

**CORRUPTION, COMMUNITY, AND THE URBAN PROJECT:
An Anthropology of Gentrification in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn**

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Master of Arts in Anthropology

School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

August 2016

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List of Acronyms

FCRC/FCR: Forest City Ratner Company/Forest City Ratner

ESDC/ESD: Empire State Development Corporation/Empire State Development

UDC: New York State's Urban Development Corporation

JDA: Job Development Authority

DED: Department of Economic Development

MTA: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

DDDB: Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn

NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

BUILD: Brooklyn United for Innovative Local Development

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

ACORN: Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

CBA: Community Benefits Agreement

NYCEDC: New York City Economic Development Corporation

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

IRS: Internal Revenue Service

Abstract

Gentrification is popularly defined as a trend in the development of urban neighbourhoods that results in increased property values, and the displacement of lower-income families and existing small businesses. As a way of developing neighborhoods through urban projects, private development companies argue that the “ends justify the means” in their quest to “renew” and “revitalize” a “blighted” neighbourhood. This thesis asks what happens to those in the footprint of a development project. Taking a 22-acre multi-use urban megaproject in Brooklyn as a privileged site for inquiry, it documents and analyzes the experience of residents in initial and subsequent phases of the development process. Drawing on fieldwork and interviews with 28 individuals, the thesis argues that gentrification can be better understood by conceptualizing the social relations involved, in particular, those of corruption and community.

Acknowledgments

I appreciate and wish to thank the individuals, both in Canada and in the United States, who have been there to support me through these last two years. My time in Brooklyn, New York was a remarkable learning opportunity, and it could never have happened without the guidance, dedication, and hard work of my supervisor, Dr. Meg Stalcup. She has been an invaluable resource, and I have appreciated her patience and enthusiasm throughout this entire process.

I want to thank Dr. Vincent Mirza, and Dr. Larisa Kurtović, for their support and expertise throughout my research, and for taking the time to be part of my thesis committee. This thesis could not have been realized without their thoughtful comments and their dedication. In addition, I also want to thank Dr. David Jaclin for his time and his advice through these last two years. He has been incredibly supportive and available for me in times of need.

I also want to thank a close, personal friend of mine, Elijah Herington, M.A. who not only helped me through times of existential crises, but also poured hours into meticulously reading through and editing this thesis with me. I appreciate everything he has done for me.

I am indebted to the residents of Brooklyn who took time out of their busy lives to allow for such frank and open discussions about their lived experiences both with regards to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project and without. “Participants”, “informants”, “interlocutors”. These terms detract from the significance of those of whom were kind enough to help me along with my project, introduce me to others, feed me, cater to my schedule, and motivate me. My family, those who remain and those who have since parted, continue to be my strongest motivator. Without all of these relationships, this project would have never come to fruition.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my loving grandfather, Duncan Robert Miller (1931-2008), and my loving grandmother, Gilberte Pelland (1930-2015).

Introduction

“This is the epicenter of gentrification,” explained Wayne. After contacting the office of former ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project director Arana Hankin numerous times with concerns and issues regarding the project’s construction and implementation, Wayne finally received a curt email response that said: “The things that you’re talking about, they just don’t happen much.” Wayne’s immediate response was an email with an attachment of video footage compiled over the course of a single week that documented numerous traffic violations by project construction teams, construction workers switching off and physically removing air quality control monitors during heavy concrete work, and a construction worker standing in the footprint of the project yelling ‘Go fuck yourself! We can make as much fucking noise as we want you fucking prick!’ at Wayne at 3 o’clock in the morning. Arana emailed Wayne back, saying “I don’t want you to document this stuff anymore. It is not necessary.” “I had that [video], and I sent it to the state” explained Wayne, “and the state said ‘we can’t control one individual’s actions’.” Furious, Wayne responded “But those are the developer’s actions! That’s a representative of the developer!”

What is the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project?

This thesis asks what happens to those in the footprint of a development project. Taking a 22-acre multi-use urban megaproject in Brooklyn as a privileged site for inquiry, it documents and analyzes the experience of residents in initial and subsequent phases of the development process. Gentrification is popularly defined as a trend in the development of urban neighbourhoods that results in increased property values, and the displacement of lower-income families and existing small businesses. As a way of developing neighborhoods through urban projects, private development companies argue that the “ends justify the means” in their quest to

“renew” and “revitalize” a “blighted” neighbourhood. Drawing on the fieldwork and interviews that will be presented in the pages that follow, I argue that gentrification can be better understood by conceptualizing the social relations involved, in particular, those of corruption and community.



Figure 1

The project I study is called the Atlantic Yards project, and originally proposed mixed-use commercial and residential urban “renewal” in the form of 17 high-rise buildings in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. A major component of the development project was the Barclays Center sports arena, which opened on September 21, 2012, and was the only completed phase of the project at the time of my fieldwork (Figure 1). Developer Bruce Ratner and his company, Forest City Ratner Companies (FCRC), renamed the project “Pacific Park” as part of a rebranding effort, due to extensive community blowback and negative media exposure. In this thesis, I will

use the name the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park¹ project to avoid any confusion, as the two names are often used interchangeably.

This thesis will present, explore, and analyze three key forms of social relations that I have identified through fieldwork on this urban megaproject in Brooklyn. The first is corruption, which I address in its guise of corrupt and corrupted solidarity networks, through which the private development company was able to accelerate approval for, and begin construction on, the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. I present the ways in which the developer used corrupt solidarity networks of cronyism, and also their corruption of existing solidarity networks by establishing its own community group, whose activities were privately funded by the developer. The role of the group was to actively promote the project at town hall meetings, and subdue any opposition to the project by other concerned citizen groups.

The second form of social relations I address are those of “predatory authority and structural violence,” through which I characterize the phenomenon of “gentrification” that my interlocutors presented to me. Residents in Brooklyn experienced harassment and were threatened by landlords and building owners, who were working to displace or evict them in order to demolish or sell entire apartment buildings. Furthermore, while some residents are able to resist looming threats of displacement and eviction, I identify that there are in fact structural impediments to doing so for many residents, and I characterize these impediments as a form of structural violence.

Finally, the third form of social relations I identify is “community,” a sense of which is present among and important to among residents, while also being the target of the developer as

¹ The use of single quotations in ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project is an explicit stylistic decision. I do so as a way to emphasize the rebranding effort of Forest City Ratner. Some of my interlocutors also refuse to call the project “Pacific Park.”

a tactic for gaining traction and support, and superseding the claims-making of community boards and block associations. Through documenting and analyzing two events held in Prospect Heights, I identify the developer's negative formation of community, which is in fact destructive of the sense of belonging and security that residents ascribe to their neighborhood.



Figure 2

No Sleep ‘til Brooklyn

Few places in North America possess demographic diversity that parallels that of the borough of Brooklyn, New York. The borough occupies the southwestern tip of Long Island, and shares a border with another New York City borough, Queens. With approximately 2.3 million residents, Brooklyn comprises a “conglomeration of people in a densely occupied matrix of neighbourhoods” (Warf 1990). The diversity between neighbourhoods is exemplified in both architecture and people. Ranging from the “quaint, traditional neighbourhoods” of Bushwick and Williamsburg, to the “sleek, modern office complexes” (Warf, 1990) of downtown Brooklyn, to the constantly changing skyline of DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), Brooklyn provides a privileged site to study urban planning and development. People with drastically different backgrounds rub shoulders and alter their urban space, such that, as is often the case with metropolitan cities in the 21st century, the underlying constant is change. Change in Brooklyn has often been characterized by an “influx of white-collar professionals into low-income central city areas” (Osman 2011, 8), and this in turn referred to as “brownstoning,” “neighbourhood revitalization,” the “back-to-the-city movement,” and “gentrification.”

One of these constantly changing neighbourhoods is Prospect Heights, a northwest neighbourhood adjacent to downtown Brooklyn (Figure 2). Notably small compared to other Brooklyn neighbourhoods, Prospect Heights is renowned for its cultural diversity and its tree-lined streets. Served by the New York Police Department’s 78th Precinct and home to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the recently renovated Brooklyn Museum, Prospect Heights has experienced rapid demographic changes over the last decade. Throughout the neighbourhood, rows of classic brownstones – coveted Brooklyn townhouses made of brown Triassic-Jurassic sandstone – are juxtaposed against older buildings perpetually under reconstruction and

renovation, and newly built luxury condominiums. However, its diversity and allure, “in particular its social mix,” has been mined, little by little, by a “long lasting process of gentrification, that – in different times and modalities – effected the majority of the so called «Brownstone Brooklyn»” (Osman 2011, in Annunziata, Manzo 2013, 72). As a resident commented to me, as we sat drinking Brooklyn craft beer in an offbeat pizza chain serving cornmeal-crust pizzas with quirky Cajun toppings called “Two Boots Pizza,” “there’s a lot of new construction going on [...] that is trashing and taking over blocks, taking over space and building monstrosity-type buildings.”

One of these “monstrosity-type buildings” is the Barclays Center, a multi-purpose indoor arena and the cornerstone of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. Located next to the renamed Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center MTA subway station and the Long Island Railroad’s Atlantic Terminal, the Barclays Center is currently home to the Brooklyn Nets of the National Basketball Association and the New York Islanders of the National Hockey League. The arena was initially proposed in 2004 when developer Bruce Ratner purchased the New Jersey Nets for \$300 million as the first step to building both a new home for the team, and breaking ground on the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. Issues regarding land use and ownership, potential environmental impacts, and the abuse of large amounts of public subsidies surrounding the arena stirred up, and continues to stir up, community resistance.

This thesis identifies and focuses on a tension between impending urban change – characterized by private development mega-projects driving the demographic and economic changes labeled “gentrification” – and “being a part of” a community in the borough of Brooklyn, whether at the macro scale of the greater borough, or at the micro scale of residents on a given block. Conversations regarding residents’ understanding of their borough, their

neighbourhood, their community, and these changes in urban space provide the ethnographic material to identify, characterize, and describe the lived urban experience of community, urbanization, and gentrification in a North American context.

Methodology

From July 1, 2015 to September 1, 2015, I conducted an ethnographic research study that included participant observation, informal interactions and conversations, online community interactions, and semi-structured interviews. Prior to leaving for the field, I undertook preparatory “digital ethnography” with regards to both the neighborhood and the development project for the purpose of better establishing my field as a researcher, by scouring different digital venues, such as a Brooklyn-focused discussion page,² and several Brooklyn-based blogs, including *Brownstoner*,³ and *6sqft*.⁴ I further developed my understanding of the neighborhoods involved, as well as the processes of gentrification, by examining academic journal articles and books that discuss the New York City borough of Brooklyn, the neighborhoods proposed, the processes of gentrification, urbanization, popular culture, and urban studies. I also critically examined magazine and newspaper features from prominent New York City periodicals such as *the New York Times*, *the New York Post*, and *the Village Voice*.

This ethnographic research has relied heavily on digital media and the forms of communication it engenders (Coleman 2010). In addition to those mentioned, a major resource for this dissertation was an online resource created by journalist Norman Oder, known as the ‘Atlantic Yards/Pacific Park Report,’ a watchdog blog that offers analysis, commentary, and reportage on the \$4.9 billion USD project to build the Barclays Center arena, and its associated

² www.reddit.com/r/Brooklyn

³ www.brownstoner.com

⁴ www.6sqft.com

high-rise buildings at a crucial site in Brooklyn. The development project provides geographic and temporal parameters for the anthropological inquiry presented in this thesis, while Norman Oder and his watchdog blog have been a valuable interlocutor and resource.

Through semi-structured interviews with residents of Prospect Heights, East New York, Flatbush, and Bushwick, I was able to document and characterize how “Brooklynites” identified with their neighborhood and their community, how they situated themselves in the greater borough of Brooklyn, as well as the city of New York, what they saw happening with regards to development in their neighborhoods, and how they experienced their community. The key terms explored in this thesis — community, corruption and gentrification — emerged through this fieldwork, because they were the significant terms for my interlocutors. Their viewpoints and lived experiences gave me invaluable understanding of the economic, residential, and communal aspects of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project.

When I arrived in Bushwick in July of 2015, I was able to use my pre-established contacts and knowledge of the neighborhood to locate potential participants through word-of-mouth and networking. This included, but was not limited to, being introduced into the mailing list of Community Board 8, BrooklynSpeaks, and Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn – three community groups to be discussed further in this thesis. After conducting a semi-structured interview with a Brooklyn resident named Wayne, Wayne took it upon himself to add me to the Community Board 8 mailing list and email all approximately 200 members of the community group. The following morning, I had received approximately 70 emails from other residents asking if they could be of any help regarding my project.

Semi-structured interviews became my primary methodological tool in understanding how residents of various Brooklyn neighbourhood understand the processes of gentrification and

its implications in their neighborhood, what it means to be an active participant in their neighbourhood, and how private development changes urban landscape. When I left for the field, I was under the impression that I would be able to conduct semi-structured interviews with approximately 10-15 residents. However, once I was put in contact with others through the mailing lists, I felt it necessary to speak to as many residents as possible in my short amount of time in the borough. I ended up recording and hand writing notes for 28 interviews. The recordings were then transcribed at a later date. I was able document my fieldwork at the end of most days by taking my handwritten notes and typing them up, adding reflections and observations.

My interviews were conducted in various settings depending on the preferences of my informants, including, but not limited to, cafés and restaurants around the neighborhood, bars, and homes. I only conducted follow-up interviews with two residents, but those interviews allowed me to clarify ambiguities that remained from previous interviews, and I was therefore able to discuss any new questions that became of interest. Interview questions evolved to include aspects of the neighborhood, family history (“How long have you and your family lived in [neighborhood]?”), thoughts on changes occurring in the neighborhood, the notion of community, aspects about the development project, government, and notions of personal and collective identities within this space, and how it may have changed or stayed the same.

In August, I attended a special event hosted by the developer Forest City Ratner called “10 Murals 1 Day” which will be discussed in chapter 3. The event was hosted in tandem with another event at the Barclays Center called the “Tournament of Champions,” which was sponsored by Nike and will be discussed in chapter 3 as well. At these two events, I was able to

speak informally with residents I had already sat down and conversed with, and I was able to experience these two events alongside them.

Thesis Outline

This dissertation is divided into an introduction and three chapters, followed by a conclusion. Chapter 1 introduces the private development megaproject the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. One of the salient aspects of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project is that despite extensive public outcry and negative publicity, the project continues, in a range of controversial, deceptive, and obfuscating forms. This chapter presents the relationship between the state, private developers, and ordinary citizens enacted in this project. I provide a project timeline, from its inception in 2003 to the time of my ethnographic work in the summer of 2015. In presenting this timeline, I address and explore numerous issues which have been well-documented in the media surrounding the project.

Drawing on Olivier de Sardan’s “logic of solidarity networks”, this first chapter argues that solidarity networks sustain the relationships cultivated between the state, the developer, the private development company, and some residents of the neighbourhood of Prospect Heights in the context of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. I posit that the pursuit and enactment of these relationships comprise a significant form of corruption, albeit one that is putatively legal. The concepts of “corrupt” and “corrupted” solidarity networks help explain why this development project was enacted in the ways that it was. The development company is enmeshed in solidarity networks which it uses to unscrupulous purpose: this is a corrupt solidarity network. The developer also pits residents against each other, resulting in a corruption of the existing community as different factions emerge. Corrupted solidarity networks are manipulated so as to push through the urban development project.

In exploring this major private development project, I document how a megaproject can negatively affect the neighbourhood it aims to become a part of. One key process is what residents have deemed the anticipatory “gentrification of their neighbourhood.” This kind of urban change, I argue, occurs because of the way in which a private urban development company manipulates solidarity networks, distorts statistics and facts, and is not held accountable by the state.

Chapter 2 aims to conceptualize and elaborate on gentrification as a phenomenon by documenting and analyzing the ways in which residents of Brooklyn use and understand the term “gentrification,” the processes it entails, and the contexts in which and through which urban change occurs. Through conversations with residents from the Brooklyn neighbourhoods of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, and East New York, I ask: How do residents define, see, understand, and live with the processes of gentrification in Brooklyn? What does their use of the word gentrification to describe changes to their urban environment mean in relation to what they call “neighbourhood” and “community”? In addressing these questions, I try to understand what people in Brooklyn are going through when they speak of gentrification.

Finally, chapter 3 focuses on how the notion of “community” is produced at different scales, and how different forms of community have worked and continue to work both with and against each other in complex and contradictory ways. I present the way that community is used by activists and community groups in Brooklyn to try and command allegiance by bringing neighbourhoods together to fight gentrification, while simultaneously being manipulated cynically by developers to both justify a development project devoid of public benefit and garner public support. Through this discussion of community, I address the collective claims-making of community groups such as Community Board 8 and the Dean Street Block Association. In this

way, I respond to the call of Biehl and McKay to provide the “need for close attention to the everyday realities that individuals and collectives craft [...] as they coalesce with local forms of exchange and politics” (2012, 1218) in social theory. To do so, I explore community as my interlocutors understand it, by exemplifying the common associations and affective aspects of solidarity networks. I then explore the political aspect of community through community politics and claims-making.

For a private developer like Forest City Ratner, the notion of “community” serves as a tactic through which a development project gains traction, support, and supersedes the claims-making of community boards and block associations. Through two “community” events hosted by the private development company – a street art “block party-style” event and an amateur basketball tournament – I identify that community is taken up by development companies as a way to add a layer of authenticity to private development projects, while also being taken up by citizen groups as a way to better a neighbourhood. I show how the solidarity networks of community are being manipulated by a private development company as a way of adding a degree of authenticity to an urban project. Community therefore gets framed as both the answer to gentrifying processes in neighbourhoods such as Prospect Heights, while it is also a construct by which gentrifying processes occur at the hand of a private development firm.

The concluding discussion will serve to bring together my discussion of gentrification, what it means, and how it works, with the mechanisms of corruption and community discussed in previous chapters. I summarize that I have presented about the intersection of urban spaces, social relations, and private development, as an answer to the question of how a multi-million-dollar private development project gets built. What many told me about the way in which the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project was enacted fit with popular narratives of gentrification,

wherein a private developer revitalizes a “blighted” neighbourhood so as to make it more appealing to a wealthier middle-class. Through my fieldwork and analysis, I show how specific forms of social relations made it possible for the project be pushed forward, including the questionable business and public relations practices by the developer, the predatory and self-interested acts of landlords, and the cynical use of community-organizing events.

Chapter 1:

The ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project: “Corruption” on the Ground

Roosevelt Hicks: “[...] this is business. This is the way it’s done in America... I get to walk away with a piece of an asset worth eight million dollars. I don’t care if somebody else makes some money ‘cause of a tax break. I get mine and they get theirs...”

August Wilson *Radio Golf* (2005)

Having left Montreal nearly thirteen hours before, including a three hour stop at the border, and after travelling through the lush wine country of the Hudson Valley, the New York City-bound Adirondack pattered into Penn Station at around 12:30AM on July 2, 2015. Despite my ambition to try and figure out how to transfer from the southbound A-train to the Brooklyn-bound L-train, I just could not handle navigating the New York City subway after such an extensive travel day. I flagged a cab down on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 31st Street, which was no easy task, and asked the cabbie to take the Brooklyn Bridge to Bushwick. As we rolled through Putnam Avenue and came to a stop in front of what would be my home for the next two months and change, a couple of young men sitting on a stoop in front of a house yelled out: “Wrong address, motherfucker!” I paid the cab driver, got out, and checked in. After taking a quick breath, and meeting my roommate for the next two months, I sat down for a second and gathered my thoughts. Before heading to bed, I dragged myself to the kitchen to get a glass of water, and sitting upright in the bin of recyclables, I noticed an inflatable clapper tube they often give out at sporting events with the unmistakable logo of the Brooklyn Nets, featuring a slogan that simply said: “We Are Brooklyn.”

Welcome to New York

“*Sell out* your community, *sell out* your life that you’ve developed over so much time, where you raised your kids – I’ll give you money for all your experience, and you’ll be about your merry way, and I own your place.” These words capture the negative view of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park urban development project in Brooklyn, New York. For my interlocutors, the negative affect surrounding what they often labelled “gentrification” has become indicative of living in New York. Many found themselves mobilizing against elected officials because of invasive urban development that, in their eyes, jeopardized their neighbourhood. Evan, a man in his mid-50s, was born and raised in Brooklyn, reached out to me via email. While “not an expert on the issue or [even] a major activist”, Evan emphasized that he has “a lot of lived experience here” in Brooklyn. Speaking about his neighbourhood of Prospect Heights, he introduced the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project to our conversation: “In the aughts, I performed regularly at the old Freddy’s Bar” Evan explained. The bar “stood where the Barclays Center is now, and [I] participated in protests against the development” and construction of the arena. As I emailed back-and-forth with Evan, he noted that “despite [the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project] being one of the most visible and *corrupt* projects in Brooklyn’s [current and ongoing] redevelopment, it’s actually a bit of an outlier.”

Labelled the “New Heart of the New Brooklyn”, the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project is advertised to urban professionals and families as the most desirable and dynamic new neighborhood to call home. Using the Barclays Center as a centerpiece and selling point, the mixed-use development project offers residential, retail, commercial, and entertainment facilities. The project has been overseen by the Empire State Development Corporation (ESD or ESDC), an umbrella organization for New York State’s Urban Development Corporation (UDC),

Job Development Authority (JDA), and the Department of Economic Development (DED). According to their website (www.nylovesbiz.com), the mission of the ESDC is to “promote a vigorous and growing state economy, encourage business investment and job creation, and support diverse, prosperous local economies across New York State, through the efficient use of loans, grants, tax credits, real estate development, marketing and other forms of assistance” (2016).

“What is happening [in other neighbourhoods] is more private market-driven, and is mostly due to the lack of regulation” in rent prices, explained Evan, unlike the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project which is a “simple case of government corruption.” Evan elaborated on the way in which the state, specifically the ESDC, alongside the city and the project’s developer, Forest City Ratner, abused eminent domain to obtain the land required for the development. It was simply “an example of the city using old-school urban renewal techniques to line a developer’s pockets.” When we last spoke in July of 2015, Evan was in the process of moving from his home in Prospect Heights to Northern California. When I asked him about his motivation to finally move after half a century of living in Brooklyn, he simply responded “I no longer recognize the city. I don’t feel at home anymore.”

“Simple Case of Government Corruption”?

Corruption, to borrow the oft-cited words of Joseph Nye, is “behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain private-regarding influence” (1967, 419). While this definition is useful in examining behaviour that violates a formal standard or rule, it nonetheless obscures certain aspects of the actual processes involved in corruption. An approach to studying corruption that associates the term with the

abuse of public office for private gain is problematic, in that the conception and definition of “corruption” is too narrow to capture the actual spectrum of unsavoury behaviour. Scholars Dieter Haller and Cris Shore also note that this narrow definition tends to add the “corruption” label to the “list of those negative characteristics that are typically applied to the ‘Other’, such as underdevelopment, poverty, ignorance, repression of women, fundamentalism, fanaticism, and irrationality” (2005, 3). The fight against endemic corruption has strong “Orientalist overtones” in that it is thought to “bedevil bureaucracies and represents the evil and primitive Other of the global rhetoric about transparency and ‘good governance’” (Anders, Nuijten 2007, 2). Haller and Shore argue that “[t]his stereotype inevitably recalls colonial discourse about the ‘primitiveness’ of ‘savage society’,” (2005, 3) and furthers a divide between “us” and “them”.

One response to this definitional quandary is given by anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, who has proposed that corruption be considered a continuum, whose two poles differ in their nature and scale (Olivier de Sardan 1999). These two poles are “petty corruption,” such as the negotiations between unlicensed hawkers and the state in Mumbai, India (Anjaria 2011), and “major corruption”, such as the “very heart of the regulated world capitalist system” (Haller, Shore 2005, 2). Olivier de Sardan calls this continuum “a ‘corruption complex’” (1999, 27), and aims for it to be broad enough to include all instances of corruption, regardless of nature and scale. He uses the term to anchor corruption in everyday practice, and pinpoint certain social norms “which ‘communicate’ with or influence the practices of corruption” (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 26). Hence, corruption becomes a phenomenon that is “institutionalized and embedded in the wider matrix of power relations in society” (Anders, Nuijten 2007, 2), and Western liberal democracies are equally afflicted by its instances.

While there is a “tendency to treat corruption in the more developed parts of the world as incidental” (Anders, Nuijten 2007, 3), a case such as Italy shows how a leading economic power is still considered a hotbed for corruption. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi “reversed the typical path from office to profit by amassing a fortune before achieving office, which he then used not so much to increase his wealth as to protect it, and himself, from multiple criminal charges for the ways he acquired it” (Anderson 2014, 5). Furthermore, his “television and publicity empire [...] furnished him with an apparatus of power independent of office, and which once he entered the electoral arena [was] converted into a propaganda machine and an instrument of government” (Anderson, 2014, 6). However — and these are questions equally pertinent in Brooklyn — can it still be considered corruption when politicians actively change the law in order to make previously illegal practices legal? Furthermore, should something be labelled corruption if the transgression is justified as a benefit to society? What about if the state is complicit in questionable acts? It is clearly no longer a “simple case of corruption”

I therefore propose that corruption, in the context of the continuum proposed by Olivier de Sardan referred to as the ‘corruption complex,’ include instances that are not necessarily *illegal* but are certainly *questionable*. Defining corruption in strictly legal or moral terms is problematic, as it simply furthers these dichotomies of “right” and “wrong,” “legal” or “illegal,” and “moral” or “immoral.” I aim to give substance to the intermediate part of the continuum, and in order to do so, I draw from my ethnographic work with residents of Prospect Heights and their experiences with the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. The ways in which the project has been implemented is questionable, and even morally reprehensible to many of the residents I spoke with, however nothing, as of yet, has been proven to be law-breaking.

I draw particularly upon two of Olivier de Sardan's six "logics" of corruption in this thesis. The logics he proposes are negotiation, brokerage, gift-giving, solidarity, predatory authority, and redistributive accumulation (1999). These six give shape to the corruption complex, but are not necessarily in themselves corruption. Rather, they are ways of interacting that are profoundly engrained in social life, and share an affinity with "corruption"-type practices (Olivier de Sardan 1999). By corruption, I am referring to a form of dishonest or unethical but not necessarily illegal conduct by a person or entity entrusted with a position of authority. This chapter argues that the logic of solidarity networks sustains the relationships cultivated between the state, a private development company, and some of the residents of Prospect Heights in the context of the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project, and that the pursuit and enactment of these relationships comprise one significant form of corruption, even though putatively legal. The concept of "corrupted solidarity networks," as part of the corruption complex, helps explain why this development project was enacted in the ways it was. Solidarity networks can exist removed from corruption but can also be used and turned back on themselves, so corrupted that the networks dissolve and self-destruct. In this chapter, I identify two basic types of "corrupted solidarity networks". One of these corrupted solidarity networks is the developer's network of "solidarity", which can really be characterized as cronyism. The other corrupted solidarity network I identify is the developer playing residents off each other in a nefarious manner. I present that these corrupted solidarity networks can in fact be manipulated in such a way so as to push an urban development through necessary processes.

Solidarities can arise from adherence to a common association, such as a church or political party. These various forms of interrelations are particularly extended, "providing each person with a capital of social relations far exceeding" that of those that do not share these

interrelations (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 40). However, what is most important, is that these interrelations also “include an almost general obligation of mutual assistance” (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 40). The more interconnected the social relationship, the more difficult it becomes to refuse a service, a favour, or a bit of string-pulling. Here, solidarity is achieved through the social bonds cultivated through an exchange (Mauss 1922). As one cannot refuse a request for assistance in a solidarity network, “the circle of individuals to whom one feels obliged to” becomes increasingly wide (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 40). The “network” – the term employed by Olivier de Sardan to qualify these multiple forms of belonging (1999) – therefore becomes one of generalised exchange, and one in which each individual experiences a corresponding pressure.

In this rest of this chapter, I explore the production of corrupted solidarity networks as laws are systematically interpreted or circumnavigated to the advantage of a private developer with the complicity of the state. I ask in what way these processes can be characterized as “corruption” as there is no real law-breaking occurring, that is, although the project continues to be controversial, deceptive, and obfuscating in different forms, and although the developer has been implicated in legal proceedings, nothing about the development project has been found to be *illegal*. Questionable, yes. Problematic, most definitely. But not illegal. I explore how this major private development project adjacent to downtown Brooklyn has affected the neighbourhood it aims to become a part of. I also gather residents’ stories about what they have deemed the anticipatory “gentrification of their neighbourhood.” Through a presentation and discussion of the timeline of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project and residents’ perceptions of it, I examine how the neighbourhood of Prospect Heights is changing. Guided by interviews and grounded in the documentation of events, I focus on the ways in which the private urban

development company manipulates solidarity networks, distorts statistics and facts, and is not held accountable by the state.

The ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project: A Timeline

In August of 2003, an article in the *New York Times* reported that developer Bruce Ratner had expressed an interest in purchasing New Jersey Nets of the National Basketball Association. His intent was to move the team to Brooklyn as part of a much larger yet-to-be-announced development project. In December of that same year, Ratner’s development company “Forest City Ratner Companies” announced the \$2.5 billion plan for the urban development project tentatively named the “Atlantic Yards,” with 17 towers designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry. The proposed project was to include a projected 2.1 million square feet of commercial space, and 4,500 residential units. I reached out to Gib Veconi via email, a community organizer and member of BrooklynSpeaks – an initiative of civic associations, community-based organizations, and advocacy groups concerned about the future of development at the ‘Atlantic Yards’ site – after I was put in contact with him through the organization’s media contact. Following the initial rumblings of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project in 2003, Gib remembered reading the article published in the *New York Times* following the project’s announcement. “I read [the article] and thought: ‘This sounds like kind of an interesting project. It sounds like kind of an exciting and ambitious sort of vision these guys have’.” However, he confessed, “I didn’t know anything about land use at the time, but I thought it was kind of interesting. I could sort of see the argument that they were talking about a bunch of buildings that were underutilized, and it wasn’t clear how long the area would take to get redeveloped.”

Following the project announcement, *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp praised the project, but neglected to disclose that both he and the newspaper’s parent

company had prior relationships and partnerships with Forest City Ratner. Around the same time as the publication of the article, Bruce Ratner expressed that the project would be almost exclusively privately *financed*, but did not disclose the financiers. Questions arose following the release of Forest City Ratner’s press materials, as the materials used entirely different terms, indicating that the arena would be primarily privately *funded*. Here, we see the lexicon of urban development change ever so slightly. “Financing,” in addition to providing funds, suggests raising money, such as a bank loan, soliciting contributions from sponsors, and the like, while “funding” often suggests a primary stream of revenue used to offset cost or to support various leveraging options. The project being “privately funded” circumnavigates any costs of borrowing for the development of the project. At the time, however, no information regarding *how* it was to be funded was provided. Finally, in January of 2004, the *New York Times* reported that Bruce Ratner and a group of undisclosed partners had received the green light for their purchase of the New Jersey Nets, following lengthy negotiations.

Lifetime Brooklyn resident Sinclair Webster has sat on the Housing and Universal Land Use Review Procedure committee for her community board for approximately fifteen years. In a Starbucks located inside of a Barnes & Noble in downtown Brooklyn, Sinclair discussed the onset of the entire development project with me, elaborating on what it was like at the beginning, and the relationship the community entered into with the developer. She explained that when Forest City Ratner came to the community with the idea for the project, they “were just promising the sun, the stars, the moon – ‘we’re going to make this [neighbourhood] so great’.” In the original proposal for the project, Forest City Ratner promised affordable housing in the residential units in a joint effort with Mayor Bill de Blasio, so as to adhere with the mayor’s ‘Affordable Housing Plan’ – a plan aimed to create or restore approximately 200,000 affordable

housing units in the entirety of the five boroughs of New York City. With regards to where the arena was going to be built – at the corner of Flatbush Avenue and Atlantic Avenue – Forest City Ratner promised to take care of any and all residents who would be displaced from the area due to the construction, including those living in the two homeless shelters located on Dean Street, at the heart of the proposed project. The project was also to include extensive green space, and create approximately 10,000 new, permanent jobs, and 15,000 temporary construction jobs. Finally, Forest City Ratner, as the developer, hoped to become an active member of the community, working alongside residents in a joint effort to rejuvenate the neighborhood.

In May of 2004, Forest City Ratner hired and funded consultant Dr. Andrew Zimbalist, an American sports economist from Smith College, to perform an economic analysis of the “Atlantic Yards” proposal. Following his economic analysis, Zimbalist originally projected that the project would generate between four to six billion dollars in revenue, of which one-third would be needed to offset the construction and operating costs of the project. The claim that the development project would bring in somewhere between four and six billion dollars’ worth of new revenue to the city and state over 30 years quickly became the mantra of the developer, in meetings, in their Brooklyn Standard promotional sheet, and in a letter provided to state legislators in an effort to lobby then-Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. As Norman Oder expressed in his criticism of what he dubbed “The \$6 Billion Lie”, “any report funded by a developer should be questioned, and tested against reports from government agencies and outside critics” (2006).

A month after the release of the Zimbalist report, another report was issued by Jung Kim and Dr. Gustav Peebles, an urban planner and anthropologist working on economic issues, respectively. The report both criticized and debunked Zimbalist’s report, and concluded that

Forest City Ratner's proposal was problematic, specifically because rather than generate any sort of new revenue for the city or state, the project would actually become an immediate and extensive drain on public finances. While syntactically not a lie in and of itself, Zimbalist's original claim about the benefit of the project was the result of "manipulated statistics [provided by the developer themselves], an enormous (and methodologically flawed) overestimate of revenues, and an omission (and then an underestimate) of costs" (Oder 2006). Following the release of the Kim/Peebles report, Forest City Ratner immediately distanced themselves from Zimbalist's report, and from Zimbalist himself. Forest City Ratner claimed that the report was not actually commissioned by the company, but was rather an independent report conducted by Zimbalist. This claim was made by Forest City Ratner Vice President Jim Stuckey's at a 2004 City Council meeting that the report conducted by Zimbalist was "not really [Forest City Ratner's] report. It is Professor Zimbalist's report" (Oder 2006). Jim Stuckey's statement, however, was blatantly undermined by the explicit acknowledgment by Andrew Zimbalist in his report that he relied on information provided by the developer, writing: "Many of the numbers used in this report concerning Nets attendance, ticket prices, construction costs and other items come from projections done by or for FCRC (Forest City Ratner Companies). I have discussed these estimates with FCRC and they seem reasonable to me" (2004).

The report issued by Dr. Peebles and Jung Kim in response addresses that Zimbalist "makes several faulty assumptions, including overstating the need for new office space [in the neighbourhood], inflating the projected levels of potential residents and workers, and ignoring the effect of [such] a long-term construction project on property values" (Cardwell 2004). Peebles and Kim inevitably conclude their report by asserting that the proposal for the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project is not worth the public investment, saying "In other states and

localities, developers pay impact fees out of their own revenues to cover the social costs arising from their projects. Here in New York, the payment is in reverse, with taxpayers handing over hundreds of millions to wealthy developers” (2004). This distortion of facts, or rather misrepresentation of facts and statistics, by a consultant hired and funded by the developer, in an effort to justify the original project proposal points is indicative of the “ends-justify-the-means attitude” (Oder 2016) that pervades the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project and involves, at varying times, project promoters, lawyers, community partners and advocates, and, as made explicit with the issues of the Zimbalist report, paid consultants.

The report issued by Zimbalist exemplifies the “corrupted solidarity network” of cronyism, in that a solidarity network was manipulated to the benefit of the developer. With Forest City Ratner hiring Zimbalist and funding the report, it was inevitable that Zimbalist produce a report to the benefit of the developer. The “general obligation of mutual assistance” (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 40) on the part of Zimbalist to provide his employer with a financial report that justified the project’s implementation came from his integration into Forest City Ratner’s astonishingly wide solidarity network. The problem with such a solidarity network, explains Olivier de Sardan, is that the interrelations become so rigorous “that anyone who fails to respect his obligations to a member of one of the networks” (1999, 41) inevitably suffers reproach and becomes subject to insurmountable pressure. The flawed report was not an overtly illicit favour, but was rather the product of negotiation of a legal and moral grey area through the distortion of facts and the misrepresentation of parties. This occurred through the manipulation of the solidarity between the consultant (dependent rather than independent) and the developer. Specifically, the developer was able to pay an economist to get what he wanted, which was a

report justifying the “good” the project would bring to the neighbourhood adjacent to the footprint of the project.

“The Ends Justify the Means”

During our conversation, Gib recalled being invited to a meeting at 1 MetroTech Center, the office of Forest City Ratner, to hear a presentation about the project. Gib had been invited by an individual he had been working alongside on the 77th Precinct Council whose name was James Caldwell. “[James] said ‘I think you should come to this meeting and hear what they have to say’” recalled Gib, “so I took a couple of neighbours down there, and we were shoved into this conference room, and a bunch of Frank Gehry renderings were pinned to the walls and everything. Some of the architectural models were displayed. I’m looking around, and the room is mostly people I know who are involved in community organizing in Crown Heights, and maybe some people from Fort Greene.” Finally, after much deliberation, “[...] Bruce Ratner comes in and thanks everyone for supporting the project.” It was in that moment that Gib thought to himself that “‘there’s something funny about this’ because we haven’t actually heard the pitch yet. Why would he begin by assuming that we’re supporting the project, before we’ve heard his presentation? Then he leaves, and then they close the door. I’m looking around the room and there is no one from Forest City Ratner in the room, anymore. It’s just people I know, community organizers, so now I’m thinking ‘who’s doing the presentation?’”

The meeting represented another instance — this time of a quite different kind of network — of Forest City Ratner’s manipulation of solidarity, in keeping with the “ends-justify-the-means” attitude described by Norman Oder. At that meeting, Gib recalled, “a fellow named Darnell [got up and announced] ‘we’re here tonight because we’re going to do a deal with Forest City Ratner for a Community Benefits Agreement, and we’re here to decide what it is that we’re

all going to get out of this.’ [That’s when] it hit me like a bucket of cold water.” He went on, “I said ‘Wait, that’s not what I thought was going to happen [here]’...I thought we were going to hear what this project is [all] about. I [was] concerned about what [would] be done to protect the rights and the interests of the people who stand to be displaced. I [wasn’t] ready to start talking about any benefits until I [understood] more about that.” While recalling his protestation against beginning the negotiations for the Community Benefits Agreement in the developer’s own conference room, Gib identified that this meeting was “the first organizational meeting for what later became known as BUILD.” “At that point, I left that meeting.” Gib continued, “I came in being relatively positive about the project, and I left the meeting convinced that nothing good was going to come of this. Nothing that was started this way was going to end well. It was such a blatant attempt to try and fragment the community. This was very clear raw and racial politics. It was crazy. It got [even] crazier after that.” Later that same year, the non-profit job-development organization ‘Brooklyn United for Innovative Local Development’ (BUILD), headed by then-Chief Operating Officer James Caldwell, was *officially* founded. The group was originally geared towards helping people find generally low-paid work in retail and services, however, shortly after its foundation, the group began spearheading public “neighbourhood” support for both the developer, and the project.

It is clear that the call for this meeting was put out under false pretenses. The developer, by playing residents off each other, was able to legally establish a community group to lobby for them and for the project. By distorting the facts regarding the project, the developer was also able to get different community members together to establish a legal community group that does not work for the community, but rather works for the developer and the development project to garner public support. There is an insidious perversion of solidarity occurring at several different

levels, regarding several different facets of the project, and this becomes the mechanism of drastic urban change. Individuals associated with the project, such as James Caldwell and his attempted recruitment of Gib to support the project in some way, shape, or form, ultimately turn the borough against itself. Furthermore, the same individual that invited Gib to the meeting hosted by Forest City Ratner in their own boardroom eventually went on to be the appointed Chief Operating Officer of the community group established by the developer as a way to garner support for the project. The manipulation of this solidarity network by the developer, specifically by using this meeting to establish a community group, shows how far the developer is willing to go in order to get the project supported, approved, funded, and built.

In May of 2005, Forest City Ratner signed a housing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the New York affiliate of national housing group ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), pledging that fifty percent of the 4,500 planned residential units would be “affordable.” The Memorandum of Understanding requires ACORN to publicly support the project, both in the press and at meetings attended by the public. Less than a week later, at a City Council Economic Development Committee Hearing, Forest City Ratner’s then-Vice President James P. Stuckey announced a revised development plan for the “Atlantic Yards” project. The revised plan increased the price tag from the aforementioned \$2.5 billion to \$3.5 billion. It also now included taller towers, higher density, less office space, but increased residential units, with the residential units increasing to between 6,000 and 7,300 units – at the time the developer remained unclear on the total number of residential units – from the previously planned 4,500.

However, this revised plan also presented that the percentage of “affordable” housing units would be reduced from the original fifty percent to a meager thirty percent. At Forest City

Ratner's request, Dr. Andrew Zimbalist – who did not make himself available to respond to the Peebles/Kim report – released an updated economic analysis report for the project's proposal. Despite the planned “affordable” housing residential units being reduced, Zimbalist estimated that the potential project revenue would increase by nearly fifty percent, owing to the proposed additional housing. While the difference between 2,250 and 2,190 affordable housing units may not be staggering⁵, 60 affordable housing units for families struggling to make ends meet in a competitive real estate market such as Brooklyn can mean the difference between residents getting to stay in their neighbourhood, and having to move out of Brooklyn entirely.

In June of 2005, Forest City Ratner and eight community groups drafted and signed a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), a first for both the borough of Brooklyn, and New York City as a whole. Among the terms of the legally binding agreement was a return to the fifty percent affordable housing units set aside for households earning up to \$109,000 a year, with various degrees of affordability identified in the agreement. The CBA also guaranteed six acres of open space for use of the public, free of charge, on the project site. Following the announcement of the drafted and signed Community Benefits Agreement, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), responding to numerous Freedom of Information Act requests received from opponents of the project, released a previously completed memorandum, entitled the “Estimated Fiscal Impacts of the Proposed Atlantic Yards Project”. The memorandum undercut several of Forest City Ratner consultant Dr. Andrew Zimbalist's predictions, as presented in his revised economic analysis.

⁵ Here, the 2,250 figure is derived from half of the aforementioned proposed 4,500 total residential units. The figure 2,190 comes from thirty percent of the maximum proposed 7,300 residential units. Thirty percent of the 6,000 residential units would allow for 1,800 units to be affordable. Regardless, there is a loss of between 60 to 700 affordable housing units, depending on which residential unit estimate comes true.

Following the drafting and signing of the CBA by Forest City Ratner and the eight community groups, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) announced that the Extell Development Company, a rival bidder for use of the railyards located on Atlantic Avenue between 6th Avenue and Carleton (Figure 3), had placed a bid of \$150 million for the exclusive



Figure 3

development rights. Their bid was three times that of Forest City Ratner's. Later that month, the New York Observer reported that Forest City Ratner was one of the top donors to the New York affiliate of ACORN, its partner in the aforementioned housing agreement. Two days later, the MTA held a vote, whose outcome dictated that it would exclusively negotiate the rights to the railyard with Forest City Ratner for 45 days, even though Extell had put in a bid greater than that of Forest City Ratner's, and both bids well under the appraised value - \$214.5 million.

In August of 2005, Courier Life's *Brooklyn Daily* reported that a signatory of the CBA alongside Forest City Ratner, Brooklyn United for Innovative Local Development (BUILD) had moved into a building purchased by Forest City Ratner in the footprint of the Atlantic Yards project. A month later, the MTA awarded the rights to the development of the railyards to Forest City Ratner for \$100 million – fifty million dollars less than Extell's bid, and one hundred million dollars less than the appraised value. Two days later, on September 16, 2005, New York State's Empire State Development issued a Draft Scope for an environmental impact statement

(EIS) regarding the Atlantic Yards project, simultaneously revealing that the office space had been cut by approximately two-thirds, and that 2,800 luxury condos had been added to the original 4,500 residential rental units, rather than the 6,000 to 7,300 residential rental units presented by James P. Stuckey in the revised plan. The released document also indicates that the six acres of promised public space – a term of the legally binding Community Benefits Agreement – including the public park to be located on the roof of the arena, would be private space.

On September 29, 2005, Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn released the IRS filings of BUILD and its president James Caldwell. The documents identify that virtually all of the group's \$5 million budget for the 2005-2006 fiscal year came from Forest City Ratner. Since that first organizational meeting in the boardroom of Forest City Ratner at One MetroTech Center, BUILD had furiously lobbied in favour of the project at community meetings. It also played a key role in the drafting of the Community Benefits Agreement, in that it was given the right to run a program to recruit and train neighbourhood residents for jobs within the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project. Following the release of the IRS filings of the group, BUILD denied receiving any direct payments from the developer for any of its activities.

Contrary to the group's denial of any financial backing from the developer, an article by Nicholas Confessore in the New York Times, dated October 14, 2005, identified that a spokesman for the non-profit organization said that "as part of the community-benefits agreement, the company (Forest City Ratner) recently gave BUILD a \$100,000 grant *and* covers its overhead costs" (2005, emphasis added). The article also identified that since its inception, the group has become the project's most enthusiastic supporter, with its president, James Caldwell, being quoted as saying that Bruce Ratner was "truly sent by God" (2005). The

project's opponents, according to Confessore, charged that BUILD is such an enthusiastic supporter, of both the project and the developer, "because [Forest City Ratner] pays it to be" (2005). Once again, this accusation highlights the generalized exchange that is characteristic of solidarity networks, and the extent to which a developer such as Forest City Ratner is willing to negotiate and manipulate these networks to their advantage, even going to the extent of privately funding their legally established community group.

In December of 2005, Forest City Ratner announced that six buildings near the Vanderbilt railyards were to be demolished in the next month. The announcement came after an engineering firm hired by the developer released a four-month study revealing that the buildings acquired by Forest City Ratner through eminent domain had serious structural damage. Eminent domain is the power of the state or national government to appropriate private property for public use. However, it can be legislatively delegated by the state to municipalities, government subdivisions, or even to private persons or corporations, when they are authorized to exercise the functions of public character. Daniel Goldstein, a spokesman for Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn (DDDB), and one of the final holdouts in the footprint of the project, told the New York Times, in response to the announcement, that in order for Forest City Ratner to justify the acquisition of the properties through eminent domain, "Bruce Ratner wants to argue that this neighborhood is blighted. [...] It is not. This is his attempt to create developers' blight" (2005).

The People and the Project

Peter Krashes is a painter, community advocate, and resident of Dean Street. Peter's home is also his place of work, and is directly across the street from the construction site of the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project (Figure 4). When we spoke in July of 2015, Peter was the standing secretary for the Dean Street Block Association - an association whose history dates

back to 1988, when residents of Dean Street began meeting to organize a block party focused on cleaning up the Dean Playground for the children of the neighbourhood. The block association traditionally advocates for and attempts to improve the Dean Playground, but has recently shifted its focus to working collectively in relation to such issues as the conversion of the Daily News plant into condominiums, and the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park development project, which residents expressed was of utmost importance to them.

Peter and his partner have lived in Brooklyn since 1990, and have lived in their current residence since 2002. Working collectively with the Dean Street Block Association, Peter explained that he has “a lot of different approaches to the subject” of the Barclays Center and the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. When Peter became involved with the block association,



Figure 4

the group was “really just building on what already existed. But, it was a response to the [project’s] proposal, and the press about the project.” Peter spoke extensively about what he called the “immediate concerns” regarding the project, “the kind of day-to-day impacts that can affect how people live their lives”.

As a block association, Peter explained that he often felt that their efforts were eclipsed by the size and scale of the efforts of the advocates of the project, specifically BUILD. However, Peter believes that what the Dean Street Block Association is doing, in that it advocates for an emphasis on the public interest of the project, “differs from other community groups, because

we've seen the challenges of the project and the oversight of the project [firsthand], and the inability of the political sphere to control the developer, or even control themselves.” Peter also explained how he felt that the immediate concerns and efforts of the Dean Street Block Association were often undermined in the political arena, noting that “the support that the state, and to a lesser extent, the city gives the developer [may] extend beyond what ‘normal’ developments receive and what [other] developers receive.” How can groups such as the Dean Street Block Association continue to have a positive impact on their community when a private development company like Forest City Ratner has created powerful networks of solidarity that enmesh both city and state governmental agencies?

Peter first heard about the project in late 2003. While listening to National Public Radio, the on-air host referenced a story in the Daily News about the upcoming development project. Peter recounted that his immediate reaction was to run to the local corner store and pick up the paper. He remembers that the article explicitly mentioned eminent domain, and contained an infographic identifying the borders of the entire plan, commenting: “I said ‘Wait a second. That’s across the street!’” Having moved into his current residence in 2002, after purchasing the building in 2001, Peter recalled that he and his partner found their home “because we knew someone who owned a building across the street. He made stretchers for painters – and [...] this looked like a very different street at the time.” After picking up the Daily News and reading the story on the project and its inevitable footprint, Peter recalled going to speak to the man who helped Peter and his partner find their home on Dean Street: “He was inside the border, so the first thing that happened was I went across the street – and he’s an immigrant from Hong Kong, employing 25 or 30 employees at his business – and I went and told him that his property was inside the borders of this project. I explained to him what eminent domain was, and he couldn’t believe it.”

The man's business – his livelihood – was eventually absorbed into the project through the eminent domain land grab, despite outcry from the neighborhood.

With regards to eminent domain, Peter recalled that “the people in the project's footprint were so impacted.” The outcry of those impacted by the project inevitably “shaped the response. They formed a coalition, which eventually became Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn (DDDB), and obviously, since we're all neighbours, the only thing to do is support them.” DDDB is a volunteer-run and community-funded non-profit that was founded in 2004. According to their website, DDDB “leads a broad-based community coalition fighting for development that will unite our communities instead of dividing and destroying them.” The group asserts itself as being in direct opposition to Forest City Ratner's 8 million square foot ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park development, specifically due to the abuse of the state's power of eminent domain, because of the fact that it took “private property from one owner to give to a private entity for private use” rather than the ascribed public use.

Since eminent domain is a state or national governmental power, it cannot therefore be characterized as a ‘corrupt’ practice in the sense of an act “publicly stamped with the seal of the illicit” (Blundo 2007, 34). Yet there is something insidious in the way in which a private developer was able to obtain 22-acres of private property through the complicity of the state. Peter did not elaborate on whether the business owner in the footprint of the project was compensated for his property. Regardless, he was not given the right to refuse compensation for his property. He was forced to give up his livelihood, which ultimately benefitted Forest City Ratner and the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. Here we see that the appropriation of the land necessary to break ground on the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, while not illegal, is certainly questionable. The “ends-justify-the-means” attitude of the state, city, and developer had

an immediate impact on and consequences for the actors involved, “according to their position with respect to the *corrupting act*” (Blundo 2007, 35, emphasis added). Those directly impacted by the project are not even given the chance to negotiate their position within these networks. Specifically, in the case of Daniel Goldstein and Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn, opponents to the project appear to be fighting an uphill battle against a developer with a direct connection to both the state and city governments.

In January of 2006, a set of community groups, led by Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn, filed a lawsuit to reverse the Empire State Development Corporation’s approval of Forest City Ratner’s plans to demolish the six aforementioned buildings. The lawsuit also argued that the lawyer representing the ESDC should be disqualified. Until recently, he had represented Forest City Ratner on numerous occasions for legal issues surrounding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. A month later, Supreme Court Justice Carol Edmead denied the lawsuit by opponents to the project to stop Forest City Ratner from demolishing five of the six properties within the project footprint. However, Supreme Court Justice Edmead granted a partial victory to the opponents by ruling that the lawyer representing the ESDC be removed from the case due to a conflict of interest, because of his prior involvement with Forest City Ratner.

In March of 2006, a press release from Forest City Ratner and the Final Scope for an Environmental Impact Analysis from the Empire State Development Corporation claimed that the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park development project has been downscaled five percent from its previous iteration. Critics of the project, especially Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn, released numerous statements identifying issues with the Final Scope, primarily blatant lies on behalf of the developer regarding the size and scope of the imminent project. This Final Scope actually identified that the project is at least 600,000 to 1,000,000 square feet bigger than in the original

plan from 2003, with building heights that are approximately 230 feet higher than originally proposed. The Final Scope also failed to address impacts regarding traffic, financing and economics, and disregarded numerous requests from the community asking for analyses of the impacts on the facilities and response times of police and fire services.

One way the relationship between the community, the state, and the developer has been deformed is, according to Peter, this “questionable absence of planning.” Peter expressed that the continuous backpedaling of the developer on serious issues, such as the environmental impacts, the construction timeline, and the development project plan, is inherently problematic, especially with an urban development project as grandiose as that of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. Peter clarified, noting that “the idea [for the entire] project was the developer’s. Not the public’s. Not the community’s. Any iteration of the project, any iteration that exists, has been generated by the developer.” A plan for a project proposed by a developer, with a questionable absence of planning, is born of a “problem with the political system.” In retort, “people have offered alternatives, of different sources, at different times” expressed Peter, and yet the “problem continues. The developer has benefitted from it, and continues to benefit from it.”

In an article dated April 10, 2006, *New York Times* reporter Nicholas Confessore, again writing on the Atlantic Yards project, discussed the experience of individuals who were forced to leave the project footprint by the developer. Those interviewed received a one-time waiver from the developer for their gag-order, allowing them to speak publicly about their experiences. The article identified that roughly two-thirds of those who owned or rented homes in the footprint of the project accepted buyout offers, or left on their own, with approximately forty percent of those still in the project footprint living in rental buildings owned and operated by Forest City Ratner. (2006) While many accepted buyouts, and found residence elsewhere in Brooklyn, all faced the

prospect that their homes or businesses be appropriated by the state via eminent domain in favour of the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project.

In October of 2006, property owners, tenants, and civic union groups filed a federal eminent domain lawsuit against Bruce Ratner, Forest City Ratner, Governor George Pataki, Empire State Development Corporation head Charles Gargano, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and New York City Deputy Mayor Daniel L. Doctoroff. Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn member Daniel Goldstein was the lead plaintiff in the case titled *Goldstein v. Pataki*. On November 15, 2006, despite rampant criticisms, rising issues, community-driven outcry, and questions about financing, the ESDC approved the final Environmental Impact Statement, without taking into consideration the community requests and concerns brought forth following the Final Scope. In January of 2007, Forest City Ratner announced that the naming rights to the arena have been dealt to Barclays Bank, for an estimated \$400 million. A week later, New York City doubled direct taxpayer subsidy to the project from \$100 million to \$205 million, continuing to contradict the original statement from Bruce Ratner announcing the entire project would be financed privately (Brown 2007).

In response to the approval of the final EIS, as well as the overall approval of the project, Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, along with twenty-five other co-petitioner community groups, filed another lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court, seeking to annul the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project environmental impact statement, as well as the overall approval of the project. During the trial, released documents showed that more than half of the financing for the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project was government-backed, with the developer seeking approximately \$1.4 billion in tax-exempt housing bonds. Despite this, in an article dated March 21, 2008, in the *New York Times*, citing the slowing economy and widening credit crisis, Bruce

Ratner announced a delay in the construction of the signature office tower and three of the residential buildings that would host a majority of the affordable units. In the article, Ratner also suggested that construction could be put off for a number of years (Bagli 2008).

In February of 2009, New York State Appellate Court ruled in favour of the Empire State Development Corporation on the appeal of the environmental impact statement. Three months later, New York State Appellate Court once again ruled against home and business owners, and tenants in the eminent domain lawsuit. In a final attempt to prevent their issues from falling on deaf ears, plaintiffs vowed to ask the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, to halt the seizing of their properties by New York State through the use of eminent domain. In June of 2009, New York's Court of Appeals announced that it would hear the eminent domain case appeal, with an argument scheduled for October 14, 2009.

Also in June of 2009, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board approved a new deal with Forest City Ratner for the sale of the rights to the railyard. The new deal allows Forest City Ratner to pay \$20 million of the \$100 million bid up front, with the remaining \$80 million balance to be paid over 25 years at a low interest rate. Six years into the project, Forest City Ratner released a new design for the arena on September 9, 2009, following Frank Gehry's unexplained departure from the project. The new design was presented by New York City architecture firm SHoP, and included only the arena, and not any of the promised affordable housing, or any other part of the project.

In September of 2009, the Empire State Development Company sent a letter with an "offer of good faith" to final project footprint holdout Daniel Goldstein for his home, before taking it by law through eminent domain. The offer was almost forty percent less than the fair market value of the three-bedroom apartment. Two months later, the Court of Appeals ruled

against property owners and tenants in their final eminent domain appeal. At that point, the State of New York had no legal bar from seizing property through eminent domain. Two days away from Christmas, on December 23, 2009, the Empire State Development Company filed the final legal papers to take title of the properties located inside the footprint of the project and evict the remaining residents and businesses. In March of 2010, Judge Abraham Gerges conducted the final approval of the eminent domain proceedings, and title was transferred from property owners within the footprint of the project to the ESDC, which will in turn gift the properties to Forest City Ratner for completion of the project. Daniel Goldstein no longer owned his home. Later that month, Bruce Ratner held a ground-breaking ceremony at the project site.

In September of 2010, the *Wall Street Journal* and journalist Norman Oder's *Atlantic Yards Report* watchdog blog revealed that Bruce Ratner was seeking to raise \$250 million for the completion of the project by utilizing the little known federal EB-5 program alongside Chinese lenders. The federal program is meant to generate job-creating investment opportunities, but in the case of Forest City Ratner and the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project, in return for \$500,000, each lender would obtain green cards for all family members. The program's intended job creation was thereby misappropriated by the developer to fund the development of the project, without any actual job creation. This lack of job creation is exemplified in a report by Forest City Ratner, dated February 1, 2011, that identified 150 people working at the project site. Forest City Ratner had promised 10,000 construction jobs. How can a multi-purpose indoor arena can get built with such a suspiciously low number of construction workers? In an event attended by some 200 protestors, the Barclays Center opened to the public on September 21, 2012, and at the time of my fieldwork remained the only completed phase of the project.

There is a remarkable degree of contestation, deception, and obfuscation surrounding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, despite the fact that nothing illegal has been found – although this is perhaps because nobody involved in the project has even been investigated. Norman Oder, writing on his watchdog blog, emphasized that while the advocates for the project continue to sing its praises, the actual public benefit of the project remained “fuzzy, and the damage to democracy is clear” (2016). The manipulation of solidarity networks by Forest City Ratner regarding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project allowed the developer to have an economic analysis produced that made untrue claims regarding the project and its future benefits. The developer was also able to privately fund and establish a community group to garner public support for the project, at great public cost and for great private gain. Despite uninterrupted public outcry and heavy skepticism, Forest City Ratner continues to claim their actions are for the benefit of Brooklyn (Oder 2012). What becomes even more problematic is that Forest City Ratner have repudiated the original ten-year timeline to build the project – a timeline that was previously endorsed by both his company and the state – and have also now claimed that high-rise, union-built affordable housing is not a feasible option in a free-market capitalist North American metropolis like New York City, despite that being exactly what was planned from the start and approved by the state twice (Oder 2012).

A Problem for the Developer

While we sat in his home, Peter recalled his first ever interaction with the developer, or a representative of the developer. Everything about the interaction was a problem, “even just showing up.” He continued: “The first meeting we went to was for Community Board 8. It was a public meeting. The person who was representing the development at the time [was] Jim Stuckey. He was at Community Board 8, and he was answering questions. There was a group of

us – some neighbours of mine. We were economically and racially diverse, and our existence was a problem, because the project was inherently impactful. Nobody knew what the project was – the developer wasn't telling anybody – but it was inherently impactful. They were going to change the community. The closer you were to the project, the more it was going to change your life.”

The extent to which a group with questions – comprised of Peter and his neighbours – was problematic for the developer became rapidly clear at the meeting. As Peter recalled: “When we went to that meeting, and we stood up, we had no idea. We just stood up and introduced ourselves, and said [that] we had trouble reaching the developer – I think I said we tried to reach the developer and they didn't return our calls. All of sudden, everyone started screaming at us from behind, because the developer had a bunch of people there. It was racially charged, and even though we were an economically and racially diverse set of people, people were yelling at us. That was our experience in the fall of 2004. It was the developer finding allies, and using race [to do so].” Peter noted that the individuals allied with the developer used a common mantra of ‘I was born here, and therefore I want this’ as a counterargument for individuals who began to voice concerns about the project while simultaneously pointing out that those with concerns had moved to the neighborhood during the 1990s, and were therefore not born in Brooklyn. “At the end of the day” Peter continued, “it was found out that a lot of [the individuals allied with the developer] were receiving economic benefits from the developer in some form or another.”

Peter continued, expressing frustration with, and concern for, the development itself, the developer, and the implementation and planning surrounding the development: “This is why gentrification with the ‘Atlantic Yards’ [project] is so [difficult] – because the developer has claimed [that] this is for Brooklyn. Other groups have claimed [that] we need this affordable

housing for Brooklyn. But it's so complicated. You have to look at what [the cost is]. Nobody knows, still. Hard to believe, but in this day and age, the degree of transparency for a project like this – one of the largest in the state of New York and in the City of New York's history – is really low. Over time, we have hardly known who is making the decisions, if there are any decisions being made by the public, or if it's being made solely by the developer. Now, we know it's primarily the developer.”

Another facet of the issues surrounding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project is that of broken promises. “The decision-making [for the development project] is happening at a very high level” recounts Peter, “and I think that broken promises is a product of that.” According to Peter, to focus on broken promises surrounding the project, whether regarding the number of affordable residential rental units, the six acres of public green space, or even just the actual time frame for the completion of the project, at the expense of “the problem of creating transparency, say for financing issues, creates the risk that the public will believe” in those aforementioned promises. The belief in those aforementioned promises is reinforced with photo opportunities and ribbon-cuttings: “people standing in front of the building saying ‘here are the [residential] units, sorry about the brackets.”” Peter noted that there is no transparency regarding all of these other elements, especially with regards to the support the developer has received for the project. “Lack of oversight is a subsidy” for the developer, noted Peter, “it shows itself in unique, consistent, [and] unresolved impacts, [experienced by] a marginal set of people.” Furthermore, in Peter's experience, “the way the project is being implemented is [through a] ‘see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil’ strategy [on behalf] of the government.”

Conclusion: Two Basic Types of “Corrupted Solidarity Networks”

In this chapter, I have conceptualized corrupted solidarity networks to help explain how a development project such as the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project was enacted in the way it was. I have identified two basic types of corrupted solidarity networks in this chapter, one of which is the developer’s network of “solidarity”, which can really be characterized as cronyism. The other corrupted solidarity network I have identified is the developer playing the residents off each other in a nefarious manner. Identifying these two basic types of “corrupted solidarity networks” has allowed me to argue that it is through these solidarity networks that relationships cultivated between the state, a private development company, and some residents of Prospect Heights are sustained in the context of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project. The pursuit and enactment of these relationships comprise one significant form of corruption, even though putatively legal. I have presented that these corrupted solidarity networks can in fact be manipulated to push an urban development through necessary processes.

In this chapter, I have also explored how the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project has affected the neighbourhood it aims to become a part of. By gathering the stories of residents regarding the anticipated gentrification of their neighbourhood, I have examined how the neighbourhood of Prospect Heights is changing because of the ways in which this private urban development company has manipulated solidarity networks, distorted statistics and facts, and has yet to be held accountable for their actions by the state. The way in which these solidarity networks are manipulated, specifically at the hand of Forest City Ratner, circumnavigates the law with the complicity of the state and of the city. The relationship between the logic of solidarity networks, as presented by Olivier de Sardan, and the continuum of the corruption complex, with regards to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, is not law-breaking, but is both questionable and problematic.

Chapter 2:

An Anthropology of Gentrification: Predatory Authority and Power

Boarding the Manhattan-bound J-train – one of the only remaining aboveground subway lines in New York City – rather than my usual L-train into downtown, I appreciate what I would call a ‘view’, but what others might call ‘opportunity’. As the train chugs along the track, the automated voice hollering messages over the public address system – “Next Stop: Flushing. Transfer to the M-train.” “Next Stop: Lorimer. Transfer to the M-train.” – I keep my eyes glued to the cityscape passing by. Barreling through Hewes Station, I identify that the train is passing over the Marcy Houses housing project. The lyrics to Jay-Z’s song “Where I’m From” pop into my head, with Jay-Z rapping: “[I’m from...] Where you can’t put your vest away and say you’ll wear it tomorrow / Cause the day after we’ll be saying, damn I was just with him yesterday.” The musical interlude of my internal monologue is quickly disrupted when I spot a massive piece of fresh graffiti on the side of a building located in the perimeter of the Marcy Projects. The clenched fist of solidarity and support breaks up the slogan “No Bureaucrats, No Masters”. A hastily painted arrow underneath the slogan identifies a new commercial development being built next door.

The “G” Word

The “inner city”, the “hood”, the “ghetto”, the “projects” – these are all terms that have been applied as monikers for predominantly Black neighbourhoods. These terms “conjure up images of places that are off-limits to outsiders, places to be avoided after sundown, and paragons of pathology” (Freeman 2006, 1). These neighbourhoods have been the focus of scholarship for decades, having captured the interest of social scientists who chronicled the

challenges, risks, and experiences of everyday life in these urban spaces (Anderson 1999; Bourgois 1995). Because of this scholarship and its focus on social pathologies, government neglect, and decline, these neighbourhoods have been popularly envisioned as having rising crime rates, a serious lack of opportunity and amenities, and residents that feel they have been left behind (Freeman 2006). However, residents do not necessarily react to changes in their neighbourhood according to the preconceived notions generally attributed to them through this scholarship. Rather, in my experience, some residents are receptive and optimistic regarding the drastic changes in their neighbourhood, primarily because of the concomitant amenities and services gentrification brings. However, it is also in my experience, that residents maintain a cynicism toward gentrification that stems from a history of disenfranchisement and discrimination.

In my ethnographic work with residents of Brooklyn, I came to understand gentrification as a much broader phenomenon that does not occur in a systematic function, or have a predictable end. Rather, it is an array of processes that occur in an asynchronous manner. My goal with this chapter is to conceptualize and elaborate on gentrification by exploring the ways in which residents of Brooklyn use and understand the term, the processes it entails, and the contexts in which and through which urban change occurs. Through conversations with residents from the Brooklyn neighbourhoods of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, and East New York, I address key questions regarding the processes of gentrification: How do residents see, understand, and live with the processes of gentrification in Brooklyn? How do residents define gentrification? Finally, in their use of the word gentrification to describe these processes, what does it do in terms of the neighbourhood itself? In addressing these questions, I am trying to understand what people in Brooklyn are going through when they speak of gentrification.

While many metropolitan cities undergoing such drastic urban change have similarities, the processes of gentrification are invoked in myriad ways, affect individuals in drastically different ways, and often do not come to the same cookie cutter result.

In order to explore the processes of gentrification, and their implications in the changing of a neighbourhood, I draw upon another of Olivier de Sardan's "logics." While solidarity networks work through exchanges and relationships of power, the logic predatory authority is "linked to a function of *authority*" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 41) and is a matter of oppression and violence. The logic of predatory authority concerns the right that many persons occupying a position of power "accord themselves to proceed to various types of extortion" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 41) often to the detriment of those who occupy a position of lesser power. While Olivier de Sardan uses this logic to characterize the monetary gains of those in positions of power, such as a cabinet director to dip into special funds for personal use (1999), I adopt the logic of predatory authority to explore how some individuals involved in the dramatic changing of a neighbourhood adopt a "ends-justify-the-means" attitude. This chapter begins with my attempt to identify what residents of Brooklyn characterize as the gentrification of a given neighbourhood, before entering into an exploration and discussion of the ways in which the identified processes of gentrification occur. I spoke to several residents about their experiences with housing boards, landlords, and the state, and some of their disturbing experiences elucidate the predatory dimension of gentrification in Brooklyn.

Experiencing Gentrification

The phenomenon of gentrification was named by sociologist Ruth Glass in London, England in the 1960s, and the term was used to "describe the 'invasion' of members of the middle and upper classes into traditionally working-class neighborhoods, resulting in the

displacement of residents” (Lees, Slater, Wyly 2008, 39). However, it is apparent that what was being described by Glass during that time was just one of the many facets of the processes of gentrification. Neil Smith, in his book *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, provides a succinct and useful definition of the process of gentrification as the means “by which poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters – neighborhoods that had previously experienced disinvestment and a middle-class exodus” (1996, 30). Such a definition invokes the inequality, marginalization, and displacement that occurs in a process that benefits the “haves to the detriment of the have-nots” (Freeman 2006, 59).

My conversations with residents of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and East New York echo the nuanced phrasing of Freeman’s experience in the neighbourhoods of Clinton Hill and Harlem: “If gentrification were a movie character, he would be both a villain and knight in shining armor, welcome[d] by some and feared and loathed by others, and even dreaded and welcomed at the same time by the same people” (2006, 60). Geraldine Buchannon, a Brooklyn resident of almost 20 years, believes that gentrification can be a positive process in a neighbourhood in dire need of change. The processes of gentrification “[change] a neighbourhood” she explained, “you’re creating more diversity, *but* there’s a way to do it.” Geraldine considers herself a gentrifier because she has only lived in her “neighbourhood for four years.” Geraldine explained that “[if] you’re not one of the people who were there for some 25 odd years, and they don’t know who you are, you’re considered an outsider, and we’re treated as such.” “I’ve been cursed out before” she continued “and [I’ve been] told ‘nobody wants *you* here!’, ‘You’re a troublemaker!’ and the like.”

For Geraldine, gentrification should be a measured process, as “it cannot be this full-on overload.” “We have a small park – a small greenspace – in the middle of our block” explained Geraldine, “and people are very threatened because [myself] and a group of volunteers – we clean it up. We plant flowers, we call the parks department.” This attempt at cleaning up the community curtails the opportunities of “lawbreakers to smoke [weed and drink] in the children’s park.” The sentiment that the processes of gentrification must be measured to some degree was echoed by Regina Cahill, a lifelong Brooklyn resident whose grandfather was born in the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Williamsburg in 1895. As the North Flatbush Business Improvement District President, Regina emphasized that gentrification is a “phenomenon that has been happening for centuries” – something that is inevitable when a “city is constantly in flux.” Regina also explained that when it comes to the processes of gentrification, “people pay [more] attention to their properties, you do attract different businesses, [and] people improve their businesses.”

However, “preserving things comes at a cost” continued Regina, “and that cost might be more than what the demographic is that you’re trying to protect. [...] you can have preservation and development at the same time” but what is most important is striking a balance between the two. However, this delicate balance between preservation and development is difficult to attain. While many policy makers believe that “bringing industry and business to poor, [disenfranchised] neighborhoods will open up job opportunities for neighborhood residents” (Kasinitz, Rosenberg 1996 in Duneier, Kasinitz, Murphy 2014, 725), many see a problem in the formulation because it does not work this way in practice. “The impulse to preserve, the desire to render comfortable, and the sheer need of a place to serve as home are three human trajectories

that converge” in areas earmarked for urban improvement, writes Herzfeld (2010, S259), often with tragic consequences.

The intersection of preservation and development is “totally aspirational” explained Gib. “That’s what happens with these large developers” he continued “they’ll sell and lease those apartments, sure, but you know, they’re really selling a vision of what’s to come.” Despite the promotional material “pay[ing] some sort of lip service to the neighbourhood and what it was” developers are really selling something new. “In the years leading up to the 2000s” recalled Gib, developmental changes to neighbourhoods was “really more of a bottom-up type of thing.” “Now it’s top-down. Developers [buy up the property], do a wholesale rezoning [of the area] – like they did with the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, or on Fourth Avenue” explained Gib. “[E]ven ‘Atlantic Yards’,” continued Gib, although the project does “not necessarily [involve] rezoning because it’s [technically] a state project – which overrides rezoning – but for all intents and purposes, it’s the same thing as rezoning twenty-two acres.” The narrative is that developers “come in with the idea of really adding density [to a neighbourhood] and making a new kind of neighbourhood. It’s not about preserving, it’s about rezoning, and bringing in density and more population, [and a different population].” “The dynamic of it” Gib identified, “is that because of the scale they’re operating on [...] this really does [inevitably] mean displacement.”

Displacement and the Politics of Discouragement

The displacement of residents occurs by means of an array of questionable tactics. In major urban cities such as New York, where housing is scarce and expensive, “displacement can threaten households with homelessness” (Freeman 2006, 72). Given the threat of displacement and the potential havoc it can wreak, it is unsurprising that residents of neighbourhoods of Brooklyn convey discomfort, anxiety, and contempt regarding invasive urban change. In late

July 2015, I sat with New York City-lifer Shaifah in the East New York branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. Shaifah spends her weekends volunteering with the adult education program hosted by the library. During our conversation, Shaifah explained that people that have been displaced because of development projects like the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project inevitably find themselves living in East New York. However, the conditions these residents find themselves in are less favourable. Shaifah elaborated, noting that “there must be like 25 or 30 [homeless shelters] in East New York alone” that are “teeming through the roof.” “It’s invasive” she continued, “We’re seeing [a] pattern repeat itself all over again *here* in East New York and other parts of Brooklyn – and I’m hearing globally speaking. People are realizing the power of ‘if you own land, you dictate the power over other people’s lives’. You can evict them [...] I don’t know what motivates it other than greed and power.” “It is *civil imperialism* – if I can coin a term,” Shaifah continued “you know [that] you were never a part of this community before [and now] you are coming in here and [...] taking over and evicting the people who made it decent to live in in the first place.”

For residents of Brooklyn, the looming threat of displacement is exacerbated by the questionable practices of their landlords. Fatu Diop has worked as a housing inspector in Brooklyn since she moved to New York from Chicago in 2002. As a housing inspector, Fatu was able to elaborate on some of these questionable practices during our conversation. She explained that she has seen far too many cases come through the court system whereby tenants are fighting for their homes because of harassment experienced at the hands of their landlords. “As a housing inspector” explained Fatu, “I go to twenty or thirty [homes] a day. Tenants are being harassed by their landlords to get out. [Predominantly] Black tenants who have been living in their apartment for an average of eighteen to twenty years – I’m telling you, the landlord no longer wants to do

anything.” Landlords are letting homes deteriorate through neglect as a way of encouraging tenants to leave. The motivation for landlords to have tenants permanently leave their homes, Fatu explained, is to have the rental unit move from rent stabilization to free market rent, also referred to as deregulation.

Rent control is a qualification rewarded to tenants who have been continuously living in their apartment since July 1, 1971. Differing slightly from rent control, rent stabilization applies to buildings built before 1974 with six or more units that are not co-ops or condos (Curbed Staff, 2012). As of 2016, the apartment in question must have also been rented for less than \$2,500 per month if the tenant moved into the unit in 1993 or later. Since no new rent stabilized or controlled leases being written, the only way for New Yorkers to finagle one of these apartments is to know a direct family member willing to pass the apartment down. Rent stabilization also entitles tenants to receive required services from landlords, and to automatically have their leases renewed – tenants therefore cannot have landlords refuse to renew their lease in favor of deregulating rent stabilized apartments to free market rent. In New York City, rent stabilization sets maximum rates for annual rent increases as decided upon by the rent guidelines board. Therefore, an apartment becomes deregulated if and only if the rent goes above \$2,500, as raised by the percentage calculated by the rent guidelines board. With these strict regulations, while invented as a way to protect renters in New York City, landlords can enter into what Fatu coined *politics of discouragement* as a way of moving rental units from rent control or rent stabilization to free market rent.

Fatu explained for her, that politics of discouragement are instances whereby landlords let apartments deteriorate to almost unlivable conditions as a way of encouraging tenants to leave the rental unit permanently. Fatu recounted instances of residents having to “go to the bathroom

[holding] an umbrella because the ceiling caved in” – so as to avoid having their upstairs neighbour see them, or have exposed sky quite literally rain on them – and said these were fairly common. Fatu also recounted a specific instance where she received an inspection request from a woman who was experiencing “a [severe] wiring problem in her apartment.” The request came through the housing inspection board because, according to Fatu, “the landlord [had come] and opened [up] the wall, and redid the electrical system – the wiring – but he didn’t close the wall [back up]. He left exposed wire everywhere [in the apartment] for *three years*.” The woman, discouraged to the point of giving up, “took newspaper and covered the hole in the wall.” Fatu explained to the woman that she could not write the violation against the landlord unless the woman “removed all of the newspaper” stapled up against the wall to cover the gaping holes in her apartment because of the fact that it was a serious fire hazard.

“People are paying 700 [dollars] for something [the landlord] might get 2000 dollars for on a free market rental” continued Fatu, but “in order to move from rent stabilized to free market rent, you have to do some renovations and justify that you did these renovations in order to increase the rent.” The issue here being, explained Fatu, that landlords are intentionally making residential units unlivable to force tenants to move, or to have them evicted by the Housing Board – often because the Housing Board condemns the unit and forces the tenant out – in order to begin these renovations. For Veronica Harris, a New York City-lifer, and a Brooklynite for 25 years, these anecdotes hit a little too close to home. Veronica takes issue with the fact that as things in the neighbourhood are changing, landlords “can easily get three times as much for my apartment.” Speaking about a specific property management company she had dealt with, Veronica recounted that this company “did everything in their power [to get me to leave,

permanently] – to the point where [I was] illegally evicted and my furniture [was] transported to Hempstead, New York [in Nassau County].”

At the time of this event, Veronica had already taken the property management company to court over Housing Board-commissioned repairs the company had failed to provide. “I had to go through the court system” Veronica remembered “[and basically] prove that the responsibility was [on them], even though we were already in court about repairs. They somehow skipped a step and finagled [a way to evict me]. It took me about a month, maybe six weeks, to get it all back. That was just one of many instances of back-and-forth to court. [Landlords] say they’ll do repairs, but they never do.” However, as exemplified in the recollections of both Fatu and Veronica, and reflected in the egregious case of tenant hounding by Joel and Aaron Israel,⁶ it is not simply the looming threat of displacement that is present in the lived experience of some Brooklyn residents. There are very real instances of landlords making housing units unlivable.

Unfortunately, for Veronica, her previous experience with her property management company, and going through the court system was not her last. During our conversation at Richol Bakery on Nostrand Avenue near Pacific, Veronica recounted another harrowing experience:

“I remember walking – my son went to preschool on the same block, between Nostrand and New York Avenue, and I picked him up and walked him home, and the son of the superintendent at the time, said ‘don’t you live in such and such apartment’ and I said ‘yeah’, and he said ‘oh, you might have some water when you get home’. Evidently, they were working on the pipes of the neighbor on top of me on the third floor. The pipe burst, and the flow of the water came from that

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/17/nyregion/brooklyn-landlords-joel-and-aaron-israel-arrested.html>

apartment, through my apartment, down to the main floor. I'm still waiting for repairs. We've had ceilings fall twice. What hasn't happened? I had an electrical fire happen there – my son was sitting on the couch with his girlfriend at the time watching television, and then I hear 'MOM!' and flames [are] shooting out of the outlet. I think a lot of it has to do – it was a wonderfully made building at the time, but maintenance is required. Even if you have the best materials, they will deteriorate. There's electrical issues, there's water damage."

As a response to these specific events, Veronica and residents developed a tenant's union, "a coalition of not only our building but also with other Crown Heights buildings." "There were people who were told that they had thirty days [or less] to move – entire buildings, [not just single apartment units]. It wasn't a case-by-case situation" she continued "It has definitely been an interesting experience."

Veronica and Fatu's experiences (both first-hand and second-hand), along with well-publicized news stories such as residents in Brooklyn having experienced bathrooms flooded with sewage for two days (Tempey 2015) show the extent to which unscrupulous landlords are going out of their way to force low-income families out of rent-stabilized apartments by destroying them and making them uninhabitable. The relationship between landlord and tenant, as described by Veronica, as well as Fatu, can be characterized as a power relation, in the Foucauldian sense of the term. "Where there is power" writes Foucault, "there is resistance" (1978, 95), and this resistance is what differs power from violence. Here, residents of Brooklyn have adopted different forms of resistance. For example, many residents have become part of an all-encompassing network known as the Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network (B.A.N.) – an activist group that includes dozens of block associations and community groups that organize

protests, events, town hall meetings, and block parties to actively fight gentrification in different neighbourhoods. Other residents, such as Veronica, resist through judicial means: “[It was] a revolving door for like five years. Every second month, every three months, I was in court.”

However, what happens when an individual cannot fight back against developers and landlords? Many individuals in similar situations do not have the socioeconomic means to go and fight in court as often as someone like Veronica. They also may not have intricate knowledge of “the value of their house” explained Fatu, and may end up being exploited by developers who offer financial compensation for a home that is significantly lower than the actual value. In these instances, there is a shift from a relationship of power where tenants can actually fight back, to one where structural violence impedes their ability to do so to the advantage of the developers and landlords. Here, structural violence refers to a type of violence built into structures that is revealed through unequal power relations and consequently unequal life chances (Galtung 1969). Unequal power relations and unequal life chances are characterized by the uneven distribution of resources – “as when income distributions are heavily skewed, [or] literacy/education unevenly distributed” (Galtung 1969, 171).

Structural constraints such as access to work, welfare, and increasing housing costs are the greatest impediment to single mothers. “Many women in inner-city neighborhoods not only have smaller incomes than men” explains Matthew Desmond, “but also have larger expenses as well” (2012, 106). This rings true for Veronica, who has been a “single mom since my son was three.” Her son is now in his early twenties. Veronica left her husband, and has been going through this entire “journey together [with her son, Eddie]. I’m glad I stuck it out, because I love the community.” Veronica has both the education and income to consistently fight her landlord in court for justice, but many do not. While landlords’ specific acts of predatory authority are

those of intentional, aggressive agency, the structural conditions that inhibit resistance and allow those acts to continue unimpeded are what create a situation of structural violence. Many feel “helpless or powerless”, like someone or something “has failed them”, explained Keely, a Brooklynite and yoga teacher, as we sat drinking coffee under the Brooklyn Bridge. “New York is difficult enough to navigate” as a city, explained Veronica, and not everyone “is savvy. People don’t know. [...] People don’t know how to navigate circumstances [like mine] and make things happen, and so you get people who are at a serious disadvantage.”

The Promises of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project

Unequal power relations and structural impediments to resistance in the face of the self-involved and abusive efforts of landlords are but one part of the narrative surrounding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. Another aspect of the development project, Gib specified, is that it was “really sold on the basis of public benefit.” “There were a variety of benefits claimed, but the main ones [were] affordable housing [and] construction jobs” he said, and “[if] you trace [those benefits] through to see how [they] actually get implemented, and to see who actually benefits, how diluted the benefits become by the time [they] get delivered – that tells you a lot about what happens with these types of project.” Elaborating on the benefits of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, as claimed by Forest City Ratner, Christin Washington, an 18-year old Brooklynite, specified that what has happened in Prospect Heights was the result of an intense marketing strategy geared towards displacement. Christin explained that private developers identify “up-and-coming areas” and respond by providing amenities and opportunities to those interested in moving to these areas. Christin clarified that Forest City Ratner conjured interest in the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project development project by

“rally[ing] support from the African American community by saying there were going to be jobs,” specifically those residing in the footprint of the project itself.

The narrative surrounding the promised 10,000 new, permanent jobs, and the 15,000 construction jobs was further addressed by James Ellis, a Texas-born Brooklyn resident of ten years that not only also sits on Community Board 8, but also volunteers for the North Flatbush Avenue Business Improvement District, and is currently employed by the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. Looking at it from an urban development standpoint, James explained that studying the impacts of an arena in a neighbourhood to any degree inevitably results in “the promises [being] nowhere near the claim.” “They claim x amount of jobs, but what kind of jobs are they?” continued James, “They’re part-time, they’re on call, and they’re not wage-ascension, career-ascension-based jobs.” Furthermore, James noted that the private development company “typically [employs] people who are not [even] from the same impact zone” for the construction jobs associated with the arena specifically, and the development project generally. “They’re typically not even Brooklyn residents for that matter, or even New York residents” continued James, “so, now you’re losing that quoted income to some other county or tax base. [Private development companies are] telling us [about] these jobs, but these jobs are *shit*.”

With regards to amenities as another facet to the development narrative, Christin explained that since the opening of the Barclays Centre, Forest City Ratner and other companies have used the area surrounding the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project as a way to promote interest in the project by providing several amenities previously unseen in the area. “Here’s your sports shop, here’s a couple of restaurants you like, here’s the Target where you know you’re going to buy stuff” she continued. Associating increased retail activity and commercial spaces with gentrification does “beg a chicken-or-egg type of question” (Freeman 2006, 62). Does the

arrival of a Shake Shack – a modern day ‘roadside’ burger stand that has become a casual restaurant chain – a Key Foods, or a Duane Reade pharmacy really mark a sign of gentrification? Possibly. Possibly not. However, what the arrival of these amenities does, no matter how frivolous, is “[attract] people [by advertising the area] as a ‘livable space’.”

“People make [these] assumptions” expressed Sinclair Webster. “The demand for [these amenities has always been] there, [they’re] just making all of these assumptions that are incorrect. I’m happy that the Key Foods now carries soy milk” she continued, “[because now] I don’t have to go to Trader Joe’s or go into the city. That’s nice. [But] it’s not that people didn’t eat that before; it just wasn’t [previously] available to them. The market has always been there, but it just wasn’t recognized.” Jess Simon, a long-time Brooklynite who has lived in New York for most of her life, emphasized that it is not only soy milk that becomes important: “If you have a bunch of people moving into the neighborhood, you have to have resources available – because they *need* kale, so you have to make sure you have kale.” The presence of basic stores and amenities certainly makes a neighbourhood more attractive to those who might be classified by others or classify themselves as the gentry, however they also become equally attractive to those considered long-term residents. The convenience afforded by improved and increased amenities and services was a constant theme in my conversations, and was readily identified as a pro to the processes of gentrification. However, equally constant was following up this discussion with the question “but at what cost?”

The “Winners” and the “Losers”

Louis Cathemer struck up a conversation with me as we sat sipping pints of Shiner Ruby Redbird at the bar of Morgan’s Barbecue, a Texas-style barbecue restaurant that I became quite fond of during my stay in the borough. While watching the Mets lose, Louis and I began talking

about anything and everything. When we first met, he was actively in the process of relocating from Sacramento, California to Brooklyn, New York and had spent the week searching for an apartment. Our conversation inevitably turned to politics and government, as – in my experience – it has a tendency to do after a couple of tasty beverages. “Capitalism” Louis started “is very harsh for the people who don’t make it. And not everybody can make it. [...] That is [unfortunately one of the] basic tenets of capitalism: there are losers.”

Regarding the urban development associated with the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, James Ellis specified that “you have to have the failures to highlight the successes. You have to have the knowledge [...] to know where the successes and the failures are, and where the positive opportunities are.” One of the biggest issues for James, however:

“[...] is how you can have the research that’s proven, and the anecdotal evidence and the circumstantial evidence that show tax benefits, and the breaks these developers and arenas get does not equal the community benefit for the tax base that they say they’re going to get. Because they talk about the ripple effects and the economic benefits on a real estate transaction for a business that’s near Barclays, that’s an economic impact that waves out, but what they’re not saying is that the business has been asking for that for four years, so it’s not curating any engine or economic benefit. Possibly even written off as a loss when they’re running down their books at the end of the fiscal year. I think there’s a fallacy in the mechanisms and the quantitative stuff that people use to speak about the benefits of major projects being subsidized through whatever numerous amounts of tax benefits. The fact that you can [even use] eminent domain is a huge issue – how do you put value on that really? How do you

subtract the loss of the community members that were there or the owner's right to private property which they thought was protected?"

When Bruce Ratner first announced his intention to build the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park mega project on 22 acres in Prospect Heights, the biggest practical obstacle he encountered was the hundreds of individuals and families that lived in the project's potential footprint. Individuals such as Peter, Gib, and Wayne became involved in community groups either in direct opposition to, or expressing serious concern for, the project. Others began negotiating buyout offers for their homes with Forest City Ratner but accepting buyout offers through negotiation processes with real estate developers, for some residents, can be a boon. According to an article in the *New York Times* by Nicholas Confessore, roughly two-thirds of those who owned or rented homes in the footprint of the project ended up accepting buyout offers, or left of their own accord (2006).

For Fatu, a former American Airlines flight attendant originally from Senegal who has owned a home on St. Mark's Avenue in Crown Heights for almost 15 years, being a home owner during periods marked by gentrification can be "an advantage [because] the value of your house goes up". In 2001, Fatu was living in Chicago with her husband – a doctor working in global medicine – and was working for American Airlines. "After September 11th, [2001], we got laid off because two [American Airlines] planes were involved" recounted Fatu. "When I worked for the airlines, I could afford to come to New York every weekend, every two weekends, because of the discount" she continued, but "when [we were laid off], I realized I had to pay [full price], and I really missed [New York], so I said 'let's just move there'." Fatu recounted her experience moving from Chicago to Brooklyn:

"When I got here, I bought a house. At that time, it started to be very expensive already, so I'm sure that people who lived here before me

didn't pay half a million dollars. I paid 525 [thousand] at that time. The increase of the value didn't start with the gentrification, maybe the gentrification accelerated the increase of the house value, but it started a long time ago. It is not the beginning. [...] Before us, I'm sure people were [buying these homes] at 250 or 300 [thousand]. It never went down. During the [Financial Crisis] in 2007, it didn't go down that much in New York City. At that time, my house was valued at 800,000 and it dipped slightly to 750,000. When gentrification accelerated exponentially – very fast – we started hearing millions. [...] Just last year, the house across the street went for 1.8 million. It's just going up and up.”

An increased market value of a home does, however, come at a cost. Fatu expressed that as a homeowner, she often has people contact her with offers for her home. “People come here and offer me two million dollars to get the house” she explained. While many would see that as a worthy investment, Fatu calls it “harassment.” “They use all kinds of techniques of communication” she begins “by letter, personally – they come and knock on your door – lately, they call you, and you don't know how they got your number.” Fatu continued, explaining that nearly every three days she receives a phone call from an anonymous caller asking if she would be interested in selling her house. No matter how many times she responds to the same question with ‘no’, the calls never end – however, the “voice [always changes].” Fatu continued:

“I say ‘who gave you my number?’ They hang up. When I ask them how they found my number, they hang up on me. Every time they send me a letter, I don't answer. [...] they knock on my door with a suitcase [...] and say ‘I want to talk to the homeowner’. ‘I can give you cash if you

want to sell your house'. It works [...] because young Black people inherited a house and they don't know the value of the house. [...] They come with a notary. You agree on the terms and conditions. They give you cash in advance. 'Where is your deed?'"

Although not a homeowner herself, Veronica recounted a strikingly similar experience:

“Early on in this whole process – I remember walking down Nostrand [Avenue] to the Key Foods one Sunday – I was by myself – and some gentleman drove up next to me in a Rolls Royce – a Jewish gentleman – I thought he wanted directions so I stepped over and he says ‘Do you want to sell your house?’ and I said ‘No’ – not that I even had a house – but I just said ‘No’, and he pulls over. I thought this only happened in the movies. He pulls over to the curb and opens up an attaché case and there’s hundred dollar bills in stack, full. He says ‘If ever you are, I’m willing to pay cash, if you don’t want to sell your house but you know someone who does, I’ll give you a percentage’. The unfortunate part is that I know people whose children haven’t lived here long enough and they have no association here [and they sell for] so cheap. If you’re going to sell, at least get an appropriate value for your home. If you wave half a million dollars in front of someone, they say ‘Oh, that’s a lot of money’ but if the value is your home is 1.5 million, it’s nothing. That’s the frustration, is that it happens more often than people know. [...] And sometimes they don’t even care. People whose grandparents built that house and maintained that house and then they grew up and gave them a better life, and then they move out to Staten Island or [New] Jersey, they

don't have an affiliation and they don't want an affiliation with the neighborhood. People just go 'Oh yeah, that's more than I had'."

After telling solicitors numerous times that she was unwilling to sell her house, Fatu said that the conversation then changed. Solicitors began calling, or personally arriving at her front door and asking "What will it take for you to give up your house?" She continued: "It's no longer 'Are you selling your house?' it is now 'How much would you be willing to give up your house for?'" Her biggest question arising from her experience is "why do they want my house so badly?" To what extent are – whom we can only assume are real estate developers or investors – individuals going to go in order to acquire this private property? "There must be something about this house" continued Fatu "that I just don't know [about]. How can they ask me those types of questions?"

These residents' experience can be seen as part of the predatory dimension of gentrification elaborated on by Olivier de Sardan. Individuals with a degree of authority, in this case real estate agents, developers, and investment agents, try to acquire private property through questionable means. What Fatu deemed "harassment" by faceless investors has become a part of the actual processes surrounding urban development in Brooklyn as a whole. If some tenants are provided with the opportunity to pocket hundreds of thousands, or even millions of dollars, "the developers stand to make much more" (Navarro 2015). Therefore, tenants are currently being asked by landlords to surrender apartments that afford protections against eviction and drastic increases in rent. In some documented cases, tenants who have refused to surrender these apartments have faced unwanted demolition renovations that never happen, intermittent heat and hot water during winter months, and constant threats of physical violence (Navarro 2015). While buyouts are often the most expedient way to ensure that a development project moves forward, building owners and landlords seeking to sell or demolish a building rely on an array of

questionable and predatory tactics to forcibly remove holdout tenants. The narrative surrounding gentrification in Brooklyn, as well as New York City in general, is rife with occurrences of holdout tenants being forced from their homes. Being constantly solicited, harassed, and even abused directly infringes upon a tenant's right to feel comfortable in their own home.

Comfort

“We're all looking to congregate in places that make us feel the most comfortable” exclaimed Alex Brueggeman in late July of 2015. Alex, an anthropology major from Howard, left Washington D.C. a year prior and moved to Brooklyn, because he felt the borough “gave him more of what [he] wanted”. We met on a cloudy afternoon at a restaurant/bar called SkyTown, located on Broadway Avenue near the corner of Melrose. The venue's website describes itself as a “chill haunt with exposed-brick walls serving comfort food, cocktails, beer & coffee, plus brunch.” After spending an hour or so getting better acquainted with a couple of craft beers, our discussion turned to urban development in Brooklyn, and Alex proceeded to discuss a facet of gentrification that had yet to be touched upon by my interlocutors: *comfort*. Identifying as a gay, Black male, he noted that he mostly frequents “Black places, because I feel the most *comfortable* in Black places.” He expressed that a sense of comfort that indicates a sense of belonging is an interesting component to gentrification, especially in Brooklyn, because he feels that gentrification can best be defined as “appropriation without acknowledgement.” While “appropriation isn't necessarily always bad” he continued, “[gentrification] is a *sinister* type of appropriation.” Alex said he felt that Black populations in historically Black neighborhoods in Brooklyn are “not being acknowledged in the places where we have *always* inhabited.”

Veronica mentioned that there has been a dramatic shift in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, especially over the last five years. She noted that this shift has happened fairly rapidly, emphasizing that “the folks coming in and buying homes are not African American or Caribbean American – they’re mostly young guys, like yourself, who are up-and-coming and moving to an area that is more reasonably priced.” With regards to housing prices, and this influx of non-Black residents into historically Black neighborhoods, Veronica professed that individuals are not to blame: “[You’re] getting more bang for your dollar – [so], I can’t blame them. I don’t personally have an issue with gentrification itself, I think everybody deserves to live wherever they feel they can afford to live.” In a housing market as competitive as that of Brooklyn, or New York City in general, it is difficult to vilify individuals for trying to find cheap rent prices. For Veronica, these individuals are no different from anyone else trying to make ends meet. Gentrification is therefore not about the person or persons moving into a neighbourhood, but rather the processes that are being perpetuated, whether consciously or not, when these individuals move into a neighbourhood.

Alex’s emphasis on comfortability in a neighborhood and misappropriation were echoed by Shaifah, who noted that “working-class African American [communities have] started changing [alongside an influx] of upper-class/middle-class, white, working communities.” For Shaifah, changing and transforming a community for the better is beneficial, especially in areas that can be considered problematic for myriad reasons, but issues arise “when you’re leaving the original residents that were there out of the equation.” However, for Shaifah, “gentrification doesn’t even know race, anymore [...] There are a lot of politicians that are behind this whole move here” she continued, “and they’re people that – I have to say – I’m *hurt* by, because they’re Black *like* me!”

Alex presented a concept he uses to actively reflect on his lived experience. He expressed that he tries to “make a distinction between *personal gentrification* and *economic gentrification*.” Alex professed that he identifies as a Black economic gentrifier, in that he is “college-educated, [making] a certain amount of money, [...] in a certain tax bracket.” He also identifies as a gentrifier because the “apartment that [he is] renting out was bought by [...] a man who is renting the house out. The price of [the apartment] for the two years that [he has] lived there has gone up 300 dollars.” Alex continued: “I can afford it. I might have to work a little bit more, but I can stay there. [...] So, *economically*, I am changing the neighborhood. At the same time, I’m not, because *personally*, I’m frequenting places that have been there for a long time.”

This economic/personal gentrification dichotomy proposed by Alex made him feel as if he was inhabiting conflicting spaces. “It’s butting heads” he expressed, “because I’m part of this new generation of young people, and young people are [being labelled] gentrifiers.” However, for Alex, being a gentrifier does not have to always have this negative connotation. Alex professed that this younger generation, himself included, are “looking for opportunity, and you can’t knock people for wanting to move [to Brooklyn, to do so].” He continued: “I can’t knock people from Buttfuck, Iowa wanting to get out, because I was that boy from Buttfuck, Arizona. We needed to get out of those places. [...] We’re all looking for [opportunity], no matter the ways. We’re all looking for that.” The difference between the younger generation looking for opportunity in a borough such as Brooklyn, and urban development looking for opportunity in changing a borough such as Brooklyn, for Alex, is that he, and he hopes the younger generation as well, are not “looking to pave over other people’s livelihoods, or erase who they are [for a chance at opportunity, though].”

For Jess Simon, being aware as a way to navigate these conflicting spaces “is great, and it’s all well and good, but it’s no excuse to be an asshole.” Jess continued:

“I say that from my own perspective. In my spare time, I do some gender and sexuality work – anti-oppression stuff. There’s a big discussion or dialogue about what it is to be a white person in a particular space and how much space I take up. I joke about it, saying that white privilege is just one more way for white people to talk about themselves. That being said, I think awareness is important, but then what do you do with that awareness? I don’t necessarily have an answer for that, but I think it’s an important question.”

Being aware becomes part of your narrative. During our conversation, Jess emphasized that being aware is important, but what you do about it is an entirely separate aspect. Extending a proverbial olive branch to your neighbour – not because you feel obliged, but rather because you want to develop that rapport and get to know them – is important.

Conceptualizing Gentrification through Experience

Norman Oder’s encyclopedic knowledge of the borough has allowed him to make a living as a tour guide, providing walking and public transit tours of different Brooklyn neighbourhoods geared to energetic, curious people. His aim is to understand, and help others understand, the history of what we see, what has changed, and why. “Being interested in urban planning and urbanism and the way a city works and the way a neighbourhood works” explained Norman “these two things feed off each other. [...] I try not to be a tour guide that simply celebrates.” Gentrification is a process that Norman both constantly writes about on his watchdog blog, and deals with as a tour guide for different Brooklyn neighbourhoods. In our

conversations, Norman explained his understanding of the processes of ‘gentrification’ by quoting a character from performance artist, actor, writer, and director Danny Hoch’s show ‘Taking Over’ – a performance piece about the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Williamsburg – “We asked for better schools and affordable housing” says one character, “and they gave us muffins.”

For Veronica, gentrification can be characterized by “an influx of individuals who formerly did not live in the community displacing, to a certain extent, people who have been there for years – and families who have been there for years and years.” However, Veronica emphasized that this displacement is often *not* deliberate:

“[...] if you *see* an area that you think is appropriate and affordable [...] who wouldn’t want to [move there]? It’s a shift in a neighborhood’s inhabitants that often displaces individuals who have been there long-term and who might not be of a particular socioeconomic level. It does bring improved market-value, often. The economic development aspect of it is great, but my only hesitation – because there is nothing constant but change – black, African Americans were not the first in these neighborhoods, obviously we won’t be the last. The only issue I have is with the displacement of folks that want to be here, that are pushed to the wall. My mother says I’m pretty tenacious and resilient, but everybody – other folks give up. ‘I don’t need to go through this’. I’m sure most people would not have stuck it out – I don’t even remember how many times I’ve gone to court. I understand the motivation [for development], but I think there has to be a balance.”

Jess Simon emphasized that gentrification as a process can be characterized by “an *unfair* amount of people being uprooted from their homes, and either being pushed out of places that are close to [...] the city, or close to jobs – and what’s happening is that when they are leaving and they’re moving [is] they can no longer afford the quality of life” they had prior to moving. Jess is “against the homogeneity of it all. [Gentrification] really does lack diversity, [...] whether that’s the colour of someone’s skin, or financially, or education.”

With regards to gentrification, James specified that it is simply “a label to a process that was always happening” and these processes definitely occur more often “in dense urban areas, where it’s about infield project and [the] revamping” of neighbourhoods. James identified that the revamping of neighbourhoods is characterized by “more tax roll money, [...] more active

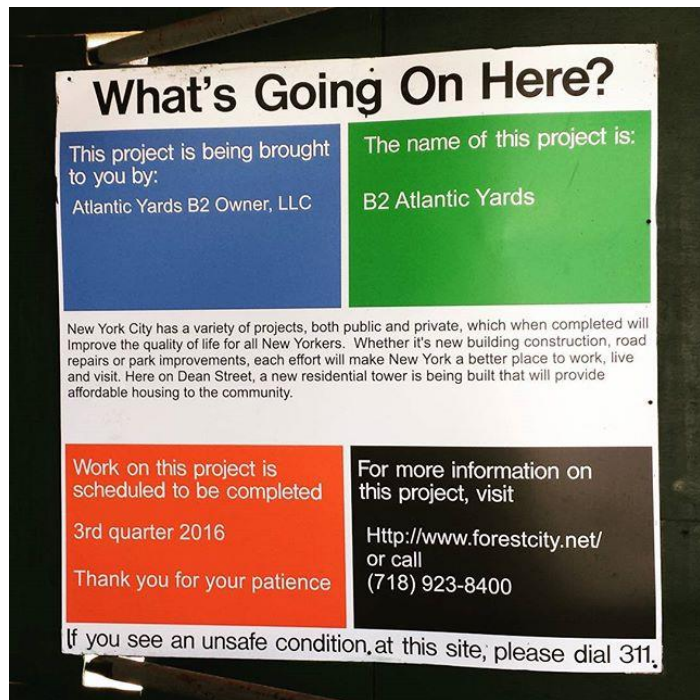


Figure 5

sanitation, [...] and more police presence.” This revamping occurs because of “newer businesses, newer residents coming in, and [the factoring in of what that does] for real estate values.” While, for many, gentrification is strongly characterized by the aesthetic and functional improvement of neighbourhoods through increases in public services (Figure 5), and increasing real estate values, James addressed a very important aspect of the processes implicated in urban development and displacement that was not addressed by others. James explained that when the supposed

“betterment” of a community coincides with increasing real estate values, this irrevocably changes the power dynamics of a community:

“You can’t go without discussing, when it comes to being displaced and residents selling their homes to developers [that] it only happens because *someone took the money*. Somebody, some family member, some property owner took the money. It takes two ways. Gentrifiers don’t just move in and acquire property. Somebody has to [actually] sell it to them. [...] It still becomes part of the narrative of being displaced, even if they might be in control or have the choice.”

With regards to urban development, neighbourhoods, for James, irreversibly change – a change that can be characterized as gentrification – because someone, somewhere, took the money.

Conclusion: The Ripple Effects of Gentrification

In their study regarding gentrification and displacement among New York City residents in the 1990s and early 2000s, Freeman and Braconi argued that demographic changes to neighbourhoods occur primarily through normal housing turnover (2004). With this chapter, I have attempted to show that this was not the case for Brooklyn’s ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park. Displacement, or the threat of displacement, has become one of the most prominent aspects of “gentrification” in Brooklyn. Residents have experienced harassment and abuse at the hands of self-interested landlords as a tactic for displacing and evicting residents, to either move from rent controlled or rent regulated apartments to deregulation, or to sell and demolish buildings in their entirety. Some tenants are able to resist, either through judicial means or through social activism against the self-interested, abusive acts of landlords. However, for many residents, there exist

structural impediments, which I have characterized as structural violence, to their efforts at resistance, which allows the self-interested, abusive acts of landlords to go left unchecked.

With regards to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park development project, and the urban ‘renewal’ of several Brooklyn neighbourhoods, this chapter has also explored how gentrification takes shape in people’s lives and the types of people they have to be or become to engage with these myriad processes. Individuals experience solicitation and harassment to sell their homes, often for below market value. The extent to which developers and investors are trying to acquire private property to change both the landscape and the demographic of neighbourhoods has led many residents to feel uncomfortable in their homes and in their neighbourhoods. I have shown that there are many dimensions that greatly alter cities, neighbourhoods, and blocks, and many in authority who are involved in dramatically changing urban space adopt the “ends-justify-the-means” attitude imparted by Norman Oder. Equality, equity, justice, and the law do not always align, and the gentrification I have described in this chapter occurs in the spaces between them.

Chapter 3:

Prospect Heights: An Anthropology of Community in Lieu of Gentrification

Brownstones, water towers, trees, skyscrapers
Writers, prize fighters, and Wall Street traders
We come together on the subway cars
Diversity unified, whoever you are
We doing fine on the One and Nine lines
On the L, we're doing swell
On the number Ten bus we fight and fuss
Because we're thorough in the boroughs
And that's a must

Beastie Boys "An Open Letter to NYC" (2004)

A New York State of Mind

When I arrived in Brooklyn in July of 2015, the Barclays Center sports arena remained the only completed phase of the project. Prior to leaving for the field, I had sent out emails to community groups and civic associations active in the neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project. Many of these groups had positioned themselves in direct opposition to the 'gentrification' of their neighbourhood, as well as to the project itself. I conducted some preliminary interviews with individuals who associated themselves with the Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network, a grassroots movement and campaign to prevent the displacement of low-to-middle income people in Brooklyn. Throughout these preliminary interviews, residents spoke extensively about their "block association" or "community board", and the responsibility of Brooklynites to become involved with these groups. Community boards play an important role in improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers, and drive at

collaborative change and improvement to neighbourhoods alongside state and municipal government agencies. Similar to community boards, but for a much more limited geographical area, a block association is an association of residents of a given city block who actively work together to maintain a safe and attractive neighbourhood. Many individuals expressed that being a New Yorker, or more specifically, a Brooklynite, means playing an active role in shaping your community, your neighbourhood, or even your city block. At the time, I had no idea what a community board, or block association really was. However, I was affected by the extent to which individuals, specifically those surrounding the entire development project, were mobilized, both against the project itself, but also within their community, trying to actively make sure that if their neighborhood were to undergo changes, that they would be positive rather than invasive.

How Does Gentrification Work?

As has been discussed in chapter 2, gentrification is a complicated trend in urban development that often results in increased property values and the questionable displacement of lower-income families and small businesses. That which residents in Prospect Heights and surrounding Brooklyn neighbourhoods have identified as ‘gentrification’ undoubtedly falls into what Nikolas Rose calls the “‘a-moral language of the market’” (1996, 331) alongside terms such as privatization and competition. As a response to such amoral language, the idiom of “community”, “which is highly morally invested [but also] intersects with markets, contracts and consumption” (Rose 1996, 331), can be seen as a way to rectify or even counter how gentrification works. Specifically, today, the notion of community is “thought to, actually or potentially, command our allegiance” (Rose 1996, 333) through moral, lifestyle, commitment, and geographic similarities. As Raymond Williams wrote in his frequently cited *Keywords: A*

Vocabulary of Culture and Society, the term community, “unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) [...] seems never to be used unfavourably, and [is never] given any positive opposing or distinguishing term” (1976, 76).

The word community has often been employed in common parlance in North America to denote actual groups of individuals and connote specific qualities regarding social relationships (Watts 2008). Community can however also refer to “a form or style of politics distinct from the formal repertoires of national or local politics” (Watts 2008, 101). Here, I am referring to direct politics, community participation, and organization. Community groups and block associations in Brooklyn exemplify community’s “modern political usage” but at the same time locate community “explicitly with respect to contemporary forms of capitalism” (Watts 2008, 103). This chapter aims to show that in Brooklyn, the notion of community is double-edged. Community is used by activists and community groups to try and command allegiance by bringing neighbourhoods together to fight gentrification, but is also being manipulated cynically by developers to both justify a development project devoid of public benefit and garner public support.

In chapter 1, Olivier de Sardan’s logic of solidarity network was conceptualized as a way to frame the relationship that is being cultivated between the state, a private development company, and residents of Prospect Heights with regards to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park development project. Forest City Ratner was able to manipulate solidarity networks cynically in order to push the development project forward, at the expense of the homes and businesses of residents. Here, I return to the logic of solidarity network, in two ways. First, I explore community as my interlocutors understand it, by exemplifying the common associations and affective aspects of the solidarity networks of community boards and block associations. In this

discussion, I explore the politics of community, and how community boards and block associations are making claims about their neighbourhoods. Second, through two cases of events held on Dean Street, I show how the solidarity networks of community are being manipulated by Forest City Ratner once again as a way of adding a degree of authenticity to the development project. With the two events, Forest City Ratner tried to force themselves into a solidarity network that they were not welcome in, once again creating resistance from residents. Community therefore gets framed as the answer to gentrifying processes in neighbourhoods such as Prospect Heights, and yet it is also a construct by which gentrifying processes occur at the hand of a private development firm.

Shaping Your Community

The mere existence of individuals with questions, and a notion of community completely different than their own, was inherently problematic for the developer. The community – what it is, who is involved, and how it exists – in relation to the project, was clarified by Peter: “Everyone has some degree of claim to being a community member, and being a stakeholder in the development of the project, and in its plan and its implementation. But, the degree to which [those involved in the project] are accountable to the community, the degree to which [those involved in the project] can speak for the community, or are just a voice from within the community – that’s often clouded.” What is clear, however, is that individuals adjacent to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project are experiencing a unique phenomenon, according to Peter: “We’re zoned in the area that the state has said is the most impacted by the project. They say the impact doesn’t extend much beyond us. [...] The perimeter of the project ends up having a unique set of experiences that draws us together. Even on the other side of Atlantic [Avenue], we’ve cultivated relationships that are from these shared experiences.”

Community, to Peter, is very much the “sense of common identity” that Williams describes (1976, 75), which has been cultivated through the shared experience of Brooklyn residents in relation to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. This shared experience has a geographic feature. In everyday parlance, the term community is often used interchangeably with place-based concepts, such as that of a neighbourhood. According to the New York City Government website, being a New Yorker means playing an active role in shaping your local communities. One way to do this is to get involved with a local community board, which is, formally, an advisory group composed of fifty volunteer members, each of whom is appointed by the local Borough President. New Yorkers elect the Mayor, Borough Presidents, City Council Members, Public Advocate, and Comptroller. These officials are collectively responsible for overseeing city government, either directly or through their appointees. The City Charter defines the authority of each official or body, including community boards, and the relationships among them. Although community boards act in an advisory capacity, wielding no official authority to make or enforce laws, ideally their role is to work with different government agencies to improve the local delivery of services, and bring attention to pressing issues. Here then, community is place-based, and is central to group identification and broader social issues.

Fighting for Your Right to Community

In Brooklyn, communities have become increasingly involved in various kinds of direct action and direct local organization – a *community* politics that is distinct from both *national* politics and *local* politics (Williams 1976). Residents of Dean Street, by “working directly with people” (Williams 1976, 76), have invoked community as a way of participating and organizing. This engagement often occurs when government agencies fail to represent the same communities that elected them, and residents I spoke to often expressed that when this occurs, they need to

take matters into their own hands. Discussing one of the busiest commercial strips in Brooklyn, Sinclair Webster recounted how a woman living off of Franklin Avenue in the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Crown Heights became an advocate for urban change. As president of her community association, “she was worried about drug dealers, and crime, and no streetscape. [She] got the streets repaved, the lights fixed - [she even rehabilitated] this housing.” Franklin Avenue, thanks to the aforementioned community advocate whose identity Sinclair wanted to keep anonymous, is now “eclectic. [...] You walk down there now and it’s like walking in [Greenwich] Village twenty years ago. [...] There are places you can stop in and eat.” She was even able to have the traffic pattern of Franklin Avenue changed. “I was like: ‘how did the traffic pattern get changed?!’” Sinclair continued, “Well, [she] got tired of having to make a left turn onto the Eastern Parkway to get out of her block. That kind of advocacy [gets attributed to] gentrification. No. That was fifteen years of hard work.”

For Peter Krashes, the community he refers to is an inclusive space that “cut[s] across the spectrum of tenant to property owner.” “We have members of our block association who were born on this street, and have never left” continued Peter. He believes that this feeling of community is derived from “[...] a passion for Dean Street that is very *local* – because of the playground, and a few other things. There’s a set of families who have been here for decades, and [have lived] in different places.” This passion for Dean Street, Peter believes, is derived from close-knit social relations that have been actively cultivated by residents, through their association and interaction: “One of the things I’ve figured out is that when there’s a tight social network, there’s a reason for people to stay,” and forego moving out of the neighbourhood. People are willing to stay, and maintain these strong social relations, even when adversely affected with issues regarding eminent domain, forced evictions, and offers of immense financial

compensation to sell their homes. Peter explained that being offered financial compensation is the most likely scenario, noting that this was “happening in one of [the buildings on Dean Street] right now. There’s an eighty thousand dollar offer to move out, and the people aren’t taking it.” Peter believes the act of refusing this financial compensation is telling, mostly “because they’re part of a community, and they know that if they take that offer, in two years, they’ll be living outside of New York [City].”

Peter expressed that this community is also accepting of those who have not lived on the block for nearly as long, exemplified by Peter himself, and Wayne’s comparatively shorter tenures on Dean Street – albeit almost fifteen years for both. With regards to the relationship he has with fellow community members, Peter was very candid, noting that while they “do disagree on a lot of stuff at the end of the day”, these disagreements do not deter from the fact that the mobilization against issues with the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park projects came about through these relationships: “I think [those relationships] evolved. We started this block association. We started asking questions, and no one was prepared to answer our questions – and [they were] really simple things. There were [even fewer] opportunities to ask questions.” Regarding these same relationships, Sinclair Webster joked about the fact that “five grownups can have a conversation about a [development project site, and reference the codes, such as] block B5 is such and such [...] in having that discussion, especially [with] Peter and Wayne, [who] both have the same familiarity I do about the project [...] you don’t even have to reference it.” This unparalleled familiarity, explained Sinclair, “shows that we’ve been at this a *very* long time, and we really understand which route they’re going now.”

As Collins posits in her article “The New Politics of Community”, community can either be “visibly named” as a political entity – exemplified by participation in Community Boards and

Block Associations – or “implicated” in significant political phenomena (2010, 8). In urbanization, community becomes significant in conversations of contemporary power relations, not only “of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability, nation, and race” (Collins, 2010, 8) but also of experience – solidarities that arise from an adherence to an aforementioned common association. The ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project therefore becomes a privileged site to study contemporary power relations implicated in the tension between community – both visibly named and implicated – and private development companies and governmental agencies. Among my informants, the “warmly persuasive” qualities of community (Williams 1976, 76) continue to persevere. However, the notion of community is inherently political. Despite “its epistemological framing as an apolitical, natural concept” (Collins, 2010, 8), a community demands “visibility, legibility, and enumeration as preconditions for claims-making” (Watts 2004, 102), especially with groups such as community boards and block associations. Groups such as the Dean Street Block Association are vocal in their neighbourhood, and demand this visibility, legibility, and enumeration in their activities. Oftentimes, as Peter explained while sipping tea in his home, even “just having a block party is a political thing.”

The following ethnographic sections present two different events held on Dean Street on the 15th of August, 2015. The first, “10 Murals, 1 Day” was a “community-oriented”, “block party-style” event held by Greenland Forest City Partners in collaboration with 10 different artists to paint over the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project “Green Monster” construction wall that encroaches severely on Dean Street – the same wall situated across the street from Peter’s front door. The second event, the “Tournament of Champions”, was an outdoor amateur basketball tournament-style event held at the Barclays Center and sponsored by Nike in association with Greenland Forest City Partners. I document these two separate “community”

events to present and analyze the “other edge” of community – specifically how community can have a negative formation if the solidarity networks involved are cynically manipulated by developers in order to both justify a development project devoid of public benefit and garner public support for that same development project.

10 Murals, 1 Day – A “Block Party-style” Event

“An 820-foot stretch of Brooklyn street will become a canvas for 10 artists” begins Melena Ryzik’s ArtsBeat blog article – a subsidiary of *the New York Times* – dated July 20, 2015 “as a way to ease the effects of a multiyear construction project.” In an initiative sponsored by Greenland Forest City Partners, the massive construction wall lining Dean Street from Vanderbilt Avenue to Carlton Avenue was going to be the featured site for ten 10-by-40-foot murals to be painted in one day – August 15,

2015 (Figure 6). “I have a pretty serious relationship with Dean Street,” said Mike Perry, the Brooklyn artist who, as the ‘artist in residence’, was picked as the curator of the entire event. While the name may not ring familiar, Perry’s work might – Perry is the artist behind the title and logo of Comedy Central’s critically acclaimed series “Broad City.” Perry



Figure 6

does, however, have a relationship with Brooklyn and with Dean Street specifically – he once had a pop-up art gallery located on the same block where the event was to be held. However, the mural project, and the motivation behind it, is problematic. As more and more properties get gobbled up by private developers and their partners – whether through legitimate business

practices, or the misuse of eminent domain – and as street art continues to rise in popularity, real estate industries and art industries continue to intersect in ways that blur the boundaries between authenticity, art, and appropriation. “Savvy developers know that urban art can cheaply provide great cover for development projects not supported by the local community” writes Bucky Turco for ANIMAL New York “and artists voluntarily work for little to no pay and don’t worry too much about the moral issues in many of these types of collaborations” (2015).

Advertised as “Fun For All”, the “10 Murals, 1 Day” event sponsored by the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project developer Greenland Forest City Partners, was fun. Who doesn’t love free popcorn, hot dogs, ice cream, and photo opportunities? The “Pacific Park Arts” installation was essentially part of a larger block party-style event provided by what was advertised as “community partners”. The event produced the wanted good publicity for the controversial development, but at what cost? The “block party-style” event was held on Dean Street between Carlton and Vanderbilt avenues on August 15, 2015, and was supposed to last from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. The residents of Dean Street, however, made their issues with the festivities known to myself in our discussion, and to the city via emails, tweets, and phone calls. Individuals were woken up at 5:30 A.M. to the sound of forklifts and cherry pickers preparing for the event, and dealing with the murals. One resident tweeted: “#pacificparkarts fail... Here is a tip. Don’t piss off the community by loudly installing at 5:30am on a Saturday!!!”⁷ (2015). While some residents weren’t nearly as bothered by the setup for the event (someone jokingly referred to it as a ‘first world problem’), speaking to a police officer directing traffic, he confirmed to me that the individuals preparing for the event in the morning were not given clearance to do so, and were in fact going against the agreement with the city, which stated they were allowed to begin preparing

⁷ <https://twitter.com/rickmania/status/632522675672453120>

for the event at 10 A.M., holding the event from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., and then having until 6 P.M. to dismantle everything and leave Dean Street.

I spoke with Peter Krashes the following day, who informed me of the fact that organizers left at almost 11 P.M. after encountering issues with the dismantling of the equipment, and taking an extended dinner break. Other residents in attendance expressed to me that once again, Bruce Ratner and his “cronies” were infringing upon the rights of residents, by coming in, taking what they needed, or doing what they wanted, with little to no regard for anyone – especially not residents – and then leaving the block in a worse condition than before. The company, despite trying to rebrand itself as a member of the community, and proclaiming that it has been working with residents to better the conditions created by their development, continue to steamroll through everything without a care in the world. No residents were informed of the fact that the preparation for the event would begin around 5 A.M. The Community Notice – plastered on telephone poles, the construction wall itself, and empty commercial buildings – simply stated that Dean Street would be closed to vehicular traffic “all day”.

While representatives of the developer happily tweeted progress on the murals as the day progressed, the biggest issue, once again, was the lack of transparency regarding the entire event. No residents were included in the decision-making or planning of the event, although the promoters claimed that the event was meant to include and promote “community partners”. I was also told second-hand by a different police officer, as I walked with Peter Krashes down Dean Street toward Carlton, that the preparation for the event had actually been approved from 5 A.M. onwards, but the police were *not* fully informed of the logistics regarding the entire event. Furthermore, residents were not advised of the fact that there would be noisy equipment needed for preparation. So, we had two conflicting stories from two different police officers.

Attendees from Dean Street felt, as did I, that there was an underlying element of corporate rebranding taking place. A Brooklyn Nets-themed photo booth was just one of many installations that made the event feel inauthentic, both to residents and myself. Another installation that added to this feeling of inauthenticity was a food cart manned by Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams, who served up free hot dogs and ice cream to children. Adams, during his run for Borough President in 2013, was backed by Bruce Ratner and his company. Although bright, colourful, and pleasant, to both Norman Oder and myself, even the murals themselves felt determinedly unmoored from the project and even from the neighbourhood. As Norman wrote on his watchdog blog, “the message [of the event] was: be a part of the project, if only by association” (2015).

At the event, Dean Street residents were generally quick to share their feelings, concerns, and experiences regarding both the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project and the “10 Murals, 1 Day” event with me. Many felt helpless in their fight to have their voices heard, especially when it came to having open communication with the developer. During the mural event itself, these negative feelings were compounded as #pacificparkarts tweets and Instagram photos posted by those associated with the developer, the artists themselves, and visitors continued to trend online. The event produced the wanted good publicity for the controversial development and the expansive construction wall that encroaches significantly into Dean Street. For example, *The Huffington Post* Senior Arts & Culture Editor Katherine Brooks (2015) wrote of the event: “What goes together better than ice cream, sunshine and neighborhood camaraderie? Ice cream, sunshine, neighborhood camaraderie and public art, that’s what.” As journalist Norman Oder wrote on his watchdog blog *Atlantic Yards/Pacific Park Report*, the murals “however colourful and bright, pleasant and diverting from the ‘Green Monster’ wall that encroaches severely on the

street, seem determinedly inoffensive, unmoored from Prospect Heights, much less from the Atlantic Yards/Pacific Park project, and its controversy” (2015). While one Forest City Ratner volunteer tweeted “Art = activation. Such great neighborhood vibes at #pacificparkarts on Dean St.! #nyc” alongside a photograph of a mural in progress, Oder’s response encapsulated the feelings of many residents of Dean Street, especially those with whom I spoke to directly at the event and afterwards: “Art can also = co-optation. However sunny the images, vibes can get creepy for those who’ve followed this project” (2015).

#ConquerAllCourts

The 5 A.M. start to the “10 Murals, 1 Day” block party-style event was only one of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project-related intrusions that came without appropriate notice to residents that same day. To my surprise, upon exiting the Coney Island-bound 4-train in order to head over to Dean Street that day, I accidentally bumped into a security guard at the closed subway exit of the Atlantic Avenue/Barclays Center subway station. The plaza outside the Barclays Center had been turned over to a 12-hour event. The Tournament of Champions (Figure 7), also known as #ConquerAllCourts, was a street basketball tournament hosted by Nike in collaboration with the Barclays Center,



Figure 7

the Brooklyn Nets, and Greenland Forest City Partners. Although Nike, the arena, and the partners did in fact receive the proper permits for hosting the event, the event was omitted from the Barclays Center event calendar for the month of August – distributed in early July – and was

not advertised on the Barclays Center website. After being redirected by security guards to the proper subway exit, I placed myself on the outskirts of the tournament plaza, and watched. The event included a DJ and an announcing team – play-by-play and commentary – both of which were amplified to the point where I had to use in-ear headphones as earplugs. I later walked up Flatbush Avenue and was able to clearly hear the noise produced by the event for almost four blocks. A concern of mine, which was shared by two parents and their young son standing next to me as we watched two teams of five play each other on the fabricated basketball courts, was the fact that both the music and the announcer included language that was not family-friendly. The disconnect between the sponsor’s claim at building community through such an event, and the actual tenor of the event, was best exemplified in the announcer scream “Jackson just made him look fucking foolish!” at a public event with children around.

A concern only brought to my attention after the fact by Norman during our conversation, was that the Tournament of Champions event at the Barclays Center intruded upon another community event scheduled months in advance. The Pacific Street Brooklyn Bear’s Community Garden – founded in 1995 as a beautification project tended to by volunteers– had scheduled its 20-year anniversary party well before any word of the Tournament of Champions was made public. In an interview with Norman, garden coordinator Jon Crow made mention of the fact that volunteers only learned of the Nike-sponsored basketball tournament six days earlier from a police officer who stopped by during a protest rally outside of the Barclays Center marking the 1-year anniversary of the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Oder 2015). The backdrop to the birthday party of the community garden ended up being a DJ, a foul-mouthed announcer, and an event that were not made public until the day before. Although all event calendars for the Barclays Center are provided as general information and “are subject to change

without notice” as stated by an accompanying note from arena Community Affairs Manager Terence Kelly, residents of Dean Street asked about distributed updates regarding intrusive events and changes.

The Sunday following the “10 Murals, 1 Day” event, Norman returned to Dean Street because he “wanted to see what it felt like when the traffic was back.” During the event, traffic was rerouted from Dean Street to allow the artist assistants and Forest City Ratner employees to finish painting the construction wall. It was also rerouted to allow the local businesses to run their stands and have people walk down Dean Street and experience a “block party”. “[...] it felt like [...] a canyon” explained Norman. “It felt like the cars and bicycles were being dwarfed, and they were not looking at the art. I did see people walking on foot who were looking at the art, but it’s a daunting thing.” While “the photos of the art straight-on are photos of pleasant scenes” continued Norman, “[...] they are not necessarily the way in which people are [experiencing or] are going to experience that street.” Arts websites, such as the aforementioned New York Times subsidiary ArtsBeat blog, published commentary about the event and how it was a way to spruce up the neighbourhood, alongside “pretty pictures” commented Norman. “But that doesn’t speak to the way [in which] the neighbourhood and the project are being experienced. Cyclists are not looking at the art. They’re staying straight and they’re staying in their lane. Manufacturing a neighbourhood. [That] feeling, there’s something to that.”

Palpable Indifference

By hosting a “block party”-style event in a neighbourhood they have directly affected as a way to garner public support for the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, Forest City Ratner have shown the extent to which they are disconnected from the community at hand. Furthermore, not only are they manufacturing a neighbourhood at the cost of another neighbourhood, as

Norman pointed to, but the project itself has produced a negative formation of community that residents are actively mobilizing against in different ways.

During our conversation, Norman Oder explained that describing the “10 Murals, 1 Day” event as a way to create and enliven this pocket of Brooklyn is testament to the “*palpable indifference* of [the developer themselves in] the developer industrial complex” towards the public. This palpable indifference was exemplified by Forest City Ratner Companies’ chief operating officer David Berliner. Berliner, speaking to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, explained that: “[Forest City Ratner] felt there was no better way to showcase the talent of local artists than to invite the entire community to watch them create and enliven this pocket of Brooklyn with their creativity” (2015). Ifei Chang, spokesperson for Greenland Forest City Partners, added “as progress continues on our project, Mike [Perry] and other local artists [brought] neighbours and community members together to celebrate the best of Brooklyn’s unparalleled and dynamic cultural offerings” (2015). The language used by both Forest City Ratner’s chief operating officer and the spokesperson of the now merged Forest City Ratner Companies and Greenland USA negates the active lived experiences of the residents of Dean Street, specifically their attempts to make their neighbourhood better.

I characterize this palpable indifference as a facet of Olivier de Sardan’s logic of predatory authority. The logic of predatory authority is linked to a function of authority, and as previously mentioned, allows those in a position of power to proceed in a manner devoid of resistance, questioning, or accountability. Here, we see that Forest City Ratner both invaded a neighbourhood for their own capitalist gain, while simultaneously manipulating their own solidarity networks to promote themselves as a member of a given community. The actions of Forest City Ratner are occurring in an “uncontrollable zone where [...] tactics of power-

grabbing, humiliation, and indifference” (Herzfeld 1992, 47) are implemented without any sort of accountability. Community, here, does in fact speak to membership and identity, but also shared interest, property, and capital. The way in which Forest City Ratner forced itself into a community as a way of asserting legitimacy for the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project points to the extent to which a developer is willing to go to get what they want, and this palpable indifference Norman refers to is one of the ways in which they can go about getting it.

The Developer-Government Alliance

While the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project may not be unique in their heavy-handed development style, the nefarious manner of their engagement with neighbourhoods, and their lack of cooperation with segments of the public, what is unique according to Norman, is the “insincerity and cold-blooded indifference of the developer-government alliance” (2011). Apart from being an active chronicler of all things related to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park Project, Dean Street resident Wayne Bailey also sits on Community Board 8, as a member-at-large and a member of the Housing/ULURP (Universal Land Use Review Procedure) Committee, alongside Sinclair Webster, Gib Veconi, and James Ellis. In early July of 2015, Wayne invited me to his home on Dean Street. Wayne’s building, known as The Newswalk, is the site of the former New York Daily News plant. As we stood on his roof deck which



Figure 8

overlooks the entire ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project (Figure 8), Wayne spoke to me about his experience as both as a resident and as a member of Community Board 8, specifically about what it is like to deal with any sort of government agency. Of the developer-government alliance that has worked so diligently to get the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project done at any cost, Wayne commented:

“Basically, the city and the state are supposed to protect us, and our interests. They’re supposed to represent *us*, as citizens, and to actually get them to [actually] do it is next to impossible. They just don’t want to do it because they only want to [represent] the people who can get them re-elected, that can give them money, that can do all this bullshit crony capitalism.”

This was, he felt, an inherent problem with the way in which aspects of the project had been enacted. Other residents of Dean Street and Prospect Heights said that they felt as though their government had failed them, from their Borough President, Eric L. Adams, to Mayor Bill de Blasio, to their governor and senator. “The developer is only doing what the government allows him or her to do,” explained Wayne, and “the company is going to do it. They’re beholden to their shareholders. If they can get a tax abatement, and they can work the system, they’re going to work the system.” The palpable indifference of Forest City Ratner is legitimized in the “ends-justify-the-means” attitude of the government to finish the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, has left residents with a distrust of both developers and of government. This distrust is significant in that it has allowed for a different form of engagement, both with the community, as well as the developer-government alliance. Skepticism and distrust of government elected officials as well as anyone associated with the developer and its holdings can be read as justified

in the context of the questionable political practice that has marked the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project.

Residents also expressed feeling as though their neighborhood was being invaded and bulldozed, while simultaneously feeling that their lives and livelihoods are being belittled. For many of those residents I came to know in my ethnographic work, the developer-government alliance that has become so engrained in getting the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project completed, is a central mechanism of gentrification in Prospect Park. ‘Gentrification’ as a process is happening at such a rapid rate, as a result of the palpable indifference of the developer and the government regarding any and all concerns, requests for cooperation, and problems expressed by residents and neighbours. From hosting their own ‘block party’-style event, to Nike’s “Tournament of Champions” overtaking and imposing itself upon The Pacific Street Brooklyn Bear’s Community Garden’s 25th anniversary party, to both Forest City Ratner and the state dismissing Wayne’s documented questionable practices, the extent to which the developer-government alliance is insincere in their motivation to become a part of a community, and indifferent in their practice in actually doing so, is evident.

Community as a Mechanism

Both the “10 Murals, 1 Day” and “Tournament of Champions” events are cases of sinister misappropriation and cynical manipulation of community for the benefit of a private developer. Because the term community “serves as a construct for organizing a variety of social groups [both visibly identified, and implicated] for very different ends” (Collins, 2010, 10), community becomes central to symbolic and organizational structures of intersecting systems of power. “When you’re a community, and you show that you’re a community” explained Peter, “then [a private] developer wants to engage with a different set of people. They don’t want to

deal with us. There's no benefit to dealing with us" and therefore, community organizing becomes political in that it allows residents to mobilize, especially if the actions of the developer "are causing us harm in some way." Peter recounted an event a couple of summers past where MTV was hosting an event at the Barclays Center that took over the entire neighborhood. MTV hosted their red carpet event down Dean Street, without advising the neighborhood beforehand. "They were terrible; they treated us terribly" noted Peter, exemplifying this feeling with anecdotes of residents' property being destroyed by fans lining up and pushing to catch a glimpse of a celebrity leaving the make-up truck, and even an elderly resident being physically manhandled by security when trying to return to their own home. "If [the arena] is putting on MTV, and [the arena wants] to get business for the arena, [they] don't want any community voice around it saying 'ouch'." Peter expanded. "You want the focus to be on the event, and the success of the event." A community, with or without an invasive urban development project, notes Peter, is easily marginalized or dismissed if it is only "ten or twelve people saying 'I don't like this'." However, and this is the case with residents of Dean Street, when the communal outcry comprises "a hundred, or a hundred and fifty people, [it becomes] a problem because they are socializing and associating [even] without the project" at the forefront, notes Peter. "We exist in our own realm" continued Peter, and oftentimes developers like Forest City Ratner want to actively avoid coexisting with groups like Peter's – see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. In a way, the developer had a hand in creating a community, albeit as a form of resistance to the tactics of the developer, and to the development project itself. Understanding the abuse of community then becomes central to understanding the organization, dynamics, and social processes of urbanization, and the inevitable contemporary social inequalities experienced by residents facing an uphill battle against invasive urban development.

The actions of Community Board 8, the Dean Street Block Association, Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, and other similar community groups, can be characterized as grassroots political projects. The ethos for community action lies in addressing the social problems and concerns “that affect a group by [specifically] seeing the group as a *community* that, because it is harmed collectively, is best helped through collective response” (Collins, 2010, 16, emphasis added). The members of these community groups therefore act as community organizers in that they are politicizing a pre-existing shared social experience that is not only place-based and local, but also lived.

Conclusion: The Complexities and Contradictions of Community

“Within the maelstrom of capitalist modernity” writes Michael Watts, “the possibilities of community are almost endless” (2004, 198). Ultimately, in Prospect Heights, and the neighbourhoods adjacent to the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, community is produced simultaneously at different levels of scale politics, and have worked and continue to work both with and against each other in complex and contradictory ways. While individuals such as Peter and Sinclair see community as that sense of common identity referred to by Raymond Williams (1976) – a common identity that is localized in Prospect Heights, and is politicized because of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project – Forest City Ratner uses community quite differently. For the private development company, the notion of community serves as a tactic through which a development project gains traction, support, and supersedes the claims-making of community boards and block associations. Implicated in these tactics, such as hosting “community” events like “10 Murals, 1 Day” and Nike’s “Tournament of Champions” – both of which infringed upon other scheduled community events – are the logics of solidarity networks and predatory authority. The solidarity networks of Forest City Ratner which include Borough President Eric L.

Adams, who was serving soft-serve ice cream and hot dogs at the “10 Murals, 1 Day” event, end up once again being manipulated in an insidious manner. However, rather than doing so to push the development project forward, now these solidarity networks are being manipulated to give an air of authenticity to its rebranded Prospect Park neighbourhood, and implicate “community members”.

Community in Prospect Heights is double-edged. For residents, community maintains the “warmly persuasive” (Williams 1976, 76) characteristics, however with political undertones. Claim-making for the neighbourhood, in the activities of both block associations and community groups, can be conduits for change, as seen with Sinclair’s anecdote. Since the notion of community is highly moral, it is also therefore highly political. Events such as the Dean Street Block Association’s “Clean and Sweep” clean-up, or “Kids are Blooming” perennial planting events are inherently political, as they are, in a manner, a form of resistance to any sort of invasive urban renewal projects. Community is therefore, as Michael Watts wrote, “an expression of modern rule” (2004, 197), in that it is the way in which individuals negotiate spatial and affective boundaries with the state. Simultaneously, events such as “10 Murals, 1 Day” and the “Tournament of Champions” identify that community is a “supplement to capital (it is *in business*)” (Joseph 2002, in Watts, 2004, 197). Community in Prospect Heights is therefore a complex notion with serious political implications. While it maintains “the quality of holding something in common” (Williams 1976, 75), community is also manipulated in such a way that it disturbs and unbalances neighbourhoods. It creates points of contention, and allows private development companies to rebrand, manipulate, and promote their agendas in a “ends-justify-the-means” attitude that blatantly disregards the lived experiences of individuals.

Conclusion

Experiencing the Project

I met with journalist Norman Oder in late August 2015 at his home near the border of Prospect Leffert Gardens and East Flatbush. Norman launched his watchdog blog ‘The Atlantic Yards Report’ in 2006, through which he offers analysis, commentary, and reportage about the \$4.9 billion project. Norman posts on ‘The Atlantic Yards Report’ “[...] every day. Every day. There’s a certain commitment to that. Not every day there’s news, but there’s [always] something I can [uncover] or make a comment on. I’ve missed a couple of days, in the early years, but I’ve pretty much been 365.” As of Summer 2016, Norman has written over 8,300 blog posts chronicling the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project – its construction updates, its budgetary limitations and revisions, its subsidies, its critics, its supporters, and even the arena’s event calendars. “I’m looking at it from the perspective of the *story*. The story is not simply the process of what’s going on affecting neighbours. The story is about the Barclays Center, it’s about [commercial] modular construction, it’s a whole bunch of things” expressed Norman, “It is [about] watching things change.”

However, Norman does not consider himself as someone who is against the project. “[Someone once] called me a critic and a chronicler. I mean, a critic *sounds* – I am not a critic, but I am critical. I have a critical perspective” Norman explained. “I don’t consider [it] my job to organize people. I’m not an opponent. I’m not trying to *stop* it. I’m trying to chronicle what’s going on and expose things” he continued. “This is a *great story*. [...] this is a very complicated and important story, and what I realized over the years is that there is a really important value to

following it. Understanding it. It has a certain momentum”. Of his own work, Norman commented:

“One of the things I’m trying to understand from my own work, is to what extent is this anomalous, to what extent is this project on the spectrum of the way things get done, with this heavy-handed development style and this engagement/cooptation of segments of the public. Atlantic Yards is not [entirely] unique. Some things about it are extreme and unusual and extremely compelling and extremely weird, but I’ve learned a lot over these years about urban planning, I’ve learned a lot about public policy, I’ve learned a lot about municipal politics, I’ve learned a lot about activism works and doesn’t work. I’ve learned a lot about the power of sports. I’ve learned about the ways in which journals work and don’t work. I’ve been asked ‘Are you an activist?’ If someone says what I do is activist-journalism or advocacy-journalism, well sort of, but I don’t think my point-of-view dictates what comes out or how it comes out. My point-of-view is an earned point-of-view in that it is skeptical of official pronouncements. I’m [also skeptical] of people who protested the project. Sometimes they said things that were bullshit. The power of the state, or the government, or the developer kind of set the agenda with too little skepticism.”

Norman started his blog as a way to follow up on the original report in the *New York Times* about the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project. For Norman, the blog allows him a little bit more freedom, because with a blog “you’re allowed to write with a voice, and you’re allowed to make conclusions based on evidence.”

Forest City Ratner is advertising the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project, specifically the *neighbourhood* of Pacific Park as a dynamic, *new* neighbourhood. Their website, www.pacificparkbrooklyn.com poses the question: “If you could build the ideal New York neighbourhood from scratch, what would you do?” with the following description:

“Imagine the perfect Brooklyn neighborhood: a thriving community for all New Yorkers. One that is close to transportation so you can get where you need to go, quickly and easily. A neighborhood filled with buildings designed by world-class architects like CookFox, SHoP, Marvel Architects and KPF. One that contains light and views—of the Manhattan skyline, of open skies and sunsets. One where a perfect neighborhood park is right outside your window and steps from your door.”

Norman and I discussed this aspect of the project, specifically this advertising campaign regarding the creation of a new neighbourhood where a previous neighbourhood existed, and continues to exist. “At the center of Pacific Park is a new park designed by landscape architect Thomas Balsley” continues the website “Stretching across two city blocks, this 8-acre park has something for everyone – sloping lawns for picnics and sunbathing, a public promenade, children’s play areas, a dog run, and athletic spaces – right at the nexus of Brooklyn’s most vibrant neighbourhoods”. Norman commented, saying: “[Forest City Ratner is] manufacturing a piece of a neighbourhood. They’re not manufacturing an entire neighbourhood. [...] that’s insane. There’s no neighbourhood that is 22-acres that has a wedge through it.” Pacific Park will also “include all of the amenities that we expect from a modern urban community” the website continues to advertise “with office space to support a true live/work experience, world class retail featuring neighbourhood amenities, shopping and restaurant spaces that Brooklyn is

famous for, and even a brand new public school.” Sinclair explained that from that first story in the *New York Times* reporting that Bruce Ratner was interested in relocating the New Jersey Nets to Brooklyn, up until the summer of 2015, “[Forest City Ratner] didn’t understand why there was a healthy amount of skepticism [surrounding the project].” She continued: “You have this skepticism at the outset [of the project], and [they began building the arena]. [They figured that] once the arena was built, they thought that all the ‘opposition’ would go away”.

Urban Space, Social Relations, and Private Development

The narratives in this thesis have addressed the processes of gentrification in the neighbourhood of Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. Engaging with literature from the anthropology of cities, and on contemporary processes of gentrification in a range of disciplines, as well as in popular journalism, I was originally concerned with issues of urban space, social relations, and private development, and wanted to address the question of “how does a multi-million-dollar private development project get built?” As a private development project overseen by Forest City Ratner Companies in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, the 22-acre mixed-use urban project known as ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park provided me with a privileged site to undertake an anthropology of gentrification. I documented and analyzed how this specific private development company was able to push an invasive urban project forward through the complicity of government entities. What this inquiry found was that the process of gentrification relied on a primary developer-government alliance, enfolded in a euphemistic narrative of urban renewal, and enacted through countless predatory practices.

In my interviews with residents of Prospect Heights, and surrounding Brooklyn neighbourhoods, many imparted a version of the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project in which a private developer revitalizes a “blighted” neighbourhood so as to make it more appealing to a

wealthier middle-class. With this thesis, I have shown that although gentrification brings amenities that are appreciated by both older and newer residents of a given neighbourhood, this comes at a steep cost. In my fieldwork, I found that the way in which a private development project gets pushed forward has many facets, from questionable business and public relations practices by the developer, to predatory and self-interested acts by landlords, to community-organizing events of residents. It is at the intersection of these elements that projects such as the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project are able to happen.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the way in which this development project was undertaken has been and continues to be problematic for myriad reasons. One central mechanism was the manipulation of community, a tactic through which the 'Atlantic Yards'/Pacific Park project was able to move forward at an expedited pace, with no foreseeable end. While the narratives surrounding the processes of gentrification often situate a response or resolution to the development occurring in a neighbourhood in a rise in community involvement, the fact that community as a notion was able to be manipulated and deformed by the developer as a way to assert legitimacy for the project, and to continue the invasion of a given neighbourhood characterizes one facet of the processes of gentrification. This thesis has elaborated on the notion that gentrification is a complicated trend, by identifying that while community has been discussed both in popular culture and in scholarship as a way to rectify or even counter how gentrification works, community can actually be used against the very population the term designates.

The notion of community, and working alongside neighbours and other community leaders, can certainly have a positive effect on the neighbourhood(s) actively pursuing productive change. However, it can also be used by private developers to try and justify a

development project criticized as being devoid of public benefit, while simultaneously using community garner public support for the aforementioned development project. Gentrification, especially in Brooklyn, cannot be assessed with only economic metrics; the social context provided by this thesis aims to further scholarship on the social and personal implications of gentrification on community, and the practices of both private development companies and the state.

The Future of Cities

In this thesis, I have explored and elaborated on key facets of gentrification, specifically social relations, community, and corruption. Other key facets to gentrification include issues of race, space, socioeconomic status, environment, ecology, and finance, among many others, especially when discussing matters of urban “renewal”, politics, and neoliberal capitalism. My reason for focusing on social relations, community, and corruption stemmed from a combination of what appeared during my time in the field, and because these facets gave insight into what was happening in Prospect Heights at the time of my fieldwork. For fellow academics, each aspect of gentrification offers what is probably equally rich terrain for inquiry.

In writing this thesis, I have attempted to answer the call of Javier Auyero and Katherine Jensen to “capture the ways in which city dwellers experience the urban environment” (2015, 361) through ethnographic work. I found the ‘Atlantic Yards’/Pacific Park project to be significant and interesting, in part, because it had the potential for a different, more positive form of urban transformation. However, the way the developer pushed the project through, got it paid for by public funds, displaced people, received numerous tax abatements, and pocketed the money were ultimately acts of injustice, and I hope that this documentation proves useful in counter efforts. This work shows that the ripple effects of development did not just happen, but

were part of an intentional, directed process. At the same time, I have aimed to show how my participants perceived, coped, and acted (or failed to act), as they walked in their neighbourhoods, saw homes and businesses get torn down, were woken up at five o'clock in the morning, and organized, or took their landlords to court.

While this thesis does not have an explicit example of “good development,” I do believe that an underlying question is: “what would good development actually look like?” Forest City Ratner could have produced the promised low-income units, and they could have employed the number of people they originally specified, but they did not. I think it could have been otherwise. In showing what this kind of development produces in the lived urban experience of my participants, I have tried provide a roadmap of gentrification as a process, the mechanisms involved, and how people resist, and can better resist.

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