides of the border, it is not uncommon for a provincial
or state government to also contribute up to a third of start-up capital in order to secure a
major new plant investment. In this current period of economic restructuring where
union avoidance has become a key corporate strategy for keeping labour costs down and
profits high, and municipalities compete against each other to lure investors, a ‘new
breed’ of transnational enterprise is targeting rural greenfield sites as a viable alternative
to low-wage production zones offshore.

As previously discussed, manufacturing enterprises have always had a presence in
rural areas – particularly in central Canada, the U.S. mid-west and south. Unlike the past,
however, today’s production plants tend to be subsidiaries of large transnational
corporations, which are very attuned to international conditions and pressures, and
produce goods primarily for an export market. During the 1980s and 1990s, automotive
and component producers, along with other manufacturers and food processors, began
increasingly locating new production facilities in greenfield sites on the periphery of
communities – as opposed to the traditional urban centres- en masse throughout central

33 A large body of empirical work has already begun to examine the changing role of the state in
an age of economic globalization and regulatory devolution, documenting the specific ways in
which localities are contributing to larger processes of economic restructuring. See for instance,
Buchanan 2000; Dewees, Labao, Swanson 2003; Goodwin 1998; Leach and Winson 1995;
Winson and Leach 2002).

34 Early traditional manufacturing industries in rural and small town Canada supplied the local
regional market with a variety of durable goods and food products – for example, furniture,
clothing, tools and machinery, and, canned fruits and vegetables. Since the 1980s, however, the
automotive and food processing sectors have come to dominate the rural economy, especially in
southwestern Ontario.
Canada and the U.S. mid-west and south, giving rural residents in those regions renewed hope for local economic development. This phenomena gave rise to what Joel Garreau (1991) coined as ‘edge city’, and is more commonly understood as suburbanization or sprawl. Greenfield development of this sort is often regarded favourably because of the influx of jobs and investment that accompanies it. However, such new growth is also heavily dependent upon local planning initiatives and government subsidization, particularly in land servicing and transportation infrastructure development. What remains to be seen, is the extent to which these industries can contribute positively to rural revitalization, community cohesion and sustainable development in the long run.

Although there is an emerging literature looking at the ruralization of transnational corporations in the U.S., there remain very few studies that examine this topic in the Canadian context (with the notable of Winson and Leach 2002; Sousa 2011).

Deborah Fink’s (1998) study of a meatpacking plant in rural Iowa provides a rare and sobering ethnographic account of what it is like to work for a large transnational corporation in small town America. Her work tells the story of how Iowa Beef Processors (IBP) emerged as a ‘new breed’ of enterprise in the early 1980s and helped shift the center of gravity in the meat processing industry from urban centers like Chicago and Kansas City to the rural mid-west. She notes that IBP sought to locate in rural communities specifically in order to move closer to suppliers and tap into a lower wage and non-union labour force. This strategy placed IBP at a distinct advantage over its Big Four rivals who each had union contracts in place within their respective operations. In the absence of union protection, Fink describes how a ruthlessly exploitative and competitive shop floor culture developed, which pitted workers against each other and
allowed the company to reap record profits while employees struggled to earn a living. Not surprisingly, her study estimates turnover at these meatpacking plants to exceed well over 400%. Fink argues it is the availability of a large pool of local and migrant labour, providing a virtually inexhaustible supply of workers, which allows companies like IBP to adopt such oppressive labour practices. Interestingly, Fink’s (1998, 188) study brings to light how IBP’s six Iowa plants received over $14 million in public subsidies through local economic development schemes, calling attention to how taxpayers are actually subsidizing the very predatory firms responsible for lowering working conditions and wages in their own communities.

With respect to the automotive industry, U.S. researchers observe that Japanese transplants are leading the way setting-up shop in rural areas, contributing to a distinctively new spatial patterning of industrial production in the process. Mair, Florida and Kenny (1988) for instance, describe how Japanese firms adopted a strategy of selecting rural greenfield sites as a way to avoid unionization and draw upon a less costly labour force, which was seen to be critical to transferring JPTs to North American. Here again, we see evidence of how local communities are actively involved in recruiting transnational corporations. In fact, the authors note competition between rival jurisdictions in the sunbelt region to court foreign investment became so intense that it triggered a bidding war between various state governments and has lead them to engage in a costly ‘race-to-the-bottom’ in ongoing efforts to offer prospective investors the best possible deal. Likewise, Kingsolver (1992, 193) discusses how Toyota Corporation was encouraged to locate a new production facility in rural Kentucky by being offered a financial incentive package worth $125 million along with a favourable ‘pro-business’
climate by the state; Kentucky is one of 22 states to have enacted right-to-work legislation, the majority of whom are located in the mid-west and south. She argues persuasively that global economic processes do not emanate from ‘above’, but are in fact always mediated by interests routed in place. Both studies suggest contemporary processes of economic globalization and restructuring are blurring the line between urban and rural places on the one hand, and local and global development strategies on the other.

This study helps document how new automotive investment in Ontario is shifting the center of auto production away from the province’s traditional manufacturing centers towards smaller communities on the periphery of nearby urban centers. The geographical patterning of these new auto production facilities is shown in Figure 5.2, which accounts for all new automotive investment in the province between 1998 and 2005. Historically, automotive manufacturing tended to be clustered in larger urban cities like Windsor, London, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, and the GTA, and within these communities, directed toward industrial areas near the old core of the city. Newer assembly plants and component suppliers have for the most part encroached relentlessly unto the countryside. Although the bulk of the province’s automotive manufacturing continues to take place within these 4 urban centres, this research calls attention to a growing share of

35 Right-to-work legislation allows any person to benefit from union protection without being compelled, as a condition of employment, to join or pay dues to a labour union. Critics of right-to-work laws argue that mandatory union membership is essential to offset the power of big business in a market economy and prevent ‘free riders’ from enjoying the benefits of unionization without contributing to the costs associated with maintaining those employment benefits.
manufacturing production taking place outside this traditional center. Two non-traditional greenfield areas can be identified where manufacturing activities are increasingly taking place: (1) new industrial parks converted from agricultural land on the periphery of city-limits along the 400, 401 and 402 highways [i.e., Chatham, St. Thomas and Woodstock; and, (2) smaller rural communities throughout the southern peninsula outside the GTA [i.e. Alliston]. Significant new industrial development is also taking place in many communities with strategic access to the 400-series highways. As Figure 5.2 reveals, while urban southwestern Ontario continues to be a major center of auto production, it is also evident that much of this production is becoming dispersed at the sub-regional scale.

36 Here an important exception to the more general pattern identified in this study should be noted. There is a long history of automotive production taking place in smaller communities between Windsor and Toronto—for instance, Tilbury, Chatham, Woodstock and Milton—many of whom enjoying strong union traditions. While the rationale for locating productive facilities in such communities followed a similar logic, the time period in which these decisions took place was significantly earlier, suggesting not to assume all pervasive and monolithic process taking place.

37 Interestingly, when you take time delays associated with heavy urban traffic into account, many manufacturing plants located in rural communities are strategically better integrated into the Great Lakes regional system—especially those near railways—than facilities located within the GTA.
Research findings highlighted here indicate that Japanese automotive manufactures in particular have been the most aggressive corporations moving into rural and small town Ontario, which seems to be mimicking the U.S. pattern noted earlier. The locational sites chosen for the last three assembly plants established in the province is a case in point. Honda located its twin production facilitates in Alliston, a small community in the predominantly rural county of Simcoe, while its suppliers are scattered
a short distance away along highways 89, 9 and 6.\textsuperscript{38} The CAMI plant—a joint venture between Suzuki and G.M.—is situated on the outskirts of Ingersoll and buttressed on all sides by cropland. Toyota’s plant in Cambridge is the closest of the three to be located near major urban centers and appears at first to be the exception to this more general trend, but it too lies just outside city limits adjacent to several farms. However, it is not just assemblers who are choosing to ‘go country’ and shift production from the center to the periphery. Since 1986, 78\% of all new Japanese auto-parts manufactures have chosen to locate in smaller rural communities throughout southwestern Ontario. To a lesser extent, approximately 50\% of Canadian, U.S. and European part suppliers have chosen to establish their new investments in these non-traditional greenfield sites. It is estimated that approximately 9,000-to-10,000 auto related jobs have been created in rural Ontario during the research phase of this study (2002-2007). These firms tend to be locating along the 400 series highways, particularly just off the 401 between Windsor and Toronto; the 402 between London and Sarnia; and, 400 north to Midland. Without a doubt, the automotive sector is quickly becoming a major source of employment for both rural residents and a growing number of urban commuters flocking to these industrial enclaves in search of work.

The dispersion of automotive investment is a direct consequence of increased globalization and the ongoing spatial reorganization of certain industries seeking to

\textsuperscript{38}Honda’s production facilities in Alliston, Toyota in Cambridge and the CAMI plant in Ingersoll are each built upon sites that were once not so long ago prime agricultural land, and are today still surrounded by farms in operation.
benefit from flexible geographies of production.\textsuperscript{39} When Japanese manufacturers sought to establish transplant facilities in North America, careful attention and planning was given to site selection. In particular, OEM’s like Honda and Toyota wanted to avoid hiring a workforce exposed to union politics in fear that such workers might pose a challenge to the more demanding work regime associated with JPTs (see also Saltzman 1995). Recruiting rural workers and other ‘types’ of desirable employees – mainly immigrants and younger adults – was a human resource strategy deployed to help facilitate the adoption of lean production methods and maintain certain competitive advantages over Big Three assemblers. A manager at a Japanese owned parts firm, who had previous experience working at a Ford plant, characterized the difference in work culture in the plant as follows:

When you’re working in a unionized environment like in Oakville, it’s a lot harder to get people to do the things you want to get done. You know, once the guys hit their quota, that’s it, there’s not much more you’re going to get out of them… And there’s nothing really you can do about that, even if they’re still on the clock. Sure, you can try and pressure them, but they know they don’t have to listen to you. If I tell someone to do something, they just say they want to talk to their union steward, or tell me off. It’s a constant battle in there, you push them and they push you right back. Here, it’s a completely different story; most of the people come to work with the right attitude. You just say what needs to be done, and that’s it. No debate! Occasionally, you’re going to come across the odd guy with an attitude, but if it’s a real problem, it’s a lot easier to get rid of the bad apples; you know what I’m saying.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Since 1965, the Canadian auto industry was insulated to a certain degree from global market conditions by the auto pact and an overall economic environment favourable to ensuring stable endogenous development. However, with the implementation of the FTA and NAFTA, and the subsequent termination of the auto pact agreement in 2001, the industry in now being compelled to operate in the absence of any such protections.

\textsuperscript{40} Personal Interview, A-10
In interviews with plant managers, unionized autoworkers were generally regarded to be troublesome and more likely to question managerial prerogatives. And it was precisely this kind of confrontational employee that Japanese assemblers sought to avoid in their locational decision making and hiring practices.

In contrast to this negative perception, rural workers were considered to embody many of the attributes of an ideal production worker. A different plant manager remarked to me:

We like to get farm boys working here. They have a good strong work ethic and many of them are mechanically inclined, I’ve found. They’ve grown up on the family farm tinkering with machinery and aren’t afraid to test things out. That kind of aptitude comes in handy in a place like this. It’s almost like second nature to them.41

Likewise, certain groups of immigrants were thought to possess similar characteristics as well:

We’ve got a lot Portuguese, Poles and Latinos working here and they are all good workers. They do pretty much what they are told to do, and are always willing to put in overtime. That’s why they came here in the first place, to work hard and build a better life for themselves.42

Many of the plant managers interviewed expressed a clear preference for these sorts of employees and felt that the local labour market provided “a good mix of talent.” When asked to elaborate what was the difference between desirable workers with the right ‘skill set’ compared to those considered troublesome, answers seemed to hinge on the two in-

41 Personal Interview, A-2
42 IBID
terrelated factors: (1) a willingness to carry on overtime at a moment’s notice regularly; and, (2) a disposition not to question, or “complain” about managerial directives.

Arguably, industrial employers have always sought to select production locations and recruit workers most likely to contribute to overall efficiency and profitability (Peck 1996, 240-242). Since the late 1980s, however, the process by which this is calculated and carried out has become arguably much more sophisticated and globalized in scope, especially as market forces start to trump domestic political considerations in the aftermath of the neoliberal revolution. Some industry analysts observe that Japanese manufacturers have been particularly aggressive making sure they recruit only the right kind of workers with the right kind of skills, which often entails pursuing a variety of anti-labour and union avoidance measures. In Gregory Saltzman’s (1995) study, for instance, he reports managers at Japanese-owned auto-parts plants attempted to weed-out ‘problematic employees’ by requiring that prospective applicants undergo a thorough screening process and subjecting new hires to lengthy probationary periods. The study concluded that applicants who expressed pro-union sympathies were statistically more likely to be filtered-out during the extensive application process compared to those who were decidedly anti-union. In this study, interviews with plant managers also revealed subtle tactics by which employers attempted to target and recruit a desirable non-union workforce. Most obviously of course, was the process by which new plant location sites were selected:

Of course location and labour costs factor in, as is usually the case with any business decision. The auto-parts sector is extremely competitive and things are only going to get tougher in the years to come. So everything needs to be calculated into the equation when you’re deciding on where to
build a new investment. Rural southwestern Ontario certainly has its advantages in terms of cheaper labour and lower union densities compared to say the GTA or, Windsor and Hamilton. But if you’re going to stay in business these days, you’ve got to be competitive not only here in Canada, but with places like Kentucky, Alabama and even Mexico.43

As Canada, United States and Mexico become more closely integrated into a hemispheric production and trading bloc, automotive manufactures are able to look between as well as within these regions for the most favourable investment climate, and use this kind of leverage to negotiate better deals with local communities, which are inevitably always more territorially routed. High union densities, tight labour markets and unfavourable policy regimes are easily circumvented in today’s geopolitical environment.

Recent research by Statistics Canada (2011) indicates a diminishing differential between rural and urban salaries, however, this study found average rural wages in the auto sector to be significantly lower compared to wage and benefit packages offered by employers located in the traditional urban manufacturing communities. For instance, in the communities selected for this case study, starting labour costs typically ranged from $9.50-$14.75 per hour in auto-parts sector. By contrast, urban based employers paid on average between $16.50 and 19.95 per hour to employees. The only exception to this more general trend lies within the automotive assembly sector, where starting wage rates at rural and urban plants are almost identical, although a discrepancy begins to emerge once benefits are taken into consideration. Nevertheless, it is the persistence of this

43 Personal Interview, A-14
earning gap, along with the other rural advantages noted earlier, which is fueling the auto industry’s drive to the countryside.

Tellingly, during the interview phase, it was discovered that Japanese assemblers encouraged parts suppliers to take specific measures to avoid having them become too concentrated in any one particular locality, and thus potentially begin to “poach” from each other’s workforce. This preference was seen to be strategically important for both manufactures and communities alike. By scattering new investments throughout the province’s rural hinterland, manufactures made certain they would not exhaust the local labour supply or inadvertently drive-up wages. In turn, rural communities were said to be benefiting from new investment without being made too vulnerable to the auto industry’s oscillating fortunes. An industry spokesperson explained the rationale for this plan-of-action as follows:

It works both ways! If you become too reliant upon any single community and there’s a labour disruption, that’s big trouble. Now if you draw upon a labour pool from various different areas, then you are going to be better protected. Likewise, if a community becomes too dependent on the auto industry and there’s a sudden downturn, that could mean the end of the community. Diversification is always a good thing; it makes you more resilient in the face of hardship.44

Upon closer scrutiny, however, this supposedly reciprocal win-win relationship does not necessarily translate into an unequivocal benefit for communities. All four communities selected for this research study did manage some degree of success attracting new plant investment, however, Chatham and St. Thomas were also subject to major

plant closings and job loss. Interestingly, not all workers were recruited from the community when a new plant initiated operations. It was found that the communities of Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston functioned as regional employment hubs, luring workers from up to 100 kilometers away to take up new jobs. Despite optimism associated with new job opportunities, new employees in these manufacturing facilities were found to be commuting significant distances to work as part of a regular routine. This kind of growing auto-dependence should be considered problematic and undermining efforts to promote sustainable community development.

Interviews with employees revealed that a large portion of the local labour force commutes from out-of-town, sometimes up to 2 hours daily. This kind of commuting behavior is difficult to sustain in the long term, should be regarded as antithetical to individual and community well-being, and certainly discourages constructive engagement in community affairs. Some prominent sociologists, notably Robert Putnam (2002), have called attention to declining community participation rates throughout North American in recent decades. This study suggests that this broader decline in ‘community cohesion’ is at least partially a result of the changing relationship between work and place noted here (see also Falk, Schulman and Tickamyer 2003, Peck 1996). Simply put, the possibility of individuals coming together for the purpose of collective pursuits is much more unlikely

45 Although academic and popular usage of the term ‘community’ often reflects numerous understandings and nuances, most common definitions usually center on the notion of a common or shared sense of purpose and/or place. For other useful articulations of the concept, see Flora, Flora with Fey (2004), Falk, Schulman and Tickamyer et al (2003), Anderson (1983), and Tönnies [1887] (1957).
to take place under conditions of increased working loads and growing commuting distances.

During the research phase, it was frequently observed that there is a heightened tendency to perceive workers and communities to be somehow pitted against each other in the competition to secure much-needed employment options in economically uncertain times. Because of this, if individuals or municipal officials were to challenge the value or desirability of a prospective economic development proposal, such concerns were quickly dismissed despite the merits underlying the concern. A ‘herd-like’ mentality seems to prevail in the community, many interviewees made mention privately, and noted that dissenting voices in the community were often labeled as ‘as anti-development’ and discouraging of economic growth, which is “always seen as a bad thing in this town.”

Although some interviewees thought about raising their voice and raising concerns about current development trends, at some point or another, the fear of being marginalized as “part of the problem” and promoting a negative image of a community as ‘anti-business,’ or ‘anti-development’ loomed in the back on their minds. As was indicated, many uncompromising ‘pro-business boosters’ often assume that any comment critical of economic growth is sufficient enough to ward-off current and potential investors.

46 Personal Interview, Municipal Official.

47 The community of Chatham, Ontario, is a useful illustrative example of this phenomenon. While many rural and small towns across southwestern Ontario have benefited from the recent boom in automotive investment, Chatham’s economic prospects have faltered, despite being strategically located in the heart of the 401 corridor and enjoying a long history of manufacturing activity. Not surprisingly, within industry circles, Chatham as come to acquire a reputation for being a ‘union town’ due to its higher-than-average union densities and several well-known labour disputes, including most recently a six-week strike in July 2002, where autoworkers
this bifurcating climate of take-it or leave-it, workers and communities are certainly in a more vulnerable position whenever expressing concerns about the direction or desirability of community development efforts.

Evidence was also found to suggest more overt forms of labour control taking place within the case study communities. Because of lower population densities, it is a lot easier to know everyone in the community and keep track of what they are doing. This has traditionally been both a strength and weakness to small town life. When employers take advantage of such conditions to regulate and discipline workers, work-life issues can become extremely oppressive. As one plant manager remarked candidly to me:

Basically, the entire town works at one of three places: ‘Country Style’ Auto-Parts, ‘Vegetable Soup Makers’ and ‘Small-Town Clothing Corp’. And well, I know there’s a little bit of an internal agreement among the managers at these plants that we won’t let workers float between us. You see, in a small community like ours, all the industry guys talk to each other, and even competitors work together sometimes. That’s something you don’t really see in a bigger city. So, if somebody applies here and puts on their resume that they worked at one of those other plants, then a phone call usually goes out to see what happened. You see, if a lot of effort is put into training people for jobs, and a whole batch of them go somewhere else, protested the proposed shut-down of International Truck and Engine Corporation (Navistar International Corp –parent company). A few months earlier, Oxford Automotive closed down a manufacturing facility in the community putting 325 people out of work; all of whom, incidentally, were unionized workers. In the local media, it is not uncommon for local residents to hear frequent reports announcing the possible shutdown of several other prominent local employers, all of which helps to create a permanent sense of employment insecurity. Incidentally, International Truck and Engine Corp. averted closing its plant after the Federal government stepped-in with $33 million under its Technology Partnership Program and the province contributed another $32 million as part of its Large Scale Strategic Investment initiative. Along with these government bailouts, the CAW agreed to work with the heavy-duty truck manufacturer to cut another $32 million in costs from plant operations to make the facility more competitive and thereby save jobs. The message sent out is clear; communities either yield to the demands of capital, or face the prospect of systematic disinvestment.
that’s going to hurt the industry. This is a small town after all and you don’t want to hurt your neighbour.\textsuperscript{48}

The inability to remain anonymous in rural workplaces allows unscrupulous managers to ostracize and even blacklist those deemed to be troublesome, regardless of the validity of such accusations. Whistleblowers, recipients of managerial abuse, pro-union employees and other victims of workplace bullying quickly find themselves in a lose-lose situation: put-up with harassment or complain and face the possibility of further marginalization. In the absence of union protection, rural workers are left with few, if any, alternatives to resolve work place conflict. One of the darker realities of working in a rural community is that in order to be considered neighbourly, one must sometimes turn a blind eye to unlawful and discriminatory practices.

The social impact of the manufacturing sector’s ongoing shift to greenfield locations is not restricted to those subjected to the new reality of the post-Fordist economy. As the Big Three American automotive producers outsource greater volumes of work from older assembly plants to independent parts producers, once securely unionized employees have come to experience a new sense of insecurity as well. For instance, one worker at the Ford Talbotville assembly plant in St. Thomas remarked:

I’ve worked here for over twenty-five years and have seen work gradually disappear from this place over the years. I remember when I first started working here seeing guys all over the place. Now, it seems like there’s

\textsuperscript{48} Personal Interview, A-12. During the interview, this particular plant manager requested I not only maintain his/her anonymity, but also not mention the actual names of firms involved nor the community in question for fear of being discovered. “After all,” s/he said, “I still have to work here you know.” In fact, this type of apprehension was a very common sentiment expressed by many of the interviewees I encountered during our field research.
hardly anyone around these days. I just got called back from being laid-off and don’t really understand why. Ford seems to be doing well and there’s certainly a lot of work that needs to be done. I know because a lot of what I’m assembling here comes from plants elsewhere, and I know we used to produce these things here. But what can you do about that? I’m just trying to hang-on and put in my time so I can retire and get a pension.49

The general shift towards deindustrialization and flexible production strategies has not only created a growing number of precarious and lower paying jobs, as we have seen, it has also come to challenge the long term viability of previously secure and well-paying jobs (see also Winson and Leach 2003). These changes serve to dampen workplace demands, and in some cases, undoubtedly, lower expectations among workers. Seen in this light, as many analysts are beginning to recognize, flexible specialization is a euphemism used by some management pariahs to ‘depoliticize’ the restructuring of operations and legitimize the scaling back pay and employee benefits, or facilitate the adoption of more intensive work regimes. In the end, these externalizing costs have tended to be overwhelmingly borne by workers and affected communities who are left to carry-on on their own (see also Nelson and Smith 1999, Moore 1996; Moody 1997). In other words, greater flexibility for big business often translates into less flexibility for employees. The evidence presented here suggests economic restructuring in the province beginning in the 1990s has had a destabilizing influence in the automotive sector, long thought to be the bastion of well-paid and secure employment. The degradation of working conditions and pay at the center of the labour market is paralleled by the rapid proliferation of precarious employment arrangements and declining wages at the

49 Personal interview, Automotive production worker

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periphery of the labour market, two diverging trends that are better understood as fundamentally interconnected.

Restructuring in the manufacturing sector should not be seen as something compelled from above and beyond, but rather, a process initiated from below and within. It is no coincidence that many of the changes discussed impacting workers and community well-being takes place during a period of significant political transformation at both the federal and provincial levels, namely, the ascendancy of neo-classical orthodoxy. Indeed, the adoption of lean production methods and the purposive redirection of crucial development infrastructure towards greenfield locations could not have taken place without an enabling regulatory environment at various jurisdictional levels. Throughout the 1990s, the federal Liberals and the provincial Tories continued, and in fact advanced, a concerted policy direction initiated by the Mulroney administration to fundamentally redefine the role of the state in Canadian society. This political project, which has been referred to as neo-liberalism, or neo-classical economic fundamentalism, has sought to recast the function of government from an interventionist agent of progressive social change –Keynesianism- to a more subdued and often disguised role as a facilitator of so-called market imperatives. In terms of concrete policy implications, this has meant the selective abandonment of Keynesian inspired social-welfare polices –such as the forty-hour work week, card certification for unions, active measures to promote full employment, and various other employment protection standards— in favour of adopting measures that supposedly unleash market rationality, including: trade liberalization, deregulation, cuts to unemployment benefits and other social programs intended to reduce contingencies. Since then, this new role for the state
in society has come to acquire hegemonic and uncontested status (see Clarkson and Lewis 1999).

At the local level, this new political-economic consensus has had a distinctive impact on community development priorities and altered traditional federal/provincial relations with municipalities. Historically, the role of the Canadian government in urban/rural affairs sought to overcome regional economic disparities and offset destructive downturns in the economy, as well as promote greater coast-to-coast integration and national self-sufficiency. Following the fiscal cutbacks of the 1990s, municipalities in Ontario were given greater responsibility to carry out development, albeit with less resources to do so (Douglas and Chadwick 2001). Despite apparently constrained financial circumstances, many communities have turned to a ‘firm recruitment at any cost model’ towards promoting local economic development. According to Flora, Flora and Fey (2004, 343-344), this approach “assumes private-sector firms have considerable geographic mobility and seek to [market] local assets to attract those firms to the community.” It also assumes any kind of development is better than no development at all. In each of the four selected community case studies, municipal planners, sometimes in partnership with private business interests – e.g. a local chamber of commerce— were very active attempting to lure potential business investment by drawing upon the local tax base to do so. Each community examined also underwrote the construction of ‘industrial business parks’ on greenfield land, complete with all the necessary basic industrial grade infrastructure requirements – water, electrical and sewage capacity. Somewhat facetiously, one municipal official said remarked: “we do whatever it takes to attract new business development in this community; anything
from chauffeuring a potential client to our various industrial sites, to wiping their ass if need be.”

Since the mid 1990s, local municipalities and the provincial government have moved aggressively to market small town Ontario as a cost competitive alternative to other lower-cost regions like South Carolina, Kentucky and Mexico. Resources have even been made available at both levels of government to produce glossy brochures detailing the cost-competitiveness of rural and small town Ontario relative to other North American rivals. In 2000, the then Tory government headed first by Mike Harris, later to be replaced with Ernie Eves, launched a five-year, $200 million Rural Economic Development (RED) initiative, as a component to their Ontario Small Town and Rural Development program. The RED program itself aims to remove barriers to economic growth in Rural Ontario by providing new incentive funding to encourage business investment. A remarkable feat given the Tories rhetorical claim for fiscal restraint!

The effectiveness of this firm recruitment strategy coupled with ongoing marketing efforts to sell rural Ontario as a low-wage and non-union production haven is questionable at best. First, government resources are often channeled towards existing firms that are already well established in the community; many of whom having close links to key government officials. In other cases, funds intended to aid rural communities have actually been diverted to urban centers within Tory held ridings, such as in January 2003, when Eve’s awarded $213 684 to an auto-parts producer –Machine Control

50 Personal Interview,A-16.
Systems—in Guelph, a small city with a population over 100,000—albeit a community with a certain rural flare. More troubling, perhaps, is the fact that the state is subsidizing large corporations responsible for ‘driving’ down wages and working standards within their respective industry. These examples highlight a troubling tendency with the emergence of the so-called post-Fordist state: the redirection of public funds from social programs and public welfare to the corporate sector (see also Clarkson and Lewis 1999, Jessop 1999). 51 While large corporations are being increasingly subsidized and bailed out by government in the name of the greater public good, workers and communities are confronted with the reality of growing insecurity and helplessness. The coming of a post-industrial age appears to favour certain economic actors while marginalizing others in the very same process.

The relationship between industrial development and community well-being is certainly a complex and ever evolving. Traditional explanations regarding the value of industrialization and the decision-making criteria firms consider when locating production facilities tends to be descriptive and provide overly simplified generalizations that overlook key elements influencing the spatial patterning of development and under-development. In particular, early debates on industrial location theory tended to be dominated by neo-classical assumptions, which tended to focus overwhelmingly on a restrictive notion of firm-level rationality while ignoring crucial externalities. Such explanations generally emphasize the merits of competition, the importance of market

51 In the American context, see Dewees, Labao and Swanson (2003) and Kingsolver (1992).

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mechanisms, the desirability of low-tax regimes and the significance of transportation infrastructure as the primary drivers of industrialization (Rees. 1974). Less well understood, however, is who exactly is expected to pay for business attraction and development subsidies, as well as take on the burden of what to do with the externalized costs associated with development (i.e., environmental damage).

In scarcely less than a decade, the centrality of manufacturing in Ontario appears to be slipping into decline with the coming of a post-industrial age. As this chapter has sought to illustrate, the broader context influencing work and community well-being has changed in fundamental ways. Restructuring in the manufacturing sector has displaced or eliminated thousands of well-paying jobs that were once the life-blood of many communities. Those jobs that remain, are increasingly becoming scarcer, more unstable, and more demanding, yet provide wages that make supporting a family difficult. Competition between workers and communities has intensified, and the basic conditions that once allowed for economic independence and prosperity have deteriorated considerably. Those economic opportunities that do exist seem to come at the expense of declining employment standards and our environmental well-being. In this respect, Canada’s path for economic development is converging with other less prosperous nation-states that have traditionally tended to rely on greater exploitation of human and natural resources.
CHAPTER SIX

- THE PARADOX OF GROWTH

[B]rownfields have become symbols of urban decay and blight that stigmatize many communities that have been left behind in the wake of de-industrialization and suburbanization. (Christopher De Sousa, 2008)

The growing concern with brownfields is really a historical legacy resulting from our early industrial development…. As it stands, from a development planning point-of-view, it’s a lot simpler to build on greenfield land than deal with the risk of brownfield remediation. (Marcia Wallace, Brownfield Coordinator – Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2007)

If economic growth is an unequivocal good, why are so many urban centres and small towns struggling to address the consequences of growth? After all, economic growth has been the norm in North America for at least the last half-century. Despite standard economic measures highlighting steady growth rates over the decades – i.e., GDP growth—the signs of neglect and decline have never been more apparent. This legacy of negligent growth has left numerous scars on the urbanized landscape and social fabric of many communities across south-western Ontario. Perhaps the most noticeable indication of neglect lies with the rapid proliferation of abandoned brownfield sites across the province. Brownfields are visible and permanent reminders of what happens to productive assets once they exceed their original lifecycle and are discarded, left behind to rot away, and as is often the case, left to others to deal with the consequences. Various issues of Canada’s Municipal World have sought to bring attention to the problem of brownfields and the crumbling infrastructure that once enabled many communities to prosper, referring to the matter as a ‘sleeping disaster’ or a ‘ticking time-bomb’. The recent wave of mass lay-offs and joblessness to follow from numerous plant shut-downs that have taken place in Ontario’s industrial heartland in the aftermath of the 2008 global

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economic recession is another sobering reminder of the heavy social cost associated with industrial restructuring. Part of the reason for today’s dilemma stems from the reality that overall well-being has traditionally been defined and gauged using a reductionist frame of reference. For much of the modern era, quantitative measures of aggregated output – namely the production of goods, creation of jobs, increases to individual income, etc. – were considered to be the sole criteria by which to judge the well-being of the economy. And the best way to ‘grow the economy’, many leading decision-makers and advocates alike tended to regard as an absolute truism, was to allow the market to be free to work its magic.

Some of the most pressing challenges facing many older mid-sized industrial communities are certainly multifaceted and complex, but to a large extent can be distilled and understood as a fundamental paradox in the way our economic system operates: people, along with their needs and wants are growing at an exponential rate, however, the means to satisfy these growing demands are not only outstripping the planet’s finite resource base, but the discarded by-products of negligence are further undermining the very basis of our current well-being at an alarming rate. Complicating matters further, despite considerable achievements along the way, concerns with unemployment and underemployment, social inequality and poverty were never fully resolved during the supposedly good times. In other words, economic growth by itself has not only proven incapable of satisfying human demands, it is also creating its own set of challenges in the process. Fortunately, in more recent years, a growing chorus of academic literature and evidence-based research is calling attention to the inadequacy of conventional economic accounting practices and flagging the concern with environmental externalities that
seldom get factored into the standard cost equation (Daly and Cobb Jr., 1994; Hawken, 1993; De Sousa 2008). Informed by this broader literature, this chapter explores one specific manifestation of the more general paradox noted above, examining the costs and consequences of changing land-use patterns taking place in the four case studies identified for review. The relationship between urban form and sustainability is an important one to consider because it reflects the basic relationship human beings have with their immediate environment. It also reflects the underlying design logic of how social systems—communities in this context—are built to function, which plays a fundamental role determining what outcomes will likely arise. Within the case studies highlighted, I shall examine more closely how the changing geography of industrial production is creating a distinct form of land-use patterning that contributes to unsustainable outcomes and fundamentally undermines community sustainability.

In the previous chapter, I began to discuss the interrelationship between brownfields and urban decay on the one hand, and the growing pressures related to greenfield development and urban sprawl on the other. Chatham and St. Thomas can be seen as good examples of how older, more established communities are grappling with industrial restructuring and looking for new ways to revitalize local economies. At the other end of the spectrum, Alliston would appear to reflect a younger, more thriving community benefiting from a fairly recent boom in greenfield development. Woodstock seems to be more of an anomaly among the case studies, comparatively speaking, being a community with an older industrial heritage, yet currently undergoing a major wave of greenfield-led growth. Despite their relative differences and unfolding circumstances, each of these communities has been dealing with the paradox of growth in one way or
another. To various degrees, they have been the beneficiaries of growth while simultaneously challenged with how best to address the costs that inevitably accompanies it. I begin the chapter by discussing the issue of brownfields and attempt to establish some understanding as to the scale of the problem. My exploration looks at the relative costs and benefits of brownfield versus greenfield development and documents how the latter is driving morphological change in the built form of each of the communities under study. This discussion serves to contextualize micro-level realities confronting municipal decision-makers, business interests and residents alike. The remainder of the chapter looks at how various community leaders have sought to address the paradox of growth, drawing upon in-depth qualitative interviews with key informants. Lastly, the social and environmental implications of growth are considered, and the chapter concludes by arguing that status-quo understandings of economic welfare, which when reinforced by a regulatory regime favouring greenfield development, tend to be short-sighted and ultimately an impediment to longer term community well-being and sustainability.

**Brownfields and the Problem of Urban Decay**

Throughout North America, particularly in older industrial regions, there has been growing interest among policy-makers, planners and researchers to better understand the full scope of the brownfields problem, and a related push to devise innovative strategies to revitalize urbanized centers undergoing decline. As a concept, brownfields refers to both known and potentially contaminated industrial or commercial properties that are either abandoned or underutilized. As Adams, De Sousa and Tiesdell (2010) makes note, the term ‘brownfield’ is often used as an alternative reference to potentially contaminated
land in order to avoid calling extra attention to inherent risks involved with these properties, and, because it serves as a useful semantic counterpart to the notion of greenfield land. The concept of brownfields is quite wide in scope and can include anything from a closed downtown variety store to an idled sprawling manufacturing complex. Despite this variability, there are a number of characteristics that can help define what constitutes a brownfield site. These typically include:

- Previously developed land, which currently lies vacant, derelict or underutilized;
- Vacant buildings or other types of built structures (e.g., storage tanks), including those below grade;
- Vacant lands, including parking lots, former dumping sites and land adjoining previously active commercial and industrial establishments;
- Any property contaminated by human activity.

Brownfields are generally regarded as problematic since they mark the end of a once productive asset, and because they carry-on to pose numerous challenges born usually by others, including: acting as a source of visual blight; lowering the value of adjacent properties; allowing for the possibility of on-site contamination migrating elsewhere; and, increasing the costs of re-development to allow for the possibility of adaptive reuse.

The problem of brownfields is widespread and will continue to grow in significance as old industries shutter and new ones take root. As manufacturers consolidate operations and shift production outside traditional industrial zones, those communities left behind are burdened with the task of having to address how best to deal with obsolete and potentially contaminated properties. While deindustrialization and suburbanization helps explain why many communities are now confronted with the challenge of brownfields, liability concerns, cost avoidance and negligent growth patterns explains why the
problem continues to worsen. Many jurisdictions have attempted to undertake comprehensive programs to identify and document the known whereabouts of brownfield sites, but to date these efforts have been partial and sporadic. Part of the challenge associated with building-up such an inventory lies with potentially uncovering culpability or identifying risk, and thereby establishing responsibility to undertake restorative measures. For this reason, the full extent of the brownfield problem remains an educated ‘best guess’.

Although brownfields are usually considered an urban affliction, evidence indicates that the issue does in fact impact communities of every size (Winson and Leach 2002; Kaplan and Austin 2003; De Sousa 2006; Adams, De Sousa and Tiesdell 2010). A report published by the American Planning Association (2010) estimates that there are between 450,000 and one-million brownfield sites in the United States. The City of Detroit, one of the hardest-hit urban centres by processes of deindustrialization, is considered to have some 6,000 abandoned brownfield properties covering an approximate area of 4,000 hectares. In Canada, research by Christopher De Sousa (2008) suggests 20,000-30,000 brownfields exist across the country occupying an estimated 3% of total urbanized land area. Within the province of Ontario, Toronto and Hamilton are considered to have the greatest number of known brownfield sites identified, which is not entirely surprising given their larger size and more extensive experience with industrialization. Research conducted for this study calls attention to the point that the negative impact of brownfields may in fact be more significant in smaller communities like Chatham, St. Thomas, and Woodstock, despite the smaller number of sites and total area footprint involved, the potential solutions are seemingly more difficult to implement. The reason
for this, as will be explored in greater detail, is twofold: (1) brownfields tend to be concentrated in the historic centers of these smaller communities making them much more prominent overall; and, (2) the smaller population and tax base available makes finding market-based solutions or acquiring sufficient publicly financed investment to carry out remediation work difficult to accomplish. To date, and for the most part, media coverage and research on the topic of brownfields has tended to focus overwhelmingly on major metropolitan centers.

Field research for this study determined that the prevalence of brownfields was most apparent in Chatham, St. Thomas and Woodstock, whereas Alliston’s recent development of an industrial sector makes the issue more of a future concern. Among the three communities noted where the concern was pressing, Chatham and St. Thomas have been most impacted, and the situation aggravated further by a wave of major plant shut-downs to have occurred in the last four years. But even in Woodstock, where a large investment by the Toyota Corporation in 2008 triggered significant spin-off development activity, numerous empty factories and vacant lots lie scattered across older industrial districts providing a poignant reminder of previous economic down-cycles. Numerous site visits to undertake preliminary surveying, followed by GIS analysis, suggests roughly 3.75-4.75% of the current urbanized land area to be taken up by derelict brownfield properties, which amounts to well above the nationwide average mentioned in work by De Sousa (2008: 3-6). This estimate reflects a potential land area of approximately 765 hectares – Chatham (315 ha), St Thomas (185 ha) and Woodstock (265 ha). These figures only begin to reveal the spatial extent of the brownfield problem in smaller communities like those under investigation here, but in no way addresses the underlying
severity of possible contamination, or the costs involved to remediate lands up to the standard to allow for redevelopment and adaptive reuse. Arguably, the figures cited above also tend to understate the extent of the problem because they are expressed as a relative proportion of total land area based on today’s urban boundaries. However, each of the communities studied have undertaken aggressive initiatives to annex vast tracts of nearby farmland during the last 15 years in order to safeguard for future greenfield development opportunities. If we divide the total area considered to be brownfields by the land area within the original community settlement demarcations, the relative proportion of brownfield land lies somewhere in the order of magnitude of 10-15% (refer to Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Estimated Extent of Brownfields in Community Case Study Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Communities</th>
<th>Number of Brownfields</th>
<th>Area Covered (Hectares)</th>
<th>As a % of Urbanized Land Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>4.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>4.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodstock</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliston</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparative Municipalities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Brownfields</th>
<th>Area Covered (Hectares)</th>
<th>As a % of Urbanized Land Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brantford</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Initial public concern and policy efforts related to brownfield contamination emerged alongside the environmental movement that came into prominence in the late 1960s and 1970s. Prior to the environmental awakening that took place at this time,
smoke-stack industries were often well regarded as a sign of progress and considered an important economic pillar to be embraced. But as society’s understanding of environmental degradation evolved and people became more aware of the harms related to toxic exposure, airborne pollutants as well as soil and water contamination, calls for regulatory action grew louder. Over time, public opinion shifted against heavy industry, which became to be seen by many as a problematic nuisance and potential health threat. Early regulatory interventions sought to safeguard public health and reduce human exposure to industrial pollutants. In Canada, responsibility over environmental matters is a shared responsibility among all three levels of government. At the federal level, the Department of the Environment, established in 1971, was tasked with the initial responsibility of combating pollution and going after problematic polluters. Provincial governments also claim legislative authority over the environment, and have delegated land-use regulation to municipal authorities. As Judith McKenzie (2002, 108-110) comments, this early era of environmental regulation was characterized by traditional ‘command and control’ strategies, and "failure to comply with these [new] regulations resulted in either penalties or sanctions." In retrospect, one could argue that the most tragic outcome to result from this initial wave of environmental mobilization was the subsequent motivation created that served to accelerate the dispersion of industry into new spaces of production, both at home and abroad. To be fair, regulatory interventions did succeed in pushing industry to curb some of the most egregious abuses from continuing to take place –i.e., toxic dumping- while production practices and emission standards have been improving steadily ever since. Under the new regulatory regime to emerge at this time, the ‘polluter pays’ principle became established in law, making
proprietors financially liable for contamination taking place onsite, which is generally considered an important achievement within the environmental movement. However, with increased monitoring and enforcement of environmental rules, the cost of maintaining ownership of ‘toxic assets’ increased substantially as well. Responding to this new form of risk exposure, many large firms began divesting problematic properties from corporate holdings, thereby seeking to limit legal responsibilities. Well-intentioned and apparent victories sometimes yield far-reaching and unintended consequences.

Local government also played a key role enabling the re-spatialization of industry. Beginning in the 1960s, a widespread consensus emerged among politicians, planners and developers alike, that spatially segregating heavy industrial land uses from residential neighbourhoods made good policy from a public health and safety point-of-view. Over the subsequent years, municipal rezoning efforts succeeded pushing the bulk of heavy industry out of the central core of many communities, including those examined in this study. The ascendancy of automobile use helped facilitate the greater distances required to travel between home and work. The rise of so-called ‘edge cities’ discussed previously, was facilitated to a large extent by municipal land-use policy. To accommodate this new spatial division of land-use and allow for continued economic growth, communities like Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston annexed vast tracts of nearby farmland to safeguard future growth options. The legacy of this gradual transformation is captured in archived documents and enshrined in various iterations of municipal Official Plans and re-zoning ordinances. In the end, communities got bigger and residents covered greater distances in order to get to their jobs. And while the bulk of heavy industrial activity has tended to shift from the center to the periphery, the
vestiges of the old order remain stubbornly behind in place. Reflecting on this past, Marcia Wallace, the province’s coordinator for brownfield redevelopment policy, comments:

The growing concern with brownfields is really a historical legacy from our early industrial development that continues to haunt us. It predates our more stringent regulations about how to store and dispose of toxic substances; where we locate our industries that are heavy polluters; what type of infrastructure we need to move people and goods from one place to another. The reality of the situation is that we as a society haven’t found a solution to these problems, nor figured out who is going to pay to fix things right.52

As we have seen, a major factor contributing to urban decay in many communities across southwestern Ontario can be attributable to the collateral damage inflicted by the brownfield phenomenon. The steady exodus of manufacturing plants and heavy industry from many communities has not only left behind a legacy of blight and contamination, but the loss of relatively well-paying jobs further undermines the economic viability of revitalizing neighbourhoods left behind in the aftermath of deindustrialization. Over time, this process can fuel a vicious cycle whereby decline triggers further decline, leaving behind a bleak urban landscape and diminished opportunities for redevelopment. Although often excluded in most standard calculations of economic well-being, the restructuring that accompanies deindustrialization can be costly, wasteful and exacerbate socio-economic polarization within society. The affluent and mobile have tended to overwhelmingly ‘vote-with-their-feet,’ seeking to escape the harshness of inner city life

52 Personal Interview, A-24.
for a new beginning in the suburbs. Within the literature, the concern with urban decay and suburban flight is generally considered to be a ‘big city’ phenomenon. This chapter calls attention to the fact that small town Ontario has not been immune to this broader transformation taking place in North American society. Indeed, a review of building permit data for the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sectors, along with residential construction trends, clearly reveals that the bulk of new development is taking place along the ‘rurban edge’ of the communities under study. Because of lower overall population densities and the limited geographic scale involved, the contrast between this core-periphery development asymmetry is arguably more visibly pronounced in smaller communities. What is becoming increasingly evident for many communities looking to redefine themselves in the new economy is that the future is unavoidably constrained by the past.

Changing Times, Shifting Land Use Patterns and Unanticipated Outcomes

There is a commonplace tendency to regard current woes as an unfortunate casualty of the broader global financial meltdown that took place in the Fall of 2008, with pundits often underscoring the point that small-town Ontario is not immune from turbulence originating elsewhere. Today’s challenging macro-economic environment certainly suggests that a quick recovery is an unlikely prospect, however, it is important to emphasize that the predicament is neither unprecedented nor entirely unexpected. Alternatively, this study takes the view that economic restructuring taking place today is a continuation of a process unleashed by the spatial triumph of capitalism and the ideology linked to laissez-faire markets, and makes the argument that local communities
do in fact play a key role shaping their economic circumstances, although the end-result may not be entirely what was desired. As mentioned in previous chapters, the past two decades witnessed a persistent shift towards an increasingly de-regulated North American marketplace enabling capital to maneuver across jurisdictions with few encumbrances in the quest for greater profitability. The period following the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been particularly tumultuous for Ontario’s manufacturing dependent economy, seeing both phases of recession and re-adjustment. At the time, there was considerable debate whether NAFTA signaled the end of manufacturing in Canada, or if the sector could find a way to reinvent itself given the supposedly more business friendly climate.

Despite considerable disruption to have taken place, data and research conducted until fairly recently suggests that Ontario managed to maintain a steady overall share of employment in the manufacturing sector despite deteriorating wage-rates and working conditions (Moody 1997; Winson and Leach 2002; Shalla and Clement, 2007). Whatever stability that may have existed in the manufacturing sector, it has, in a very short period of time, all but evaporated. According to figures compiled by Statistics Canada, the province of Ontario lost some 95,000 manufacturing jobs between 2008 and 2011 (Stats-Can LFS 2010). Reviewing media reports released in the four community case studies, this research suggests approximately 8,265 manufacturing jobs have been eliminated in plant shut-downs during a 3 year timeframe – Chatham and St. Thomas being the hardest hit – which amounts to a staggering 25% disruption in the local manufacturing workforce (see Table 6.2). With the prospects for recovery anything but certain, the current economic downturn raises the specter, once again, that job losses in the manufacturing
sector may prove to be a permanent structural loss rather than a short-term cyclical downswing.

Table 6.2: Permanent Manufacturing Job Losses, 2008-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Estimated # of Jobs Lost in Manufacturing, 2008-2011</th>
<th>Job Loss as a % of the Total 2006 Labour Force</th>
<th>2006 Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>2011 Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatham-Kent (Census Division)</td>
<td>2,895</td>
<td>[LFT= 43,557e]</td>
<td>6.64%</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>5,170</td>
<td>[LFT=14,885e]</td>
<td>34.70%</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodstock</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>[LFT =14,665e]</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliston (New Tecumseth)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>[LFT = 11,900e]</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial and National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>95,000</td>
<td>[LFT= 6,587,580]</td>
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<td>6.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>322,000</td>
<td>[LFT = 17,146,135]</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Government of Canada, Investing in Canada; Statistics Canada, Semi-custom Profile, 2006 Census; Statistics...

The current round of industrial restructuring taking place highlights a peculiar paradox of growth that has been overlooked in much of the mainstream literature on economic development. In the past, economic growth was generally considered to be an unequivocal good. More factories, for example, meant that more cars could be produced, which in turn created more jobs for people who could then buy more cars. The Fordist system of mass production was assumed to create a virtuous cycle whereby growth would enable subsequent growth, apparently without limitation or constraint. At least this has been the dominant albeit implicit narrative underlying our economic system to date. Whatever societal disagreement over economic affairs that did emerge and boil-over into the political arena, the concern tended to be over matters of social inequality and distribution, not necessarily about the nature of economic growth. So long as GDP was up, surely nothing could be down, and the ‘rising tide would float all boats’, at least this was the conventional wisdom prevailing over how the economic system supposedly
functions. As mentioned earlier, however, this consensus began to show signs of strain as early as the 1970s. The overwhelming reaction by capital to what has been described as a protracted crisis of economic accumulation, was for firms to adopt a variety of strategies to help increase efficiency and lower the costs of production (Peck 1996; Harvey 1996). Within the context of this case study, the concrete manifestation of this broader paradigm shift would be made evident with the adoption of lean production methods and the re-sourcing of production throughout the manufacturing sector.

Whether under the label of ‘streamlining’, ‘downsizing’, or ‘outsourcing’, the new model of corporate business management to emerge sought to improve production efficiencies by migrating to new spaces of production, and seeking to reduce the price of labour as the means to increasing overall profitability. Unionized employees in particular became targeted and vilified as impediments to boosting productivity and creating prosperity in the new economy. Reflecting on this new period of growing anti-union sentiment, Jim Stanford, an economist with the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union remarks:

No doubt about it, the post-free trade era has been tough for unions and workers alike. To be clear, it has always been a struggle to maintain good jobs, promote workers’ rights and protect union gains over the years. But under globalization capital has a freer hand to locate their investments and maximize expected returns. With free trade there are obviously less restrictions on a company’s freedom of mobility, which means less bargaining power for unions. It is clear that the new model of globalization that follows the NAFTA agreement and aligns with the WTO vision is one in which companies should have maximum freedom to ship their investments solely on the basis of private interest without any kind of social accountability or regulatory oversight. That vision hurts workers regardless of jurisdiction. We’ve managed to survive so far but the space for us to operate and protect our memberships is decreasing. I don’t want to sound pessimistic about the future, but there is no doubt that the environment for unions is more challenging now, and that explains why unionization is declining just about everywhere you look. There is almost no country in the world where unions have been able to hold on to their previous gains.
There is a pervasive sense that there is little that Canadians can do to keep jobs and investment here other than pull out an ever bigger carrot to lure, or in some cases just retain companies from going elsewhere.  

Within the context of an uncontested free market milieu, large transnationalized corporations led the charge insistently demanding concessions from organized labour and relocating operations to reap the advantages of less regulated jurisdictions.

As discussed previously, the respatialization of industry is a key profit maximizing strategy deployed by many firms in the post-Fordist economy. This shift is not only characterized by the desire to take advantage of lower cost regions, as many commentators have already noted, but also involves a clear preference of greenfield land over what are considered to be more problematic brownfield sites. This study calls attention to how urban decay and the proliferation of brownfields is connected to this broader process of globalization, which conspires to abandon the old and seeks alternatively to reap the rewards of the new, reflecting a pervasive trend undermining the livability and sustainability of many long established communities in southwestern Ontario. The case studies highlighted in this research further suggest that the impact of industrial dislocation is neither a uniform process, nor one that is driven exclusively by exogenous factors. In fact, one of the key lines of inquiry to be explored in this section is to consider how smaller communities within the same regional context have responded to globalization and deindustrialization. Are all small manufacturing-dependent communities destined to share a similar fate when confronted by the pressures and

53 Personal Interview, A-22.
realities part-and-parcel of the new economy? Or is it possible alternative outcomes may arise over time, and if so, is there anything inherently unique about how a community approaches local economic development priorities that can account for divergence?

The shift toward suburbanized forms of development is often justified by proponents as a way to escape deteriorating urban centers and take advantage of more favourable tax and operating environments. Yet once set in motion, urban decline can trigger a vicious downward spiral whereby the migratory exodus impoverishes those left behind, which then creates a motivating factor leading to others wanting to flee and seek greener pastures as well. Upon closer examination, this common justification for urban flight, arguably, better reflects the underlying cause of urban decay in the first instance. When a community’s population base begins to decline, a serious fiscal dilemma arises that becomes difficult to resolve once put in play. As the tax-base contracts, the community is confronted with the challenge of maintaining existing public infrastructure and services with fewer resources. This difficulty is then compounded further by the fact that infrastructure lifecycle maintenance and renewal costs are financed by property tax revenue, which is constrained in place, and these expenditures often get deferred. Eventually, however, roads, sewers and water systems deteriorate and need to be replaced, as a community can only manage to delay such costs for a limited period of time. Ultimately, current taxpayers are responsible for the repair and renewal costs of a community’s basic infrastructure, despite not necessarily being the full beneficiaries of previous investment, and these costs inevitably go up over time irrespective of the fluctuating size of the underlying tax base. A free-rider type of dilemma emerges when the spatial congruence between people and place is severed allowing certain actors to
reap the benefits of a previous generation’s investment in public infrastructure, and then avoid the costs of its reproduction. It becomes a serious issue of fairness and equity when long-term resident taxpayers get stuck footing the bill for those who have benefited from these investments, but opted to move-on from the locality in order to avoid mounting liabilities. Worse still, when buildings and property are abandoned in a state of dysfunction, the cost of remediation is shifted entirely to the public at-large. To add insult to injury, as I shall examine, some communities may actually be subsidizing the basis of their own decline.

De-industrialization, therefore, can undermine community sustainability not only because of the immediate loss of jobs and tax revenue, which in itself is significant, but also because the environmental degradation left behind by way of abandoned brownfield properties creates a legacy cost borne entirely by those left behind. Yet as we have also seen, the rise of the so-called post-industrial economy does not necessarily signal the end of business investment within the manufacturing sector. This peculiar outcome is a reality that often gets overlooked in much of the literature. As noted previously, mass industrial production processes have undergone significant transformation in the decades following the Second World War, and much of this is a result of the impact of the automobile. But manufacturing continues to be an important economic mainstay in many communities undergoing such change. While the desire to relocate production activity to take advantage of lower cost and less regulated jurisdictions is certainly one facet of the de-industrialization story, it is important to point out other segments of the manufacturing sector remain profitable and viable. Indeed, many manufacturers, including the growing presence of transnational corporations, are looking toward small town Ontario as
preferred sites to locate new capital investment. Of course as automotive-based transportation logistics eclipses the role once played by railway lines, these manufacturers, not surprisingly, have sought to locate new developments so as to be strategically orientated by highway infrastructure. Increasingly, as we shall see, the suburban industrial park has become the locational site of preference for many of today’s advanced manufacturing firms. It would appear then, that urban decay and growth can coexist uneasily within communities trying to reinvent themselves in the new economy.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, local economic development experts pushed the idea of greenfield development as a solution to communities looking to avoid economic decline. In particular, facilitating the creation of large industrial and business parks was considered to be the most promising means to attract new investment and create the much desired jobs of the future. Attracting high-tech companies and research firms was generally considered to be top prize in the competition to lure strategically important industries. Proponents like Michael Porter of Harvard’s Business school suggested cities could gain a decisive competitive advantage over rivals by directing public investment in infrastructure development to enable the formation of business parks, ultimately facilitating the emergence of specialized ‘clusters’. Porter, like other proponents of cluster-based specialization, highlighted that the world’s leading economic regions are characterized by production zones where clusters of related industries benefit enormously from synergies made possibly by close geographic proximity and interaction—for example, Silicon Valley in the United States, Emilia-Romagna in the Euro-zone and Canada’s Technology Triangle (see also Florida 2002 and 2009). Influenced by this broader intellectual orientation, many communities throughout southwestern Ontario
bought into the idea that subsidizing industrial and business parks is an important catalyst to promoting growth, enclaves that are for the most part built on the outskirts of communities.

Key informants working to encourage local economic development in each of the four communities examined concede that the epicenter for growth has long shifted to the outskirts of town. For example, an economic development officer for Chatham comments,

Most of the manufacturing site locators that come through our door are definitely looking for industrial land development opportunities with quick access to the 401 NAFTA corridor. While we do have plenty of serviced industrial lands within our more established industrial areas, the buzz is certainly with prestige industrial properties that have 401 frontage. Our local economic development strategy is to make sure we have a plentiful supply of fully-serviced industrial lands to attract potential investors. We’ve been very proactive by creating the Bloomfield Business Park, which makes available 120 acres of fully serviced industrial lots with direct access to the 401.54

In St. Thomas, Robert Wheeler, the community’s economic development officer notes:

The last few years have been extremely challenging for this community and we’ve lost a number of major employers that were the economic backbone in our community. We’ve received some financial grants from other levels of government and are looking to attract new investment from abroad to get things going again. St. Thomas has a lot to offer –our proximity to highways 401 and 402, and our tax rate is very favourable compared to other municipalities in southwestern Ontario. We’re investing heavily into making sure we’ve got plenty of greenfield industrial land fully serviced and ready for market development.55

54 Personal Interview, A-19.
Despite turbulence in the economy, nearby Woodstock and Alliston appear to have avoided the brunt of permanent plant shutdowns, with informants calling attention to the importance of recent measures enabling greenfield industrial development. Len Magyar, Development Commissioner for the community of Woodstock remarks:

These are challenging times but we’ve got reasons to be optimistic. Employment levels have remained stable with overall job losses in the manufacturing sector offset by new openings.... We have been very fortunate to have landed the new Toyota Plant and that will go a long way ensuring the long term sustainability of the automotive sector in this community. We’ve been working hard to promote local development opportunities and have created a number of new industrial parks near the 401 to bring over 400 acres of serviced industrial land to market. This has been the key to our successes.56

The commissioner of development for Alliston reflected:

Our community has been on an upswing for the last decade, and a big part of that growth is due to the rather large investment made by the Honda Corporation. There was a time when the prospects for this community weren’t so clear, and working with the province, we made a substantial investment to ensure our new industrial park had the capacity to accommodate a large industrial employer like Honda. Our community is also well served by upgraded highway transportation routes, and recently we built an industrial bypass to help deal with the traffic impact of the plant.57

Faced with the perils of de-industrialization, greenfield development can seem like a quick win when it comes to promoting economic activity and encouraging new job creation. Despite superficial appearances, however, the widespread promotion of

56 Personal Interview, A-9.

57 Personal Interview, A-6.
greenfield development as a panacea to the current economic downturn can be a self-defeating strategy, and the outcome of many hidden distortions. To begin with, significant upfront public investment is required. Greenfield development requires enabling land-use regulations and costly infrastructure to allow ‘raw’ land to be brought into industrial use. Typically roads, utility servicing and sewage disposal capacity must be constructed before potential investors can establish a new industrial plant or commercial complex. These significant costs must be paid for by the local tax base. While these expenditures are often justified on the basis that new investment will generate jobs and increase local tax revenues, return on the initial investment should not necessarily be considered a guaranteed outcome. If a community expands outward at the cost of a declining core, the overall fiscal impact can be neutral, or possibly negative. Furthermore, intensified regional competition to expand the industrial land supply can fuel a wasteful dynamic whereby already established firms look to acquire attractively priced greenfield locations while discarding older establishments. Alternatively, if the construction of new industrial and business parks exceeds market take-up and lay underutilized for years afterward, the return on investment goes un-recouped as the built infrastructure deteriorates with time. Within the context of southwestern Ontario, the current market for land economics is tilted in such a way as to favour greenfield development over brownfield redevelopment opportunities.

Within the provincial context, small towns and big cities alike have historically required the costs of servicing for residential and non-residential developments to be recovered through the issuance of building permits. During this process local government can levy development charges –or development cost levies- to finance the
‘growth’ related capital costs associated with new development, whereas general property taxation is intended to cover the ongoing maintenance of existing services. In Ontario, the Development Charges Act, 1997, is the legislation that delineates how and what services can be charged at the development permitting stage, which in the province is restricted to so-called ‘hard services’58. The underlying rationale for development charges is generally considered to be that new growth should pay for itself and not constitute an undue burden on existing taxpayers. In practice, however, this is not always the case and there is considerable variation over how local governments can go about implementing urban land development policy. Although the legislative act does not preclude marginal cost differentiation, it does not encourage it either. For instance, within a community’s jurisdiction a municipal authority can charge:

- all developments the same fee to cover all services,
- some developments the cost of all services,
- different amounts for different areas within a municipality to reflect cost differentials,
- a uniform charge across the municipality plus an area-specific charge for additional costs.

Ultimately, it is the local tax base that picks-up the tab and underwrites all the associated risk liabilities through property taxation.

Municipal governments can and do make a number of policy decisions that guide community economic development priorities, not least of which is determining property tax and development charge rates. For instance, differences can arise in terms of what gets included -or excluded- from the local tax base, how value is established between

different classes of property (e.g. residential, institutional, commercial and industrial properties), what portion of that value is taxable, and at what level tax rates get set either within or between classes of property. Depending on how the local property tax system is structured, certain forms of development can be encouraged over others. Tax differentials are often considered to be an important factor influencing decision-making in business site location. Some studies suggest that property taxes have a significant impact on decision making at the regional scale, but become less relevant when distinguishing between regions. Within the community case studies, municipal officials interviewed underscore the importance of the local tax-regime in retaining and attracting industrial employers.

Our industrial property tax rates are very competitive compared to other jurisdictions and we know how important it is to make sure our industrial lands are attractively priced. For this reason, we waive the development charges for those new industries looking to build in our communities.  

Our tax environment for large industrial employers is very attractive and our community is supportive of new business. Because we are not allowed to bonus an individual interest or favour a particular employer, we’ve cut our development charges by 50% across the board.

In all four communities, development charges are no longer applied to industry. The favourable treatment of industrial interests is justified as a crucial element of the local economic development strategy –if you can attract a large industrial employer, the tax revenue brought about indirectly is considered to be worth the initial expenditure. In

59 Personal Interview, Municipal Official (St. Thomas)
60 Personal Interview, Municipal Official (New Tecumseth)
other words, the subsidy offered to prospective industrial investors, and paid for by the local tax base, is generally considered to be a favourable return-on-investment given subsequent benefits to arise from increased economic activity, assessment growth and job creation.

Within the communities under study, economic development initiatives have tended to follow a large plant recruitment strategy as a way to stimulate local well-being. To achieve this, local planning efforts have sought to promote a business friendly environment, mostly by keeping industrial land development charges artificially low and financially underwriting the required infrastructure needs. In addition to traditional revenue sources available to communities, municipal authorities also take advantage of debt-financing schemes and provincial grants to achieve local ambitions. The instruments local government utilize to raise revenue and address community needs, working in tandem with available planning tools, can and do affect the geographic patterning of development.

A preliminary examination of the evidence available seems to suggest that the outcome of such efforts is somewhat mixed and can serve to highlight yet another dimension to the paradox of growth: to reap economic rewards it is necessary to become ever more competitive. Data acquired from municipal officials helps put this notion in context.

The automotive industry is very significant in our community [St. Thomas]. When the sector took a hit, we got hurt. Competition for new investment and jobs is very intense nowadays, not just within Ontario but globally as well. We are seeing jobs go down to the southern U.S. and Mexico, and that’s a big concern for us. The only thing within our control is making sure we can look attractive to new investors. So it goes back to the land issue,
we’ve got to take the steps and make the necessary investments to ensure we’ve got the required industrial lands to attract new employers.61

All things considered, Woodstock is managing to weather the storm unleashed by this recent economic downturn and is well poised to succeed once the recovery takes holds. Our community is very attractive to industrial employers when compared to bigger cities like Toronto or London. We’ve got an ideal location next to the 401/403 interchange and invested heavily along with the province to upgrade road infrastructure to allow for greater traffic flows. The cost of industrial land ready-to-go for development is our biggest advantage. We also don’t levy development charges on new industrial builds. So when you compare the cost of fully serviced industrial sites with our regional competitors, we are much more attractively priced.62

In the aftermath of recession, the pressure for local communities to compete with one another to attract new investment and much needed jobs has intensified considerably, and the solution offered to overcome current economic challenges is to offer even greater inducements to prospective investors, especially big industrial employers.

It seems like a strange twist of irony that the re-spatialization of productive capacity in southwestern Ontario has not only been the outcome of capital’s desire to increase profitability and free itself from regulatory burdens, but to a large degree, this process is also being subsidized by government action. The research reported in this section highlights that many smaller communities have been incredibly adept at marketing and positioning themselves as lower cost places for new investment. For instance, municipal authorities often note how their small town Ontario is able to offer

61Personal Interview, Municipal Official (St. Thomas)
62Personal Interview, A-9
potential investors the best of both worlds, rural and urban. As one interviewee stated in an interview conducted in 2006:

Our community offers plenty of advantages for any new business looking to expand or set-up a facility. When you compare the cost of our industrially serviced land with anything that is available in places like Toronto or the rest of the GTA, you quickly realize how competitively priced we are. That’s our biggest selling feature and the reason why you’ve got large automotive manufacturers investing in our community.\(^63\)

Another government official explained:

With this [Rural Economic Development] fund, our government seeks to build partnerships with business—particularly within the tourism and the manufacturing sectors—to attract investment and create jobs in rural Ontario. By providing financial incentives to businesses, we are encouraging firms to think about rural Ontario as a suitable place to do business. This is our government’s way of ensuring that all Ontarians get to benefit from the prosperity created in the new economy. It is important that we take measures to ensure that job creation happens in rural Ontario, not just the urban centers of the province.\(^64\)

Local municipal promotional efforts often showcase numerous key metrics to reinforce the notion of how smaller communities are more cost-effective options than big cites given their unique locational advantages, specifically lower average wage rates and cheaper ‘industrial’ land, an explicit reference to agricultural land suitably zoned for development purposes. Given rural Ontario’s strategic proximity to large urban markets in Canada and the United States, coupled with the province’s highly developed transportation infrastructure, many smaller communities are arguably more advantageously situated than traditional urban manufacturing centres. It is for this reason

\(^{63}\) Personal Interview, Municipal Official

\(^{64}\) Personal Interview, Municipal Official
that transnationally mobile capital and many smaller communities alike have sought to each capitalize of this rural edge.

Within the community of Woodstock and Alliston alone, it is estimated that at least 3,500 new fulltime manufacturing jobs have been created between 2006 and 2011. Not surprisingly, these same communities witnessed a significant demographic surge during this same period, recently confirmed by Statistics Canada`s 2011 population census (Statistics Canada, 2011). In contrast, population growth in both Chatham-Kent and St. Thomas slowed considerably, while the employed workforce contracted as a result of high profile plant closures. Although reflecting fairly recent developments, both of these diverging trends have had a noticeable impact on local employment opportunities and community growth patterns. Today, for instance, just consider the fact that rural residents living in small town Ontario are more likely to be employed in manufacturing than in agriculture. And those once securely employed in long established unionized automotive plants, no longer certain jobs will be around indefinitely, are among the fortunate to have remained employed in the aftermath of the economic downturn. The fortunes of many smaller communities throughout North America, like those examined in this study, have tended to show conflicting signs of growth and decline. Unstable and shrinking labour markets in some areas in southwestern Ontario are contrasted by sudden and rapid growth taking place in other places not too far away. Within an overall context of rising unemployment, urban and rural municipalities alike are intensifying efforts to court new flows of capital investment and encourage much needed job creation.

For a number of decades now the North American manufacturing sector has been significantly transformed by corporate restructuring, technological change and the re-
spatialization of productive capacity, much of this a direct consequence of globalization. Within the automotive sector, despite ever increasing output levels and continued profitability, the industrial landscape has been marked by processes of de-industrialization, disinvestment and a persistent decline in overall employment. The end result of all this turmoil has led to the stagnation and decline of many traditional industrial areas that were once the economic bedrock of the region. In response to the most recent crisis in capitalism, various levels of government – and a growing consensus across party lines calling for stimulus – have sought to intervene directly in the market to ameliorate economic conditions. As one government officially succinctly put it:

If Ontario is to rebound and compete in the new economy, then we need to become more competitive and find innovative ways to grow. Rural Ontario, because of its greater isolation and lack of diversification, must work even harder to promote development and ensure that it doesn’t fall behind our urban neighbours.65

Paradoxically, attempting to stimulate economic development in rural Ontario by undercutting the cost of commercial and industrial land is arguably a self-defeating strategy, and serves to undermine the role once played by traditional urbanized areas. Indeed, the regional impact of this incessant quest to develop ever more land for economic exploitation not only fails to deliver greater net new benefits, but in many ways aggravates inequalities within and between communities.

The interview material highlighted above helps reveal how local authorities play a fundamental role reshaping the built environment within which private firms operate and deliver goods to the market-place. Looking to lure new investment and facilitate job

65 Personal Interview, Government Official
creation, many communities throughout southwestern Ontario have proactively expanded the supply of greenfield industrial land fronting the 400-series corridor through public financing arrangements. While this industrial land development strategy can certainly make any single individual community appear more attractive to potential investors, the consequence of numerous municipalities pursuing the same approach, can also inadvertently flood the market with an over-supply of cheap land, thereby indirectly subsidizing sprawl. This influence can be powerful enough to find numerous examples of local firms shuttering old locations only to relocate operations in nearby industrial business parks.

Opponents of urban sprawl often make the argument that the outcome reflects an inefficient use of land resources and requires substantial public subsidy to extend servicing into outlying areas. The encroachment of industrial activities onto the countryside fundamentally alters the traditional role and function of urban settlements. These communities no longer serve as places for residents to live and work within close proximity, but rather become increasingly fragmented and void of purpose. Road networks and highway systems crowd-out pedestrian environments and social interaction, while traffic congestion increases in scale and intensity. Researchers have also recently warned of the link between growing auto-dependency, longer commuting distances needed to get to work and the rising obesity epidemic (Power 2001). Others stress that this kind of sprawl is inherently unsustainable because it consumes finite resources; including productive agricultural cropland, green spaces and sensitive environmental habitat (see Blais 2000; Sousa 2011). Those against industrial sprawl underscore the
point that the implications associated with outward-orientated non-contiguous growth are not always desirable, particularly from an environmental and quality-of-life perspective.

Despite what appears to be critical draw-backs, sprawl does have its defenders. Those in favour, however, tend to reframe the issue as a matter of freedom of choice and economic imperatives. Advocates often make the point that urban-centric and compact development is also costly and can artificially constrain the options available to consumers and developers. With globalization, consumers and investors are said to be no longer limited by the spatial constraints of the past, and instead free to pursue the most advantageous and cost-effective arrangements desired. Given an unconstrained environment, the clear preference in the North American marketplace has been for suburbanized forms of development. Those in favour suggest there are many benefits to suburbanization that cannot be easily overlooked, including cheaper housing prices, greater access to open spaces, shorter commutes to non-urban destinations and the lower cost land for commercial and industrial development. Defenders emphasize that it is simply a market response on the part of developers and consumers alike, and that the free market is best suited to allocate land resources in the most efficient way.

Whether one favours or opposes the desirability of sprawl, conflict between the two perspectives often hinges on fundamentally different understandings of how the market operates. Those against sprawl criticize it on the basis that relentless urban encroachment onto the countryside is inherently unsustainable, undermines community cohesiveness and is often unattractive from an aesthetic point-of-view. They typically argue in favour of increased regulation to contain development activities to already existing areas and prevent market failures from taking place, particularly with regard to ecological costs that
get ignored. Alternatively, the proponents of suburban, or fringe development, insist that freedom of choice and unfettered market forces always leads to outcomes more desirable than the prospect of government interference. Moreover, in an increasingly globalized economic order, those jurisdictions that impose higher costs and restrictions on business will inevitably discourage new investment from taking place and stagnate as a consequence. Indeed, throughout the 1990s and well into the new millennium, much of the discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of fringe development mutated into a polarizing debate between those who are either ‘anti’ or ‘pro’ development. To a certain extent, municipal authorities in small town Ontario have become rather adept at marketing their communities as pro-development and a more cost-effective alternative to larger urban centres given their unique socio-spatial attributes, lower labour costs and cheap industrial land. This rural advantage, as it is often referred to, attempts to offer capital the best of both worlds, rural and urban.

Yet the incessant drive to become ever more competitive and produce more goods cheaply as the main route to encouraging economic growth, and by implication the sole criteria to gauge social wellbeing, is arguably fundamentally flawed. Indeed, the quest to produce more with less has been the undisputed orthodoxy for the last two decades. However, the outcome of this broader political economy has been anything but an unqualified success story in terms of delivering greater prosperity, while the ongoing transformation taking place is eroding many of the social ties and protective buffers that have traditionally safeguarded communities from the most destructive aspects of free market behaviour. To a certain extent, each of the communities examined in this study have managed to attract new industrial investment and jobs by building industrial parks
on the edge of town. And while reflecting a fairly recent phenomenon, this strategy has already noticeably impacted local economic development opportunities and community growth patterns. Given the apparent success, the question remains: Is growth always an unequivocal good?

**To grow, or not to grow..., is that the question?**

The research reported on in this chapter has highlighted both instances of growth and decline taking place outside the province’s main urban centers. And despite several high profile plants closings to have occurred, overall employment levels in the community case studies have fared on average better than bigger city counterparts. Yet this resiliency in rural and small town labour markets follows on the heel of a broader and protracted crisis taking place in the economy. Researchers point out an important aspect to the current global restructuring of economic processes is the spatial and temporal reorganization of the relations of production between capital and labour so as to tilt the balance of class power in favour of the former (Bonanno 2000; Harvey, 1996). The end result of this transformation allows capital greater ‘flexibility’ in locating investments regardless of the consequences for community or sustainability. The freeing-up of capital to seek out the most advantageous localities imposes a harsh new disciplining logic that serves to punish jurisdictions with higher labour costs and standards of regulation, and appears to reward those areas with less stringent demands. The ascendancy of this more cut-throat ‘growth-at-any-cost paradigm’ has had a noticeably corrosive impact on the structure of employment opportunities and quality-of-life in high-income countries. Within the Canadian context, recent studies call attention to a shift away from a world of
stable full-time jobs and the proliferation of highly contingent employment arrangements in a misguided effort to become more competitive in the global marketplace (Winson and Leach 2002; Stanford and Vosko 2004; Shalla and Clement; Gibbs, Leach and Yates, 2012). As employment conditions deteriorate in the developed north, strategic government intervention in the economy has overwhelmingly sought to offer big business even greater inducements to stimulate job creation. This one-sided shift toward a pro-growth agenda plays a pivotal role facilitating the adoption of a more exclusionary model of economic development. One conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that while rural and small town Ontario has managed to achieve some degree of success attracting new flows of capital investment, the growth generated is not being dealt with in an equitable or sustainable manner.

Both the communities of Chatham-Kent and St. Thomas have experienced major contractions to the manufacturing base while Woodstock and Alliston managed to expand the significance of the sector. These changes to the local economy are not entirely incidental. Several informants confided that Chatham-Kent and St. Thomas are generally considered to be union towns whereas Woodstock and Alliston are regarded as non-union havens. During the research phase of the study, two major automotive assemblers with unionized workforces shuttered operations –Navistar in Chatham-Kent and Sterling in St. Thomas— at the same time as Toyota in Woodstock and Honda in Alliston expanded production output. An interviewee who requested to remain anonymous suggested this outcome was not entirely surprising, given that union plants tend to be particularly vulnerable during down-times, and Japanese firms are resolute in avoiding unionization. The informant went on to say that Japanese employers’ "...are definitely keen to remain
non-union, even if it means paying union wages and benefits to take away the motivation". Anti-union sentiment tends to be rooted in the idea that such workplaces are more costly and create impediments to growth. Seizing on this perceived cleavage, economic development campaigns that are publicly funded openly promote the fact that Woodstock and Alliston offer lower union densities compared to elsewhere in Ontario. Although there is a tendency in some of the literature to assume the mounting pressure to reduce labour costs and worker protections is a result of globalization, a research finding to highlight here suggests it is also, partially, a self-inflicted wound. In other words, the drive to reduce employment conditions to the lowest possible denominator is as much a consequence of competition between communities within a common regulatory jurisdiction as it is with foreign nation-states.

Intensified competition between communities in southwestern Ontario creates an unhealthy dynamic whereby local governments attempt to undercut each other to become more competitive. Lack of effective regional coordination in economic development matters serves to contribute to an increased sense of fragmentation that undermines the capacity to undertake effective policy initiatives aimed at promoting the public good. This chapter has sought to illustrate the role municipal actors’ play in re-shaping the socio-economic landscape. The disarticulation of community and regional interests has major implications for the wellbeing of residents. A major theme to emerge from the research is that the push to become more competitive often translates into an erosion of

66 Personal Interview, Auto Production worker
working conditions and increased sense of vulnerability within communities. The rapid proliferation of non-standard work arrangements is a key consequence of this paradigm shift. Non-standard employment refers to jobs that are highly insecure, casualized or temporary in nature. These positions typically offer lower wages and limited opportunities for skill development or career advancement. While often justified as a means to providing greater flexibility and encourage growth, the livelihoods afforded by such occupations hardly allow for anything other than a marginal existence. Although once mostly constrained to agriculture and the service sector, evidence from this study indicates that these types of jobs are becoming the new reality in small town Ontario. Promoting economic growth without consideration for the quality of jobs being created is not likely to yield outcomes conducive to overall well-being.

In summary, analysis of the community case studies reveals that those most affected by the new reality of contingent work, not surprisingly, are new entrants to the labour market, made up disproportionately of young people and new Canadians, who reflect important demographics vital for future prosperity. It is these vulnerable segments of the population that are bearing the brunt of post-industrial adjustment. Reversing these trends will be crucial to address the long-term sustainability of communities struggling to deal with socio-spatial fragmentation, growing income inequality and increased social exclusion. Without an employment base capable of allowing individuals the ability to secure stable livelihoods, communities cannot flourish and those living on the edges of mainstream society compelled to eke-out a marginal existence. The conclusions drawn in this chapter warn against making any optimistic assessment of economic health and vitality in small town Ontario, particularly if based solely on a narrow understanding of
growth. The existence of a large and growing pool of contingent workers is worrisome because it increases the vulnerability of households and communities to unforeseen shocks. Without a major change in how local economic development takes place, along with a shift away from the reliance on contingent works as a strategy to promote growth, sustainability cannot be addressed, let alone pursued.
CHAPTER SEVEN

- THE END OF COMMUNITY…, OR A TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS?

While the origins and meaning of life may be unknown, the way nature transforms the non-living to the living, the simple to the complex, the inefficient to the efficient, is better known and understood. All industrial systems and designs pale when compared to the efficiency of natural systems of production. (Paul Hawken, 1993)

From the point of view of the individual capitalist or resource owner bent on maximizing his [sic] private gain the calculation is correct. But it clearly exposes the individualistic presuppositions of modern economics. From the point of view of person-in-community, things look rather different. (Herman Daly & John Cobb Jr., 1989)

It is not at all accidental that this dissertation began with a discussion of globalization only to shift focus and examine how broader socio-economic forces play-out in the localized context of small-town Ontario. The previous chapters stressed how disparate patterns of community decline and growth should not be seen as isolated outcomes of local decision-making, or developmental trajectories, but rather understood as part of a complex interaction involving transnationalized business interests, municipal decision-makers and ordinary individuals looking to sustain households. The challenges brought about by the paradoxical intertwining of growth and decay is not entirely unique to smaller communities. Across the globe communities of all sizes have been impacted and are attempting to adapt to newly emerging circumstances. As discussed previously, this shift towards a global economic order, made possible by innovations in logistic and communication technologies, has come to fundamentally respatialize the distribution of productive capacity, critical infrastructure and human settlement patterns creating both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in the process. In the aftermath of the recent economic meltdown, traditional economic orthodoxy and the once considered stable labour markets of the
developed world appear acutely vulnerable to deterioration. A new debate is emerging looking at communities in decline and what regenerative strategies, if any, can be deployed to reverse ongoing decline (Dixon et al 2007; De Sousa 2008; Greenwood and Holt 2010; Florida 2010). Despite the global scope of the problem, it seems likely that any effective attempt to redress today’s unwanted outcomes will need to work from the ground up. Local communities, as I shall explore further, do have some scope for autonomous action, and this space for strategic intervention helps explain the variation communities exhibit when addressing their own unique circumstances.

Current development trends fundamentally altering traditional community morphology and exacerbating socio-economic disparities reflect a visible spatial manifestation of globalization. The full impact of these processes on overall community well-being is often less apparent. De-industrialization, most notably in the United States, gave rise to the possibility that communities are not only susceptible to the risk of stagnation, but they can in fact undergo dramatic decline. A ‘community-in-decline’ can be understood as a more encompassing phenomenon referring to a town or city undergoing de-population, economic disintegration, rising unemployment or numerous other social problems symptomatic of an underlying crisis of community. Consequently, the notion of a ‘community-in-decline’ can be useful to help address a complex and multidimensional process of changing demographic, socio-economic and environmental realities while avoiding simplistic judgments about causality, permanency or directionality. Community as the focus of empirical inquiry alludes to a ‘wholeness’ or ‘connectedness’ that transcends the various elements which contribute to the aggregation, yet at the same time constitutes a pragmatic yardstick by which we can begin to measure...
and evaluate ideas of localized well-being and quality-of-life. While the preoccupation with community as a discrete unit of analysis has a deep and rich history in the social sciences—particularly within the tradition of sociology and anthropology—it has for the most part been taken for granted, or ignored altogether in other areas of academic research, perhaps most problematically, when it comes to understanding the generalized functioning of economic relationships within society. Arguably, this individualistic bias and reductionist frame-of-reference also afflicts conventional approaches to the practice of community planning. With the increased prevalence of small towns and cities alike confronting the reality of urban decay, understanding the sources and possible remedies to such decline is quickly becoming one of the most pressing unresolved community planning issues of today.

The debate about the ‘end of community’ or what measures are required to regenerate more sustainable communities is fundamentally a discussion about what the future will look like, and what actions must be taken to ensure continued well-being. Processes of urban abandonment and de-industrialization do not just happen by accident, nor take place over night. Instead, deliberate decisions are made and concrete steps taken that have tremendous implications for the viability of local economies, where commerce and industry locate, and ultimately, how people interact with the built environment. Whether deliberate or otherwise, as this study serves to attest, community development in small town Ontario—like many other urbanized centers around the world—have all too often allowed the narrow pursuit of private interest to supersede consideration of the broader public welfare, highlighting a regulatory deficiency that is negligently silent on how the costs-to-growth become addressed within society. Influential researchers
Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr. (1989: 50-51) have noted that the “tendency for the market to erode its own competitive foundations...” is pervasive and can expose the “corrosive effect[s] of individualistic self-interest” when functionally abstracted from community and the environment. This chapter makes the argument that the policy framework governing community planning in Ontario, along with the implementation tools available to smaller communities is no longer adequate to confront the main challenges impacting small towns and their surrounding hinterlands. From this critic, the chapter goes on to suggest that the planning field in particular would be better served by a shift away from a paradigm focused exclusively on managing—or promoting—growth, to one that can better integrate how ‘growth and decline’ are interconnected urban processes that must both be addressed in a coherent fashion if sustainable community development is to be achieved.

The communities of Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston have each encountered significant challenges in the midst of unprecedented change. Heightened competitive pressures resulting from globalization and aggravated by an increased sense of economic vulnerability conspire to undermine the ties that have traditionally bound community together. With growing unemployment, and the pervasiveness of precarious employment for those that do find work, the very foundation of community sustainability is jeopardized. As Gibbs, Leach and Yates (2012) further note, the risk and insecurity experienced by workers in the new economy serves to undo traditional working class solidarity and can discourage localized efforts to demand higher, or even maintain, existing community standards over worklife and local quality-of-life. One of the basic assumptions informing this study is that community well-being is ultimately sustained by
the availability and quality-of-work. Indeed, the relationship between work and community is a fundamental building block of social organization, and as livelihoods deteriorate, the implication will be, so too does community. The outlook described here is not entirely favourable. But as with any social transformation, the process of local adaptation is seldom uniform—some communities and residents inevitably fare better than others. Differentiation is the by-product of specific historical conditions, unique geographic circumstances and contested social struggles. The purpose of examining four small towns in the heartland of southwestern Ontario is to uncover some of the complexity with how localities respond to common challenges. I begin the chapter by examining more closely on community planning as a field of inquiry and a tradition of practice. Drawing upon interview data from each of the case studies, research findings are presented to sketch-out local responses to what are without a doubt major urban dilemmas. Reflecting on the research materials collected, the analysis looks to provide a critical assessment of how each of the communities are attempting to take up the challenge of sustainable community development, then concludes with some recommendations on how to address identified shortcomings.

**Time to ReThink Community Planning: “Are We Recreating Things Nobody Wanted in the First Place?”**

Planning as a field of expertise and professional practice emerged in the early 20th century as a means to reconcile rapid economic and settlement growth within a framework of orderly management (Friedman 1987; Caldwell 2011). Even prior to the Great Wars, unrestrained urbanization in southwestern Ontario was seen to be a real
threat to community life and the rural hinterland. As Wayne Caldwell (2011) highlights in a recent tribute to the legacy of Thomas Adams, the release of *Rural Planning and Development in Canada* in 1917, a commissioned report for the Canadian government, marked a key watershed moment in the history of professional planning in Canada. In his pioneering work, Adams calls attention to the upheaval faced by many communities at the forefront of industrialization and urbanization, and the need for government intervention to promote the public interest and curtail the most egregious abuses of unrestrained land development. At the time, Adams was quick to recognize the importance of safeguarding agricultural and industrial areas from other incompatible interests to ensure both long-term economic prosperity and conserve the natural resource base. Government leadership and coordination was seen to be instrumental in optimizing land-use development according to sound scientific principals while ensuring public fairness in the adjudication process. Adams’ early preoccupations not only helped inform the establishment of a formalized planning system in Canada, but they continue to offer relevant insights on many pressing contemporary planning related issues.

In Canada, the constitutional framework delineating responsibility for community planning is ceded to provincial governments, who in turn delegate powers to municipal authorities. Within Ontario, the *Planning Act (1990)* provides the comprehensive legislative structure outlining how land-use can be controlled, and by whom. The Act itself is passed by elected provincial representatives to guide land-use decision making. The stated intent of Ontario’s current planning framework is to “promote sustainable economic development in a healthy natural environment” within a policy-led system that allows for local autonomy ([www.mah.gov.on.ca](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca)). All land-use planning documents
prepared at the provincial, regional or local level are required to adhere to the provisions set-forth in the *Planning Act*. While the provincial government oversees overall compliance with planning matters, Section 16 of the *Act* allows municipal authorities to establish an Official Plan detailing the “goals, objectives and policies to manage and direct physical change... and the effects on the social, economic and natural environment of the municipality” (Planning Act 1990). Moreover, Section 34 of the *Act* grants local municipal councils the authority to enact zoning by-laws regulating the use of land on a property-specific basis in order to achieve a variety of public policy objectives (*Ibid*). In other words then, municipal governments are afforded the *de jure* right to establish a shared vision in guiding a locality’s desired built form, and can utilize zoning-by-laws as the primary means to implement this collective aspiration.

Planning legislation in the province of Ontario grants local authorities the ability to control the use of privately owned lands with a specified range of regulatory instruments, namely the official plan policy document, zoning by-laws, site plan controls and subdivision approvals. These planning tools are essentially forward looking. The underlying assumption at play takes community development to be a linear and relatively straightforward process of adding value to previously undeveloped or under-developed lands. Land-use conflict is generally considered to be a short-term irritant that can be resolved with appropriate planning interventions in the longer term. Over time and once fully developed, urbanized land is seen to provide for a wide range of beneficial residential, commercial and industrial uses that generate private wealth and public tax revenue. Despite occasional friction that can arise from time-to-time, urbanization is generally considered to be a desirable end-state. For much of the twentieth century, when
most Canadian communities could be considered in their nascent stage, this type of planning system appears at first glance to have worked rather well. Indeed, Canada’s planning system is often held as exemplar of a pragmatic route balancing the freedom of a market economy with progressive interventions to blunt social inequality, promote public health and conserve the natural environment.

Throughout southwestern Ontario’s history, rural and urban planning was essentially geared toward facilitating new development – that is, aiding the layout and construction of buildings, roads, and other hard infrastructure vital to communities. A central objective of the current planning regime is to encourage urbanization while being pro-active in alleviating potential conflict by disentangling incompatible land uses. In this manner, the province’s planning system allowed, to a certain degree at least, the incorporation of reformist elements into the community planning process without fundamentally challenging market dynamics. Promoting social harmony was, and is often still, construed as a technocratic exercise in community design, which comes to be supplemented by social welfare transfers from other levels of government. Arguably, the public planning profession managed to achieve numerous social gains contributing to the high quality-of-life enjoyed in Canada. The list is significant, and includes achievements now taken for granted, including: the protection of residential neighbourhoods from industrial polluters; the acquisition and preservation of open space and parkland; the adequacy of road networks; safe water systems; sanitary sewage disposal infrastructure, etc. Despite the great expansion of cities, towns and villages over the last century, the province’s planning regime remains overwhelmingly oriented toward managing new growth, albeit with an ever increasing degree of sophistication. The question of how to
tackle new urban problems, such as the need to remediate abandoned and potentially contaminated properties, along with how to replace deteriorating or obsolete infrastructure, as I shall discuss further, was never fully contemplated.

As explored in previous chapters, the turbulence experienced in Ontario during the 1980s and 1990s created far-reaching consequences that now threaten to undermine the coherency of the province’s planning system. Globalization helped unleash a process of significant intra-firm restructuring that has come to respatialize industrial capacity, and consequently, redirect the mobility of people and goods within and between jurisdictions that for the most part remain firmly territorialized. New growth centres and mobility options for residents can reflect the vitality unleashed by globalization, however, many areas left behind in the wake of industrial transformation struggle to address high unemployment, environmental degradation and other issues related to community decline. The fallout associated with globalization continues to receive a great deal of scholarly attention – and with good reason (Winson and Leach 2002; Falk, Schulman and Tickamyer 2003; Shalla and Clement 2007; Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2011; Sousa 2011; Gibbs, Leach and Yates 2012). The prospect of community decline is a fairly new concern within the Canadian planning context. Communities confronted by de-industrialization are increasingly faced with the complex challenge of trying to mitigate the impacts of decline on the one hand, while simultaneously looking for options to promote economic growth. The increased spatial mobility associated with globalization presents a serious challenge for the sustainability of communities as bifurcating pressures of decline and growth threaten to tear the ties that once held people together in place.

This is not to suggest that global mobility in itself is inherently negative, but rather can
become problematic when certain interests benefit from new spatial arrangements and others get stuck to bear the cost of adjustment.

There is a growing realization within the planning field that recent forms of suburbanization tied to globalization often materialize at the expense of established communities (Metzger 2000; Howland 2011; Lee 2011). Some like Beauregard (2003) have gone as far as to call this process ‘parasitic’. For Beauregard, suburbanization can be considered parasitic in the sense that success becomes reliant upon draining off economic vitality and investment previously focused elsewhere. Post-Fordist restructuring examined previously, can be understood as both the cause and consequence of this new development trend. Yet at the local level, globalization and threats to community sustainability are primarily understood through the lens of economic disruption and growing employment vulnerability. Municipal officials interviewed for the study were keenly aware of just how dependent they had become on transnational automotive firms as a major source of employment in the local labour market. In St. Thomas, one administrator remarked:

A significant portion of our workforce is employed by a handful of large auto manufacturers. When the auto-sector took a nose-dive, we got hit real badly with job losses. And it’s not just people directly employed by these firms that feel it. A lot of people in this community are dependent on those jobs. The dilemma we face as a community is a heavy reliance on a sector that is becoming very unstable. We’ve been trying to bounce back ever since.  

An economic developer for Chatham-Kent commented:

67 Personal Interview, A-5.
There has been a lot of uncertainty and fear surrounding the future of the automotive industry, and the Navistar truck-plant in particular. Our community has been manufacturing trucks at that site for about 65 years. It is has been the largest private sector employer in the community for many years. Nowadays with increased competition and pressure to lower production costs with what you see in Mexico and the US south, well-paying jobs like these can’t be taken for granted.  

Both St. Thomas and Chatham were once home to thousands of well-paying unionized automotive jobs. Tellingly, fears over plant closings were a reoccurring theme to emerge in many of the interviews with key informants. Even prior to the official announcement of permanent plant shut-downs by Navistar International Corporation, Sterling Trucks and Ford Motor Company, there was a sense among many of those interviewed that the ‘good times’ were now a thing of the past. The shuttering of three major automotive assembly plants, along with numerous other smaller component producers, reflects the single largest economic blow to have ever impacted both communities in recent memory. Statistical analysis helps quantify just how heavy a blow both communities had experienced, suggesting nearly 40% of the manufacturing sector was wiped-out in the period between 2008 and 2011. In the aftermath of such unprecedented economic devastation, it seems that the anxiety expressed by many informants was indeed well grounded.  

The experience of economic vulnerability while prevalent among many informants in each of the community case studies, also diverged in unique ways. For the most part, Woodstock and Alliston appear to have weathered the recent downturn relatively

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68 Personal Interview, A-19.
unscathed. To be certain, some job losses and lay-offs did take place during the study period, however, these seem minor in comparative terms. Labour market reports released by Statistics Canada (LFS 2013) actually indicate net-job gains to have taken place in both Woodstock and Alliston. Despite grounds for optimism, many in the community nevertheless expressed an internalized sense of competition along with a self-imposed austere outlook on worklife. As one informant commented: “good jobs are becoming a rare commodity these days…, and those that have them should be grateful and not take anything for granted.” Another interviewee who serves as the community economic development officer was more elaborate and explained:

The main thing we’ve got to be concerned with is our competition and ensuring we remain economically competitive going forward. There are a lot of communities out there, not just in Ontario. Our competition is global, especially when it comes to the automotive sector. If we cannot compete on even terms with places like Kentucky or South Carolina, not to mention Mexico, then we risk losing more jobs to them. I know that even with firms like GM, they’ve restructured operations so that their own plants compete against each other for specific product lines. On the industrial land development side of the equation, we also need to offer a competitive product. Industrial employers require suitable sites that are large enough and fully serviced for their production needs. If you don’t have ‘ready-to-go’ industrial parcels with appropriate servicing, you can’t attract new business into the community.

Local media reports often highlight what seems to be a never-ending storyline of plant closings and persistently high unemployment, which ultimately serves to reinforce an acute sense of precariousness. This fear can go a long way lowering

69 Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Resident

70 Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Community Economic Developer
community expectations and encouraging the promotion of an economic
landscape skewed toward the interests of capital.

Another closely related theme to emerge in many of the interviews was an all too
pervasive fatalism that seemed to encourage people to look inward and become more
self-reliant when confronted with hardship. This individualizing perspective appeared to be the norm rather than exception. Instead of looking toward community for possible solutions to emerging challenges, a prevalent yet subtle form of resignation took hold over many, suggesting perhaps, today’s harsh new reality is in fact beyond contestation. Such a perspective stands in contrast to the collective activism that once characterized a previous generation. Residents often talked about the challenges of finding and keeping work in the community. As one resident and member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) lamented: “farmers may feed cities, but in this town they need to find jobs outside agriculture to feed themselves.” Despite the historical role played by agriculture in small town Ontario, statistical analysis does reveal most people are now employed in the manufacturing and service sectors. Responding to a bleak employment market, many interviewees talked about the need to take on survival strategies in order to make ends meet, for instance: balancing multiple part-time jobs; undertaking independent contract work; and, starting-up small scale enterprises. Others noted giving up looking for work within the community altogether, opting instead to undertake an arduous commuting ritual to take-up work elsewhere and help maintain the existing household. Local government officials often echoed this self-defeating pessimism. As one municipal planner explained:
Smaller communities like ours often face a David and Goliath type of battle these days to attract economic investment dollars. Our traditional livelihoods have slowly disappeared and we are competing against larger cities like Windsor and London for jobs. Many of our youth are just giving up on small town life and choosing to go to places like Toronto to look for better options.\footnote{Personal Interview, A-17.}

Interviews described here only begin to scratch the surface when it comes to documenting the hardship faced by many in the new economy. Losing stable employment is not only psychologically traumatizing for those affected, but it can be life altering and lead individuals to become uprooted from community. In their research, Winson and Leach (2002) found that when workers in small town Ontario experienced job loss, many of the displaced took up to a year to find new employment, and often at lesser pay. In fact, their own community surveys suggest post lay-off wages to be generally 10-to-30\% lower than previous rates of remuneration, varying in severity between communities as well as along gender lines. Decisions about where people live may begin as an accident of birth but in the longer-term they are ultimately underwritten by the availability of viable livelihoods. Attention to the implications of new mobility patterns is critical to fully appreciate the dilemma facing community leaders and small town planners. Globalization weakens attachment to place as job seekers too are often compelled to relocate to find viable employment options. Several of those interviewed, for instance, mentioned they knew of neighbours that when confronted by job loss, were forced to migrate to western Canada to seek out new career opportunities. Another interesting research finding to highlight here is the prevalence of job creation taking place

\footnote{Personal Interview, A-17.}

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on the outskirts of town. Indeed, data acquired from municipal administrators confirms that the bulk of new employment opportunities lay outside traditional community centres; requiring would-be applicants to have access to a private motor vehicle. Unlike years gone by, the current workforce has become ever more auto-reliant, which now serves almost as a *de facto* precondition to finding and accessing work. In the context of small town Ontario, this trend is of particular concern given the limited availability of public transportation options. The growing number of mobile workers not only speaks of added hardship for households that must adjust to more taxing routines, overall community vitality suffers too, as more and more people withdraw from community social life just to sustain livelihoods. As one long time resident recalled nostalgically: “I remember a time when this town was bustling with activity, people going and coming from work, shopping, enjoying life…, nowadays when I take a stroll downtown; it feels like a ghost town.”

With the hyper mobility of capital and labour in the new economy, a sharp new distinction begins to arise between less favoured regions and the new growth magnets.

In spite of the rhetoric often associated with globalization as a driving force leading to innovation and technological advancement, evidence from this study suggests a stubborn and increased dependence on more traditional automotive transportation logistics. This trend applies equally to the workforce, local consumer habits and firm-level production dynamics. Much of the story presented thus far looked at the gutting of manufacturing capacity in Ontario, and how recent flows of capital investment shifted the

72 Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Resident
focus of industrial production away from city centres to suburban zones and rural areas.

Yet the manufacturing sector itself, however, remains surprisingly resilient and new firms continue to invest in the province. Researchers have long called attention to how transnational firms routinely ‘shop’ the global marketplace and select the most favourable jurisdictions to locate, pushing operational costs down and avoiding burdensome regulatory regimes (Winson and Leach 2002; Stanford and Vosko 2004; Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2011; Sousa 2011; Gibbs, Leach and Yates 2012). Less well understood is the role local government plays facilitating this process. Reflecting on the compromising role sometimes carried out by municipal authorities, the Commissioner of Development Planning for Alliston remarked rather candidly:

It is a very difficult call to make. We want to encourage economic diversification and investment in the community. Places like Honda require major investments to transportation infrastructure, particularly with upgrades to roadways and connections to the highway system. There is a lot of upfront cost that goes into building the kind of infrastructure required by major industrial employers. Our community could not have done all this by itself without provincial assistance. In total, the province along with the municipality spent around 30 million dollars to undertake all the required projects to ensure the Honda deal took place. The question I guess, and this is something I constantly struggle with, is to what extent does all that public investment go to the sole benefit of a particular firm, versus how much actually benefits the community more broadly. It isn’t all that clear-cut. Communities don’t have a good system in place to evaluate if incentives funded by the general tax-base generate benefits that then go back into the community.73

Ironically, urban intrusion into greenfield areas could not be accomplished so easily without considerable public subsidy and government intervention. Transportation

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73 Personal Interview, A-6
planning efforts by local governments routinely take forecasted auto-traffic demand as a given, or even desirable if it contributes to economic development. The dilemma that arises of course is that investment in automotive transportation infrastructure tends to hasten dependence on personal vehicles and trucks as an integral facet of life. Conventional approaches to planning attempt to engineer solutions allowing for an ever growing number of motorized vehicles to move in-and-out of communities, an objective that is not only unsustainable, but self-defeating. Policy makers are becoming more aware of the ‘full cost’ implications associated with growing auto-dependence, recognizing how increased traffic congestion, tailpipe emissions, longer commute times and pedestrian-hostile roadways ultimately end-up undermining quality-of-life and community well-being.

Much of North America was built with the presumption of an unconstrained land base and the availability of cheap energy. These advantages helped fuel a prosperity that reigned unchallenged for much of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, natural resource abundance also encouraged communities to grow and develop in unsustainable ways. To a large extent, urban planning reinforced such tendencies by encouraging the construction of low density housing, redesigning communities to facilitate auto-circulation and separating workplaces from residential neighborhoods. More recent trends of suburban growth, along with the intensified urbanization of rural areas, helped diffuse many of the problems once considered big city issues. In fact, many small towns in Ontario adhere to the same planning principles and strategies adopted by their urban counterparts at the height of the post-war boom. Economic conditions in southwestern Ontario have been particularly favourable to smaller communities with strategic access to the 400-series
highway, which provides an important linkage to the U.S. market. Communities like Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston invested heavily in financing the construction of industrial parks and infrastructure developments designed to attract industry. Not surprisingly, population and employment growth has consistently outpaced nearby metropolitan centers for the last two census periods (Statistics Canada 2011).

However, growth in small town Ontario comes with its own set of challenges. Research interviews in Alliston revealed an underlying dissatisfaction with how recent development trends impacted quality-of-life within the community. As one town planner remarked:

Growth can be a Catch-22, especially for rural communities near the GTA. Many people come here thinking what an idyllic piece of rural paradise I’ve found here. The paradox is that by growing too much, too quickly, you end up losing what attracted you here in the first place. It seems like the pressures to expand housing developments, erect commercial plazas and break ground on new industrial plants is unstoppable.\(^{74}\)

Another long-term resident reflected:

Every year that goes by it seems like we are becoming more like a suburb of Toronto..., You’ve got the same big box stores and massive factories all over the place. This community has grown so much in the last 15 years that I don’t even recognize it anymore.\(^{75}\)

Most experts now agree the global economy has fundamentally altered most aspects of urban and rural life, constituting a powerful force towards homogenization (Harvey 1996; Freidman 2005). Small Towns and rural communities have been implicated in this

\(^{74}\) Personal Interview, A-16

\(^{75}\) Personal Interview, Long-term Resident of Alliston
broader transformation, and although they exercise limited control over external market influences, some capacity to shape new development at the local level remains within the purview of good planning.

In some communities, such as Woodstock and Alliston, concern with the viability and supply of agricultural land was identified as a pressing concern. Within a national context, less than 5% of Canada’s total land base can be classified as prime agricultural land according the Canadian Land Inventory (CLI). Of this land area, more than half of all Class 1 farmland resides within southwestern Ontario. Numerous studies warn of the alarming rate by which Ontario is losing its most productive farmland to urban uses (Watkins, Hilts and Brockie 2003; OMAFRA 2005; OFA 2013). Small town Ontario can be considered ground zero where relentless urban pressures threaten to envelop a limited rural resource base. Several of those interviewed expressed considerable pride noting the influence agriculture played in the history of the community’s development. For many, an agrarian work ethic helped define a sense of identity and what it meant to be a contributing member of society. There was also a realization that family farming had become somewhat of a rarity. Those that did farm as a way to earn a living noted significant difficulties confronting the agricultural sector.

Farming is a tough business to be in right now cause you’ve got thin margins and a lot of unpredictability. I’ve heard it said that a farmer in this country can feed up to 200 people…, nowadays that same farmer needs his wife to go out and work to help feed the family.76

76 Personal Interview, Small-town Farmer
Another interviewee explained:

It is becoming very hard to make a living off the farm in this community, especially as more and more people come here that aren’t used to standard agricultural practices like spray cropping and fertilizing fields with manure. I know of several cases where farmers have had to spend in excess of a hundred thousand dollars defending their right to farm…, just because some people challenge their farming practices. I’ve done this my whole life but don’t see my kids carrying-on after I retire. In any case I stand to make more money selling my land to a developer than I would farming it. \(^{77}\)

In the past, prosperity generated by the rural hinterland helped nourish the growth of nearby urban centres. In an apparent twist of fate, urban sprawl now threatens to consume the finite availability of prime farmland in the region.

At present, the government of Ontario has made modest albeit important legislative strides toward protecting agricultural land from urban encroachment. Initiatives like the *Greenbelt Protection Act (2004)* seek to protect vulnerable agricultural lands and environmentally significant areas from urban development primarily through the land-use planning system. Land use designations identified as ‘prime agricultural areas’, ‘specialty crop areas’ and ‘rural settlements’ were identified by the province and applied to a wide swath of territory surrounding the Golden Horseshoe, a term referring to the sub-regions of Toronto and Hamilton, one of the fastest growing mega-regions in the world. Since implementation, the Greenbelt has been lauded for being one of the largest and most successful efforts to curtail urban sprawl. Municipal planners interviewed for the study, however, raised an important limitation often overlooked. Although the

\(^{77}\) Personal Interview, Small-Town Farmer
legislation reflects a step in the right direction, several respondents were clear to point-out the policy does little to address the issue ‘beyond the vicinity of the Toronto bubble’. Some of those interviewed went as far as to suggest that the Greenbelt Protection zone ‘simply displaces the problem further down the field.’ The fact that prime agricultural land continues to be lost at a troubling pace, especially in southwestern Ontario’s farmbelt, helps substantiate the viewpoint articulated by several of those questioned.

Within the established land-use planning framework elected politicians and local administrators work together to manage growth in order to balance the rights of individual property owners with the broader community interest. Complicating matters further, social, economic and environmental factors must be evaluated and weighed within a context framed by competing interests and adversarial political viewpoints. Local government, guided by a progressive provincial policy regime, may earnestly endeavor to ensure good planning and development takes place within the community, yet notwithstanding good intentions, outcomes do tend to fall short from stated goals. A planning administrator for Woodstock described part of the apparent challenge in an interview:

[c]ommunity planning is a difficult task because you’re dealing with a lot of people that value things differently. It is not the provincial role to tell communities how they should develop, and whether they ought to grow or not. Within our development policy role, we work with council, local residents and businesses to identify needs and what avenue is most appropriate to take as a municipality to achieve those goals.78

78 Personal Interview, Planning Administrator (Woodstock)
Establishing a shared community vision, as many respondents conceded, can be a rather illusive quest made all the more difficult by challenging local circumstances. Another municipal official who requested to remain anonymous confided:

Protecting environmental interests can be next to impossible when unemployment rates are high and people need jobs. How do you turn down a development proposal to protect farmland when there is so much pressure to push economic development? The backlash can be intense.  

Although local authorities in each of the community case studies seek to protect farmland and greenspace as an official policy objective, steadily rising unemployment levels in the post-recession period are once again emboldening calls to make sure environmental protection efforts do not interfere with economic development projects and much needed job creation.

Politicians, municipal planners, business interests and local residents each fulfill an important part when it comes to influencing land-use outcomes. Municipal staff and members of Council are primarily responsible for guiding and making decisions on planning related matters, whereas business leaders and ordinary citizens are expected to inform the process. Professional planners undertake research, compile public feedback and other pertinent information, and ultimately draft recommendations for Council direction on specific planning proposals. This formalized system makes planning a potentially politically charged forum as elected representatives wield considerable power, and planning decisions ultimately become subject to all the machinations of realpolitik.

79 Personal Interview, Small-Town Municipal Administrator
Many of those interviewed were keenly aware ‘just how political’ and ‘heated’ things had become in recent years. Reflecting on this state-of-affairs one interviewee explained:

The people in this community have a right to know where the municipality is going, and there’s a lot at stake when you look at the Official Plan. Many voices sought to explain what we are trying and hoping to achieve, and this document summarizes that conversation. Not everyone may agree with everything that’s in it, but it is our effort to come together as a community and make that vision clear. What is frustrating about the planning process is that when you have a contentious proposal before council, and that vision gets totally thrown out because developers with deep pockets hijack the agenda and manage to successfully lobby for their own interests.\(^{80}\)

When there is sufficient local political backing and community support, the province’s planning framework does allow for the articulation and promulgation of collective aspirations. The real difficulty of course lies with translating vision into a feasible implementation plan and making sure required resources are in place to make things happen. A daunting task to say the least! Several municipal insiders mentioned the steep uphill struggle required for the community to take in order to be in a position where it could embark on anything resembling a sustainability agenda. Some made mention of limited financial budgets to work with, stressing how need far exceeded available capacity. Others talked about substantial information deficits that precluded effective socio-economic and environmental monitoring, crucial elements in benchmarking progress. As one respondent highlighted, “even if the community decided

\(^{80}\)Personal Interview, A-17.
we wanted to become more sustainable, it is not entirely clear to me we would know where to start, or where to go anytime soon.”81

At the moment, there is no specific legislation designed to protect agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas beyond the Greenbelt demarcation. Whatever environmental safeguards do exist is primarily a function of the existing planning regime as governed by the Planning Act, 1990. A certain degree of environmental consideration has always been contemplated within the planning framework at play; however, alternative interests generally win out. Since at least the 1990s, transnational corporations in particular have looked to small town Ontario as a preferred destination to locate new production facilities because of cheap land, an ample supply of low-cost labour and weak zoning restrictions (Sousa 2011; Gibbs, Leach and Yates 2012). At the same time, each of the communities examined in this study have marketed themselves as eager recipients of this investment. For this reason, settlements located on the rural-urban interface are subjected to an intense amount of development pressure. Yet as it is also the case, the ability to court new flows of investment capital does not necessarily spare communities from the destructive volatility inherent in the global economy. The confluence of social forces linking together those intent on lowering the costs of production, with others in desperate need of economic opportunity, is perhaps the greatest challenge impeding sustainable community development. Not surprisingly, a

81 Personal Interview, Small-Town Municipal Administrator (Alliston)
number of those interviewed expressed a similar apprehension. One long-time resident and community development worker remarked:

Is this progress? We are paving over paradise to put up big box stores, monolithic factories and track housing. Now we’ve got more congestion, worsening air quality and less quality-of-life. In 10 or 20 years I wonder what all this is going to look like and whether it was worth the price we paid. Many people come here to get away from the city and enjoy a quieter lifestyle. Are we just recreating things nobody liked in the first place?  

Another community planner explained:

Not having options as a community is a bad thing. However, when growth is out-of-control it can be just as problematic from a planning point-of-view. Building roads and providing public services can be costly, and these inevitably get tacked onto your property tax bill. When everyone is rushing to push development through the best decisions aren’t always made…. and you don’t always realize it until it’s too late. At that point though, you’ve got to live with things –and pay for it as well.

Research interviews undertaken for this study help illustrate that when localities compete against each other to offer foreign corporations the most lucrative deal, it is not all that self-evident how communities stand to benefit from the bargain. In Alliston and Woodstock for example, much of the workforce employed at Honda and Toyota commutes from elsewhere. Is it equitable for local ratepayers to absorb property tax hikes when they are not the direct beneficiaries? Or when a factory is decommissioned, as is the problem in Chatham and St. Thomas, who should pay clean-up costs and site remediation work to allow for redevelopment? These unanswered questions call

82 Personal Interview, Long time Resident
83 Personal Interview, Community Planner
attention to the many hidden costs associated with uneven development and urban sprawl.

When community confronts the prospect of decline, the paradigm long governing the way we layout our settlements, and serves to determine the required infrastructure allowing for our interconnectivity, must be fundamentally re-examined and thought over. The postwar pattern of community development is not only costly and socially inequitable, but unsustainable in nature. Community advocates understand how suburban lifestyles drain vibrancy and resources from mainstreet. Heritage preservationists realize without inhabitants historic buildings cannot be saved and put to good use. Environmentalists understand how urban sprawl consumes greenspace and contributes to the degradation of the natural ecosystems. Taken together and if left unchecked, abandoned neighbourhoods and alienating suburban sprawl can work to diminish a sense of collective belonging and erode the foundation of community health.

As I have discussed throughout, conventional approaches to planning focused solely on ‘enabling’ growth are not well suited to address the longer-term ‘maintenance’ costs arising thereafter, externalities that are then passed onto future tax payers or left to fester in place. Communities today exist in an age of global competitiveness and hyper mobility. The flight of industry and people to new spaces of urbanization reflects a cost avoidance strategy that is the product of many distortions and perverse incentives. Moreover, the freeing-up of capital to chase the most advantageous localities imposes a disciplining logic that can punish jurisdictions with higher standards of regulation, only to reward lower cost, less regulated communities looking to court economic
development. Because opportunity is mobile and liabilities tend to be more territorialized, the contrast between success and failure becomes rather stark. The ascendency of a more cut-throat economic milieu has had a noticeably corrosive impact on the structure of local employment markets and the built landscape of many communities in southwestern Ontario. What these interview excerpts help to highlight, is to point-out some of the more salient consequences of negligent growth. As living conditions deteriorate in more affluent countries like Canada, the government’s role in society appears ever more ambiguous, and in need of greater scrutiny. Planning for a more sustainable future is not necessarily about stopping or slowing the rate-of-growth, as detractors claim. Rather, it reflects the need to rethink the nature and pattern of growth, and consider how communities can be better designed so as to be more conducive toward facilitating the end-goals of shared prosperity and long-term well-being.

**ReGenerating Community for Sustainability – Turning ‘Bad’ into ‘Goods’**

Land-use planning impacts almost every aspect of sustainable communities. Undoing much of the damage discussed in previous chapters is predicated upon new ways of organizing how people come to interact with land and the built-form that relationship takes. Shifting away from unsustainable habits requires the incorporation of an ecosystems approach to community planning. Urban sprawl and uneven development can only succeed in displacing and postponing the problems human beings create with their dysfunctions. Only by looking inward rather than outward will citizens and their representatives begin to move away from short-term fixes, and instead address the
underlying causes working against long-term community well-being. As shall be explored further in this final section, broadening our understanding of planning to include elements of sustainability promises to be a productive route to regenerate areas left behind by industrial restructuring. Sustainable community planning can respond to multiple challenges and build resilience by encouraging land use practices better suited to creating a diversified employment base; allowing for higher levels of residential utilization; promoting transit supportive densities; and, becoming more pro-active in protecting greenspace and other environmentally significant areas from urbanization.

Municipal officials interviewed understand how development contributes to the ‘bottom-line’ of the local tax base. Just as pertinent to the matter, however, not all development should be considered equally beneficial to the community. Research studies highlighted previously have sought to call attention to the hidden costs associated with sprawl, and how this form of development can be an impediment to sustainability (see Roseland, Cureton and Wornell 1998; Slack 2002; Hall Jr. and Porterfield 2001). Despite a growing awareness, municipal decision-makers often fail to make the connection, and worse still, undertake measures aggravating circumstances. Nevertheless, local government remains a significant player in the local economy and key to affecting positive change. They are primarily responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure essential for economic activity, maintain parks and greenspace, establish community standards and regulations, undertake taxation and can mediate dialogue with other sectors. Much like private enterprise, local government provides an important array of goods and services to the community. While local governments may not be the only entities involved in planning and development, they are publicly accountable and the sole
conduit for community decision-making. Yet if local government is so critical in the movement to become more sustainable, this begs the question: why do municipalities often stand in the way of an alternative community development model?

Through the use of official community plans and zoning by-laws, local authorities dictate land-use patterns and built form. Administrators can commission Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) to inventory and determine which areas merit protection, or use available land use controls to guide development in terms of building height, setbacks and intensity of use. However significant these tools may be in determining what development will look like, they seldom unfold in a vacuum. For the municipal staffers interviewed, routine planning matters and development approvals often became subject to intense debate. Even when the situation appears straightforward and the rules to be applied evident, self-interest and financial gain demonstrate a peculiar ability to warp outcomes. As one official explained:

Human beings aren’t perfect, and politicians are only human. People will not always see eye-to-eye when applying the rules, especially when their own money is at stake. Our development process is open to public involvement, that’s part of a democratic process…, and as it happens, many times the most determined voices get their way. Sometimes when I look at what happens to a planning application after it goes to Council, I just scratch my head. It isn’t always pretty, but it’s the system we’ve got.84

Public planners are highly trained civil servants and generally up-to-date with the latest best practices in the field of community planning. They may even bring forth professional recommendations for consideration based on sound planning criteria, only to

84 Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Municipal Official
see hard work and effort dismissed by other considerations. The challenges encountered by municipal staff reflect an important research finding that exposes some of the constraints within which governments operate: dissenting opinions, fragmented public input, limited jurisdiction, tight timelines, constrained budgets, and so forth. For local government to be able to fulfill its potential in the move toward sustainability, it requires an informed and engaged citizenry to function as a willing community partner.

Over the years, the design and layout of urban settlements has become increasingly more regulated. Government departments at various levels working alongside other professional planning interests developed an intricate and comprehensive body of standards regulating all aspects of how Canadian communities take shape and grow. Although applicable regulations for sub-dividing land, building construction, laying-out streets and other basic infrastructure are applied uniformly from one place to another, remarkable variation in physical form has evolved between communities, nowhere more apparent than between rural and urban areas. One reason why development regulations are standardized is to ensure a degree of consistency across the field and shield local decision-makers from the need to make ad hoc modifications to development proposals, which can introduce elements of risk and potential liability. They also assure a level of quality and specification intended to promote public health and safety. Many different types of trained professionals are involved in community planning, including engineers, planners, research analysts, social workers, architects and urban designers, though they do not always get along or work toward a common purpose. There is a growing realization among many in the research community that the current planning system has become too cumbersome, exclusionary and ineffectual (Hall Jr. and Porterfield 2001;
Does the current planning regime itself along with outdated zoning codes stand in the way of a more sustainable future, or is reforming them part of the solution?

Understanding how zoning and other land-use controls play-out on the ground is useful not only to better appreciate current practice, but also instructive to inform efforts at improving planning as well. Zoning ordinances dictate the size and intensity of a permitted use on a property specific basis. This is planner’s speak referring to a building structure and the type of function it will likely perform, and thereby creates distinctions between residential, commercial and industrial properties. When applied to the realm of land-use planning, zoning standards accomplish two important objectives. First, it establishes a limitation on the scale of physical development that can occur on a particular property. Second, and subject to greater interpretation, it can be used as a policy instrument to achieve a number of legal, economic and moral goals. The latter becomes more apparent when one ‘zooms-out’ and examines the planning ramifications at a neighbourhood or community-wide scale. Originating initially as a progressive step by local government to ameliorate deplorable urban conditions at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, zoning by-laws have taken-on a life of their own ever since. Looking back at a century of community planning and urban development in the North American context, the impact of zoning on shaping the built environment cannot be overstated. In small town Ontario, the predominant land-use pattern is typified by low density residential neighbourhoods, traditionally encircling a commercial core. In the past, and as discussed in a previous chapter, smaller rural communities were important locales for early industrial production as well. Overtime however, evolving
zoning regulations managed to push these sorts of land-uses ‘out-of-town’ to the extent that such activities are for the most part prohibited on mainstreet. By contrast, bigger cities generally have a broader range and intensity of land uses, which is to say they have more buildings in a variety of shapes and sizes that can satisfy a larger number of different purposes. And despite being historic centers of mass industrialization, here too, zoning practices have also tended to shift industrial uses toward the outskirts. Notwithstanding the rural-urban divide, low density housing segregated from commercial and industrial zones is now the most prevalent and problematic pattern of settlement characterizing much of southwestern Ontario, and indeed North America.

Looking toward the future, urban planning must confront some difficult questions, and look to reinvent itself as a profession or face becoming an impediment to needed change. Community abandonment and urban sprawl not only reflects an unflattering legacy but serves as a poignant reminder of what can happen to a field of practice that fails to address new circumstances and adapt to emerging constraints. Neighbourhood blight, poor air quality, traffic congestion, extended commute times, auto-dependence, employment/place-of-residence locational imbalances are all symptoms of the same land-use dysfunction. A growing body of research is making it clear how the low density suburb –the privileged darling of the North American planning tradition – is the most unsustainable form of human settlement ever devised (Daly and Cobb Jr. 1994; Harvey 1990; Roseland, Cureton and Wornell 1998). Yet conventional planning practices encourage the separation and segregation of residential, commercial and industrial activities, thereby requiring the greater consumption of land to allow for spatial dispersion and the use of the automobiles to enable circulation. Because of this, small
towns and cities are ‘growing-up’ in population terms at the same time as they ‘spread-out’ geographically. Increasingly focused on preserving housing values in middle class and upscale neighbourhoods, municipal planning too often turns a blind eye to the root causes of urban decay. It is only by rethinking planning and incorporating elements of a sustainability perspective into the practice of local community development that decline can be reversed and communities put on the path of regeneration.

What does sustainable community development look like? Can the concept of sustainability integrate successfully within public planning, and if so, does it become applicable to a neighbourhood, town, city or region? As noted earlier, sustainability suggests that the socio-economic needs of human-beings cannot be considered artificially separate from the environment’s capacity to accommodate those demands. The shift toward sustainable communities requires that the impact of human activities –their ecological footprint— become more attuned to the biophysical processes and resource constraints governing all life on the planet. In other words, it necessitates a new kind of ecosystems thinking about how human population settlements are built to function. And like all natural systems, towns and cities cannot go-on consuming resources or discarding unwanted by-products without consequence on an indefinite basis. Eventually, the outcome of bad choices must be reckoned with one way or another.

Making communities sustainable can only be accomplished by re-urbanizing existing built-up settlements, and making these spaces more livable for people. It also requires the adoption of a bioregional understanding to interconnectivity so as to avoid problematic tendencies to either flee, or displace, unwanted conditions or circumstances.
Closing the loop on human-environmental interactions is the only way to ensure a degree of eco-justice by clamping down on unscrupulous ‘gaming-the-system’ types of behavior and begin dealing with problems at their source. Communities facing decline need to work harder at offering lifestyle options that can attract residents and find solutions to the various aspects undermining local quality-of-life. New approaches to urban planning are re-directing policy attention toward regenerative strategies that can revitalize neighbourhoods, ‘green’ the brownfield areas and modify transportation infrastructure to make alternatives to the automobile more viable. These approaches are relative newcomers to the planning stage and empirical findings from this research study can help validate their potential applicability.

In recent years there has been heightened interest to re-examine policy tools and existing incentives to ensure they are more effectively deployed to stimulate desired economic outcomes and discourage damaging behaviours. Such instruments – taxation policy, development charges, financial subsidies, zoning regulations, performance monitoring initiatives— are particularly favoured within the environmental literature as a means to internalize costs overlooked by the free market (Daly and Cobb Jr. 1994; Hawken 1993). It is not reasonable to expect sustainable outcomes to prevail when unsustainable options are given a distinct advantage. Nor will the broader public come to accept higher costs or more burdensome rules when these are applied inconsistently and produce mixed results. Without significant system-level reform, it is not likely that authorities or individuals will alter deeply entrenched behavioral habits. As one municipal planner made clear in an interview:
Becoming sustainable is going to take a great deal of effort and coordination from a lot of different groups that aren’t used to dialoging together. It can’t just be about changing planning, it’s about changing peoples’ attitudes and behaviours as well. You can make all the rules you want, but if not enough people accept them, and if you can’t make sure they’re applied across the board in a fair way, you’re not going to get very far with that. That’s why education is key to all this…, and getting the word out is important to get people to change their attitudes.⁸⁵

As suggested by the previous quote, policy instruments should not be devised or implemented in isolation from the broader community context. Only by reaching out and building a broader-based consensus will it be possible to gain the kind of support required to overcome the public skepticism that remains all too prevalent.

Urban intensification is viewed by forward-looking planning authorities as a critical policy objective to reverse decades of neglect and decline. The better use of existing urbanized space to accommodate population growth can reduce pressure to develop on greenspace and farmland outside the existing urban footprint. Compact development enhances opportunities to walk and cycle, and creates the density required to sustain local markets and allow for public transportation to be more feasible. It is also less costly than greenfield development since much of the required infrastructure is already in place. Evidence suggests even with modest investment, distressed neighbourhoods can be made more appealing and attract new residents (De Sousa 2008; Dixon and Raco 2007). Reclaiming urban space makes financial sense for municipalities as well, since higher land values and taxation returns typically ensue revitalization efforts, and can offset

⁸⁵ Personal Interview, A-17
initial clean-up costs. This approach to community planning is often referred to as ‘New Urbanism’, and provides a viable alternative to the conventional planning paradigm detailed earlier. Interviews with municipal planners revealed most were of the opinion that new urbanist planning principles held a great deal of promise for the field, and could offer significant social, economic and environmental benefits to communities in need of revitalization. As one informant noted:

Urban renewal is essential to breathe new life and vitality into areas long overlooked. These neighbourhoods are ideally situated near commercial and entertainment districts and can offer people options without the need to drive all over the place. For these places to really take off, you need to increase the number of people wanting to work and live in the area.\textsuperscript{86}

Other respondents noted while urban redevelopment was certainly an important step that needs to be taken to counteract decline, they also made mention that a significant segment of the population continues to prefer traditional suburban lifestyle options. “Things are changing, but there’s still a long way to go to make these places more family friendly,”\textsuperscript{87} another planner conceded.

For \textit{New Urbanist} planning to succeed, several barriers must be dismantled. One of the main obstacles obstructing change, ironically, resides within the planning system itself. Traditional zoning codes can be notoriously inflexible, and often discourage infill development. Without increasing population density to a vital tipping-point, not much redevelopment can take place. Antiquated zoning runs contrary to the idea of a mixed-

\textsuperscript{86} Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Municipal Administrator

\textsuperscript{87} Personal Interview, A-16
use district, whereby different activities can mingle within a shared spatial scale to create a dynamic environment. To provide a viable alternative to the suburban development model, new urbanism calls attention to the need to do away with zoning restrictions that do not allow for higher residential densities within older neighbourhoods, or discourage the incorporation of commercial and recreational establishments within existing buildings. Promoting integration and diversity within the built environment is essential to inoculate against the sterile homogeneity prevalent in North American communities plagued by segregated land uses.

The effectiveness of urban renewal can only fully materialize if abandoned brownfields and other derelict properties are targeted for redevelopment. Brownfields are now a focus of policy attention in many communities across the industrial world. Since at least the 1990s, researchers, environmental activists and a growing number of community planners advocate the redevelopment of these sites as a way to offset the outflow of employment and people from the inner city to the rurban fringe (De Sousa 2008; Florida 2010). Much of the emerging literature suggests brownfield redevelopment is the surest way to achieve complementary objectives of environmental sustainability and social equity. Remediating blighted properties helps undue previous environmental damage while working to revive neighbourhoods impacted by deindustrialization and socio-economic deprivation. Research participants interviewed for this study unanimously agreed that brownfield redevelopment was an indispensible component to sustainable community development.

The remediation of existing contamination is an important environmental objective. It allows our community to reuse sites that were previously
unusable and improves local quality-of-life. From the point-of-view of a municipality, it’s great because it will increase the utilization of existing infrastructure and reduce the need to expand roads, sewers, water treatment and other services elsewhere.\(^{88}\)

This is a good thing for revitalization. It addresses local needs and allows residents and their families to enjoy the neighbourhood without fear or worry. The area becomes more attractive; it’s a gain for everyone.\(^{89}\)

The benefit of brownfield redevelopment is that it makes for a more vibrant and livable community. A rejuvenated core is good for residents and supports our local merchants. This type of success brings about even more success.\(^{90}\)

As these highlighted excerpts serve to attest, brownfield redevelopment is clearly attractive to communities looking to reinvent themselves as more hospitable and livable places. An important corollary to be drawn-out from this research finding is that when existing urban spaces are made capable of attracting more people, the demand for greenfield development becomes counterbalanced.

The efficacy of brownfield redevelopment initiatives is ultimately reliant upon eliminating hidden distortions that appear to make greenfield development options less costly. For instance, if fuel prices better reflected true environmental costs, then daily commutes over long distances to and from work would not seem so practical. Perhaps the single most significant impediment limiting the take-up of brownfield alternatives, however, is the availability of abundant and cheaper greenfield land. Several important

\(^{88}\)Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Municipal Administrator

\(^{89}\) Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Community Worker

\(^{90}\) Personal Interview, Small-Town Ontario Economic Development Officer
studies detail how suburban and fringe development tends to under-price the true costs of providing municipal infrastructure and other public services to outlying residential developments (Roseland, Cureton and Wornell 1998; Slack 2002; De Sousa 2008). This research makes the point that the cost of providing the required servicing to low density developments in outlying districts is not only substantially higher when compared to urban intensification, it is also subsidized by the exiting tax base. Ednid Slack (2002) suggests through a combination of user-fees and area specific development charges reflecting the marginal cost of extending infrastructure to new areas, such measures could go a long way removing pricing distortions and level the playing field between greenfield and brownfield development. When asked to comment on the challenges faced by brownfield development projects, an economic development officer for Chatham replied:

Brownfield redevelopment is a hard sell, especially for smaller communities. In larger markets like Toronto you can recoup upfront costs more easily because higher housing pricing allows it. Out here land is too cheap and the amount of money you need to put into the project isn’t going to be compensated afterwards given going market prices.91

Existing municipal development financing arrangements in small town Ontario result in a situation where those who benefit from suburban development do not come to pay the full costs associated with this type of built form. Without a major overhaul to greenfield land valuations in suburban and rural areas, brownfield development cannot be made economically competitive.

91 Personal Interview, A-19
Another barrier to brownfield redevelopment is the negative risk perception often associated with brownfield properties themselves. Yet the recent shift in policy intervention directed toward incentivizing urban renewal exposes a challenge not easily overcome. Taking action on derelict land reclamation requires an upfront commitment and investment of resources. When local governments attempt to increase this kind of regulatory capacity, it adds to the existing tax burden of affected jurisdictions. Indeed, one of the major stumbling blocks toward dealing effectively with the brownfield problem lies in determining who pays for the cost of remediation. Whenever the full cost of clean-up is not borne by the beneficiary of the original land-use, as is often the case, the tab is inevitably passed onto tax payers. As De Sousa (2006) points out, in larger urban centers like Toronto, the rezoning of former industrial properties along lakeshore and the city’s west end served as the catalyst to brownfield redevelopment due to the strength of the local housing market. In smaller communities with more modest growth prospects, the market driven approach to underwriting redevelopment remains more elusive. As Marcia Wallace notes:

Environmental liability and fear of what you might find the deeper you dig remains a huge obstacle that will limit those willing to take the risk. And because the likelihood of finding onsite contamination is high, even those who do take-up the challenge of brownfield redevelopment will get derailed by escalating costs. Without a strong real estate market or government intervention, this type of redevelopment isn’t financially viable.92

92 Personal Interview, A-24
This research study confirms market demand for brownfield redevelopment in small town Ontario remains relatively weak, made all the more unlikely when remediation costs and the more onerous approvals process gets factored into the cost equation for developers. To become attractive to both investors and consumers, local government will certainly need to take an interventionist approach making brownfields more competitive with the greenfield competition over and beyond eliminating existing market distortions.

Financial incentives are being utilized by some governments as a way to overcome barriers to brownfield redevelopment. Such financial mechanisms provide direct financing to address outstanding environmental liabilities where market forces have proven unresponsive. Clean-up funds are widely regarded as an area where the public sector can play a strategic leadership role facilitating sustainable redevelopment. This approach is better developed in the United States and United Kingdom (Dixon and Raco 2007; De Sousa 2008). Within the Canadian context, responsibility for brownfield redevelopment remains an area of contested responsibility, and governments at various levels have played a minimal regulatory role regarding the private sector as primarily responsible for initiating redevelopment projects. Within the community case studies, brownfield redevelopment was only pursued indirectly via small scale programs intended to revitalize the downtown commercial corridor. Mostly through micro-grants aimed at building rehabilitation, tax holidays and other forms of tax-increment financing (TIFs), municipal authorities began taking initial steps to stimulate interest in regeneration during the research phase of the study. Several respondents noted that this was a particular area that warranted specific policy attention and resourcing. In spite of some promising
preliminary efforts, interview results suggest a considerable information deficit also exists among all the communities investigated. The capacity to collect, document and evaluate data on the whereabouts of brownfields and discern the extent of contamination issues was, and continues to be, grossly underdeveloped. Consequently, reliable financial data on the estimated costs to remediate contaminated sites, along with their potential market value once made suitable for redevelopment, was virtually non-existent. Without effective benchmarking and monitoring capacity, it will be difficult to make the required progress to move beyond the ‘pilot project’ stage.

In the last decade, the Ontario government has attempted to promote more sustainable community development by implementing the Strong Communities Act, 2004. Also known as Bill 26, the amendment to the Planning Act reflects an initial step towards planning reform. The main intent of the legislation is to boost environmental protection and better serve the public interest by opening up the planning process and allowing more time for public scrutiny. Most significantly, the legislation strengthens the implementation standard for applying the strategic priorities delineated by the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) –the policy document outlining priorities for how communities grow and protect the environment. In particular, it now requires that land-use planning decisions at the municipal level ‘shall be consistent with,’ rather than the ‘have regard to’ clause, as was previously the case. Although reflecting a necessary shift in overall policy direction, research findings indicate that this in itself has not been sufficient to quash inter-community rivalry in the quest to attract investment dollars, which was shown to be particularly fierce and undermine existing community standards. Furthermore, because the residential housing market by virtue of being territorialized is relatively insulated
from direct pressures brought about by globalization, cut-throat competition between municipalities to lower development costs and ‘poach residents’ from each other seems financially senseless. In this regard, there is an identified need for greater regional coordination among municipalities, perhaps reinforced by Provincial oversight, to better ensure that the drive to become more competitive does not descend into a perverse ‘race to the bottom’ pitting local communities against each other.

In the absence of a coordinated regional policy framework, communities can take important steps themselves to avoid creating incentives leading to inefficient patterns of land-use development. The shift toward sustainability requires widespread recognition that overall land supply is a finite resource base that cannot be expanded once depleted, or modified easily upon being developed. This chapter calls attention specifically to the need to protect small towns and the surrounding countryside from relentless development pressures which continue to envelop the narrow distinction between rural areas and urban spaces throughout much of southwestern Ontario. While measures like the Greenbelt initiative play an important role curbing sprawl in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region, many communities outside the protected zone struggle to achieve sustainable land development outcomes. The conclusion to be drawn indicates a pressing need to better utilize urbanized land, including a greater emphasis on reclaiming abandoned, underutilized and derelict lands within existing community settlements. Much of the research findings and analysis explored in this chapter points to a rather cautious outlook when assessing the prospect for more sustainable community development. If communities like Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston are to develop in a more socially and environmentally sustainable direction, attention must be paid not only to courting new
flows of capital investment, but also ensuring that working conditions and environmental standards are not sacrificed in the development process.
CHAPTER EIGHT

- CONCLUSION: MAKING COMMUNITIES WORK

This dissertation has sought to elucidate the interdependent and complex dynamics linking community growth with decline as it unfolds in the context of four mid-sized communities situated within the rural heartland of southwestern Ontario, Canada. The research findings and analysis explored throughout help identify a problematic divergence arising between uneven development trends and the conditions required for long-term social and environmental well-being. These circumstances raise important questions regarding how to go about understanding the relationship between capital flows, job creation and local economic development priorities on the one hand, and human migration patterns, new forms of urbanization and the basis for sustainable communities on the other. The desire to unleash market forces and cut red tape, despite pretentions otherwise, has not precluded the interests of ‘big’ capital from calling upon local government to undertake costly development schemes with the hope of turning around troubled economies. Nor should these “growth-at-any-cost’ strategies be considered unqualified successes –indeed, reversing community fortunes remains a rather elusive goal. The capacity for any single community to enact economic development policy is inherently limited. While it is often acknowledged how the hyper mobility of capital alters the rules of the game when it comes to maintaining competitiveness on a global stage, less well understood is how quality-of-place determines community viability in the longer term. In this final chapter, I offer some concluding remarks about conventional community development practices and underscore the need for a new
paradigm that can better integrate concern for human welfare with a sustainability perspective. The chapter closes by discussing some of the challenges confronting the implementation of a sustainable community development agenda and how these may be overcome.

The discussion has direct relevance to municipal planners and community decision-makers who must increasingly confront, and devise ways to deal with, the socio-environmental consequences of fragmenting communities. Small towns and mid-sized cities subject to bifurcating pressures of urban decay and suburban sprawl are especially vulnerable to falling into the trap of trying to attract new economic investment by whatever means possible. On their own, smaller communities are poorly positioned to respond to the incessant demands of the global economy. In the past, there is evidence from the Canadian context to suggest government leadership in local economic planning and development matters can play a positive role counterbalancing the negative aspects associated with destructive market forces. Undertaking community focused development projects can help stimulate local economies by building sustainable infrastructure, incentivizing diversification and ensuring the benefits of growth are more widely distributed. Regrettably, this course of action remains out of favour and stands at odds with \textit{laissez-faire} attitudes placing considerable faith in market solutions. If communities like Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston are to be encouraged to develop along a more sustainable path, attention must be paid not just toward courting new industry, but more importantly, ensuring that community development efforts help reinforce long range socio-economic and environmental objectives. The research study
highlights the pressing need to re-orientate public policy initiatives to better address this deficiency.

Researchers point out a defining feature to the current global restructuring of industrial operations is the spatial and temporal reorganization of the relations of production between capital and labour so as to restore the dominance of the former at the expense of the latter (Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Jessop 1990; Harvey 1996; Bonanno 2000). The outcome of this class project affords greater ‘flexibility’ to capital by promoting a pro-business climate conducive toward renewed capitalist accumulation, regardless of the consequences to community or the environment. The freeing-up of big capital to seek out the most advantageous localities for investment imposes a harsh logic that punishes higher cost and more heavily regulated jurisdictions, and favours those places with minimal standards. The ascendency of a cut-throat economic paradigm has had a noticeably corrosive impact on the structure of labour markets in higher income countries like Canada, while environmental problems are left to fester in place. A major conclusion to be drawn from the study is that while certain communities in southwestern Ontario have managed some degree of success attracting new development opportunities, much of this growth is not being managed in a sustainable way.

Research findings not only confirm the unbridled impact globalized market forces have had on community relations, but it also brings to light how municipal authorities retain an important role mitigating how these processes play-out locally. Free-market advocates of globalization often applaud the desirability of a minimalist state, yet current conditions for capitalist development appear to require the need for significant
government intervention to enable growth. This apparent contradiction warrants further investigation. The research results help support the idea that globalization should not be taken as a single, coherent movement toward socio-spatial integration, but rather construed as a geo-economic strategy pursued by highly motivated actors to redefine and circumnavigate regulatory capacity. Despite major dislocations to result from de-industrialization, the case studies nevertheless show the important role municipalities assume in supporting local development. However, communities are well advised to re-think a policy approach focused narrowly on attracting footloose industry. Without an enhanced role for public planning so as to integrate social, economic and environmental considerations into a comprehensive strategy for the public good, the ascendency of an exclusionary model of development will continue to corrode the ties that bind individuals together and make communities vulnerable to decay and fragmentation.

The case studies also illustrate that the line dividing rural and urban spaces can be rather thin and easily blurred as urbanization encroaches onto the countryside. For much of the post-war period, suburbanization has come to reflect the predominant form of land use development taking place in much of southwestern Ontario. With growing auto-dependence and sprawling developments on the edge of traditional metropolitan centers, spatial proximity is no longer an influencing factor linking places of work to residential settlement areas. As the more affluent and mobile flock to the suburbs, older neighbourhoods experience net losses in population density and become less viable over time. Those left behind are faced with a much more daunting task of trying to make ends meet within a distressed socio-economic milieu. Unchecked sprawl also threatens the environment through habitat destruction and air pollution due to greater automotive
dependence. Ironically, it is the province’s land-use planning and zoning systems that helped encourage this gradual separation and the associated patterns of land development, which has now become a major threat to sustainability.

Another key implication to consider is that although smaller communities exhibit a degree of autonomy when it comes to implementing local community development initiatives, the effectiveness of such strategies can be called into question, especially when evaluated from a regional perspective. Within each of the communities looked at, local authorities were active in the area of economic development. Most significantly, municipalities sought to lure new investment by embarking upon aggressive campaigns to bring industrially serviced lands to market. This approach essentially equates the role of a municipality with that of a developer. Industrial land development initiatives are fancied by economic developers as a quick way to kick-start economic activity and generate jobs. Unfortunately, what may well make sense from the vantage point of a single community can also contribute to a collective action dilemma when other localities follow suit and flood the broader market with an abundance of heavily subsidized and under-priced developable lands. The end result is not only costly but wasteful as well.

The conclusions raised in this research project suggest there is a need for greater regional coordination in southwestern Ontario to prevent communities from undercutting each other. In the absence of an overarching policy planning framework, localized community development efforts can often work at cross-purposes. Municipal governments will not serve the broader public interest when short-term opportunism prevails over longer term thinking and regional coordination. The traditional approach to
community planning and economic development tends to be atomistic and assume little to no limits to growth imperatives. The case studies examined reveal troubling instances of uneven social and economic development, growing inequality and wealth polarization, as well as the unsustainable consumption of land based resources. In short, the research calls attention for the need to do community development differently.

Within the urban planning literature the heightened interest in new urbanism marks a swing in the pendulum away from the traditional paradigm that has reigned unchallenged for the last half century. At issue, is a realization that community planning needs to do a better job of taking all the costs and benefits associated with development into account. New urbanism reflects the latest wave of planning reform insights challenging the notion that any kind of growth is a good thing, and instead makes the point that certain types of development are inherently more socially beneficial than others. In fact, certain forms of development that promote the separation of land uses and outward orientated growth are what lie at the root of urban decline. Advocates of new urbanism advance the idea that smart growth recognizes the need to better harmonize human and environmental needs into the design of places. Far from constituting an impediment to economic development, smart growth looks to increase the density of human population settlements and direct development activity toward existing urbanized areas, thereby preserving green space and farmland. New urbanism and smart growth take up the challenge of sustainable development by focusing attention on how to make neighbourhoods and communities more livable places, rather than the status-quo and unsustainable practice of endlessly expanding elsewhere. Making communities work
begins by tackling urban issues where they reside, and not run away from challenges hoping they will somehow cease to exist.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this research study is that Chatham, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Alliston, like many other communities outside the Greenbelt Protection zone, lack the planning tools required to implement effective growth management practices within respective jurisdictions. While provincially initiated measures like the Greenbelt Protection Act, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridge’s Moraine Plan provide the necessary policy direction and enforcement mechanism required to achieve more sustainable land-use outcomes, these instruments are not available beyond the vicinity of the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. Without enabling legislation, many communities like those examined herein, continue to accommodate growth pressures by expanding established settlement areas. One key recommendation put forth in this concluding section is that a stronger endorsement of a strategy to better utilize existing urbanized lands in small town Ontario, including a more determined effort to reclaim vacant, under-utilized and derelict lands is needed to offset the demand for greenfield development and recognize the finite nature of the resource base. Today’s system of land-use planning, including a significant portion of public preference, continues to favour outward-oriented development over higher density infill opportunities. Unless overall consumption habits shift in favour of inward-focused re-development, consumer demand will continue to undermine efforts aimed at promoting sustainable land-use rationalization.
In order for growth management policies to succeed, the re-development and intensification of existing urban spaces must be made viable and attractive to residents. Growth control regulations and boundary demarcations are important tools for shaping where development takes place. Managing growth is as much about discouraging some options as it is about facilitating other possibilities. Consequently, protecting natural features (i.e., tree coverage and waterway networks) and enhancing the urban environment through naturalization, restoration and greening becomes critical to promoting livability, health and well-being, as well as encouraging local community buy-in. By providing dedicated resource funding targeted specifically to brownfield redevelopment, the Province of Ontario could take an important step ensuring that regional disparities do not stand in the way of progress. Currently, this research study reveals that brownfield regeneration remains mostly confined to bigger cities and financed largely through private developers (see also: De Sousa 2006). Brownfield redevelopment can produce a multitude of public benefits for smaller communities impacted by de-industrialization; however, support from upper levels of government is needed to overcome obstacles related to a limited population base and weaker real-estate markets. This community-enabling and partnership building approach would allow smaller municipalities to address localized priorities while simultaneous contributing to the broader aim of sustainability. Facilitating coordination and dictating fixed settlement boundaries would go a long way discouraging inter-community rivalry to attract new growth and reign-in pressures to intrude further onto surrounding agricultural lands. Sustainable development will only be achieved through an approach that is able to
connect how localities interact and form part of a broader regional conglomeration –the success of all depends on the fidelity of each.

Lastly, ensuring that sustainable community development takes places requires a sustained shift in how most municipalities approach local development plans and public sector priorities. Whether communities look to ‘build up’ or redevelopment neglected areas ‘within’, the traditional approach to expand outwards and ignore the limits to growth is becoming increasingly untenable. Many land-use plans and zoning systems, including those of the case studies examined, are based on outdated models that never fully contemplated the full costs unregulated capitalism imposes upon human communities and the environment. It is ultimately up to local residents and decision-makers to balance short-term profit seeking interests with the broader long-term public good. The issue is how to strike the right balance between private property rights and the need to safeguard the public interest when it comes to enhancing quality-of-life and ensuring sustainability. Inevitably goals and values will conflict and the question of sustainability will ultimately be a matter for political and democratic deliberation.
APPENDIX A – LIST OF KEY INFORMANT CONTACTS

1. Ian Bender, Director of Planning, Simcoe County

2. Jay Brown, Economic Development Officer, County of Middlesex

3. Margo Cooney, Nottawasaga Futures Economic Development Group, New Tecumseth

4. Marsha Coyne, Senior Planner, Chatham

5. Sean Dyke, Economic Development Officer, St. Thomas

6. Brendon Holly, Director of Development Services, New Tecumseth

7. Colin Longhurst, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Government of Ontario

8. Ron Lyons, Nottawasaga Futures Economic Development Group, New Tecumseth

9. Len Magyar, Development Commissioner, Woodstock

10. Manager #1, Auto-Parts Firm, Small Town Ontario

11. Manager #2, Auto-Parts Firm, Small Town Ontario

12. Manager #3, Auto-Parts Firm, Small Town Ontario

13. Manager #4, Auto-Parts Firm, Small Town Ontario

14. Manager #5, Automotive Assembly Plant, Small Town Ontario

15. Manager #6, Automotive Assembly Plant, Small Town Ontario

93 All research participants in this study were required to provide informed consent according to guidelines established by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Guelph. In some cases, interviewees expressed concerns about disclosing their identity and professional affiliation, requesting instead to participate as unnamed sources. In those instances, the preference of the research participants is respected throughout the dissertation.
16. Municipal Planner #1, Small Town Ontario
17. Municipal Planner #2, Small Town Ontario
18. Paul Mistele, Executive Member, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
19. Aileen Murray, Economic Development Officer, Chatham
20. Peter Rigby, Economic Development Officer, Ingersoll
21. Lera Ryan, Policy Development Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
22. Jim Stanford, Economist, Canadian Automotive Workers Union
23. William Steep, Chatham-Kent Labour Council, Chatham
24. Marcia Wallace, Brownfields Coordinator, Government of Ontario
25. Robert Wheeler, General Manager, Economic Development Corporation, St. Thomas
26. David Worts, Executive Director, Japanese Automobile Manufacturers Association

Note: An additional 24 interviewees agreed to participate in this research and contribute insights, asking however that their identities and occupational affiliation not be used with explicit reference.
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