"The Fight for Voice"

Exploring Conflict and Participation in Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy

by

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Abstract

Despite the widespread popularity of participatory design, research, and planning processes, an analysis of power indicates that participation in these processes is not as inclusive as it is articulated to be. The conflation of participation with consensus models of decision-making have coerced diverse participants into agreeing – often, with the dominant voices in power. Democratic theories of "agonistic pluralism" offer an alternative. Conceptualizing conflicts as a space of diverse viewpoints interacting, agonistic pluralism sees political life as dynamic, evolving, and always moving in and out of conflict. Combining this with an understanding that 1) participatory processes must disrupt power structures in order to advance social justice, and 2) unconscious psychological factors affect individual participation in groups, I conceptualize inclusive democratic participation as a process of internal transformation, therapy, and healing. This internal process then affects external change – leading to public discourse and outcomes benefitting communities experiencing marginalization. Following this framework, I use arts-based interviews to understand how different residents, institutional partners, community developers, and researchers understand and practice participatory democracy in Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. These different understandings of participatory democracy interact and conflict to illustrate 1) how different forms of personal, positional, and systemic power serve to supress diverse perspectives, and 2) how important psychology and social justice are to inclusive democratic participation. Ultimately, this paper claims that a heightened self-awareness of personal, positional, and systemic power can help researchers, designers, and practitioners manage their power in a way that encourages diverse perspectives rather than suppressing them. This is important because when we manage our power in order to facilitate more inclusive democratic participation, we make strides towards a truer democracy with pluralistic public discourse and engagement.

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Dedication

Over the past several months, I have been invited into community conversations in which residents, institutional partners, and researchers deliberated together over best ways to make their neighbourhoods and their city a great place to live, work, learn, and play. Throughout my data collection process, these community members welcomed me into their internal recollections of difficult conflicts that have encouraged and dissuaded them in their neighbourhood engagement. These conversations have been deeply personal, and we've sat together in the vulnerable space of uncertainty and complexity. This project is dedicated to the community members who directly and indirectly form the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, and continue to engage in the work in the midst of conflict and challenge.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Images

PREAMBLE

I want to start with a land acknowledgment. Over the past two years, I've studied at OCAD University, which acknowledges the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnaabe and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land that we are on.

For this project, I travelled to what we now call the city of Hamilton, Ontario, which recognizes and acknowledges that they are located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the "Dish With One Spoon" wampum agreement.

These land acknowledgements are important because they recognize that people lived here long before settlers arrived and created the geographical boundaries of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. What they don't explicitly state, but remains at the core of the sentiment, is the years of colonization, genocide, massacre, and discrimination that arose from a clash between different ways of understanding and walking in the world. And without diminishing the importance of land acknowledgments, I want to recognize the difficult historical and contemporary relationships that we have with Indigenous communities, because I don't think we can hope for reconciliation without confronting the conflicts and abuses of power that have brought us here.

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This project aims to confront the conflicts that arise when different ways of understanding the world are brought together. The specific conflicts that I am interested in are ones in which there is an imbalance in power. Looking at participatory neighbourhood planning processes in my case study, I explore how individuals who work in institutions such as the

municipal government, major funding bodies, and social service agencies have the power to influence events and circumstances in the city of Hamilton, which in turn, affects the lives of residents and communities experiencing marginalization who hold less power. If my focus is to analyse local conflicts through the lens of power dynamics, however, then it is important that I first situate this project in two ways: 1) within a broader discourse of the power dynamics between researchers and communities, and consequently, 2) with the specific objectives of improving collaboration for communities experiencing marginalization.

In their book, *Research as Resistance,* Leslie Brown and Susan Strega introduce their contributing writers as researchers who are concerned with challenging "epistemological guarantees" and with "questions about our relationship with those we 'research'" (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 3). Influenced by postmodernist critique, they unpack rationality and our understandings of objective reality, as put forth by the Enlightenment (Brown & Strega, 2005). Importantly, these researchers are interested in the processes and experiences of marginalization and trace back paradigms of objectivity and positivism to the colonizing and marginalizing objectives of research production through time. For years, research has been centralized and evaluated on particular standards, by particular people, with the objective of establishing which knowledge can be deemed legitimate. This has far reaching consequences. When a group of people has the power to influence what we consider "truth" and "knowledge" in society, that group of people also has the power to influence and control societal conditions based on those conceptualizations of knowledge. Traditionally, this has meant that researchers have come from privileged positions in the academy and have gone out to communities to research, explain, and make decisions that change the lives of individuals experiencing marginalization. Throughout this process, these individuals have little control over what is said

about them and how that 'knowledge' will affect their lives, which acts as both a cause and an effect of their marginalization.

As a result, the past few decades have seen increased interest in research that is oriented towards social justice and emancipation. Questioning what is considered 'knowledge,' and what purposes that knowledge is used for, this kind of research offers alternatives to traditional research practices that have historically been used to marginalize and control communities. Increasingly, this kind of emancipatory research includes collaborative and participatory research processes that have been used to disrupt the power structures of academic research. The purpose of this project is to understand how deeply these processes are able to disrupt the existing power structures. Despite unpacking participatory processes through a lens of power, it is important to note that my research process was not participatory. The analysis is my own, and for this reason, it was particularly important for me to question the structures of power that exist within my research process, and within the participatory processes that were spoken about in my data collection.

The widespread use of participatory processes means that a focused study on participation and power could benefit a number of different groups. However, in this study, I choose to evaluate the benefits of participatory processes for communities experiencing marginalization. There are two reasons for this. First, in my position as a researcher, I have already outlined how I hold power that has historically been used to marginalize communities. It is important, then, that I engage critically with my research in order to benefit rather than exploit communities experiencing marginalization. Second, the power structures that exist between the researcher and the researched are replicated in collaborative neighbourhood planning spaces. I use the case study of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) in this project, which engages residents in processes that are funded and staffed by the municipal government and

by the Hamilton Community Foundation. While in research, communities have been

marginalized through particular standards of what constitutes "knowledge" or "truth," local

democracy can also marginalize communities through particular standards of what constitutes

participation, engagement or political processes. While the NAS is sometimes envisioned as a

space for alternative models of participatory democracy, it is limited in its capacity to engage

communities experiencing marginalization. Thus, the purpose of this project is to unpack how

power shapes and influences neighbourhood collaboration within the NAS, in order to inform

how participatory processes may be made more inclusive for communities experiencing

marginalization.

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A conversation about inclusivity is a conversation about how access is facilitated and

mediated (Gibson & Turner, 2012). Laura Kate Gibson and Hannah Turner (2012) note that in

creating inclusive cultural spaces, there is a need to confront processes of colonization and

marginalization and recognize that institutions have long been known to restrict access by

declaring who can participate in cultural practices and knowledge production, and how. This

recognition that power suppresses alternatives and diversity is the first step towards

understanding accessibility through a framework of social justice. Disability justice activist Mia

Mingus critiques common understandings of inclusion, and writes:

> We must understand and practice an accessibility that moves us closer to justice, not just
> inclusion or diversity… As organizers, we need to think of access with an understanding of
> disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and "we are just like
> you" to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is
> considered "normal" on every front. We don't want to simply join the ranks of the privileged; we
> want to dismantle those ranks and the systems that maintain them. (Mingus, 2010)

What is powerful about Mingus's understanding of disability justice is that she conceptualizes

disability as the characteristics that restrict access to a space. Most commonly, this is

understood as physical disabilities. For example, an individual using a wheelchair is restricted

<div align="center">4</div>

access to upper levels of a building that are only accessible by stairs. Through Mingus's

definition, however, characteristics of race, class, gender, sex, sexual orientation, and of course,

ability, all serve to allow or restrict people from accessing spaces. What Mingus demonstrates in

in her writing is that we need to think about not only providing access to previously restricted

spaces, but we also need to think about how to dismantle our ideas of how these spaces are

'desirable,' 'mainstream,' or 'normal'. There is power involved when everyone wants access to

the centre. What Mingus advocates for through a lens of disability justice is a model of

accessibility (or inclusion or justice) that allows access to the centre while at the same time

creating alternative viable, thriving spaces as well. Throughout my paper, this is the definition of

inclusion that I use. By unpacking power structures in order to create more inclusive

participatory processes, I define inclusion not by a set of static rules that will include everyone,

but in a more responsive societal strategy whereby everyone is able and empowered to

participate in ways that make sense for them. Part of the goal of this paper is to unpack the

ways in which power restricts people from participating authentically as themselves.

INTRODUCTION

> *"I think what became clear was—which was a good thing in the end, was that—was that we just—we are not, we don't have enough of a shared vision for what the next level of—of the [Neighbourhood/Hub] could be, or whatever it was that we were trying to put together, and so that means we gotta fall back to what we are. And for some, that was disappointing and therefore disengaging. And for others, it was probably a sigh of relief, right?"* (I6)

The past several decades have seen a surge of interest in collaborative practices. Across different disciplines, collaboration is seen as a way to create more robust outcomes through the collective effort of diverse actors. Designer Liz Sanders (2002) sees this collaborative turn as an effect of society's disenchantment with hierarchy, consumerism and industrialism, as we now enter a new era of networks and collective influence. In local governance and planning circles, collaborative planning has gained popularity as a more democratic alternative to the top-down expert-driven planning processes (Ramsey, 2008), and in international development, the language of participation and empowerment are used widely so as to bring to mind "a world where everyone gets a chance to take part in making the decisions that affect their lives, where no one goes hungry or is discriminated against, and where opportunities exist for all to thrive" (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. 1044). The seduction of collaboration lies in its idealistic position as an alternative to 'traditional' models of hierarchy, control, and elitism. At its core, collaboration offers the sense that everyone has important things to contribute.

Furthering this point, Scott E. Page makes three claims in his book, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. First, he asserts that we can increase the overall productivity of our work and find more numerous and more

effective solutions by incorporating diverse perspectives and using diverse tools (Page, 2007).

Next, he goes on to demonstrate that by using different models to predict an outcome, we

increase our chances of an accurate prediction. Finally, he shows us how different fundamental

values can make it more difficult to make decisions. This last point is what I find so interesting

about the current widespread practice of collaboration. Despite it being more difficult to move

forward when we hold different values, collaborative practices have nevertheless become the

desired norm in fields ranging from local planning and governance (Ramsey, 2008),

international development (Cornwall & Brock, 2005), critical research (Rutman, Hubberstey,

Barlow, & Brown, 2005), design (Sanders, 2002), policy-making (Pelletier, Kraak, McCullum,

Usitalo, & Rich, 1999; Michels & De Graaf, 2010) and conflict mediation (Kahane, 2017).

 In this paper, I am interested most in a particular form of *participatory* collaboration in

which the different perspectives of community members and residents help guide organizational

work. The work is challenging, particularly because community members are so diverse. One

of the individuals I interviewed for this project told me:

> I think part of it is, as diverse people get closer to each other, they become aware of significant
> differences and significant, particularly significant differences in what their understanding of a
> healthy and good community is. And the more diverse the group, the greater those differences.
> Um, and so that was one kind of natural process that was going on, and some people as they
> bump into those difference, they choose to disengage. Others dig in even more, and the conflict
> gets even more intense. (I6)

Community-based participatory projects, which involve engaging community members in the

process through all stages of the project (Wallerstein & Duran, 2018), are challenged not only

because different perspectives make it more difficult to move forward with a plan, but also

because an analysis of power indicates that participation is not always as inclusive and

authentic as it claims to be. In *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, editors Bill Cooke and Uma

Kothari introduce three tyrannies that prevent participation from meaningfully engaging diverse

voices: 1) "the tyranny of decision-making and control" in which the decision-making processes

of the facilitator are privileged over the decision-making processes which are already found within a community; 2) "the tyranny of the group" in which the dynamics of a group contribute to reinforcing the interests of the powerful; and 3) "the tyranny of the method" in which participatory methods are privileged over other methods that may be able to overcome some of the limits of participation (Cooke & Kothari, 2004, p. 7-8). These "tyrannies" speak of the different factors that stand in the way of participatory processes engaging diverse stakeholders and perspectives in a meaningful way, and contribute to the challenge that Page highlights of diverse value sets making it difficult to make decisions.

There is a tension, here, between Scott's model of collaboration and Cooke and Kothari's critiques of power within participation. If the appeal of collaborative, participatory practices is increased efficiency or better results, then the effort to build more inclusive collaboration practices diminishes as soon as the effort exceeds the outcome. Inclusive collaboration is difficult to accomplish because of varied value sets. However, if the appeal of collaborative, participatory processes is based on an analysis of participation's potential to disrupt existing power structures, then the motivation is different. Despite the widespread appeal of collaborative, participatory processes, it is important to acknowledge this tension because it indicates differing value sets placed on participatory processes. Seeking to understand how these conflicting values affect the success of participatory processes in practice, I use the case study of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) in Hamilton, Ontario to focus my inquiry on two interconnected research questions:

1. *How are participatory processes used in Hamilton, for what purposes, and for whom?*
2. *How do these different understandings of participation interact and conflict to contribute to a public life informed by democratic theories of "agonistic pluralism"?*

Critical Perspective

Despite the rosy imagery of participatory processes creating a world in which everyone prospers, I use the critical democratic theory of "agonistic pluralism" conceptualized by political thinkers including Chantal Mouffe, Bonnie Honig, and William Connolly to offer a critical perspective through which to understand consensus in participatory processes. Agonistic pluralism assumes that in a pluralistic society, there will always be diverse perspectives and that for any given perspective, there is always the possibility that the opposite conflicting perspective will also be present. However, rather than strive towards consensus, agonistic pluralism sees this as a sign of a healthy, diverse society. Indeed, agonistic pluralism critiques consensus building for its objective to change people's minds to agree with one idea. This act of changing opinions to create consensus, according to agonistic pluralism, is an act of coercive power that shifts opinions towards the hegemonic way of thinking. Thus, in a situation in where everyone agrees, agonistic pluralism would assert that there is a coercive power at play that prevents people from disagreeing or speaking their mind.

I use this critical perspective of power, coercion, and agonistic pluralism to unpack what inclusive participation looks like in neighbourhood collaboration. Seen through this lens, participatory processes in which there are high degrees of consistent agreement may actually be problematized through an analysis of power. My focus is on how different perspectives and conflicts can inform more inclusivity in participatory processes.

As stated before, I use a social justice model of inclusion, whereby the goal is not to include everyone in the same process, but to allow diversity and conflict to inform multiple, alternative modes of participation. This is important because of our analysis of power; I have illustrated earlier that colonialism and hegemonic power structures have served to dictate what is counted as "knowledge," and through similar processes, what constitutes political

9

engagement or participation. The ability for communities to participate in alternative ways that may conflict with each other takes on a justice approach to inclusion.

The last component that rounds out my perspective on inclusion is that of psychology. Literature on group processes indicates that an individual's participation in any kind of group is always influenced by a number of unconscious factors that are unrelated to the task at hand. Outside of the individual's role as a group member, each individual also confronts their own anxieties, perceptions of self, relationships to other people, ambitions, and unresolved issues from the past every day. In moving towards a model of democratic inclusion, it is critical that we also recognize that people are different – not only through their diverse perspectives on an issue, but also in the way they understand their participation in a group on a personal level.

How does this critical understanding of inclusion inform our work in public sector engagement or community-based participatory processes? The important take-away from this project is its analysis of power. Despite its negative connotations, Julie Diamond (2016) demonstrates in her book, *Power: A User's Guide*, that power is everywhere and is a fundamental part of society, infiltrating all parts of our social life and relationships. While power *can* corrupt, it does not need to. Diamond refers to power as a force that is used by everyone, regardless of role, rank, or network, and defines it as the "capacity to impact and influence our environment" (Diamond, 2016, p. 3). When we are able to understand how power influences us and our colleagues, we are better equipped to change our behaviour in order to encourage diverse perspectives and models of participation. When we do not have this level of self-awareness, we make ourselves vulnerable to the corrupting influences of power that may lead us to react in ways that suppress diversity. In working towards more inclusive strategies of democratic participation, it is critical that we develop a level of self-awareness around how power influences our work, so that we may use our power to create a more democratic society.

In an inclusive democratic society, everyone feels empowered to "participate fully, creatively, and passionately in [their] own lives" (Diamond, 2016, p. 15).

Researcher Standpoint

In order to answer my research questions, I returned to the city where I was trained to be a community-based participatory researcher. Hamilton, Ontario serves as the context and case study of my inquiry. Since completing my undergraduate degree in Hamilton, the city continued to draw me in because of its strong culture of partnerships, and working and learning together. With partnerships between neighbourhoods and institutions like the municipal government, it offers an interesting case study through which to understand participatory collaboration engaging diverse perspectives and relationships to power.

This project was only made possible through the support of my colleagues, mentors, and friends in Hamilton, and so it is worth speaking a little bit about my relationship to Hamilton and experience with the case study of this project: Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS). My first exposure to the NAS was in 2015, when I was invited into the Jamesville Hub and Beasley Neighbourhood as part of a team of student researchers. At the time, Jamesville and Beasley were treated as two NAS neighbourhoods, each with their own planning teams that focused on ways to make their neighbourhoods better places to live, work, learn, and play. These planning teams invited us into the neighbourhoods after they reviewed their Neighbourhood Action Plans and identified that communities experiencing marginalization were underrepresented in the planning process. By their definition, the planning teams were concerned that communities that experienced barriers including language and disability were unintentionally excluded from participating in the neighbourhood. We were asked to recruit and engage neighbourhood residents with lived experiences of marginalization, and train them to be

community co-researchers who would interview their social circles to help us understand how to reduce barriers to participation within the NAS.

The Jamesville and Beasley project pivoted as we engaged community co-researchers in the process. From our personal interactions and from the interviews our co-researchers gathered, we learned to distinguish between marginalization and marginality. The difference was a critical one for us; it helped us understand communities in the margins as sites of resistance, as described by critical theorist bell hooks:

> I was working…to identify marginality as much more than a site of deprivation. In fact, I was saying just the opposite: that it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose, to give up, or surrender as part of moving into the center, but rather as a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (1990, p. 341)

This conceptualization of the margins as a space to nourish alternative ways of being and thinking within our shared society became an important theme in the work I have undertaken since the Jamesville and Beasley project. In understanding marginality in this way, my intention is not to undermine the systemic inequities that marginalize or exclude these communities from participating in "mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life" (Black, 2017, p. 122). Rather, the difference is in the future vision; hooks illustrates the possibilities of "alternatives, new worlds" and new systems, new centres.

Soon after I finished the Jamesville and Beasley project, the NAS Steering Committee called for a review of the entire Strategy, as it reached its five year anniversary. The Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) led this review, later named (re)Imagining the NAS, and I was hired to be part of a research team to create a conceptual framework for the NAS. It was through this work that I was introduced to some of the tensions of participatory planning and democracy, as they play out in practice.

When I started to design this research project, I was looking through the lens of these past experiences. I remain deeply committed to supporting "alternatives", and I understand different, resisting, contradictory perspectives as representing new possibilities. How this plays out within the organized and unorganized structures of the NAS is the focus of this project.

Summary of Following Chapters

In the paper that follows, I explore and utilize the theories grounding participatory processes, democratic participation, critical design, arts-based research, and group process to outline and analyse the implementation of different forms of participation in the case study of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy.

In Chapter One, I review literature that spans participation, democracy, art and design, and group psychology in order to complicate our assumptions around democratic participation as an inclusive strategy. Using the critical work of Chantal Mouffe, William Connolly, and Bonnie Honig, I use the theory of agonistic pluralism to conceptualize inclusive participation as one marked by disagreement and conflict. However, while some scholars have used the principle of agonism to mean conflicting perspectives on an issue, I complicate this idea by exploring how psychology affects group process. Understanding that conflicts are influenced as much by individual psychology and individual anxieties as they are by differing rational opinions on an issue, I assert that inclusive participation within neighbourhood collaboration requires space to accommodate differing individual goals, and resulting conflicts.

In Chapter Two, I introduce my case study, Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS), and outline the initiatives and events that have led up to Strategy's creation. Often referred to as a "resident-led" initiative, the NAS was built on a partnership between two major institutions: the City of Hamilton (municipal government) and the Hamilton Community

Foundation. Despite the shared values of collaboration and partnership, the work of the NAS is complex because of the differing goals, structures, and participatory models spanning the two institutions, residents, neighbourhood groups, and community developers. The conflicts that arise from these differences make the NAS an ideal case study; the Strategy gave me the opportunity to look at how different participatory models interact and conflict to advance or limit inclusive practice.

In Chapter Three, I outline the methods I used to conduct research in Hamilton. Specifically, I designed an arts-based semi-structured interview in which participants reflected on conflicts they had experienced within the NAS, and created artistic representations of these conflicts. Subsequently, I showcased their art in an exhibition and asked visitors to fill out a survey in response to the artwork.

In Chapter Four, I present my research findings. In particular, my interviews reveal how the structures of the City of Hamilton necessitate one form of participation, which conflicts with more "resident-led" alternative forms of participation. Rather than suggesting that any form is superior, I look at how different forms of participation, conflict mediation, and resident engagement are used for different purposes within the Neighbourhood Action Strategy.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I use the responses to the exhibition survey to present arts-based processes as a method that may be used to promote understanding and reflection in the aftermath of neighbourhood conflicts.

1.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: Participation, Democracy, & Design

"I love this—I've used this quote a lot and let's see if I can get it—G.K. Chesterton, um, who was a – oh how would you describe him? He was a – he was an author, um, a newspaper guy I think, actually, in Britain in the early twentieth century. And he was one of these guys with ideas right? And so he would end up in arguments with everybody, but he talked about his relationship with his brother, and he said, you know from the time we were little kids, we argued, and we argued, and we argued. We argued over everything and we argued intensely. We argued so intensely that people would leave the table at meals. We argued and we argued and we argued. But we never once quarrelled." (I6)
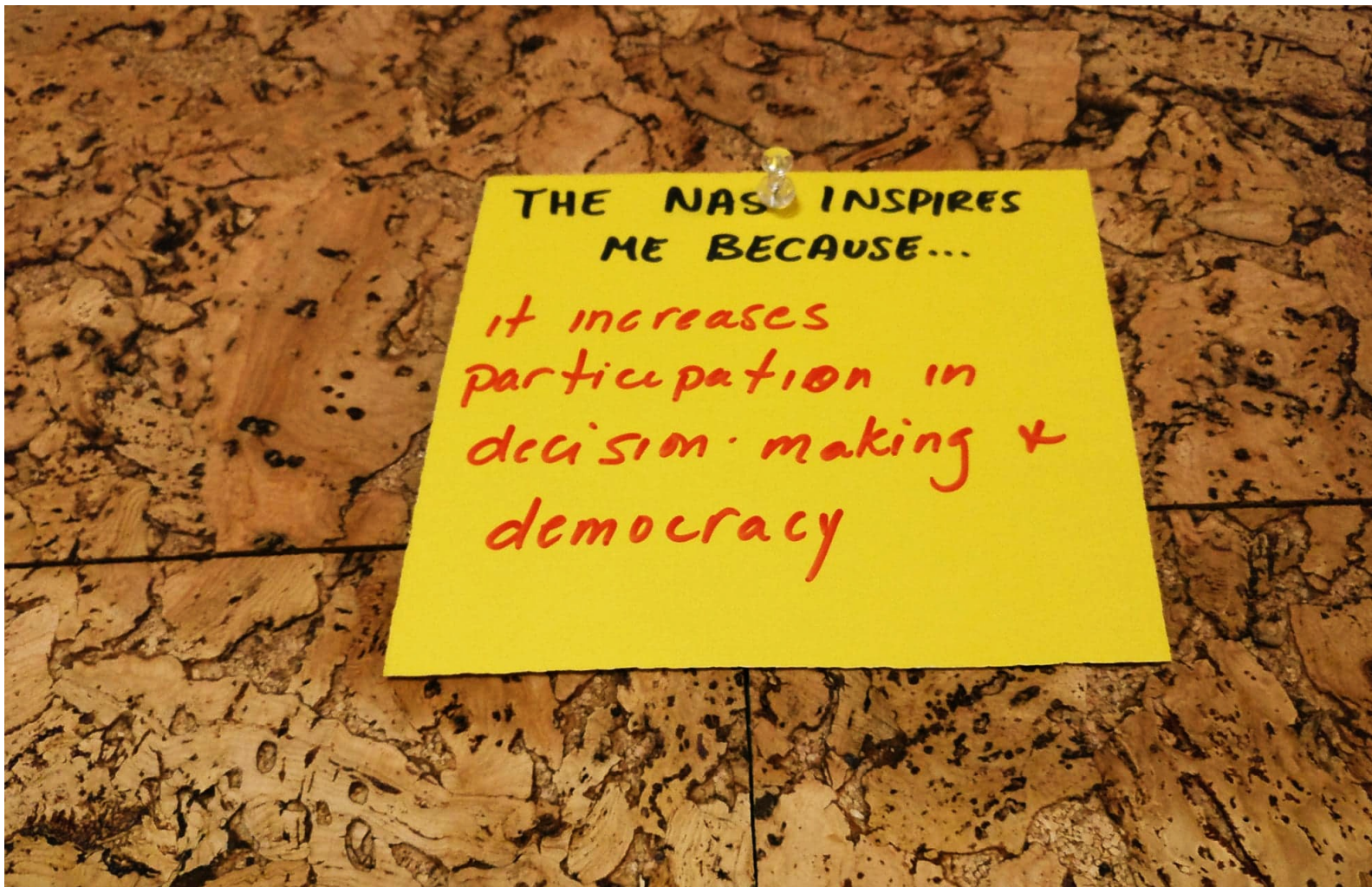
Image 001: Interview participant shares what inspires her: participatory democracy

In order to answer my research questions, I turned first to the literature around participatory processes, tracing the methodologies back to two different theoretical traditions: the Northern tradition and the Southern tradition. While the Northern tradition is more focused on using participation to inform a continuous cycle of action and evaluation in order to produce useful outcomes, the Southern tradition explicitly ties itself to the pursuit of social justice and liberation. The primary objectives of the Southern tradition are to disrupt the structures of power that have colonized and oppressed communities experiencing marginalization, and to move towards emancipatory ideals. Aligning this project with the principles of the Southern tradition, I then turned to the literature on democracy, which holds participation as a key element of a healthy society. The critical perspective on participatory principles, however, allows me to highlight democratic ideals that strive for a society that is inclusive of diverse people, rather than simply diverse ideas. This is important if we are to align ourselves with the principles of social justice and emancipation, and the theories I use of agonistic pluralism shed light on how structures of power within a society exist to limit diverse participation from diverse communities.

The final piece that rounds out our understanding of inclusive democratic participation is the consideration of underlying psychological factors that affect the ways in which individuals participate within groups. The need for this perspective emerged after I had started to collect data for this project, and led me to review the literature on group process. These underlying psychological factors complicate our ideas of diverse participation, because they demonstrate that we need to take into account not only the diverse ideas that are formed, but also the diverse people who form those ideas – and their underlying psychological anxieties and triggers.

As a focused study on methods, I then turned to literature on critical design as a way to understand the more tangible interventions that could push society towards more inclusive, democratic participation. The goals of critical design are to provoke more insightful

16

conversations about political issues in our present and future, and create a space within design for criticality rather than utility. However, while the purposes of critical design are often compared to the purposes of art – to inspire discourse and affect change – I find the literature on arts-based research methodologies more aligned with the participatory principles that ground this paper. With strong ties to art therapy, arts-based research can have a dual purpose of collecting data, while simultaneously helping individuals work through their own emotions and express themselves. In other words, the literature on arts-based research has more of a focus on facilitating internal transformation and healing in addition to contributing to public discourse, while critical design is often externally focused on provoking public dialogue, with limited literature unpacking the designer's positionality and emotional connection. As a result, arts-based research completed my methodological exploration and closed the loop between methodology and inclusive democratic participation by taking into account individual psychology.

Together, the following literature review offers a critical unpacking of power in order to conceptualize what inclusive democratic participation looks like, emphasizing that social justice moves past ideas in order to emancipate diverse communities, and navigates the different psychological factors that influence diversity and conflict in those communities. Ultimately, as I demonstrate in my final sections of this chapter, this conceptual framework is an important tool to help us understand the way we use, mismanage, and abuse power in order to encourage or suppress diverse perspectives. A deeper understanding of how power operates in each of our own lives is a critical first step in moving towards a more inclusive democracy.

1.1   Participatory Everything: Tracing Participation Back to Theory

In fields spanning research, design, local planning and governance, and international development, empowerment and participatory processes offer a "promise [for] an entirely

different way of doing business…they speak of an agenda for transformation that combines no-nonsense pragmatism with almost unimpeachable moral authority" (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. 1043). The language of participation has been equated with democracy, whereby the processes through which people are able to participate in decisions on issues that impact them "[are] the means by which a democracy is built and [participation] is a standard against which democracies should be measured" (Hart, 1992). Similarly, in design spheres, participatory design offers a new way of looking at the world, moving from hierarchies to networks and from consumerism to collaboration (Sanders, 2002).

While the language of participation evokes visions of a future in which everyone is able to prosper and thrive, Cornwall and Brock critique the use of participation as a buzzword in international development. They assert that by divorcing 'participation' from its political roots in social movements and citizenship rights, the language of participation today can refer to a neoliberal project in which citizens take on the responsibility of carrying out work ordered by administrative staff (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Preventing this, Cornwall and Brock suggest, requires a critical unpacking of the different meanings that can be derived from participation. In this section, I trace participation back to its different theoretical schools of thought, in an attempt to answer the question – participation for what purpose, and to serve whom?

In the third edition of *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: Advancing Social and Health Equity,* Barbara Israel, Amy Schulz, Edith Parker, Adam Becker, Alex Allen III, J. Ricardo Guzman, and Richard Lichtenstein (2018) outline some of the following principles of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR):

1. It involves the participation of community members

2. It involves a process of reciprocal cooperation in which community members and researchers contribute equally to the process

3. All members learn from each other

4. It uses capacity building at a local level to change systems at a higher level

5. Participants exercise choice and control over their own lives and life choices

6. Members engage in a cyclical practice of research and action

In CBPR, these shared values lie on a continuum on which most participatory research approaches fall under either the Northern or the Southern tradition, as Nina Wallerstein and Bonnie Duran identify (2018).

The Northern Tradition finds its roots in the school of "action research" named by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Unsatisfied with research for the sake of research, Lewin was looking for ways to close the gap between theory and practice, and engaged in cyclical processes of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Lewin was influenced by other sociologists, including Talcott Parsons, who were also interested applying knowledge to help solve problems and make decisions outside of the academy. More generally, this school of thought "viewed social progress as based on rational decision making [and emphasized] practitioners acting as coequals to academically trained researchers in their inquiry process" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2018, p. 19). It is significant to note here that the Northern tradition emphasizes *collaboration* between different stakeholders and is focused on creating useful, utilizable outcomes through the partnership with practitioners in the filed of inquiry. This collaboration is based on a rejection of positivism; Lewin "rejected the positivist belief that researchers study an objective world separate from the meanings understood by participants as they act in their world" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2018, p. 19).

The Southern Tradition of participatory research, on the other hand, finds its roots in the Marxist critiques and liberation movements of the early 1970s, and are heavily influenced by the writing and contributions of Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire. Some themes in the

Southern Tradition echo the Northern Tradition, including the idea that reality is not objective, but rather, made up of the subjective experiences of communities and the meanings they attached to their experiences. The emphasis in the Southern Tradition however is on communities, and particularly vulnerable, marginalized, and disenfranchised communities. Recognizing the colonizing role that research and education have played in these communities, the role of participatory research in the Southern Tradition is to disrupt the power structures that uphold colonizing values of knowledge production and to work alongside communities to reclaim traditional and experiential ways of knowing (Wallerstein & Duran, 2018). In this tradition, participatory researchers form relationships with community members as participatory co-researchers and co-inquirers, and most significantly, researchers dismiss the claim of neutrality. Instead, participatory researchers in the Southern Tradition are openly committed to ideals of social justice and emancipation. These ideals align also with the work of decolonizing research within racialized communities, within which research has historically been used as a method of control and colonization (Wallerstein & Duran, 2018).

It is important to recognize that the words attached to each tradition are often shared and used interchangeably, which means "participatory action research" (PAR) is associated frequently with the Southern Tradition, but can also be traced to the Northern Tradition. The theoretical foundations of the research may also differ based on the local context and ideology of researchers, and the assumptions that partners bring into the work. As my research in Hamilton shows, it is not uncommon for people to bring different theoretical assumptions of participation and collaborative relationships into their shared partnership, which can cause a great deal of conflict and confusion.

While Wallerstein and Duran have outlined these two traditions specifically for research partnerships, the spectrum from utilization-focused collaboration to emancipation and social

justice is a useful framework to identify the theoretical 'leanings' of other collaborative and participatory processes. For example, Judith Innes and David Booher (2000, p. 18) explain that collaborative planning holds the view that "planning should be done through face-to-face dialogue among those who have interests in the outcomes," in order to create solutions in which everyone benefits. The values of mutual benefit, partnership, and stakeholder participation are upheld, but in this particular definition, there is no explicit commitment to social justice that would trace the objectives of collaborative planning to the Southern Tradition. Similarly, Elizabeth Sanders describes participatory design as a part of a culture in which the end user participates in the design process. Identifying certain changes in society, Sanders writes, "the rules have changed and continue to change. The new rules are the rules of networks, not hierarchies," (Sanders, 2002, p. 2) and later, "[participatory design] emphasizes the direct and active participation of all stakeholders in the design development process…[making] the deliverables of design more meaningful to the people who will ultimately benefit from them" (Sanders, 2002, p. 6). Again, Sanders' definition of participatory design leans towards the collaborative utilization-focused process and outcomes of the Northern tradition rather than the commitment to social justice of the Southern Tradition.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that research or practice does not always need to be participatory to be of the Southern tradition. In the introduction to their book, *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & Anti-Oppressive Approaches,* Leslie Brown and Susan Strega writes of the objectives of critical research, which also rejects claims of neutrality and commits itself to social justice. Critical research problematizes research relationships and centers "questions of whose interests are served not only by research products but also in research processes; it challenges existing relations of dominance and subordination…[offering] a basis for political action" (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 10). The critical research processes they

describe are not always participatory (although they certainly can be), but they are concerned with critiquing and transforming research and practice that has historically or contemporarily devalued knowledge from the margins.

In the Southern Tradition and also sometimes the Northern Tradition, the discourse around participation and emancipation are concerned with historical processes of systemic oppression, colonization, and social injustice. The participatory principles that I align with in this paper are concerned with making space for those who have not historically been included in the creation and development of knowledge or project outcomes. The political undertones of participation led me next to democratic theory, in order to explore the ways in which citizens may inclusively participate in a democracy.

1.2   Democratic Theory: Deliberation and Agonistic Pluralism

Democracy is not a static concept. Rather, it has been constructed differently across geographic locations, cultural contexts, and historical eras. Challenging the notion that democracy is specifically about pursuing consensus, Carl DiSalvo illustrates a spectrum of democratic possibilities, where "on one end… the governing principle is consensus and the associated concerns are those of access to information and procedures [and] at the other end, the governing principle is contestation and the associated concerns are those of revealing and challenging hegemony" (DiSalvo, 2010, p. 1).
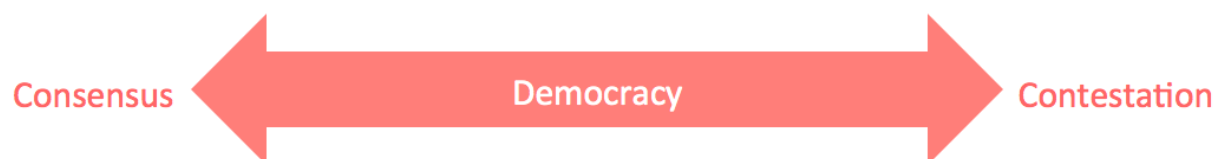
Figure 001: Democratic Spectrum

In this conceptualizing this spectrum, DiSalvo draws upon theories of deliberative democracy, which strives for consensus to move forward, and agonistic pluralism, which views contestation as a radical display of inclusion.

Influenced largely by the work of political theorists Chantal Mouffe, William Connolly, and Bonnie Honig, agonistic pluralism understands conflict, exclusion, and coercion as persistent and dynamic forces in daily shared life. The work of Chantal Mouffe has been particularly influential in developing the theory around agonistic pluralism as a direct critique of deliberative democracy's consensus building appraoch. Arguing that in complex situations, consensus reinforces, at least on the surface, a dominant singular hegemony, Mouffe (2013) sees a different way to move through complex situations: to create multiple hegemonies. Her critique of deliberative democracy is followed by her proposition that in *agonistic* democracy, *politics* exists under the *political*. According to Mouffe and her contemporaries, the *political* is the conflicting views that are always present in society – what she calls, the *radical negative*. Since society is made up of plural actors, the plurality of views set the conditions for potentially conflicting views at all times. *Politics*, in Mouffe's writing, is the organization of plural actors under the *political* conditions of conflict. In other words, politics are the practices through which people engage in political life – whether it be through formal mechanisms of voting, or not. Agonistic democracy calls for a recognition of the diverse views and underlying tensions and conflicts. In the process, agonistic democracy leads the way to creating multiple hegemonies. This is critical, in Michel Foucault's (1980) conceptualization, because the task at hand is not to take the power to act away from people who have it, but rather, to ensure the possibility that *others* are able to access the power to act in *different* ways, should they choose. As my research in Hamilton indicates, this space for participating in different, alternative ways is central; the goals of participatory democracy are not only to include residents in city governance processes, but also

to encourage resident leadership in alternative ways in their communities, which act outside of the processes and models of municipal government.

One of the critiques that agonistic pluralism has of deliberation is the idea that plural actors can come to a rational consensus on political principles (Mouffe, 2013; Connolly, 2002). Consensus, they argue, is a temporary condition that is shaped by coercion and power dynamics. As Adam Kahane (2017) asserts, we will not come to a consensus because we come from different parts of a complex situation; to strive for consensus is to impose the will of one group, reminiscent of colonial thinking. Furthermore, to make a political decision means to exclude or cut off the possibility of other political possibilities, which will become a source of contention as people move forward (Honig, 2001). That said, most conceptualizations of agonistic pluralism do not suggest that there *cannot* be consensus; only that these moments of temporary agreement are shaped by overt or underlying forces of coercion and exclusion, and that it is not lasting (Glover, 2011). Thus, for agonistic pluralists, the central task of politics and radical inclusion is to leave the space open to engage and re-engage in conflicts concerning our shared life together.

Agonistic pluralism is not without its critics. In particular, as political theorist Selen A. Ercan (2017) writes, the main priority in agonistic democracy is contestation over any form of negotiation or path forward. However temporary or coerced any political decision may be, there remains a need for politics to be practical, and Ercan draws upon the concept of "agonistic respect" from William Connolly to create this space for practicality. In agonistic respect, she writes, the aim is to "facilitate a democratic engagement oriented towards arriving at negotiations and settlements, however temporary these may be" (Ercan, 2017, p. 118). She combines this understanding of agonistic respect with deliberative democracy ideals of

consensus and mutual agreement to form deliberative approach that is both practical, and informed by agonistic pluralism.

Ercan's (2017) approach is informed by three criteria. First, she aims to define inclusion using the principles of agonistic respect and the necessity of contesting viewpoints (rather than diverse people). Second, she asserts the need for spaces that actively encourage contestation between different stakeholders and publics – both those in positions of power, and those who are not. Finally, it is critical in Ercan's approach that there be concrete outcomes based on "discursive contestation among multiple publics" (Ercan, 2017, p. 114). What is interesting about Ercan's approach is that her conceptualization of inclusion is not of representative population but of representative discourse. She writes, "what is important for a discursive notion of inclusion is not so much that everyone participates in the public debate, but that all existing discourses on the issue are included within those debates" (Ercan, 2017, p. 119). Such an approach creates the conditions to be able to see an issue from different viewpoints without needing to invite multiple publics into a space.

While the practicality of this approach is to be commended, I think it is important to connect the ideas that Ercan puts forth with the participatory ideals of the Northern and Southern traditions spoken about previously. In particular, Brown and Strega's call to question how the research *process* benefits and disrupts power structures between researcher (or deliberative facilitator) and the researched (or plural publics) is critical. Ercan's suggestion that multiple publics do not need to be present in the room – only their ideas – seems to connect her collaborative discursive approach to the Northern tradition of participation. It is important to recognize this because it helps us clarify goals; Ercan is not explicitly concerned with social justice and emancipation, but rather with creating a deliberative approach that may be utilized in public discourses, and informed by plural voices.

Ercan's desire to form a practical approach to move forward led her to suggest a process framed by the three criteria listed above. Based on her objectives of utility, these criteria are optimized towards practicality and procedure. In response to this kind of procedural approach to making politics practical, Honig offers a last thought in an interview with public policy scholar Nick Pearce:

> [Hannah] Arendt once asked, while sitting on a panel debate on feminism, 'What would we lose if we win?' For the proceduralist that's a good question to think about. If you actually succeeded in turning politics into mere proceduralism – completely procedural practices with none of the tumult and chaos that attend democratic forms of life – you lose the things you need for a democratic form: first, the tumult and spontaneity and even surprise that attend entry into the public sphere, and, second, public things. Admittedly procedures themselves are public things, but you also need parks and schools, prisons, armies and land and all the kinds of things people can struggle and fight over. (Pearce & Honig, 2013 – "The optimistic agonist: an interview with Bonnie Honig" Open Democracy)

In other words, politics that concerns itself with procedure and ideas is one that is devoid of the passions and conflicts that arise when *people* participate in inclusive ways. Procedure loses the human element of politics, and as I align this paper with the participatory principles of social justice and emancipation, it is the transformative effect that participatory democracy can have on different individuals that I am most interested in. Thus, while recognizing the structural efficiency of Ercan's approach, I align this paper with the agonistic pluralism as defined by scholars such as Bonnie Honig.

Agonistic pluralism sees political life as more than the structures and procedures of the political system. Central to their vision of politics is the passions that citizens bring to contesting the political system and participating in a larger culture of political action and discourse. This sense of politics being guided by human passions, critique, discord, and action outside of the system provided the impetus for this research study.

1.3 Unconscious Factors Influencing Participation in Group Process

Agonistic pluralism, as conceptualized by theorists like Chantal Mouffe, William Connolly, and Bonnie Honig, suggests that the ways in which we each engage in political life are always shaped by some form of coercion, exclusion, or conflict (Honig, 2001). My research exploration of conflicts within Hamilton's NAS, as a result, was driven by the idea that conflicts represented diverse perspectives on our shared public life. However, guided by some of the connections between arts-based research and therapy that I will elaborate on below, it became clear through my interviews that the positions we take within conflicts are also influenced by coercion and exclusion. As this paper will demonstrate, the positions we take (whether they conflict with other perspectives or not) are influenced by factors such as our values and beliefs, but also by structural and interpersonal power dynamics and underlying factors within our psychology. In other words, the conflict is rarely *only* about the stated task at hand, but it is also about our concerns as individuals – how we perceive ourselves in relation to others and our anxieties about the positions we find ourselves in (Sampson & Marthas, 1990). This understanding of psychology influencing our participation in conflicts is not incongruent with theories of agonistic pluralism, which also alludes to politics inspired by the different passions of diverse community members. However, I turned to the literature on group process and negotiation to better understand the psychological factors that influence conflicts in democracy.

In their book, *Group Process for the Health Professions,* Edward Sampson and Marya Marthas make it clear that, "we have been working with groups for too many years to harbour even the slightest doubt that unconscious factors play an important role in all our group activities" (Sampson & Marthas, 1990, p. 104). They are writing about the unconscious factors of psychology – the anxieties, hidden desires, and underlying unconscious motives that make group work more than a rational process of task completion. They draw on the work of

psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion to help explain these factors, and suggest that when groups meet, there are always two agendas at play: one that is conscious, explicit, and focused on the task of the group, and second agenda that is hidden, sometimes unconscious, and emerging to influence an individual's behaviour within the group.

This hidden agenda involves what Bion calls "basic assumptions" in all groups, and "involve such factors as hostility, flight or withdrawal, hope, helplessness, and dependency" (Sampson & Marthas, 1990, p. 107). When they emerge to influence individual behaviour, these basic assumptions can help to explain how and why people may react to leadership in different ways, particularly when these reactions stand in the way of productively moving the group towards its stated goals.

While reactions to leadership are an important part of group dynamics, Sampson and Marthas outline two different forms of relationships in groups that affect individual behaviour: 1) the basic assumptions directed towards the leader of the group, and 2) the basic assumptions directed towards peers in the group. With regards to their relationship with the leader, an individual may need to reconcile with themes of "authority, dependency, freedom, and individuality," while an individual's relationships to other members of the group may be influenced by themes of "competition, assertiveness, intimacy, sexuality, envy, giving, [and] sharing" (Sampson & Marthas, 1990, p. 108). What accounts for these factors and hidden agendas? Sampson and Marthas have three reasons that offer a preliminary analysis:

1. **Unresolved feelings**: experiences and hurt feelings from the past that may be triggered by particular factors in the group.

2. **Habits of Public Behaviour**: learned behaviours of socialization that unconsciously guide group members to act according to particular norms.

3. **Fears of Vulnerability**: the reluctance or fear of opening oneself up to attack or criticism can lead individuals to act in ways to protect themselves.

While these three factors may influence individuals to behave in groups in a certain way, it is important to recognize that individuals do not *always* make decisions based on hidden agendas. Sometimes, an individual's rationale for disagreeing with other members of the group can be a rational and explicit difference in perspectives.

When unconscious factors *are* at play in a group's interactions, Sampson and Marthas offer three behaviours to look out for. When individuals feel threatened by some kind of unconscious factor, they may react in one of the following ways:

1. **Fight/Flight**: where an individual either disengages or leaves the group (flight), or responds to the perceived (physical or emotional) threat by fighting and arguing.

2. **Dependency**: where an individual responds to unconscious anxieties within the group by letting go of decision-making functions or strong opinions by yielding or following a dominant leader in the group.

3. **Pairing**: where an individual finds other members of the group to align themselves with, creating subgroups within a larger group for a sense of protection (Sampson & Marthas, 1990).

Understanding these unconscious factors and protective behaviours helps to shed light on many of the conflicts that I heard about in my interviews.

In their book, *Difficult Conversations,* Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen (2010) add this discussion of unconscious factors as a central component of any conflict or disagreement. Negating the idea that conflicts are simply about a difference of opinion, they suggest that every conflict is actually a conversation about identity, among other things. The "identity" conversation gets to the heart of why conflicts matter so much to us. Each conflict

reveals something that threatens the way that we view ourselves, which can be a disturbing thing. Stone, Patton, and Heen (2010) write that there are three core identity issues that come up frequently, which means that conflicts often lead us to question ourselves in three areas: "Am I competent?"; "Am I a good person?"; and "Am I worthy of love?" (p. 112). Often, these questions are at the heart of deep anxieties. This is particularly troubling when we have what the authors call "the all-or-nothing syndrome," in which we think that a negative answer to any of these questions suggests a complete opposite; we are completely incompetent, a terrible person, and absolutely underserving of any care.

Conflict mediation consultant Adam Kahane furthers this discussion, by claiming that in the complex social problems of our time, it is impossible to separate conflicting perspectives from conflicting individual goals. In his proposed model of stretch collaboration, Kahane (2017) suggests that we need to recognize the value of both conflict and connection. Talking about issues is not enough; we also need to be able to argue because we are driven by different, deeply personal values. Recognizing the importance of conflict connects back to the ideas of agonistic pluralism; conflicts help us understand different perspectives that may otherwise have been suppressed. Kahane (2017) reinforces the ideas around unconscious factors outlined above, stating that protecting the interests of the 'group as a whole' is a myth; group members have responsibilities not only to the group, but also to themselves as individuals and to the communities they belong to. We are complex individuals with multiple roles and multiple interests.

Despite the importance of conflict and disagreement, Kahane asserts that it is equally important to move towards a position of connection and cooperation. However, unlike theories of deliberative democracy, Kahane suggests a dynamic movement between the two positions, not privileging conflict or connection, but offering them both as essential ingredients for stretch

collaboration. This is critical. By offering a cyclical process of conflict and cooperation, Kahane keeps the dynamic passions and forces of agonistic pluralism in tact, problematizes the linearity of deliberation, but all the while keeps open the possibility of cooperative collaboration.

While agonistic pluralism centres the importance of conflict in democratic participation, the literature on group process unpacks the psychological elements of these conflicts and offers an individual-level perspective on public participation. In reviewing this literature, it is clear that conflicts are about more than just events or issues; they are about our underlying anxieties, feelings, and constructions of identity, all of which add a layer of complexity to facilitating inclusive democratic participation.

1.4   Design for Democracy: Critical Design and Agonism

Despite the critique that agonistic pluralism does not offer practical strategies to negotiate and move forward, design interventions more recently have taken up the call for agonistic forms of design to spark conversations about political life. Design researcher and educator Carl DiSalvo (2010) illustrates the field of 'design for democracy' through the lens of Mouffe's *politics* and the *political* by explaining that most design for democracy projects fall under the category of politics. If *politics*, in Mouffe's definition, is characterized by the structures and mechanisms through which we organize political life and governance, then designing for politics, as DiSalvo (2010) explains, involves designing interventions that improve and increase access to established political mechanisms. In our society, this could mean interventions to increase voter turnout or creating a more accessible voting system. While this is important and necessary work, as DiSalvo demonstrates, the issue with designing for politics is that it does not facilitate interaction between different, contesting, points of view. Indeed, by focusing on improving the current system, design for politics often serves to take attention away from the

contestation that is central to political life, as conceptualized by agonistic pluralism (DiSalvo, 2010). DiSalvo offers an alternative: political design, that seeks to make explicit the contesting viewpoints and power dynamics that exist under the *political.*

In political design, the objective is to create new spaces for contestation, and in the process, create new opportunities for action. DiSalvo (2010) notes that the contestation could be facilitated in either the *objects* or the *processes* of design. This means that a political design project could result in some form of tangible object that then provokes and facilitates debate, or the process itself could be characterized by contesting viewpoints working towards some sort of objective.

DiSalvo's description of political design aligns well with what designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby have termed 'critical design'. Critical design is a form of conceptual design that aims to offer critique as a way to discuss and offer alternatives to current trends in society. Set up as an opposite to what they called "affirmative design," which supports and amplifies the status quo, critical design is an approach that seeks to ask questions rather than provide answers and is created to make us think instead of persuade us to buy (Dunne & Raby, 2013). In particular, Dunne and Raby were concerned with design's uncritical enthusiasm for technological progress, and they viewed critical design as a way to ask questions about technology's role in our lives and in our understandings of what it means to be human. As an example, the Situation Lab, led by futurists Stuart Candy and Jeff Watson, produced NaturePod™: a machine that can be brought to your cubicle that will help you "reap the health benefits of spending time in nature – for productivity, creativity, and stress relief – without even leaving your office." (Candy, n.d). While the stated purpose of NaturePod™ is to replace time in nature with a more efficient use of time in the office, the critical design object's actual mission is

32

to spark a wider conversation around the future of our relationship with the natural environment.

A comparison of affirmative and critical design is shown in Figure 002 below.

[a]	[b]
Affirmative	Critical
Problem solving	Problem finding
Design as process	Design as medium
Provides answers	Asks questions
In the service of industry	In the service of society
For how the world is	For how the world could be
Science fiction	Social fiction
Futures	Parallel worlds
Fictional functions	Functional fictions
Change the world to suit us	Change us to suit the world
Narratives of production	Narratives of consumption
Anti-art	Applied art
Research for design	Research through design
Applications	Implications
Design for production	Design for Debate
Fun	Satire
Concept Design	Conceptual Design
Consumer	Citizen
User	Person
Training	Education
Makes us buy	Makes us think
Innovation	Provocation
Ergonomics	Rhetoric

Figure 002: Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby's Manifesto of Critical Design: a/b (2013; p. vii)

As designers, Dunne and Raby are ultimately concerned with utility. They are quick to

point out that critical design is not necessarily negative, nor is critique. Rather, critique may also

be "a gentle refusal, a turning away from what exists, a longing, wishful thinking, a desire, and

even a dream. Critical designs are testimonials to what could be, but at the same time, they

offer alternatives that highlight weaknesses within existing normality" (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p.

35). Indeed, Dunne and Raby (2013) suggest that this is where critical design differs from

commentary; rather than commenting on society's shortcomings, good critical design creates a

space for discussion between the way things are and the way things could be, and it is in this

space of conversation that change is possible and alternatives can be imagined.

Critical designers see the value of contestation as contributing to more meaningful conversations about our shared lives and shared futures. In their alignment with political design, I draw inspiration from the idea of public discourse facilitating space for alternative actions. However, what is less clear from this literature is how critical design is aligned with emancipatory ideals for disenfranchised communities. Little is said about how the creation of a critical design object affects communities, or indeed, the designer. Where the focus of critical design literature is outwards, towards provoking discourse in public spaces, I turn to literature on arts-based research to explore the internal value that art can play in both inspiring dialogue and expressing complicated emotions.

1.5 Arts-Based Research

Despite being used for different purposes (healing and creating new knowledge, respectively), the literature on art practices nevertheless outlines many synergies between art therapy and arts-based research methods (Leavy, 2009; Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Coming from a participatory action research (PAR) perspective that research outcomes should be useful to both the researcher and the research participants, arts-based research inquiry is aligned with the principles grounding this paper particularly because of art's dual ability to help us work through and express our emotions creatively, and to create new insights. An arts-based inquiry approach allows for the generation and analysis of new layers of meaning in the "subjective, intersubjective, socio-emotional, [and] relational" aspects of conflict and collaboration that are the focus of my research study (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p. 164).

Despite their alignment, art therapist Jamie Bird nevertheless outlines some interesting differences between art therapy and arts-based research literature, when working with communities experiencing domestic violence and abuse. While art therapy, Bird illustrates, is

focused on a psychological model and focuses on the individual, arts-based research is more concerned with a sociological model that promotes "collective participation" and "collective empowerment," understanding violence to be socio-political rather than a personal challenge (Bird, 2018, p. 16). The sociological arts-based research intervention is still therapeutic, but recognizes participants as co-creators of knowledge and of their therapeutic process, forming natural connections to participatory action research (PAR). Furthering this, Bird calls attention to the social justice agenda that arts-based research can take, citing ethno-mimesis – an approach that connects participatory arts, PAR, and ethnography – "to create a space in which the arts can be used by participants to represent their life worlds…[and] to engage the imagination of participants, researchers and audiences in order to illuminate injustices and make visible marginalised lives" (Bird, 2018, p. 14). The specific focus that these arts-based research interventions have of engaging participants experiencing marginalization to represent their own challenges through a therapeutic arts process aligns with the principles of social justice that guide this paper. This is where the literature on arts-based research seems to be distinct from critical design interventions; while critical design is focused outwards, towards provocative political statements that inspire conversation in society, arts-based research begins internally (either individually or in a collective group) and then moves outwards.

This is not to say that arts-based research is not a powerful tool for public discourse. The potential that art has to explore intersubjective challenges can move personal lived experiences into public discourse. As Chilton and Scotti suggest, art has the ability to take us "from the intimate to the universal and [are] capable of invoking and provoking questions; new ideas; and participative, communal, and active approaches to inquiry" (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p. 163). Art is analogous to critical design this way, in provoking meaningful conversations about complex societal challenges.

35

While arts-based research, as Bird outlined, can often take a sociological lens to collective therapy and empowerment, a psychological lens to understanding individual participation in a collective still remains important. This is why the literature on group process and unconscious psychological factors remains a critical component of inclusive democratic participation. Arts-based research offers one approach to bringing together participatory objectives towards social justice, democratic principles of agonistic pluralism, and unconscious factors of individual participation in groups by promoting an internal transformation process of healing and therapy. However, while the therapeutic part of arts-based research may be limited by its sociological approach to collective healing, other methods may fill the gap to offer a more focused approach for personal healing that is geared towards the individual.
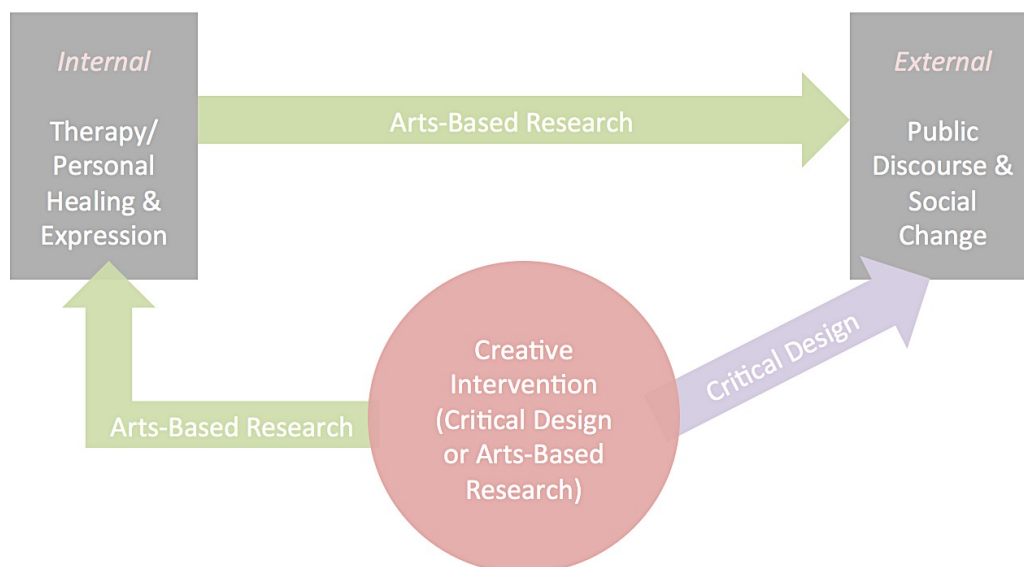
Figure 003: Internal and External Objectives of Creative Interventions

In summary of the last two methodological sections, creative interventions such as critical design and arts-based research are often used with the intent of creating some form of internal or external change. While much of the literature on critical design is focused on the *external* change – for example, the public discourse that a design object might provoke amongst audience members, and then subsequently, social change – the literature on arts-based

research points inwards, first. In arts-based research, it is critical to first engage participants (sometimes through a participatory process) in a creative exercise that promotes personal healing, self-expression, and internal transformation. This internal work is then showcased to provoke public discourse externally, and subsequently social change. It was the therapeutic benefits that arts-based research could have on research participants, alongside the strong alignment with the 'unconscious psychological factors' component of my framework on inclusive democratic participation, that led me to focus my research design around arts-based research.

1.6 Inclusive Democratic Participation in Practice: An Analysis of Power

In the section above, I highlight the importance of internal transformation and personal healing within inclusive democratic participation. What do individuals need to heal from? In this final section, I put forth that various power structures have worked to silence, suppress, or marginalize individuals and communities. The critical piece of this conceptualization of inclusive democratic participation, therefore, is its analysis of power. As I will demonstrate later in this paper, the mismanagement of power (in its different forms) has suppressed and prevented individuals and communities from expressing their diverse perspectives, and delegitimized alternative modes of participation in order to control what counts as true engagement, participation, and knowledge. This gives way to various forms of conflict, trauma, and need for healing. In her book, *Power: A User's Guide,* Julie Diamond (2016) notes different variations of power as it is manifested in the world, but three variations are useful to our understanding of power in inclusive democratic participation.

First, at the most intimate level is *personal power*. Diamond uses the example of Nelson Mandela, who spent twenty-seven years in prison during the apartheid in South Africa. She writes:

> Because he had been sentenced to prison indefinitely, he was stripped of all human rights. He wasn't just on the lower rungs of authority; he wasn't even on the ladder. And yet, he saw himself as a teacher and moral guide—to other prisoners, to guards, and to the government. He said he saw his trial as an opportunity to teach. (Diamond, 2016, p. 64)

Despite having no power, rights, or resources within society, Mandela nevertheless had personal power – a "combination of psychological abilities, life experiences, emotional intelligence, and spiritual strength" that exists within us regardless of any external factors (Diamond, 2016, p. 64). Thus, regardless of our position in society, we each have varying levels of personal power.

Second, Diamond speaks to *positional power*, or the "authority of one's position or role within an organization" (Diamond, 2016, p. 3). This is perhaps a more common understanding of power, indicating that a person's position gives them the ability to make decisions that will influence or have impact on their surroundings or organization.

Third, Diamond speaks to a kind of contextual power (or lack of power) that I will call systemic power. She shares the story of her friend Chandra, who, as the Chief Marketing Officer of a Fortune 500 technology company, held a lot of positional power (Diamond, 2016, p. 54). However, there are times when Chandra doesn't feel powerful, particularly in contexts where she has to speak in ways she is not accustomed to. For example, Diamond explains:

> Chandra's boss is a 'numbers' guy; he values data, numbers, and metrics. Chandra is more of a 'big picture' people person; she values ideas, communication, and relationships. But he's the boss, so she has to use his 'currency,' a currency of which she has less. (Diamond, 2016, p. 55)

While part of the power that is illustrated is positional – that is, Chandra's boss has positional power because of his role and rank – the other part of it is *systemic* because Chandra has to adopt a way of explaining ideas that is not her regular way of communicating. Who needs to change their style is dependent on context, and Diamond explains that "each context has a different set of values, determined by the constellation of people, customs, issues, and dynamics present" (Diamond, 2016, p. 55). In this case, Chandra's boss played a big role, but

as noted previously, communities experiencing marginalization have long been forced to change their practices in order to fit into traditional forms of knowledge production (Brown & Strega, 2005). People who have the privilege of working within a system that is aligned with their values and modes of communication, therefore, have *systemic* power.

Through all its different variations, power is not *necessarily* negative – as Diamond describes it, it is a force absent of any intrinsic values. However, in an analysis of how roles influence us, Diamond brings together studies that illustrate how the power from high-ranking roles given to ordinary people in the context of a study can actually serve to *disinhibit* individuals in decision-making – that is, when study participants were given positional power, they were more likely to take up space and time in their interactions, disregard other opinions, and act in self-serving ways (Diamond, 2016). This means that power has the ability to corrupt anyone – the abuse of power is not an intrinsic quality of the individual, but rather a mismanagement of power within a role when we have limited understanding of power's influence on us. When mismanaged, power has the ability to change leaders and subsequently, to suppress diverse perspectives. This is why an analysis and understanding of power are critical to public sector engagement and community-based work. Diamond writes that power can be positive:

> It allows us [to] find the learning in setbacks, hope after defeat, and balance after life delivers a challenging blow. We use power every day to make choices, from the mundane – "eggs or oatmeal?" – to the life-altering decisions concerning jobs, partners, and long-term objectives. Indeed we use power to motivate ourselves, set goals, and push ourselves towards those goals. Power, when used well, can be an act of self-love, and owning your authority and influence is the necessary precondition to self-development. (Diamond, 2016, p. 15)

Ultimately, this literature review – with its analysis of power within participatory processes, democracy, and unconscious factors influencing individuals within group processes – is able to move forward through this conceptualization of power in practice. The purpose of this paper is to develop an awareness of how power operates in democratic participation in different

variations, so that we may begin to use power as an act of self-love and self-development, as Diamond describes above.

1.7 Bringing it all Together: A Conceptual Framework

Bringing the pieces together, the literature on participatory processes and agonistic pluralism helps us develop a critical perspective into who is engaged in participatory democracy and for what purposes. Since the focus of this paper is to facilitate more inclusive democratic participation whereby communities are able to participate in conventional or alternative ways that make sense to them, I align this paper with the participatory principles of the Southern Tradition, working towards social justice and critically analysing the structures of power that uphold traditional forms of knowledge production in order to disrupt them. Participation, in this context, is subversive and creates alternatives to hegemonic thought and practice. This aligns well with the democratic theories of agonistic pluralism, in which conflict is seen as a healthy way of contesting hegemony and participating in public life.

A layer of complexity is added to our understanding of agonistic pluralism when we consider the underlying psychological factors that affect an individual's participation in a group. The deep anxieties and issues around identity construction shape the way people interact with others and advocate for public action. Thus, it is not enough to call for diversity in perspectives. Doing so costs us the opportunity of engaging diverse stakeholders in subversive participatory processes that will uncover underlying psychological complexity alongside pluralistic values and beliefs.

Brought together, these three elements— 1) participation for social justice, 2) democracy through agonistic pluralism, and 3) the unconscious factors that affect an individual's participation within group process—explain different parts of what constitutes inclusive

democratic participation. The objective of considering and bringing together each of these elements is ultimately to facilitate an internal process of transformation and personal healing for everyone involved. One way that the three elements could come together is through arts-based research, as outlined above, in order to advance individual or collective empowerment and therapy. However, as previously noted, other methodologies could also be taken up in the centre of the three elements to further internal transformation and personal healing.

As discussed within this chapter, three forms of power: personal, positional, and systemic, are constantly at play within democratic participation. When mismanaged, these forms of power can act to suppress diverse communities from participating in diverse ways within a democracy. However, a level of self-awareness and critical understanding of power can help us manage our power to advance inclusive democratic participation, facilitating an internal transformation process (or personal empowerment) that then enables individuals to participate in alternative ways that make sense to them.
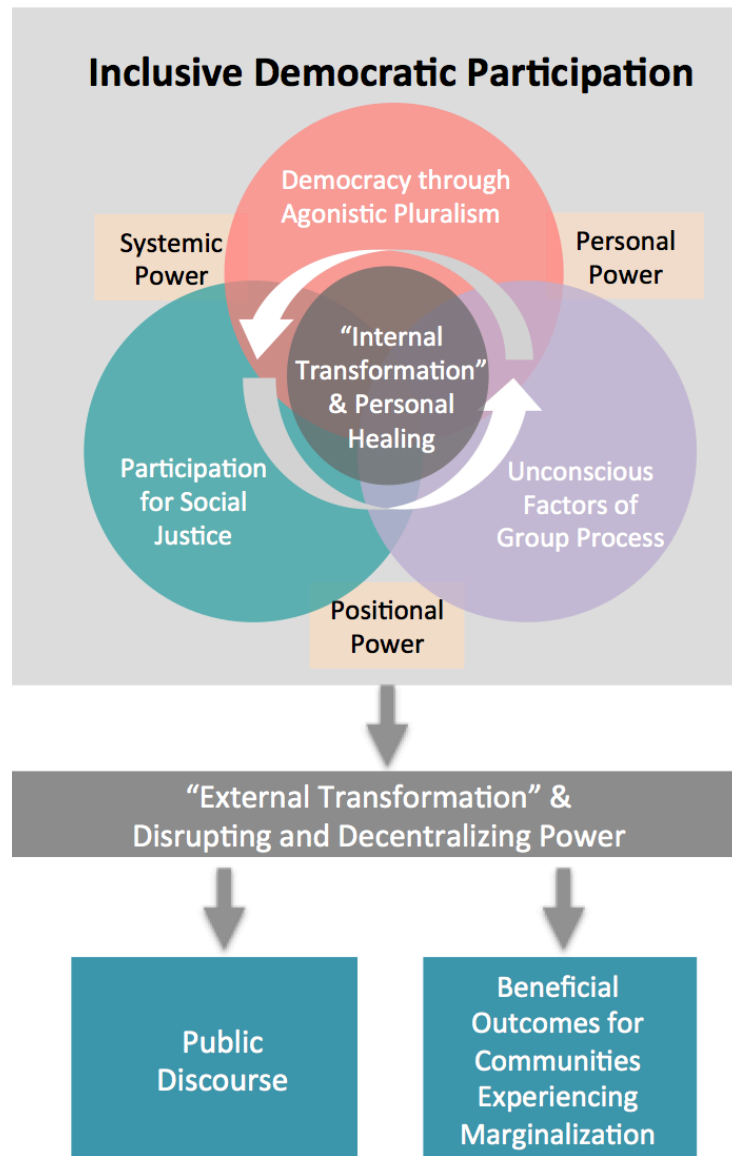
Figure 004: Conceptual Framework Developed Through Literature Review

The conceptual framework in Figure 004 above summarizes the key factors contributing to inclusive democratic participation, as uncovered through my literature review, recognizing that power always operates in the background. The final piece of the framework is to use inclusive democratic participation to promote public discourse and also to lead to outcomes that advance social justice and are of benefit to communities experiencing marginalization. While critical design is ended to facilitate critical public discourse, I have made a case, through the literature, for why an arts-based research practice is more in line with the principles of inclusive

participation, and therefore better positioned to translate inclusive participation into public discourse.

While the literature offers some of the theoretical underpinnings of participatory processes, I use the idea of politics as being fuelled by human passions, psychology, pluralistic perspectives, and conflicts to focus my study on the practice and implementation of participatory processes in a specific case study. I use Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy – an initiative that was started to engage residents in planning processes that would reduce health inequities—as the case study for my research, and ask:

1. *How are participatory processes used in Hamilton, for what purposes, and for whom?*

2. *How do these different understandings of participation interact and conflict to contribute to a public life informed by "agonistic pluralism"?*

In the next chapter, I offer some of the historical background leading up to the NAS, outlining the main events, changes, and structures that influenced the conflicts participants shared with me through my data collection process.

2.0 CASE STUDY: Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy

I made a promise to you that we would make this the best place, the safest place to raise a child. I made a promise to you that I would not walk away from the tough conversations that we have in this ward. I made a promise to you that I would do everything in my power to address these things. And everything in my power is demonstrated here tonight because it is not anything that I can do alone. It's not anything that the police or any other elected official can do on their own. At the end of the day, it has to start here. We have to take back our communities… So here is the call of action tonight. This is not about balloons and barbeque smoke, this is about organizing street to street, door to door, neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This is about taking back OUR community. This is about working with our partners. - Councillor Green, in Calverley (2015)

Image 002: Participants shared their commitments to the NAS, Photo by Aimee Burnett

2.1 Why Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy?

In exploring how different models of participatory processes interact and conflict while working towards inclusive democratic participation, I chose to use Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) as a case study for multiple reasons. First, the NAS is founded in an institutional partnership between the City of Hamilton (municipal government) and the Hamilton Community Foundation. Until very recently, the NAS worked alongside the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) who managed the community developers, and the Strategy is formed on partnerships built between residents, service providers, community developers, and institutional staff. This culture of partnerships between different institutions and groups of people is significant to my study because despite their shared collaboration, each organization brings a different understanding of participatory democracy to their work. As a case study then, the NAS offers me a chance to observe how different understandings of participatory process interact and conflict as they are practiced within the larger Strategy. Second, the diverse range of organizations and groups involved with the NAS allows me the opportunity to contextualize participatory processes within different organizational structures. Rather than using participatory process as an umbrella term, the ability to connect process to structure added a layer of nuance and complexity to my research because it acknowledged the different ways in which we participate in different contexts, towards different goals. How community members use participatory strategies in order to achieve their objectives through different organizations is a part of my research findings. Finally, the NAS offers an ideal case study because it is a democratic intervention that is committed to frameworks of anti-oppressive practice, social determinants of health, and asset-based community development. As a result, the NAS aligns with the principles of this paper in its movement towards social justice and reducing inequities through a critical analysis of power.

In this chapter, I will summarize some of the key events that led to the formation and evolution of the NAS. While this is important background information that will help contextualize the data I collected during interviews, it is important to note that the perspective this chapter takes is from an institutional standpoint. As a reader, you may notice the different institutional objectives that come together in the formation of the NAS. However, what is missing from this account is the resident perspective. The passions and arguments that Honig has articulated are a central part of agonistic democracy and politics are absent here, but illuminated in my data analysis in Chapter 4. Thus, while this chapter is meant as an overview to understand the structure and procedure of the NAS, the impact of these events will be expanded on and complicated through the politics (in Mouffe's conceptualization of the term) illustrated within my interview data.

2.2 Community Development in Hamilton

The Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) was created in 2011 as a way to support resident-led planning initiatives that would respond to the social, economic, and health disparities that had been identified in Hamilton (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017). However, since community development in the city began years before the NAS, it is worth tracing the history back earlier to some of the foundational initiatives that helped inform the creation of the NAS.

It helps to begin with the Hamilton Community Foundation's early anti-poverty work. The Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) is a philanthropic charity and the first Community Foundation established in Ontario. In 2002, HCF stepped up to lead some of the anti-poverty work in the city by launching a new initiative called "Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighbourhoods." Using a community development, neighbourhood-focused approach to anti-

poverty, HCF hired community development workers to work in neighbourhoods, engage

residents, and support resident-led projects through small grants (Neighbourhood Action

Evaluation Team, 2017).

In 2004, HCF committed more funding to continue the anti-poverty work of "Growing

Roots" with the launch of "Tackling Poverty Together" (TPT), where it invested $3.4 million in

grants over the course of three years, to projects from any sector that was connected to poverty

prevention, alleviation, or reduction. TPT also saw HCF partner with the City of Hamilton to

create the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction in 2005, with stakeholders from different

sectors looking to create change through policy and programs. Meanwhile, "Growing Roots"

continued to work with residents to lead neighbourhood work (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation

Team, 2017).

In 2007, TPT and "Growing Roots" officially ended, but their priorities were combined to

launch "Tackling Poverty Together II" (TPT II). In this new initiatives, HCF invested $5 million to

spend the next five years to develop neighbourhood hubs, and to invest grants that addressed

systemic issues of poverty, including employment, policy, and education. Through TPT II, six

neighbourhood hubs were identified, and in each, HCF provided grants, and helped organize

neighbourhood planning teams that brought together residents, service providers, and a

community development worker. By 2009, HCF had established two more neighbourhood hubs,

bringing the number of hubs up to eight (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

2.3 Hamilton Spectator's Code Red Series

In April 2010, as part of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction's efforts to

increase awareness around the city, the local newspaper *The Hamilton Spectator* published a

series of articles entitled "Code Red". These articles used data on poverty and health within

neighbourhoods to highlight the vast health inequities between Hamilton's wealthiest and lowest-income neighbourhoods. Shortly thereafter, in 2010, the Hamilton City Council approved $2 million in funding to go towards an initiative that would improve the conditions of "Code Red" neighbourhoods and create more integration between the City of Hamilton and local community initiatives within neighbourhoods (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

It is important to make note of how Code Red was received within the City. On one hand, the statistics provided the impetus for City Council to create a new neighbourhood-based, anti-poverty initiative within the government to address the issues. On the other hand, as one of my interview participants in this study shared with me:

> I think Code Red was really, really good on many levels, but there's a lot of people in the neighbourhoods who are like, that's not—that's not our identity. And, and even if what Code Red has identified is part of the reality of these neighbourhoods, the idea that you are coming up with, right—you haven't really nailed the problem. (I6)

By highlighting health and income inequities in such a public way, the unintended consequence of Code Red was that it created stigma around many of the neighbourhoods. Many residents did not feel as though the series had accurately portrayed the realities of the neighbourhoods in which they lived, belonged to, and felt pride in (Reilly, 2012). Code Red may have reflected part of the reality, but not the entire reality of these neighbourhoods.

2.4 Creating the NAS through Asset-Based Community Development

The initiative that City Council approved in 2010 and launched in 2011 was called the Neighbourhood Development Strategy, which subsequently became known as the Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS). The funding allowed the City to hire a Director and other City staff to create a strategic framework that would then carry out community development work in Hamilton. In this strategy, the eight HCF neighbourhood hubs were combined with three

additional neighbourhoods identified by the City, to reach a total of eleven neighbourhoods to be

supported by the city (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

Building off the momentum of resident leadership within the community hubs in "Growing

Roots" and TPT, the NAS was framed around a model of asset-based community development

(ABCD) (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017). ABCD focuses on the strengths,

resources, and assets that neighbourhoods have, and seek to mobilize these assets to address

neighbourhood challenges that residents have identified for themselves (Kretzmann &

McKnight, 1996). A key part of this approach is to leverage resident leadership, which, as one

resident shared with me:

> means that the people living… primarily the people living in the neighbourhood and also to a
> degree, the people working in the neighbourhood – they're the ones that take the lead on—on
> sketching out what their preferred future is and how we're gonna get there. Historically, municipal
> government has done studies—paid for studies to be done to define what the problems are and
> then come up with solutions. And when you're living in a neighbourhood, and you feel an outsider
> come in to study you, and then you hear their report on what they've defined as the problems,
> and what they are going to do to fix my life, I'm like, "who are you?" (I6)

The NAS began through exercises of asset-mapping and creating plans based on asset

mobilization, founded on the principle that residents already have assets that they can mobilize

to resolve challenges they face (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

2.5 (re)Imagining the NAS

In 2016, the NAS Steering Committee (comprised of the three NAS funding partners,

described below) called for a review of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Led by the Hamilton

Community Foundation, this review was named "(re)Imagining the NAS." "(re)Imagining"

evolved in two phases. In Phase One, a team of researcher consultants were hired by the

Hamilton Community Foundation to review literature on community development, complex

systems, and place-based interventions to conceptualize how the NAS would operate. The

literature review was guided and supplemented by community-based participatory research

conducted alongside a team of residents who were recruited as part of the process. The

resident team conducted interviews in their neighbourhoods to help clarify some of the

challenges that residents and others had faced with the NAS. The focus of Phase One was the

development of a conceptual framework for the Strategy.

When Phase One wrapped up with the development of a conceptual framework,

(re)Imagining embarked on Phase Two in August 2017, which was focused on developing an

operational plan/framework based on the "Big Ideas," "Guiding Principles," and "Existing

Programme Elements" identified in the Phase One conceptual framework. Through a series of

community consultations, focus groups, interviews, and secondary research, Phase Two

developed a set of recommendations that support the NAS in becoming more aligned with the

conceptual framework identified. Phase Two wrapped up in March 2018.

2.6 Structural Evolution

The structure of the NAS continues to evolve. When the Strategy was formed in 2011,

the NAS was funded by three partners: The City of Hamilton, the Hamilton Community

Foundation, and the Hamilton Best Start Network. The City of Hamilton housed the Strategy

within their newly formed NAS office, and hired a Director and Manager to help guide the work

of the NAS. HCF continued to support resident-led initiatives through its small grants program,

and supported service providers in running programs within NAS neighbourhoods through larger

grants. HCF also funded the salaries for most of the community developers. The Hamilton Best

Start Network funded the salary for one community developer, and also contributed to half the

NAS manager's salary. The three NAS funders make up the NAS Steering Committee

(Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

Each of the neighbourhoods were required to form planning teams to create a Neighbourhood Action Plan that would identify their assets, challenges, and objectives. The development of these action plans were supported by the community developers and City staff, and eventually presented to City Council for their approval (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

Although the funding to hire community developers (CDs) came from the Hamilton Community Foundation, the CDs were originally supervised through four different non-profit organizations: the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC), Wesley Urban Ministries, Environment Hamilton, and Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY). In 2014, it was identified that the CDs needed to be brought together into one unified team in order to align their pay, benefits, and mandate across the neighbourhoods. After a call for proposals, the SPRC won the bid to supervise and manage the CDs. By August 2014, six CDs were working in neighbourhoods through the SPRC (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2017).

Beginning in January 2018, the NAS Steering Committee decided not to renew their contract with the SPRC to supervise CDs, in order to have maximum flexibility to implement the recommendations put forth by (re)Imagining Phase Two. In January, community developers entered into a one year employment contract with the Hamilton Community Foundation. Now supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation, the CDs are working alongside HCF staff to develop core competencies and group process skills that will help them amplify their work in neighbourhoods, aligning with the guiding principles and big ideas identified by the (re)Imagining conceptual framework. Alongside this group and professional development, community developers continue to support residents in the eleven neighbourhoods they work with within the NAS.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Some of the different participatory objectives are alluded to in this historical overview. For example, the Hamilton Community Foundation and the City of Hamilton bring different organizational perspectives to their partnership in the NAS. While HCF builds off of years of work in anti-poverty and community development, the City of Hamilton enters the partnership with the power of government, and the political will to see change in the aftermath of the Code Red series. While not contradictory, these differing perspectives on neighbourhood work have come into conflict through the Strategy.

It is perhaps even more important to recognize that through all these structural and organizational changes, people's lives have been significantly impacted. As change management literature indicates, organizational changes that only involve senior level executives run the risk of creating conflict if the organization's cultural change is not effectively managed (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006). Without the active engagement of all levels of stakeholders, changes to an organization "can lead to the emergence of several cultures throughout the organization, cultural collisions and slow cultural adaptation within the organization" (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006, p. S83). The impact that the organizational changes have had on residents, service providers, and institutional partners is reflected in the conflicts that participants shared with me during interviews for this study. What is most clear is how the formation and the evolution of the NAS have created different participatory cultures throughout the Strategy, and witnessed the cultural collisions of conflicting objectives. These insights are further illuminated in Chapter 4.

3.0 Methods

"Taking the time to hear multiple perspectives; re-thinking or evolving one's own ideas and perhaps not aspiring to all 'agree' but aspiring to better understand each others' experiences and perspectives on what is important about a neighbourhood. Moving forward requires time, space, willingness to share and listen and learn, and ultimately flexibility of the process." (E1)

Image 003: Following a suggestion by one of my interview participants, I developed a creative process to reflect on neighbourhood conflicts, as a final project outcome.

Before I begin to unpack some of the insights revealed through my study, it is important to outline the research methods I used in my study and offer a rationale. My interest in agonistic pluralism led me to focus my research questions on conflicts experienced within the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. I wanted to learn how different stakeholders in the NAS perceived the conflicts they were involved in and what these different conflicts could teach me about power, psychology, agonistic democracy, and deliberative conflict resolution. Since conflicts can be personal and difficult to talk about, I decided to use one-on-one semi-structured interviews to create a comfortable environment for participants to share their experiences of conflict, and also to start to unpack the perspectives and motivations of different actors that led to the conflict.

Although I was interested in understanding the different experiences of conflicts, I was also, more broadly, interested in how a deeper understanding of these conflicts could contribute to public discourse through the lens of agonistic pluralism. While recognizing that agonistic pluralism is often critiqued for its specific focus on contestation and its limited ability to move towards any form of (even temporary) negotiation or settlement, I still wanted to explore how agonistic pluralism could still enrich the practice of political or critical design interventions in order to spark conversation the could lead to deeper understanding between diverse stakeholders. In particular, as a slight departure from critical design but in line with participatory approaches to research and design, I thought it was important that interview participants who had experienced the conflict, be the ones to represent the conflict in a way that could spark public discourse. By focusing on the personal elements of self-expression, the critical design exercise that I built into my interviews fell more in line with arts-based research methodology and its focus on healing and reflection.

Finally, I showcased the artwork created by participants in a public exhibition in Hamilton, in an attempt to spark public discourse. In moving the artwork towards public discourse, I used the conditions of deliberative democracy in an attempt to create a "space that [facilitates] interaction and contestation across multiple publics" (Ercan, 2017, p. 119). Ercan outlines two kinds of interaction required for the deliberative process to influence change: horizontal interaction and vertical interaction. Horizontal interaction is oriented towards engaging a wide variety of public opinions and exposing them to each other. Recognizing that the "public" is plural, interaction between horizontal actors serves the purpose of creating contestation, agreement, and debate among the different opinions. Vertical interaction, on the other hand, is concerned with how public opinion interacts with and influences formal decision-making bodies. In other words, vertical interaction engages people in positions of authority or power, who may be able to use public discourse to create systemic change.

With these two forms of interaction in mind, I hosted the exhibition at Collaboration Station, a community space operated by Evergreen Hamilton, during Hamilton's monthly James Street Art Crawl. The exhibition was open to Hamilton community members perusing through James Street's art galleries (horizontal interaction), and specifically invited interview participants who are in positions of power within Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (vertical interaction). While the purpose of the art gallery was not explicitly to provoke systemic change, and the contribution of this research to the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is limited by both its small sample size and its narrow focus on conflict, the engagement of both "horizontal" and "vertical" audiences provided me with a diverse range of perspectives in response to the art that was showcased. These perspectives were captured in exhibition surveys which I asked each visitor to fill out.

Below, I outline and explain my two methods of data collection: one-on-one semi-structured interviews and an exhibition survey, as well as a third section discussing how I used coding to analyze my data.

3.1   SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (Method One): Towards Understanding

One-on-one semi-structured interviews are widely used as a method of qualitative data collection (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). By asking predetermined questions and leaving space for the conversation to open up to topics that the participant feels are important, the semi-structured interview allowed me, as a researcher, to access participant insight into their own experiences (Mojtahed et al., 2014). Furthermore, an in-person interview allowed me to interpret meaning through full-body communication: people communicate through their body language, intonation, and facial expressions, all of which elaborate on the verbal answers given (Schnatz, 2012).

While the inspiration for the second "co-design" part of my interview came from critical design, the actual process we used to create representations of conflict reflect more of an arts-based research approach. I asked participants to identify the one or two key conflicts that they have faced in their work. They then used art supplies (and their imaginations) to create objects that represented the different sides of those conflicts. I contributed to the process by offering ideas when needed. For some of the art pieces, I also worked with participants to identify how I could refine the art to better express their vision using materials that were not available during the interviews. The use of arts-based practices to work through and represent challenging life experiences is common, and as discussed in my literature review, shares close ties with art therapy. In particular, I was inspired by the work of Jamie Bird's work with women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. Using arts-based research methods, the women in the study created visual representations of how they respond to violence, which then became a

way to talk about the past, present and future (Bird, 2018). In my arts-based research interviews, I was inspired by this use of art as a mode of expression that can then open up further conversation.

3.2   EXHIBITION SURVEY (Method Two): Towards Public Discourse

A week after I had completed interviews with all eight interview participants, I curated an exhibition to showcase the art pieces developed within the interviews. This art was meant to inspire public discourse around the conflicts experienced within the NAS. In order to document the different perspectives, I asked exhibition visitors to fill out a short survey in response to any of the art pieces that resonated with them. The survey questions (outlined in Figure 00X below) served two purposes: 1) To get a sense of how different people perceive and position themselves in relation to a particular conflict, and 2) To generate ideas on how conflicts may be resolved, across the different audience-stakeholders. The qualitative survey method has been used in research studies looking to collect data from a large number of participants under time constraints and logistical limitations (Mazzola, Walker, Shockley, & Spector, 2011). In the case of this exhibition, it would have been impractical to conduct interviews or focus groups because doing so would have limited the flexibility visitors had in entering the gallery at a time convenient to them.

Name of Piece:
In the piece in front of you, what do you think the artist was trying to say? What are the different sides of the conflict, and which side are you most likely to take?

Name of Piece:
If the piece in front of you represents different perspectives that are conflicting, how might this conflict be resolved? How do we move forward when we don't all agree?

Figure 005: Exhibition Survey Questions

3.3   CODING: Data Analysis

Once I had completed all my interviews, I transcribed the recorded data into text. Following Carl Auerbach and Louise Silverstein's (2003) framework for qualitative analysis, I then categorized repeating ideas into themes and connected different themes to form theoretical constructs. It is worth noting that while I did not conduct a member checking process due to time constraints, my analysis is shaped by my relationships and interactions with the (re)Imagining the NAS team and my previous experience working in neighbourhoods in Hamilton. The coding process I used was informed through narrative analysis, an approach that involves "structuring, interpretation, and recontextualization applied to human stories constructed by narrators who are situated in specific personal and social contexts of their lives." (Suzie Kim, 2011) This is appropriate because of my interview format where I encouraged participants to share and unpack stories of conflicts. In Chapter 4, I weave together this narrative analysis with secondary research to form key insights developed through this research.

3.4   Note on Research Relationships

I recruited participants for my interviews by reaching out to my networks in Hamilton. The (re)Imagining the NAS project began in August, 2016, in Hamilton, Ontario, to create a set of guiding principles with neighbourhoods involved in the city's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. I was involved in the first phase of the project as a researcher. In the second phase of this project, which began in August, 2017, three of my former co-workers continued the work to operationalize the conceptual framework that was developed during the first phase.

It is worth pausing here to reflect on my role as an outsider researcher on this project, interviewing and collecting data from participants who I have worked closely with before. My role in Phase One of the (re)Imagining project meant that I had insider knowledge on some of

58

the discussions and conflicts that arise within the NAS. This meant that I was already aware of some of the challenges of the Strategy, and aware of some of the stories that shape the perspective of some of my participants. This insider knowledge informed my analysis of my data (Gitlin, Peck, Aposhian, Hadley, & Porter, 2002). On the other hand, my research study and analysis was also shaped by my previously existing relationships with the (re)Imagining team. Conducting research with participants I have a close relationship to carries the risk of coercion or pressure to participate. My dual role as (former) co-worker and researcher, therefore, carried what researchers have called "ethical mindfulness;" an ongoing process of transparent dialogue to communicate concerns, choice, and consent (Fleet, Burton, Reeves, & DasGupta, 2016, p. 339). In some circumstances, this sense of ethical mindfulness meant that I was not able to use some of the information shared with me, because I knew that it was disclosed within the context of my pre-existing relationship of trust with my participant and the information could be traced back to identify the participant. Knowing that I would be approaching the (re)Imagining research team to participate in the study, I also attempted to practice ethical mindfulness by working closely with the team to shape this research. Opening up my study design to their feedback meant that they held a degree of control over the study that they would participate in. Following the ethical criteria guiding research done through my dual role, this meant that they were able to "ensure that the undertaking of any research…is both beneficial to [them] and consistent with the integrity of the research" (Fleet, Burton, Reeves, & DasGupta, 2016, p. 337). Ultimately, their close involvement with the design of this study made it a more robust and contextually appropriate research study.

3.5   Recruitment & Sample Size

Many different people are involved with the NAS. The NAS Steering Committee consists of individuals from the NAS's two funding partners: the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF). Community developers work in eleven NAS neighbourhoods to facilitate resident-led action, and residents have formed Neighbourhood Planning Teams to make their neighbourhoods better places to live, work, learn, and play. In my interviews, I recruited a mix of individuals from this network of people.

After consulting with the (re)Imagining the NAS team, I chose to use a participant-driven sampling approach to participant recruitment. Also known as respondent-driven sampling, this approach involves recruiting an initial wave of participants, who then become involved in recruiting a second wave of participants from their communities to take part in the study, and so on and so forth (Tiffany, 2006; Salganik et al., 2006). In my study, this involved recruiting my initial participants from the (re)Imagining the NAS team. The (re)Imagining team then helped me recruit by reaching out to other people in the NAS network: residents, funders, community developers and other professionals involved in the NAS work. In total, I was able to recruit eight participants to participate in interviews that lasted 1 – 2.5 hrs.

For the exhibition, I sent invitations to all my interview participants as well as to community members who are involved in the NAS work in some capacity or involved with participatory design processes. Since the exhibition was launched on the day of Hamilton's monthly Art Crawl, I was able to recruit additional residents to participate in the exhibition survey. In total, nine participants filled out a survey in response to the exhibition.

3.6   Limitations

This study was limited by several factors. First, the network of people and projects involved in Hamilton's neighbourhoods is more complex than is represented in my limited sample size. The focus of my research was to uncover some of the key challenges and conflicts around power, psychology, and participatory mindset. For this reason, I recruited participants from the each of the key "groupings": institutional staff, community developer team, residents, and (re)Imagining research team. However, this is representative of only some of the complexity. If time had not been a limiting factor, I might have recruited more participants, from more NAS neighbourhoods, to capture more of the nuanced politics and conflicts that influence NAS engagement.

Second, my participant sample reflects the diversity of people actively engaged in the NAS and connected to the (re)Imagining team. As research into Hamilton's neighbourhoods has indicated, while the NAS engages diverse communities, it is limited in its ability to engage newcomer communities and communities of lower socio-economic status (Pothier, 2016). However, as one of my interview participants reflected to me, "the NAS is like— it's a huge network of people who are – maybe I'll take a risk here, probably both knowingly and unknowingly involved… There are things that happen and changes that happen in neighbourhoods as a result of the NAS… that are just happening" (I6). A deeper study into the conflicts within the NAS might have engaged with more of these people who are "unknowingly" involved in the NAS, or people who have knowingly disengaged with the NAS.

Finally, although I have worked remotely with Hamilton's neighbourhoods for three years now, I am not an insider or a resident. There are complex nuances to consider when thinking about how the neighbourhoods were formed, where their boundaries are, which people are involved, what the demographics are, the language that is used, and much more. My limited

insight into these nuances means that some of my analysis comes from an outsider perspective.

Despite these limitations, I hope I have reflected the stories that were shared with me, with

respect, integrity, and care.

4.0 "The Fight For Voice": Unpacking Conflict, Participation, & Trauma in Interviews

"Like, there are people who've become disengaged from their community because of the NAS. There are people who have been harmed and broken by it. And those are terrible, terrible, terrible situations that have profound impacts on people's lives. But there are so many more stories of good than bad. And there's a lot more hope than pessimism." (I5)

Image 004: I engaged participants in a series of reflective and creative exercises to unpack and represent themes of conflict through artwork

4.1   Resident-Led: Structuring Accountability and Expertise

As I've mentioned in Chapter 2, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is grounded in an asset-based approach to community development, which seeks to provide an alternative to the needs or deficit-based approach to community development that has historically been common (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). In this alternative approach, community development begins with the assets, strengths and resources of the community in order to move towards revitalization. Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) suggest two reasons for this: first, they identify that successful community development requires local residents and institutions to be invested in the process, and second, it is unlikely that neighbourhoods facing challenges will receive significant outside funding, resources, and support that will change the realities of the community. They acknowledge that, "the hard truth is that development must start from within the community and, in most of our urban neighbourhoods, there is no other choice" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996, p. 25). Elsewhere, Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel, and Minkler (2018) also share the harm done when traditional research settings "ignore, discount, or erase the 'community evidence' and local knowledge necessary to create culturally effective and sustainable interventions" (p. 5). It is likely this commitment to valuing resident knowledge and resident assets that have labelled the Neighbourhood Action Strategy as a resident-led initiative. As far as buzzwords go, "resident-led" reflects the optimistic and participatory tone of contemporary development agendas, identified by Cornwall and Brock (2005). It is less clear, to all partners involved, what the meaning and the enforcing structure of "resident-led" is.

In particular, through all the different understandings of resident-led, it became clear that even when the language of the NAS valued resident input by calling it resident-led, the different stakeholders involved in the Strategy were not organizationally or structurally accountable to residents. As one participant shared with me:

> At the City, in terms of…this sort of um, asset-based, community-led decision making… didn't always – wasn't always well understood… [and the] value was not, uh, appreciated, um, amongst some of the management team… Sometimes, there was some conflict there in terms of you know, why would we be listening to residents? We take our marching orders from Council and from Senior Leadership, not from citizens. (I4)

As indicated by this participant, the large bureaucracy of government means that government staff have to report to many people, and because of the way these hierarchies are structured, residents are often the last to be prioritized. Another participant shared that even if government staff were able to prioritize resident input, they are not individually able to remain accountable:

> So [in] government, there's an expectation that, whatever a resident asks for, [government staff] should be able to provide…."through our taxes, we're paying your salary, so you should be doing what we need to do." On the other hand, [it's the] government, so [they're] not—as [staff], [they're] not the end decision maker – that's our Council. (I2)

At the level of Council, City Councillors are positioned to make decisions on behalf of residents, and are elected based on their ability to represent the interests of the majority of voters. However, the majority of voters are not the same as the majority of residents, and it is here that my interview participant identified a lack of accountability to residents, even within Council:

> Each politician has their own vision and goals for their neighbourhoods. Each politician listens to some, but not all, of resident input… what motivates them? For most cases, is to be re-elected next time, and to do that, they have to… be supportive of those with as many voices in that community. (I2)

What I am trying to assert here has to do with structure rather than intention. With the best intentions, government staff and City Councillors can commit to the ideals of resident-led community development. However, without the structures to enforce this, there is confusion and disillusionment among residents as to what they can expect a resident-led Strategy to entail. As one resident shared with me:

> One of the hardest things to overcome, especially when new people would come into um, the planning team, is the sense of well, has—has the Neighbourhood Action Strategy said this was okay? Or, is there funding for this? Or whatever. And then it's like— whoa, wait a second, if this is resident-led, it doesn't matter if the Neighbourhood Action Strategy—you know, if the HCF says it's okay or not, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if there's funding for it… Like, we could easily dig into our pockets and throw a little bit of money at it, and we would have the grant in five minutes, rather than going through a convoluted process for three hundred dollars. Right? Um, and… that's the kind of thing that I mean by resident-led, where we don't feel bound by the re—

> the outside resources and the outside perspective, but we see them as resources, as opposed to gatekeepers. (I6)

As this resident perspective clearly articulates, if the spirit of "resident-led" means that residents are able to mobilize their assets to create the kinds of neighbourhoods they want to live in, then the processes that residents must use to connect to the funding institutions are already a step in the opposite direction. Interestingly, in the interaction between all these messages, two different kinds of relationships between residents and government are articulated. The first relationship, articulated as "an expectation that, whatever a resident asks for, we should be able to provide [as government]" (I2), indicates a reliance on government, while the second relationship, articulated as, "we see them as resources, as opposed to gatekeepers" (I6) shifts the focus to residents taking leadership by mobilizing their assets.

I elaborate more on these two different forms of resident involvement and participation in the NAS later in this paper, but what is important in this conversation around "resident-led" is how the structures of different institutions might follow that leadership. As discussed above, the hierarchies of the municipal government make it difficult for government staff to recognize how residents mobilize assets, and then direct their government work towards building and supporting this kind of resident leadership. There are too many other stakeholders for government staff to report to. The Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF), however, as a major funding partner and a charitable organization outside of government, has the ability to work in more resident-centred ways. One of the ways HCF did this was by designing the *(re)Imagining the NAS* project to be more participatory and iterative. One interview participant shared:

> The challenge was that HCF had taken on the leadership of the (re)Imagine project, which is a review of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, and [the (re)Imagining project] had intentionally embarked on a highly iterative, highly participatory process that is very complex, um... but was reaching out to various communities and residents who had felt disenfranchised and disconnected from the process over the number of years. And in doing that work, [the (re)Imagining team] had built, or were starting to build, or rebuild, some of the trust between communities and institutions like the City doing the work. But it's messy. It's nebulous. Its timelines shift all the time. (I1)

66

In leading a review of the NAS through a process that was participatory and iterative, HCF attempted to rebuild trust with communities that might have previously felt like the NAS funders were "gatekeepers" to their work. The focus here, again, is not the success of this iterative process, but how the structures of HCF, in its funding role within the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, allowed for such a process to exist. I am limited in my ability to unpack the limitations of such an approach, as led by HCF. However, there is an important observation to make about how HCF's leadership in this project may have affected the network of relationships built within the NAS, and particularly HCF's relationship with the City of Hamilton. One interview participant shared:

> The other tension in all of that is that there aren't clearly identified kind of roles and responsibilities across the partners, so when [the City of Hamilton and HCF got] into the situation that [they] found [themselves] in… [they didn't] actually have anything to go back to, to help remind [them] of who's doing what and why and how, because those things have never actually been clearly broken down. Like in a partnership agreement or something. (I1)

This lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities contributed to a lack of understanding between funding partners and their shared work:

> We have this partnership that's built on trust, um, and yet, we can go through this period where we didn't know what we were doing… it was so challenging because there's so much accountability wrapped into supporting neighbourhoods, um, and we want to make sure that our partnership is as strong as it can be, to move through this next period of work together. (I1)

In attempting to value and build upon examples of resident leadership within the asset-based approach of the NAS, the organizational structure of HCF enables it to work in iterative and participatory ways that centre resident involvement. This is where the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the City limits it from 'following' or building upon resident leadership in the same way. However, it is significant to note the differences in how different stakeholders understand the term "resident-led" because these different understandings play a role in how the two funding partners work with residents and ultimately, work with each other, as noted by my interview participant.

Despite the natural limitations that structural hierarchies have on the municipal government's ability to be responsive to resident leadership, policy scholar Peter Somerville (2010) notes interesting relationships within the "multiscalarity" of governance. He indicates three different forms of governance: hierarchy, self-, and co-governance, and makes the case that while neighbourhood or resident leadership is incongruent with the hierarchical models of government, they nevertheless offer the only viable alternatives to government forces on a neighbourhood scale (Somerville, 2010). This is an interesting perspective because it offers a different understanding of resident leadership, in which residents participate, not to influence the governmental system but to offer alternatives to the City's governance model.

Bringing this back to our analysis of power, what Somerville is talking about is the personal power that residents have to engage, participate, and lead their neighbourhoods in alternative ways, without being restricted by the positional and systemic power that the City of Hamilton holds. While this may be aspirational, it is nevertheless significant to note that residents do not always feel that they have the personal power to participate in the NAS without the approval of City staff, and the City of Hamilton is limited by its hierarchical structure to manage its positional and systemic power in a way that encourages residents to participate wholly and creatively. Thus, while the structural hierarchies in government pose natural limitations, they still continue to suppress diverse perspectives through the positional and systemic power that the government holds.

4.2 Participatory Democracy: NAS as a Mini-Government, or something else entirely?

At the heart of the conversation about resident leadership in the NAS is a conversation about what it means to create a participatory democracy. The idea that the NAS is ultimately

about participatory democracy was shared with me multiple times, including when one

participant let me know that:

> The good, I think, in the sense of creating a new culture of community engagement at the City, a new ability to be able to listen and understand what people were saying… it really to me, gets to the heart of what participatory democracy should be. This is about our democracy as human beings, and how we engage in our governments and how governments collect and spend the money that we give them, to best suit the needs of the people who live in the community.. (I4)

Many of the interview participants who were affiliated with NAS institutions agreed that the NAS

was a vehicle for systems change. It offered an opportunity to shift the way governments

interact with citizens to meet their needs. However, what participatory democracy looks like in

practice seemed to differ across the participants I interviewed.

Speaking to the evolution and differing ideals of participatory democracy, sociologist

Francesca Polletta writes of the strategic dilemma that early activists and advocates of

participation faced: "the tension between preserving an alternative within one's own…network,

and modelling an alternative for a wider audience… [it's] the strategic dilemma of 'reaching out

or reaching in'" (Polletta, 2015, p. 87). In other words, participatory democracy could exist as an

alternative form of democracy for people who felt marginalized by the mainstream democratic

system, or it could be framed to be attractive to the mainstream democratic system, in order to

change it. In interviews, this dilemma revealed itself through participants' varying views and

experiences of how residents participated in democratic processes. On one hand, participatory

democracy seemed to imitate a resident-led mini government, with a similar kind of hierarchy.

On the other hand, participatory democracy could be part of something else entirely; an

alternative way of engaging with public life and neighbourhood decision-making that was less

reliant on government and more reliant on the tight bonds between neighbours.

Many of my participants did not favour the first way of looking at participatory

democracy. Convinced that "resident-led" meant less hierarchy and more of a grassroots

approach to community building, one participant suggested that in one planning team in

particular, "they kind of recreated a hierarchical system, very much like government… and not in line with what we were trying to achieve, I think, in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy" (I4). However, it is interesting to note how this form of participation was learned and recreated from experiences within the planning team. In this particular neighbourhood, a new Chair was elected, who "was all about consolidating power" (I4). Some members of the neighbourhood felt as though they had "moved from this consensus-based decision making inclusive body to a much more bureaucratic, top-down, 'whatever the executive says, goes'" (I4) model of operating. The new Chair was focused on a particular development project which had received thousands of dollars in funding, and it is significant to understand why this was the leader's focus. My participant shared:

> I also think [the Chair] had a very specific vision of what the neighbourhood should look like. It is an old…neighbourhood… and um, unfortunately the City in its wisdom, built a overpass right through the heart of it, um and so that's what basically impoverished that neighbourhood, right? Because nobody wants to live right next to an overpass. So um, [the Chair] really had a vision [for the development project]. (I4)

The Chair's past experiences with the government in this neighbourhood is an important one. Rather than dreaming of alternative ways of engaging in public life, this Chair seems to have accepted that the City had the power to ultimately change the face of the neighbourhood and daily life. Accordingly, the Chair's mission was to participate in democratic processes in order to use positional power to shape the City's agenda and actions. The Chair's exposure to public decision-making was through the City, and these municipal decision-making patterns were reflected in the Chair's practices within the NAS planning team. Indeed, it is worth noting that this too, is participatory democracy – the ability for residents to participate and influence change through the democratic mechanisms that exist.

To others, participatory democracy meant engaging in public life without relying on the government or other democratic institutions. Interestingly, this also existed in the NAS. One participant shared with me:

> We were, as a community group, um, really wrestling with our relationship with the [NAS institutions], um, [and so] we—we pulled together a group of people um, from the community group, to just have some open brainstorming time as to whether it would be possible even for us to go without um, the [NAS institutions], and without a hired community development worker or, should we create our own thing and hire our own community development worker? Are there other partnerships out there that we should be pursuing? Um, what did it mean—really we were looking at, what did it mean for this to be truly resident-led? And how can we structure ourselves to do that? (I6)

Instead of reaching out to NAS institutions and working within the system, these residents reached into their communities to search for ways to be resident-led, self-reliant, and effective at creating the change they wanted.

While it is worth understanding that different residents and institutional partners may have different visions and motives with regards to participatory democracy, it must still be said that the two different visions described above are not mutually exclusive. Whether or not residents feel the need to engage in the City's democratic processes, they nevertheless exist within the same ecosystem and influence each other. Another interview participant shared with me:

> I am motivated by systems change. And there's something really exciting for me, to think about, um, big institutions doing their work in different ways, and in a small way, how the Neighbourhood Action Strategy can inform the way that those institutions operate and work. And, I think it's important, absolutely, to have engaged and empowered, quote unquote, residents, um, but I also think more importantly almost, if you can have institutions that are able to change and shift their practice, to be more responsive, more curious, more creative, more transparent. I think that is a hallmark, of a really healthy society, and is the kind of society that I would want to live in. (I1)

This understanding of systems change as marking a difference in the way institutions go about their practice closes the loop on the second perspective of participatory democracy creating an alternative. Ultimately, residents seek to participate and contribute to their neighbourhoods in different ways. Regardless of which strategy they choose – working with the political system or working with neighbours to envision alternatives – the goal is to influence the way that the City makes decisions on behalf of residents, and what decisions are made. While these different strategies have created conflicts within planning teams because of their differing methods and objectives, they each play a role in moving towards participatory democracy, broadly defined.

71

What is most interesting in these interacting and conflicting conceptualizations of participatory democracy is how the conflicts are layered with different forms of power. In the first example of the Chair who wanted to influence the neighbourhood's development project, it is clear that the Chair took the positional power given to them, to suppress the perspectives of other people on the planning team. However, the Chair's life had previously changed drastically when the City used its positional power to build an overpass over the neighbourhood. While the Chair's systemic power (or model of leadership) aligned with the hierarchies of the City, it did not align with the model of leadership that was encouraged within the NAS, as explained by my interview participant. This meant that while this Chair enjoyed positional power, it was the lack of systemic power within the NAS that ultimately drove this person out of the planning team. As a different model, other residents chose to use their personal power to imagine alternatives to the NAS, feeling that their models of engagement were not aligned with the systemic models of engagement encouraged by the NAS.

4.3   Residents & Institutions: Navigating Power, Relationships, and Professionalism

As discussed above, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy was created on a foundation of asset-based community development and resident leadership. There was a strong understanding, across my participants, of the systemic and positional power that institutions, and people who work in institutions, have in neighbourhood work. Recognizing that resident involvement has often been tokenized in community development and in projects led by large institutions (Kubisch, Auspos, Taylor, & Dewar, 2013), interview participants often shared reflections of how power dynamics contributed to or exacerbated their experiences of conflicts. One participant, speaking from a funder's perspective, shared:

> The sort of the original framework around the neighbourhood strategy was developed by the funders– so it was developed by the City, and the Hamilton Community Foundation. When the SPRC came on, they also had a big part in that as well, um but it wasn't formed within the

neighbourhood. So the work that happened through (re)Imagine five years into the Strategy, might have— had it been at the beginning— helped with this issue. But it also might have meant that the Strategy never got off the ground. I don't know the answer. I don't know if there is one. There's gotta be a balance somewhere there. (I4)

Despite recognizing that institutions carried most of the power even early in the NAS, this interview participant explains the resistance to creating shared NAS objectives and values with residents from the very beginning. Considering government timelines where 'quick wins' are needed to validate the use of taxpayer dollars, the early years of the NAS needed to move quickly, according to this participant. Working through a more deliberate process of creating shared values could have compromised the participation of municipal government, and it is this delicate balance that characterizes the network of relationships and power in the NAS. In other words, the NAS is able to operate in the way that it does because it was formed in partnership with the highest institution of positional and systemic power – the City of Hamilton. In order to retain that connection to power, NAS partners maintain a delicate balance in which they seek resident input within the parameters and deadlines required by the City. This has meant that the City retains its positional and systemic power. Some of the challenges that the NAS currently face are in their attempt to balance this power by centring resident voices (personal power), even as they continue to operate within hierarchical structures (retaining positional and systemic power).

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What makes the relationships within the NAS more complex is that power does not operate solely on the resident – institution "positional" axis. Rather, the values and framework that NAS funders decided upon in the early days, albeit without resident input, were designed to practice anti-oppressive ideals. In anti-oppressive practice, power and oppression are explicitly explored in recognition of the social and political structures that have historically and systematically privileged certain groups over others (Baines & Edwards, 2015). This means that

the NAS has committed to identifying and reversing issues of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization on the basis of race, sex, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability, among others, and disrupting the structures of systemic oppressive power. This becomes a complex dynamic when funders use their positional power to push back against oppressive practices that they identify in resident planning teams, as was the case in at least one neighbourhood:

> They weren't a welcoming space… there were some issues around um, values as well that played into it to. So there was certainly a gender issue, um, that the people in power were—were male, were—were again, old white males who'd been there forever… I'd go so far as to say there was certainly some misogyny there, which… the SPRC, and rightfully so, pushed back against. (I4)

As the interview participant identified, when the values of the funders did not match the values of the residents involved, it was the funders' money to take away, but they did so in the spirit of using their positional power to reverse systemically oppressive practices. "Can funders support resident-led, when resident-led is racist and misogynistic?," (I4), my participant asked.

Racism has been identified and called out in multiple cases throughout the NAS, and Hamilton researchers have identified that the Strategy struggles to engage meaningful participation from racialized and low-income residents (Pothier, 2016). I will address issues of race and racism in planning teams later in this paper, but what I am most interested in here is the complex interplay between privilege and systemic power that shapes the interactions between institutions and certain groups of residents. Another interview participant, speaking from the government perspective, shared:

> A long-term resident… said, "I've lived in Hamilton for – I think it's almost fifty years – I've been through the good, and the bad, I've been employed in the steel factory, um… I've lost my job in the steel factory, I've had to find other work, and now with—" over the past couple of years, Hamilton has been a welcoming city to newcomers. And the newcomers that have come to this city— uh, he felt frustrated because they were getting greater attention than residents who've lived here a long time, and haven't received the same attention. (I2)

What this resident's perspective reminds us of is that privilege is complex. Research has shown that "neutrality" in the face of oppressive situations including racism is a false claim; institutions

that do not actively oppose oppressive practices ultimately support their continuation (Baines & Edwards, 2015). Yet, the positional power differential between institutions and all residents, explored above, remains. The language of power, oppression, and privilege become difficult to understand, particularly when residents who have certain experiences of marginalization feel less heard by institutions than other residents with different experiences of marginalization.

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Further complicating these relationships between different groups of residents and institutions are the dynamics that arise when people take on different 'roles'. As we see in the NAS, roles can be defined by an employment contract, as is the case with institutional staff, or they can be positions that residents are elected into and volunteer to fill. Each of these roles are attached to certain "expected behaviours and responsibilities," and they "define and regulate the behaviour of those who occupy them" (Sampson & Marthas, 1990, p. 55). Interestingly, as one interview participant shared with me, people bring their own perceptions to their roles, which may not always match the expectations or perceptions of other people. Speaking about a planning team that was comprised predominantly of Caucasian men who planned events for a racially diverse neighbourhood, this participant shared:

> In some ways, they felt very philanthropic, I think, that they actually were able to access these small grants and create these events that they felt were of benefit to the neighbourhood. In terms of them being really true community engagement type events and activities, they weren't because they actually almost became like a service provider. So they ran the barbeques… *for* the neighbourhood, instead of having the neighbourhood come and create these things together. They became sort of the service providers that again, didn't consult with the neighbourhood, and just went in and then ran all these things *for* the people of the neighbourhood. (I4)

While funders may have expected planning teams to be comprised of 'residents,' acting within a role of 'resident,' it is interesting to note how the planning team members in this neighbourhood sought to expand that category and perceived their roles on the planning team to be different from the one they occupied in their day-to-day lives.

<p style="text-align:center">75</p>

This is particularly interesting when compared to a perspective shared by a resident interview participant, who said:

> And that's where a lot of our service providers, um, yeah I wonder sometimes if they're exacerbating the problems because they're doing things in a – in a service provider-client relationship. And that works if there's a strong fabric of personal relationship, and then maybe there's some who aren't connected in that fabric—they're falling through the cracks so there's a service provided, but that service provided needs to be a means of making space for people to get woven back into the fabric. Right? And most of our service providers don't think that way. (I6)

Similar to the issue with role perception above, this resident participant felt the need for people to be connecting as people in authentic relationships rather than to be connecting solely through a mechanism of transactional services. On one hand, it is worth noting that people always carry multiple roles, and that there are expectations of professional boundaries that accompany certain roles, which I will explore more below. On the other hand, however, this "fabric of personal relationship" reflects the values of resident-centred community building, in which personal relationships are central because community building is personal for residents (Kubisch, Auspos, Taylor, & Dewar, 2013). This balance between personal and professional, and the sometimes conflicting expectations attached to different roles, adds another layer of complexity to the tangled network of relationships in the NAS.

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Two of my interview participants reflected that the roles that they occupy limit them in their ability to express authentic emotions. This tension is explored in social work literature, which acknowledges that while emotions are a central part of relationship-based work and are too often marginalized in the profession, they must be managed "within a wider context of processes, statutory responsibilities, professional knowledge and power" (Ingram, 2013, p. 17). The power dynamic established between social workers or service providers and their clients is a specific one, in which the professional has the responsibility of managing their own emotions in the best interest of the client. A level of self-awareness and self-regulation is a requirement of the position and the power it holds. However, this is where the different roles and the

misunderstandings around power distribution in the NAS reach another tension. As one

participant from an institution shared with me:

> I saw them as residents/clients, and that's viewing them in a specific way. I would never fight with a client or… I wouldn't feel comfortable being as open with a client and having that back and forth that is necessary to this work. But, if we view them as partners, then you can have that back and forth. And the thing is that they're both. If the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is about working with marginalized populations, you're going to need to see them as clients in some ways, but partners in other ways. And so the Neighbourhood Action Strategy is this mismatch of different roles and different hats that people— everybody has more than one hat in that sense, so how do you tease out that complexity and work in that way? (I3)

The lack of clarity in whether institutional partners should work with residents as partners or as

clients affects interactions within the NAS. It is also an indication of the lack of clarity around

'shared power' within the NAS. Even if residents were to be treated as partners, there is no

accountability built in to give them positional power, which means there must be some

recognition of their personal power. However, that recognition of mutual power is not actualized

within the relationships between institutions and residents, who have a long and difficult history.

Reflecting on how the high levels of mistrust between residents and institutions affected their

ability to move forward with the work, my interview participant shared the difficulties of

connecting with residents in an authentic way:

> If I was being real…yesterday… I would have said, I feel really overwhelmed by this… because I want to believe that what we're doing… is going to be positive for you guys in the end, like I really, really, truly want to believe that. But listening to you be negative makes me feel hopeless. Could I say that to them? I don't know, I felt like I couldn't. (I3)

In navigating the boundaries between the multiple roles that someone working for an NAS

institution must play, it is possible that this "mismatch of different roles and different hats"

creates further confusion around how power is distributed (are residents partners or clients?);

and the spirit of asset-based community building (can institutional partners form authentic

personal relationships with residents?). Furthermore, as I will explore in a bit, repressed

emotions can also contribute to fractured relationships, as different stakeholders are unable to

recognize the full human complexity of their partners (Ingram, 2013).

Before I explore those fractured relationships, however, it is interesting to note that even residents, as they take on more of a mediation role in their neighbourhoods, gravitate towards repressing their own feelings. One interview participant, speaking from a resident perspective, told me:

> I… have never felt like I'm actually a participant in my neighbourhood. In the same way as everybody else. I feel like I'm an outsider, and I just watch everything that happens and when there's something that I feel like I might be able to contribute to, like, I jump in there. But I don't get involved in those conflicts and debates in the active passionate like, I'm one of the people fighting, kinds of ways, right?...the way I was helping, generally, when conflicts arose in the neighbourhood, is by being somebody that anybody could talk to. And so, as soon as I like, put something down, like, my fear was that if I were to like, really engage, like, I would lose…that ability to more quietly connect with people, right? (I5)

Again, residents continue to take on roles that either expand or fall outside of the category of "resident." In these different roles, residents also must manage the power and knowledge that they hold in the neighbourhood, and the responsibilities they feel they have to their communities. It is worth noting that these roles and responsibilities can effectively diminish a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood, as expressed by this participant. However, they also illustrate the personal power that residents can embody and utilize, even without a formalized position. It was this resident's sense of responsibility to their neighbourhood, without any formal recognition of that responsibility, which contributed to their personal power.

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The last idea I want to explore in this theme of power, professionalism, and relationships is the role that repressed emotions can have in perpetuating a detachment of institutional partners from their humanity, thereby fracturing relationships. The same interview participant who spoke about the mistrust between residents and institutions, reflected on the cycle of vulnerability and recognition of humanity:

> Like if [they were] able to see me as a person, I think I could be vulnerable with [them]. But I think [they see] me as part of the institution. And it's like that chicken and the egg thing, because if I could be open with [them], then [they] would see me as a person. But I feel like I – [they have] to see me as a person first, before I could be open with [them]. (I3)

78

What is strikes me as interesting is the relationship between being able to "see" or "recognize" one as a person, and the expression of intense emotions. Another interview participant shared that the most intense conflict in memory was "this period where we didn't know what we were doing, and we couldn't even recognize our partner anymore" (I1). A third institution-based interview participant noted the misguided perceptions people had:

> I don't feel like I have as much power as people think I do…I walk into a room sometimes, and the discussion changes. The way people will speak to each other, the way they speak to me, changes from when I'm not in a room. I find that really odd…It doesn't bother me when people draw me into conflict. (I2)

What is significant about these statements is that in each of these cases, these institutional partners were not drawn into conflicts where emotions could be explored. Their power became restricted to their positions, but as they have each expressed, they felt a lack of power when they were in contexts that were more personal. Meetings with residents are fuelled by passions – and personal power – that these institutional participants did not feel they could hold. As a result, the conflicts remain under the surface, and there is perhaps a missed opportunity to explore a deeper understanding of the agonistic commitments that different stakeholders hold within their neighbourhoods.

4.4   Conflict Resolution: Choosing Between Disengagement and Deeper Engagement

I focused this study on experiences of conflict within the Neighbourhood Action Strategy because of the perspective brought forth by agonistic pluralism: that the potential for conflict exists at all times between diverse groups of people, and that in addressing conflicts (rather than suppressing them), we may pluralize hegemonic thought (Mouffe, 1999). Mouffe and her contemporaries pay attention to the dynamic nature of political thought, agreement, and discord, but what was most significant in my interviews was how often conflict led to a disengagement from neighbourhood collaboration.

The popular discourse around collaboration is that it leads to better results. However, equally important to discuss is the importance of agency and choice within collaborative settings, particularly when conflicts arise. In his book, *Collaborating with the Enemy*, Adam Kahane (2017) outlines four ways of responding to conflicts: collaborating, forcing, adapting, or exiting. When faced with a problematic situation, he writes, we need to decide on two things: whether or not we have the power to change the circumstances, and whether or not we can continue to operate in the circumstances as we find them. If we decide we can change the circumstance by ourselves, no collaboration is technically required – we have the power to force change. If we can't change the circumstances, and can't bear the situation as it is, we have the option of exiting the group entirely. If we can't change the circumstances, but are willing to continue on in the problematic situation, we adapt our expectations or our roles in order to make the situation more bearable. It is only when we decide that we can change the situation, but need to work with other people in order to do so, that we collaborate (Kahane, 2017). Put a different way, one interview participant identified how a conflict within a planning team led to different responses from different team members:

> When conflict hits, um, significant differences especially in values – either we end up pulling back to a more superficial level of collaboration, or even disengaging completely, or it takes us to a much—much deeper um, respect for each other, and engagement and yeah deeper level of engagement. (I6)

Translated into Kahane's categories, this participant acknowledges that conflict can drive group members to disengage (or exit); change their expectations to model a superficial level of engagement (or adapt); or commit to working through the conflict to achieve a deeper level of engagement (collaboration). Forcing, in this participant's assessment of the neighbourhood, was not an option anyone considered.

The first step in the face of conflict, however, is making a choice. In the words of my interview participant:

To go further, there has to be that commitment to stick with it… but you can't make that commitment to everybody, right? At one point I chose to stay involved in [one neighbourhood/hub], and not be involved in [another neighbourhood]. Um, cause there's – I've only got so much of me to go around, and, and so many conflicts I'm willing to actually get into. (I6)

In my conversations with interview participants, both residents and institutional partners reflected situations in which people disengaged, and other people committed to a deeper level of collaboration. Another participant shared:

I think… the long standing relationship that we've had together… has actually helped us to move through— continue to move through [the conflict] now, because we have such a long standing history of working together, um, that there is that historical commitment to each other, that we are both, like, committed to rolling up our sleeves, and um, getting through it together. (I1)

Years of collaboration meant that both partners were committed to working through the conflict to gain a deeper understanding of each other, in order to create a strong partnership. In another conflict within a planning team, however, the conflicted had escalated to the point where an outside facilitator had come in to help team members work through the issue. Unfortunately, this was a situation that was more complex than the facilitator was able to understand, and by "the second time we met, the two sort of, like, two people left. Like, 'I'm out, I'm not pursuing this moderation next time.' More, and eventually it was nothing" (I5). It is worth mentioning that exiting a group or a conflict is not always permanent. As I will discuss in a bit, the people who left eventually began to reconnect with each other one on one, in less formal and structured ways, to find paths to resolution. However, the critical piece to our understanding of inclusive democratic participation is that conflict alone does not disrupt power structures and make multiple, diverse voices heard. Without a keen understanding, compassion for, and tools to navigate the conscious or unconscious psychological aspects of conflicts, there is actually a greater risk of complete disengagement, which serves once again to suppress diverse perspectives.

Part of the challenge of the conflict mediation session that was brought in, however, requires a deeper discussion of the conflict and identity politics, and their effect on the mediation. Having had some conflicts rooted in decisions being made for their community without their input, this particular neighbourhood hub had been meeting regularly to discuss the future of their planning team. As the diverse group of residents grew closer and closer together in order to move these ideas forward, they began to realize that different people had different visions for the hub – their interests were not all aligned. It was around this time, as they were trying to work through this, that one person spoke up and said that she did not feel like she was being listened to or respected, on account of her identity:

> She finally just like put it all on the table. And she said really clearly that she had felt disrespected through the process. She had felt not listened to, and she felt that that had to do with her being a woman, being a single mom, being of a particular—being of a, you know, uh, I guess what we'd call a lower economic position, um, you know, not doing yeah. Um… and also being part Native. And so she felt that all of those—all of those factors had meant that she wasn't being paid attention to and respected in the meeting. (I6)

At around the same time, events were being offered in the neighbourhood that specifically targeted people of colour (POCs), sparking lively debates on racism and reverse racism. Both these incidents ignited a conversation on racism and oppression that, for many people in the hub, called into question their sense of identity and social position in the group.

> There were several people in the meeting who felt like – that's just not a fair criticism. They felt like they had been listening really carefully, and – and that there was room for her input, um, yeah and they felt like they were being labelled as racist or sexist or whatever, right? And so the walls came up pretty strong. (I6)

The conflicts escalated to the point where they called in an outside conflict mediator. However, the process of selecting a mediator came with its own set of challenges.

There were two sides to the conflict mediation debate. On one hand, as one interview participant expressed:

> You can't have somebody with a history of this in Hamilton, come in and moderate this. You've got people who are so angry, and if you bring in somebody that somebody has a past working relationship – good or bad – somebody around that table is going to feel alienated and excluded. (I5)

On the other hand, the same participant reflected on how others felt that there was no truth to the "neutrality" claim of an outside facilitator. The mediator, they felt, needed to be someone who they could trust, and who understood the dynamics of anti-oppressive practice and the intersections of race and class. My interview participant recollected one community member saying, "suggesting we get somebody else…is just accommodating like, the other people who would want a white moderator from a higher socio-economic class" (I5) which the community member felt was not a neutral outside perspective, but rather, a very specific way of looking at the world and at conflict mediation. At the heart of the conflict is an issue of systemic power; one person feeling silenced because the form of communication and engagement style in the neighbourhood was not easily accessible or familiar. The issue with bringing in a mediator who came from a particular place of systemic power, therefore, might only exacerbate the situation because it could suppress the perspectives of people with less access to that systemic power.

While conflict mediation facilitated by someone with an outsider perspective is one approach, there are other models of mediation that align with the community member's analysis of power in choosing a mediator. This acknowledgement that mediators are not neutral and outside knowledge is not expert knowledge is a core element of intergroup dialogue (IGD), where an explicit effort is made to balance power, create an understanding of the realities of privilege and oppression, and invite community members to act as co-facilitators in the process, giving them positional power (Lensen, Chesler, & Brown, 2012). IGD may not be equivalent to conflict resolution practices because of its focus on forming lasting relationships rather than resolving the problem. However, what is interesting about IGD is that it models some of the anti-oppressive practices that form the core of the argument in the neighbourhood planning team. Actively examining power and privilege, IGD emphasizes "mutual responsibility and vulnerability of all parties" and creates spaces that are equally representative of the different

83

sides of the conflict (Lensen, Chesler, & Brown, 2012, p. 422). Lensen, Chesler, and Brown

used IGD in a large U.S. city to facilitate dialogue between racialized communities and police

around racial profiling, offering an case study of how IGD may successful facilitate

conversations around race.

Returning to the planning team, however, the conflict mediation workshops in this hub

were not received well. This could have been due to a wide range of factors, including the

relationships that residents had with institutions and formalized processes, a need for more time

to reflect, process, and commit to entering into a formal conflict resolution process, or a lack of

clarity on the part of residents and the mediator on what the conflict was actually about. What I

find interesting is that the stories my participants shared with me about this hub reflect a certain

spirit of resident initiative (and personal power) that was not always reflected in the formal

processes of the NAS. It follows that while the formal conflict mediation did little to mend

fractured relationships, hub members began to:

> connect with each other. And… I think, I think everybody except for one person managed to rebuild a – a new way of relating with each other. Somewhat based on the old, but there's a new level to it. Um, for some of them probably some distance there. More distance from before. And for others, a- a greater closeness… rather than getting us all together and trying to figure out who we as a group are, they've been able to reconnect in different ways with the one-on-one piece of it, kinda rebuild that – that web again, as opposed to the amoeba. (I6)

My interview participant reflected that what moved many of them to re-connect with each other

and commit to find a way through the conflict was "a care for the person, and a care for what

we've been trying to accomplish together…and an awareness that we're not going to get

anywhere…if we're not understanding each other better" (I6). While I do not want to suggest

that formal conflict mediation processes and facilitators are not required, it is significant that this

community was able to find a way to process their conflict in an informal way, starting at the

level of individual relationships, as is the core principle of asset-based community development

and resident-centred community building (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Kubisch, Auspos,

Taylor, & Dewar, 2013). In the middle of all the conflict, my participant shared one last

takeaway from the experience:

> One of the women who reacted the most strongly and felt—felt—probably the most hurt by those accusations, is also part Native. And um, - and – and yeah, for her, it almost caused her to completely disengage. Like, she was just really, really hurt. But, she and this other woman, got together at some point and talked it through more. And they – they managed to find some significant common ground and then ended up collaborating together, for an extended period of time in leading uh, the—the planning team through its next phase. And um, and even though they still have significant differences, from what I've been able to see, they've – they have a stronger friendship than ever before, and um, stay connected about a whole bunch of stuff, and encourage each other in where they're going. And – and for a while, they actually were the key people leading the planning team through probably the most difficult time that the planning team has had. So I've—I've seen how it is – it is possible for people in the midst of conflict to um, kind of st—take a step back, and try to really understand the person rather than defend themselves in the midst of it, um, and I think move towards forgiveness. (I6)

In other words, power is not static but dynamic. Despite both women feeling a lack of power at

certain points in the conflict, they were able to use their personal power to connect with each

other and move through it.

4.5   "Beyond Balloons and BBQ Smoke": Trust & Having the "Tough Conversations"

In 2015, following a gun fight on the streets, City Councillor Matthew Green made a

public promise to residents to "not walk away from the tough conversations that we have in this

ward" and declared, "this is not about balloons and barbeque smoke, this is about organizing

street to street, door to door, neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This is about taking back OUR

community" (Green, qtd in Calverley, 2015). Inspired by the message that residents should be

working towards the bigger things, like public safety, soon became a conversation piece at

planning team meetings. The phrase "beyond balloons and barbeque smoke" became a way to

speak about neighbourhood organizations as spaces to mobilize around tough conversations

instead of relationships and fun.

One participant shared the story of how this call to action was taken up in the

neighbourhood hub, noting that, "suddenly there starts to be conversation about how radical and

progressive is the planning team? Like, to what extent are we actually addressing the big

issues?" (I5). In attempting to address the big issues, some residents began to work on housing

and homelessness issues in their neighbourhood. This is when things started to get

complicated. Residents were questioned about their intentions when they, as homeowners who

rented out parts of their homes, were "actively challenging somebody who bought a property

across the street… and was converting it into apartments" (I5). While my interview participant

was quick to note how hurtful this situation was, and that people are far too complex to be boxed

into categories like "homeowner," other people in the planning team who came from a lower

socio-economic status began to make assert that this group that had formed around

homelessness was just a way to make people feel better about themselves. Meanwhile, those

who had taken up the cause of addressing these bigger issues were upset by the accusations:

> People got hurt when they were trying to do what they felt was right, and they were told that what
> they were doing was exactly counterproductive to the goal that they were trying to achieve.
> …Um, people were offended by being dismissed – by having their comments dismissed because
> they made more money, right?

The accusations did not go away, and the planning team had the larger conversations on power,

oppression, and racism that I spoke about earlier.

Complicating the situation was the fact that people have different reasons for attending

planning team meetings, and also make different commitments to conflict resolution. On one

hand, "people who were like, actively hurting in that moment…were offended [when] they

were… asked to park their feelings and to wait... there was almost like this pretending that

everything was okay" (I5). These residents felt an urgency to delve deeper into the issues and

conflicts and to be heard. On the other hand:

> When people come to a community meeting, especially you know, the first few times they're
> there, they're not coming to enter into deep relationships with everybody else in the room.
> They're coming cause there's something that bugs them about what's going on or something they
> want to see happen and they wanna find some people who can work on it together. They're not
> looking for soulmates, right? And so if you're trying to work at this deeper level, right, of—of

> vulnerability and mutual understanding and you've got somebody coming in cause they want to get something done – how do you facilitate that conversation? (I6)

The worry among some residents seemed to be that by creating this space of critical and vulnerable conversation about complex issues, they were actually pushing away or disengaging new residents who were attending planning team meetings for the first time. However, the conversation about each resident's personal role and relationship to complex challenging issues is part of the commitment to address the tough issues. My interview participant reflected on how these tough conversations became:

> the beginning of like, the destructive process that has totally destroyed like, the old structure in [the hub]… I think we're trying to build up a non-issue problem-based group [now] that focuses on fun. Instead of challenging issues.

The evolution of how these difficult conversations ended in a conflict that ultimately pushed members away from talking about complex issues, would appear to be a missed opportunity to engage in serious issues in the city and to move "beyond balloons and barbeque smoke." However, the literature on resident-centred community building challenges the very binary that seems to have been created. Kubisch, Auspos, Taylor, and Dewar (2013) identify that relationships are at the heart of this kind of community building, particularly between 1) residents with other residents, 2) residents and neighbourhood institutions, and 3) residents and community change agents. They assert that only once these relationships of trust have been formed, there may be movement towards collective action on community issues. However, they caution that patience is required. While the city has many complex challenges and there is a strong desire among residents and institutions to mobilize around those challenges, and "people have multiple motives for most things they do. People might engage in community-building activities because their friends do it and it's fun, or because there's a problem that needs solving" (Kubisch, Auspos, Taylor, & Dewar, 2013, p. 62). Time is required in order to build

relationships and organize around a cause. That said, the authors point out that in resident-centred community building, forging new relationships is an indicator of success in itself.

This spirit of relationship-building being central to tackling the larger issues is reflected in the thoughts of my interview participant, who shared:

> In the end it comes down to relationships, right? We can have all the systems, and all the plans and everything. Ultimately, it's—it's relationships, are we able to relate to each other, and there's um, you know the Neighbourhood Action Strategy was initially developed because of issues of poverty… at the core of poverty are broken relationships. It's broken relationships with ourselves, with others, with the systems, and with our environment, right? And uh, with the powers. And so – and so if those relationships are fractured, or warped, it doesn't matter how good the plan is, you're not gonna get it to work well… Now since [a conflict in a different hub], um, there's been a lot of turnover, and um, a good number of the people that have stayed…get it in terms of the – 'let's build a relational fabric'. And so some of them in particular, what they're doing is… they're starting on their street. Right? And they're—neighbour to neighbour. Can—can we do a little barbecue party? (I6)

Despite the sense that barbeques and neighbourhood gatherings do not help address larger concerns of safety, homelessness, and racism, the literature on resident-centred community building supports the views and experiences of my interview participants, who were only able to begin having productive conversations on race, power, and oppression when they had built strong relationships of trust and mutual enjoyment. Furthermore, while building relationships of trust through the different dynamics of power does not immediately address the 'bigger issues,' it arguably does something far more foundational. Building these relationships, instilling a sense of personal power, and creating trust between individuals begins to disrupt some of the power structures that have long fuelled the mistrust between residents and institutions. It is this relational work that ultimately advances inclusive democratic participation, moving us towards a truer sense of living in a democracy.

5.0 "Neighbours Bicker": An Artistic Exploration of Conflicts in Neighbourhood Collaboration

"In reflecting on "conflict," in light of your exhibition, it seems to me that what counts isn't necessarily whether we disagree (find ourselves in conflict) or agree with one another. What counts is the basis for our agreement or disagreement. For example, has the conflict risen between us because you want to uphold the values of community (democracy, freedom, equality, autonomy) and my practices conflict with those values? Is conflict, in this case, not a sign of a good will? No doubt, our agreement could also be the result of our mutual ill-will. So what counts, to repeat, isn't whether we agree or disagree but the nature of the agreement or disagreement." (Exhibition Participant)

Image 005: Exhibition Designed for Conversations around Art Pieces, **Photo by Aimee Burnett**

While the interviews revealed insights into the complex interactions of different participatory models within the NAS, the survey responses from the exhibition revealed important themes around reconciling differences within collaborative processes. In this section, I analyze the two themes that emerged around 1) flexible processes and 2) understanding different perspectives, in response to how diverse stakeholders might continue to collaborate through conflict. Then, after a photo gallery of the artwork that was displayed at the exhibition, I share some final thoughts around the use of arts-based research methods as a tool to facilitate flexibility and understanding in the process.

4.1   EXHIBITION FINDINGS

From the responses received during the exhibition, two key themes emerged: 1) the tension between rigid structures and flexible processes, and 2) the recognition of multiple perspectives in a conflict and the need for understanding between different perspectives.

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Structure versus Flexibility

Interestingly, the idea of rigid structures within the NAS was connected to concepts of humanity. One respondent suggested that the "NAS removed the 'neighbourliness' for original group of people – to a more formal structure," hinting that the structure itself removed the sense of informal camaraderie that exists between neighbours. Another respondent commented on a different piece (piece 5) to say:

> The use of numbers and grades makes me think about being 'just a number' in a process (and not a person) and being assessed or judged as part of the neighbourhood process. Yet the last few pages reflect connections and a more personal entry. Perhaps the artist found (or expected) the NAS process to be very impersonal and rigid, but over time the process evolved to become more personal and flexible.

Again, the idea that the structure of using numbers and grades reduces the humanity from people is juxtaposed with the alternative of a flexible, more personable process that is flexible to residents' needs.

As a way to move forward from the conflicts depicted in the art pieces, two suggestions were made. First, it was suggested that the NAS "return to a more 'grassroots' engagement" and detach itself from the formal structures that exist today. Another participant suggested:

> Resolution means taking the time to hear multiple perspectives; re-thinking or evolving one's own ideas and perhaps not aspiring to all 'agree' but aspiring to better understand each others' experiences and perspectives on what is important about a neighbourhood. Moving forward requires time, space, willingness to share and listen and learn, and ultimately flexibility of the process.

Again, it is suggested that to understand the people we are working (or arguing) with, we need flexible processes.

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Understanding Different Perspectives

The second theme that was prevalent throughout the responses was the need to understand and respect all the different perspectives in the conflict. In particular, many respondents illustrated the interconnections they saw between perspectives, writing, "I think the artist is trying to say how complex conflict is and how many different people/groups are involved and how interconnected they all are," and "I also think that although the "asterisks" are conflicting, they are all interconnected somehow, as represented by the lines and the broader "grid" surrounding them all." This recognition that we are all connected and share space, despite our differences, indicated to respondents that there was a need to understand each other. Significantly, one respondent felt that the way forward, also, was interconnected, writing:

> This piece looks like many very different sides of a conflict vying for power/one goal. The words attached to the piece suggest that they all have to exist in equilibrium for a viable solution. It doesn't seem like one side should 'win' per se. The only outcome is a solution involving all the parts. How we move forward when we don't agree, I'm not sure. I suppose the first step in agreeing that no one side has the answer independent of the other side. It's recognizing a new solution is required and then working to figure out what that may be.

<div align="center">91</div>

The flow between interconnected conflicts to interconnected solutions is interesting because it is not entirely synonymous with reaching consensus. The respondent does not explicitly say that everyone must agree with the solution; only that the solution involves all stakeholders, affects all stakeholders, and has the potential to benefit all stakeholders. This is significant, because as the literature on agonistic pluralism has shown, consensus-building processes often exert power in order to convert people to side with the hegemonic perspective. In this response, however, it is not consensus that matters, but rather, the recognition that we are all affected by the problem and should benefit from any attempts at a solution.

<div align="center">***</div>

While the main themes from exhibition responses were outlined above, one final comment is significant. In searching for a solution to move forward through differing perspectives, one respondent reflected:

> How do we move forward? Maybe we can't. Maybe everybody, each side, is clear about their needs/wants, and they need to decide if the shared purpose… aligns with their wants/needs. They'll have closure because they stated what they needed (they put it all on the table), even if they walk away.

It is significant to note that this suggests that it is not always necessary for everyone to move forward together, in the same direction. However, what is particularly important in this statement is the need for closure – the sense that the partnership or collaborative experience has ended for a reason, without any lingering feelings or doubts as to whether the collaboration could have continued. In conflicts where we are not able to move forward together, perhaps closure is the least we can hope to expect.

4.2   PHOTO GALLERY: Exhibition of Participant Artwork

Image 006: Art Piece #1, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett
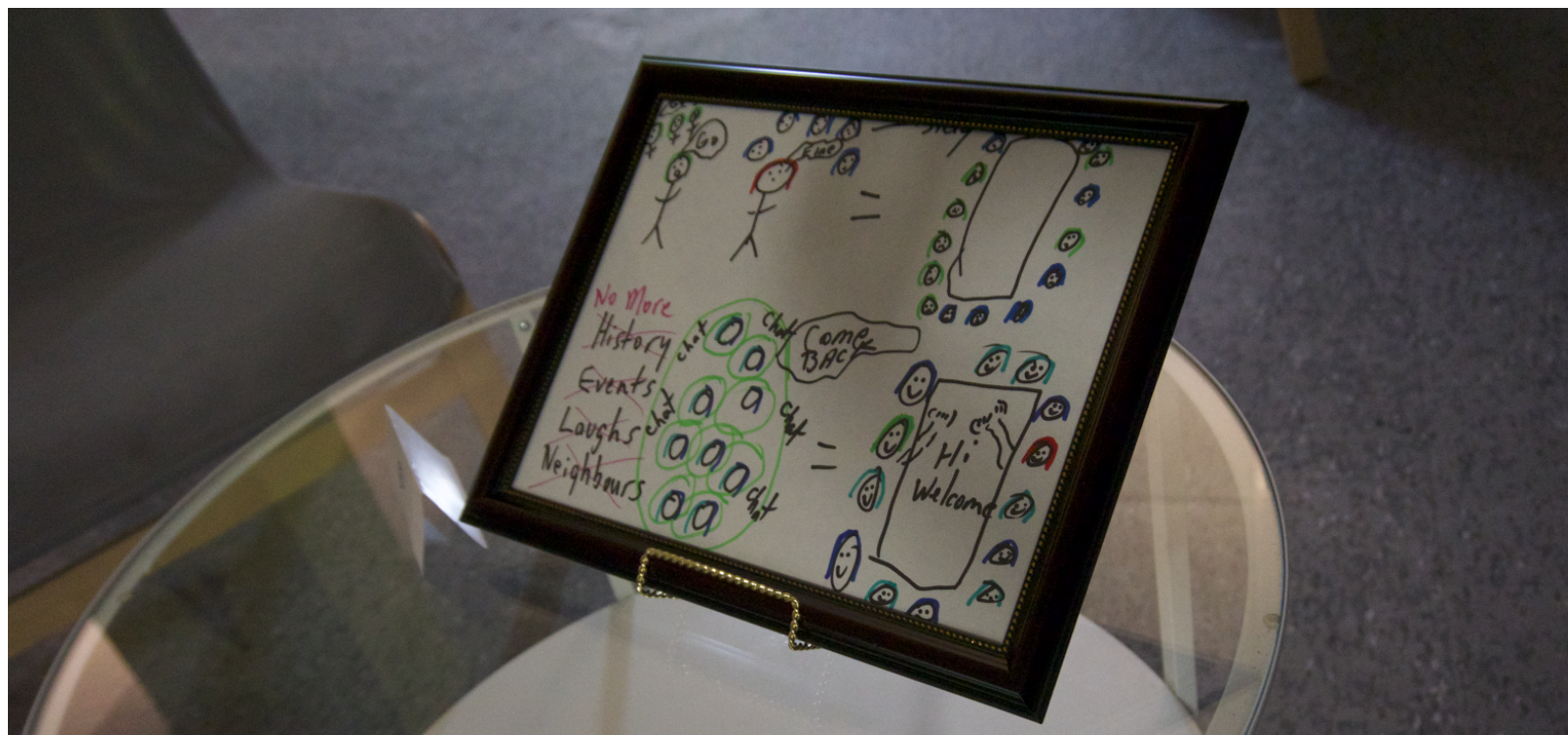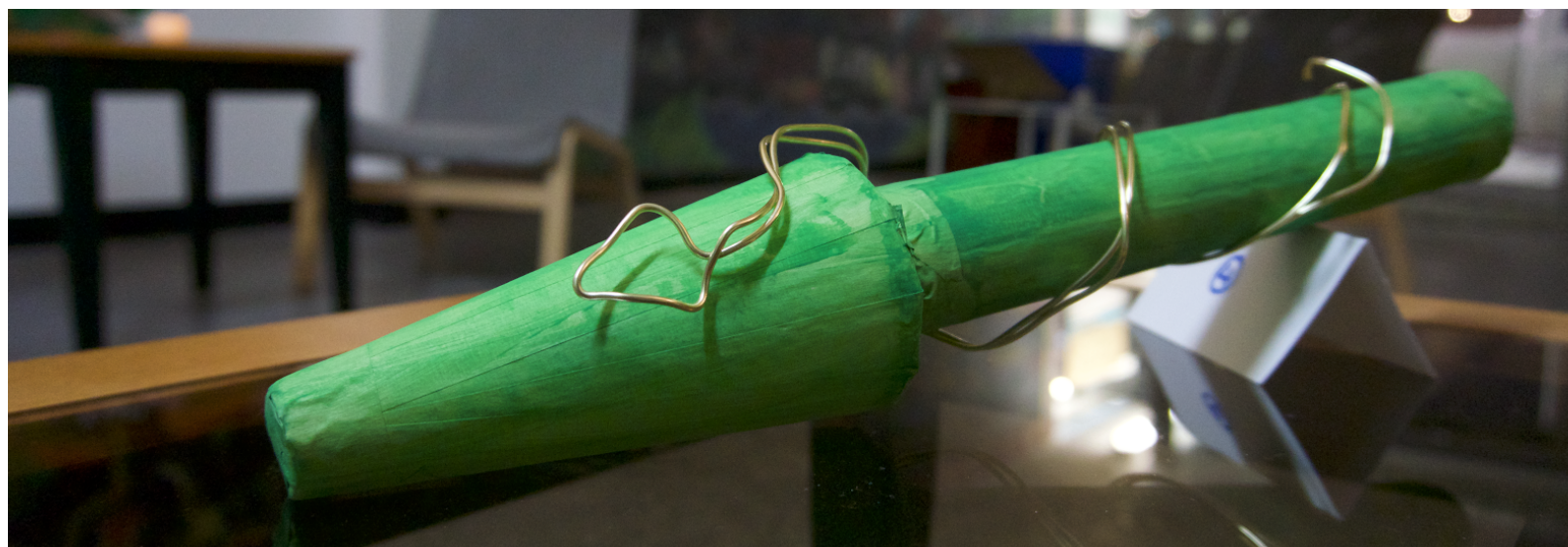

Image 007: Art Piece #2, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

Image 008: Art Piece #3, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

Image 009: Art Piece #4, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

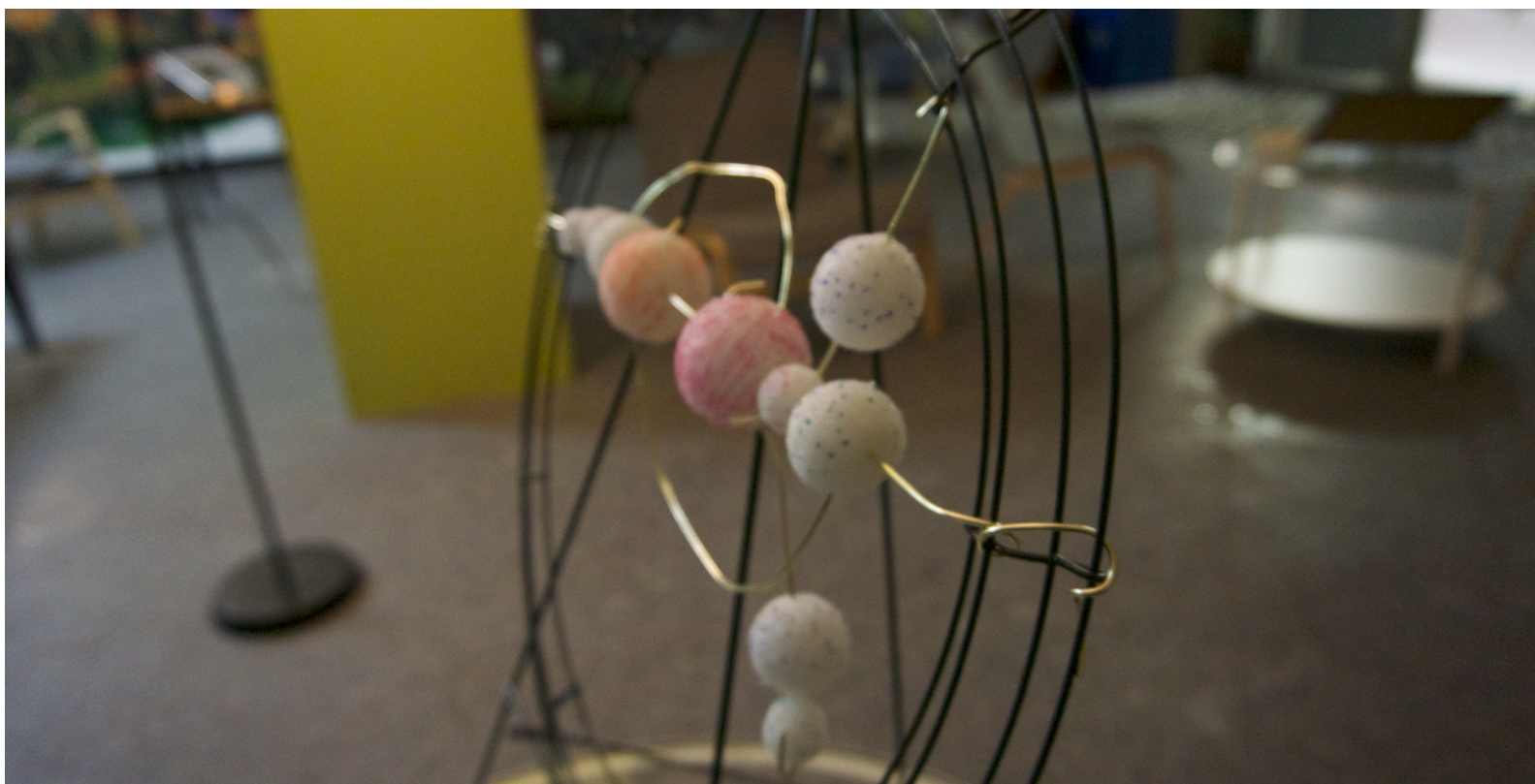**Image 010: Art Piece #5, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett**

Image 011: Art Piece #6, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

Image 012: Art Piece #7, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

Image 013: Art Piece #8, Created by Interview Participant, Photo by Aimee Burnett

4.3   Arts-Based Research as a Tool for Moving Forward

Interestingly, while survey respondents identified a flexible, grassroots process and understanding between different perspectives as two of the main ways through which diverse stakeholders could work through conflicts and advance their democratic goals, it is significant to note that their solutions were proposed in response to and as a summary of the artistic process that participants had already undergone. In other words, it is because participants had represented the different perspectives involved in the conflicts that exhibition visitors were able to clearly identify how an understanding of the different perspectives can pave a way forward. Thus, the process of producing artistic representations of a conflict already achieved what was identified as a strategy forward. Similarly, exhibition respondents proposed a flexible process of engagement, and the arts-based research process offer multiple different avenues of self-expression and reflection. Finally, with a close connection to art therapy, arts-based research practices offer a chance at closure that one exhibition respondent suggested.

Closing the loop, then, I return to my literature review on arts-based research practices with an understanding that it offers a powerful opportunity, not only for self-expression, reflection, and therapeutic healing, but also for widening our perspectives to consider the roles and perspectives that others have in our artistic representation of a conflict.

CONCLUSION

"I didn't know how we would untangle the conflict, and I don't think that it is totally untangled, and maybe it never will be and that's fine… I don't know how we –I didn't know how we would do it, but I knew that it was important to try. So, unless, somebody sits across the table from me and says absolutely no, then I'm going to keep trying. Because I think that the systems change in how institutions work together and work with citizens in their community is worth more than my, you know, couple month discomfort and uncertainty." (I1)

This project was designed to unpack some of the differing models of participatory processes in practice, and analyze how different participatory objectives interact and conflict in my case study of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Through my literature review, I developed a critical perspective by aligning this paper with the social justice principles of the Southern Tradition of community-based participatory research. Using the democratic theory of agonistic pluralism, conceptualized by Mouffe, Honig, and Connolly, I understood conflict as a site of diverse perspectives interacting, and the consequently, the values of inclusive participation advanced. The literature on arts-based research methods and group process added a layer of complexity to this conceptualization of inclusion as it emphasized the underlying psychological factors that coerce us to make certain decisions.

Designing a study to focus on the different interacting and conflicting ways in which participation plays out in the NAS, I was able to reach five important insights. First, the structure of an organization influences the kind of participatory democracy the organization is able to envision and engage in. In the NAS, it became clear that the hierarchical nature of the City of Hamilton limited its ability to be responsive to the different forms of resident leadership that emerged within the Strategy. As a charitable organization with a less rigid structure, the Hamilton Community Foundation was far better positioned to engage in the kind of iterative

practices of resident-led neighbourhood work. What this meant, looking through a lens of power, is that the City's systemic and positional power actually served to suppress some of the different perspectives and examples of personal power that residents demonstrated.

Second, these structures influence what participatory democracy means within the context of the organization. While participatory democracy might mean more of a grassroots model of neighbourhood governance, it could also mean, to some residents, a chance to shape the work and priorities of municipal government. If participating in municipal government is the goal, then a model of participatory democracy could very well reflect the hierarchies established within the institution residents are trying to participate in. Alternatively, participatory democracy could offer alternatives to local governance structures. What is important from this analysis is not to determine which form of participatory democracy is best, but rather, to understand how power within different contexts shapes which forms of participatory democracy are acceptable in the given context. In practice (if not in theory), the NAS supports a particular kind of grassroots model of neighbourhood governance and action, while the City favours hierarchy and meeting their priorities and deadlines. Within each organization, people have used systemic and positional power to suppress perspectives that reflect something different from the organization's explicit or implicit ideas of valid participation.

Third, power dynamics exist between residents and other residents, and residents and institutional partners. This power often prevents institutional staff from creating relationships with residents in which they can be honest and authentic about their feelings – which can block effective communication and inclusive participation. Through our discussion of power, we know that even people with positional power can feel a lack of systemic or personal power, which can lead to disengagement and block inclusive participation.

Fourth, conflicts can be resolved in different ways: either by leaving the group, continuing to engage on a surface level, or making the effort to understand other perspectives in order to collaborate more meaningfully. This complicates the perspective I started with in this paper, assuming that conflict is a sign of inclusive participation. Instead, conflict can trigger psychological responses that block any form of collaboration or participation at all. This is critical; rather than helping uncover different perspectives, conflicts (without a keen understanding of psychology, therapy, and healing) can effectively work to suppress diversity by leading to disengagement.

Finally, while there seems to be a binary created between barbeques and neighbourhood gatherings, and talking about the tough issues like safety and homelessness, the trust required to navigate the latter is built through the former. They are not mutually exclusive parts of community building, and while people may engage with the NAS for different reasons – even conflicting reasons – it is the interaction between all these diverse stakeholders that advances the goals of inclusive participation through multiple avenues of interest. The relational aspect of the NAS is central to advancing inclusive democratic participation. By building trust between individuals, through all of the messiness of power dynamics, this relational work actually serves to move us closer to a deeper sense of democracy in our society.

<div align="center">***</div>

These conclusions have important implications for interrogating the inclusiveness of democratic participatory processes. In particular, the conceptual framework developed through my literature review stands. Conflicts, through an understanding of agonistic pluralism, help us see different ways of understanding our shared public life. However, conflicts and diversity are shaped in a landscape of systemic, positional, and personal power that must be navigated in order to encourage diverse perspectives. Without a keen sense of psychological well-being,

therapy, and healing, conflicts can serve to push people away, and suppress diverse

perspectives as a result. Furthermore, we cannot think about diversity without acknowledging

that for years, colonialism and systemic power have served to marginalize and suppress diverse

perspectives within all aspects of society, including our universities, design institutions, and

most certainly governments. When we are able to bring a social justice perspective on

participation, together with the passions and diversity fuelling conflicts through agonistic

pluralism, and a deep understanding of psychological triggers and unconscious factors – we

have the elements required to facilitate a deep internal transformation that promotes personal

healing and therapy. This is the critical part of inclusive democratic participation; it should be

healing to participate, rather than harmful. When inclusive democratic participation is internally

meaningful, it can then work towards external objectives of contributing to public discourse and

creating outcomes of benefit to communities experiencing marginalization.

     While an analysis of power is foundational to the conceptual framework, it is in my case

study of the NAS that we see how power works in complex ways. The insights gained through

this study demonstrate how positional, systemic, and personal power can all be used to

suppress other perspectives. However, the NAS has also illustrated how, with a level of self-

awareness, vulnerability, and consciousness of power, residents can build trust with other

residents and institutions in order to facilitate shared understanding and growth. The point of

this paper is not to illustrate which form of power is most 'powerful,' or most corrupting, or most

insidious. It is not to articulate which axis of power to pay most attention to. Instead, an

analysis of different forms of power helps us understand more deeply the complex work of

inclusion. In order to advance inclusive democratic participation, we each – in whatever role or

body we occupy – need to develop the self-awareness to understand how we are using our

personal, positional, and systemic power to encourage or suppress diverse perspectives. It falls

on institutions and governments to earn the trust of people with less positional and systemic power than they have. When we develop this self-awareness around power, and this trust is earned, we might see residents participating in democracy in ways fuelled by their passions, a dynamic public life of diverse communities interacting and conflicting, and ultimately, democracy fuelled by alternatives rather than mere procedure.

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