ME, MYSELF, & PEOPLE LIKE ME:

A Visualized Analysis of Gentrification Systems in Toronto

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Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2025

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ABSTRACT

Gentrification has continued to be criticized by academics for its contributions to rent hikes, closing of essential businesses, and displacement of marginalized residents in cities. In Canada, where a cost-of-living crisis impacts cities like Toronto, one may wonder: How can we aspire for a more equitable future? This research visualizes existing system of gentrification within Toronto, Canada, annotating the shared drivers between actants, and inquires whether a plausible narrative for de-gentrification can be crafted from this synthesis. Using literature and research from a range of disciplines, it employs various socio-cultural frameworks and visualization tools such as Actant and System Mapping to identify areas of opportunity within existing systems. Contributions of this research include visualizing the system and proposing possibilities of where the system can slow down if provided the proper resources. Secondarily, this work adds to the discourse of gentrification and de-gentrification within a Canadian context, offering an expanded socio-cultural understanding of the terms.

PREFACE

When I first moved to Toronto, I sustained a temporary injury that changed the way I saw my neighborhood. Walking became a chore, and my values were challenged. Suddenly, I resented the distance to the closest grocery store, and that the closest clinic to me for physiotherapy was for dogs. My uncertainty concerning whether I would fully recover radicalized me. My passion for accessible urban spaces has always existed but lacked a clear direction and imperative to change. This research, while being deeply personal to me, also comes from empathy towards those who do not have the platform to advocate for themselves. While this was a short-lived inconvenience for me, how I became aware that this is a reality for many is a vehicle for investigating systems that are not equitable.

The irony with most commentary on gentrification is that the researcher is usually an active participant and benefactor. I am no exception to this, where I can distill my findings in a café or walk (now able-bodied) to school and would never intentionally misrepresent my identity to communicate otherwise. My inherent biases show at times, and my worldview is formed as the result of certain privileges I hold. I have done my best to create something that is the output of my own passions, skills, and abilities as a researcher and academic. But, at the end of the day, I believe we all deserve more equitable spaces to call home and want to see this change within our lifetime.

So, ask yourself – Is this it? What could the future look like if we worked together and beat gentrification systems at their own game? Let's get started.

Acknowledgements

Many people have made this research possible. For those close to me to who kept me on track when I questioned everything and did nothing – thank you. This extends to family, friends, housemates, and neighbors. My gratitude will be shared for months following this submission as it would not have been possible without you all.

I also would like to extend a special thank you to Suzanne Stein, who has done all the above and more as my primary advisor. I see how you juggle your commitments and the care and intention you approach your students with. Advisors at OCADU are not compensated for their countless hours spent advising students and do so because they believe in us and share our passion for the future. Working within difficult systems is a common trend across this research, and it extends to navigating institutional challenges that stem from decisions that sustain the inequitable legacy of a not-so-distant past. The empathetic persist.

Acknowledgement of Land

In Canada, gentrification systems are the direct result of our colonial history and domination of the land. Destructive planning and efforts under the guise of advancement are key drivers that have resulted in the current situation we see today. Born on Treaty 6 territory, I have had the privilege of completing this research on the land of Treaty 13, stewarded for centuries by Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Haudenosaunee, and Huron-wendat (Wyandot) territory. These diverse Indigenous groups came together under the Wampum Belt "Dish with One Spoon" Covenant, to share responsibility to the land and uphold a commitment to peace, friendship, and respect. These are not new ideas but are especially relevant in our current urban context. We are guests on this earth, and through our shared responsibility to the land and others, we are interconnected.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) disclaimer

It is important for researchers to attempt to solve their own problems and sit with discomfort as part of the design research methodology. As such, I have not sought out the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to aid or enhance my research and have relied only on literature that can be tracked back to specific people and effectively credited.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

What does your ideal community look like? For many, an up-and-coming neighborhood with history and charm may be an ideal place to settle. Have you asked yourself who was there before you and what say they have in the changing urban landscape?

Toronto, the largest city in Canada, is no exception to this discourse that follows from trendy places and the displacement of generational residents. From federal deregulation of affordable housing in the 1990s, to the removal of rent control in apartments built after 2018 through provincial rule (*Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, 2022),* the conversation seems to frequently center profit over people and has been decades in the making. Consequently, the defining sense of community these places have offered has been eroded, manipulated, and marketed to those who can afford it and sold as consumption, convenience to a new, gentrifying, demographic (*McCann, 2020*). This contrasts with traditional understandings of community that stem from the bettering of the collective through shared interests and goals and advocacy for resilient urban spaces and the protection of those most vulnerable (*Kunstler, 1993*). However, those with the capital and spending power are favored in decision making and the differing understandings of community have resulted in clashing expectations and social narratives – leaving those who need the most support out of the conversation and priced out of what is left behind.

The overall outcome is complicated; urban renewal processes do not retain generational, often marginalized, residents, and the new look of an old neighborhood attracts people and businesses (commerce) and improves infrastructure. This vicious cycle has created a mutually harmful “Us” against “Them” dichotomy, where lower income residents and affluent gentrifiers cluster away from each other (*Gale ,2021*) to satisfy their own expectations with the (inequitably allocated) resources available to them. This conflict has been around for centuries, and relates back to the studies of Ferdinand Tönnies, who understood a post-industrial society (also known as Gesellschaft) to weaken community ties, a departure from the traditional society seen in smaller villages (Gemeinschaft) (*1887*). This transition also came with a warning. A shift to an industrial society departs from the stability and steadiness once seen and embraces a sense of rootlessness. Urban contemporaries such as Jane Jacobs partially share this sentiment and warn of a cultural dark age from societal disconnect. She notes that societies that shift away from community and define success through industrialization lose essential traditional knowledge and risk collapse in times of disparity *(Jacobs, 2004*). If we forget how to care for each other, how can we expect to thrive when faced with war, famine, or climate emergency? Is it too late to find our way back to Gemeinshaft?

This has inspired an inquiry into the values of new and generational residents in Toronto. How might these differing representations of community be unified, and by whom? If this were to change tomorrow, what would the first step be? While it may never seem like the right time for change, we can at least aspire to ask more questions and reflect on what we used to have. What could a future look like in a city that is in harmony with its residents and how can it incorporate elements of the village we all need?

Research Overview

This research leverages socio-cultural and design frameworks to visualize and annotate the motives of actants within a system. It exemplifies the system of gentrification within Toronto's urban core and proposes areas of opportunity to unify certain values of new and generational residents through mutual sympathy and shared aspects of identity. The casual term de-gentrification is reframed in this work and defined by me as a desired state of stagnation, or, at times, reversal of gentrification through the intentional pursuit of unity between new and generational residents.

The remainder of this chapter explores the context that has guided this inquiry, mainly focusing on further understanding of the problem sociologically and within a Canadian context. This chapter also speaks on trends that have contributed to the acceleration or stagnation of gentrification, such as City marketing, and historical & current success stories in affordable housing in Canada. Additionally, this chapter surfaces certain gentrifying demographics, such as queer people, who have a nuanced history of oppression which has necessitated their migration into safe and affordable urban setting.

Chapter two details the methods of inquiry (Methodology) that have been used to create a comprehensive and balanced foundation for this subject and contextualizes the research questions that have framed this inquiry:

Exemplifying the urban context of Toronto, Canada, how might we understand and visualize systems of gentrification to identify possibilities for community development that is desirable for both gentrifiers and generational residents?

This section includes a literature review, considering substantive and methodological texts and the role they play within this research, and how definitions of gentrification and de-gentrification can be defined and understood through basic socio-cultural worldviews. Chapter two also utilizes visual tools such as Actant Maps and Spaghetti Diagrams and develops a Drivers Matrix that illustrates actants and their respective relationship to the existing system and with each other.

Data from previous sections is synthesized in Chapter Three, where a System Map is generated from to demonstrate how the current system of gentrification works in respect to new and generational residents. This is further annotated through the development of an Existing System Loop that details current drivers between these actants within the system and underscores the necessity for a unification of values between the resident groups, in line with an ideology of de-gentrification. Identifying opportunities within the system, allow for the development of a plausible narrative for change within the larger system in the next chapter.

The final chapter will look inwards, crafting a narrative for change between the resident groups through their shared values and identity. This speculative cultural shift is substantiated through a Power-Law data model and concludes the research inquiry, shedding light on how a mutually desirable, de-gentrified future in Toronto could be achieved by the sympathy of a few key actants within the system.

Broadly, this research demonstrates a process to analyze complex systems, such as gentrification in Toronto, Canada, to identify leverage points between conflicting actants. These hypothesized values of shared identity can craft a plausible change narrative achieving a desirable and equitable future of a de-gentrified Toronto. Contributions include a contextual analysis to develop a visualized system of gentrification as well as data collection, through tools and frameworks, to annotate drivers between actants intended for replication & peer-review. Additionally, this research further adds to discourse and grounds discourses of gentrification and de-gentrification within a Canadian socio-cultural and systemic context.

An ideal community can look very different depending on who you ask. To get to the core of these differences, it is important to understand the history and context of why this is the current reality. The next section provides an overview of the history of housing and urban perspectives.

1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

This section's purpose is to introduce critical contexts that have allowed gentrification to be this prevalent, how it has left many out of the conversation in the prospect of new residents, and how branding and consumption have changed the way people navigate cities. Throughout, it references critiques and success stories that speak on how these systems have been weaponized or disrupted, and who benefits depending on what is done.

Gentrification, Revanchism, a Loss of Community

Depending on who you ask, the concept of gentrification can be framed and reframed as good or bad. Acknowledging this common cycle, it is important to ask: Good or bad for whom? It can happen across public and private sectors and not seek to exclusively harm or benefit a neighborhood (*Lees, Slater, Wiley, 2008*), however, the benefits often cater to a new, more affluent, demographic with diminishing returns to long term residents. For them, this can look like investments in new infrastructure to improve safety, densification through increased housing stock, access to nature, and supporting new businesses (*Lees et al., 2008*). In contrast, generational residents are faced with increased cost of living through property tax and rent increases, the closing of businesses that serve the community such as laundromats, and racism both systemically and overtly by new residents and over-policing *(Lees et al., 2008*). This is not to mention that new businesses and infrastructure may not be accessible, affordable, and/or desirable to a generational resident. It is important to note that gentrification is not a new concept, but the term has changed as of recently to offer an expanded understanding and impact. Contrasted to the 21st century inner-city housing displacements that previously defined gentrification, it has undergone a metamorphosis to keep up with current trends and criticisms. Today, gentrification speaks on almost any urban redevelopment scheme that caters to middle-income newcomers (*Gale, 2021*). Gentrification also looks different with increasing gender, sexuality, and racial equities, but still largely remains an economic and generational problem. This is mostly due to changing demographics in relation to immigration, birth rate, and an aging population. For instance, in the United States, we can see the decline of non-Hispanic white people, predicted to become a minority population by mid-century, a 5% increase of populations 65 or older by 2040 (22%, up from 17%), and increased equity in opportunity for education and employment (*McCabe and Rosen, 2020*). This paints a different picture for some, positioning them for a better opportunity, and a chance to benefit from systems of gentrification. But the question persists — for whom?

Gentrification is successful in causing both the migration into and displacement out of urban spaces. By understanding the actions, reactions, and interactions of the populations involved, a narrative of conflict and inequity becomes clearer. Geographer Neil Smith classifies the "vengeful policies used in the contemporary urban context to highlight the negative effects of zero-tolerance policing and related policies on the poor." (*Smith 1996, as cited in Lees et al. ,2008*) as revanchism in a city, or a Revanchist City. Geographer Eugene McCann also shares this sentiment, where "policing, cleaning, and managing of urban public spaces with the express intention of making them correspond to a carefully constructed brand" (*2020*). In this context, a Revanchist City thrives when policy favors

development and ignores the displacement of generational residents. While some argue gentrification's benefits, such as allowing social class mixing and the opportunity for an inclusive place for all to live *(Bryne 2003 as cited in Lees et al.,200*8). But in practice, many new and existing residents opt for voluntary social segregation where they gather with similar demographics to make the best of their realities. Development favors prospective residents, granting them new bars, restaurants, and community amenities such as parks and schools (*Smith 2002; Lees 2003a; Davidson and Lees 2005; as cited in Lees et al, 2008*), while regulation of these spaces through curfews and property tax (in the context of new businesses, that may inform the increased price of food or services) create inaccessible and undesirable places for generational residents. The result of social mixing in practice, such as in South Parkdale in Toronto, has been described as superficial at best, and hostile at worst (*Slater 2004, as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). Could this be due to the attitudes of the resident groups? Or can it be viewed as a policy problem where either group lacks the proper resources to integrate? Either way, the result has created siloed realities within these neighborhoods, underscoring differences between generational and new residents.

The reality is that gentrification can be good and bad, at the same time, for different audiences. But the clashing values have real consequences, and if cities are revitalizing historically affordable neighborhoods, who or what is lost in the shuffle? What is new may not mix with what remains, in more than one way. Re-developments frame and market community as a commodity drive policy, leaving generational perspectives realized through support networks and connection to slip through the cracks (and then be repaved next summer). Placing an emphasis on potential residents and visitors rather than those who already live in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification continues the cycle of gentrification. The social stratification and mutual othering between low-income residents and affluent newcomers divide existing communities and erase the culture and history of these areas. Since the motives differ between the conflicting resident groups, without proper checks and balances in place entire neighborhoods are threatened to be warped into a commodity only few can afford. This theme is especially true in Canada, where we currently face a housing crisis that has caused significant damage to communities across the country.

How is Gentrification Happening in Canada?

Gentrification is a reality for many urban settings, especially in North America. In a Canadian context, drivers including rising housing rental and ownership costs and diminishing housing stock have created a pinch point in cities, making the impacts of gentrification felt by many and difficult to ignore. For instance, rent for a two-bedroom

apartment in Toronto, Ontario, is expected to rise to an average of 26%, or $5,600 CAD, by 2027 (*Sliz, 2024*). The average monthly earnings of a resident in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), in contrast, has only grown an average of 1.02% annually, assumed to be roughly $6836,00 CAD by 2027 (*Statistics Canada, 2024*). This would mean that an individual living alone would be spending an average of 82% of their monthly income on rent. With housing becoming largely unaffordable to the average individual in the GTA, how might one be expected to remain in close proximity to their friends, family, and community while staying financially stable? This is where certain affordable havens in cities that historically are composed of generational, typically marginalized, communities come into play. Initially, these communities are attractive to those who need an affordable area to live and certain people may also have cultural or relational motives to settle somewhere like this, such as young, middle-class individuals (*Lees et al, 2008*). While these moves can be driven strictly by financial need, there may be more nuance when understanding history and identity.

Historically, the migration of new residents into a neighborhood may also be ruled by necessity. Certain initial gentrifiers, also referred to as pioneer or embryotic gentrifiers, may represent a legacy described by Feminist Marxist geographer Demaris Rose as the breakdown of traditional patriarchal values where single women, gay people, and working couples can reclaim a sense of autonomy in rejection of suburban forces (*1984, as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). Discussions of gentrification can be especially polarizing in this context, as these previously underserved communities become a safe space for well-intending progressives to reclaim their identity but also a priority for developers and policy makers in the prospect of new residents and visitors. One significant historical instance of this happening is with queer people. While being a dated quote (and not Canadian), the political leader of San Fransico's gay community in the 1980s remarked that "when gays are scattered, they are not gay, because they are invisible." (*Castells, 1983 as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). Historically, queer people have needed tolerant and safe spaces in urban settings, leading to many actions which are in line with pioneer gentrification (*Lauria and Knopp 1985 as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). If one's oppression results in the displacement of another oppressed group, who is in the right? Gay marriage in Canada was legalized in 2003, however, queer people (especially non-cis male individuals) still face discrimination, violence, and threats to their identity today. The legacy also remains relevant for many queer people, through the act of recognizing those who fought for their rights before them. But regardless of the legacies or intentions of pioneer gentrifiers, their migration unintentionally puts neighborhoods on the map and opens the floodgates for urban redevelopment, rent hikes, new businesses, and the eventual migration (once it is perceived safe) of more affluent people to benefit from a trendy area (*Gale 2021*). Once the area is deemed unaffordable for the pioneer gentrifiers (at least those who are not

economically mobile), the cycle continues and gentrification bleeds over into adjacent havens.

So, what changes are needed to disrupt this cycle? Interestingly, global issues such as the threat of war, climate and health crises, and recessions are ways in which gentrification has slowed, or reversed, in Canada. For instance, the values shared between Canadians directly following World War II strengthened social safety nets and improved existing community ties. The comprehensive housing strategy at this time, known as the National Housing Act, enabled the construction of postwar housing for veterans in cities such as Calgary, Alberta through the Veteran's Land Act (*Harris & Shulist, 2001*), and the modernization of the existing house stock through renovation and access to utilities (i.e. electricity, running water) across urban centers in Canada. Additionally, it also shifted cultural perceptions around subsidized housing projects since well-respected veterans were recipients of it, which benefitted other marginalized members of society who also required affordable housing.

More recently, this immense community connection was seen to some extent during and directly following the impact of Covid-19, and in the aftermath of the Fort McMurray wildfires. But why didn't sweeping support and policy change follow, and what would need to change to seed these aspirations? It is shown that many gentrified areas still remain progressive on paper in terms of politics, seen through their voting patterns (*Ley, 1994 as citied in Lees et al, 2008*). So, shouldn't these gentrifiers have the right mindset to advocate for their neighbor? Jane Jacobs speaks on "staying power" in communities and how there must be ways to keep ideas alive beyond individual champions or working groups (*Jacobs, 2008*). Without this, policy can swing back in favor of corporate interests and leave the people behind. One notable and often ignored perspective is a decolonial one. The analysis and study of Human Geography and Housing Sociology tend to ignore the potential of Indigenous perspectives. While not in Canada, notable success stories challenge the limited imaginations of policy makers and academics. These stories consider ideas of relationship to land, responsibility and stewardship, and function for the preservation of traditional practice (*Vaughan 2018; Saha, Lipon, Nicholls, Sivam, & Karuppannan, 2019 as cited in McCabe and Rosen, 2023*). While innovation in housing is a proud legacy of Canada, there is also an ongoing and unhealed colonial past. With what is known about the current reality of Canada's housing landscape, opportunity arises for innovation and out of the box thinking to approach these problems. Cities such as Toronto have become interesting case studies on how innovation can create new problems in the pursuit of development.

The branding of Toronto

Understanding the motives as to why Toronto caters to specific prospective residents, leaving many current residents out of the conversation, can be related back to the idea of a city as a brand. Eugene McCann's review in 2020 understands City Marketing as the perpetuation of myths that cities are "welcoming and safe, vibrant and fun; tolerant and accepting of social and cultural difference; environmentally friendly, culturally rich, and/or business friendly; and strategically and conveniently located". These myths may seem positive, but are subjective and frequently weaponized to harm those who do not fit in. A safe city to one person may be unsafe to others. For instance, policing laws such as Frisk & Search have been criticized for disproportionally targeting racialized individuals, and vagueness which allows an officer to exercise extreme individual bias based on appearance (*Wortley, 2021*). This, amongst many other examples, illustrates that these ideals of City Marketing are not universal, and if governance caters to affluent individuals, it puts those who are marginalized, housing insecure, and/or lower income at a further disadvantage. City Marketing is also achieved through methods which include incentives of "[…] (re) building, policing, and cleaning the urban built environment […] and continual efforts to maintain coherence in the city's marketing message by keeping disparate interest groups […] on the same page, "on message," or, in some cases, out of the spotlight." (*McCann, 2020*). When considering current development initiatives in Toronto, it is fair to assume that those with the money to spend in these redeveloped areas are the priority to many. Whether affluence buys your way into a new condo or just allows you to shop comfortably at specialty stores and farmers markets, City Marketing is a lens to guide development that does not benefit all equitably. Representing economic and aesthetic priorities as the foundation for assessing a city creates a narrative that places emphasis on cleaning, policing, and maintaining a space for consumption for those who can afford it, and is unwelcome to low income, marginally housed, racialized, and otherwise stigmatized urban populations (*McCann, 2020*). In other words, the business case for urban renewal does not advocate for vulnerable residents already living in neighborhoods.

Currently, Toronto has 84 identified Business Improvement Areas (BIA's). One of the BIA districts is Parkdale Village, which was briefly introduced earlier in this research as an affordable haven and example of social mixing malpractice (*Slater 2004, as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). BIAs are typically composed of retailers and do not advocate for the residents living in the community, especially those who are generational who may disrupt their messaging of safety and cleanliness. The Parkdale BIA mentions a mix of low- and high-income residents but does not note that Parkdale has one of the highest levels of poverty in Toronto, at nearly 25% of residents below the poverty line (*Statistics Canada, 2021*).

Interestingly, the Parkdale BIA states four values of Inclusiveness, Affordability, Diversity and Equity (*2016*). As stated previously, City Marketing terminology as such can be vague and is never universal. Also, the language and resources used to communicate with business owners is directed at reporting and regulating behavior, including quotes in the 2022 Member's Package such as,

"There are a number of local resources available to help you respond to both emergency and non-emergency situations you may encounter while doing business in Parkdale. When you contact the right service agency you help improve the efficiency of local resources to better address community challenges." (*Parkdale Village BIA Member's Package, 2022*)

BIAs are private governance agencies and have been known to contract private security agencies as well as public services to sweep streets of nuisances to maintain a sense of cleanliness and order (*McCann, 2020*). Rather than educating on the needs of vulnerable residents, who may have lived in the area longer than the businesses have operated, the BIA warns of challenges in the community such as theft, vandalism, property damage, nuisance issues, noise complaints, and trespassing. This shows that even in highly impoverished areas in a city, new businesses are only supplied resources to regulate behavior through reporting and policing. Could these new businesses that offer non-essential services do more to support their community? Perhaps if governance of space involved generational residents (or at least involved advocates for them) the focus and actions of BIAs would be more equitable.

Summary

Gentrification has changed in recent history. It went through a metamorphosis in the late 21st century and its impacts are extensive in cities. These changes offer more diversity in terms of age, race, and other indicators of identity, but this remains a conversation that disproportionally impacts racialized and low-income residents of a previously affordable neighborhood. Gentrifiers and generational residents may have more in common due to personal identities, and shared history of oppression, but due to their differing motives and priorities of how space is marketed to them they may never see connect on a personal level. In Canada, the history of housing innovation in contrast with its colonial past have created an interesting pinch point where opportunity may come from an emphasis on land stewardship and connection with others. However, the current environment that gentrification creates is one of social separation, trends, and the needs of many replaced with consumable wants of few. New developments in cities like Toronto can bring renewal to neglected areas through infrastructure such as bike lanes, transit networks, and parks. However, these developments typically make things more unaffordable for generational

residents and are done to attract new residents and business opportunity. These changes may also not be desirable for those living in these neighborhoods as they cannot access or afford to benefit from these new amenities. While these changes should be happening regardless of the "prospect" of the neighborhood, they do not. The increase of property value prices existing residents out of their own communities and neglects the previous contributions made to make the space interesting and authentic. The values that generational residents do hold, which are in favor of community supports and resilience, are not shared by others within the system, including the new residents and businesses who govern space through BIAs. The normalization of these revanchist policies and City Marketing initiatives have divided the values of resident groups within gentrification systems. If de-gentrification challenges this very framework, how might we identify opportunities to approach space, so it is desirable for both new and existing residents? The next chapter explores how to approach this question and map the system of gentrification within Toronto.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section covers the various methods of inquiry and mapping used to complete this Major Research Project. Building off the context introduced in Section 1.0, these diverse perspectives were unpacked to thoroughly contextualize the domain of research, develop research questions, and visualize data through system maps and other design tools.

2.1 KEY INQUIRY:

This research began with the development, previously introduced in Chapter 1, which serves to provide a consistent scope narration to inform research and data analysis, and synthesis throughout this inquiry:

Exemplifying the urban context of Toronto, Canada, how might we understand and visualize systems of gentrification to identify possibilities for community development that is desirable for both gentrifiers and generational residents?

These questions identified key literature and rooted the domain of inquiry within sociology, system design, and human geography. These questions also introduced the concept of de-gentrification, which describes the regression of an urban context into a more affordable state. As gentrification can have both positive and negative impacts, so can de-gentrification. This concept is not widely discussed in academia, but casual definitions on platforms such as Wikitonary have described it as an urban area becoming more affordable over time as a result of policy or economic downturn (*2018*). Depending on the

definition, de-gentrification can also speak to a decrease of quality of life (*Hendrix, 2021*) or, according to a vernacular definition on Urban Dictionary, the shift in appeal of an area due to rapid development making an area no longer desirable as a trendy place to live (*2008*). For clarity, this research tests the use of de-gentrification as an ideology to describe a desired state of stagnation, or, at times, reversal of gentrification through the intentional pursuit of unity between new and generational residents. Further clarification between gentrification and de-gentrification is documented in Section 2.2a.

Parameters

This research did not involve engagement with human participants. All data has been collected from secondary research sources and advisory input. While there are limitations that come from dedicated secondary research, gentrification is a process that is well documented, both academically, and in contemporary discussions. Additionally, the involvement of research participants can be difficult as generational residents who are displaced tend to disappear from communities and are difficult to track (*McCabe & Rosen, 2023*) while those who do remain are either of a new affluent class or currently navigating other societal challenges because of these gentrification systems. This approach allows a more equitable representation of perspectives, while being mindful of the criticisms that surround Western processes of auditing communities that can come off as extractive and colonial (*McCabe & Rosen, 2023*). This would constitute further research that is out of scope within the timeframe and expertise of the research team.

This key inquiry not only informed the research questions but also served as a scoping mechanism to ensure thorough and focused research was possible within this timeline. It also identified the domain in which this work will be completed within, and how key ideas and themes will be used to craft a concise narrative throughout the paper.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data collected from this research is from secondary research, analyzing academic sources, census data, and mainstream journalism. This section provides an overview of these sources in conversation with the research question and previous inquiry.

2.2a Literature Review:

The texts cited are related to various important themes and provide lenses of sociology and human geography, while others address nuances within the Canadian context. Many important themes have already been introduced in Section 2.0, and a full annotated bibliography of key texts can be found in Appendix A. This review also informed the

generation of actants within the system of gentrification in Toronto, which are used in the visual tools in Section 2.3.

Application & Outcomes

At times it can be difficult to establish a baseline for what gentrification is when aspiring to map it as a system. One way this baseline can be established is though analyzing gentrification and its counterpart, de-gentrification, as sociological phenomena. De-gentrification is not frequently used in academia and has varied casual definitions, so it is important to delineate how it differs from gentrification with the context of this research. As such, it is formalized through basic sociological worldviews in Table 1. These worldviews include the View of Human Nature, View of the Good Life, Equality with Others, Responsibility to Others, Relationship Between Individual & State, Relationship of Human with Nature, and Sources of Ethical Wisdom. As such, these worldviews of gentrification and de-gentrification serve as anchors for upcoming frameworks and analysis.

WORLDVIEW	GENTRIFICATION	DE-GENTRIFICATION
VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE	Revanchist ideals; Humans need progress and a structured society to properly function, advancement is pursued through technology and innovation.	Right to the city; People must constantly be challenged to participate in community to contribute to local culture and shape shared identity.
VIEW OF THE GOOD LIFE	Gentrification is a necessary tool to stabilize and redevelop neglected urban spaces to improve quality of life.	De-gentrification is an anti-capitalist and unified ideology which allows shared values within society to be achieved.
EQUALITY WITH OTHERS	Gentrification produces equality for select demographics within, who may be seeking safety or community.	De-gentrification produces equity through meaningful contribution and horizontal community governance at the citizen level.
RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHER	Responsibility to others is offloaded onto policy makers and governing bodies, where friends can optionally share resources.	Community members are responsible and accountable to those around them.
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN	The state's role in gentrification is for promoting economic growth and	The state's role in de-gentrification is for ensuring equity and providing checks and balances through

INDIVIDUAL & STATE	ensuring safety through policy and governance.	policy, governance, and citizen representation.
RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANS WITH NATURE	Nature is to be tamed, where ownership of land is a priority and commodity to be optimized, and value is extracted from the environment.	Humans co-exist with nature, where varied approaches promote community relationships, health, and stewardship challenging existing land ownership narratives.
SOURCES OF ETHICAL WISDOM	Answers are found through trends that drive individual efforts, where it is right to prioritize self-interest over the needs of others.	Answers are sought out through consulting community, traditional knowledge, and shared values.

Table 1: Worldviews of Gentrification and De-gentrification

Table 1 can be viewed as guiding principles that define gentrification and de-gentrification. By putting them side-by-side, some interesting contrasts can be seen:

Gentrification is largely a functionalist process within society. Human nature is framed as a competition between groups, where progress becomes the priority and can dominate conversations of policy and development. This can be interpreted in a variety of ways but speaks to McCann's review of revanchism as a tool of neoliberal urbanism (*2020*), where "Us" against "Them" motivates vengeful policies under the guise of redevelopment. Within gentrification, an ideal life is to be achieved through the opportunities that development brings to a city. Whether it's consumption, or the idea of being part of something more authentic and urban (*Lees et al, 2008*), these ideas are marketed to prospective residents as an authentic community within an up-and-coming neighborhood. While mostly equitable only to those who can afford it, gentrification also provides a chance at autonomy, mobility, and safety for an oppressed few within this demographic such as gay people and single women (*Rose 1984, as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). The government is expected to care for your neighbors, especially those who are left behind when a neighborhood changes and individual resources are reserved for close friends and family. The state is also expected to keep things clean, accessible, and safe for new residents (*McCann, 2020*). Human's relationship to nature within gentrification systems is extractive and aims to possess capital such as housing or land, stemming from colonial homesteading legacies (*Glenn 2015 as cited in McCabe & Rosen, 2023*). Finally, ethical wisdom in gentrification is an individual pursuit, where trends and vengeful policy (*Ley, 1994 as citied in Lees et al, 2008*) overshadows good agents who may aspire for better within the system.

In contrast, de-gentrification follows a leftist, decolonial view of urban settings. This draws from many leftist contemporaries, such as Donald Cuccioletta, who is a founding member of Montreal's Political Action Front (FRAP). He calls back to Henri Lefebvre's 1968 concept "Right to a City" which questions the role of a city to an individual and emphasizes the potential to use large urban centers as places to dismantle capitalism from within (*Cuccioletta, 2021*). In pursuit of "the good life", de-gentrification can be framed further as an anti-capitalist structure to allow unified and shared values of individuals to come together. It also can produce equity within communities through the search for meaningful contribution (*Shirkley, 2008),* collaboration, and horizontal community governance at the citizen level (*Cuccioletta, 2021*). Citizens are responsible for each other to maintain tradition and a sense of community, where the state provides safeguards through policy, governance, and citizen representation. This is drawn from the analysis of American urban decline by James Howard Kunstler in his 1993 book *THE GEOGRAPHY OF NOWHERE*, which details the rise and decline of man-made environments in America due to systemic tools of segregation and capitalism (*1993*). In a de-gentrified community, stewardship of land, and the emphasis on traditional knowledge become aspects of connection between residents, where history is valued and culture is built (*Vaughan 2018; Saha, et al. as cited in McCabe and Rosen, 2023*). Ethical wisdom stems from and self-references community needs, traditional knowledge, and shared values.

While pockets of de-gentrification may already exist within gentrification systems, they work largely in opposition with each other. For leverage points to be identified, various mapping tools can be used to visualize current gentrification systems within Toronto.

2.3 MAPPING SYSTEM OF GENTRIFICATION

The next phase of this research draws from the data from previous sections and begins the visualization process. This is done through employing Actant Maps and Spaghetti Diagrams as visual tools. Additionally, the development of a Driver Matrix was implemented to analyze various motives within actant interactions. Mapping the existing system allows for the identification of conflict between actants, and the visualization of interactions and influences in relation to the worldviews of gentrification. This prepares the body of research for annotation to identify areas of opportunity.

2.3a Actant Map

Building off insights collected in the previous phase, an Actant Map allows for the understanding of who is involved in the system, and what power they hold in comparison to

others. An Actant Map plots the various actants across concentric levels of user/ individual, organization, industry and policy and are arranged on a dual axis, where each end represents polarities of power and knowledge within the selected system. This can further scope and frame a problem and reveal imbalances within interactions that further mapping tools can aspire to unpack. Actants generated during this mapping are typically used in other design tools, such as System Maps, and serve as an important foundation for codesign when considering who is over and under-represented in the system.

Rationale

Following a System Design methodology, an Actant Map is a tool used to identify and represent important participants and their relationships with each other, key issues, and outcomes within the system (*Jones, 2022*). For this research, visualizing those who are involved within gentrification systems and the relative advantages and disadvantages they hold is necessary to ensure fair representation for all. An Actant Map not only allows for this to happen, but it allows for early understanding of power dynamics within the system.

Modifications

While an Actants Map is templated to work within knowledge & power on the x & y axis, respectively, it was important to modify this to better represent research objectives. This was done by updating each end of the axis to represent an extreme of Influence (x) or Impact (y) with the very center of the chart representing neutrality (0,0), and the opposite end of the axis representing the inverse. This results in four unique quadrants that contribute to a greater narrative of who these systems cater to, and who is left out despite their stake in the conversation. Figure 1 annotates each quadrant on the modified actant map.

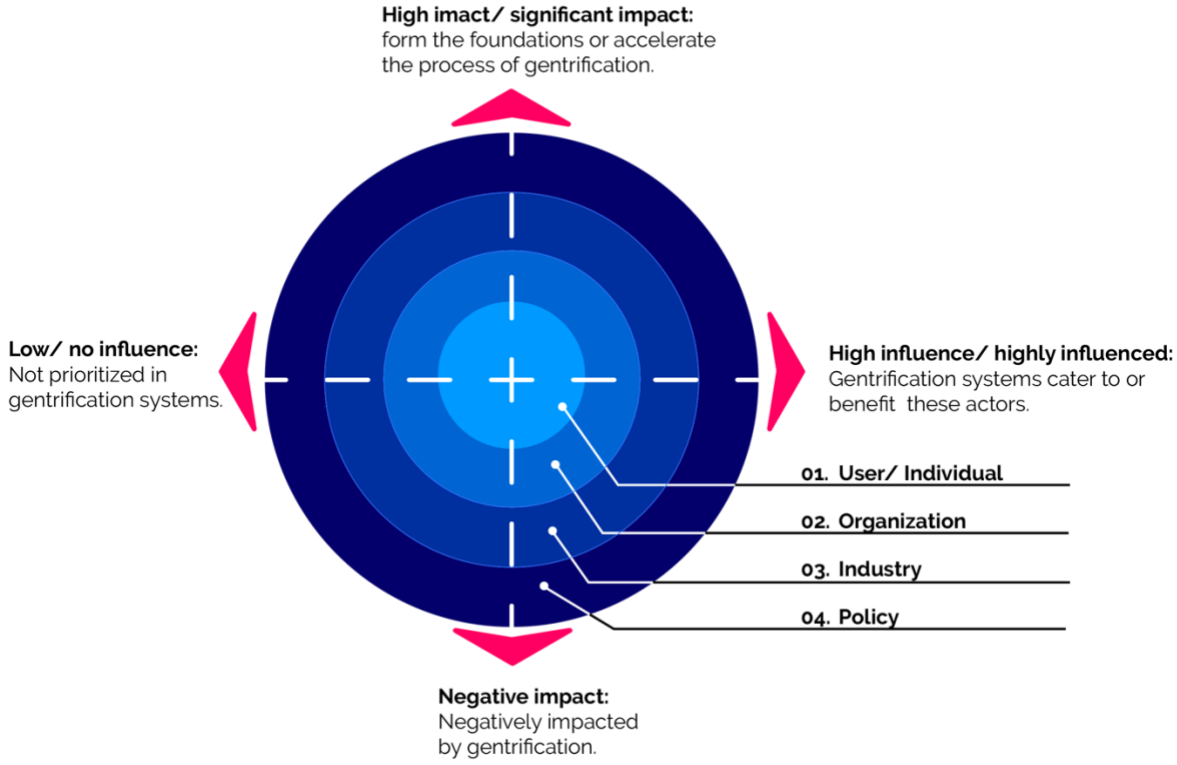


Figure 1: Modified Actant Map

Application & Outcomes

Actants are broken into four distinct categories of User/ Individual, Organization, Industry, and Policy. Table 2 details the 40 actants generated in relation to gentrification systems in Toronto.

ACTANTS WITHIN GENTRIFICATION SYSTEMS (TORONTO, ONTARIO)

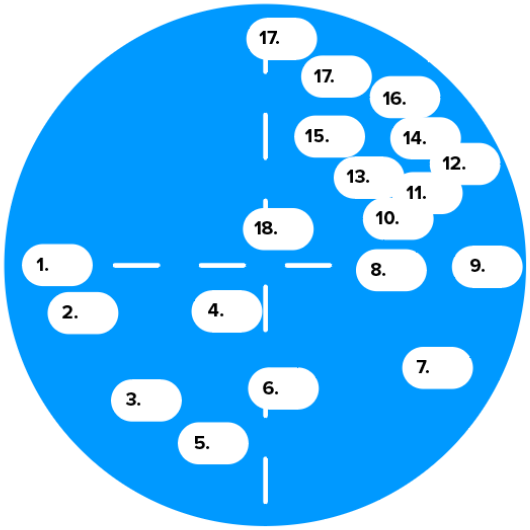
USER/ INDIVIDUAL		ORGANIZATION	INDUSTRY	POLICY
Private Planners, Engineers, Architects	Business owners	Provincial governments (Ford admin)	Co-ops	Land back initiatives
Affluent families/ Wealthy Individuals	Renters	Municipal governments	Old/ existing infrastructure	NRP (neighborhood redevelopment plans)

Investors	Advocates against gentrification	Banks	Short term rental platforms	Zoning
Developers	Indigenous people	Civic Services (hospitals, fire, police)	Advertisers	
Landlords	Low-income families/ individuals	Federal governments	Transit networks	
Real estate agents	Racial minorities	Affordable housing	New developments	
Home Buyers	1st Generation Immigrants	Land/ housing trusts	Education systems	
Children	Home Sellers	Schools	Rental markets	
New Residents	Generational Residents	Policy Makers		

Table 2: Actants Within Gentrification Systems in Toronto

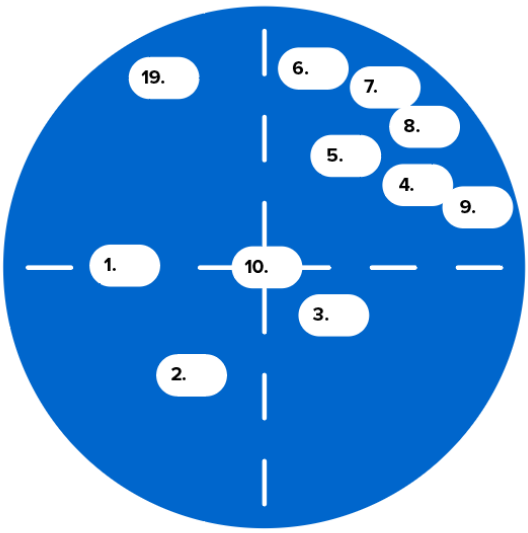
Each level of actants is then charted on their respective 4-quadrant map (Figures 2 & 3) for further analysis of the system. The Actants Map revealed many key insights. (27) of the actants were plotted in the top right quadrant (+,+), where they have high impact on gentrification systems, and are highly influenced and benefit from gentrification, overall. While work had been done to equitably represent all quadrants, the data continuously clustered here and may present a future opportunity to fill this map more equitably across all quadrants. The bottom right (+,-) had (6) actants, top left (-,+) had (3), and bottom left (-,-) had (7). In general, this map gave the sense that majority of sectors and individuals in Toronto benefit from the actions of gentrification, except for marginalized groups, generational residents, and those actively advocating against gentrification (Community groups, renters, allies to the cause).

01. User/ Individual



01. First generation immigrants
02. Seniors
03. Generational residents
04. Racial minorities
05. Indigenous people
06. Advocates against gentrifictaion
07. Renters
08. Business owners
09. Children
10. Real estate agents
11. Home buyers
12. New residents
13. Landlords
14. Developers
15. Investors
16. Affluent families/ individuals
17. planners, engineers, architects
18. Home sellers

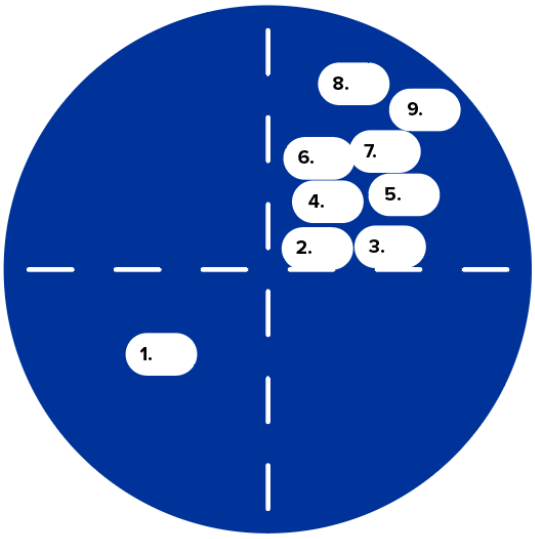
02. Organization



01. Land/ housing trusts
02. Affordable housing
03. Communities
04. Civic services (hospital/ police/ fire)
05. Schools
06. Media outlets
07. Provincial government (Ford admin)
08. Municipal government
09. Banks
10. Federal government
11. Policy makers

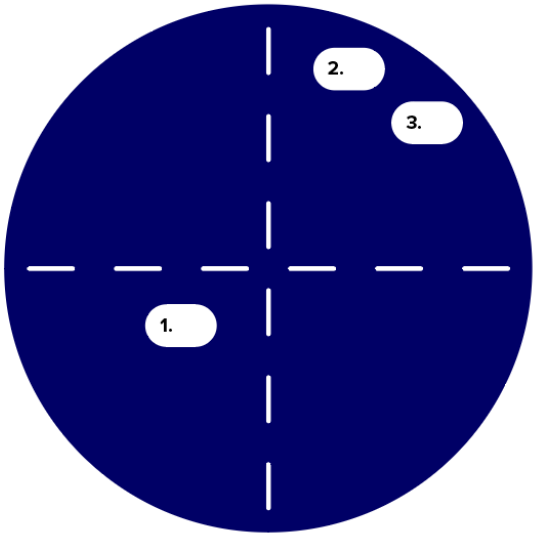
Figure 2: Actant Map

03. Industry



01. Co-ops
02. Old/existing infrastructure
03. Rental markets
04. Education systems
05. Public space
06. New developments
07. Transit networks
08. Advertisers
09. Short-term rental platforms

04. Policy



01. Land back initiatives
02. Neighbourhood Redevelopment Plans (NRP)
03. Zoning

Figure 3: Actant Map

It is worth noting that this map captures “Affluent Families or Individuals” and “New Residents” separately, despite there being assumed overlap in identity such as race, immigration status, age, or values that would pull these actants more central. While acknowledging this nuance, class is determined to be the dominant factor in differing these individuals from those with similar traits, who would have less impact and influence in this system (*Hamnett 1991; Smith 1992; Wyly and Hammel 1999 as cited in Lees et al, 2008*). Additionally, many actants could be neutral, where it depends on the context to determine a specific location on this map. For instance, “Business Owners” could refer to someone with a new business entering a gentrifying area, or one who has occupied a neighborhood pre-gentrification and risks being priced out of the location. It is important to note how this map could be understood or misunderstood without adequate context to guide the reader. As such, Section 2.3b speaks more on the relationships between actants.

Considerations for the future

It is important to include a variety of perspectives when generating actants for a system. Future considerations for the process would embrace a more collaborative approach where researchers from diverse backgrounds work together with the community to identify actants across all levels of the system. This would require more time and work with subject experts and community groups to capture a potentially modified or expanded list of actants.

2.3b Spaghetti Diagram

A Spaghetti Diagram incorporates the actants generated from the previously introduced Actants Map and illustrates the complexities between each. It charts the relationship within the system, getting a sense of how the aspects such as users, organizations, industries, and policies interact with each other. This map connects actants through codified lines that show various types of relationships and influences. This map is traditionally used behind the scenes to familiarize the researcher, or research team within a complex system within a certain narrative and identify opportunities to craft a succinct System Map.

Rationale

One primary goal of this research is to effectively visualize complexities through a socio-cultural lens. A Spaghetti Diagram works iteratively and expansively to display the messy and interconnected relationships between various actants within the system. Visualizing, and embracing this complexity challenges individual bias one may have in jumping to a solution. This can help ensure that the insights are rooted in thorough analysis, and a

specific narrative. This phase is important to understand current influences and connections between actants and inform upcoming phases that attempt to understand and unpack certain interactions between actants.

Modifications

This process can serve various functions depending on the goals of the researcher. For this project, this map has been modified to include more than individual actants, and includes actants within organization, industry, and policy as well. As this research intends to work within a sociological framework, it is important to analyze the system in a way that includes the larger environmental structures as well as the individuals within the system. As it can complicate the narrative of how influence and relationships can happen and verbiage may shift depending on whether the relationship refers to an individual or collective, this is considered and further addressed during the analysis in Chapter 3.

Application & Outcomes

This Spaghetti Diagram revealed both semi-quantitative and qualitative insights. All actants within the map have at least one connection with another actant. The direction of the arrow and type of line indicates the inferred direction and style of influence. In reference to previous literature review and subsequent plausible narratives, each connection is codified through the most prominent relationship and influence. The six distinct connection types are shown in Table 3.

Connection Type	Description	Visualization
Alliance	Actants are connected through sustained, shared values.	
Broken Connection	One or both actants have changed to a severity that has severed a previous relationship.	
Conflict	Actants are connected through sustained, opposing values.	
Influence	One actant has an influence on another actant.	
Emergent Influence	This indicates a newer relationship (last five years) brought on by a change in values or culture which has afforded one actant more influence over the other.	
Oscillating Influence	This relationship changes direction frequently, where both actants have influence on each other depending on	

	the context or anticipated system change such as government shifts or trends.	

Table 3: Spaghetti Diagram Connection Types

An alliance is shown as a solid green line between actants and implies that there is a generally positive, sustained relationship. This could be due to the aligned motives of the actants, such as Affordable Housing and Land Trusts aligned goal of the preservation of affordable spaces within a city. Additionally, this is used to align certain actants such as Racial Minorities and Indigenous People, who may share certain aspects or identities. A broken connection is shown by a solid black line with "//" in the middle. It references a previous state of alignment, where the current state is defined by one or both actants having severed values. For instance, Co-ops and Policy Makers have a broken connection in this context, as government initiatives currently do not support innovative housing models that were once championed. Finally, conflicts are shown as a blue dashed line and represent actants that have sustained and opposing values. One example of this is between Developers and Advocates Against Gentrification, where their motives within the system of gentrification fundamentally oppose each other.

Influences within this system are visualized three different ways. First, a directional solid pink arrow shows general influence between actants, where an actant has a perceived influence on another. For instance, an actant such as Policy Makers are influenced by many actants within the system such as governments (Municipal, Provincial, or Federal) but also influence other actants such as Affordable Housing or Land Back Initiatives. A dotted pink directional arrow is used to show an emergent relationship between actants. This relationship has emerged within the past five years as a result of a values or policy shift that awards one actant new dominant influence over another. For example, Developers can be seen to have emergent influence on Home Sellers due to their unregulated purchasing habits of the housing stock in Canada, which typically pay over-asking to secure more capital for development prospects. A pink dashed non-directional line represents an oscillating relationship between actants. This speaks of influences that are known or anticipated to change directions within this system, in relationship to factors such as government shifts or cultural trends. For instance, actants such as the Provincial Government (Doug Ford Administration) has defunded or regulated various aspects of Civic Services and Education Systems, where a different government administration may be influenced by lack of these services to base their platform and budget on.

For simplicity, the map has been separated into two visualizations where each actant has a maximum of one connection in each map; The first shows the relationships between

actants through **Alliances, Conflicts,** and **Broken Connections** (*Figure 4*)**.** The second illustrates the influence between actants, illustrating the **Influence, Emerging Influence, and Oscillating Influence** (*Figure 5*). While these maps can seem overwhelming at first, they are more of a process tool for the team to identify how actants interact within the system. This can identify knowledge gaps, and aid in the development of a succinct system map. A combined visualization of this Spaghetti Diagram, where actants may have a maximum of two connections shown can be found in Appendix C.

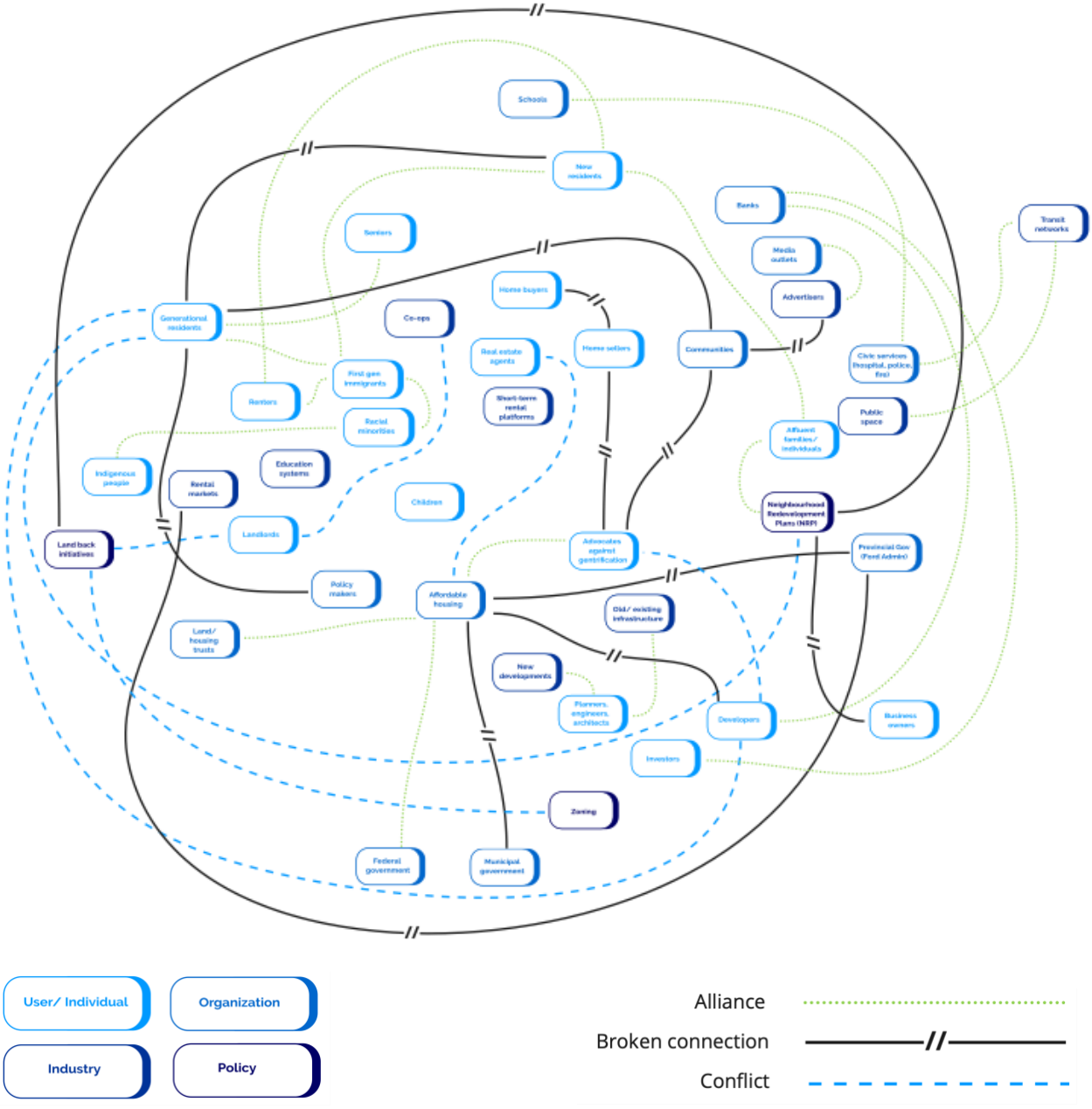


Figure 4: Spaghetti Diagram - Alliances, Conflicts, and Broken Connections

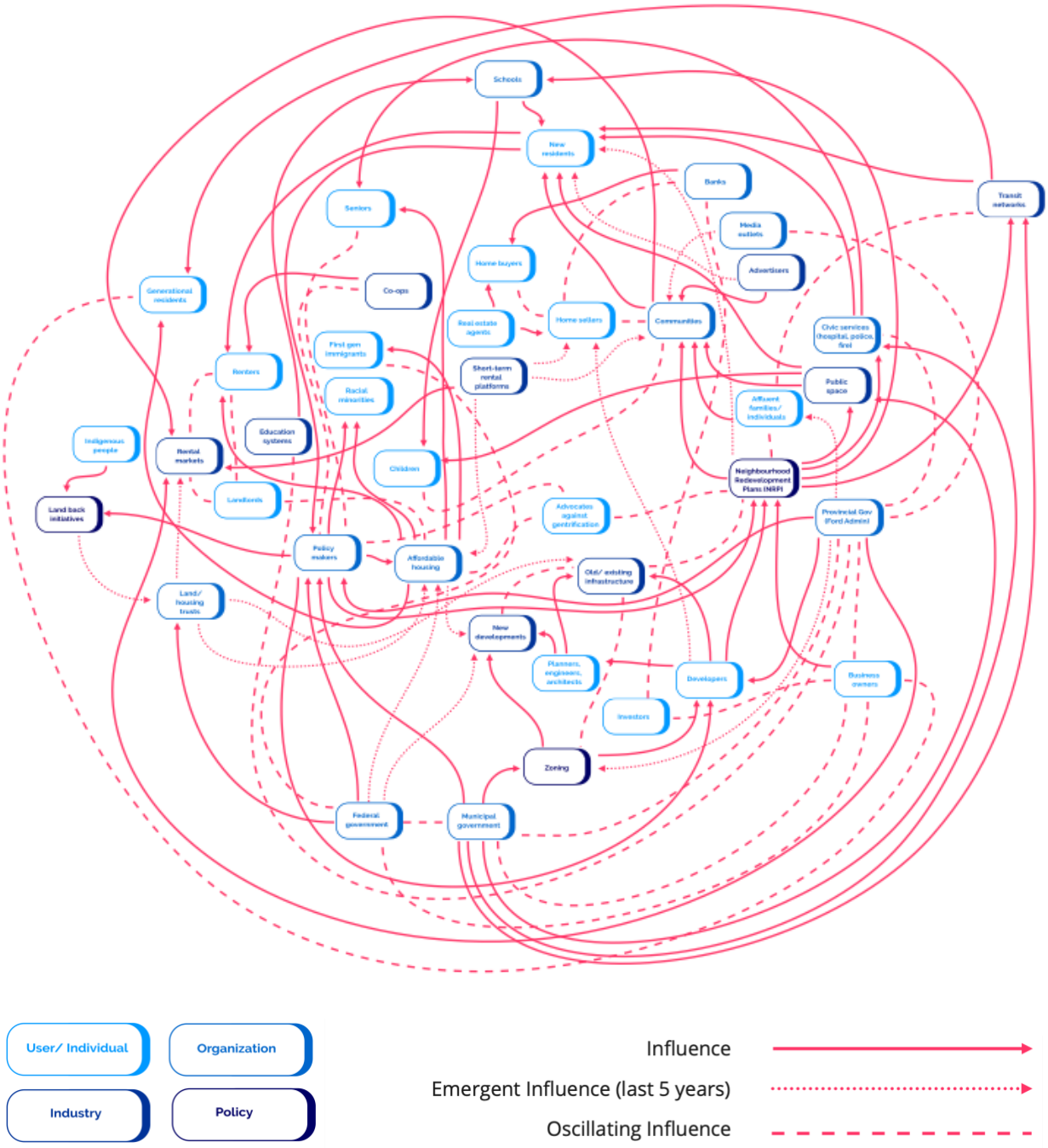


Figure 5: Spaghetti Diagram - Influence between Actants

When analyzing these maps, a few notable things come to light. Looking at the relationships in Figure 4, we see a cluster of actants in alliance with each other. Notably, generational residents are aligned with other users within the system including seniors and racial minorities. Generational residents are also visualized to have conflicting

relationships with Neighborhood Redevelopment Plans and developers and broken connections to new residents and their communities, seen through previous literature review in Section 1.1. Some actants also have multiple nodes of connection to different levels of the system, such as affordable housing. Affordable housing is connected to every level of government, conflicting with municipal and provincial, but aligned with housing goals of the current federal government. In addition, we see how new & generational residents interact with each other within the system, and how the impact & influence of new residents are practiced through alliances and influences with other powerful actors within the system, such as affluent Families, or policy makers. Section 3 extracts a System Map out of the Spaghetti Diagram and speaks more directly on qualitative findings.

Understanding how actants are connected to one another is an important step to craft a clear System Map. While interactions are codified within the Spaghetti Diagram, there is still an opportunity to further annotate these interactions between actant in relation to the socio-cultural context of gentrification. The next section introduces a tool designed for this research that visualizes the various drivers across policy, industry, organization, and users that flow between actant levels. The Driver Matrix is a tool to demonstrate how abstract sociological foundations can inform concepts & theories that influence individual actions, within the system of gentrification.

2.3c Driver Matrix

Overview

A Driver Matrix was created for this research as a means to annotate socio-cultural drivers between actants. Created out of the literature review, this matrix allowed the actant's interactions to be codified through these drivers, across various layers within the system, including the User/Individual, Organization, Industry, and Policy. It consists of a vertical axis with labels from top to bottom as Abstract, Concept/ Theory and Action/ Interaction, respectively. Similarly, the axis is also labelled from top to bottom as Policy, Industry, Organization, and Individual/ User in correlation to the actants in the related system. The matrix allows for the transformation of terminology such as "Law & Order" at the top, to "Regulation" in the center, and 'Redlining" & "Seeking Safety" near the bottom. These drivers are intended to be used in a gradient, depending on the actants interacting. For instance, if an individual actant is connected to a policy actant, they may borrow terms from all levels of the matrix (**Abstract, Concepts, Action/ Interaction)** to contextualize the interaction, while an individual-to-individual interaction will likely only use **Actions**. This matrix is intended to accompany a system map or loop diagram and serve as a key

reference for the viewer to understand how these typically intangible drivers relate to the nature and type of actant interactions.

Rationale

It can be difficult to standardize interactions between actants depending on the different layers of society they belong to (i.e. Policy, Industry, Organization, User/Individual). Consequently, a way to illustrate the shift in verbiage between actants in relation to their level is a necessary tool to ensure that information is not lost when annotating drivers across each level of the system.

Application & Outcomes

For this body of research, eighteen (18) drivers have been plotted in the matrix. Table 4 approximates each driver into their respective category. As this matrix is intended to be a gradient between layers of the system, these categories are not strictly prescribed to each column.

ABSTRACT	**CONCEPT/ THEORY**		**ACTION/ INTERACTION**
POLICY	**INDUSTRY**	**ORGANIZATION**	**INDVIDUAL/ USER**
Identity	Privilege	The Right to a City	Seeking Community
Law & Order	City Marketing	Racism/ Discrimination	Maintaining Tradition
Safety & Security	Revanchism	Redlining	Seeking Safety
Norms/ Values	Perceived Value	Conspicuous Consumption	Following Trends
		Regulation	Imposing Values

Table 4: Socio-Cultural Drivers of Gentrification

On the abstract level, actants related to policy employ drivers such as Identity, Law & Order, Safety & Security, and Norms/ Values which exist as broad societal brackets, informing socialization and the formation of institutions. Concepts and theory within the matrix are prescribed to both Industry and Organization and speak on the middle of socio-cultural drivers within the system of gentrification. Industry employs drivers such as Privilege, City Marketing, Revanchism, Perceived Value which stem from socialized norms in the pervious category. Similarly, these drivers further form bias, and silos of behaviors on a more granular organizational level within this system. Drivers at the Organization level manifest as The Right to a City, Racism/Discrimination, Redlining, Conspicuous

Consumption, and Regulation. These concepts and theories create tangible socio-cultural structures for individuals to navigate, where the final level of the matrix represents actions or interactions of Individuals or Users within the system of gentrification. These drivers all contain adjectives to speak on how they relate to users, and include Seeking Community, Maintaining Tradition, Seeking Safety, Following Trends, and Imposing Values. Figure 6 plots these drivers within a vertical axis and uses directional arrows to propose connections between individual drivers across and within actant levels.

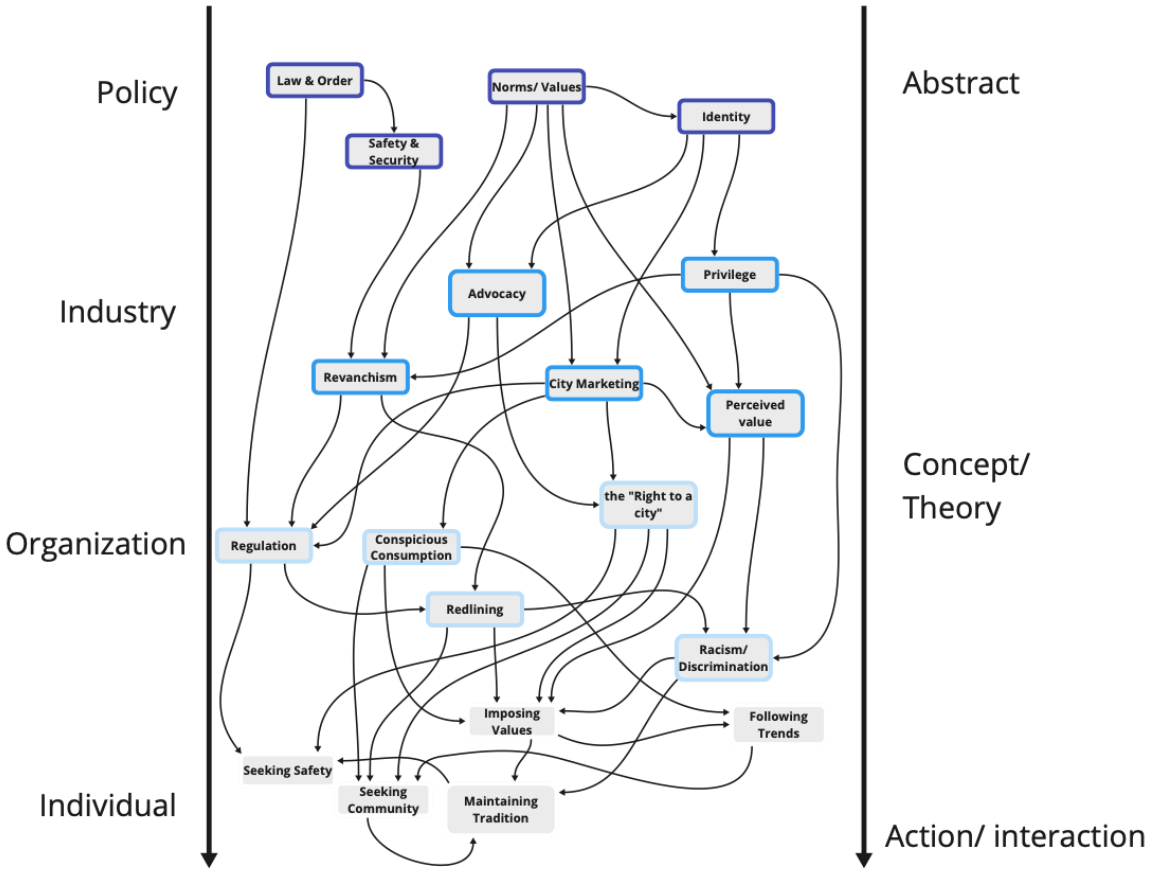


Figure 6: Driver Matrix

This matrix is intended to be added to the legend of a System Map, where these drivers are referenced as a means to annotate the overall system. Arrows connect each driver both vertically, between levels, and horizontally, within levels. Notable paths show Law & Order connected to Regulation which branches to either connection to individual actions of Seeking Safety or Redlining to Racism & Discrimination to Imposing Values. These differing pathways can demonstrate how structures of regulation can impact different actants with

the system. Additionally, we see how a conceptual level driver such as City Marketing is influenced by and influences many other drivers. This demonstrates how integral this driver is to the system and how varying perceptions of community can be portrayed by the inclusion or omission of certain industries. Application of this matrix will be in Chapter 3, where the tool is used to annotate interactions within the System Map.

2.3d Summary

This section reviewed the various methods to visualize the complex system of gentrification in Toronto. By understanding the relative impact and influence of actants across all levels of system, and how they may interact or influence one another, groundwork for synthesis is possible with this data. The next section extracts a System Map from the previous visualizations of gentrification and utilizes the Driver Matrix to annotate interactions between key actants.

3.0 SYNTHESIS

This chapter is a cumulation of the previous work introduced in the report and aims to weave previous data, methods, and context together to develop a plausible narrative within gentrification systems in Toronto. With respect to the research questions that have framed this research, the analysis brings together methodological tools to inform the development of a succinct system map. This map is then annotated through socio-cultural drivers to develop a narrative and inform the final section of research.

3.1 SYSTEM MAP

In reviewing the Spaghetti Diagram (Section 2.3b), certain interactions of interest between actants informed the development of a System Map. The System Map (*Figure 7*) demonstrates the interactions between new and generational residents as well as policy makers and neighborhood redevelopment initiatives. The direct environment in which they are situated is also included and relates back to services provided to the community and the development and maintenance of infrastructure.

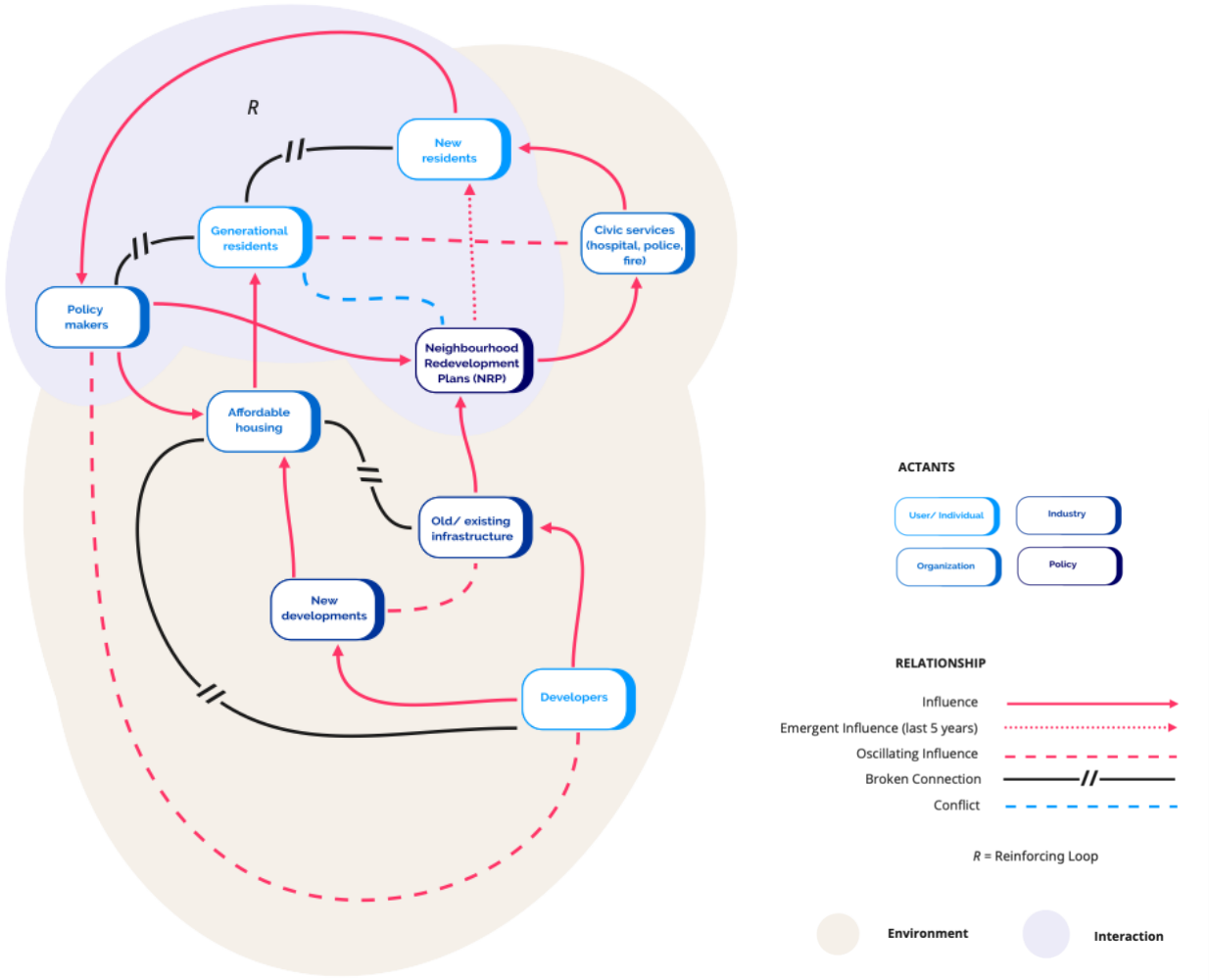


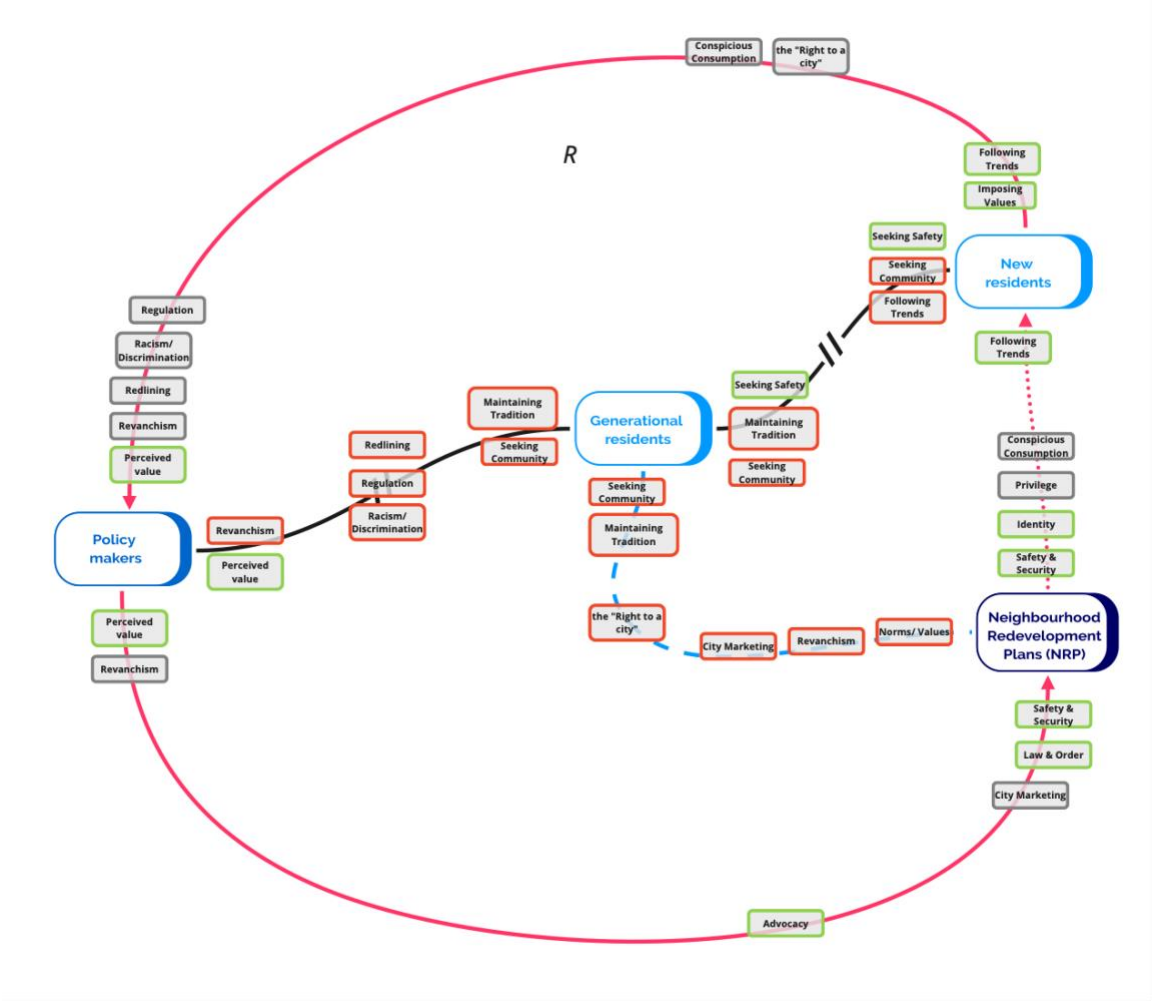
Figure 7: System Map

The narrative within this map positions policy makers as key actants for shaping the built environment who are influenced by the values and actions of new residents. This is since new residents hold significant power within the system (see Section 2.3a) and could bring economic prosperity to a community if the environment attracts them (see City Marketing in Section 1.1). As a result, policy makers enact redevelopment initiates, such as a neighborhood redevelopment plan (NRP), to update and expand infrastructure in prospect of these new residents. This also influences developers who can provide density and other services to a changing community through new developments and redeveloping existing buildings. A NRP can also lead to the expansion of civic services, such as hospitals, fire, and police in an area to ensure the needs of the new residents are met. If an area can attract new, more affluent, residents, this can increase property values for homes and businesses. This series of interaction creates a reenforcing loop (visualized as an *R),* which

serves as a simplified, and idealized, representation of gentrification. This system becomes more complicated when considering the needs of existing residents, where redevelopment can disconnect them from their previous lives, and new infrastructure can price them out through increased taxes and the closure of essential businesses. Additionally, enhanced civic services can bring harm to marginalized groups through over-policing and creating an emphasis on cleanliness and safety. Developers typically need to adhere to an affordable housing minimum in developments, meaning new housing will fall short of balancing the damages gentrification can do to residents who cannot afford to remain in their communities.

3.1a Existing System Loop

Isolating the interaction within the System Map (*Figure 7*) allows for a closer look at the reenforcing loop within the system. By annotating the interactions between each actant through applying drivers from the Driver Matrix, the Existing System Loop (*Figure 8*) reveals a narrative between the generational residents and other actants to understand the loop by.



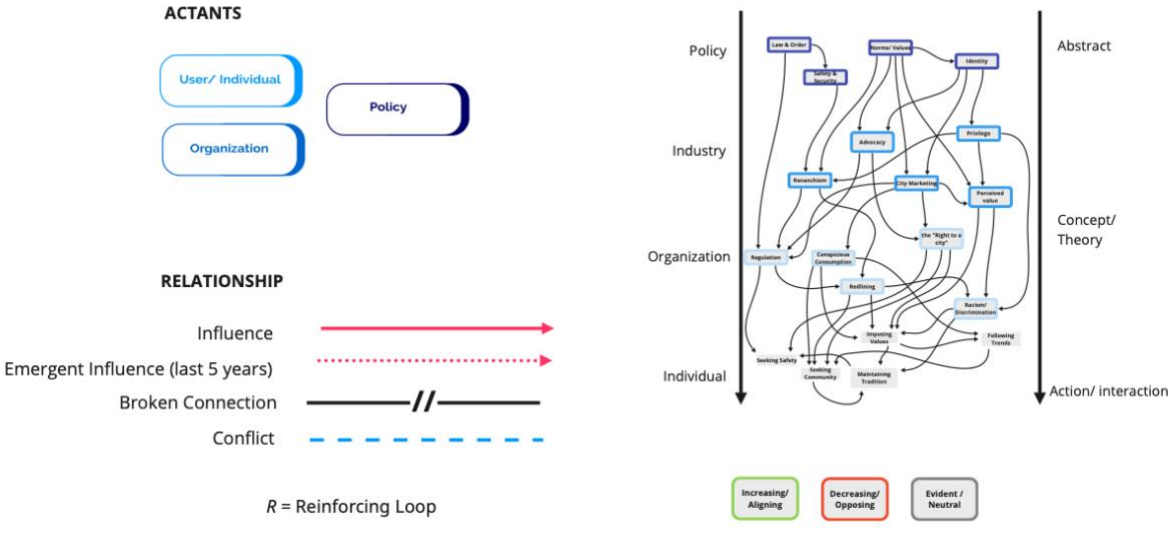


Figure 8: Existing System Loop

This system demonstrates a narrative of generational residents being surrounded by a repetitive cycle that creates an entirely new, consumable, and trendy space to attract new residents and visitors. All drivers are aligned or neutral within this loop and generally benefit those within it. However, stuck in the middle, with little say or power to stop this cycle are the residents that currently live in the area undergoing gentrification.

The drivers demonstrate that the relationship between the generational residents and the new residents, policy makers, and NRPs is one of conflict and power imbalance. While generational residents aspire to maintain tradition through cultural values and seek/ keep community within the neighborhood, many actions of the other actants conflict with these needs. For instance, policy makers don't do enough to protect existing residents, so their community remains affordable and desirable to them. While they may both agree on the perceived value of the area, policy makers employ revanchist policies such as regulation of space and redlining neighborhoods through tax and other infrastructure decisions. This follows a discriminatory or racist legacy and excludes the residents from the fate of their neighborhoods. Similarly, the NRPs follow a directive of branding the neighborhood as something new and exciting for others to benefit from (See City Marketing from Section 1.1), while ignoring the previous community and their relationship with space. The drivers of policy makers and NRPs reinforce the mutual othering experienced by the two resident groups as their perceptions of community is very different from one another. New residents are pressured to utilize consumable elements within a city, whereas generational residents find community through tradition, supporting neighbors, and causal use of space at low or no cost.

In summary, systems of generations operate around these generational resident groups, while ignoring their needs and values. While this seems despairing, it opens a necessary dialogue around how unity between the two resident groups can be achieved through the exploration of values, and how connections between shared identity and culture can bring people together in times of uncertainty. The next chapter entertains a plausible system change through challenging existing inequities within the system of gentrification and proposes ideological components of de-gentrification to achieve it.

4.0 FINDINGS

This final chapter of research proposes a narrative for change within the annotated system, taking a closer look at how new residents can sympathize with existing members of the communities they relocate to. This section speaks on certain gentrifying demographics,

such as queer people, as an entry point for de-gentrification efforts. This is done through unpacking both resident group's conflicting drivers. Additionally, the concept of power-law is referenced to explain how a corrective reenforcing loop can be introduced into the existing system to improve the relationships with the generational residents and the remainder of the system. While this section does not propose solutions, it highlights which certain interactions could be identified and reframed in a more equitable way.

4.1 CHANGE NARRATIVE

So far, this research has followed a process of expansion and contraction to answer the questions of how values between actants can be visualized and annotated within Toronto's gentrification system, and whether de-gentrification can be framed as mutually desirable between new and generational residents. Writer and urbanist Jane Jacobs speaks about how culture is lost through continued "successes" in a population. (*Jacobs, 2004).* The loss of culture can result from globalization, economic successes, or any shared action that moves a group away from their roots and into something more automated and superficial, and successes are not shared equally. Is what is gained worth what is lost? This research continuously highlights the erosion of culture and narrative of conflict between resident groups resulting from their differing understandings (and expectations) of community in the pursuit of gentrification. Findings from this research highlights the area of most plausible change within the system and explores variables such as diversity through immigration and the growing rejection of consumer norms as an opening to unify drivers and craft a shared understanding of community through de-gentrification.

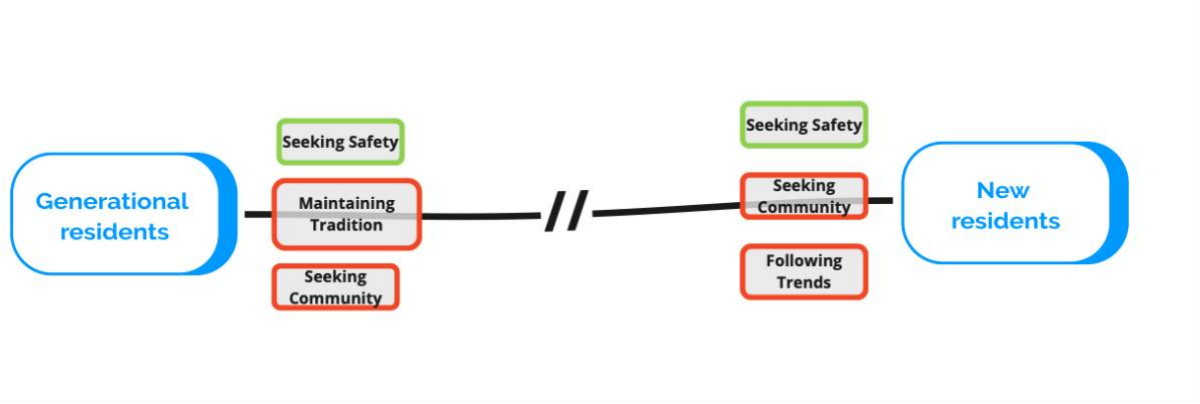


Figure 9: Existing System

Currently, the existing system (*Figure 9*) is operating with a broken connection between the resident groups. Broadly, they may both value safety as a facet of community but have very different expectations of the community they seek. Where generational residents may

value culture and tradition, new residents look for consumer culture framed as community (*McCann, 2020*) and look towards businesses and commerce when seeking community and find close friends and coworkers as core people within this practice. Jane Jacobs argues the importance of acquaintances and strangers who share your neighborhood to guide individuals who are looking for further meaning (*Jacobs, 2004*). So, how might we make acquaintanceship and connection through shared space mutually desirable? This is a vital first step to allow resident groups to unify, and work towards mutually benefiting the communities they reside in.

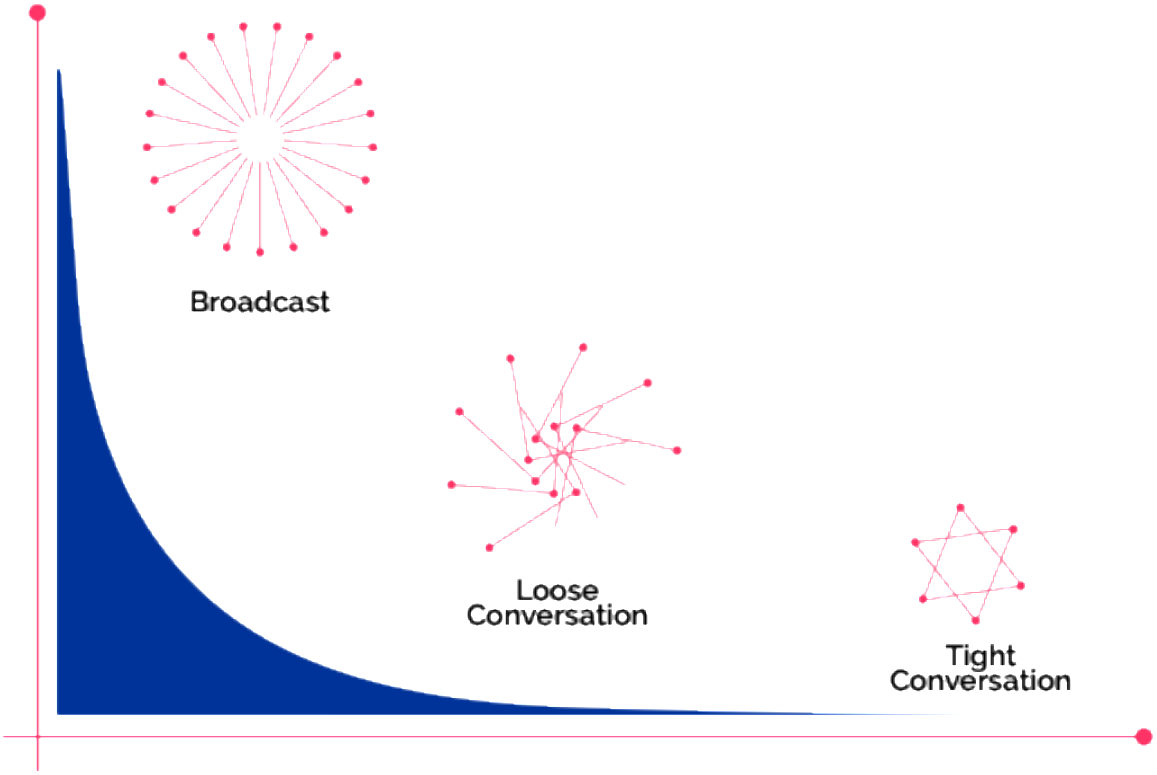


Figure 10: Conversational Patterns in Power Law Distribution

One way this can be framed is through a Power-Law Distribution Model (*Figure 10*), which demonstrates how efforts by a dedicated few are able to have a great impact on the system overall. This theory is covered by author and academic Clay Shirky when speaking on Wikipedia's success as a case study for how personal motives can translate into collaborative production (*2008*). Using a platform where people voluntarily offer their time and expertise to contribute to a collective mission of accurate, open access information is an inspiring story on how people self-motivate to come together if the opportunity presents itself. Power-Law Theory shows that there doesn't need to be participation by every actant

within a system to improve the overall outcome of it. This is due to how this information forms, where highly invested efforts are broadcast and smaller contributions remain as tight knit conversations (*Shirky, 2008*). This imbalance is capable of driving large social systems due to its requirement that only a dedicated few lead the charge and renders an "average" participant nonexistent as all contributions slot into a predictable curve.

As mentioned earlier, many gentrifiers have motives beyond following trends that can be unpacked and leveraged to unify understandings of community between resident groups. For instance, queer people prove as an interesting example of gentrifiers. Being an oppressed group themselves, they were led by necessity to find safety and community within a city to avoid discrimination, violence, and further marginalization. Their priorities became safety, community, and affordability (especially for young people). Historically, queer people have existed on the societal fringes and must seek community to find safety, but times have changed to an extent. Today, many queer people in cities such as Toronto can feel safe throughout many neighborhoods. But their history remains. If queer gentrifiers were given the resources, could they better align with generational residents through their shared values of safety and community? And how might this trigger system change to desire de-gentrification?

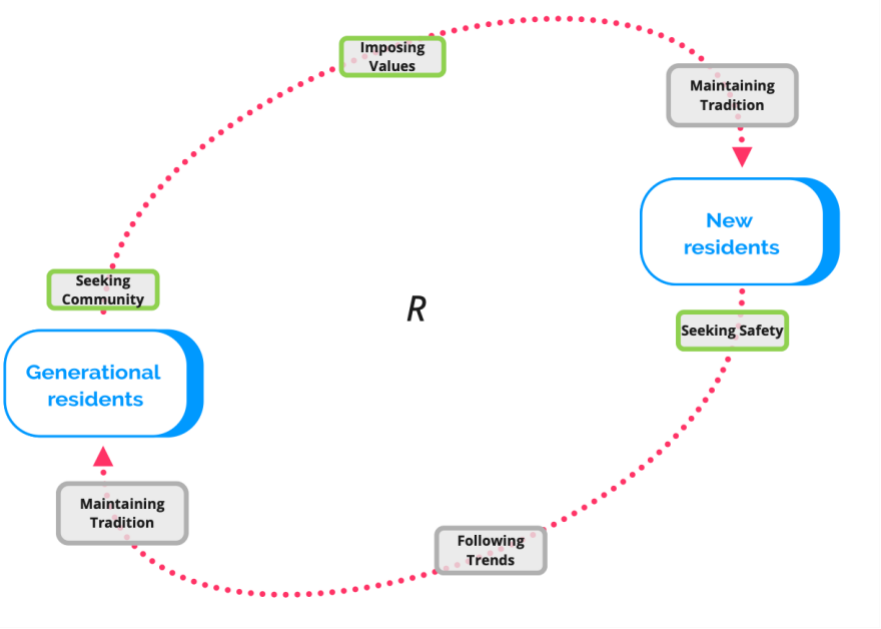


Figure 11: Proposed System Change

The proposed system change looks at which few new residents can be leveraged to desire and champion change within their system through their shared connections to the

generational residents. By enabling select new residents to sympathize with existing residents through various aspects of their identity, there seeds an opportunity for system change. The Proposed System Change (*Figure 11*) aspires to create a reinforcing loop between the resident groups, where actions are positively building and compounding on each other. It illustrates how tradition can be maintained within the loop through sympathizing with generational residents, and how the shared value for safety for new residents can be leveraged in a way that supports the previous culture and identity of the community.

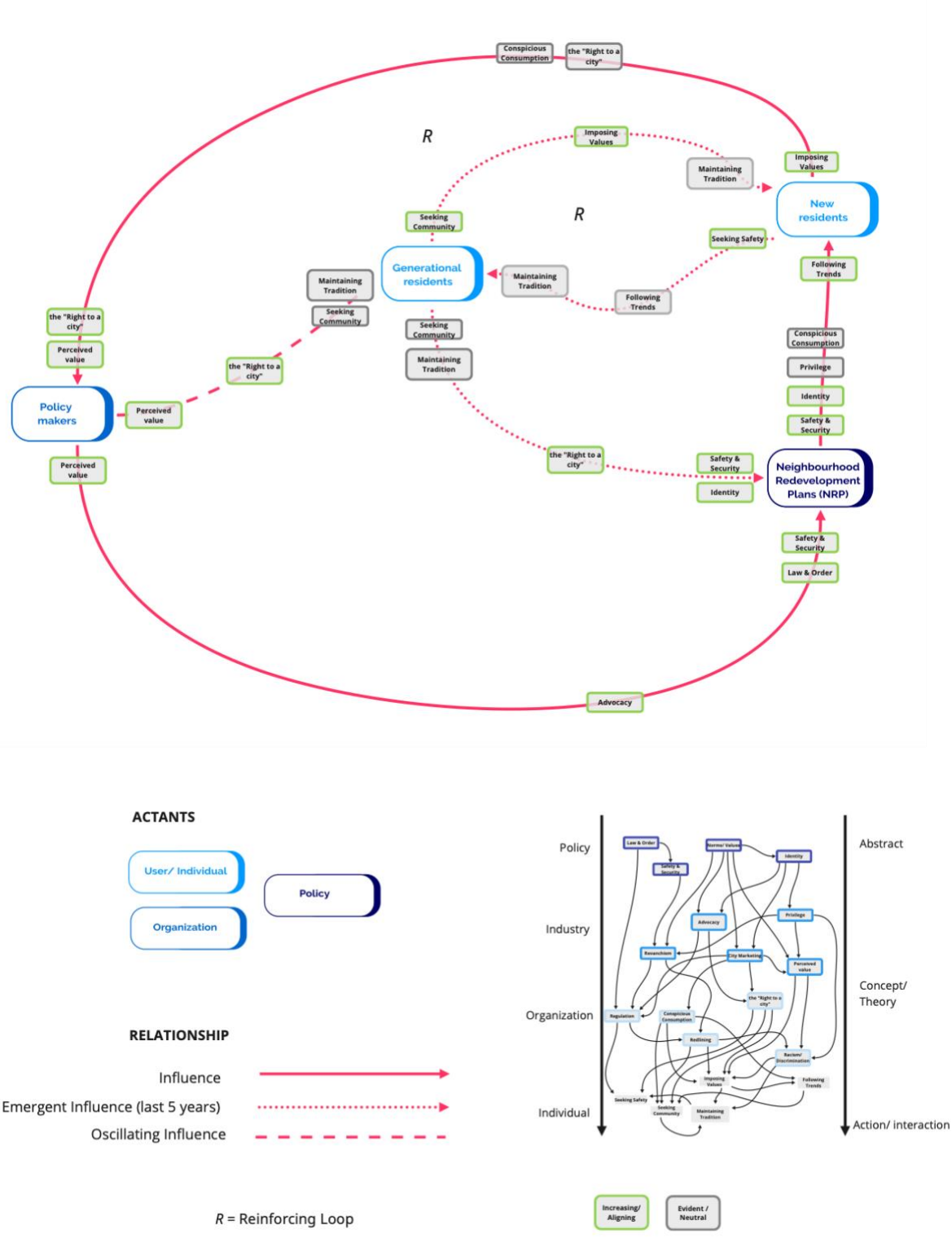


Figure 11: New System Loop

This system change demonstrates how a dedicated few can be utilized to shift the perspectives of new residents by normalizing the de-gentrified perspectives of community within their neighborhood. Ultimately, if more new residents can sympathize with generational residents on how community can look, it may shift the overall narrative towards their needs when advocating for certain policies within their neighborhood. Since new residents have far more influence and impact within the context of gentrification (see Actant Map in Section 2.2), this can influence how development is approached, and what safeguards policy makers put in place in prospect of these new residents.

To new residents, this could mean behavioral change from the consumption that NRPs and City Marketing perpetuates. But the question remains -- how can we make this desirable? As a starting point, we look for ourselves in others. This act may look generational, cultural, or relational, but must be convincing enough to bridge class differences.

4.1b Future Actions

More research into how unifying events have staying power in communities may need to be done to suggest direct ways this change could happen. Events like these were seen as recently as 2021, during the lockdown imposed by Covid-19, where a pandemic had the temporary unintended benefit of unifying people through shared values. Events like these challenged societal systems and resulted in the flexibility of working from home, improved one's relationship with the natural environment, and emphasized the need for communities to combat isolation. Remnants of this time still exist today but are under constant threat of reverting to a pre-pandemic model of life, where workplaces require 40 hours of in-person dedication, and what is left once back in your community is spared for close friends and family. Ideally, the next step of this research would work towards testing this theory on a sample demographic of new, queer, residents, to see whether sympathy towards generational residents can be aspired for and measured to advocate for policy change within a gentrifying neighborhood.

5.0 CONCLUSION

At the time of writing this, the world is going through many changes. In Canada, tensions with the United States and threats of recession, war, and climate emergency are all realities with the power to divide, but with the right resources, have the potential to unify. Not all systems are meant to stay intact, and in fact, advocating for change is something we can all do if given the opportunity. With global relationships seeming less and less aligned, there is an urgency (and opportunity) to build community through showing up for those around you. It's time to start identifying these resources and ask how we can empower individuals to come together in the best interest of their communities. Clay Shirky proposes the power of love as a renewable building material, allowing for mending, reconstruction, and preservation. He notes "when people care enough, they can come together and accomplish things of a scope and longevity that were previously impossible; they can do big things for love." (*2008*). By strengthening these ties between neighbors, proximity to each other can be a means to advocate for the preservation of space through equity and shared values.

This research challenges differences between actors and identifies a process to visualize and annotate opportunities for change within a system. Through identifying how socio-cultural drivers influence and impact those in a system, barriers can be identified and reframed into a narrative for change. Exemplifying gentrification systems in Toronto, Canada, the influence and impact of actors within the system were visualized to show how they interact with each other and where change might be most plausible based on shared socio-cultural factors. This research found that for unification to be possible, new and generational residents must have the opportunity to sympathize through shared values, overpowering the patterns of consumption and displacement that are common within gentrification systems. For this to be possible, select new resident groups such as queer people are exemplified as those who may find de-gentrification desirable through their unique history and shared cultural, generational, or relational aspects to gentrifiers.

Further research is needed to identify how this can be translated into a real urban context, and suggests this process be reviewed and built on by peers to ensure diverse perspectives and ethical considerations. Additionally, this research did not engage directly with generational residents, as this would need to be done with extensive care and training, which this research timeline did not allow.

We know what unification can look like in time of disparity, with shared individual motives working towards a collective goal. But can this unity emerge without crisis? And what is the

role of policy makers, residents, and community spaces to create the staying power for unifying initiatives? Advocating for a desirable, unified, community takes time and commitment, and the openness to connect with your neighbor.

Community should come at a cost, but not a fee. Community is fueled by culture, tradition, and love, not marketing trends. It is not exclusive but rather holds the power to uplift those without the means to advocate for themselves. Our future in Toronto could be something beautiful, away from disparity between old and new, rich and poor, & private and public. Maybe tomorrow our future will begin through an unexpected conversation, and we can only begin to imagine what is possible once the pendulum swings. If we care enough, we can do big things for love.

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7.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY / READING LIST

DARK AGE AHEAD

Jacobs, Jane. DARK AGE AHEAD. Vintage Canada. 2024

- *DARK AGE AHEAD* is one of the many texts produced by urbanist Jane Jacobs throughout her career. This text speaks directly on culture as a reasoning for the problems we currently face in North American cities. As we have focused so much on successes and left tradition behind, she warns of an impending cultural dark age. Multiple sections of this book are referenced throughout, and speaks to the narrative urgency in which this report is written in.

GENTRIFICATION

Lees, Loretta, et al. *GENTRIFICATION*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

- *GENTRIFICATION* documents the history and phenomena of gentrification globally. The section referenced in this research spans pp 91-275 which directly draws on gentrification in large cities within the 2000s. Notably, it exemplifies Toronto's Queen West and Parkdale neighborhoods in 2001, where large-scale redevelopment occurred and resulted in the gentrification of the area. This reading also introduces many perspectives within these contexts and offers various nuances in gentrification such as queer people's necessity for safety in cities as pre-determinant of gentrification. Additionally, this section speaks on the future of gentrification and unpacks the "business case" for gentrification and weighs the impacts on different classes within this context. It is important to view gentrification as the complicated occurrence it is, and while it is not exclusively bad nor good, it disproportionately impacts low income, marginalized communities. While this text is outdated to an extent, it is important to anchor current happenings to previous cycles and confirm or deny previous predictions of the (now present) future.

HERE COMES EVERYBODY: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations

Shirky, Clay. *HERE COME EVERYBODY: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*. Penguin Group, 2008.

- *HERE COMES EVERYBODY* draws from social theory and explores how collective action does not need to come from structured organizational initiatives, rather, from community and shared individual goals. This research references Pp 109-142, which details the success of Wikipedia which leveraged personal interests to create a collective product. The primary interest of this research is the data surrounding the Power-law distribution Figure 10 & 11, and how this formula can be applied to other systems, such as gentrification. While this text does not engage directly with housing and space, it borrows processes from other sociological discourses and is intended to broaden the understanding of collective action.

TAKE THE CITY: Voices of Radical Municipalism

Toney, Jason. *TAKE THE CITY: Voices of Radical Municipalism*. Black Rose Books. 2021

- *TAKE THE CITY* focuses on human geography and collective action as a tool to reclaim cities and resist inequity. Referenced sections include pages 47-66, detailing the history of the Political Action Front (FRAP) in Montreal, Quebec in the early to mid-70s. This is a vital reference point to understand how resistive action has led to fairer representation within Montreal, stalling, and sometimes actively resisting gentrification in comparison to national trends across other major cities. While viewing Montreal as a case study, in this research, it is important to understand how tight knit community and shared cultural values enabled such a successful outcome.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSING

McCabe, Brian J., and Eva Rosen. *THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSING: How Home Shape Our Social Lives*. The University of Chicago Press, 2023.

- *THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOUSING* details the sociological context and implications of housing in the United States of America. Recognizing there are key distinctions between Canadian and American housing systems, there are many key principles of sociology that can be interpreted from this text and applied to other secondary research. The main section that will be referenced in this book is pp 67-133, which contains a collection of chapters that discuss Indigenous perspectives, affordable housing as public health, housing discrimination systems, eviction, and American manufactured housing such as trailer parks. As mentioned, this text is to be used

primarily for discussion and concepts, as there is a larger community of Housing Sociologists in the USA.

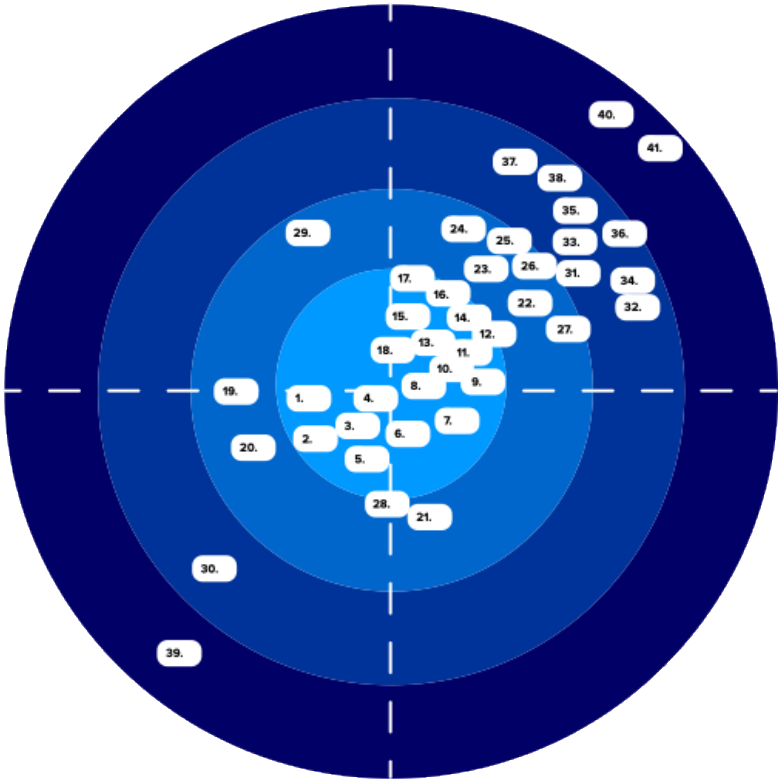
Methodological Texts

Design Journeys through Complex Systems: Practice Tools for System Design

Jones, Peter, and Kristel Van Ael. *Design Journeys Through Complex Systems: Practice Tools for Systemic Design*. BIS Publishers, 2022.

- *Design Journeys Through Complex Systems* serves as the main framework for this research methodology, which with be further discussed in the Methods section below. While it will not be referenced throughout this research paper, many tools and processes are attributed to this text. Notable methods include Actants Map, System Map, Story Loop(s).

APPENDIX B: FULL ACTANT MAP



01. First generation immigrants
02. Seniors
03. Generational residents
04. Racial minorities
05. Indigenous people
06. Advocates against gentrifictaion
07. Renters
08. Business owners
09. Children
10. Real estate agents
11. Home buyers
12. New residents
13. Landlords
14. Developers
15. Investors
16. Affluent families/ individuals
17. planners, engineers, architects
18. Home sellers
19. Land/ housing trusts
20. Affordable housing
21. Communities
22. Civic services (hospital/ police/ fire)
23. Schools
24. Media outlets
25. Provincial government (Ford admin)
26. Municipal government
27. Banks
28. Federal government
29. Policy makers
30. Co-ops
31. Old/existing infrastructure
32. Rental markets
33. Education systems
34. Public space
35. New developments
36. Transit networks
37. Advertisers
38. Short-term rental platforms
39. Land back initiatives
40. Neighbourhood Redevelopment Plans (NRP)
41. Zoning

APPENDIX C: FULL SPAGHETTI DIAGRAM