PLACING HOUSING POLICY:
PLANS, CHALLENGES AND ADVOCACY IN VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

by

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ABSTRACT

As regulatory frameworks, social housing policies are intended to assess, frame and reflect the general ideals and priorities of societies regarding poor and 'hard to house' populations. Yet, the extent to which abstract principles of well-being are achieved is dependent upon the daily practices, decisions and discretion of a multitude of advocates from across the housing sector. This research is a multi-scalar analysis of the relationship between urban housing policies and the practices of housing advocates involved in maintaining and creating housing for low-income populations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The work focuses on how people and places are represented in policy documents and explores how and if these constructions are reproduced in the practices of housing advocates. Using a poststructuralist framework, I argue that current municipal policy is based on a neoliberal approach to housing provision that is reflected in both the challenges and strategies to housing vulnerable populations.

Keywords: homelessness; housing; policy; Vancouver; Downtown Eastside

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1: INTRODUCTION: POLICY, PEOPLE AND PLACE

> The Downtown Eastside (DTES) has a lot to offer. Because low-income people have lived, worked and played together in the DTES for 100 years, we've learned a lot. We are not marginalized here. We are the majority…[b]ecause there are so many of us, we have been able to create things that work especially for us…[w]e're proud of these accomplishments and, given the right conditions, we could do much more. The DTES has had a hand in shaping cutting edge social policy for the region and the country (CCAP website, April, 28, 2009).

Every Tuesday morning, Wendy Pedersen, a member of Vancouver's Carnegie

Community Action Project (CCAP), sits down at her computer and writes the *Tuesday*

Morning Paragraph, a brief statement about how the Downtown Eastside (DTES) is

envisioned by the people who live there. Using quotes from mapping and community

visioning sessions, Pedersen describes residents' hopes of retaining the DTES as a low-

income community, one that is close-knit, inclusive and retains the many strengths of its

current residents. Drawing from residents', as well as her own personal experiences,

Pedersen argues that the DTES needs to be conceived of as a longstanding and socially

valuable low-income neighbourhood as opposed to a neighbourhood of problems in need

of change and redevelopment and written into city policy as such, in order to secure the

place for the people who call it home. Pedersen's advocacy bridges the divide between

city housing policy initiatives and the DTES residents to whom they seek to provide

housing. Her work exemplifies the links between housing policies and the ways in which

people and place are constructed by housing advocates. Through a telling of the DTES as

a healthy and vibrant low-income community, from the perspectives of its residents',

Pederson advocates for changes to government policy. These constructions can serve to produce (and have the potential to reproduce or transform) the places and people described in housing policy.

Housing is an integral facet of social welfare and it is a central aspect of life, linked to health and socio economic status. It is considered to be a crucial marker of identity and inequality and it is a key concern of state policy and of civil society (Evans, Wells, Chan & Saltzman, 2000; Bryant, 2004; Dunn, 2002; 2000; Hwang, 2004). As regulatory frameworks, social housing policies are intended to assess, frame and reflect the general ideals and priorities of societies regarding poor and 'hard to house' populations. In general, these policies posit housing as an integral component of social well-being. Yet, the extent to which abstract principles of well-being are achieved is dependent upon the daily practices, decisions, and discretion of a multitude of planners and politicians responsible for creating policy and a diverse array of housing service providers responsible for operationalizing those policies on the ground.

This leads both to a consideration of urban housing strategies and the ways in which places and people are constructed and framed in the policy documents. It also demands a consideration of whether or not these constructions are similarly interpreted and reproduced uniformly by housing providers. The purpose of this research is to explore how the people and places that are the object of social housing policies are conceived within written policy documents and how those policies function on the ground, through the contingent practices of housing advocates who operate in reference to their own conceptions and constructions of service sites and recipients. In this work, I focus specifically on how people and places are produced within policy documents and

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explore if and how these constructions are reproduced in the practices of the social housing advocates in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Research in geography and cognate disciplines tends to focus on the broad contours and consequences of housing policy. These literatures show how policy shapes the contemporary urban landscape through the creation of uneven geographies of segregation, gentrification and health (e.g., Massey & Denton, 1993; Wyly & Hammel, 2004; Dunn & Hayes, 2000; Dunn, 2002). Geographers have also focused on the production and modification of place through changes in the housing market, city regulation and planning, the concentration of poverty, racial segregation, the construction of gendered spaces, displacement and rights-claims (e.g., Newman & Wyly, 2005; Zukin, 1995; Smith, 1996; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Sibley, 1995; Mitchell, 2003).

Yet, little geographical research has examined the microscales and everyday spaces of housing policy, specifically the role of housing advocates in operationalizing state and city housing policy in specific settings (but see DeVerteuil, 2003, Gurstein & Small, 2005). The research discussed in this thesis contributes to the literature by engaging in a qualitative study of the perspectives and experiences of housing advocates in British Columbia. Housing advocates are not simply defined as people working outside the state but are also government planners and politicians who formulate social housing policy and programmes, as well as staff and managers of social housing facilities responsible for enacting policy in Vancouver. This multi-scalar approach focuses on the relationship between written housing policy and programs, and the practices of housing advocates through a critical examination of the ways in which people and place are

constructed and framed in the written documents and by housing advocates. The research

is therefore guided by these questions:

1. What is the relationship between written housing policy/programs and the

   practices of housing advocates and how do they differ in their understanding of

   housing priorities?

2. In what ways are people and place constructed and framed within policy

   documents and by housing advocates?

3. What are the challenges faced and strategies employed by housing advocates in

   order to create and maintain social housing for low-income populations?

In the next section of this chapter, I contextualize issues of housing provision and

housing policy-making in Canada generally and in Vancouver, British Columbia, more

specifically. I then detail the methodological approach to this research. In Chapter 2, I

discuss geographical approaches to place-making. The chapter outlines concepts of

neoliberal structures of urban governance, discourse, binary formation, 'third space' and

the utility of poststructuralism as a basis from which to understand how power operates.

The third chapter provides a summary and analysis of City of Vancouver housing policy.

In this chapter, I identify a reliance upon neoliberal discourses of market development,

market participation and social mix within the documents and argue that these discourses

are employed as partial solutions for alleviating homelessness. In the fourth chapter, I

look to the practices of housing advocates, with particular attention to the challenges they

face and strategies they employ, in their task of providing, creating and maintaining

housing for vulnerable populations. I examine how municipal housing policy impacts the

work of advocates as well as how neoliberal conceptions of people and place are

interpreted by housing advocates. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the role of housing advocates on housing policy and suggest implications for future policies.

1.1 Increasing Homelessness

Canada is currently experiencing a major housing crisis for low-income populations (Canada Housing and Renewal Association, 2009; Laird, 2007). Most recently, the federal government in Canada estimated the number of homeless to be 150,000 (National Homelessness Initiative, 2006) and city-wide street counts indicate that homelessness and housing affordability issues are becoming increasingly prevalent across the country in cities such as Iqaluit, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver (Laird, 2007). In the city of Vancouver, there has been a twenty percent increase in the number of homeless since 2005 and a one hundred and forty-six percent increase since 2002 (Homeless Action Plan Update, 2008). In six years, the number of homeless in Vancouver has grown from 628 to 1547 (Homeless Action Plan Update, 2008). However, these numbers may underestimate actual numbers of people experiencing homelessness due to inconsistent methodologies and varying operational definitions employed in counting homeless populations, the broad geographic scope of homeless people (SPARC BC, 2005) combined with the visible/invisible nature of homelessness (Klodawsky, 2006; Fieldler, Schuurman & Hyndman, 2006).

General research suggests that Canadians lack access to housing because their incomes are too low to be able to afford the existing stock and/ or there are few vacancies and units available (Drummond, Burleton & Manning, 2004; Pomerory, 2004; Hulchanski, 2004a). While housing affordability issues affect both middle and low-income households, housing need is found to be highest among low-income households,

renters, singles and off reserve, non-farm native households and therefore it is these groups that are often referred to as those 'most in need' of housing in Canada (Drummond et al, 2004). These findings are congruous with counted homeless populations in Vancouver that were overwhelmingly represented by male (72%), and aboriginal people (32%), and that were composed of 43% who were receiving income assistance as their main source of income (GVRSCH, 2008). Many homeless people had no formal or consistent source of income at all (SPARC, 2005).

The housing system in Canada has been defined as a dualism of separate policies and standards that are essentially based on tenure. "There is a dualism-- a differential treatment of owners and renters, of those who are well off and those who are poor" (Hulchanski, 2004b, p.237). With this statement, Hulchanski argues that there is a dual system in housing provision with different benefits for owners and renters. Canada's two part housing system is comprised of both primary (80%) and secondary (20%) parts, each tied to distinct and unequal government activities, subsidies and policy trajectories (Hulchanski, 2004b). The primary part is mainly driven by the private market while the secondary part is most closely associated with the public or non-market sector. The primary sector is based upon universal rights, and designed to ensure stable levels in consumption and accumulation of housing (Hulchanski, 2004b). Comprising 80% of Canada's housing system, this sector is driven by the political rationale of the middle class, housing building, mortgage-financing and real estate industries (Hulchanski, 2004b). In contrast, the secondary system is based upon ensuring subsistence of the 'deserving' poor with minimal impediment to market function; it is designed to provide basic housing needs and select benefits to target groups (Hulchanski, 2004b). Within the

framework of a dual housing system, housing policy becomes an important driver in the adequacy, suitability and affordability of market and non-market housing for low-income populations. It is for these reasons that housing policy, policy-making, and policy-oriented advocacy are important objects of study for geographers and other social scientists. In the next section, I outline the trajectory of housing commitments made by various levels of government with specific attention to Canada's current system of housing for low-income populations.

1.2   Housing History: Understanding the Canadian Context

Over the last sixty years in Canada, the responsibility of affordable housing provision for low-income populations has gradually devolved to provincial and municipal levels of government. This shift reflects and is reflective of a change in the priorities and funding structures at senior levels of government (Carroll, 2002; Drummond, et al, 2004; Hulchanski, 2004a, McBride & McNutt, 2008). Hulchanski (2004a) outlines four distinctive periods of federal government housing involvement. The first period from 1949-1964 is characterized as a time when the federal government avoided significant involvement in housing. Few public housing units were built during that period. The decades from 1964-1984 were characterized by federal involvement in the creation of non-market, social housing and a commitment to a social safety net (Hulchanski, 2004a; Carroll, 2002; Pomeroy, 2004). In 1973, amendments were made to the National Housing Act that allowed for a new non-profit housing program and direct federal funding to non-profits and municipalities (Hulchanski, 2004a). These programs were administered through non-profit and co-op housing groups, in conjunction with an overarching federal national housing strategy (Hulchanski, 2004a).

From 1984-1993, the third period, the federal government slowly withdrew funding from social housing programs. In 1993, a watershed decision, the effects of which are still felt viscerally, stopped all direct federal funding for social housing programs. Concerns over expenditures, efficiency and the long term commitments involved in social housing programs prompted senior government to adopt policies of cash transfers or shelter allowances (a proportion of welfare that is specifically for housing/rent payments) rather than invest in the construction of new housing. Characterized by a reduction in government spending through targeted assistance (Carroll, 2002), these policies revealed an ideological view of social housing as unfair competition for market housing (Hulchanski, 2004a). The post 1993 period, has been characterized by a gradual devolution of housing responsibilities to provincial governments. In conjunction with this, this period has also been marked by major cuts to federal money transfers to provinces for social assistance programs such as the Canada Assistance Plan, post secondary education and health care.

Since their election in 2001, the Liberal government in British Columbia has administered neoliberal policy agenda, emulating one previously adopted by senior government (McBride & McNutt, 2008). Such policies were made manifest in changes to provision and responsibility for social welfare from government to various levels of community (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Hackworth & Moriah, 2006) as well as in changes to social assistance, including welfare eligibility and requirements, a decrease in minimum wage for new employees, an increase in health care premiums, and a delisting of health care and the termination of the universal prescription drug program in favour of an income based plan (McBride & McNutt, 2008).

Compensation for the loss of direct federal financial support in social welfare has resulted in the use of entrepreneurial strategies in urban governance (Harvey, 1989). This is manifest as cities become increasingly business-minded in their method of governance. Paralleling the rise of entrepreneurialism, particularly at the urban scale, has been the rise of 'participatory' approaches to governance and service provision which 'responsibilize' community members, charities, churches, non-profits, and other members of civil society and encourage them to take up the reins of social service provision, including housing (McCann, 2001). In the absence of a national housing strategy, non-profit organizations are increasingly developing partnerships with federal, provincial and municipal levels of government in the provision of housing for low-income groups. Non-profit organizations are defined as, "an incorporated association with the objective of operating without gain or profit for members or board members" (Hulchanski & Shapcott, 2004). The housing sector is now comprised of a range of operators including provincial and municipal housing agencies, faith based agencies, service clubs and community based organizations, and exhibits substantial variation in management philosophies, portfolio size (number of developments and age of building(s)), length of operation and target client group (BCNPHA, 2004).

In general, partnerships between government and non-profit organizations are characterized by subsidies that fund some of the housing costs (through land donations, amenity 'bonusing', changes to or easements in zoning regulations) and state policies that create the broad frameworks within which the housing facilities operate. The management and operation of the facilities tend to be left to the service providers (Pomeroy, 2004). Such partnerships are advantageous as they create a permanent stock of

housing units that are designed specifically to serve lower income households; in this way, non-profits, charitable organizations, and churches can help to address issues of housing affordability and supply (Pomeroy, 2004) while also providing unique, community based approaches to local problems (Drummond et al, 2004). However, the extent to which such partnerships, as manifestations of government policy commitments are able to achieve and sustain their aims is dependent upon a particular formulation of policy and the presence of a diverse array of housing advocates who are responsible for operationalizing such policy under increasingly harsh neoliberal conditions.

1.3   Methods and Sample Selection

For the purpose of understanding the relationship between social housing policies and the work of housing advocates, data was collected and analyzed from three sources: (1) City of Vancouver housing documents; (2) interviews with housing advocates; (3) participant observation in Citywide Housing Coalition events as well as attendance at conferences and community events. The method of data analysis for the City housing documents and the interview transcripts was similar. Data analysis of the documents involved reading and summarizing each document, making notes on its central purpose and the solutions proposed within it to solve the problem of homelessness. Following the interviews, each recording was transcribed. I then read each of the interview transcripts several times in order to become familiar with them and to get a sense of recurring themes. These themes (e.g., the role of the market in social housing provision) complemented ones relating to the framing of the place and its people that had formed the basis of my thesis proposal. These two sets of complementary themes provided the terms used to analyze and code the texts. Both the policy documents and interview data were

then coded (using a highlighter) to note each time people (homeless people, community, society, etc) and place (the DTES, homes, supportive housing, etc) were referred to in the documents.

The documents analyzed were *The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (2005b); *The Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supportive Housing Framework* (2007); and *The Homeless Action Plan* (2005a). Together, these documents constitute a framework for action intended to significantly reduce or end homelessness for vulnerable populations within ten years. *The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (2005b) has the purpose of creating a revitalization strategy with specific attention to the existing low-income population of the neighbourhood. While *The Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supportive Housing Framework* (2007), and *The Homeless Action Plan* (2005a) do not explicitly focus on the Downtown Eastside, these documents were chosen because of their emphasis on populations experiencing mental health and addiction and those who are considered to be low-income, homeless or 'at risk' of homelessness. These characteristics are prominent in populations living in the Downtown Eastside.

The second source of research data was ten open-ended interviews that were conducted with housing advocates who work in the DTES (See Appendix A for interview guide). Housing advocates are often members of multiple groups and study participants were: a city councillor, housing co-ordinator, Member of the Legislative Assembly, director, manager and frontline workers of non-profit housing organizations, a community activist and a researcher who work to find, create and maintain affordable

housing for low-income populations (See Table 1.1: List of Housing Advocates). While traditional understandings of government workers (city councillors, MLAs, etc.) may view their role and status as widely different from the work of front line staff of non-profit housing organizations or community activists, for example, I define housing advocates as *all* people who work to provide housing for the 'hardest to house'. This is, admittedly, a rather broad definition of advocates and advocacy but understanding anyone tasked with creating and contributing to, as well as carrying out, social policies for housing as a housing advocate has its merits. Specifically it avoids the narrowness of viewing the structure and function of social housing policies as strictly institutional in nature and offers a perspective that understands housing policy and housing provision as a fluid, multi-scaled process in which there are diverse actors and outcomes.

Many housing advocates that I spoke with had personal contact with homeless individuals on a daily basis. And many of these same people had participated in both the creation *and* critique of government policies for social housing at several levels of government. Housing advocates exhibit differences in methods of advocacy: some advocates draw upon activist strategies such as public demonstrations, for example, in the creation and provision of social housing, while others employ more conventional methods such as speaking in City Council meetings. Despite these differences, the housing advocates with whom I spoke all worked with the intention of finding, creating and/or maintaining social housing for vulnerable people. In their work, they possess the capacity to both shape and rework social housing policies. It is for this reason that I have constructed and employ this broad but coherent definition.

Snowball sampling was employed in order to understand established relationships among research participants and obtain interviews with others in the field. This is a sampling strategy that allows researchers to begin the interview process with a few key informants and 'network out' by obtaining the names of potential participants from their present sample (Norman, 2005). At the end of each interview, informants were asked for the names of others who might be able to speak about the topic of interest.

Table 1.1:   List of Housing Advocates

Housing Advocate	Number of Interviews
City Councilor	1
City Housing Co-ordinator	1
Member of the Legislative Assembly	1
Executive Director	1
Housing Manager	1
Activist	1
Researcher	1
Frontline Worker	3
Total Number of Interviews	10

While recognizing the importance and interconnectedness of homeless populations and the experiences of social housing tenants to the formulation of social housing policies and the practices of housing advocates, this level of study was an intentional design strategy developed in order to accommodate several perceived barriers to accessing their knowledge and experiences (see DeVerteuil, 2004). These barriers

include: lack of participant incentive, potential harm to participants, the need for trust building, time constraints, and policies inhibiting volunteer experiences at the chosen sites of study.

Contemporary methodological concerns in qualitative research as well as anecdotal reports from residents in the DTES indicate a growing concern with research participants being conceived of as pure, 'native informant' who are objects (rather than subjects) of study (Smith, 2005; Slim, Hugo & Thompson, 1993). For the purpose of my research, I was concerned with several barriers to accessing homeless populations and their experiences. First, I questioned whether or not homeless people would be interested in participating in my study without some incentive. To offer incentive in the form of financial compensation could be costly without additional sources of funding. Other forms of incentive such as getting a 'good feeling' or 'experience' out of involvement for participants may not be as appealing and therefore could make it difficult to entice a viable amount of participation for data collection. Second, as with any research study involving human subjects, there is the chance of harm to people who participate, as they may experience painful feelings when retelling stories of their present and past life situations. Third, I was concerned with the time that is required to build trust with participants, to develop a rapport and create a safe and supportive atmosphere for sharing experiences. I thought this might be difficult to do within the four to eight month timeframe for data collection in this research. Lastly, and perhaps the most impactful consideration in this design, is physical access to the sites of study. Upon speaking with an employee of one housing association, I was informed that the Society did not accept volunteers; it was suggested that one way (or the only way?) to gain access to tenants

would be to work as a paid employee. After careful consideration of this option, I decided

that my position as a researcher, and my ability to obtain useful, and credible data would

be further complicated if I was perceived by research participants as both a researcher

and an employee of the organization. In addition to these perceived barriers to access, I

recognize studies analyzing specific experiences of tenants using interviews is a common

scale of study within the fields of housing (Dorvil, Beaulieu, & Robert, 2005; Gurstein &

Small, 2005; Whitley & Cargo, 2004), and therefore the design of my study was sensitive

to this.

The third source of information came from participant observation at public and

community forums on housing, two local film screenings on homelessness, two *Canada*

Housing and Renewal Association's (CHRA) Congresses, the University of Calgary's,

Home and Homelessness Conference and University of British Columbia's, *Re-imagining*

Health Conference (See Table 1.2: Ethnographic Sources).

Table 1.2:   Ethnographic Sources

Source	Type	Date	Location
Project Civil City: Housing and Homelessness	Workshop	November 13, 2007	Vancouver, BC
Urban Housing Policy	Course	January 1- April 30, 2008	Vancouver, BC
SCARP Homeless Count	Training Session	February 3, 2008	Vancouver, BC
SCARP Homeless Count	Volunteer	March 11, 2008	Vancouver, BC
Breaking New Ground- CHRA Annual Congress	Conference	April 2-5, 2008	Vancouver, BC
West End Housing Forum	Volunteer	September 14, 2008	Vancouver, BC
Finding our way home	Film Screening	January 07, 2009	Vancouver, BC
Something to eat, a place to sleep and someone who gives a damn	Film Screening	November 03, 2008	Vancouver, BC
Re-imagining Health Services	Conference	November 6-8, 2008	Vancouver, BC
Leading Edge Solutions to House Everyone	Certificate in Sustainable Community Development	February 13-14, 2009	Vancouver, BC
Growing Home: Housing and Homeless in Canada	Conference	February 18-20, 2009	Calgary, AB
Renewing Our Communities- CHRA Annual Congress	Conference	April 15-18, 2009	Toronto, ON
You Count: Homeless Count for Collingwood-Renfrew	Volunteer	October 08, 2009	Vancouver, BC
You Count: Homeless Count for Collingwood-Renfrew	Training Session	October 14, 2009	Vancouver, BC

In addition to this, I participated in organizing events with Citywide Housing Coalition (CHC). CHC is a local non-profit society, the mandate of which is to raise the awareness of government and the general public about issues of housing and homelessness through public participation, action and media. The group recognizes housing as a human right and envisions a future with safe, secure and affordable housing for everyone. They seek to create awareness and dialogue in a non-confrontational, family friendly atmosphere using public demonstrations, various forms of media and links with like-minded community groups. As a member of CHC, I worked with people who represented over thirty communities in Metro Vancouver to raise awareness through several activities, including organizing a city wide march in which over two thousand people walked through the streets of Vancouver to rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery for government intervention in the issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing.

Members also performed a 'sleep out' demonstration in front of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's office at Georgia and Thurlow Streets in Vancouver's business district in order to attract attention to the housing crisis and encourage voter participation in the (then) upcoming federal election.

My experience as a member of Citywide Housing Coalition kept me informed of ongoing housing issues around the city and the Downtown Eastside through continued interaction with other members concerning unlawful hotel evictions, landlord-tenant relations, lack of single room occupancies (SROs) available to low-income people and the poor living conditions in SROs such as bed bugs, cockroaches and rodent infestations, etc. Through CHC's mail list, I also received emails about articles concerning housing and issues of homelessness in the local media. My position as a member of CHC allowed me to make essential contacts with others interested, and working in, housing provision for low-income people in the Downtown Eastside as well as provided the chance to gain a better understanding of local perspectives on housing issues.

The results of my research are reflective of the coding process and themes that emerged from the method of document analysis and knowledge gained from participant observation in Citywide Housing Coalition demonstrations and workshops, public forums and conference sessions. Rather than attempt to mould research data into a preconceived theoretical framework, the ideas I present about the use of the market as a mechanism for solving homelessness, and neoliberalism as a discourse were garnered from the inductive methods of data collection outlined above.

2: GEOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES TO PLACE AND PEOPLE

2.1 Neoliberal Approaches to Urban Governance

2.1.1 The Politics of Urban Governance

Geographers concerned with place and the processes of place-making have made significant contributions to the development of knowledge on how policy is formulated and how it 'gets done' (Cummins, Curtis, Diez-Roux, Macintyre, 2007; Anderson, 1988). In this chapter, I focus on geographical approaches to place and place-making and the significant role of government policies, specifically neoliberal policies, for understanding how places are governed and constructed.

Place is physical space that has been given meaning (Cresswell, 2004) and is comprised of three elements: location (fixed physical setting), locale (a setting for social relations) and sense of place (the emotional and subjective attachment that people have to place) (Agnew, 1987, in Cresswell, 2004). Contemporary work on place and urban governance notes a shift in governance strategies toward the utilization of more entrepreneurial, innovative approaches in order to alleviate distressed conditions and secure better futures for populations (Harvey, 1989). In this task, governments have acquired an "entrepreneurial stance to economic development" (Harvey, 1989, p.5) meaning that places are increasingly oriented toward producing positive business climates in order to "lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space" (Harvey, 1989, p.11). As governments work to

navigate new spaces of inter-urban competition, their approach to governance is marked by explicit attempts to shape cities into landscapes made ready (or ready-made) for consumption that are most closely aligned with neoliberalism (Harvey, 1989).

Neoliberalism has become a central focus of recent work on government and the state (Harvey, 2007; McBride & McNutt, 2008; Brenner & Theodore, 2002). This research has entailed an explicit focus on neoliberalism's impact on social welfare provision for vulnerable populations (Hackworth & Moriah, 2006; Chouinard & Crooks, 2008). Neoliberalism "promotes the extension of competitive, market ideals to all aspects of life and,… to the operation of the state" (McCann & Ward, Forthcoming). Broadly defined, it emphasizes "private enterprise and entrepreneurial initiative as keys to innovation and wealth creation" (Harvey, 2007, p.64). While increases in production, and the reduction of government intervention in social welfare are propounded as the best means for the elimination of poverty and the provision of higher living standards to everyone, the ways in which principles of neoliberalism are expressed are often multiple and diverse with various outcomes dependent upon the time and place within which they occur (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Larner, 2003).

A neoliberal approach has been tied to processes of gentrification (Smith, 2002) and the employment of multiple discourses in creating cityscapes most palatable to economic investment (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). In general, this "neoliberalization" (Peck and Tickell, 2002) has seen movement from a Fordist system of production with emphasis on a Keynesian welfare state toward open and market based flexible accumulation that emphasizes market competition, individual responsibility, flexibility and innovation, and abandons welfare state policies that seek to promote wealth

redistribution (Harvey, 2007). Broadly defined, neoliberalism embodies three key strands that have particularly affected urban policy formation. The first strand understands the individual to be the "normative center of society" (Hackworth & Moriah, 2006 p. 523). This strand particularly influences policy decisions that encourage individual participation and a lack of dependency on the state. Second, the market is "the most efficient and effective means of dispersing and reproducing this autonomy"; and third, "the interventionist state [i]s [seen as] the chief impediment to both market and individual autonomy" (ibid).

Despite such emphasis on the role and utility of the market for the continued success of the economy, the "neoliberalization" of urban governance has been argued to be rife with internal contradictions and consequences (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Harvey (2007) speculates that such reorientation toward the interests of capitalist development have resulted in several consequences including increasing impoverishment and disempowerment of the poor and the inevitable decline of democracy. Similarly, others contend that the use of neoliberal ideals to justify public housing restructuring may serve to increase socio-spatial polarization of rich and poor populations (August, 2008). In addition to these concerns, scholars have looked to the importance of disrupting current understandings of neoliberalism in ways that can provide further insight and useful considerations into not only what neoliberalism is but also how it is actively played out on the ground (Larner, 2003). Larner (2003) suggests a careful tracing of intellectual, policy and practitioner networks that underpin neoliberal ideas and their manifestation in government policies and programs, more careful analyses of neoliberal ideologies and an examination of the techniques of neoliberalism – the neoliberal states,

subjects and spaces that are constituted in particular forms at particular times. Brenner and Theodore (2002) also suggest the need to examine "actually existing neoliberalism" and emphasize the utility of a framework that understands the contested nature of a "disciplinary political authority that enforces market rule over an ever wider range of social relations" (p. 4).

Contemporary examinations of housing provision as a manifestation of neoliberal approaches to governance also argue the challenges are multiple and complex (see Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Rose, 2004; Crump, 2002). This work implies that both the processes and outcomes of neoliberalism are contingent upon the time and place within which they occur. This results in un-pure, muddy, *hybrid* processes of neoliberalization rather than an ideologically-pure, ideal type. In this thesis, I attempt to take up the challenge to trace out "actually existing neoliberalism" in Vancouver by looking at the impact of city government housing policies and the practices of housing advocates in creating housing for poor people.

2.2   Neoliberalism and Discourse

2.2.1   "Neoliberalization" as a Process

My research is concerned with how neoliberal ideals have permeated the governance of cities, with particular attention to how people and places are constructed in order to make such governance possible. Several current works in urban and political geography emphasize the utility and importance of employing discourse analysis for understanding the ways in which people and places are circumscribed by, and can

actively accommodate and resist, relations of power and domination (see Wilson &

Grammenos, 2005; Crump, 2002; Haylett, 2001). Discourse is defined as a

> specific series of representations, practices and performances through
> which meanings are produced, connected into networks and
> legitimized...[they] are heterogeneous, regulated, embedded, situated and
> performative...[d]iscourses shape the contours of the taken-for-granted
> world: they 'naturalize' and often implicitly universalize a particular view
> of the world and position subjects differentially within it (Gregory, 2003).

In keeping with this definition, Lees (2007, p. 102) argues that discourse analysis,

"is a tool for uncovering certain hegemonic ways of thinking and talking about how

things should be done that serve vested interests". Critical discourse analysis provides a

framework for linking interactions and texts within social and cultural circumstances

(Lees, 2007) and can upset representational models of language and performance (Pratt,

2003). In the context of this research, recognition of policy language as a text that works

to actively construct the sites and recipients of housing will allow for further

interrogation and understanding of the relationship between written policy objectives and

the everyday practices of those made responsible for carrying out policy (Proudfoot &

McCann, 2008).

Neoliberal strategies in the provision of social housing are a form of discourse

that is necessarily reliant upon particular conceptions of people in order to operate. Such

conceptions promote "a neoliberal mode of citizenship [that is] centrally defined through

employment and independence from the state" (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008, p. 175).

These neoliberal constructions of citizenship and participation are manifest as places that

act as sites of exclusion. Contemporary research (see Mitchell, 2003; Crump, 2002) on

state regulation (such as anti-homeless laws) suggest that these laws are designed to deal

with deviance and disorder-- the social pathologies-- that is conceived as characterizing and perpetuating the problem of homelessness. Anti-homeless laws are contingent upon understanding the cause of homelessness to be constituted at the individual rather than structural level (Mitchell, 2003; Crump, 2002). The construction of homelessness as a voluntary act (see MacDonald, 1995), underscores its criminalization and the consequent creation of anti-homelessness legislation. In the neoliberal city, homeless are perceived as dependents, subject to arbitrary and invasive forms of authority, forced to comply with rules that they have little power to address, and subsequent suspension of basic rights to respect, privacy and individual choice (Young, 1990). Crump (2002) argues that conceptions of homeless as 'Other' become institutionalized through legislation and are indicative of widespread agreement by policy makers, politicians and plebeian alike, who propose spatial solutions to social problems.

Wilson & Grammenos (2005) argue that a similar derogatory discourse is used to justify gentrification efforts in the United States. Proclaimed as beneficial, cleansing and for the good of all, the gentrification of neighbourhoods entails a physical reconstruction of the cityscape that is reliant upon a scripting and coding of bodies aimed at the denigration of neighbourhood residents and social character (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Alongside tools of historic district designation and tax increment financing, governments employ a derogatory discourse which narrates that the spaces needed for gentrification are problematic, deteriorating and 'culturally failing' (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Discursive constructions of identity inform the spatial construction of exclusion. In the case of Chicago's Humboldt Park, Puerto Rican youth bodies became scripted as crude and 'atavistic', and marked as poor and different by media and real

estate capital (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Through a scripting and coding of bodies that resonated at both social and spatial scales, discursive constructions of identity made the link between supposedly irrefutable causal appearances, community morals and the need for the transformation of space (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005).

Gentrification as a redevelopment policy is legitimated through its supposed elimination of social and moral decline as a method for confronting and cleaning up spaces of decay (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). This discourse permeates both the spatial and social fabric of cities despite arguments and efforts of residents to represent and recreate their neighbourhoods as stable, proud and productive spaces. Constructed as unproductive, unsafe and an unstable ethnic enclave, pro-gentrification discourse works to reconfigure identity (individual and neighbourhood) in Chicago's Humboldt Park and to create a space of exclusion (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). Current residents are excluded from social rights and citizenship while the physical gentrification of the landscape forcefully excludes residents from space through condominium development, and new construction that lead to rising property prices (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005).

Similarly, August's (2008) work examines the discourse of social mix as a justification for redevelopment of low-income neighbourhoods into mixed income communities. Social mix is argued, "to increase the socio-economic diversity in an urban area, typically to correct the over- and under- representation of certain groups in comparison with the wider city" (Van Kempen & Ozuekren, cited in August, 2008) and is thought to promote inclusivity and community. Her recent review of seventy-nine studies on social mix concludes that despite appeals to equality-oriented and progressive objectives, tenants of public housing redevelopment tend to benefit the least and may

instead have their disadvantage magnified by appeals to social mix and poverty deconcentration programs (August, 2009).

In this research, I consider these arguments with an explicit attempt to examine the inner workings of neoliberalism at a particular local scale. I consider how government policy and programs designed with the intention of housing provision for vulnerable populations are played out in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and look to examine their relationships with neoliberal ideals as well as the ways in which such policies, as manifestations of neoliberal agenda, impact and are impacted by, the work of housing advocates. In addition to this, I pay particular attention to the constructions of people within the policy documents, and from the perspectives of housing advocates and look to examine how these constructions affect the challenges faced in housing provision. At the same time, I look to examine the strategies that are employed by housing advocates and search for the potentials and possibilities of the creation of more equitable spaces for vulnerable groups.

2.3   A Poststructuralist Approach to Policy

Since the 1970's, geographers have attempted to reposition themselves within academia with a focus on practical and intellectual concerns such as social justice, signifying an explicit departure from quantitative undertakings and geographical approaches overly focused on technique (Dear, 1999). The postmodern, or poststructuralist approach emphasizes that, "… interpretations and the authority of the observer are regarded as socially constituted, contingent and partial… [it] stresses an openness to a range of voices and perspectives in social inquiry, artistic experimentation and political empowerment" (Ley, 2000). Poststructuralist thought is generally associated

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with French philosophers Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Deleuze and Baudrillard (Pratt, 2000). Employing the process of deconstruction, poststructuralists force both self-reflexivity and self-contextualization that lends to the concept of situated knowledge (Pratt, 2000). This approach critiques binaries and categories as serving the interests of boundary formation that are central to the creation of the subject and processes of identification that are regulated by, and enmeshed within, relations of power and domination (Pratt, 2000).

The overarching sentiment of this approach combines a distrust of metanarratives, denies singular subjectivity and universal truth, challenges essentialism and emphasizes the importance of context (Popke, 2003). For the poststructuralist researcher, knowledge is always a situated product of the time, space and the subjective experience of the individual producing it (Popke, 2003). Poststructuralist strategies for producing knowledge assume a relativist, anti-foundational and anti-essentialist lens for dismantling the modern Cartesian subject as a rational, autonomous and universal agent (Popke, 2003). Apparent and arguably inherent to the approach, the poststructuralist perspective is constituted by a plurality of voices that combine to produce multiple narratives concerning the makeup of this theoretical framework (Ley, 2000).

2.3.1 Binary Oppositions and Constructions of Difference

David Sibley's (1995) work, *Geographies of Exclusion,* is one examination of the process of binary formation that serves to relegate some individuals and groups to the margins while maintaining some at the center. He seeks to identify as well as contextualize the attitudes toward others that inform exclusionary practices and processes of control. In doing so, he develops a complex and comprehensive argument about the

mutually reinforcing relationship between constructions of Self and 'Other'. Sibley

shows how this process of creation becomes manifest as exclusion in the socio-spatial

environment. He works from notions of individual difference to the processes that

constitute societal difference and by shifting scales, he also examines how these

differences operate in the location of the family, home and nation.

Constructions of Self and 'Other' come to constitute both social and spatial

boundaries however the practice of boundary formation and maintenance cannot be

separated from the context within which it is situated. Boundaries cannot be

conceptualized as universal, but rather as influenced by dominant paradigms and are, thus

a product of power (Sibley, 1995). Sibley (1995) focuses on the ways that the identity of

'Other' becomes a fixed representation, necessarily physically and cognitively distanced

from the referent Self. He emphasizes the mapping of imaginary geographies that are

constructed using recursive imagery, popular culture and media that create new, and

reinforce existing stereotypes (Sibley, 1995). Manipulating the mix of fear and desire that

characterize the public's fascination with 'Other', these stereotypes work to dehumanize,

and relegate groups to ideas of nature and disease, presume immorality and construct

those on the outside as enduringly oppositional to Self.

Sibley (1995) infuses a consideration of capitalism into his argument and suggests

that exclusionary spaces are simultaneously organized around the principles of

purification and consumption; the capitalist imperative reinforces criminalization of the

impoverished 'Other' that is characterized as dependent and unable to provide for itself.

His discussion is more of a conceptual framework for understanding and deconstructing

psychoanalytical perspectives that create difference than a focused examination of the

specific material *impacts* that result from constructing difference. Nevertheless, he presents a compelling argument about how we can alter exclusionary spaces through a confrontation of our own fears about 'Other' and posits the need for a more inclusive participant methodology that allows for the experience of others to penetrate our worldviews. His work represents a stimulating and intellectually engaging perspective on the creation and maintenance of boundaries of exclusion that operate at multi-scalar and multi-dimensional levels.

I think Sibley's conceptualization of the processes that constitute geographies of exclusion is a useful tool for the deconstruction of discourses, which emerge as a result of our production of identity. An in-depth understanding of the manner in which we as individuals create difference, the extent to which social and cultural values play a role in determining our processes of distinction, and the creation of spaces that result, I think can lead to the construction of more equitable socio-spatial environments. If we can deconstruct dominant discourses down to the level of fear, desire, repulsion and excitement that serve as motivators for recognizing difference, then perhaps we can begin to create more equitable spaces for all individuals. Sibley (1995) contends that the socio-spatial construction of the environment is necessarily reliant upon the rhetoric of inequality for its success, therefore a dismantling of such rhetoric through the recognition of processes that create and inform spaces of exclusion, has the potential to transform space, and in fact, begins the process of transforming space.

Sibley emphasizes the development of identity in this regard. We must make conscious the mechanisms through which we create difference with a thorough examination of both ourselves and the spaces we have constructed in response to

distinctions made between Self and 'Other', he argues. Therefore it is important to investigate the mutually reinforcing material and social processes that result in the creation of spaces of difference. At the same time, it is imperative to examine our role in the process of socio-spatial manifestations of identity with not only a recognition of ourselves as actors (using the poststructuralist approach to situated knowledge, discussed above) but also a recognition of our responsibility for changing landscapes of domination. In this sense, we must confront and recognize our ability to produce, reproduce or deconstruct inequitable spaces/relations through housing policy, for example.

This research approaches municipal housing policies and the practices of housing advocates as actively engaged in the production of social and spatial environments. Their work is framed within the context of how cities deploy neoliberal discourse in the provision of social welfare services targeted at poor populations. In the interest of maintaining a poststructural approach, this research on policy will allow for an examination of government strategies that are based on policy as well as engagement with members of multiple groups, or voices, from across the housing sector that are impacted by policy (Pain, 2006). In this way, I think poststructuralist sensibilities can provide a useful framework for beginning to conceptualize the relationship between government housing policies and the practices of housing advocates.

To begin with, policy as a metanarrative, or a manifestation of dominant ways of thinking and as a written document, works to construct binary relations between the policy maker and the object of policy. Government policies, as a product of those who hold power, can be understood to occupy a space of domination over those who are the

object of policy formation. Policies that employ a neoliberal discourse have been argued to create exclusionary spaces for homeless populations (see Crump, 2002; Mitchell, 2003). As policy makers create policy, they become the producers of knowledge, occupying a site of power and privilege-- helping, and acting-- rather than being acted upon. The objects of policy, that is, the people and places written about in housing policy documents, effectively become 'fixed' within these written documents. They occupy the site of the subordinate, the unprivileged, the helped and the acted upon. Therefore written policy documents can be understood to construct a dichotomous distinction, a binary relation, between the knower or the producer of knowledge, and the known, the object of knowledge (See Table 2.1: Poststructural Critique of Policy).

Table 2.1:   Poststructural Critique of Policy

Policy Maker	Homeless Population
Makes Policy	'Fixed' in Policy
Creator of Knowledge	Created as Object of Knowledge
Knower	Known
Dominant	Subordinate
Helper	Helped
Actor	Acted Upon
Subject	Object
Detached Observer	Situated
Privileged	Unprivileged

However, while a poststructuralist understanding of binary formation does provide a fundamental base upon which to begin our examination of the relationship between policy and practice, a more thorough investigation of how power operates among those deemed dominant and subordinate is necessary. The next section further

explores the utility of binary assumptions in understanding power as an arena within which relations exist, may be contested and/or negotiated.

2.3.2 Domination, Resistance and Third Space

Cresswell's *Falling Down: Resistance as Diagnostic*, (2000) serves as an examination of the entanglement and complexity of power relations among groups deemed dominant and subordinate. Drawing from Marx, Foucault and Bourdieu, Cresswell explores notions of the binary assumption and moves towards a theoretical framework that understands power relations to be two-way processes. Power 'enframes' the relationship between and amongst groups deemed dominant/powerful and subordinate/resistant; neither one can be constituted without the other (Cresswell, 2000). Resistance can therefore be re-conceptualized as an indicator of power and a subset of power, rather than the romanticized absence of power (Cresswell, 2000). Acts deemed resistant greatly depend upon the subjective positioning of those who define and impact and those who are defined and impacted, by resistance.

In this way, resistance takes on the characteristics described by De Certeau: resistance obeys its own logic, can be read as 'wandering lines' and its paths are not captured or determined by the systems in which they develop (1984). Resistance is intricate and entangled, reliant on the framework of power, not domination, for its construction (De Certeau, 1984). Foucault asserts, "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1982, p. 790). Rather than defining resistance and domination as separate metaphorical and physical places of power, both can be conceptualized as existing within its overarching framework. This understanding of resistance departs from orthodox, Marxist and binary notions of domination and

subordination that require the dispersion of hegemonic ideology for significance. Instead it implies a reworking from within the structures of power (De Certeau, 1984).

Cresswell develops an understanding that is congruous with De Certeau's notion of resistance. His theoretical framework presupposes subjectivity and focuses rather on the spatially and temporally contingent relations of power (Cresswell, 2000). It does not deny subjective positioning but instead shifts focus from issues of age, race, gender, sexuality and class to the transformative capacity of power. It draws from Foucault who looks to the mechanisms of power, that is, the insidious reorganization of space for control, rather than to power itself (De Certeau, 1984). Power is situated and networks of power (domination and resistance) are spatialised within this context (Cresswell, 2000). This conceptualization of power is a useful theoretical tool for understanding resistance and domination as a dyad (a representation of two things overlapping into one) rather than an oppositional binary of relations (Cresswell, 2000).

Moore's analysis posits the same argument (1997, p.92),

> A notion of links between locations and subjects deconstructs the longstanding Marxist cultural hegemony model by demonstrating the impossibility of finding a pure position or site of subjectivity outside the economic and cultural dynamics that structure modernity.

Neither domination nor resistance are autonomous but instead are constituted by and constitutive of, physical and ideological overlappings of space (Moore, 1997). Detection of forms of resistance is diagnostic of power; it denies power as overarching and affirms notions of agency (Cresswell, 2000). Resistance serves as the site upon which individuals and the collective are able to deny reductionism to hegemonic forces (De Certeau, 1984).

This view of resistance transforms the debate on resistance from one concerned with its construction as a product of domination to one concerned with its operations within the framework of power. Through understanding how individuals and the collective resist, it may be possible to understand the ways in which power can be manipulated, subverted and reconstituted from the inside of a set of policy institutions, for example. In response to his notions of strategies of the strong and tactics of the weak, De Certeau asserts, "the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, … of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is seized" (1984, p. xix). Defining resistance entails a critical attention to the intersection of scales, the suppressed, and suppressors and their relative subjectivities.

From this perspective, Cresswell's theoretical framework and conceptualization of resistance becomes a valuable tool for the indication of power operationalized. Rather than seek to mould resistance into an ontological hierarchy of relations, resistance as diagnostic sheds constraints of singular subjective positionings and reaffirms the spatial and temporal constitution of relations of power. Within this understanding, uniformity ceases to exist and romanticized notions of resistance as the absence of domination become less persuasive. Nuanced views of resistance perceive its practice as motivated by the alleviation and transformation of the conditions under which one lives (Cresswell, 2000). Viewed in this way, relationships of power are more complex and contextualized. They are dependent upon the actors involved, as well as the time and space, in which they take place.

Extending from this trajectory is the notion of 'third space'. Third space is defined as, "a space produced by those processes that exceed the forms of knowledge that divide

the world into binary oppositions" (Rose, 2000). It is conceived of as a "consequence of

hybridity" (Bhabba, 1990 in Soja, 2009), a product and disruption of old and dominant

ways of thinking and doing with aims to reconceptualize the way we think about space

(Rose, 2000). The concept of third space serves to dismantle notions of 'pure' and

exclusive spaces, in this case, space that strictly conforms to the wills of dominant or

subordinate individuals or groups. It serves to disrupt and disorder a reductionist spatial

thinking and works "to break down the rigid object-subject binarism ... while

simultaneously maintaining the useful knowledges of space derived from both of these

binary fields" (Soja, 2009, p. 52). Speaking of Lefebvre's conceptualization of third

space, Soja states,

> *Everything* comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the
> abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the
> unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency,
> mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and
> the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history (emphasis in
> original, 2009, p.54).

I use the concept of third space in order to conceptualize the relationship between

government housing policies and the practices of housing advocates in the context of

increasing "neoliberalization" of cities. In their position as translators of housing policy

documents for the people and places concerned in such policy, I think that housing

advocates can be viewed as occupying a space of 'in-between'. The concept of third

space is one way to understand the messiness and complexity of relations between

different groups. Rather than understand this relationship as an ontological hierarchy of

relations (for example, the idea that social housing policies dictate housing outcomes),

this concept embodies a preoccupation with the tentative nature and transformative

capacity of power relations. It shifts focus from ontological concerns (what we know is

real) toward an epistemological focus of relations (theories we use as a basis for knowledge/reality) (Soja, 2009). I argue that the work of housing advocates encompasses a third space. As housing advocates produce knowledge that is written into housing policy documents and are tasked with carrying out such policies, they can also help to rework such policies, if they fail to meet the needs of vulnerable people. Through a relationship with both housing policies and homeless populations, the practices of housing advocates constitute a *reflexive* third space that has the *potential to disrupt binary distinctions* that may be created through the process of policy formulation in which the object of policy (homeless people and the DTES) becomes 'fixed' as 'Other' than society and the market, within written documents.

In the next chapter I present three key documents produced by the City of Vancouver. They are each designed to address issues of housing and homelessness in the Downtown Eastside. First, I provide a summary of the documents. Second, I argue that these documents embody neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix and are reliant upon binary constructions that work to justify a particular set of market solutions to homelessness. In the subsequent chapter, I present the challenges faced by housing advocates as they attempt to negotiate neoliberal policy frameworks and follow with a presentation of the strategies they employ in their task of finding and maintaining adequate, suitable and affordable housing for low-income populations.

3: HOUSING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

3.1 Vancouver Housing Policies

The province of British Columbia has worked alongside the City of Vancouver to establish social housing policies, strategies and action plans in order to address the problem of homelessness and the need for affordable housing for low-income populations since the federal withdrawal of funding in 1993. Social and supportive housing provision is a central focus of several key policy documents concerning affordable housing in the DTES. Social housing is defined as housing that is "funded by government and managed by non profit societies or government. Residents of many of these units are income tested with rents being geared to income" (Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, 2005b, p.5), while supportive housing is defined as "affordable housing that provides links to support staff who assist tenants to stabilize their lives, enhance independent living skills, and reconnect with the community" (Supportive Housing Strategy, 2007, p.1).

The provision of social and supportive housing for those with mental illness, addiction or concurrent diagnoses (those who suffer from multiple barriers such as mental illness, drug addiction and physical conditions such as HIV, hepatitis C, etc.) is connected to provincial and municipal policy commitments to affordable housing for core need groups with specific attention to 'vulnerable' populations and those at risk of homelessness (Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, 2006). Such policies are reflective of provincial and city priorities for housing provision for 'those most in need' and emphasize their specific approach to individuals with mental illness, addiction or

concurrent diagnoses. These efforts represent the provincial and municipal governments'
recognition of inadequate supply of affordable and appropriate housing and the related
rise of homeless populations, including many people diagnosed with mental health and
addictions in low-income groups. Often these policies encourage involvement from
multiple levels of government and employ a host of actors in their creation and
implementation.

According to the City of Vancouver, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) is
home to approximately 16,000 people with one-third of its residents suffering from
addiction and one-fifth with a diagnosis of mental illness (City of Vancouver, 2005b).
Often termed the 'hard to house', individuals with concurrent diagnoses are generally
understood to be 'most in need' of housing and support services in the city (City of
Vancouver, 2007). Vancouver's DTES contains almost half of the city's supportive
housing (City of Vancouver, 2007) which is part of a housing continuum focused upon
skill development and rehabilitation (Dorvil, et al, 2005). For these reasons, this research
focuses specifically on the Downtown Eastside, and specifically on the challenges faced,
and the strategies employed, by housing advocates who attempt to operationalize housing
policy, and work daily to find and maintain, affordable housing for the 'hard to house'.

The three key documents analyzed in this thesis focus on the provision of housing
for people in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. They are, *The Housing Plan for the
Downtown Eastside* (2005b), *The Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal
Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supportive Housing Framework* (2007), and *The
Homeless Action Plan* (2005a). Together, these documents constitute a framework for
actions that is intended to significantly reduce or end homelessness. While *The*

Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health &

Addictions Supportive Housing Framework, and *The Homeless Action Plan* do not

explicitly focus on the Downtown Eastside, they were chosen because of their emphasis

on populations experiencing mental health and addiction and those who are considered to

be low-income, homeless or 'at risk' of homelessness. In the paragraphs that follow, each

of the housing documents will be summarized, presented and analyzed with reference to

the ways in which they reflect neoliberal ideals of market development, market

participation and social mix as methods of intervention in issues of housing and

homelessness. In addition to this, I will discuss the ways in which people and place are

framed within the documents and show how these constructions are tied to neoliberal

discourse found in the housing policy.

3.1.1   The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside

The *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* was written in 2005 with the

purpose of creating a revitalization strategy with specific attention to the existing low-

income population of the area. The eighty-six page plan proposes to encourage and

integrate market housing with the intention of creating a mixed community that will

"serve a diversity of income levels, and will include services and activities that will

appeal to both existing and new area residents" (p. 7). It presents the role of housing to be

critical for the health, family, economic opportunities and stability of the community

(p.11) and posits that neighbourhood change should emphasize "revitalization without

displacement" (p.8). The plan is comprised of twelve sections including context, portrait

of the people in the Downtown Eastside, housing mix, the future of SROs, social housing,

market housing, smaller suites, special needs residential facilities, sub-areas, community engagement, conclusions and implementation.

The plan's primary goal is to revitalize the DTES through the integration of market housing in the area with consideration of existing low-income residents. It encourages the infusion of market housing development mixed with the existing, and construction of, new social housing in order to provide positive neighbourhood change. Through the creation of increased housing choice for both moderate and low-income households and the subsequent diversification of residents, the area will be able to support business initiatives and provide employment opportunities for local people (p.3). However, it cautions that the rate of new market development be monitored and should proceed at a similar pace to the construction of social housing in the area.

The Downtown Eastside is presented as a low-income neighbourhood that has undergone significant neighbourhood change over the last twenty-five years. The current population is characterized by "higher than average levels of mental illness, drug addiction, dual-diagnosis, and communicable disease (such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS), and a high proportion of residents are low-income earners" (p.9). The area is "increasingly dysfunctional economically and socially" (p.11), the result of a combination of factors including the reduction of senior government spending on social housing, specifically the cancellation of provincial programs such as HOMES BC (a program that provided subsidies and rent supplements to non-profit, co-op and private housing providers for low- and moderate-income people), increased pressure from the influx of new market housing and commercial development in the area and throughout

the city, and the closure of mental health facilities that have led to an increase in the numbers of homeless people suffering from mental illness.

The Downtown Eastside's 16,000 population has a unique social profile, and a set of housing needs and priorities to match (p.13). The area is divided into eight subareas including Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District (DEOD), Thorton Park, Strathcona, Hastings Corridor and Industrial Lands. (See Figure 1: Sub Areas of the Downtown Eastside). Presented using charts and graphs, the population differs from the average city-wide population in several ways: they are older (one third over the age of 55 years), predominately male (61%), single (61%), more ethnically diverse, low-income (67%), with one third receiving social assistance (p.13-14). Typical clients of DTES health clinics are described as "male, unemployed, intelligent, young to middle-aged…, living in SROs (single room occupancy hotels) or social housing and having a history of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse" (p. 15). Considering the special needs of the existing demographic, the primary goal of the plan is to "transform the area into a sustainable and inclusive community with an emphasis on low-income and affordable housing" (p.13).
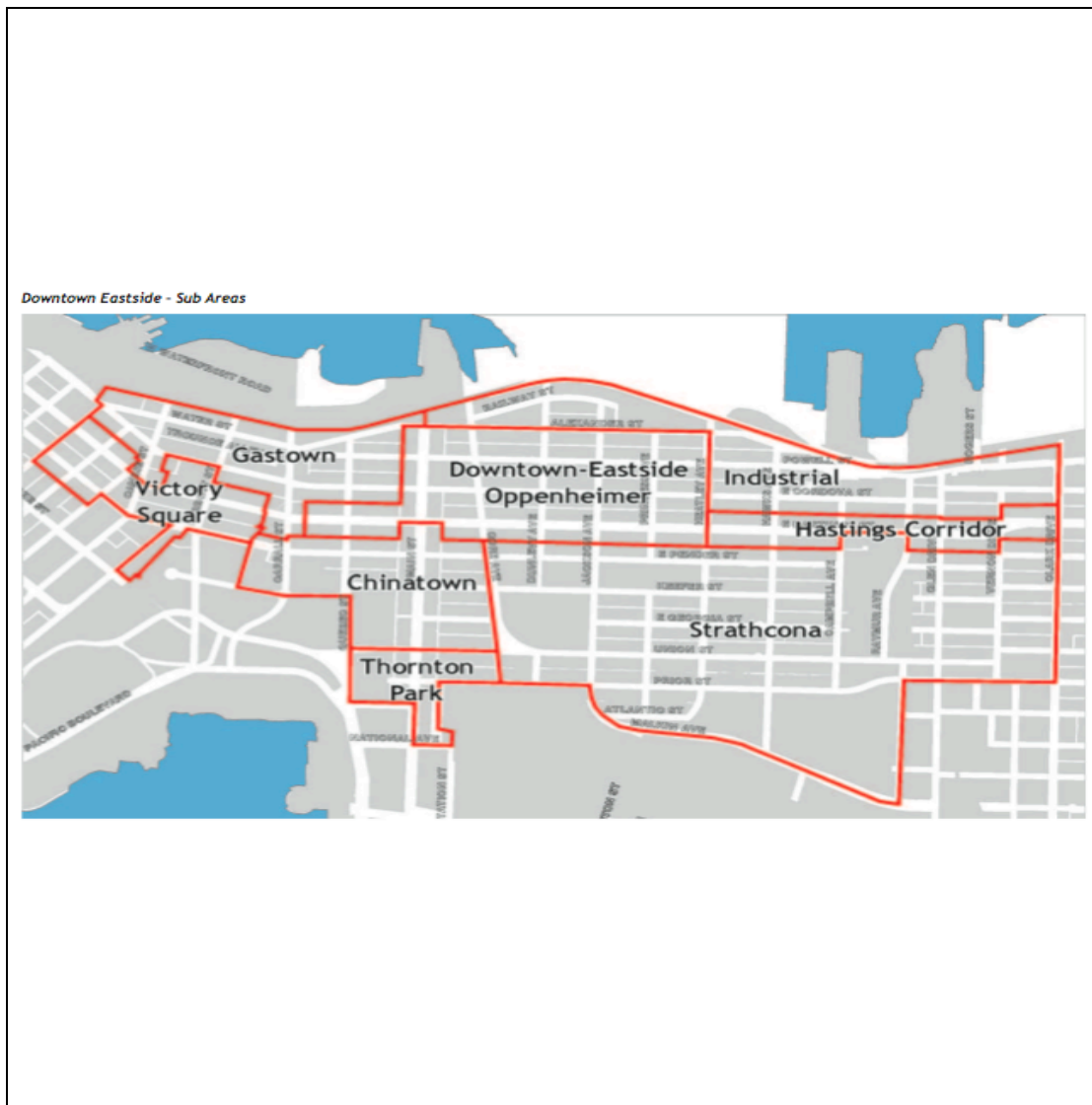
Source: City of Vancouver, 2005b

Figure 3.1: Sub Areas of the Downtown Eastside

In order to improve and stimulate the area's economic viability, new market housing development will be encouraged along with the replacement and upgrading of existing social housing as a strategy to ensure the area remains a primary neighbourhood for low-income people (p.18). To address the rate of change occurring in the DTES, the City will utilize a one-for-one replacement policy of low-income housing. This is also known as the SRA (single room accommodation) bylaw. One-for-one replacement means

that for every low-income housing unit lost (to changes such as conversions to condos, erosion of existing stock, etc), there must be one unit of low-income housing constructed to replace it. In addition to this control, the plan recommends that the City support and accommodate the restoration of heritage buildings using incentives, exercise zoning tools to encourage development of affordable market housing for moderate-income households as well as provide essential services such as community policing, treatment for substance abuse, low-cost food, job opportunities, health clinics, community centres, clothing and other retail goods, and good maintenance and positive use of public spaces (p. 19).

The fourth section details the current number and conditions of Single Room Occupancy units in the DTES. In March 2003, there were 5093 SROs in 125 buildings in the DTES (p. 21). SROs are found in buildings that are approximately one hundred years old, typically one hundred square feet, do not contain private bathrooms or kitchens and are rented on a monthly basis. The units are currently the least expensive accommodation in the city with rents closest to the shelter allowance portion of single people on income assistance ($375/month). The plan proposes that the City continue to enforce the SRA bylaw in order to mitigate the loss of future SROs due to closure, conversions or demolitions and control the existing conditions of the units. This by law allows the City to ensure that SROs are adequately maintained and managed by private owners. The plan recognizes that the existing conditions of SROs often do not provide the most optimal living conditions for people, however it maintains the importance of ensuring a minimum standard for the units until additional social and affordable housing can be provided.

Currently the City provides social housing through long term leases of City owned land at below market rates, capital grants and negotiations with developers (p. 29).

Social housing encompasses a range of housing options from the provision of supports for those requiring additional services such as meals, life skills training and housekeeping, to units suitable for individuals or families who desire independent living. At present, there are 4827 social housing units in the DTES; five hundred and eighty of these units are supportive housing.

Roughly half of the market housing units in the DTES are owner occupied while half are rental accommodation. These units are comprised of live-work spaces, condominiums, single-family dwellings and duplexes. The plan proposes to increase the number of affordable rental accommodation in the area in order to encourage opportunities for the infusion of middle-income levels and mixed-income social housing (p.39). The plan encourages the gradual replacement of SROs with better quality housing such as traditional-sized social housing (400-500 sq. ft.), small suites (traditional suites with square footage relaxable to a minimum of 275 sq. ft.) and renovated SROs. In addition to this, the plan recommends amending bylaws to ensure new units contain cooking and bathroom facilities and that the provincial government raise the shelter portion of welfare for tenants in new small suite buildings (p.43).

The plan also outlines the use of Special Needs Residential Facilities (SNRFs). These are "residential facilities for people who, by reason of illness, disability, age, an immediate crisis situation or other factors are temporarily or permanently unable to live independently" (p. 45). The plan recommends that zoning amendments be made in only two areas in the DTES (the DEOD and Hastings Corridor areas) in order to allow for some further development of new SNRFs.

The next section of the plan outlines the eight subareas of the Downtown Eastside, discusses the existing policy for each, and lists recommended actions. It concludes with a section on the importance of community engagement in civic policy-making and the importance of involving community groups in the planning process. It is recommended that City staff examine the possibility of the creation of a community based advisory body in order to review proposals and policy decisions, provide feedback and help to monitor the rate of change occurring in the DTES (p. 67). Finally, the plan presents a detailed table of actions for each section previously described, outlining the action, who is responsible for carrying out the action and when the action will be carried out.

3.1.2 The Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supportive Housing Framework

The second document, *The Supportive Housing Strategy for Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supportive Housing Framework* was written in 2007. The twenty-page document draws upon Vancouver Coastal Health's Mental Health & Addictions Supported Housing Framework to establish the need for, and right to, supportive housing in Vancouver. The strategy outlines Vancouver City Council's priority, "...to locate supportive housing throughout the city...and to support geographic balance" (p.1-2). It identifies three categories of supportive housing: mental health supported housing, addictions supported housing and low barrier housing. The first category is designed, "... for people engaged in mental health treatment", the second, "...for people in recovery from addiction who want to live in an alcohol and drug free environment", the third, "...for people who may not yet be engaged in any treatment"

(p.1). The strategy is divided into twelve sections including a summary and introduction, a definition of supportive housing, a discussion of the context of supportive housing in the city, its development and operation, who is housed and how housing is assessed, an inventory of existing supportive housing is made, including locational information, future supportive housing and its locations within the city are also identified, and the city approvals process and neighbourhood relations and recommendations are discussed.

The strategy focuses on people with mental illness or addictions which are understood to be, "...health conditions which can affect people of all socio-economic backgrounds in all communities and neighbourhoods" (p. 3). The strategy outlines the means for addressing mental illness and addiction presenting scientific evidence that supportive housing provides positive outcomes such as the reduction in emergency room visits, the reduction of symptoms for schizophrenia and psychosis, as well as being cost effective (p.7). Supportive housing is developed through partnerships with the federal and provincial governments and operated through government programs at various levels and the non-profit sector (p.7).

The strategy presents supportive housing as an integral part of the City's housing continuum and provides maps and tables on existing dedicated and mixed social housing buildings within and outside of Vancouver (p.9). Currently there are 1240 units of mental health, addictions supported and low barrier housing in Vancouver. Based on Vancouver Coastal Health's projections, the strategy anticipates there will be a need for an additional 800 units of mental health supported housing, 675 units of addictions supported housing and 725 units of low barrier housing over the next ten years. It plans to address this need through market supplements and new building construction (p.11). Due to zoning, zoning

capacity and land classification, supportive housing sites will likely be located where apartments are permitted in high-density areas. Mental health and addictions supported housing are expected to be located throughout the city both inside and outside the Downtown Core, while low barrier housing is expected to be located in the Downtown Core as this is where many prospective tenants now live and where related community services are situated (p.14).

The strategy also outlines the City's approval process for the development of supportive housing. This stipulates that proposals and development applications are reviewed using bylaws and guidelines that apply to SNRF's (Special Needs Residential Facilities) and dwelling/residential uses (p.16). The City requires public notification, erection of signage at the site and that letters be sent to adjacent property owners and neighbours providing a project description (p.17). Generally the Development Permit Board will assess the application at meetings open to the public, considering factors such as land use, traffic, parking, and building design (p.17). If there are public concerns regarding the project or programs, an Operations Management Plan may be developed which describe the projects, associated programs and the goals of operation. This plan is designed to help to manage impacts, address neighbourhood issues and provide a point of contact for neighbours (p.17).

The strategy concludes with a list of recommendations for locating supportive housing in appropriately zoned areas to support geographic balance, encourages the City to buy appropriate sites based on availability, and urges the provincial and federal government to provide funding and provide information to the public regarding mental illness, addictions and supportive housing as well as supportive housing projects and

program planning. Finally, the strategy recommends that the City work with Vancouver

Coastal Health to secure new provincial funding for support services and monitor strategy

implementation with reports every three years (p.19).

3.1.3   The Homeless Action Plan

The third document, *The Homeless Action Plan* was created in 2005 with the

purpose of addressing the growing number of visible homeless, those staying in, and the

significant number of people turned away from shelters. It also highlights the increase in

households 'at risk' of homelessness (p.1). The purpose of the sixty-six page document is

to, "identify actions which the City, other levels of government, the community and

business can take to address this urgent problem" (p. 1). It is comprised of four sections

including an introduction and summary, a profile of homeless people, needs, gaps and

actions, and conclusions. The document begins with three key reasons that serve as the

rationale and objectives for the plan,

> There are many reasons for ending homelessness and these relate both to
> the homeless individuals and the larger community. Three simple reasons
> are: to eliminate the human suffering and waste of potential lives; to
> reduce the drain on public and private supports; and to avoid the negative
> effects on communities, businesses and society (HAP 2005, p.3).

The plan was developed in order to identify a set of specific actions though which

the community and all levels of government can work in order to address the problem of

homelessness in Vancouver as well as further the implementation of the existing regional

plan, *Three Ways to Home* (2003). *Three Ways to Home* (2003) emphasizes affordable

housing, support services and adequate income as primary elements in the solution to

homelessness. *The Homeless Action Plan* (2005) identifies these same priorities as

essential to the alleviation of homelessness. It also outlines how attention to each of these

priorities can work to end homelessness. Recognizing that the decisions of government, business, the public and individuals are related to the rise in homelessness, this plan propounds to suggest different decisions and directions for reducing and eliminating homelessness within ten years.

The plan provides a profile of homeless people and describes 'absolute' homelessness and those 'at risk' of homelessness. The 'absolute' homeless are those who are shelterless or street homeless, those staying in shelters and those staying with friends and family. Those who are considered to be 'at risk' are living without safe, secure, adequate, accessible, permanent housing (p.2). 'At risk' populations are defined as households in core need, that is, households that "live in housing that is unaffordable, inappropriate or inadequate AND cannot afford to rent housing that does meet all standards" and spend more than fifty percent of their income on housing (p. 13, capitalization in original). Census data from 2001 in Vancouver indicated that there were 40,000 people living in 20,500 households 'at risk' of homelessness (p.13).

The plan estimates there are 500 to 1200 homeless people on the street per night. 'Absolute' homeless populations are overwhelmingly adult, single, male and disproportionately aboriginals. Many exhibit symptoms of mental illness and at least two thirds suffer from drug or alcohol addiction (p.11). One quarter of street homeless people reported having no source of income due to ineligibility for government assistance or difficulty in applying for government assistance. Similarly, those staying in shelters are reported to be mostly male, single, between the ages of twenty-five and forty four, with sixty percent receiving government transfers as their main source of income while twelve

percent identified as aboriginal (p. 12). Little is known about those staying with friends and family as a result of their relative visibility in comparison to street homeless.

The plan argues that all levels of government should play an integral role in providing adequate levels on income, housing and supports. It emphasizes increased supports for finding and maintaining employment as well as continuing the supply and funding of affordable, social, rental, supportive and transitional housing as well as emergency shelters and safe houses. In addition to highlighting needs and gaps, a total of eighty-seven actions are proposed pertaining to how each level of government can respond to the barriers experienced by those who are homeless.

The document concludes with a summary of key priorities in reducing homelessness. These are changes to the BC Employment and Assistance program and job creation, increasing supportive housing and increasing mental health and addiction services for the homeless (p. 65). It calls for an increased emphasis on the systemic barriers and underlying causes for homelessness rather than the provision of temporary measures such as emergency shelters. However, the plan also recognizes the need for additional funding and responsibility from senior levels of government in order to ensure that the fundamental causes of homelessness (income, supports and housing) are addressed and further calls upon partnerships between all levels of government, service providers and the community to respond to the homeless crisis.

3.2 Vancouver Housing Policies: Reflections of Neoliberalism

The documents presented above exemplify the mechanisms through which the City of Vancouver works to address issues of housing and homelessness. These efforts

are framed within the context of decreased federal and provincial funding and participation in social housing. As municipalities are charged with increased responsibility for social housing, they find themselves with less money available to provide what is required to house vulnerable populations. Under conditions of increasing inter-urban competition, cities are also tasked with the job of presenting themselves as places that are most attractive to capital and investment (Harvey, 1989). Part of this is manifest in attempts to clean up cities and deliver 'unblemished' cityscapes such as ones that are devoid of homeless people (Mitchell, 2003). Yet, in contrast to anti-homeless legislation, the above documents are reflective of City of Vancouver's recognition of, and sincere commitment to, addressing issues of homelessness that are designed to house the 'hardest to house' and are not intended to be punitive.

On the one hand, City housing policies look to incite participation from federal and provincial levels of government. The City proposes legislative reform by lobbying for changes to welfare eligibility and requirements, the provision of employment assistance and training and increased funding for subsidized housing, for example (City of Vancouver, 2005a). Such changes to senior government policies are expected to address components of income, support services and affordable housing that currently exacerbate homelessness. On the other hand, the City documents presented above also rely upon neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix as essential catalysts and integral components to housing provision, in the absence of senior government intervention in housing. While reliance upon such discourse is not new, contemporary understandings of their role and utility have changed over time (see Cole & Goodchild, 2001; August, 2008). Whereas previous undertakings in housing were

concerned with meeting "…an elemental human need - the need for shelter, for physical and emotional comfort in that shelter" (Basford as cited in Hulchanski, 2004a, p. 181), current attempts at housing provision for 'those in need' look to the ways in which housing can be generated by, and generate, market outcomes. Housing is now viewed as a vehicle for economic growth that has the potential to generate positive economic outcomes in both formal and informal sectors and to increase human capital through attending to 'basic needs' (Harris & Arku, 2007).

Current municipal housing policy is built on an understanding of the role of the market as being multi-dimensional. First, these policies emphasize market development. Social housing policies look to the ways in which the market can provide housing for vulnerable populations. Additional housing is expected to be generated by private market intervention through new developments, for example. Second, these policies emphasize market participation. There is an expectation that participation in the market, through employment, for example, will result in better housing outcomes. It is thought that through the creation of employment opportunities, incomes will increase and individuals will have more money to spend on housing, resulting in more housing options for low-income people. Not only is participation in employment understood to lead to better housing outcomes, it is also understood to lead to less dependence on the state. Finally, these policies utilize a discourse of social mix. Through additional housing starts, increased job opportunities, and the placement of social and supportive housing units across the city, communities are expected to become a mixture of different social and economic backgrounds that could lead to better communities and more housing options for low-income people. As suggested above, discourses of market development, market

participation and social mix are often synthesized and reliant upon one another rather than retained as mutually exclusive ideas.

While the central tenant of neoliberal discourse emphasizes the role of the market, it is also necessarily reliant upon particular binary constructions of people and place in order to operate. Homeless people in the DTES must be framed in terms of their relationship to the market in order to justify particular market solutions to homelessness. They must be understood to be outside of the market, conceived as unemployed and not participating in the market place, unhealthy and a drain on public services. In addition to this understanding of people, the Downtown Eastside must be conceived as a place of deterioration and in need of development, in order to justify efforts for redevelopment, new construction and the influx of new businesses and amenities. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on the ways in which neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix are used as mechanisms for alleviating homelessness in the policy documents, as well as examine their respective constructions of people and place.

Neoliberal discourse is clearly evident in the language of *The Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (2005b) objectives. The document begins with an overview of the vision of future housing that states,

> The DTES will remain the primary community for low-income singles in the city and the region…It will, however, be a functional mixed-income community as the City's revitalization initiatives in the area reverse its decline... The integration of market housing...can help revitalize the area and diversify the social mix without compromising low-income housing objectives. Market projects can support business initiatives providing employment opportunities for local residents and also provide housing options for those with low-income who move into employment and wish to remain in the area (p. 3).

Market development, market participation and social mix are employed in the plan as tools for the revitalization of the DTES. New market development in the form of housing construction, alongside social and supportive housing starts, is seen as central to social mix that is, the integration of low-income populations with moderate to high-income populations. It is partly through the addition of market housing that this 'mixing' is expected to occur. Employment opportunities are made available to low-income people as a result of increased available incomes that in turn are hoped to support businesses in the area. The plan relies upon both physical and social components for justification. It assumes that the addition of *physical* infrastructure will produce positive *social* outcomes; the encouragement and integration of market development in the DTES will result in a social mix that will allow for increased market participation of individuals. 'Mixing' in this sense, is not only equated with the mixing of housing and incomes but also presumably the mixing of positive social behaviour. Through their physical proximity to employed, moderate-income people, current residents of the DTES will be able to obtain more affordable housing and opportunity for employment. The plan continues,

> …future growth is anticipated and should be accommodated with the intention of revitalizing the area and providing new affordable housing options. This plan establishes policies to support the integration of market housing, with an emphasis on housing for moderate-income households. The intention is not to have market development displace the low-income community, but rather to complement it by creating a mixed-income community that can support the provision of goods, services and employment opportunities for local residents of all incomes (p. 3).

'Future growth' in the form of market development is viewed as an inevitable occurrence and an unquestionable good and therefore it is seen as appropriate for it to be used to facilitate the development of affordable housing options. An example of this is

found in the DEOD Official Development Plan (a subarea of the Downtown Eastside), which requires that all new development over 1FSR provides a minimum of 20% social housing in either units or square footage (Downtown Eastside Housing Plan, p. 29). (FSR refers to floor to space ratio which is a proportion of the built floor space to site area.) New market development is used to provide an avenue for further development of non-market housing. The encouragement of market development for moderate-income populations is understood to lead to further opportunities for affordable housing for low-income populations that adds to social mix rather than increase polarization and displacement of low-income people. The subsequent mix is thought to attract investment, as well as facilitate employment and business opportunities, for local residents.

The *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (2005b) relies upon a construction of DTES residents that understands them to be outside of the market place, mainly unemployed and with little income to contribute to businesses and amenities. In addition to this, the DTES, as a place with a concentration of low-income and unemployed residents, is conceived as a site in need of integration into the market place. The plan proposes market solutions through the construction of new development, an influx of new businesses and amenities and a mix of residents with differing social and economic backgrounds that can support it. These solutions are understood to lead to better housing and employment opportunities for existing residents, as well as decrease their dependence on the state.

Similar discourse is evident in the *Homeless Action Plan* (2005). The plan suggests that through participation in employment, for example, individuals are provided means to better health and housing outcomes that have positive effects throughout the

community. In the beginning pages, it states the three principle rationales for the plan.

First,

> Homelessness is clearly a tragic situation for the individual. This is obvious when we look into the faces of the people who are street homeless in Vancouver. There is a high human cost when people are not able to fully participate in society and end up isolated from their community (Homeless Action Plan, 2005, p.3).

The second one states,

> An increasing body of information also indicates that our current approach to homelessness has led to an inefficient use of public resources. It costs more to leave people homeless than to provide them with permanent housing and support services. A 2001 study by the Province indicated that the public costs for providing services and shelter for one homeless person are up to $40,000 annually compared with up to $28,000 for someone who has housing (HAP, 2005, p. 3).

The third one goes on to add,

> …[O]ur current approach to homelessness has led to an inefficient use of public resources…Homelessness also negatively affects neighbourhoods and business. The quality of life is reduced for citizens of Vancouver, particularly in the Downtown, but also in our neighbourhood centres. Having people living in our streets and in our parks is bad for business, especially tourism, which is a major part of Vancouver's employment and economic base (HAP, 2005, p.3).

Homeless people and the state of homelessness are considered through its relationship to the market. The state of homelessness renders individuals outside of the rest of society and community in terms of their status and participation. The plan argues that homelessness translates into high economic costs, inefficient use of public monies and negative consequences for neighbourhoods, businesses and community members. In doing so, it suggests that solutions to ending homelessness are contingent upon integrating homeless people into the neighbourhood and community through their participation in the market.

The plan constructs homeless people as isolated and not participating in society. It argues that the state of homelessness, is not only tragic for homeless individuals, but for all residents of Vancouver and relies upon this construction in order to justify particular solutions to homelessness that suggest the need for reintegration of homeless people into a market based society.

Neoliberal discourse is also evident in the *Supportive Housing Strategy* (2007). It states that "new supportive housing should be located to support geographic balance across the city" (p.15), and that "it is important to ensure a distribution throughout the city" (p.16). The strategy encourages 'geographic balance' and suggests that the locations of mental health, addictions and low barrier housing are best determined through technical categories such as areas with appropriate (apartment) zoning, maximum density zoning capacity and land classified as residential or Special Needs Residential Facility (SNRF) categories. It argues that by locating supportive housing throughout the city by means of technical classification, rather than some other form of classification such as community cohesion or individual preference for housing, the tenants of supportive housing will be better connected to members and services of the community. "If supportive housing is located city-wide, it provides opportunities for people to access this kind of housing where family and friends are nearby and where they are familiar with the services and the neighbourhood" (p. 13). The concept of geographic balance is underscored by notions of proper social mix that are thought to ensure better opportunities for housing and support for people who experience mental illness and drug addiction. Locating social housing throughout the city, rather than encouraging a concentration in one area such as the DTES, is thought to attract investment and the

potential for more housing developments; different income levels attract services and generate employment opportunities that lead to healthy communities and therefore better housing options for vulnerable people. The discourse of social mix works in conjunction with discourses of market development and market participation. New market development encourages new businesses as well as a diverse social mix that can support new businesses and new development, all of which lead to healthier and more inclusive communities.

In order for this discourse to operate, it is reliant upon a construction of people and place that assumes that individuals who are in need of supportive housing are less capable of being healthy and well if they are concentrated together in one area. It constructs ill and addicted people as unhealthy and incapable of forming healthy communities, on their own. This strategy relies upon the assumption that people who need support services alongside housing will lead healthier lives if they are not living together in one area. In this case, social behaviour is conflated with physical proximity (Crump, 2002). Through the physical deconcentration of those who experience mental illness and drug addiction, it is thought that negative social behaviours associated with these illnesses can be better solved. People are thought to lead healthier, more productive lives if they are not nearby others who use drugs or have mental illness. Again, the solutions proposed are done so in terms of their relationship to the market. The strategy proposes that best practices for creating healthy communities involve the integration of low-income, vulnerable individuals with moderate- to high-income individuals where they can participate in employment, for example.

Each of the policy documents can be viewed as a form of government intervention in social welfare that is necessarily reliant upon particular conceptions of people and place that serve to render them oppositional to both broader society and the economy. While the interventionist state is generally seen as anathema to neoliberal ideology, the manner in which states govern is also crucial to the operationalization of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007). This is reflective of the complex and contradictory nature of "actually existing neoliberalism" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Neoliberal discourse is necessarily reliant upon a binary system of representation between the target demographic, that is, homeless people and the places where they live, and the rest of the population. Homeless people are understood to be separate from the rest of society; they are not our neighbours but rather 'people living in the streets' (City of Vancouver, 2005a). They are assumed to be unemployed and without legitimate ties to the economy, presumably failing to contribute to, and instead only detracting from it. The documents described above forge the creation of a center and a periphery and renders the subject outside of the margins of society in order to justify particular market solutions to homelessness. In the next section, I present data gathered from interviews with housing advocates as well as data from participant observation in order to discuss the ways in which neoliberal discourses present challenges to housing provision for the 'hard to house' in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

4: NEGOTIATING NEOLIBERAL TERRAIN: CHALLENGES HOUSING ADVOCATES FACE AND THE STRATEGIES THEY EMPLOY

4.1 Challenges to Housing Provision: Perspectives of Housing Advocates

As those who are responsible for practicing government policies, housing advocates play a pivotal role in the administration and delegation of housing plans and strategies for homeless populations. Advocates are tasked with translating government policy documents into tangible housing outcomes for homeless people. In an increasingly neoliberal policy environment, they face several challenges in their task of creating, finding and maintaining affordable housing for those who are 'most in need'. Interviews conducted with housing advocates indicated that the challenges they face stem to a great extent from neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix. More concretely, these challenges entail changes in the availability and nature of housing and reflect restructured government funding and an emphasis on the competitive market for increased housing starts and maintenance of existing rental stock. They include a lack of housing supply, low vacancy rates, poor conditions in existing stock, conversions of rental stock to condominiums, high rents and the lack of appropriate supports for those who experience addiction and mental illness. Additionally, housing advocates face other challenges when attempting to house the 'hard to house'. These challenges concern the ways in which poor people and social housing are conceived by policy makers, private landlords, the media and broader society and how those

perceptions influence the location and accessibility of housing stock for poor populations including conceptions of those in need of housing as unemployed, unhealthy and incapable of forming healthy communities. All of these challenges will be discussed in terms of their relationship to municipal housing policy's reliance on market development, market participation and social mix for the provision of social housing in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

4.2 Market Development

Reliance upon the private market is central to the creation of more affordable housing for vulnerable populations, in the absence of the addition or provision of social housing (government funded and/or operated housing). One of the most significant challenges, according to all interviewees, is an insufficient supply and lack of adequate housing stock to meet the demand and needs for affordable housing for low-income people.

> Well the biggest thing that constrains social housing is the decisions of the senior governments, the federal and provincial governments, to not fund social housing. We didn't used to have a homelessness crisis. We do now. What's different? What's different is the federal government stopped building social housing in the mid 90's. The provincial government stopped building social housing in the early 2000's, in 2002. That's what's different. That's the biggest difference. The main reason we don't have social housing is cause they don't build social housing anymore. That's the most important reason (Interview, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Vancouver, February 2009).

Another one stated,

> There's already a consensus made that there's a housing crisis. There's not a lot of affordable housing and on top of that my clients have mental health issues and on top of that they have addiction issues. [There were] very, very few buildings that would accept applications. It was very hard. It required a lot of footwork and meeting people and trying to find the right match. And in competition, people with addictions and mental

health-- they're kind of on the bottom of the queue for that housing (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, August 2008).

In Vancouver, lack of supply, low vacancy rates, high rents and apartment conversions to condominiums have meant that the poorest populations have few options for housing other than in privately owned and operated Single Room Occupancy hotels in the Downtown Eastside. These hotels rooms are among the oldest and cheapest form of accommodation in the city; most are approximately one hundred years old and rented at shelter allowance rates (City of Vancouver, 2005a). SROs are typically ten feet long by ten feet wide and do not have private kitchens or bathrooms. In some cases, bathrooms are shared by up to twelve people (City of Vancouver, 2005a). SROs are also well known as being sites for drug dealing, drug use, and dangerous conditions (City of Vancouver, 2005). (See Figure 2: Typical SRO Hotels in the DTES.)

The poor conditions of the available housing stock adds to the challenge of an insufficient supply of affordable housing in the DTES. One advocate states,

> A lot of those buildings in the DTES are way beyond even trying to prop up anymore… some of those older buildings should just be demolished or replaced. They've got hundred square foot rooms. They are in horrible condition. Nobody should be living like that (Interview, City Councillor, Vancouver, January 2009).

Another laments,

> I see more people who are homeless who really want to find housing, who have so little options for it. I mean sometimes their only option is a room that's like, maybe ten by seven feet, that's full of bugs, and that's not a way to live (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, August 2008).

Advocates indicated growing concern over poor conditions in rooming houses. They specifically point to bedbugs, cockroaches and rodent infestations that make it increasingly difficult to find and maintain appropriate housing for their tenants.

Figure 4.1: Typical Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the DTES (Reprinted with permission, Jay Black, 2009)

In addition to challenges of low supply, unaffordability and poor conditions of existing stock, many advocates cited problems in trying to find housing that provided adequate support services for their specific client group,

> So part of it is housing, but the other part of it, (and the two, as far as I'm concerned, can't be done separately), is the other supports. Because you have to address the other issues at the same time you address the housing. But you need the housing in order to help stabilize, right? Somebody's gonna get their sleep, somebody's going to get some food to eat, you know, at least its there, they've got it in their fridge. You can't just say, 'Okay, here's your room, here's your key. You're on your own'. It's not enough (Interview, Housing Manager, Vancouver, November 2008).

Since many of the 'hardest to house' experience issues of mental illness, drug addiction, physical disabilities and other barriers, they often require additional services in

order to maintain their housing. These services are generally found within supportive housing environments and can include meal preparation, monitoring and administering medication, help with cleaning, addiction services, detox, and counselling, etc. Advocates indicated that privately owned housing fails to provide the types of supports that many of their clients need.

Reliance upon discourses of private market development in the creation and/or provision of affordable housing for low-income populations presents significant challenges to housing provision. While new development does increase the number of housing units available, the infusion of new market development does not necessarily have the effect of creating more housing for low-income populations since low-income populations cannot afford new construction or locations where moderate to high-income people move from when they upgrade to new development. Since market development is governed by the market, not government, it is privately owned and operated with goals of profit accumulation. Most individuals in greatest need of housing in the Downtown Eastside collect welfare as their main source of income and many suffer from mental illness and drug addiction (SPARC BC, 2005). This means they are only able to pay $375/month for rent (the allotted shelter allowance for a single person on welfare) and often require support services alongside housing. New market housing does little to increase the amount of available income to low-income people for housing or address their need for support services. Housing advocates indicated that many private owners do not want low-income tenants, often lack the necessary capital to maintain or upgrade their properties, do not provide support services or build additional low-income rental housing. One advocate is particularly clear on this issue,

The amount of effort and work that's necessary to maintain housing for this population-- for a private operator, it's a lot of work. They aren't the most ideal tenants by far. We can't expect the [for] profit, market value, market housing to do that. They're not equipped to do it. They don't have the expertise or staff or the philosophy to do such a thing (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, October 2008).

High-end condo developments often serve to further exclude and marginalize low-income populations when they are built in areas that were previously low-income (August, 2009). As moderate- to high-income populations move into an area, prices for housing, services and amenities rise and low-income people can no longer afford to live there. Therefore the addition of market housing does not guarantee that low-income populations will gain better access to adequate and affordable housing. The causal relationship attributed to increased housing starts and more housing options for low-income people fails to recognize the limited income of vulnerable populations, their need for support services and the interest of private developers to maximize capitalist gain.

4.3 Market Participation

Reliance upon market participation as central to the alleviation of homelessness also posed problems for advocates. The discourse of market participation reflects notions of the neoliberal subject that understands individuals as autonomous and best accommodated by a freely functioning and unfettered market (Harvey, 2007). Market participation through the addition of employment opportunities, for example is conceived as a means for individuals to attain better housing opportunities through an increase in income and subsequent money available for housing costs. A corollary to this discourse is the assumption that homelessness is a choice made by homeless people to not participate in an environment that supports equal potential and success for everyone. This

understanding is manifest in the ways in which poor people and social housing are

conceived by policy makers, private landlords, the media and broader society and

influenced the location and accessibility of housing stock for poor populations living in

the Downtown Eastside. General understandings of low-income, homeless populations as

unemployed, untrustworthy, unhealthy and unproductive results in the stigmatization and

discrimination of vulnerable populations that serves to exclude them from available

housing (Wilson & Grammenos, 2005).

Interviews with advocates indicated that a major challenge they face concerns

common sense understandings of homeless people as 'Other'. As one put it,

> Getting back to maybe a more foundational problem-- there's a real us
> versus them mentality with the poorest people in the city and the people
> who are well off. A lot of people in Vancouver are really scared to come
> into the DTES. They come in here and they see filth and they see people
> acting like mongrels and whatnot and they're like, 'They are animals, let's
> get out of here' and there's no real empathy at the same time. It's more
> like 'Ughh'… I kind of understand that, I mean, why wouldn't they think
> that way, with such space in between each other? At the same time, a lot
> of people that live in the DTES have that much fear or even more to leave
> this neighbourhood because they leave the DTES and they're usually
> chased back into this neighbourhood because of how they're perceived.
> Usually they get chased back in here by the police, sort of, just abused,
> when they leave the neighbourhood and whatnot. So it's almost like a little
> bit of a sanctuary from the rest of the planet for a lot of these people
> (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, September 2008).

These conceptions serve as a barrier for poor people in the DTES to find housing. One

advocate states,

> I discovered fairly early on when I first started to try to find people
> housing that because of the reputation of people living on the street-- most
> private owners don't want it. I found a lovely basement suite for
> somebody and the guy-- he [the private owner] was a good Christian man,
> he kept telling me, you know, but he couldn't do it. He couldn't, because
> he didn't trust him [the prospective tenant]. They have heard stories and
> they're just not willing to go there. Some of them just don't want to be

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> bothered and they'd rather try somebody else. So, you know, you are dealing with a lot of different personalities and problems and issues and I've found that dealing with a lot of the SROs, the managers come in with their own baggage (Interview, Housing Manager, Vancouver, November 2008).

Binary constructions of homeless people as oppositional to the rest of society make it difficult for advocates to find housing for their clients. Through an understanding of homeless people as untrustworthy, lazy and dependent, they are excluded from available housing stock. These notions are congruous with constructions of homeless people in municipal housing documents that are reliant upon binary constructions of homeless people in order to justify market solutions to homelessness. Homeless people must be conceptualized as being outside of society (and the market) in order to argue that through integration in the market (through new developments and employment, for example), the problem of homelessness can be solved.

In the dominant discourse, the causes of homelessness are connected to an understanding that homeless people choose not to work. Solutions to homelessness are, therefore, framed in a way that they must involve integrating homeless people into the market via their participation. However, in practice, the creation of more opportunities for employment, for example, does not necessarily mean those in need of housing will gain employment (August, 2008). Since many in the DTES suffer from drug addiction, mental illness and have physical disabilities, this population does not necessarily possess the skills to participate in paid employment. Therefore an influx of employment as a solution to homelessness may instead create an exclusionary environment for those who are not able to participate. Rather than making more inclusive and accessible housing, these notions can instead serve to displace poor populations as those capable of

employment push homeless people out of an increasingly market-oriented Downtown Eastside.

4.4 Social Mix

Reliance upon neoliberal discourses of market development and market participation works to exclude vulnerable groups from new housing developments as well as their access to existing housing stock. In addition to these challenges, the discourse of social mix marks a significant barrier for housing vulnerable populations. Housing advocates indicate that instead of addressing issues of supply and inclusivity, these understandings associated with social mix were instead used to justify gentrification efforts in the DTES,

> It's getting worse for the low-income people. You can't bring in condos and expect that that's gonna help low-income people at all at this stage. So to me that balance would be to help the low-income people of the neighborhood first and if there's any room left over, you know, other people could move in. I think the whole 'mix' is a rhetoric. I mean I think it's a rhetoric that's being used to gentrify. This neighborhood's for sale-- so they [the City/private developers] need to get in there and figure out how to create support for the selling of the neighbourhood. And that's part of it, is to play on people's fears that people can't be healthy and live together if they are low-income. And that's not true, 'cause people can. But it means you have to work on improving the conditions of people's lives (Interview, Housing Activist, Vancouver, February 2009).

Through an understanding of homeless people as unhealthy, unproductive or incapable of making good choices on their own, the discourse of social mix allows for an influx of new market development designed to attract moderate to high-income people. Notions of 'Other' act as exclusionary constructions for current residents of the DTES to maintain the area as their home. Such understandings mean that 'those in need' of housing are subject to competition for available housing, or at least for the sites where

housing might be built, in the DTES. Additionally, increased incomes in an area often

mean that as expensive market housing and businesses move in, many of the services and

amenities available also become too expensive for low-income populations. This means

that homeless people are given little choice about where they can live. As rich people

move in, poor people are pushed out.

Reliance upon neoliberal discourses as mechanisms for housing outcomes have

resulted in increased hardship for advocates in their work. In the policy documents,

market development, market participation and social mix are conceived as catalysts for

increased housing availability and housing options for vulnerable people. However, these

discourses rely upon constructions of homeless people and place that render them outside

of society and the market and instead can work to promote exclusionary practices that

have translated into housing barriers for the homeless. Rather than create more housing

options, these constructions can negatively effect the location and accessibility of housing

for low-income people (August, 2008; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005). In Vancouver,

housing advocates face challenges of affordability and supply as well as issues of

stigmatization and discrimination of homeless populations that are the result of a reliance

upon market solutions to homelessness. In the next section, I look to the strategies

employed by housing advocates as they attempt to address these challenges.

4.5   Housing Strategies: Addressing the Challenges

Advocates employed multiple and diverse strategies in order to address the

various challenges they experienced in housing provision. These strategies are reflective

of their personal experiences and views of homeless populations as well as their own

understandings of housing policy. Many look to address immediate housing challenges at

local and provincial levels. Several make attempts to lobby governments with letter writing campaigns, public demonstrations, writing reports, conducting community visioning sessions, developing networks between community and government, as well as attending and speaking at City council meetings in order to draw attention to, and raise awareness of, the need for affordable and appropriate housing for vulnerable populations. Other strategies were designed to encourage senior government to take up responsibility for social housing through the design and implementation of a national housing strategy that would see government build and fund new social housing units. This was done in hopes that such a strategy would promote national direction and cohesion in order to address housing challenges across the country.

In conjunction with these strategies, advocates develop strategies to address issues of stigmatization and discrimination. These strategies include attempts to educate the public about causes of homelessness and the diversity of homeless people, attempts to demonstrate their need and desire for housing, and to build trust among homeless populations and others in society, including housing advocates. These strategies often involve garnering community participation through organizing public demonstrations around the city and the province including a city wide housing march, and a ribbon tying event to protest changes from public housing to mixed income redevelopment at Little Mountain (British Columbia's first public housing project) (See Figures 4.2 & 4.3), as well as other grassroots initiatives such as designing a poetry book with contributions from DTES residents. Advocates work to alter the ways in which the general public views issues of housing and homelessness by promoting the idea that housing adequacy

and affordability issues affect people of all socio-economic backgrounds and groups in

Canada.

Figure 4.2: Housing March Poster (Reprinted with permission, Tom Thompson, 2009)

Figure 4.3: Ribbon Tying Event (Reprinted with permission, Tom Thompson, 2009)

One advocate explains her approach:

> So you start at the top and bottom - you put in housing and food, and then you put in respect and individuation, and work toward the middle and you get success. (Interview, Housing Co-ordinator, Vancouver, March 2009).

Strategies for addressing the challenges to housing are reflective of the ways in which advocates themselves discursively constructed homeless populations. Their

personal understandings of homeless people worked to inform their strategies for

addressing housing challenges. One put it this way,

> I guess part of my experience though is adjusting my expectations for what a lot of people at least in our housing societies, what they'll be able to accomplish. You don't really notice it when you come down to this neighbourhood and you see some of the struggles people are having. You don't really understand the kind of training that's required just going through childhood to your teens to come out and be able to function in society. So many things like learning basic manners, basic relations, or being angry with other different traumas that may have set you back. And then you're behind all your peers and then you lose hope. And then you get stigmatized at the same time. And people dealing with this stuff, I mean, it's easy to say, 'hey, why don't you just pull up your socks and go get a job?'. When you see it first hand, you know that that's just a silly thing to say, it's impossible for these people because they don't have any, they don't know how to do that... A lot of the people around here just don't have those kinds of skills. It's too late in their life to get them. But that being said, it doesn't mean we're giving up on them but you have to measure your rewards in different ways. Like is this person happier today than they were yesterday? Are they staying out of jail or are they smiling? Are they eating food? Do they have a sense of hope now? Are there things that they still can accomplish? (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, September 2008).

Noting that any measurement of the potential for accomplishment among the populations

he dealt with must be considered relative to their life experiences and traumas, he

continued,

> If we're really gonna solve this problem there needs to be more understanding created between the groups. And that will create more empathy and I think once you have that emotive attachment to your different fellow human beings the problems really start solving themselves almost. It becomes obvious that well, 'we need to do this', 'we need to do that'. And people sort of at the same time maybe re-examine their beliefs. Oh, why am I like this? Maybe I need to look at their struggle a little bit closer to see what the root of it is. I guess that is the real solution to the problem and then the rest of it, you know, the rest will solve itself (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, September 2008).

In this task, housing advocates often worked to educate the public about people who are

homeless in ways that were informed by their own understandings of homeless people:

> Part of the task is to normalize people's attitudes about people who they tend to think of as deviant. People who are homeless are not an alien species from another planet. They are not. You could be homeless in a minute. I could be homeless in a minute. The people who are homeless, many of them weren't homeless a minute ago and we need to normalize people's attitudes towards these folks (Interview, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Vancouver, February 2009).

Others suggested the need to adopt an approach that reflected and recognized the

diversity, and different needs, of homeless people in order to be able to better address

their needs.

> So for us, it's going to be a matter of meeting each person where they are-- it is the only way to help. We can't use a cookie cutter approach to dealing with people's issues because they are so individual. It's the same thing with the housing, whether or not we would be so inclined to go with this model or that model, all models should exist. Because what works for one is not going to work for another and it's a matter of trying to figure out what's going to work best. You know, so there's a place for all of it (Interview, Housing Manager, Vancouver, November 2008).

In addition to proposing solutions that are critical of, and often diverged from,

existing government policies, some advocates suggest following an entrepreneurial

approach as a means to housing provision. Similar to the approach used in City housing

policy that looked to government as well as business solutions to housing, one advocate

embraced the idea stating,

> We have to be entrepreneurial. We have to be very business minded. I mean I think we still try and get them [the government] to realize the error of their ways, get back in the game. But we don't have the luxury of waiting around for them. While we're lobbying on that, at that level, we're still doing our other stuff, creating our business model, engaging in social enterprise, trying to get some affordable home ownership, trying to figure out a way to do it in a city like Vancouver where the land prices are absolutely outrageous. I think that in particular the larger societies can do

other things that will allow them to build more housing, create equity that they can lever into housing dollars, create partnerships with the private sector, work closely with the private sector and business community in a way that enhances and promotes community. I think its not that hard to sell that. What we've got to do, we've got to quantify our qualitative data. We've got to put that in numbers. There's no room for slackin' off and just goin' along on government handouts. Those days are over (Interview, Executive Director, Vancouver, February 2009).

The strategies employed by housing advocates reflect their desire to address the multiple challenges they face in providing housing for vulnerable populations. These strategies varied among advocates and often were a reflection of their own personal opinions, creativity and innovation. One advocate stated, "I responded out of what I can do and who I am. The next person that has this job will do it really differently because they'll be coming into it in another time, another ground and that's really appropriate and they'll need somebody that's a little bit different than me" (Interview, Housing Co-ordinator, Vancouver, February 2009). In the task of housing provision for Vancouver's 'hardest to house' advocates drew upon their own personal experiences and creativity as available tools in order to devise strategies to help get people off of the street and into housing. The next section returns to the concept of third space as one avenue for understanding the important role of housing advocates as producers of an 'in between' space for translating government policy documents in order to attend to the needs of homeless populations. Using interview data with housing advocates, I argue that their work serves to 'bridge the gap' that is created through binary formations of homeless populations that are constructed in written policy documents.

4.6 Housing advocates: Making a Third Space

The challenges housing advocates face are manifestations of municipal housing policies that are predicated on a discursive binary of homeless populations, on the one hand, and the rest of society, on the other. This binary tends to justify certain policy responses to homelessness. These responses are most closely aligned with neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix and work to construct homeless people as problems, not because of their histories of trauma and disadvantage but because of their failure, or putative unwillingness to, choose to act as autonomous individuals in a 'properly' functioning market. Homeless people are marked out as 'Other' in contrast to the rest of society (Sibley, 1995; Wilson & Grammenos, 2005; Crump, 2002).

Within this context, I argue that housing advocates occupy a third space. Often members of multiple groups, housing advocates are city councillors, Members of the Legislative Assembly, directors, managers and frontline workers of non-profit housing organizations, community activists and researchers who work to create, find and maintain housing for poor people. Housing advocates must work to translate policy for the target populations of policy and in addition, are tasked with carrying information back to policy from the perspectives of target populations, if these policies fail. Therefore the work of housing advocates can disrupt discourses that are used in policy documents to justify particular market solutions to homelessness. Through their personal experiences and intimate contact with homeless populations as well as their ability to draw upon and contribute to, the information and resources made available by government, housing advocates present an arena within which relationships of power can be transformed. This

can be viewed as an example of Cresswell's understandings of power as an arena within which relations exist (2000). In this respect, attempts to 'fix' homeless identity within social housing policies does not necessarily result in the creation of purely inequitable relations of power between policy makers and homeless populations. Instead, there is no strict adherence to specific realms of power as advocates 'go-between' and are often the one's who create, as well as critique, housing policy. In this way, housing advocates can work to 'bridge the gap' between stigmatized populations and policy. "I listen to people who are living the experience of homelessness in the street and bring what they've told me to people who are implementing housing and housing design policy-- taking the reality of the street and trying to impact policy" (Interview, Housing Co-ordinator, Vancouver, February 2009).

In an increasingly market oriented environment, advocates are tasked with, and rely upon, building relationships with actors from across the housing sector including private landlords, non profit housing societies and outreach staff in order to house vulnerable people.

> We build relationships with operators [private landlords] and also non-profits and that's the only way some of these clients are able to be housed. Otherwise they wouldn't. 'Cause we provide that support, we provide that security, we say, 'if anything's wrong, call us'. We're almost like extra staff, an outreach staff for those buildings, which is really great. There are buildings that just don't want to deal with anybody that is official in many cases, for their own reasons, right? (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, October 2008).

Another describes her work,

> So all you can do is your best and what you try to do is you really have to get to know some of the places, get to know the managers, the people making the decisions on who moves in and who doesn't. And try to make it a fit (Interview, Housing Manager, Vancouver, November 2008).

Housing advocates act as translators between policy, policy makers and those in housing need. They work to give a voice to homeless populations and communicate their needs to influence policy and policy makers.

> [We act as]... extra eyes and hands for them and give the stigmatized population legitimacy in their words. And also, the ability to communicate with bureaucrats in their own language and also to calm the client down when they become excited. I think that's another really good thing about our program. We act as a middle man for both the populations cause they speak different languages and they have different ways of communicating and at times aren't always concurrent with each other and so there's a lot of conflict because of that. We provide that translator kind of service for these two different populations (Interview, Frontline Worker, Vancouver, October 2008).

The role of housing advocates and their occupation of a place 'in between' policy documents and the target of such documents is reflective of differing epistemological basis for understanding vulnerable populations. Policy as a written document establishes homeless people and homelessness using quantifiable and objective facts that render homeless people oppositional to the rest of society. In conjunction with this knowledge, housing advocates draw upon their personal experiences with homeless populations in order to define their own solutions to homelessness. The solutions presented by housing advocates are both manifestations of the challenges they face in their work on a daily basis as well as products of their own personal experiences and stories that they choose to tell about the people that they want to house.

Interestingly, the ways in which housing advocates present and construct homeless populations was often not very different from the ways in which they were constituted within the housing documents described above. Advocates did understand homeless people to be unique and different from the rest of society, however this

difference was not perceived as deviance. These understandings are reflected in the strategies that housing advocates propose in their attempts to find solutions to the challenges to housing. Instead of looking to market solutions to housing problems, housing advocates propose that housing should be viewed as a basic human right that must be provided to all people. They argue that access to housing should not be contingent upon homeless people's participation or integration into the market.

That being said, the solutions that advocates propound for housing problems are often, but not always, different from neoliberal discourses of market development, market participation and social mix. Drawing from their experiences with vulnerable people and housing challenges, housing advocates work to 'bridge the gap' between stigmatized populations and policies and programs designed to house them. In this way, they occupy a third space, a place 'in between' policy and practice that can serve to transform power relations between the two groups rather than retain or reproduce inequitable relations that are understood to be inherent in binary constructions of identity. Housing advocates resist dominant neoliberal discourse through their re-framing of the solutions to issues of housing and homelessness. This is done within an overarching framework of inequitable relations of power however these strategies, as a form of resistance, often work to subvert this inequality. Through the utilization and reliance upon of the quantitative facts and research found in housing policy documents, coupled with their experience working with vulnerable populations, housing advocates are able to make credible their critique of existing policy and call for a reworking of its proposed solutions to homelessness and housing issues.

5: RE-NEGOTIATING POLICY AND PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICIES

5.1 Going Home: Understanding the Challenges and Strategies

In the context of globalization and increased interurban competition between places, cities around the world are currently utilizing an 'entrepreneurial approach' to urban governance that is marked by an adherence to neoliberal ideals (Harvey, 1989; 2007). In this thesis, I have argued that social housing policies in Vancouver are reflective of contemporary government's attempts to employ a neoliberal approach to governance. While I argue that many of the challenges faced by housing advocates are tied to the use of a neoliberal approach to housing provision, I do not contend that current housing policies focused on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are inherently or exclusively negative. (Or that neoliberal mechanisms are manifest in uniform ways over time and space.) On the contrary, such policies are manifestations of local government's recognition of, and commitments to, addressing the problem of homelessness and in this way are not intentionally punitive.

Within the documents, there are several measures and recommendations that call upon senior levels of government to address issues of supply, affordability and provide supportive housing that meets a range of needs, as well as genuine attempts to promote the development of more inclusionary spaces for poor people (City of Vancouver, 2005a). At the municipal level, there are also restrictions that have been developed with the intent to control the market such as the SRA bylaw, and periodic reports to monitor

the rate of change that is occurring as a result of market development in the DTES
(Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, 2005b). Therefore, these documents-- and the
City's housing policies—cannot be seen as ideologically pure expressions of neoliberal
views of the market. Clearly many of those involved in writing and implementing the
policies would disagree with the ideological principles of neoliberalism. However
neoliberal ideals about market provision are symptomatic of our current system for
housing. They have been internalized by institutions to such an extent that even
progressive social policies are tinged by them or must work within their rubrics for
pragmatic reasons. This point resonates with the contingent, contextual, hybrid
conceptualization of neoliberalism espoused by Brenner and Theordore (2002), among
others.

  This being said, there is no doubt that adopting a specific conceptual frame
through which to view certain social processes leads to a focus on certain aspects of those
processes while casting other aspects of the same processes in shadow. Thus, the
employment of a neoliberalism as a conceptual frame in this thesis tends to focus
attention on the appeal to the market mechanisms in the policy documents. By extension,
it sometimes underplays the ways in which policy documents did, in some cases, attempt
to construct homeless people and the place of the Downtown Eastside in ways that were
congruous with resident's conceptions of themselves. For example, Vancouver policies
should be commended for the insistence that that the revitalization of the DTES should be
done with consideration that it is largely made up of low-income people who consider it
their home and want to remain living there.

Therefore my analysis of City of Vancouver housing policy documents focuses on their reliance upon discourses of market development, market participation and social mix as part of their strategy to alleviate or eliminate homelessness within ten years. Such reliance upon neoliberal discourse also entails particular constructions of homeless people and place as 'Other'. Within the documents, homeless people in the Downtown Eastside must be understood to be markedly different from the majority of society and separate from the market, in order to justify market solutions to homelessness.

My analysis here is an examination of a set of plans that focus on the role of the market as a means to solve homelessness. It is reflective of the range of responses provided by housing advocates as well as my own experiences and knowledge of housing issues in the city. I argue that through an expectation that the market can be used to solve such problems, these neoliberal discourses work to further exclude vulnerable populations from appropriate and accessible housing and reinforce existing discrimination of homeless populations. From this research, it is evident that existing policies, as manifestations of "actually existing neoliberalism" serve to present several challenges to housing provision.

Challenges to housing provision concern the availability and nature of housing stock, as well as impact the location and accessibility of appropriate housing for vulnerable populations. Despite their intention to provide more housing units and housing options for low-income people, the utilization of neoliberal discourses sometimes served to increase the disadvantage experienced by the 'hard to house', as they were subject to more competition for available stock and excluded access to new development, in places where they wanted to live. Housing advocates say that understandings of low-income

people as unhealthy and unproductive help to justify expensive condominium development, and an influx of high-end services and amenities in the DTES that are not affordable to its current residents and therefore push them out of their neighbourhood. Additionally, these understandings may lead to the location of supportive housing facilities in areas where 'those in need' do not want to live, or do not feel comfortable living. Conceptions of vulnerable people as unemployed, unproductive and incapable of forming healthy communities on their own, may serve to create exclusionary spaces and deprive them of choice about where they can live. These same conceptions were also reflected in the strategies advocates employed to deal with housing challenges.

The strategies designed by housing advocates attempted to navigate these challenges through a reworking of existing government policies and programmes to satisfy the diverse needs of vulnerable populations as well as attempts to alter public opinion about 'those in need' of housing. Advocates draw upon their personal experiences and opinions of homeless people in order to find ways to address neoliberal constructions of people and place. In some cases, this meant attempting to alter the ways in which broader society viewed homelessness by creating an understanding that homeless people are not markedly different from the rest of society in that they deserved to have a safe and affordable place to live. At the same time, however, housing advocates acknowledge the uniqueness and diversity of many people who are homeless in the strategies they propose for dealing with housing challenges.

Part of these strategies involved a reliance upon, and ongoing efforts to, build relationships with all members of the housing sector while acting as a voice for homeless people. Advocates work to translate housing policies into tangible housing outcomes for

homeless people while acknowledging the different personalities and preferences of each of their clients. As the translators of housing policies and those responsible for enacting such policies for vulnerable populations, housing advocates embody a third space of 'in between'. Within this 'third space', they work toward creating and maintaining social housing policies that are most appropriate to meeting the diverse needs of vulnerable people.

This work exemplifies that the governance of cities must be viewed as a conflictual process, comprised of a complex coalition of forces. Government tends to play facilitative and coordinating roles, but the organization of space ultimately occurs through a diversity of agents. Therefore if we come to understand policies as being underscored, imbued with relations of power, not as value neutral but rather value laden stories that are told by specific actors aimed toward a specific audience, we can hopefully come a bit closer to understanding the operationalization of policy as a process that can work to create more equitable spaces. The challenges housing advocates experience serve as a basis for the strategies that they employ in order to find appropriate housing for their clients. In this way, their work stands to resist existing discourses about the places and people who experience homelessness, potentially reworking the structures of power that are understood to be inherent in binary relations between dominant and subordinate groups. Drawing from both housing policy and their experience with homeless people and homelessness, housing advocates work to navigate the spaces between and in doing so, tell a different story about homelessness and how this problem can be solved. The future of housing policies and chances of its success therefore hinges upon this

relationship and the importance of fervently listening to, and understanding the people

and places concerned in housing policies.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: **Interview Guide**

Background (Who are the actors?)

1. Can you tell me about the organization you work for?
2. Can you tell me about your position and what you do?
3. How and why did you become interested in housing?

People and Place (Question 2- In what ways are people and place constructed in order to facilitate its enactment on the ground? Question 1b- How do they differ in their understanding of housing priorities?)

1. What can you tell me about the group of clients that you work with? Who are they?
2. From your experience working in the DTES and in finding housing, what do you think the greatest need is for the residents here?

Policy as Written and Practiced (Question 1a- What is the relationship between written housing policy and the practices of housing service providers? Question 3- How does housing policy constrain and enable local service providers' ability to supply appropriate housing to tenants who have addictions and/or mental health issues?)

1. Can you tell me about which policies and programs you think most affect the work that you do on a day-to-day basis?

2. Can you tell me about which policies and programs you think least inform you work?

3. Do you think existing policy objectives are being met?

4. How do you see these policies as having an impact on your work? Do you think these policies are important and relevant to the work that you do?

5. How do these policies constrain and/or enable the work that you do?

6. Do you think these policies accurately reflect your clients' interests and needs?

7. For those with dual diagnosis (mental illness and drug addiction) do you think it is necessary to have a different set of rules, policies or programs to address specific needs?

Policy as Practiced (Question 1)

1. What kind of challenges have you faced in working for [name of organization] in terms of finding for clients with mental illness and drug addiction/ dual diagnosis?

2. What kind of strategies have you adopted to try to deal with these challenges?

3. If you could make some recommendations for policies or programs that would make your job easier, what recommendations would you make?

Final Questions

1. Is there anything else I should read?
2. Is there anyone else I should talk to?
3. Is it okay if I email or call you if I think of something else?

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