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### Transformative spatial governance

*New avenues for comprehensive planning in fragmented urban development*

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## 6. Exploring transformative place-making within the comprehensive spatial governance of Toronto

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Place-making is often seen as a more community-friendly means of developing urban space, as opposed to market-oriented, property-led forms of urban development. However, broadly perceived as the adjustment of spaces in line with the needs of people, place-making is criticised as being ill-defined and failing to consider the wider context in which any place-making effort is inevitably embedded. This paper establishes a connection between wider structuring forces, particularly those connected to neoliberal shifts in spatial planning and governance, and looks at “place-making” from a governance point of view. Efforts that combine social and spatial elements to address the needs of diverse communities in two areas in Toronto are showcased: one commercially viable for and one unattractive to private property development. The comparative analysis reveals the opportunities and limitations of these efforts, particularly in terms of their ability to transform existing spatial governance arrangements and the connected capacity to influence beyond the micro-scale.

### 6.1 Introduction

With public sectors losing their monopoly of political and economic power, urban development has transformed from a managerial activity into a complex interplay between a multiplicity of actors, stakeholders, institutions and interests (Harvey, 1998; Madanipour and Hull, 2001; Jessop, 2016). Since the 1980s, these changes have expanded the possibilities for private initiatives (Tasan-Kok and Vranken, 2011), although the influence of residents and bottom-up actions tends to be limited in the face of “market forces that set the ‘rules of the game’” (Swyngedouw, 2005: 1991). With the ascendance of neoliberal modes of governance in various geo-institutional contexts (Hackworth, 2007), property-led urban development, whereby local authorities follow real-estate interests and collaborate with the private sector while scaling back social investments, has become a common

practice (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002). Spatial planning itself has become increasingly neoliberal and entrepreneurial, with changing institutional frameworks and land-use regulations which accommodate market interests (Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012). Embedded in fragmented institutional landscapes and vague policy arrangements, planning needs to coordinate between public, private and civil society actors (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez, 2002; Healey, 2006; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009). Planning, as a spatial governance practice, has become a fragmented activity that can be best understood as “territorial governance arrangements” aiming to shape spatial development in particular places (Nadin and Stead, 2008: 35). In a way, the governance of cities and the practices of planning have become more flexible to cope with the increasing vigour of urban development (Tasan-Kok, 2008).

In the meantime, bottom-up initiatives and community activism have gained a significant role in urban development (Healey, 2004), although also in a fragmented manner. Collaborative planning, though briefly, was seen as a way to govern places in increasingly complexifying urban societies as a more people-sensitive mode of governance (Healey, 1997). Generated by these changes, renewed attention is being paid to the concept of “place” (Madanipour and Hull, 2001; Davoudi and Strange, 2008; Healey, 2010). From this perspective, place is socially constructed and operates through interactions between people and groups, institutionalized land uses, political and economic decisions, and the language of representation (Saar and Palang, 2009), and is reflected as part of a new “place-making” trend in a wide range of initiatives, disciplines and professions concerned with the built environment (Palermo and Ponzini, 2014).

Inspired by Lefebvre’s (1991) understanding of space as a social construction, place-making is widely used in reference to define collaborative efforts, which aim to transform spaces through community actions. These actions have, therefore, both social and spatial references in planning, although only as micro-scale interventions. With related discourses conveying normative dimensions of community, inclusiveness and belonging (Fincher, Pardy and Shaw, 2016), place-making is said to turn the official planning process upside down, by putting the needs of a local population first and thereby adjusting spaces accordingly (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). However, the term has been subject to criticism for becoming an “increasingly vacuous mantra” (Punter, 2010: 352). Furthermore, place-making efforts, as well as analyses, tend to focus on micro-scale initiatives that are “divorced from the socio-economic landscape of people and place” (Fincher, Pardy and Shaw, 2016: 518). One of the reasons for this specific micro-scale focus is the strong “urban design” application of the term (Aravat, 2002; Ben-Joseph, 2005;

Brown, Dixon and Gillham, 2009; Fleming, 2007; Montgomery, 1998), which has created scepticism among social science scholars. This narrow focus is particularly problematic – as we illustrate – when scholars and practitioners alike overlook the embeddedness of place-making efforts in a wider spatial governance system, as it disregards the underlying conditions that facilitate or amplify certain initiatives, while hindering others.

It is the aim of this paper to establish a connection between wider structuring forces associated with neoliberal shifts in spatial planning and governance, and area-based efforts which aspire to adjust spaces to the needs of local communities. We argue that place-making efforts need to be understood as “transformative practices” within the framework of a comprehensive spatial governance structure. In essence, place-making efforts, where successful, may become institutionally embedded learning practices, or – as we call them – “transformative practices” that instigate institutional change, and change the way in which spatial organization is linked to community needs. We set out to compare different institutional conditions and governance arrangements in two areas in Toronto, a city that is repeatedly linked with urban neoliberalism (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009), entrepreneurial and neoliberal city planning (Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Lehrer, Keil and Kipfer, 2010), as well as property-led spatial revitalisation and “unprecedented condominium development” (Webb and Webber, 2017: 48). Simultaneously, Toronto is a place where community activism and local/bottom-up initiatives are essential elements of the governance system (Tasan-Kok and Özoğul, 2017).

The first area is Regent Park, a former stigmatized low-income inner-city neighbourhood which had community groups advocating for redevelopment, whose location makes it highly commercially viable for private property development, and which is currently undergoing large-scale revitalisation through a public-private partnership. The second one is Jane-Finch, a much larger and highly-stigmatised inner-suburban area that seemingly has little to offer to spur private investment, but which is characterised by strong bottom-up community dynamics. By investigating how different institutional conditions and governance arrangements in the two areas affect the ways in which community needs are matched by spatial interventions, we shed light on the consequences of fragmented urban development and the intricate interplay of two seemingly disconnected processes: property-led development on the one hand and community place-making activities on the other. Furthermore, we argue that growing fragmentation and complexity in urban governance should not lead us to revert to isolated, small-scale analyses. Instead, it becomes fundamental to scrutinise how place-based efforts relate to macro institutional frameworks and may instigate institutional change. Therefore, we unravel the opportunities and

limitations of tangible efforts aiming to link social and spatial elements in Regent Park and Jane-Finch to transform existing governance arrangements. Hence, we focus on their connected capacity to influence beyond the micro-scale.

If place-making efforts are to be transformed into transformative practices, they must cut across the divide of scale and policy sectors within a comprehensive governance structure. Yet, in Toronto, despite strong, widespread and comprehensively embedded community-scale efforts across the city, social planning is usually combined with spatial organisation in the neighbourhoods that are attractive for property development. Innovative place-making efforts in commercially unattractive locations stay at a micro scale and are unlikely to turn into transformative practices without coordinated policy actions navigating market dependency in revitalisation. We illustrate the contrast between Regent Park and Jane-Finch on the basis of a larger research project conducted in Toronto within the framework of the EU-funded research project, *DIVERCITIES*<sup>11</sup>. The results of this paper are based on institutional mapping, policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with a diverse set of actors, ranging from municipal planners to community organisations and private developers involved in Toronto's spatial governance.

## **6.2 Transformative place-making as comprehensive spatial governance**

Contemporary discourse on place-making highlights a number of participatory and holistic approaches to the development and maintenance of predominantly public spaces (Project for Public Spaces, 2017). Instead of top-down land-use regulations and interventions in the built environment, the social realities and needs of people are prioritised (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). However, with growing popularity, the widespread and sometimes tautological or homonymic use of place-making by different disciplines brings about superficiality and inconsistencies, and makes it conceptually ambiguous (Punter, 2010). The absence of government involvement, for example, is often seen as beneficial and cost-effective in situations of decreasing public funds (Kent, 2016) and can be seen as a perspective that easily taps into the neoliberal rationalities of self-responsibilisation (Larner, 2000). Furthermore, the dominant focus on small-scale efforts, such as architectural monuments, individual streets or demarcated public squares, raises questions on whether place-making can live up to its frequently proclaimed goal of creating social equity (Fincher, Pardy and Shaw, 2016). In contrast, research has found that political questions in place-making tend to be bypassed (*ibid.*). Additionally, it is generally ignored that place-making can also target private space, and has in fact strong roots in real-estate development, and is used to enhance “market value, product innovation and territorial marketing” (Palermo and Ponzini, 2014: 35).

Interrogating recent place-making trends against longstanding discussions in the fields of social geography and planning on the concept of place illuminates the importance of having a wider frame of reference than the current place-making literature provides. Conceptualising place as a specific location in a complex web of spatial and scalar relations, in which at a particular moment in time power relationships work out (Massey, 1994), elucidates the complexity in relationships and institutions socially and spatially constructing a place. For example, stakeholders who are materially and ideologically invested in place-making (Martin, 2000) may in fact “come from other places” (Healey, 2010: 32). Additionally, as Harvey (1998) points out, power relationships may play out at and across different scales. Understanding place-making as a form of governance utilizes the term “governance” in its more descriptive meaning (González and Healey, 2005) and broadens the understanding of processes and power relationships at hand.

Simultaneously, however, it is crucial to take the wider institutional setting and governance arrangements in which each place-making practice is embedded into account. In the field of governance, a number of scholars have made the connection between “the phenomenology of micro-practices” and “wider structuring forces” (Gonzalez and Healey, 2005: 2056). Healey (2006: 299), for example, differentiates between “episodes of governance”, characterized by the interaction of a specific set of actors, their particular positions and ambitions, and the wider “rhythm of established governance processes”. Jessop (2016: 17), on the other hand, distinguishes between governance in a “narrow sense of networking” and “meta-governance”, which has the ability to drive more strategic change. Other examples include specific “articulations between state, market and civil society” (Swyngedouw, 2009: 72) versus “choreographies of governance” (ibid.: 74), or “change movements” versus “local regimes” symbolising the rules of the game (Moulaert et al., 2007). The crucial point is that all of these scholars, despite their use of different terminologies, commonly highlight the dialectic relationship between specific urban practices and the wider institutional context.

With growing fragmentation and complexity in urban development, it is reasonable to analyse and focus on specific projects and area-based practices. However, particularly in the current place-making literature, the institutional frameworks shaping area-based efforts are neglected. To encompass the wider structures and dynamics that influence place-making efforts, we refer to spatial governance, which includes the often abstract power relationship between state, market and civil society (Swyngedouw, 2009), the formal and informal norms and rules for service provision, as well as the “networks, discourses and practices, and the deeper cultural assumptions which give authority and legitimacy to actors and processes”

(Healey, 2006: 299). Spatial governance underscores that “space can be site, object and means of governance” (Jessop, 2016: 10), and based on the reviewed governance literature we can assume that spatial governance influences and structures place-making efforts, but also that place-making efforts may have the ability modify the existing forms of spatial governance. Understanding the relationship between place-making efforts and spatial governance becomes pivotal in scrutinising the conditions under which the former can transform the latter. Focusing purely on different places within a city can bring misleading results if an overarching vision is missing: “at stake is an idea of the city as a network of places or a place itself” (Palermo and Ponzini, 2014: 10).

Existing literature has provided insight into the possible conditions that would allow a specific project or initiative to transform wider institutional arrangements. Healey (2006) emphasizes the importance of networks and coalitions that allow new ideas or discourses to travel from one place to another in the wider governance system, particularly those that have power over the distribution of resources and the establishment of formal competencies and principles, facilitated by political support which spans traditional boundaries. Similarly, Swyngedouw (2009) stresses the importance of the public sector in establishing regulatory frameworks, despite the shifting power relationships between states and markets. That said, he also argues that the current system strengthens groups that fit the overarching marketization agenda, while it reduces the power of those that are working against the fundamental principles of the system by means, for instance, of anti-privatisation strategies (Swyngedouw, 2005). This view is supported by Adams and Tiesdell (2010), who draw attention to the decisive element of state-market relations in land and property issues in contemporary spatial governance, arguing that the debate has to be broadened to reveal the forces that are shaping different places. Efforts considered as place-making are too often treated as “spatial enclaves” (Palermo and Ponzini, 2014; Fincher, Pardy and Shaw, 2016), so they fail to account for “the contradictory tensions (the state/market/civil society conundrum) in which any form of governing is inevitably embedded” (Swyngedouw, 2009: 66). Particularly in what some call “neoliberal spatial governance” (Allmendinger, 2016), largescale property development plays a crucial role in today’s urban development (Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012) and is significant in understanding how community place-making efforts are embedded in wider spatial governance.

### **6.3 Methodology**

The two selected case study areas of Regent Park and Jane-Finch differ considerably in terms of attractiveness for private sector investments and particularly property development. Our analysis follows a differentiating comparative approach, which

utilises divergent starting points, which were expected to provide variations in outcome (Pickvance, 2001). The differences in terms of location, connected to land values and real-estate prices, build the foundation of our assumption that the actors involved in the area, their interaction, as well as public planning and other policy responses, form divergent institutional settings which affect local place-making activities. In order to understand Toronto's spatial governance, we created institutional maps which illustrated the roles of stakeholders and institutions involved with influence and interests in a certain domain (Aligica, 2006), and thereafter conducted a policy analysis. The latter particularly focused on the planning policy framework and discourses connecting land-use regulations with community needs on the one hand and private sector involvement on the other.

Furthermore, a total of 27 interviews were conducted between September and November 2015 and in May 2016 to understand how social and spatial objectives are linked in Toronto's spatial governance. At the city-scale, and based on purposive sampling, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with policymakers and public officials working on strategic initiatives and one on stakeholder engagement in the City Planning Division, one on social policy in the Social Development, Finance and Administration division, one with a representative of the Community Development and Recreation Committee, two on the Tower Renewal Program and five with planners working for Toronto Community Housing (TCH). The semi-structured interviews focused on understanding internal and external forms of collaboration in the public sector, as well as policy priorities, strategies and development models.

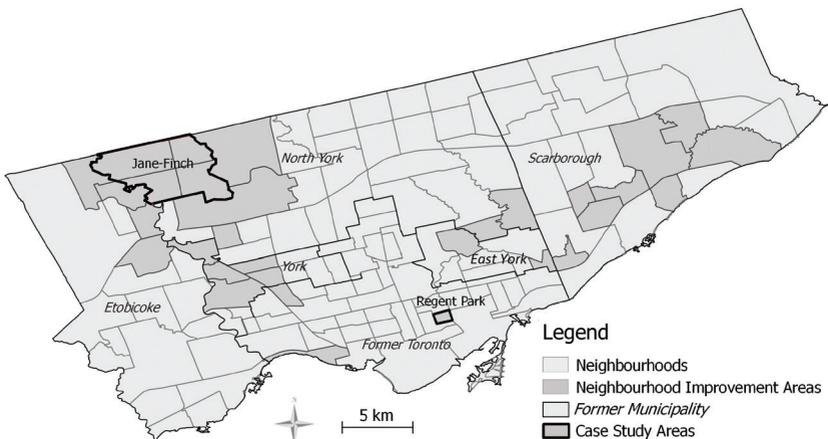


Figure 26. Case study areas within Toronto

To understand more area-specific planning, policy responses and governance arrangements we interviewed a municipal district planner responsible for the Toronto & East York district encompassing Regent Park, as well as five individuals working in the field of community recreation, and a private developer directly involved in Regent Park. For Jane-Finch, we interviewed the municipal district planner responsible for the North York district, where the case study is located, as well as five representatives of local non-profit organisations and two individuals steering informal bottom-up initiatives. The interviews focused particularly on the link between community activities with wider social and spatial policies, and collaboration and potential conflicts between actors from the local scale with those operating at higher scales.

## **6.4 Spatial governance in Toronto**

Toronto is known for its “tremendously dense and complex interactions with other levels of government and with local societal groups” (Horak and Young, 2012: 13). In 1998, the old city of Toronto was amalgamated with the surrounding municipalities in a bid to cut costs and to increase Toronto’s global competitiveness – a process that has been described as an aggressive form of neoliberalisation (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009). Adding to this complexity, previous resistance to amalgamation turned into a successful movement for more fiscal autonomy. With the adoption of the New City of Toronto Act (2006), granting the city a greater legislative authority, increased fiscal resources and inclusion in wider (provincial and federal) policy processes regarding urban matters (Horak, 2007), Toronto established its extraordinary status amid the higher tiers of government, when compared to other Canadian municipalities (Horak and Young, 2012). Within this complex setting, both City Planning and relevant social policy divisions (Employment and Social Services; Social Development, Finance, and Administration etc.) are administratively located under the Toronto Public Service Department. Although there is a clear distinction between the organisation of spatial policy and land-use regulation, and of social policy and community development in the city, these departments exchange information and work together when it comes to neighbourhood-level spatial policy development.

The legislative framework of spatial planning, and hence the work of Toronto’s City Planning division, is defined by the Province of Ontario and focuses primarily on land-use regulations. The Ontario Planning Act determines the fundamental land-use planning principles for the province but also speaks to a wide range of social issues such as affordable housing and mixed-use communities. Additionally, granted by the Planning Act, the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can issue Provincial Policy Statements representing provincial interests

which all plans adopted by municipalities in the province are required to address. The 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, a sub-provincial region in Southern Ontario encompassing the Greater Toronto Area, is yet another planning instrument that refers to some of the specifics that the Province wants to see the municipalities achieve, including the “collaboration among all sectors – government, private and non-profit – and residents” (Section 1.2.2). At the municipal level, the Toronto Official Plan is the most important document as it determines land-use designations as well as provides long-term visions for the growth of the city (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009). The current Official Plan, adopted in 2015, for example, emphasises the role of planning in catering to a diverse population by providing community infrastructure, accessible spaces and equal opportunities for everyone (Tasan-Kok and Özoğul, 2017). It is supplemented by a number of Secondary Plans that include area-specific growth policies. The first Official Plan, developed after amalgamation, aimed to reduce regulatory complexity and, amongst other things, facilitate real-estate investments (Kipfer and Keil, 2002) and these practices continue through today (Lehrer, Keil and Kipfer, 2010). It also faced the challenging task of establishing a comprehensive plan for six former individual municipalities which have since been turned into city districts and are characterised by stark differences (Hulchanski, 2010).

At all levels, planning policy exhibits a thorough understanding of planning as more than just land-use regulation, based on a framing idea that takes into account the inherent intertwining of the physical environment and social life. In practice, this approach involves multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams reviewing planning applications, cross-divisional inter-agency collaborations and shared policy objectives (*Interview City Planning, 17 May 2017*). Furthermore, municipal planners are involved in various area-based policy initiatives, which constitute an important element in Toronto’s spatial governance. For example, in the early 2000s, neighbourhood regeneration gained momentum in the political arena (Horak, 2007), proof of which can be seen in Toronto’s Priority Neighbourhood policy. In 2005, this policy identified areas for investment, later renamed “Neighbourhood Improvement Areas”, where the aim was to combine physical restructuring with “people-centred interventions such as youth programs, community services and community policing” (ibid.: 5). Another collaborative programme, Tower Renewal, was launched in 2009 as a holistic approach to improving conditions in the city’s high-rise apartment neighbourhoods. Transformed into a permanent Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization Unit in 2015, the programme combines building upgrades, rezoning efforts and community engagement programmes (City of Toronto, 2018). Despite these integrated efforts, however, systematic social and spatial inequalities continue along income and race divides, as well as the inner

city-suburban divide, and some inequalities have even deteriorated (Hulchanski, 2010).

Toronto's growing neoliberal orientation (Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009) is often seen as an underlying factor in the city's socio-spatial inequality. The city's first Official Plan after amalgamation brought about a shift from "neighbourhood planning to the imperative of investment" (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 120). The current Official Plan, which provides a framework for both public and private sector investment up until 2031, stresses the need for private sector involvement, stating, for instance: "The City of Toronto cannot do it alone. We need leaders in the public and private sectors with the courage to take risks, develop proactive solutions and then follow through" (City Planning Division, 2015: 21). Massive reinvestment in buildings since the 2000s, the increased deregulation of planning (Lehrer, Keil and Kipfer, 2010) and Toronto's "flexibilization of planning practice [have therefore] accentuated the constraints and limitations of city planning" (Kipfer and Keil, 2002: 228).

## **6.5 Place-making with/without private property development in Regent Park and Jane-Finch**

In order to understand how spatial governance in Toronto influences place-making practices, we turn our attention to the Regent Park and Jane-Finch cases. Both planned and constructed around the mid-20th century, the two areas resembled each other for several decades, not only in terms of their modernist design principles, their single-use zoning and their mix of high-rise apartment buildings and town houses surrounded by unguarded open green space (Sewell, 2009; Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009; Tazan-Kok, 2015), but also for the stigmatization by the media and population at large, with crime in the city being linked to their marginalized groups. The inner-city Regent Park (Figure 26), spanning 69 acres, was constructed in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a slum removal drive. On the other hand, Jane-Finch, which is today classified as an inner-suburban area consisting of four official neighbourhoods (Figure 26), was constructed as a model modernist suburb based on a 1962 plan that foresaw the transformation of 650 acres of farmland into a new community. In both cases, the spatial layout and design are considered as factors that contributed to the deterioration and emergence of social problems soon after construction (City of Toronto, 2005; Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009).

Based on 2011 census data, the Jane-Finch area is home to approximately 82,000 inhabitants, with 23.4% of the population classified as low-income after tax at the person level, meaning these residents live below half of the Canadian median household income (City of Toronto, 2013a). Neighbourhood demographic estimates

for Regent Park indicate a population of approximately 10,000, with 46% being classified as low-income (City of Toronto, 2014). Prior to revitalisation, in 2005, Regent Park was home to approximately 7,500 low-income residents living in rent-geared-to-income apartments (Brail and Kumar, 2017). In both Regent Park and Jane-Finch, 56% of the population speaks a language other than English or French as their mother tongue, providing a snapshot of both areas' diversity. Despite the size differences, the modernist histories and the similar spatial, social and economic challenges make Regent Park and Jane-Finch very interesting to compare.

Another common feature in both areas were bottom-up and tenant-led movements, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, which demanded physical reconstruction and apartment renovations, and called for an end to systematic under-resourcing and under-servicing (Rigakos, Kwashie and Bosanac, 2004; Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009). Today, many of the demands of the residents of Jane-Finch have still not been met, such as their request for a community centre. In Regent Park, these movements were also unsuccessful until the early 2000s, which marked the beginning of the large-scale redevelopment project. This divergence of Regent Park's development compared to Jane-Finch can be attributed to the areas' different locations, which influenced the potential for property development and consequent private sector interest in redeveloping the site. In 2012, for example, Jane-Finch was described as one of the worst real-estate markets in Toronto, reaching an average price of CAD 320,000 (Doolittle, 2012). In the current heated real-estate market of the Greater Toronto Area, existing home transactions in Jane-Finch in July 2018 reached an average of CAD 561899 (Toronto Real Estate Board, 2018). Yet, in Regent Park and its surrounding areas, they reached an average price of CAD 713 309 (*ibid.*), still marking a considerable difference. The contrasting development in Regent Park and Jane-Finch shapes the core of our analysis from this point onwards, in which the aim is to explore the drive to turn place-making efforts into transformative practices in spatial governance.

### **6.5.1 Combining social and spatial innovations through private sector involvement in Regent Park**

Regent Park once represented Canada's largest public housing project. Socially and physically isolated from its surrounding areas, problems emerged in Regent Park soon after its construction and sparked several resident movements demanding better quality, service provision and building maintenance (Horak, 2007). Between 1969 and 1978, a tenant movement emerged to demand improved living conditions and democratic changes to the housing management, but backfired as their struggles were picked up by the media and politicians to portray Regent Park "as a crime-ridden, drug-infested area" (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 118). Two further

endeavours to partially reconstruct the area in the 1980s and 1990s, spearheaded by resident groups, also failed because of a lack of necessary resources from the provincial government, which was responsible for housing development at the time (Horak, 2010).

In the late 1990s, Ontario's Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris transferred the responsibility for public housing from the province to the individual municipalities (Hackworth and Moriah, 2006), and with an amalgamation, Toronto's various public housing agencies were merged into one: Toronto Community Housing (TCH); "typical for neoliberal state-rescaling projects, devolution came with provincially mandated financial austerity and administrative marketization pressures" (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009: 120). Located close to the Central Business District and adjacent to some of Toronto's most gentrifying neighbourhoods at the time, such as Cabbagetown, Regent Park was in a strategic position to respond to the demand for market housing in the downtown area. Needing to find a new approach to finance revitalisation, TCH proposed the redevelopment of the area and was granted approval by the City Council in 2003.

In order to finance the demolition and rebuilding of the public housing units, TCH formed a public-private partnership with the private developer Daniels CM Corporation (DCM). By increasing density through the addition of more than 5,000 market units, the area's existing rent-geared-to-income units could be rebuilt with 1,800 new units within the area and 266 nearby (TCH – Toronto Community Housing, 2017). The following CAD 1 billion revitalization project (Hayes, 2016), now due for completion in 2019, also included new community facilities and retail spaces that would in turn transform Regent Park into a mixed-use, mixed-income community. The project also received additional financing from the City of Toronto, from provincial and federal government grants, as well as from private foundations, adding to the multiplicity of actors and organisations involved in the area (Figure 27). On the policy side, the City of Toronto established a comprehensive policy framework, including rezoning regulations, a Secondary Plan, Urban Design Guidelines and Toronto's first placebased Social Development Plan (*Interview Toronto City Planning, 16 May 2016*; Figure 25). Furthermore, various municipal divisions continue to collaborate and be involved in the social and physical redevelopment of the area, for instance, in the Regent Park City Project Management Team (Figure 27).

The participation of multiple stakeholders and particularly community groups, as well as old and new residents, earned the project international acclaim (City of Toronto, 2013; Hayes, 2016). Simultaneously, the entrepreneurial strategies adopted by TCH and the approach to deconcentrate poverty by adding market units has been highly criticised (August, 2008). Others, however, argue that within the given

parameters, the intricate governance arrangements that were made to include existing grassroots organisations, social service providers and residents, as well as the city’s public administration efforts and firm policy framework, led to relatively strong approval by existing public housing residents (Horak, 2010; Micallef, 2013; *Interview community-recreation, 16 May 2016*). While the legal framework prescribed a specific level of engagement, the focus on participation has been accredited to the ideological invest in Regent Park according to interviewed TCH and DCM representatives. Through both well-developed formal and informal relationships, they used, for example, community animators to better understand the needs of the residents. Furthermore, key stakeholders were said to be constantly discussing how to set up and programme spaces that served the “common good” and encouraged meaningful encounters between old and new residents, for example, by means of public spaces in a new park or community gardens (*Interview TCH, 19 May 2016; Interview TCH & DCM, 24 May 2016*). The institutionalization of different policy pieces, particularly the social development plan which linked physical restructuring with social objectives but added room for flexibility and creativity, are now seen as major contributing elements in Regent Park’s success (*Interview TCH, 10 May 2016*).

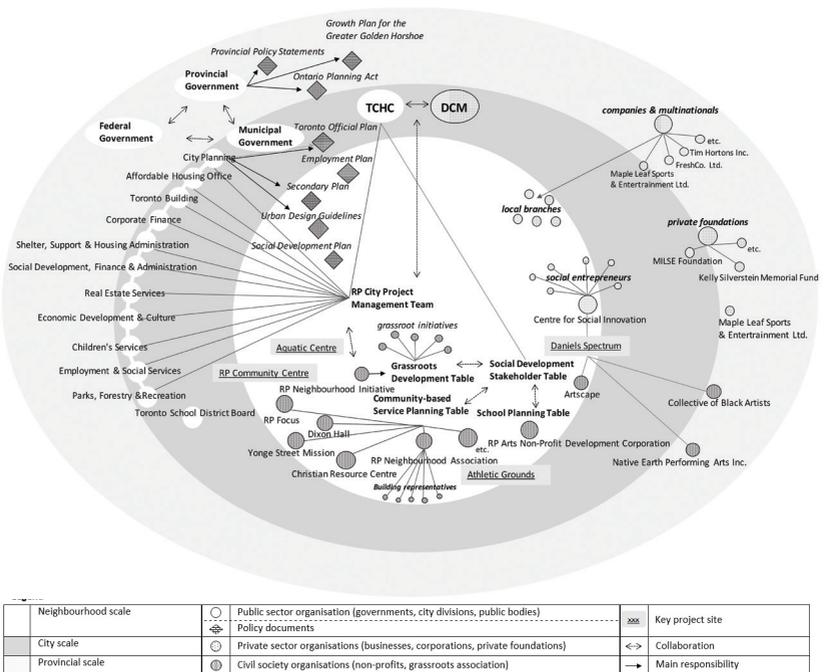


Figure 27. Place-making in Regent Park<sup>12</sup>

Overall, this complex and sophisticated policy framework, combined with a multitude of actors and stakeholders across the policy sector and the public, private and civil society sphere (Figure 27), made it possible to link the social and spatial interventions in the revitalization of Regent Park. As part of the revitalization scheme, place-making activities were enhanced and encouraged. Several key project sites that respond to the needs of the community stand out as being both accessible and inclusive, and allowing people to socialise and self-organise. The Daniels Spectrum, for example, provides space for arts-based and community-focused events. Prior to the construction of the new community centre, much thought was given to the historic divide between northern and southern Regent Park, as well as the location of new public and private housing. Aiming to foster a sense of ownership among all residents, the new community centre provides activities, space and social support programmes free of charge (*Interview Toronto Community Recreation, 16 May 2016*). By far the most prominent example of inclusive design is the Regent Park Aquatic Centre, a new public swimming pool with large glass windows that can be covered with flexible blinds to allow members of the community who would otherwise not make use of the facility to swim in privacy.

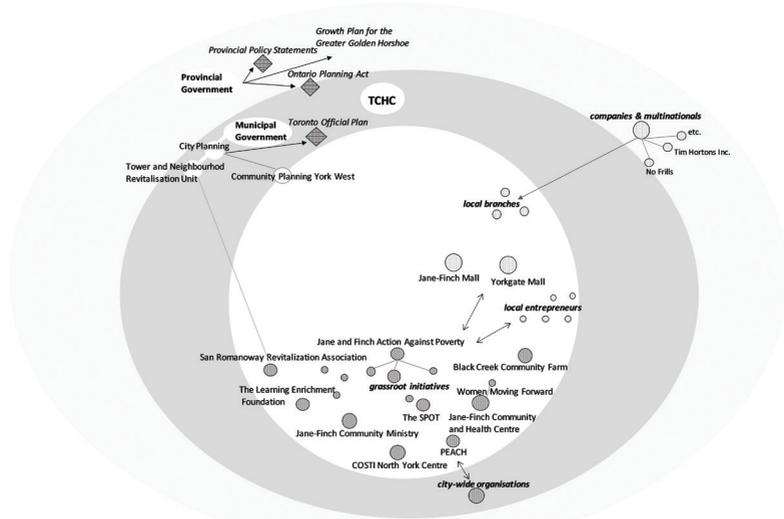
Reactions to Regent Park's revitalisation, however, remain strongly polarised. While being praised for its success and awarded the Best International Neighbourhood Renewal Program (DCM, 2017), the revitalisation has also borne the brunt of much criticism. For example, it has been said that the project turned "public housing residents into clean-living, productive and legitimate users of urban space" where they were once rendered illegitimate and unproductive slum-dwellers (James, 2010: 83), and has been described as a "centre-left commitment to institute a neoliberal framework of devolution, austerity and marketization" (Lehrer, Keil and Kipfer, 2010: 88). Regardless of opinion, however, the impact of Regent Park beyond the neighbourhood scale cannot be denied and critics even point out that the "project may have far-reaching consequences" (*ibid.*), noting that the model is already being applied in other redevelopment schemes in Toronto, in projects in which TCH is involved. The combination of social and spatial elements by means of multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration has in turn set a new precedent for the city (*Interview Toronto City Planning, 16 May 2016; Interview Toronto City Planning, 17 May 2016*). The TCH and City Planning have shifted their approach, and in newer revitalization projects such as in Alexandra Park, another downtown project of a similar size to Regent Park, and Lawrence Heights, located in the northern part of the city and double the size of Regent Park, the decision was made to avoid the temporary displacement of residents to other parts of the city during the course of construction (*Interview Toronto City Planning, 16 May 2016*). Moreover, the DCM seems to have changed general perceptions on the role of

private developers in neighbourhood revitalisation. In Alexandra Park, for example, the developers shortlisted by TCH had to present their plans to the local community, who had a critical say in the final selection decision (*Interview TCH, 19 May 2016*).

### 6.5.2 Social innovation and spatial limitations in Jane-Finch without significant private sector involvement

Jane-Finch is one of Toronto’s most stigmatized areas. Through its frequent portrayal in the media as a crime-ridden pocket of poverty, Jane-Finch’s negative reputation reaches even beyond the city (Tasan-Kok and Özoğul, 2017). Nevertheless – and to the surprise of many outsiders – the area has a rich and vibrant community life with a strong feeling of attachment among the residents, featuring different formal and informal networks and support systems that try to meet the needs of Jane-Finch’s diverse population (ibid.; Figure 28). The location on the northern fringe of Toronto, however, distances Jane-Finch considerably from the downtown core and one community organisation, for example, contests the under-servicing of the area by public transport (Young and Keil, 2010).

Burdened by a challenging spatial layout and physical design, the community



**Legend**

Neighbourhood scale	○	Public sector organisation (governments, city divisions, public bodies)	⊗	Key project site
	⊞	Policy documents	⊞	
City scale	⊞	Private sector organisations (businesses, corporations, private foundations)	↔	Collaboration
Provincial scale	⊞	Civil society organisations (non-profits, grassroots association)	→	Main responsibility

Figure 28. Place-making in Jane-Finch<sup>13</sup>

appropriated and utilised the existing space in a resourceful way (Tasan-Kok, 2015). Zoning regulations designate Jane-Finch as primarily residential with a disconnected industrial terrain in the west of the area. It attracts a few enterprises that require easy access to the highway but are rather unattractive for enterprises and entrepreneurs in the service sector. The main intersection between Jane Street and Finch Avenue West is Jane-Finch's centre: a busy car-centred intersection framed by parking lots and two shopping malls. The limited availability of commercial and office space has driven up rent prices, and faced with limited financial means, community-based organisations must make use of "leftover" spaces in shopping malls, basements and warehouses (ibid.) for community and youth centres, support programmes and day-care centres, giving them the chance to test their products or services for a low fee (Özoğul and Tasan-Kok, 2016). Successful individuals in the community have a strong tendency towards social entrepreneurship or philanthropic work, perceiving themselves as role models and acting as informal mentors to other community members (ibid.). As a result, various bottom-up initiatives run by groups or individuals outside the formal institutional framework exist, making temporary use of the existing spaces and resources to the benefit of the community. Despite these efforts, however, the physical structures contain inherent obstacles that complicate or impede these strong community dynamics, and many community organisations, residents and advocacy groups are appealing for redevelopment and larger-scale spatial interventions (Tasan-Kok and Özoğul, 2017).

Jane-Finch is not subject to an elaborate policy framework such as in Regent Park (Figure 28), but nevertheless a number of efforts from the city and TCH do exist. In contrast to Regent Park however, landownership in the Jane-Finch area is more complex and only partial areas are municipally-owned land. The municipal programme Tower Renewal, for instance, led to rezoning in a few trial sites in Jane-Finch to allow for commercial activities in the lower floors of apartment blocks to spur local economic growth. However, this approach has not been translated into city-wide zoning changes, and strongly depends on the willingness of private landlords to cooperate (*Interview Toronto Tower Renewal, 2 October 2015*). Jane-Finch has also witnessed some small revitalisation projects, such as transforming the area surrounding three apartment towers in San Romanoway (Rigakos, Kwashie and Bosanac, 2004), and TCH is currently renovating a handful of public housing units, particularly in areas that do not attract the private sector (*Interview TCH, 19 May 2016*). Nevertheless, these efforts on the whole have been fragmented, which is partly connected to landownership issues. Additionally, representatives of TCH and city planners who were interviewed stressed that they are constantly seeking new ways to attract private finance in order to be able to implement larger scale changes (*Interview Toronto City Planning, 16 May 2016; Interview TCH, 19 May 2016; Interview*

*Toronto City Planning, 24 May 2016).*

The relationships between public officials and community-based organisations appears to be contentious (Interview *community-based organisation, 22 September 2015; Interview Toronto City Planning, 24 May 2016*). Municipal planners perceive some groups as adversarial and lacking the will to cooperate, while residents and community activists ask repeatedly why their demands for a community centre are not being met when faced with the grand redevelopment taking place in areas like Regent Park (Monsebraaten, 2015). According to municipal planners, a common difficulty faced was attracting sufficient private capital to the area to allow redevelopment. They often emphasized the new opportunities arising from the construction of a new light-rail transit and metro extension close to Jane-Finch, a considerable public infrastructure investment, which could operate as a catalyst for change and create a framework for public and private investments in terms of a more legible street network, public realm improvements, parks and community facilities, which would also address the long-term demands of the community (Interview *Toronto City Planning, 16 May 2016; Interview Toronto City Planning, 24 May 2016*). The first changes related to the plan, however, included the construction of an 8-hectare industrial facility for the housing of up to 75 light-rail vehicles at the Jane-Finch intersection. Following public outcry and local resistance, the plans were eventually changed to provide some spaces for local businesses and community activities, but community leaders voiced their frustration with the process, arguing that “it speaks volumes about how the government views us” (McNevin in Monsebraaten, 2015).

## **6.6 Discussion and conclusion**

Analysing place-making efforts through the lens of spatial governance in the case of Toronto gives us the opportunity to make a couple of important contributions to place-making literature. First of all, the missing link between local or community scale efforts and macro-scale governance structures, here defined as “transformative practices”, is explored in this study. This conceptualisation also helps to link place-making to spatial planning and governance literature. Our analysis reveals that in order to strengthen the position of local communities in spatial governance, local governments need to develop conscious policies to manoeuvre through market-oriented, property-led and entrepreneurial urban development formulations. The Regent Park case shows that this is possible through transparent and continuous dialogue between private sector actors and community groups. In a bid to satisfy their desires for profit and the avoidance of risk, and utilising their experience in street-scale interventions, private companies can develop very careful strategies for the development of liveable urban spaces. Helping to move away from stereotyped understandings of the property industry, the Regent Park case also displays that

private sector involvement is not necessarily a bad practice, especially if conscious anti-gentrification measures such as a non-displacement policies are in place.

Learning from the Regent Park experience, our interviews revealed that local government, the public housing corporation and private sector companies were able to adjust their strategies to deal with similar projects. From the private sector's point of view, the Regent Park experience led to a change in the approach to (re) developing other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with new efforts aimed at more socially-oriented developments. In the case of Jane-Finch, formal and informal place-making efforts to define community needs at a micro-scale do exist and these have led to the formation of creative, spontaneous and bottom-up solutions. Although challenging, special attention is paid to the construction of place, taking into account the experiences of local communities that reflect strongly both the collective identity and individual needs. However, the enthusiasm of the private sector to regenerate a stigmatised neighbourhood located outside the downtown core, with special attention paid to the local community, is lacking in Jane-Finch, where bottom-up efforts are remarkably marginalised within the wider spatial governance. In Jane-Finch, social innovations have remained at a micro-scale, while the more advantageously located Regent Park contains examples of how place-making can turn into transformative practices. The connection between location, land values and real-estate prices lies at the heart of the differences in institutional conditions and governance arrangements, causing different sets of actors, stakeholders and organisations to be active and invested in the two areas, with divergent regulatory and policy frameworks governing their interactions.

Furthermore, the empirical findings illustrate the value in linking the concepts of place-making and spatial governance. The narrow micro-scale perspective that is often found in place-making literature would provide a very incomplete picture of Regent Park and Jane-Finch. It would, for example, ascribe too much importance to the individuals involved in Regent Park and their involvement in the processes at play and would disregard the institutional setting in which these relationships are embedded. Regent Park is a clear example of policies and relationships playing out at multiple spatial scales, all of which have an impact on what is happening “on the ground”, and exemplify the need to consider place-making as governance activity. The contrast between Regent Park and Jane-Finch that is clearly illustrated in the governance networks presented in Figures 27 and 28 shows that “it is not enough to conceive good niche projects inspired by purely local interests and goals” (Palermo and Ponzini, 2014: 10). Looking through the lens of spatial governance serves to explain why efforts in Jane-Finch are being realised only slowly and in a fragmented manner, despite the high level of community activism. Public landownership makes

a big difference, as it gives the public sector an upper hand in any development process but constitutes a rather inflexible factor. Instead, the cases illustrate that in increasingly market-oriented and entrepreneurial planning systems, collaboration between and comprehensive regulatory efforts of the involved public sector agencies are needed as a cornerstone of spatial planning interventions and land-use regulations. This, of course, requires, more administrative costs and complications for the public agencies.

Our research in Toronto further shows that successful transformative practices require, first of all, transparent and community-targeted relations between the public and private sector actors that go beyond classic “contractual” relations. Both parties need to make financial and ideological investments into the project if gentrification processes are to be prevented, and place-making efforts need to be connected to larger-scale policy frameworks and rezoning measures. Since marketisation value and location are the most important factors governing investments for the private sector, the public sector needs to make investments into marginalised neighbourhoods and to lure the private sector into place-making efforts by offering tax advantages or other incentives. That said, full dependence on market dynamics is a dangerous approach, in that it can lead to disconnected efforts, no overarching vision and the risk of increased socio-spatial inequality by focusing on some places while neglecting others. In fact, our wider research on entrepreneurship in the Jane-Finch area (Özoğul and Tasan-Kok, 2016) showed that the lack of institutional support from the city provides obstacles to implement ideas such as creating a community business hub, which could have motivated further local economic development and eventually revitalization of the area for the advantage of its residents. The stereotyped views on neoliberal governance of private-sector and property-market dependency usually underline the problems caused by the involvement of the private sector in urban revitalisation. However, as can be clearly seen in the case of Jane-Finch, the public sector could do so much more than just defining revitalisation projects in such neighbourhoods through small but effective interventions to support the community efforts and local economy. More research on the nexus between local activities and the built environment can shed light on how small changes might have meaningful impact and make these areas more interesting for revitalisation. By linking them to wider institutional and governance frameworks, they may even serve as transformative practices for other parts of the city. However, our experience in Toronto demonstrates that new institutional arrangements and planning instruments are needed to prioritise the coordination of social and spatial policy actions in the city’s disadvantaged areas.

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