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### Fieldwork entrepreneurs in Toronto, Jane-Finch (Canada)

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*Governing Urban Diversity:  
Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

## Report 2h Fieldwork entrepreneurs in Toronto, Jane-Finch (Canada)

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*The views expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of European Commission.*

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## 1. Introduction

This report provides empirical evidence on the relationship between urban diversity and entrepreneurship at the neighbourhood level, and contributes to a deeper understanding of the connections, dynamics and processes involved. More specifically, we want to explain and document the reasons why deprived neighbourhoods may provide conditions for individuals or groups to strengthen their creative forces and enhance their economic performance. Entrepreneurship can be analysed from micro (individual) - and macro (community, neighbourhood or city level) perspectives (Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001). Micro-analyses, for instance on the importance of social capital, focus on individual attributes such as educational levels of entrepreneurs (Schutjens and Völker, 2010), and are often highlighted as strong predictors of success perspectives. Macro-analyses look at larger entities, for example at the social networks and connections in communities, neighbourhoods or cities (Jennings et al., 2013). The link between diversity and entrepreneurship is primarily tackled in studies on ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship. Here too studies can be found that start with the individual and relate the social capital of immigrants - including their talents, skills and social connections - to increased creativity and economic competitiveness of cities (Eraydin et al., 2010). Others take a larger scale as the point of departure, such as Saunders (2011) who coined the term “arrival city” and argued that new and less-organised immigrant communities not only trigger creativity and innovation, but also function as accessible entry-points for newcomers to start their business and integrate into the mainstream economy. Aiming at identifying the macro and micro factors that are important in the economic performance, innovativeness, and creativity of enterprises; and the conditions that support and sustain their competitiveness as well as longer term development, the data is collected at Jane-Finch neighbourhood based on face to face interviews. We show that Jane-Finch can be perceived as an ‘arrival city’, but individual factors play a large role in this.

The general aims are broken down into more detailed and concrete research questions. They are central in the chapters of this report:

1. What are the main characteristics of the entrepreneurs and their business? What are the evolutionary paths and the fields of activity? What are the physical conditions and the ownership pattern of their offices/production sites/shops? (section 2)
2. What were the main motivations of entrepreneurs for establishing a business? What is the importance of neighbourhood diversity for starting their business where it is located now? Why did he/she select this line of business and from whom the entrepreneur has received support in different forms in starting this enterprise? (section 3)
3. What are the success and failure factors important for the economic performance of enterprises? What is the current level of performance and how did it change? To what extent does the diversity of the neighbourhood play a role in economic performance? What are the long-term plans of entrepreneurs? Do they have any plans to change size, market and business strategies in order to reach higher levels of competitiveness? (section 4)
4. Which policies, measures and organisations contribute to the performance of enterprises? What are the contributions of membership to various initiatives on the performance of enterprises? What do the entrepreneurs want from policy makers at different levels? (section 5)

Toronto is not only home to one of the most diverse populations in the world, but also a key player in Canada’s economy. In 2013, the city’s economy generated 10% of Canada’s national GDP (City of Toronto, 2015). Diversity, in this respect, is considered an integral part of the city’s economic success,

with policies for instance highlighting the benefits of a diverse workforce, the recruitment of foreign talent, or the provision of a diverse and competitive business environment. Nonetheless, whereas some areas of the city benefit from economic prosperity, Toronto becomes increasingly divided with rising levels of inequality (Hulchanski, 2010): Relative to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area average, income levels in the north-eastern and north-western parts of Toronto have decreased considerably during the last decades, creating concentrations of low-income households and poverty.

Located in the north-west of Toronto, our main case study area Jane-Finch is characterised by high levels of deprivation. Jane-Finch consists of the two neighbourhoods Black Creek and Glenfield-Jane Heights and is situated around the intersection of Jane Street and Finch Avenue. Formerly home to a large Italian community, the current population of approximately 80,000 is highly diverse with many people having roots in the Caribbean, South or East Asia, Africa or South America. Furthermore, Jane-Finch hosts one of the highest proportions of youth, refugees and newcomers, and has one of the highest numbers of single-headed households, people without a high-school diploma, low-income earners, and public housing tenants compared to the rest of the city. Jane-Finch also constitutes a highly stereotyped area, which is frequently connected to crime, violence and despair in mainstream media, leading to the place-based stigmatisation of its residents (Wilson et al., 2011; Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2015). Planned and constructed in the 1960s according to modernist principles to accommodate large numbers of people (Tasan-Kok, 2015), Jane-Finch is a typical suburban neighbourhood mainly dominated by residential functions, lacking commercial activities at the street level. High-rise apartment buildings, semi-detached as well as townhouses characterise the landscape particularly to the east of Jane Street. Visual commercial activities, on the other hand, are largely confined to two shopping malls located at the intersection between Jane Street and Finch Avenue, or to some strip malls mainly along Jane Street. The area to the west of Jane Street is partly covered by an industrial terrain. The absence of a commercial neighbourhood centre with small retail and office space creates a challenge for local business start-ups to purchase or rent in the area without having to make large investments.

Fieldwork was conducted between September and November 2015 and we selected our interviewees through various channels. Identified via online research, which included detailed mapping of retail activities at street level, we contacted several entrepreneurs with links to Jane-Finch in advance. Once in the field, contacts from previous rounds of research supported us to establish connections with local entrepreneurs. Moreover, visits were paid to the two shopping malls and strip malls in the area in search for participants. Lastly, during interviews the snowballing method was applied asking interviewees for referrals to other entrepreneurs in their networks. All together we talked with 52 people. In contrast to many European contexts, a wide range of non-state actors, non-governmental organisations and private parties play an important role on all levels of governance in Canada (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2014). Therefore, we ensured that our sample was as diverse as possible in order to understand the complex conditions and dynamics affecting diversity and entrepreneurship. Our sample includes entrepreneurs (36) but also a few white-collar employees (3). Furthermore, additional informants were community sector representatives (5), policy-makers (3), researchers and academics (3), a bank manager and mall manager.<sup>1</sup> The interviews took either place in the interviewee's working environment, or in public spaces such as libraries or cafés.

As can be seen in the following section, the profile of the respondents is quite diverse though the majority of them suffer from the stigmatisation of their neighbourhood and its disadvantaged position

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<sup>1</sup> A list of interviewed persons can be found in the appendix

in the city. However, we could define three trends that shows certain types of individual dispositions of entrepreneurs in our sample:

- *Societal change seekers*, who transform their personal experiences of disadvantage into ambitions and commitment to improve their communities or society at large, displaying interesting tendencies of social innovation and creativity;
- *Self-fulfilment seekers*, who make use of their professional skills and experiences, display some degree of creativity, and while making rather rational decisions, strive for personal development and advancement;
- And *resilient survivors*, who display resilience to all forms of challenges they face but whose survival largely depends on their entrepreneurial activities which, despite considerable efforts, do not create enough profit to make more creative but risky business changes.

Throughout the report, these categories will aid our analysis.

We managed to interview some entrepreneurs who display interesting tendencies of social innovation and creativity. They transformed their personal experiences of disadvantage into ambitions and commitment to improve their communities or the lives of people in similar situations. For example, an entrepreneur who came into conflict with the law during his own youth, now utilises his company to give troubled young people from disadvantaged backgrounds a second chance, and teaches them how to run small businesses. One entrepreneur, who grew up in poverty and recalled the hunger he endured, aims to inspire other people to reach for their goals despite their circumstances. And another entrepreneur, who felt the consequences of stigmatisation from an early age onward, founded for instance her own non-profit organisation to fight stereotypes affecting her community. Their success, we argue, should not be measured in financial terms but in terms of societal impact they have created in the neighbourhood.

During our fieldwork, we were confronted with some challenges. Much research in Jane-Finch focuses on negative aspects of the community, and hence runs the risk of reinforcing stigmatization and stereotypes that many inhabitants encounter on a daily basis. Thus, similar to previous rounds, we experienced some degree of ‘research fatigue’ (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2015). This time, it was coupled with hesitation and suspicion. The fear of revealing business-related information and consequently being subjected to governmental tax checks deterred many entrepreneurs to participate from the beginning. Participating entrepreneurs did not feel comfortable to provide any financial data, such as profits and turnovers, or did not want to reveal any personal information.

Despite these challenges, we were able to collect a wide range of data to answer our main research question: under what conditions does diversity turn into the advantage of entrepreneurs’ economic performance? Based on our findings, we argue that these conditions are both linked to the individual characteristics and the neighbourhood conditions. Furthermore, (personal and neighbourhood) diversity does more than solely contribute to the entrepreneurs’ economic performances. In deprived areas like Jane-Finch where resources are limited, diversity can create particular neighbourhood dynamics in which entrepreneurs utilise their creativity and success to benefit their community, either directly through their business or through philanthropic work. In order to strengthen this cycle and make entrepreneurship accessible to those lacking individual skills, characteristics and networks to succeed, organised entrepreneurship support at the neighbourhood level is fundamental to counterbalance these deficits.

## 2. The entrepreneurs and their businesses

### 2.1 Introduction

Urban diversity is not limited to ethnic differences or different places of origin. Contemporary urban landscapes are transformed by both hyper-diverse individuals and communities (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). In places like Jane-Finch, where ethnic characteristics and backgrounds have become normalised parts of everyday lived experiences (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2015), various individual attributes, lifestyles, attitudes and activities intersect, rendering identities dynamic and multidimensional. Moreover, individuals neither act in a specific way solely because of a set of objective social rules, nor because of completely conscious and independent decisions (Bourdieu, 1990). Instead, a mix of broader social structures and *individual dispositions* influences entrepreneurship, including individual characteristics such as personality, relations and people around the entrepreneur, as well as dynamics and processes nourished by the neighbourhood's social, economic and spatial context with factors such as income inequality, racialisation, stigmatisation (Hmieleski and Baron, 2009; Baron et al., 2012).

Based on micro and macro level data and analysis, this section describes the main characteristics and experiences of interviewed entrepreneurs, and provides information on their businesses as well as the location and spatial conditions of their enterprises. While laying the foundation for this report, this section demonstrates that in order to reveal the conditions under which diversity turns into the advantage of entrepreneurs' economic performance, both diverse personal backgrounds and neighbourhood diversity have to be taken into account. Furthermore, it illustrates that classic typologies such as ethnic, immigrant or female entrepreneurship are not able to capture the complex realities of entrepreneurs in a hyper-diverse context such as in Jane-Finch. Similar arguments have for instance been raised by Wang and Liu (2014), who argue that a new generation of 'global-oriented immigrant entrepreneurs' differs considerably from their predecessors in terms of target markets, business sizes and financial turnovers. Thus, immigrant status alone does not give meaningful information on an entrepreneur's characteristics or core fields of activities, calling for the need to develop new types of entrepreneurship, which take changing characteristics and market conditions into account. As mentioned in the introduction, in order to group and better understand entrepreneurs in our sample, we developed the three broad categories *societal change seekers*, *self-fulfilment seekers*, and *resilient survivors*.

The profiles and choices of each type shows different characteristics although there are clear cut divisions between them; sometimes entrepreneurs changed positions between these categories or sometimes simply fit into multiple categories. The new forms of entrepreneurship, therefore, should be seen as some *dominant trends* that appeared in our case-study neighbourhood in relation to the conditions created by diversity and deprivation, under which entrepreneurship is experienced. In what follows we elaborate on individual characteristics (demographic, educational, and locational) as well as business characteristics (business features, evolutionary paths and fields of activity) in our sample.

### 2.2 Characteristics of the entrepreneurs

Individual identity factors like the ethnic background of the entrepreneur, age, family background, gender, education and previous experience may be important variables in determining the success of their enterprises, their core fields of activity and evolutionary paths.

*Demographic characteristics*

Our sample covers a wide array of demographic characteristics and past experiences in general. We were able to achieve a relative gender balance. At the time of the interviews, their ages ranged from 23 to 70 years. The largest age group were entrepreneurs between 30 and 35 years (7). Thus age-wise the sample is relatively spread. Moreover, the majority of interviewees possessed Canadian citizenship even though half of the sample was born outside of Canada. Out of this group of ‘first generation immigrants’ (13), four arrived as refugees and only three arrived after the turn of the millennium; none can be classified as ‘newcomer’ according to the Canadian definition of people who immigrated to Canada in the last five years (Statistics-Canada, 2010). Countries of origin include a variety of places in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. In contrast, entrepreneurs with no direct immigration experiences, considered ‘second generation’ (7), had more frequently Caribbean roots (4) than other backgrounds. Furthermore, due to the demographic composition of our sample, the majority of entrepreneurs have transnational links with family members living both in Canada and abroad. While *societal change seekers* in our sample tend to be younger – in their twenties or thirties – and mostly belong to the ‘second generation’; *resilient survivors* are dominantly first generation immigrants to Canada. The group of *self-fulfilment seekers*, on the other hand, is mixed and includes for example entrepreneurs who came with a refugee status to Canada, as well as longstanding Canadian citizens. Their commonality lies in their age categories of forty and above.

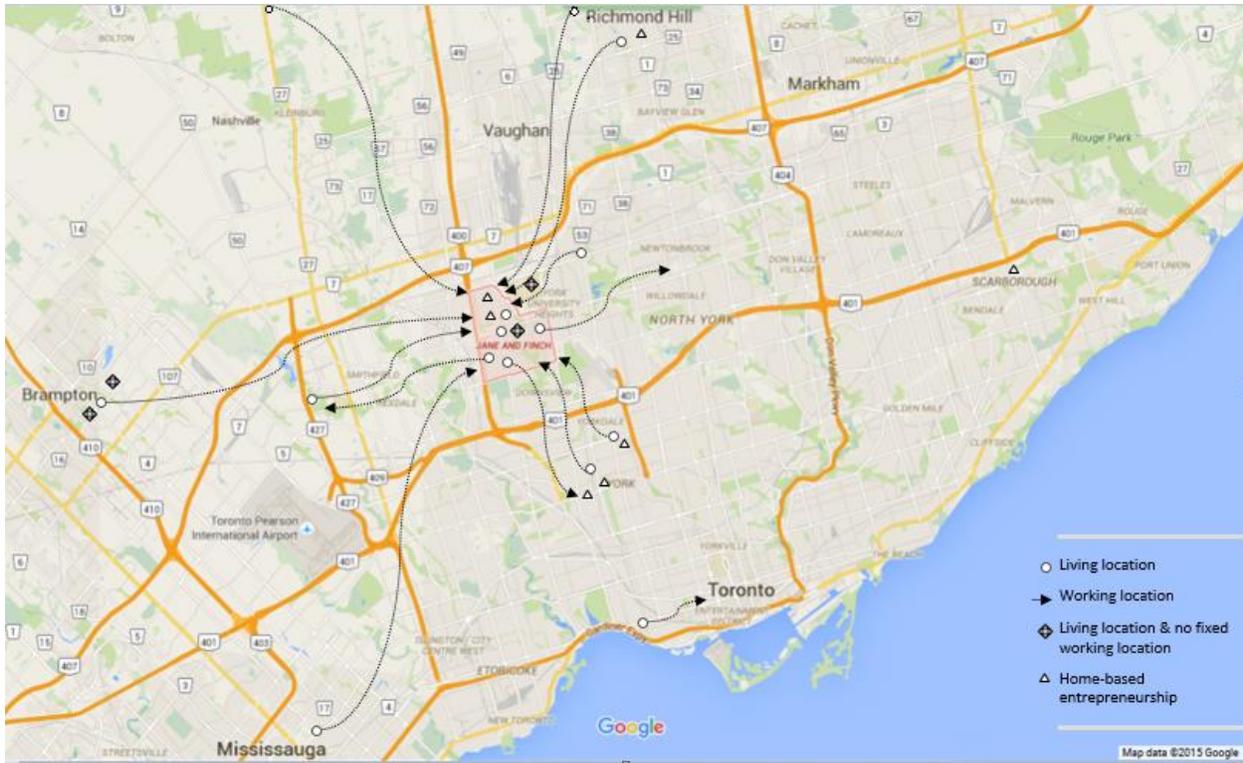
*Educational characteristics*

The main case study area Jane-Finch is generally characterised by low educational attainments. In 2011 only 13.7% of the Black Creek population - one of the two neighbourhoods constituting Jane-Finch – had a university diploma compared to a city-wide average of 36% (Wilson et al., 2011). Hence, it was striking that the vast majority of entrepreneurs in the sample held a college (11) or university degree (13), resonating with literature that highlights the importance of education at the level of the individual for entrepreneurship (Patel and Conklin, 2009). *Self-fulfilment seekers* in particular displayed a high level of education. In addition, several interviewees stressed education as a factor of success.

Despite very different career paths and developments of entrepreneurs in the sample, their education often played a role in their previous work-related activities. Most interviewees started their business only after they completed an educational programme, or after having worked several years in skilled part-time and full-time positions, although a few of them (2) described their entrepreneurial drives from a very young age onwards. Only a few (3) entrepreneurs were business owners in their countries of origin before they came to Canada.

*Locational characteristics*

Variables such as education and previous work experiences might mediate the influence of diversity on the neighbourhood level in relation to entrepreneurial success. To gain a better understanding of the benefits of neighbourhood diversity in Jane-Finch on entrepreneurship, our sample differentiates between four living and working scenarios as Figure 1 displays. The first group of interviewees lives in (8) or within a 20 km radius (5) of Jane-Finch, out of which ten work in the area and three outside. The second group of entrepreneurs (5) live 20 km or further away but work in Jane-Finch.



**Figure 1: Locational characteristics of sampled entrepreneurs**

Source: Authors

The tendency of successful entrepreneurs to move out of Jane-Finch as soon as they have the financial means to do so was a recurring topic in interviews with community sector representatives. Therefore, the third group encompasses entrepreneurs who either grew up (3) or lived temporarily (5) in Jane-Finch and have since then moved on. Entrepreneurs in this category gave both personal and societal reasons for their decision to move away. For example, a female entrepreneur in her early 30s [R7: construction, Jamaican background] changed her living location to provide her daughter with a better prospect even though she had a rather positive perception of Jane-Finch:

*“As I started to do better, I left the area. There is the stereotype and there is the reality of things, you know? So once things went better and I could afford a better community...well, it is a good community because I benefitted from it.”*

Lastly, another group of interviewees (5) were neither living nor working in Jane-Finch, but often had some form of affiliation to it, such as being involved in local community projects and services or trying to employ disadvantaged youth from the area.

### 2.3 Characteristics of the businesses, their evolutionary paths and core fields of activity

Similar to the variety of entrepreneurs’ personal characteristics, the business characteristics, evolutionary paths and range of products and services offered vary considerably. Nevertheless, a few trends emerge with regards to the average business size, international activities and factors influencing business developments. In terms of evolutionary paths of the entrepreneurs we found out that even

though a small number of entrepreneurs made some adjustments in products and services due to changing market conditions, substantial changes were very limited when it comes to sectoral choices. However, some changes were noted related to transnational links as explained in below sections.

#### *Business characteristics*

Businesses in our sample were set up between 1987 and 2015 but in different periods. For instance, two businesses were created before 1990, two between 1990 and 2000, five between 2000 and 2005, and four after 2005. Whereas the majority of entrepreneurs are dedicating all their time to their enterprise, some (6) interviewees operate a part-time business while being employed elsewhere. They were either not ready to take on the full risks of entrepreneurship, or their businesses were not generating enough profit. Most of them belong to the more recent immigrants to Canada in our sample, such as the following entrepreneur [R20: female, 50s, fashion] who arrived in 2011 from Jamaica, and now balances her entrepreneurial endeavours and paid employment:

*“Now I am doing this night job. It is not bad and I need the money. It is okay because I got time to do my thing at home, and it pays not bad.”*

At the age of 52 with years of work experience and leading a successful business in her home country Jamaica, it is still difficult for her to solely live from her entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the sample includes a few (2) entrepreneurs offering informal services, which are run on a rather occasional and demand-driven basis, and serve as a source of additional income.

Besides two family-owned businesses, the majority of interviewees were sole owners. According to previous research, businesses in deprived areas are generally limited in size and employment opportunities (Williams and Huggings, 2013). Correspondingly, a common characteristic of the businesses in the sample was their relatively small size: ten businesses are one-person operations, eight can be categorised as micro-businesses with 1-5 employees, and eleven as small businesses with 5-15 employees. The larger businesses were often owned by *self-fulfilment seeking entrepreneurs*. With regards to the selection of employees, however, stark contrasts, illustrated by the following three examples, were identified. In the first case, employees lived both in and outside Jane-Finch and the interviewee [R2: male, 60s, public health], a Black Canadian entrepreneur running one of the largest and most successful businesses in our sample, stressed their skills and personalities as decisive criteria:

*“Being in Canada you have to be diverse anyways. And it wasn’t like oh I am going to pick this person because of their background, no that was not the case. We looked for people that had certain qualities and personalities, and that would be able to fit in with our team.”*

In contrast, another entrepreneur [R11: female, 60s, wholesale], who immigrated herself from former Yugoslavia to Canada and owns a wholesale store with ten employees, strongly associated the place of origin with particular character traits, impacting the way she selects her employees:

*“I tried to get the people from this area to work and I did have them but it didn’t work very well because, our backgrounds are quite different. Now I have mostly (employees) from Afghanistan and Pakistan. They are wonderful people, they work hard, they are reliable. I have to say that when you have young students working for you, if they are not Afghani, or from that region, they are always on the phone with their boyfriends, these girls, they are not. They all go to school. They are really devoted.”*

In the last case, a few interviewees living outside of Jane-Finch but working in the area expressed caution about employing local people, depending on who is attached to them. Their concerns correspond to negative perceptions particularly conveyed in mainstream media, highly stereotyping Jane-Finch and linking it to crime, violence and despair (Royson, 2012). Overall, the average number of jobs created by the businesses in our sample is rather low and employee selection procedures are influenced by individual skills, assumed group identities and neighbourhood perceptions.

### *Evolutionary paths*

Business developments are influenced by a variety of personal, financial and social circumstances. Without ignoring the complexities involved, two main evolutionary paths stood out. The first one involves business development that is primarily based on the *individual skills of the entrepreneur*. Many of these entrepreneurs belong to the category of *self-fulfilment seekers*. Graduating from college or university, or coming from abroad with a set of competences – including familiarity to entrepreneurship or international work experience – often formed the foundation of the businesses. In this category, both college and university graduates as well as entrepreneurs arriving in Canada without large financial capital used their skills to work their way up and gradually expand their businesses. The second path that stood out includes entrepreneurs whose business development is closely connected to *organised community support*. This form of support has particularly been used by *societal change seeking entrepreneurs*, followed by *resilient survivors*. In our sample, business-related aid included the availability of micro-loans, business advice and mentoring services. Nonetheless, also seemingly unrelated programmes play an important role. As one interviewee [R7: female, 30s, construction, Jamaican background], who took part in a community programme for single mothers, which encouraged her to get a college degree and become an entrepreneur, explained:

*“One of the benefits of the community is that they actually do care, and are able to create a programme like that.(...) They do actually not cover so much about business, more like how to find work, how to continue from where you left off. So they just try to help you as much as they can. I had times when I didn’t have diapers, I did not know what was going to happen tomorrow, I didn’t know how we were going to eat tomorrow, you know? And I would run to the office and they would always find something, some way to just help.”*

Besides individual skills, the highlighted evolutionary paths emphasise the importance of local infrastructure and community support for entrepreneurship. Especially in areas like Jane-Finch where many people live in precarious conditions, support networks in the neighbourhood are crucial to ensure that basic needs are met before inhabitants can release their entrepreneurial potential.

### *Fields of activity*

The fields of activity of entrepreneurs in our sample stretch across the tertiary sector. Entrepreneurs are active in retail (12), and are selling manufactured goods such as various supplies, phones and clothes, or offer various services (10), such as car-wash and credit services or first aid trainings. Interviewees included in the category of *resilient survivors* often ran their businesses in more traditional fields associated with ethnic entrepreneurship and operated for example small retail stores. Additionally, several entrepreneurs (6) operate businesses in information technology and media sectors. Mainly *societal change seekers* and *fulfilment seekers* offer for example PR and telecommunications, video production, online media, or worked in the field of entertainment. Often related to the generally small size of the sampled enterprises, a number of entrepreneurs (11) offer customised products and services as a way to stay competitive. The owner of a store located in a shopping mall in Jane-Finch [R11: female, 60s, wholesale, born in former Yugoslavia] noted flexibility as her main quality to withstand the competition of large chains in the area:

*“The difference between me and the big stores is that I am flexible. I have people coming from Ethiopia, they want teff flour<sup>2</sup>. I order it. (...) Different company and they are not flexible. And they say, let me check if that is on our list. So this is my advantage.”*

Others used a factor of their identity as a way to distinguish themselves from others, such as the young female entrepreneur [R7: 30s, Jamaican background] working in the largely male-dominated field of construction:

*“How I advertise sometimes attracts people: woman. And it is easier for someone to have a woman in their space than a big man showing off, you know?”*

Moreover, fields of activity are also influenced and directed by characteristics of the neighbourhood. For instance, a retailer [R10: male, 60s], who came from Jamaica to Canada with his family as a child and sells items at local events in Jane-Finch, pointed out:

*“I get into the artisan things, jewellery as well. Not expensive, because I am trying to sell on a scale where the people can afford it. I go more for volume of sales than high price for one item and wait for one person to give me 1.000.”*

Jane-Finch as a low-income community, in this case, influenced his selection and particularly the price range of his products. Substantial changes were very limited in terms of products and services as entrepreneurs generally kept their activities in one sector or field. Yet, some changes occurred with regards to business expansions. Thereby, transnational links often translated into concrete business ideas, with entrepreneurs operating across countries and in places where they have strongest affiliations. In our sample, for first generation immigrants in Canada (5), it often meant keeping business connections, trading or providing service in their countries of birth. Entrepreneurs of the “second generation” (4) targeted first of all their parents’ countries of origin.

## 2.4 The location and site/s of the enterprise

In line with the different living and working situations, enterprises are located both in and outside Jane-Finch. Jane-Finch is a neighbourhood, which not only lacks public spaces (Galanakis, 2015), but also does not have a real commercial centre (see Photo 1 in Appendix 2). The intersection of Jane and Finch avenues kind of define the core of this fragmented neighbourhood, yet without the feeling of a real centre with social, commercial and other non-residential activities. Due to the spatial conditions in Jane-Finch (i.e. fragmented land-uses, large undefined empty spaces between large residential blocks, high-way structures, etc.; see Photo 2 in Appendix 2), visual commercial activities take place in the two main malls – Jane-Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall - or in the several strip malls across the area. The sites of enterprises in our sample include five stores and one rented cart in the shopping malls, and three businesses located in a strip mall. Additional information was provided by conversations with five shop owners located in shopping malls, who were willing to talk about their experiences but wished not to participate in a formal interview. Overall, being located in a shopping mall (see Photo 3 in Appendix 2) or strip mall (see Photo 4 in Appendix 2) was perceived as highly advantageous by most entrepreneurs, due to increased traffic of customers, security reasons, and the

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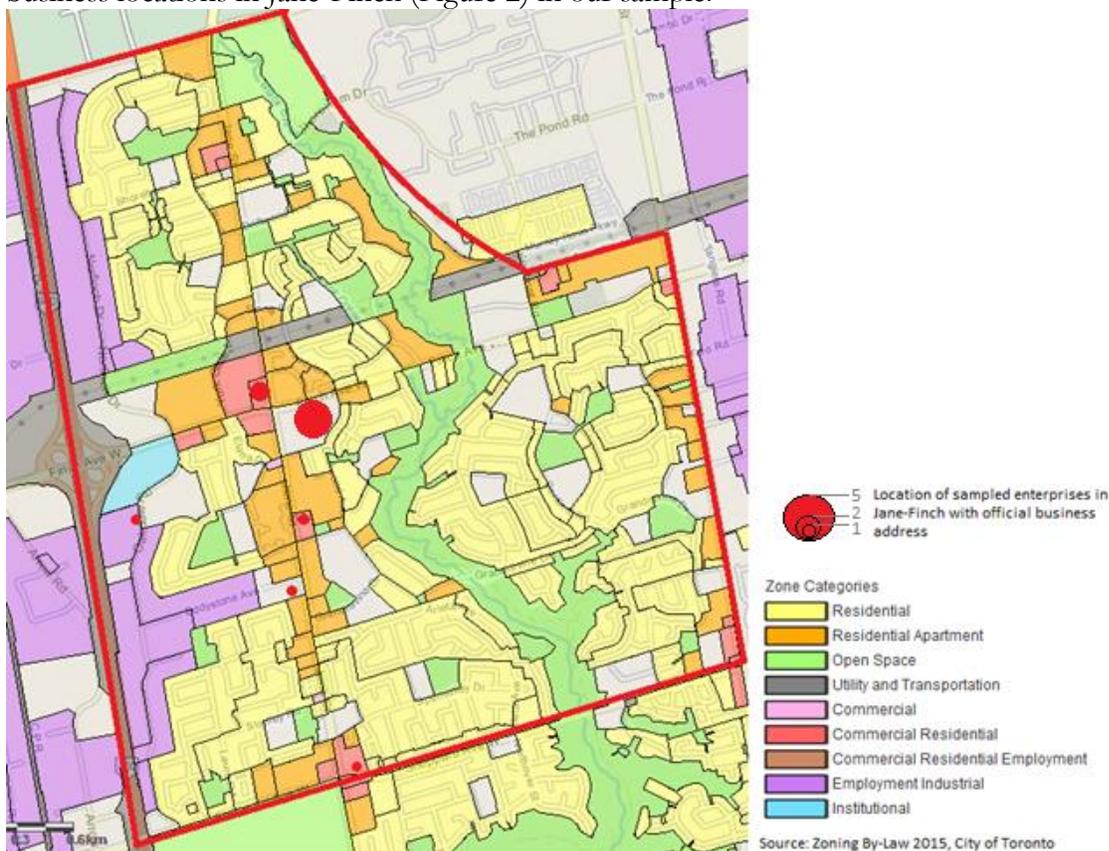
<sup>2</sup> Teff is a grain and staple food in Ethiopian cuisine

protection from harsh weather conditions. Businesses located in independent locations included both stores and office buildings.

Folmer (2013:742) argues that ‘disadvantaged neighbourhoods may under certain conditions serve as incubators for business start-ups as they offer low-rent office spaces’, which in turn can have positive effects on their economic development. In Jane-Finch, however, the lack of commercial, retail or office spaces for small businesses was recognised in interviews with policy makers and community service representatives. As one community worker involved in a micro loan programme in Jane-Finch [R40] disclosed:

*“The rental market here in Jane-Finch, even though it is a low-income community is higher, is high. Real estate value is high and renting in the Yorkgate Mall here is just as expensive as renting something in the core of Toronto.”*

Start-ups or small businesses, which constitute the majority of our sample, were often not able to pay for office, production, or retail space. Instead, four entrepreneurs had no fixed location and frequently connected to their customised services, worked in different places across Toronto. Furthermore, seven interviewees indicated that they are working from home. This information explain the limited official business locations in Jane-Finch (Figure 2) in our sample.



**Figure 2. Location of sampled enterprises in Jane-Finch**

Source: Authors

## 2.5 Conclusions

Based on the introduction of our sampled entrepreneurs and their businesses, we can already point out that personal background, neighbourhood and community conditions play a role in defining the characteristics of the entrepreneurs in Jane-Finch. Exclusively focussing on either one would provide an incomplete picture. Thus, in investigating the conditions under which diversity is beneficial for entrepreneurship, we have to take account of both levels: the hyper-diversity at the individual and neighbourhood level. By balancing with personal identities and skills, the following chapters will explore the neighbourhood conditions, which trigger entrepreneurship and enhance entrepreneurs' economic competitiveness. In line with a hyper-diversity approach, different identity aspects of entrepreneurs, instead of merely origin or ethnic background, will be highlighted during the analysis.

### 3. Motivations to start a business and the role of urban diversity

#### 3.1 Introduction

The following section aims to understand the motivations of entrepreneurs in our sample to start a business. Starting a business is a complex undertaking, influenced by various factors. Frequently, these factors are connected to the individual, with research focussing for instance on the knowledge, skills and personality traits of entrepreneurs (Segal et al., 2005). In the field of ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship studies, theories focussing on 'push' and 'pull' factors in relation to entrepreneurial motivations (Gilad and Levine, 1986) are particularly prominent. Push factors inhibiting individuals to find employment include structural constraints and discrimination. They are often used to explain higher rates of self-employment among people belonging to immigrant groups or racialized minorities (Ley, 2006). Pull factors, on the other hand, can be associations of entrepreneurship with increased opportunities or upward mobility (Nakhaie, 2015). Furthermore, social networks of aspiring entrepreneurs are often deemed important as they can provide various resources such as information and access to capital (Klyver et al., 2008).

Social networks are not necessarily bound to the neighbourhood of the entrepreneur. Nevertheless, a branch of literature specifically investigates neighbourhood effects on both attracting and triggering entrepreneurship (Bailey, 2015). The locational choice of an entrepreneur can play an important role in the competitiveness and success of a business (Eraydin et al., 2010). Moreover, neighbourhoods have been connected with locational structures, the provision of resources and the conveyance of perspectives, whereby deprived areas do not automatically transmit adverse attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Bailey, 2015). In contrast, lower-income and diverse neighbourhoods are said to foster creativity and innovation (Saunders, 2011). In Jane-Finch the direct link between creativity and innovation, and diversity was not easy to establish. However, as can be seen in below sections, we have observed an interesting tendency of social forms of entrepreneurship with particularly young entrepreneurs refusing to accept the status quo and *seeking for societal change*, triggered by the diversity and deprivation in the neighbourhood.

In what follows we provide the analysis of factors influencing the decision to and realisation of starting a particular business in a specific location, as well as the role of urban diversity in these processes. We argue that a combination of personal and neighbourhood factors influence motivations of entrepreneurs. These motivations large resemble those defined in classic entrepreneurship literature, even though the possibility of traditional entrepreneurship development in deprived neighbourhoods can be limited. Yet, a unique aspect stood out illustrating that entrepreneurial individuals in deprived communities adapt and modify 'the entrepreneurial process to pursue community goals, [and] thereby

making new forms of development possible' (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004:229). Diversity in these settings, provides skills, knowledge and market opportunities when the entrepreneur receives institutional support and is embedded in a social network.

### 3.2 Motivations for establishing a business

The above-mentioned push and pull factors, also known as opportunity-necessity differentiation, provide a useful point of departure to understand motivations for establishing a business. Nevertheless, they frequently 'oversimplify the complex motivations underlying entrepreneurship' (Ibid.:13), including constant changes and evolutions of motives and stimuli. Individuals have to weigh out the benefits and risks of self-employment. Their subsequent decisions are influenced by their locality, socio-economic circumstances and experiences (Williams and Williams, 2012). While recognising the multiple dimensions influencing entrepreneurial drives, four main categories emerged in our sample:

- *Perceived opportunities*, which are closely connected to personal objectives and market gaps, and initially attract individuals to entrepreneurship;
- *Financial considerations*, like perceived opportunities are related to personal objectives that motivate individuals to become entrepreneurs;
- *Structural constraints* constituting limitations for specific groups to find employment and compel people to set up their own business;
- *Societal ambitions* acting as incentives for entrepreneurs to couple economic success with the wider community, social or environmental goals, both in the neighbourhood and beyond.

While the discussions in the first three categories include various aspects discussed in entrepreneurship studies, *societal ambitions* as motivational factors in deprived and diverse neighbourhoods remain under-theorised.

#### *Perceived Opportunities*

In line with literature (Stephan et al., 2015), one of the most common motive for entrepreneurs in our sample was the perception of opportunities, covering different dimensions, which are closely related to the personal situation and circumstances of the entrepreneur. One of our respondents, a female entrepreneur and single mother emphasised the benefits of self-employment with regards to flexibility and time management, in particular related to childcare arrangements. Some others highlighted entrepreneurship as a chance to work independently, describing their character as controlling or unwilling to take orders from others. The most dominant drive, however, was the perceived opportunity for personal advancement and development by *self-fulfilment seekers*, who mainly linked opportunities to their professional skills. A highly qualified entrepreneur [R13: male, 40s, media, born in El Salvador], who arrived in 1989 as refugee in Canada and had worked for several years in a large institution before setting up his own business, remembered:

*"I worked up to the point where I couldn't keep growing and decided to start my company."*

Furthermore, for some interviewees the decision to become a business owner was not a long-term plan but rather an unforeseen opportunity. They took over already existing businesses, such as the owner of a home décor store [R5: female, 50s, born in India], even though only having a lower form of education, she had previous experience of owning a store in the United Kingdom before coming to Canada in 1979. In Canada, she only recently came to Jane-Finch and took over an existing business from a family member:

*“That time I went home and I asked my girls. I say that my sister is selling the business, and they say: ‘mum you love the business, why you don’t take over?’”*

An additional four entrepreneurs were primarily motivated by an observed market gap. Projecting personal experiences onto others was particularly common among *societal change seekers*, who saw an opportunity in providing a specific service or product and were generally more innovative and risk taking than *self-fulfilment seekers* and *resilient survivors*. One entrepreneur, for instance, started a business in the textile industry because she found it difficult to find fitting skirts for herself. Overall, perceived opportunities were largely disconnected from urban diversity on the contrary to the European ethnic entrepreneurship studies where perceived opportunities in the market are related to the ethnic diversity of the population (Smallbone et al. 2010).

#### *Financial considerations*

Elements of financial risk, success and return are repeatedly identified as motivational factors (Stephan et al., 2015). In our sample, financial considerations of entrepreneurs were connected to different stages of need. For some interviewees, self-evidently most common among those belonging to *resilient survivors*, becoming an entrepreneur was part of their survival strategy. One of them, an ambitious young entrepreneur [R23: male, 20s, retail, Jamaican background] who grew up Jane-Finch and showed a strong entrepreneurial drive from an early age onwards, told:

*“My mother is a single parent and it kind of pushed me to become an entrepreneur. The first thing I did was mowing someone’s grass and I made a hundred dollars in a day and from there I never looked back. [...] When I go to other environments now, people are inspired by me because of my upbringing, I guess the hunger most importantly, where they see such a strong entrepreneur. They wonder how I developed that gift at such a young age.”*

Other entrepreneurs were better off, but still chose entrepreneurship for financial gains in order to improve their situations and life for their families. The two informal entrepreneurs in the sample were also mainly motivated by generating additional income. Motivations related to financial gains were sometimes slowly evolving. For one entrepreneur with experiences in many different jobs, it was rather a process of realising that independent working independently instead of as a broker had positive consequences for his financial situation. Unemployment was a further financial concern and constituted the main motivation for three interviewees. Once again denoting to the provision of *institutional support* and its effect on entrepreneurship, an entrepreneur from Jane-Finch [R19: female, 30s, fashion and media, Jamaican background] described her experience as follows:

*“Actually I lost my job working in a law firm and since I lost my job, I went to the employment centre. And being at the employment centre, they told me about a programme called Summer Company which is a programme for young entrepreneurs who had a business idea and wanted to start a company for the summer.”*

With a deprived neighbourhood as main case study area, in which many inhabitants experience income insecurities, financial considerations as entrepreneurial motivations are relatively anticipated.

#### *Societal ambitions*

Previous research found that even though ‘community business entrepreneurship shares many traits with traditional entrepreneurship, the processes differ in terms of the beneficiaries of these activities’ (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004:226): Community benefits were valued higher than individual financial

gains. Seldom included in research on entrepreneurship, Stephan et al. (2015:38) argue that the neglect of community or social aspirations ‘suggests an oversight of motivations that is particularly significant to specific populations of entrepreneurs (e.g. female or minority entrepreneurs)’. Within our research, there was a striking number of interviewees who were motivated by wider societal ambitions connected to causes such as youth and community development, combatting stereotypes, and diminishing environmental impacts. Entrepreneurs in our sample worked towards their goals either directly through their business, for instance by selling eco-friendly products, or through philanthropic work, using their business profits to create or fund projects and activities for the community. Our data confirm that ‘social commitment, non-profit goals and benefits for the neighbourhood [can act] as (additional) drivers for entrepreneurship besides calculated and self-interested individual behaviour’ (Trettin et al., 2011:5): Growing up or living in an area like Jane-Finch and experiencing discrimination and structural constraints acts as a strong incentive for more socially-aware entrepreneurship. Moreover, several entrepreneurs who grew up in Jane-Finch and became successful felt the obligation to act as role models for younger people in the community. The same entrepreneur [R9: female 30s, telecommunications, Caribbean background] from Jane-Finch, who highlighted the existing stigma for people from the area, explained:

*“There are so many kids I know that are scared of going out of town. And that’s like ‘What, you don’t want to go downtown!?’ That’s really odd. And so they are really scared because they are so stigmatised. It’s about showing them the barriers that are out there. But that you can go beyond those barriers. It is about opening your mind and being able to envision yourself somewhere.”*

Other entrepreneurs, however, target larger scales such as the whole city of Toronto to raise awareness for their causes such as environmental hazards, or were active in mental health advocacy. In line with these findings, Cohen and Munoz (2015) extended notions of community-based and place-based entrepreneurship, which often highlight the relationships and strategic ties of an enterprise with a particular local community (Shrivastava and Kennelly, 2013). Emphasising the interplay of entrepreneurs with societal ambitions and ‘the urban places where they operate’ (Cohen and Munoz, 2015:264), they developed the concept of ‘purpose-driven urban entrepreneurs’. In contrast to traditional entrepreneurs solely responding to perceived market opportunities, these entrepreneurs focus ‘on solving issues experienced in daily living covering wider aspects of human and civic life in urban areas, [which] emerge at the intersection of the person, the physical (territory) and civic spaces (social) in which he or she is embedded’ (Cohen and Munoz, 2015:284). Since urban problems are rooted and entrepreneurs are embedded in multiple and complex social systems, corresponding place-changing efforts of urban entrepreneurs target different scales, ranging from the neighbourhood to the urban and global scales. In our sample, entrepreneurs who are particularly motivated by societal ambitions are subsumed under the term *societal change seekers*. They do not necessarily resemble each other in background, education or field of activity, but share experiences of discrimination, stigmatisation and/or other disadvantages in their personal and professional history. Furthermore, due to their efforts to socially reconstruct Jane-Finch and places beyond, they can be seen as place-makers seeking societal change at different scales.

### **3.3 The importance of location and place diversity**

Entrepreneurs make locational decisions based on various factors, including but not limited to physical attributes of a place. Even though it is impossible to generalise motivations of entrepreneurs in our sample concerning the location of their enterprises, three influential components emerged, which played a recurring role:

- The first component is the *physical location*, frequently including practical considerations related to the physical environment and living locations;
- The second component *population composition* involves the decision to locate in an area due to specific characteristics of the surrounding population;
- Finally, entrepreneurs were attracted by an observed *market opportunity*, constituting the third component.

While the first component is largely disconnected from social conditions in Jane-Finch, both the *population composition* and *market opportunity* can be linked to different facets of diversity.

#### *Physical location*

Based on our data, physical locations were the most decisive factors in entrepreneurs' locational choices. Some of our respondents (4), operating their businesses in Jane-Finch, stated that their decision was based on the physical proximity to their living locations. For one entrepreneur [R2: male, 60s, public health], his locational choice was partly influenced by his employees' living locations, who were to a large extent residing in the Jane-Finch area. Additionally, he made strategic decisions based on spatial proximity:

*"We wanted visibility for marketing purposes, being close to the highway and close to the city without being downtown."*

For this entrepreneur coming from outside of Jane-Finch, the neighbourhood itself was no significant factor in his decision. Accordingly, the surrounding diverse population did not play a big role in his entrepreneurial activities because he described his enterprise's location as more of an industrial area, which buffers interaction with people living in proximity. In contrast, another entrepreneur [R11: female, 60s, wholesale, born in former Yugoslavia] operating a store in the food sector in one of Jane-Finch's main shopping malls specifically chose her store's place according to the physical features of the surrounding:

*"I chose especially this location because it has such a high population, apartment buildings around this mall and it's in walking distance."*

Entrepreneurs taking over an existing enterprise did not have influence in the locational decision.

#### *Population composition*

The population composition of an area was a determining factor for another set of entrepreneurs. Different characteristics or aspects of the population were thereby deemed important. For some entrepreneurs offering services targeted at lower economic households, such as credit support, the socio-economic conditions of inhabitants in Jane-Finch played an important role. One store manager [R6: female, 20s, retail, born in India] associated positive attitudes with less wealthy people in Jane-Finch:

*"So my husband was not thrilled for me when we got offer from the mall to come here. But I did because I know this area, I would say this area has down to earth people. Nice people who are not well off like in my other locations."*

For others, the ethnicity and/or origin of their customers had more value. For instance, one longer-standing business was attracted by the high number of Italians previously living in Jane-Finch, who in

more recent years moved further North and the new incoming population is not necessarily buying her offered products. Interestingly, for some entrepreneurs the attraction did not lie in one specific group of people but instead in the existing variety of population groups in Jane-Finch, characterising it as a truly hyper-diverse area. The entrepreneur [R9: female, 30s, Caribbean background] active in the sector of telecommunications stated:

*“[We chose] Finch because the area has a lot of migrants, immigrants there, it’s very diverse. There’s a huge African and Caribbean population in that area as well. But we sell to everyone, for example Vietnamese, all kinds of people.”*

Thus population composition was perceived as a market opportunity for entrepreneurs, whereby different facets of diversity were highlighted.

#### *Market opportunity*

Both the *geographical location* and *population composition* were closely related to a perceived market opportunity for individual entrepreneurs. A number of interviewees, however, were solely attracted by market opportunities in the form of lack of competition and/or existing opportunity structures. Some saw opportunities in creating innovative services, whereas others simply filled a gap in the market, such as the fact that there was no specific franchise yet in the area. Furthermore, opportunity structures such as religious and community infrastructures formed an incentive for some entrepreneurs to locate their business in a specific area. As one Christian entrepreneur [R19: female, 30s, fashion and media, Jamaican background] noted:

*“Being a person of faith, a religious person opened the door for a market, a target market.”*

Similarly, a Muslim entrepreneur [R10: male, 60s, retail, born in Jamaica] relocated to Jane-Finch because of the opportunities to sell his items at events at mosques and several community-organised flea markets. Hence, specific identity aspects such as religious belief seem to have a positive effect on entrepreneurship. Additionally, while Jane-Finch suffers from stigmatisation, which could lead to the assumption of repelling entrepreneurship, there are market gaps and some opportunity structures that draw in enterprises.

### **3.4 Selecting the line of business**

Similar to the different motivations, various factors play a role in the selection of a line of business that both related to individual characteristics as well as neighbourhood influences. In our sample, decisions were mainly influenced by

- *Skills and passion*, indicating individual capabilities and interests,
- *Familiarity and knowledge*, forming the basis of a perceived market opportunity,
- *Feeling of security*, which a line of business was perceived to offer.

#### *Skills and passion: Individual capabilities and interests*

For a majority of interviewees it was self-evident that one’s business is connected to both personal skills as well as interests, especially for the *self-fulfilment seeking entrepreneurs*. Consequently, many answers resembled the following entrepreneur [R12: male, 40s, media, born in El Salvador], who simply said:

*“Because it is my passion. And because it is what I know to do.”*

Moreover, environmental stimuli like growing up in a diverse neighbourhood like Jane-Finch were largely perceived as beneficial by interviewees and connected to acquiring valuable business skills such as the ability to market to different cultures. This ability, in turn, had an influence on the selection of a line of business. However, not only exposure to different cultures but also navigating in a community with different socio-economic backgrounds was considered beneficial. One young entrepreneur [R23: male, 20s, retail, Jamaican background] who grew up in poverty in Jane-Finch and managed to work his way up to own a company with ten employees, reflected:

*“I think that for anybody who understands a lot of success stories, a lot of people are always watching celebrities wondering how they started, they started from nothing. And I think that Jane and Finch being one of those places where for myself I would say, it helped me to become really diligent, and learn street smarts, common sense, now that I talk to anybody, I am not afraid of anything in business, and those are the things that you need moving forward.”*

Most entrepreneurs who grew up in Jane-Finch reflected positively on their upbringing, and felt that it had given them valuable interpersonal skills that can be applied in business and contributed to their personal success.

#### *Familiarity and knowledge*

A second influencing factor was familiarity and knowledge. Interviewees were familiar to entrepreneurship, because their parents were business owners or because connections in their family acquainted them with the particular line of work. As such, one entrepreneur who is active in the media and music industry [R22: male, 30s, born in Grenada], observed:

*“When it comes to the music business, my dad and uncle are already in it. So I kind of grew up in the music, what I liked and just continued doing it.”*

Skills and passion are closely connected to knowledge of a specific topic. For instance, the skill of being able to market to different groups of people goes hand in hand with, as one interviewee stated, increased knowledge about potential market groups and successful services. In this sense, knowledge can act as inspiration for setting up a specific line of business. Coming from a diverse Caribbean background herself and knowing that people in a community like Jane-Finch with many international links frequently call “back home”, for example, led one entrepreneur [R9: female 30s, Caribbean background] in the sample to start a business in the telecommunication sector. She clarified:

*“I know that they all call home every single day. And I also saw how my huge competitor was making a lot of money even from my family. I knew that everyone uses it, we just needed to change to spin it differently. And to give them exactly what they want.”*

Furthermore, international links often translated into concrete business ideas, with entrepreneurs operating across countries in places where they have strongest affiliations. For first generation immigrants in Canada, it often meant keeping business connections, trading or providing service in their countries of birth. Entrepreneurs of the “second generation” predominantly targeted their parents’ countries of origin.

#### *Feeling of security*

A perceived sense of security was the last main influence affecting the line of business: Entrepreneurs often chose what in their point of view not only provided the best opportunities but also the least risks. Businesses in the food sector were especially chosen for that reason. The wholesale store owner [R11: female, 60s, wholesale, born in former Yugoslavia], for instance, disclosed:

*“And we figure out that food is one of the things that is the hardest in the business but it is the one that is the least affected by economic changes.”*

Another interviewee [R10: male, 60s, born in Jamaica] operating a small trading company importing goods through his wife’s international links in Morocco and Turkey, saw a change in the global economy which led him to pursue his specific line of business:

*“Importing, exporting, yeah because the world is run on trade now. At one time you couldn’t get anything from other countries in Canada because everything was manufactured here. But now everything is made somewhere else. So trade is good. [...]The world and globalisation and all these things, is coming a small place.”*

Decisions were also largely connected to personal skills and market opportunities. For instance, one entrepreneur discovered that even though he did not have experience in running a travel business, he was familiar with an office environment. His market research indicated that there would be a need for a travel agency. Combined, he concluded that a company in this field would provide him with the most security.

### 3.5 The availability of advice, start-up support, and finance

Access to information, support and capital plays a crucial role for entrepreneurship. The formation of initial capital can be particularly challenging for people living in areas like Jane-Finch. The lack of wealth among many residents in Jane-Finch constitutes an obstacle to receive a bank loan to start a business. In our sample, only a few entrepreneurs took out a bank loan when they set up their enterprise, and only those among the *self-fulfilment seekers* with long work experiences in paid employment. However, it has been argued that ‘individuals who are determined to engage in enterprising behaviour adapt and find appropriate tools for business development’ (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004: 229). For example, among low wealth individuals, ‘many aspiring business owners use financial bootstrapping methods to decrease external capital needs in their start-up phase’ (Kim et al. 2006:7). They often chose ventures that require low initial capital as it was the case in our sample in which many entrepreneurs only required small amount of initial capital, and often worked to earn it partly themselves. Nevertheless, respondents unanimously stated that starting their enterprises – even if it was a one-person operation – would not have been possible without support. Entrepreneurs in our sample all received assistance, ranging from emotional to financial support, primarily by:

- *Organised entrepreneurship support;*
- *And/or their personal networks.*

#### *Organised entrepreneurship support*

Previous research found that organisational bodies and programmes are influential in fostering entrepreneurship and contributing to entrepreneurial success in deprived areas, for instance by serving as key players in connecting residents with businesses (Trettin et al., 2011). Correspondingly, in our sample, *organised entrepreneurship support* was one of the main support systems used by entrepreneurs, especially by *societal change seekers*. Some interviewees followed training or a support programme in their

neighbourhood, and some elsewhere, while some others took part in more than one programme. Community representatives indicated that people in Jane-Finch frequently lack the skills to put their ideas into practice. Hence, information given by community organisations and accessible business advice centres is fundamental. The small business development advisor of a micro-loan programme [R41] emphasised:

*“So part of it is that we want to insure that people who want to start a business understand what it means. Basically what we are asking people is to explain to us how they are going to make money. What is the competition that they need to deal with? How are they going to pay back the loan with the cash flow over the period of time? I mean if people cannot really answer that, they should not really go into business. A lot of times it might be even a good thing that we are saving people to start a business too soon.”*

Besides useful information, the personal support received by community support workers was deemed important by several entrepreneurs. One entrepreneur [R1: male, 20s, non-profit, born in Ghana] who grew up in Jane-Finch and described his own youth as troubled, stressed the emotional assistance of his mentors working for community organisations:

*“Sometimes, you don’t know who to talk to, everything is going rough. You just call your mentors, you talk to them, you know? You’re about to give up but your mentors are like “come on”, they believe in you. When you feel like giving up and you mention it, it is just like you know you have somebody to disappoint if you give up right? Your mentors, they just stand by you, [that is] what keeps you going.”*

With regards to capital, representatives of a micro-loan programme bemoaned the low success rate of people following and completing it. A problem is the limited sum of money that many organisations give out. Depending on the envisioned venture, for instance a pharmacy, aspiring entrepreneurs would require a far greater amount than the usual 500-5000 dollars. While these smaller sums were crucial for some entrepreneurs in our sample, organised entrepreneurship support at the local scale generally aims at small business ideas, limiting the lines of businesses that entrepreneurs from deprived neighbourhoods can enter.

#### *Social networks*

Often, informational and capital support are provided by an individual’s social networks (Klyver et al., 2008). This was frequently expressed by interviewees, who made for example explicit references to emotional support provided by family members, religious institutions, or friends. Many of them belonged to the group of *resilient survivors*, who seemed more inhibited to accept help from outsiders and community organisations. Especially interviewees belonging to *self-fulfilment seeking entrepreneurs* further emphasised the importance of networking for the development of business contacts and information. Those professional contacts can also take over the role of mentors, as it was the case with some interviewees. As one [R18: male, 30s, beauty, Canadian] explained:

*“And from there I was like, this is a person I need to stay close to. I am pretty much stalking him all the time, when he drives home I will be like, okay I drive home with you just to talk, so that I can get nuggets of information from him. And other mentors are more like I can meet every other month to kind of let them know what is going on, but yeah usually it is random encounters and then I latch on to them.”*

Moreover, the family played a particular role in providing initial capital. Due to bank loans requiring assets and programmes by organised entrepreneurship support often have high requirements and long procedures, entrepreneurs frequently turned to their family for (additional) financial support, such as

the following entrepreneur [R27: male, 30s, automobile service, Jamaican background] who decided to set up a business while facing unemployment. He revealed:

*“My family was a big support and when I was initially setting it up, I was going to different family members and was saying, okay this is what I am doing, this is the vision I have and if you can offer 50 dollars, 100 dollars, whatever you can support me with, it will help. So like forty different family members were able to help and I raised like 5000 dollars at the beginning.”*

Thus, social networks are crucial for entrepreneurs in our sample, with family members more often providing financial support and business contacts information and moral support.

### 3.6 Conclusions

Motivations to start a business are dynamic and multi-layered. On the one hand, individual aims and ambitions act as incentives to start an enterprise, for example in the hope for personal development, financial gains or envisioned security. The social network of an entrepreneur is very influential since it is frequently the origin of knowledge and familiarity to entrepreneurship or a particular line of business. It also offers a considerable amount of support, information or initial capital in the start-up phase of a business. On the other hand, motivations are influenced by the surrounding context. Our analysis shows that a neighbourhood was particularly considered attractive as a business location based on physical attributes, the population composition and the perceived opportunities by entrepreneurs related to gaps in the market.

We found that growing up or living in a diverse and deprived neighbourhood provides both skills and knowledge, which stimulate individuals by giving them ideas and direction for new business ideas. Nevertheless, structural constraints create challenges for entrepreneurs, which cannot be ignored. In areas like Jane-Finch, many people lack the necessary information and resources to put those ideas successfully into practice. Entrepreneurs in our sample widely used organised support in forms of programmes, mentoring or micro-loans. It can be concluded that *organised entrepreneurship support* is particularly important in deprived neighbourhoods where, for instance, options to receive a bank loans are foreclosed for many people, or for those entrepreneurs lacking a strong social network.

The sense of responsibility and societal ambitions felt by entrepreneurs in our sample were rather unforeseen results. The chances of experiencing structural constraints, based on both individual markers of identity such as skin colour and origin or neighbourhood stigmatisation, are likely to be higher when growing up or living in a diverse and deprived neighbourhood. We found that diversity, in this respect, creates special dynamics: often based on personal experiences, entrepreneurs become motivated and perceive themselves as agents of change. We also observed that the entrepreneurs' fields of action are not limited to their immediate environments. These tendencies will be further explored in the following section.

## 4. The economic performance of enterprises and role of urban diversity

### 4.1 Introduction

This section explores how economic performances, target markets, cooperation and competition unfold in hyper-diverse areas. Economic performance is traditionally measured with indicators such as revenues, employment size and growth, or the level of salaries (Hmliesleski and Baron, 2009; Wang and Liu 2014). These measurements provide important indicators of an enterprise's financial success. However, on the basis of our study at Jane-Finch we developed a couple of arguments that may influence the understanding of performance of entrepreneurs in a deprived and diverse neighbourhood:

- Success is not only defined by financial gains, but also by *recognition, status and societal contributions*;
- diversity may positively influence an enterprise's performance in providing a *broad customer base, respectful customer relationships, and transnational links for cooperation and expansion*;
- however, to succeed financially, entrepreneurs may have to operate beyond their neighbourhood (which we show happened in Jane-Finch; see Figure 1)

As discussed in the previous section, societal ambitions play a significant role in motivating *societal change seeking entrepreneurs* in or from Jane-Finch. Similar to Johnstone and Lionais (2004:225) premise that 'community business entrepreneurship evaluates wealth in terms of the benefits accruing to the broader community rather than as personal profit', we argue in this section that success in a deprived neighbourhood like Jane-Finch is not only defined by financial gains, but also *recognition, status and societal contributions*.

Moreover, literature with a particular focus on immigrant entrepreneurship, frequently argues that 'despite incessant claims and much persuasive evidence of entrepreneurial prowess, immigrant business mostly consists of small firms operating in low-value sectors of the economy' (Jones et al., 2012:2). Immigrant owned businesses, from this point of view, are extremely labour-intensive and can only sustain themselves because they exploit family members or workers from the same ethnic group (Ibid.). Furthermore, physical proximity, as it is often the case with ethnic businesses, is said to negatively impact collaboration between enterprises (Letaifa and Rabeau, 2013). However, it has been shown that in contrast to large corporations, ethnic enterprises 'have natural linkages with and genuine interest in the communities that they are based in' (Liu et al, 2014:567). Although we did not particularly focus our research on ethnic or immigrant businesses, due to the high levels of ethnic diversity at Jane-Finch, most of the enterprises we analysed can be characterised as ethnic or immigration based business.

Contrary to much of this literature, we observed different tendencies in the area. For instance, instead of locating businesses in close proximity to each other, most entrepreneurs operate beyond their immediate neighbourhood, due to the limited purchasing power in Jane-Finch. In line with scholars Wang and Liu (2014), who argue that a new generation of 'global-oriented immigrant entrepreneurs' differs considerably from their predecessors in terms of target markets, business sizes and financial turnovers, we observe a relatively high degree of internationalisation and international networking in our sample, which is beneficial to a company's economic performance (Kariv et al., 2009). Overall, diversity is found to positively influence an enterprise's performance in providing a broad customer base, respectful customer relationships, and transnational links for cooperation and expansion.

Nevertheless, in order to succeed financially, most entrepreneurs have to operate beyond their immediate neighbourhood.

## 4.2 Economic performance of the enterprises

In economic terms, ‘firm performance levels are in general lower in disadvantaged districts than in more prosperous neighbourhoods’ (Sleutjes et al. 2012:26). Enterprises in these areas are usually smaller in size (Williams and Huggings, 2013), as it is the case in our sample with 10 non-employer firms and 8 micro-businesses. Therefore, a small body of literature points towards factors other than financial as important indicators of entrepreneurial performances in deprived neighbourhoods. Often neglected in entrepreneurship studies are, for instance, the contributions to and recognition from the entrepreneur’s community as a factor of success (Stephan et al., 2015). Therefore, despite solely looking at monetary gains, we evaluate the performance of enterprises in our sample with regards to two different forms of performance indicators:

- Direct gains related to the *financial performance* of enterprises;
- Indirect gains of *recognition and societal contribution*.

### *Financial performance*

The willingness of interviewees to reveal any financial data on their performance was very low. Therefore, entrepreneurs were asked to evaluate the general performance of their businesses. We can, thus, only provide an indication of *self-perception of financial success*. Approximately half of the respondents indicated that their enterprise was doing well, an answer particularly common among *self-fulfilment seeking entrepreneurs* who generally started from a more convenient point of departure with previous work experiences, capital and already established business contacts. Personal evaluations, however, which led to very subjective assessments. For example, one entrepreneur [R7: female, 30s, construction, Jamaican background] running a one-person operation in construction, described her performance as follows:

*“I am financially independent. I can save money for my daughter now. I am almost done paying off my student loan. [...] And my grandparents get money every month now, because I can afford to give them money.”*

In contrast, another entrepreneur [R2: male, 60s, public health] who similarly indicated that his enterprise was doing well, but who owns one of the largest businesses in our sample, responded to the same question:

*“It is stable and we are keeping twelve people employed and they can pay their bills and live comfortably, so I consider that a success.”*

Based on the premise that firms with employees have larger financial resources and turnovers, and consequently perform better in economic terms than non-employer firms (Wang and Liu 2014), our sample suggests that on average, economic performance is rather limited. From the businesses in our sample with 5 to 15 employees, four of them were located in a shopping or strip mall in Jane-Finch, and seven were led by entrepreneurs with considerable previous work experience in Canada. Reasons for the increase in sales were mainly connected to the growing number of clients and the improvement of customer confidence in a product and service. Thereby, consistency was deemed important, as the interviewed mall manager [R44] explained:

*“When you stay in an area for a while, people get to know you. Once people know you, they know what you have. When you go into a new area, people usually say, oh, they come and look first. They look you up and down. And if they have never seen me before, they ask, are you going to be here next week? They want to develop a relationship. To come back next week. So it is important to stay in one area and be consistent before you move to other areas.”*

Not doing well, on the other hand, were mostly the more recent immigrants to Canada who arrived between 2001 and 2013, as well as the informal entrepreneurs, in the category of *resilient survivors*. They were among the six entrepreneurs who were not able to live from their incomes. Moreover, inexperience with entrepreneurship and the line of business she chose, forced one interviewee [R19: female, 30s, fashion and media, Jamaican background] to abolish her first business idea despite considerable efforts:

*“I wasn’t making enough money doing what I was doing. Even though I was passionate about it, I wasn’t making enough money. And I worked my butt off. I worked so hard.”*

Other reasons for the decrease of financial gains included a specific target group and consequent loss of customers due to population changes in the neighbourhood, the economic crisis of 2008, as well as the fluctuations of the US dollar and its conversion to Canadian dollars.

Low purchasing power creates obstacles for entrepreneurship in deprived areas (Berg et al., 2014). In our sample, it affected particularly *resilient survivors*, who tend to operate on smaller scales. Correspondingly, the entrepreneur [R10: male, 60s, born in Jamaica] with the small importing business selling items at local events, explained that he frequently does not participate in the Jane-Finch mall’s flea market on Sundays, due to the risks that his profits are considerably lower than the fees he has to pay for a stall at the event. In fact, branching out of Jane-Finch emerged as one of the most crucial indicators related to a better economic performance. Inhabitants’ low spending powers affect for example restaurants and consequent entrepreneurial patterns in the neighbourhood, as one community worker [R40] explained:

*“I think there is a lot of interest in restaurants but one thing that we find is that most restaurants come and go because it is a very low income neighbourhood, people don’t have the money to spend on an upscale restaurant. So it becomes more of a fast-food and they end up having to pay for their facilities.”*

Entrepreneurs active in the food sector confirmed these observations. One informal entrepreneur [R15: female, 60s, food, born in Somalia], who is selling samosas<sup>3</sup> to her neighbours, noted:

*“I know downtown I can sell one for two dollars. But here, people here don’t have that much. So I sell one for one dollar. For that I buy the meat, I buy the green pepper, I buy green onion, I buy the spices. So I spend the money but at least some money comes in. Some extra money.”*

The prospect of earning more money downtown, however, does not outweigh her fear to leave her immediate living environment. Instead, the scale of the area, in which interviewee moves and operates with confidence is rather limited to her housing block.

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<sup>3</sup> Samosas are fried or baked pastries with savoury fillings, prominent in Northern and Eastern African as well as Asian cuisine

From the entrepreneurs who indicated that they were performing well financially, the majority was actively working beyond their neighbourhood, either by selling products or providing services outside Jane-Finch, or by having their company located completely outside the area. In addition, leaving the neighbourhood was perceived as key to success by entrepreneurs operating businesses in a variety of different sectors. A young entrepreneur [R23: male, 20s, retail, Jamaican background] who started his enterprise in Jane-Finch, reflected:

*“I started to branch out of Jane and Finch now, I am expanding all over Canada right now. My product is currently sold in Alberta, I travelled to Quebec and places like that and looking at Montreal and so forth, and even North America. Then Europe of course as well. I think a big part of my success came from travelling, outside the community as well.”*

#### *Recognition and societal contribution*

According to our data, a deprived neighbourhood does not necessarily create ‘success’ in terms of money. Nevertheless, other factors were deemed more important by interviewees. One interviewee in a management position [R43] from outside Jane-Finch who works in the community made the following observation:

*“What I find is that there are two sets of individuals within this community. You have the set that are die-hard ‘this is my family, this is my life, this is my community and I am not leaving and I am going to stay and make it better’, which is fabulous, and then you have the others that are itching to get out.”*

In addition, we found that even entrepreneurs from outside Jane-Finch, such as one interviewee [R21: female, 50s, automobile, Argentinian family background] operating a family business in the area, displayed a high degree of commitment to the community in which they were working. Being located with her business in Jane-Finch for more than two decades, she was not only emotionally connected to the area and tried to break its negative stigma by disseminating positive stories of the neighbourhood. She also actively supported several local charities, which for instance organise summer programmes for disadvantaged children from Jane-Finch. For her, business success was largely connected to the ability to support these programmes with larger financial resources. Additionally, she pointed out:

*“I think we are so successful because we emphasise service more than profit. In this community, people come with envelopes on a Friday, they don’t have a debit or a master card. They just open their envelope on a Friday and they have got a limited amount of cash. And that’s how they pay and that’s what they wait for. That is the kind of community that we are serving and it is unique in that aspect.”*

As previously highlighted in section 3.2 with regards to societal ambitions, many entrepreneurs in our sample are invested in community-based projects or programmes and initiatives connected to broader social and ecological changes. These ambitions were frequently valued higher than solely financial gains. One entrepreneur [R27: male, 30s, automobile service, Jamaican background], who uses his personal experiences to teach aspiring young entrepreneurs how to run businesses, emphasised:

*“I really want the concept of eco-friendly, socially-conscious business to catch on. And that is the main reason why we became a big corporation. We want the businesses that we help to create from our programmes to be eco-friendly and socially-conscious from the beginning instead of fully capitalistic.”*

We also found that an exceptional number of entrepreneurs in our sample perceived themselves as role model. Research shows that role models can have significant effects on empowering and increasing entrepreneurial motivations among disadvantaged individuals (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013). In our sample we observed similar patterns with *societal change seekers*, functioning as ‘community forerunners’, using their businesses as instruments for social mobility, sharing their experiences and trying to support and inspire others. A young entrepreneur from Jane-Finch underlined how he feels as follows [R23: male, 20s, retail, Jamaican background]:

*“I think that if I show my actions, other kids will change and create their own business, if they hear more success stories out of Jane and Finch.”*

In order to attract media attention and promote their business ideas and connected societal ambitions, a number of entrepreneurs made use of their personal story and experiences, such as growing up in a deprived neighbourhood, having a troubled youth or belonging to a racialized group. A long-term resident [R3: male, 30s, media, Vietnamese background] from Jane-Finch noted:

*“Diversity, it is a game. A lot of people use it to benefit themselves and a lot of people have. And I don’t blame people who do that, whatever they do, as long as it is legal, they should just do it. They should take advantage of it. Because you can’t compete with someone who lives downtown, whose parents are doctors or lawyers, and who got all the money and connections. You need every extra leverage.”*

Subjected to stereotypes, structural constraints and racism, it is interesting to see that entrepreneurs actively turn these negative aspects around, both to set a positive example and to gain a broader platform for their societal ambitions. Attention and recognition from others, for instance in forms of awards for their engagement, can in turn enhance their economic performances. This aspect is not much studied: This form of agency, and indirect gains for an enterprises performance, are often neglected features in academic literature.

### 4.3 Markets, customers and suppliers

While low purchasing powers in deprived neighbourhoods negatively affect entrepreneurship (Berg et al., 2014), transnational activities are said to increase an enterprise’s performance (Kariv et al., 2009; Wang and Liu, 2014). Hence, investigating whether entrepreneurs benefit from being in close proximity to their customers, or whether they operate in markets beyond the neighbourhood, gives interesting insights into the performance of enterprises in hyper-diverse areas.

According to data in our sample, the argument that enterprises in deprived areas only have ‘highly localised demand’ (Williams and Huggings, 2013) cannot be confirmed. Eight entrepreneurs indicated that their customers were living mainly in Jane-Finch, with the majority of them being store owners in a local shopping or strip mall. The majority of interviewed entrepreneurs, on the other hand, was active outside the neighbourhood: in the city of Toronto, throughout Canada or internationally. Particularly enterprises in the quaternary sector, in which online communication and services play a key role, had a larger scope of action.

Similar patterns could be observed concerning the location of suppliers. We foremost noticed that our interviewees frequently did not need a lot of supplies; especially service-based enterprises and those makes use of the internet kept their supplies to a minimum. This finding reflects the argument that aspiring entrepreneurs in deprived areas tend to choose businesses with low entry barriers (Williams

and Huggins, 2013). Moreover, even though the large majority of our sample had migration backgrounds, either directly or indirectly through their parents, entrepreneurs are not bound to traditional ‘immigrant businesses’ anymore (Wang and Liu, 2014). For those entrepreneurs whose businesses are dependent on supplies, for instance retailers, the immediate neighbourhood hardly played a role. The only exception was, although in a very small-scale, the 69-year old informal entrepreneur selling samosas to her neighbours, who bought the needed ingredients in a local supermarket. Instead, importing products from abroad via online shops was relatively common among interviewees.

With regards to customer profiles, a number of entrepreneurs indicated that their customer base largely consists of a particular social group, such as people with Hispanic backgrounds, Italians, very young or very old people, or business professionals. The majority of entrepreneurs described their customers as very mixed, a condition deemed necessary by some, although markets of people with higher disposable incomes were perceived as more advantageous. One interviewee [R17] selling phone contracts in a shopping mall in Jane-Finch stated:

*“We have people from various backgrounds. I don’t think it can be exclusive or all-inclusive when you have a business. You have to just open your business to whoever will buy.”*

Having a variety of customers belonging to different social groups was also perceived as advantageous in increasing patronage. The entrepreneur [R21: female, 50s, automobile, Argentinian family background] with a family business in Jane-Finch reflected:

*“I’ve had East Indian people from the temple not so far from here tell me that we are famous in that temple for our business. That is probably how diversity is good for business. Each community, they all have their tango-shons or Muslim services or whatever, and they talk and they bring their friends.”*

Furthermore, a customer relationship based on personal contact, sociability and trust was highly valued by a considerable amount of interviewees. In this way, entrepreneurs indicated that they were able to receive feedback and adjust their products and services. With regards to diversity, the respectful interaction with people from different backgrounds was repeatedly highlighted in interviews. According to one entrepreneur [R23: male, 20s, retail, Jamaican background] who started his enterprise in Jane-Finch, a respectful relationship increased the customer loyalty to his brand:

*“One of the things that I learned to say was shrikria, which is Indian, and also mabad... which is Somali how you say thank you. Little things like that, cultures appreciate it. When you know how to say thank you in different languages, another one was Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, you start to pick up as you go along. So when you are able to speak to someone else’s culture and respect that, it opens so many doors for you. It is unbelievable. Once people see that you respect their culture, they support you.”*

Others, such as one entrepreneur with El Salvadorian background [R13: male, 40s, media], attributed their successful customer relationships to their personal cultural backgrounds:

*“I think the customer relationship differentiates us from many other companies. You know, our accountant said ‘you guys are so nice to your clients, but how can that be? Is that because you are from another country or is it your culture or what is it?’ And I think a lot has to do with that, with respect, family, how to throw a party or how to take care of them. And I think that is part of the value that we bring to the table when we are at the business.”*

Overall, diversity among customers and personal diverse backgrounds with regards to customer relationships were considered valuable assets for enterprises.

#### 4.4 Relations among entrepreneurs: Evidence of competition or co-operation?

Opinions on the effects of clustering differ in academic literature. Whereas some argue that having businesses in the same neighbourhood can provide a positive business milieu for professional collaboration among particular types of entrepreneurs, others argue that *geographical proximity* can have a negative effect on collaboration (Letaifa and Rabeau, 2013). According to data, cooperation in the immediate environment of enterprises was very limited. In fact only two entrepreneurs indicated that they actively collaborated with businesses closely located to their own. For the majority of interviewees, geographical proximity was described as resulting in peaceful coexistence and a friendly relationship or small talk with ones' neighbours. As the owner of a phone store [R6: female, 20s, retail, born in India] in a shopping mall indicated, *"it is just a friendly gesture."*

Competition in the neighbourhood was experienced more often than cooperation, especially by retailers selling more conventional items, who did not specialise in a niche market and belonged mostly to the category of *resilient survivors*. Nevertheless, also competition was described as relatively little in the neighbourhood. The owner of a bulk food store [R11: female, 60s, wholesale, born in former Yugoslavia] made the characteristics of Jane-Finch responsible for the lack of competition. She said:

*"Well my business I don't have so many [competitors]. Because it is not easy business, you have to know what you are doing and investment is quite big. There is a big national supplier not far away from us, but my prices are much better. So I don't look at them as my competition."*

Hence it seems that the neighbourhood neither plays an important role for competition or cooperation. Especially entrepreneurs working from home are frequently isolated from their commercial environment, and some of them indicated that they were not having any contact, neither good nor bad, with other businesses in the neighbourhood. Letaifa and Rabeau (2013) argue that artificial clusters often fail 'because of a lack of social proximity' (2074). *Social proximity* constituted also the more important factor in our sample. For instance, one entrepreneurs [R27: male, 30s, automobile service, Jamaican background] operating a service-based business without a fixed location, explained:

*"I am definitely trying to work on building my network, to say these are people who are like-minded, and if I can help them in any way I can, they can reach out to me."*

Similar networks, often independent from a particular location, were used for collaboration by several entrepreneurs. Moreover, in line with the tendency of entrepreneurs to offer services and products beyond the neighbourhood, the scale of competition increased as well. One interviewee [R14: male, 50s, tourism, born in Somalia] operating a travel business defined the scale of his competition as follows:

*"There are other travel agencies around, competition is always there and this is a big city. In Ontario there is over 3000 travel agencies. So it is tough. The numbers are coming down because of the internet, but there is a lot of competition."*

Thus, he sees his competition at the scale of the province, as well as online, illustrating that entrepreneurs in our sample are not only ‘globally-oriented’ by choice, but also by exogenous changes in technology and the global economy.

#### 4.5 Long-term plans and expectations of the entrepreneurs

Long-term plans and expectations highly differed per entrepreneur. Overall, *societal change seekers*, as well as *self-fulfilment seekers* were able to articulate their long-term plans better than *resilient survivors*, who seemed to be more occupied with their daily activities than big business plans. Johannessen et al. (1999:118) talk about ‘pro-activeness’ to describe ‘the ability to create opportunities or the ability to recognize or anticipate and act on opportunities (or dangers) when they present themselves’. According to them, the pro-activeness of an entrepreneur is a highly personal attribute. Based on our data, factors such as gender, education, origin or line of business played no considerable role in the differences of plans and expectations. Hence, we explain the variations in future ambitions and the impossibility to detect any patterns in our sample by personal dispositions.

Nevertheless, we found that a diverse range of entrepreneurs who were either unsure of any future plans, or did not want any changes altogether. As argued before, many interviewees defined success with indicators other than financial gains. As a result, and even though from an outside perspective it might seem that there would be room for improvement in their financial situation, some interviewees were content with what they had. One entrepreneur [R7: female, 30s, construction, Jamaican background] with no further aspirations told:

*“You know what, my main thing was just to be happy doing what I do. So that’s my main goal. And you know what, I am anxious to get up and go to work every day. For me, this is it. And just to do this every day and be able to feed my family and take a vacation when I need to.”*

Similarly, entrepreneurs with ambitions to expand their businesses often did not want to do it on the expenses of their flexibility, or quality of their products and services. This decision was also related to the awareness that these factors largely contribute to the enterprise’s competitive advantage, for instance by the entrepreneur [R20: female, 50s, born in Jamaica] active in the fashion industry, who admitted:

*“I don’t want to do mass production; I don’t want to sell it to retailers. I don’t want this person to buy one dozens, two dozens, three dozens. I don’t know if I am selfish, I don’t want to do the bulk thing. I want [my brand] to be a name and a signature to it but at the meantime I don’t want to do retail.”*

Lastly, similar to findings in section 3.4 of personal backgrounds and migration histories influencing transnational activities of entrepreneurs, countries of origin or parent’s countries of origins partly directed long-term plans. With regards to his plans for expansion, one second-generation entrepreneur [R27: male, 30s, automobile service, Jamaican background] explained:

*“So we got some interest from Uganda, and Jamaica is my home town. My parents are from Jamaica. So I would love to have a foot print there. And the United States is more like the feasible option because it is close, and see if it works out.”*

## 4.6 Conclusions

In a deprived neighbourhood like Jane-Finch, the possibilities to increase an enterprise's economic performance and expand a business solely based on revenues through local customers are limited from a certain point onward. Success, however, is not exclusively measured by financial gains but by recognition and respect from the community for the entrepreneur's work, and the societal contributions of the enterprise, illustrated by the high number of *societal change seeking entrepreneurs* in our sample. In this sense, the more successful ones are those who have 'impact' in the society, which also affects some entrepreneurs' future expectations regarding business changes and plans for expansion. A contribution of being exposed to a diverse neighbourhood is the consequent respect for differences, which frequently formed the basis of successful customer relationships in our sample. Moreover, targeting a diverse population increases the customer base of a company.

The neighbourhood and population of Jane-Finch mainly plays an important role for entrepreneurs involved in retail, particularly those owning stores in the local shopping malls or a strip mall. Nevertheless, most entrepreneurs who want to expand and increase their financial gains are dependent on orientating themselves outside their neighbourhood, and selling products or services at larger scales ranging from the city of Toronto, to a Canadian or international market. Consequently, for a majority of entrepreneurs, the role of the neighbourhood is diminished or even also largely irrelevant, also with regards to competition or cooperation. Social networks, on the other hand, are more decisive over an enterprise's performance, and long-term plans and expectations seemed to be closely connected to the individual's entrepreneurial drive.

Entrepreneurs who lack those networks and the personal dispositions to leave their immediate environments on their own, in order to explore markets and create business networks outside the familiar neighbourhood, are dependent on local support structures, which will be examined in the next chapter.

## 5. Institutional support and government policies

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the institutional support and government policies affecting entrepreneurs in our sample. Attitudes of local and central governments towards entrepreneurship, as well as existing legislation and policies to enhance different types of enterprises, for example, can create both opportunities and limitations for entrepreneurs. However, our study shows that there is a *mismatch* between the federal and city level institutional support mechanisms and community scale impact. Macro scale institutional and financial support systems can only be effective if local scale institutional efforts (neighbourhood and community) are recognised and supported directly. Otherwise, we argue, the organised entrepreneurship support for entrepreneurs can be marginalised with regards to entrepreneurial support mechanisms on the neighbourhood scale.

The effects of entrepreneurship policies are extensively discussed in literature. Studies, however, often include 'cross-national benchmarking and best practice comparisons' (Jenrekson and Stenkula, 2009:9), which run the risk of neglecting contextual specificities such as differences in economic systems or the indirect influence of other public policies on entrepreneurship. Therefore, academic research increasingly investigates the effects of institutional contexts on entrepreneurship (Ferri and

Urbano, 2015). Besides economic and historic forces, institutional contexts form part of 'local entrepreneurial environments' (Malecki, 2009) building frameworks in which entrepreneurs operate. Moreover, there are also studies that point out the the impact of laws, public institutions, and regulatory practices upon entrepreneurship, especially considering immigrant (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; 2003; Rath, 2000; Rath and Kloosterman, 2000), which is referred as *mixed embeddedness approach* to contextualize the interaction between micro-level cultural characteristics within the broader political, social, and economic settings (Teixeira, et al., 2007).

In many deprived neighbourhoods, entrepreneurs face impediments due to factors such as 'inappropriate government regulation', 'limited social and business networks' and 'constraints to finance' (Nolan, 2003:78). Consequently, not only the creation of new businesses is limited, but also the survival rate of business start-ups is diminished in these settings. Therefore, common measures to create entrepreneurial support infrastructures include 'technical assistance, training and education, networking with peers and mentors, and access to financial capital' (Markley, 2007:125). Support can be provided by both governmental and non-governmental organisations and actors. For instance, formal business associations such as chambers of commerce or other institutional bodies are deemed valuable for networking, support and training purposes, as well as due to their regulatory functions of a trade or service, and the allocation of funding and grants (Doner and Schneider, 2000). Furthermore, a wide range of organisations, including non-profit and private initiatives, frequently play an important role in the creation of 'entrepreneurial opportunity structures' (Hackler and Meyer, 2008) which provide tailor-made opportunities to support specific groups.

It has been acknowledged that institutional provisions and governmental policies can largely influence 'a virtuous cycle that supports and strengthens entrepreneurial endeavours' (Spigel, 2013:807). On the contrary, a lack of institutional support and particular sets of policies can inhibit entrepreneurial developments in diverse and deprived neighbourhoods. In what follows we provide an analysis on the conditions in Jane-Finch from the perspective of our interviewees. We will discuss how our respondents perceive and evaluate the government's attitudes and assistance in relation to entrepreneurship, their awareness and perceived benefits of different forms of support, as well as their personal policy recommendations. Throughout this report, the importance of organised entrepreneurship support for entrepreneurs in our sample has been emphasised. Nevertheless, interviewees felt that deprived neighbourhoods were marginalised and neglected in the City's approach to entrepreneurship, and they indicated room for improvement particularly with regards to entrepreneurial support mechanisms on the neighbourhood scale.

## **5.2 Views on the effectiveness of business support provided by local and central governments**

Governmental attitudes and actions in relation to entrepreneurship highly influence the conditions under which entrepreneurs initiate their businesses and undertake their daily activities. A comprehensive literature review on the effects of public policy on entrepreneurship by Audretsch et al. (2002), for example, revealed influences in five key areas: 'the demand side of entrepreneurship; the supply side of entrepreneurship; the availability of resources, skills and knowledge; preferences for entrepreneurship; and the decision-making process of potential entrepreneurs' (Henrekson and Stenkula, 2009:8). The federal government in Canada perceives entrepreneurship as crucial part of the country's economic success and for instance tries to attract foreign entrepreneurs with a special 'Start-Up Visa' (Government of Canada, 2015). During our interviews, however, it was seldom differentiated

between the three existing government levels in Canada; statements on ‘the government’ predominantly referred to the local government of Toronto.

The City of Toronto employs several strategies to support entrepreneurs. One of its main institutions in this respect is *Enterprise Toronto*, which offers free advice and services for entrepreneurs and small businesses, and runs several programmes and networking events (City of Toronto, 2016a). *Enterprise Toronto* operates three ‘advisory centers’ across the city, of which some entrepreneurs in our sample made use of. They largely perceived the provided support as very effective. One entrepreneur [R27: male, 30s, automobile service, Jamaican background] without previous experiences in starting and operating a business, remembered:

*“[Attending the programme] was probably one of the best decisions that I have made because going to that centre you get exposed to all the resources that are available. And you got a person that you can talk to about your ideas, they help with your business plan, they help you with your marketing ideas and they can point you in the right direction, introduce you to the proper resource, the contact, and that can really fast-track what you do.”*

Nevertheless, the closest centre from Jane-Finch is located in the *North York Civic Centre*, which takes approximately one hour to reach with public transport. The distance limits its effectiveness for entrepreneurs based in Jane-Finch. Especially in such a deprived and stigmatised area, where according to interviewees many people do not have the means or are afraid to leave their immediate environment, effective support should be easily accessible, located in close proximity to potential entrepreneurs, and neither require resources or time-consuming procedures to find advice (Nolan, 2003).

In 2009, the City of Toronto launched the *Tower Renewal Programme*, a programme aimed to improve the conditions in Toronto’s suburban areas that are characterised by considerable amounts of high-rise apartment towers. Part of the programme includes the rezoning of ground floors in residential tower blocks, to allow commercial activities in several sites across Toronto, including in Jane-Finch (City of Toronto, 2016b). ‘The lack of suitable premises is cited as a common reason for why microenterprises migrate from undersupplied localities’ (Nolan, 2003: 88). While it is too early to evaluate the programme’s success with regards to opportunities given to local entrepreneurs, this policy effort illustrates that City’s recognition of the need for more small-scale commercial or retail spaces to revitalise local economies in areas like Jane-Finch. Nonetheless, the lack of affordable space as well of sufficient funding for initiatives are ongoing problems in Jane-Finch. Any efforts to create a community business hub have been unsuccessful thus far. Interesting is that despite the limited finances, a local entrepreneurship programme rejected a grant that was offered by the City of Toronto, which was supposed to support the entrepreneurial development of people from a particular origin. Entrepreneurial opportunity structures for specific social groups are important, but framing target groups in terms of ethnic background can have ‘negative effects by reproducing an inferior Other’ (Hogberg et al., 2014:1). The programme turned down the grant based on its lack of inclusiveness and a perceived noncompliance with the city’s anti-racism policy.

Overall, interviewees in our sample perceived business support provided by the City as rather ineffective. Despite its declaration to support entrepreneurship in lower-income communities, for instance by specific programmes offered by *Enterprise Toronto* (City of Toronto, 2016a), the local government was perceived as favouring those with money and neglecting entrepreneurship in deprived neighbourhoods. Moreover, the question was raised who classifies as entrepreneur in the

eyes of the local government. One entrepreneur involved in supporting business start-ups in his community [R26: male, 20s, non-profit, born in Nigeria] explained:

*“I think entrepreneurship is a big thing for them [the city government] but I think, who they see as entrepreneurs is the question that we have. It is about access, right? Everybody has a target market and the way they [policy makers] work, leaves people in the fringe.”*

Another entrepreneur [R24: male, 20s, information technology, White Canadian] questioned if there was a genuine place for communities to have their voice be heard or become involved with the City’s approach to entrepreneurship. Thus, while the local government implements some programmes and initiatives, which are also valued by individual entrepreneurs, the dominant view was that governmental efforts were selective and insufficient to enhance entrepreneurship in deprived communities.

### 5.3 Wider awareness of organisations, programmes, and initiatives to support entrepreneurs

In Jane-Finch, we observed the provision of *opportunity structures* by different actors. Hackler and Meyer (2008) explain ‘entrepreneurial opportunity structures’ in relation to human capital and the need to create opportunities for specific groups, such as secondary educational institutions, particular business schools for instance for women, or minority recruitment programs. The neighbourhood’s community shopping mall, for instance, was found to provide tailor-made support for newcomers and aspiring entrepreneurs from various backgrounds with ambitions in retail. The mall management [R44] perceived the diversity of aspiring entrepreneurs as assets, saw an opportunity in their economic performances and thus provided additional assistance for example to people who encountered language difficulties. Unfortunately, due to reservations and language barriers, none of these entrepreneurs is included in our sample.

Without corresponding ‘institutional visibility’ (Nolan, 2003), the sole existence of opportunities is not enough. Entrepreneurs in our sample were mainly aware and made use of support provided by

- *Formal business organisations*, such as chambers of commerce which were offering mostly indirect benefits;
- *Non-governmental organisations* providing entrepreneurship support with rather direct contributions to economic performances.

#### *Formal business organisations*

Formal business organisations can positively affect the economic performance of businesses (Doner and Schneider, 2000). More than half of entrepreneurs, particularly *societal change* and *self-fulfilment seekers*, indicated that they were part of such organisations, including unions representing specific lines of businesses, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Board of Trade and business associations for black entrepreneurs and professionals. The larger the interviewee’s enterprise, the more likely was the membership in a formal business association. Contributions of these memberships were largely perceived as indirect. One entrepreneur [R21: female, 50s, automobile, Argentinian family background] explained, for instance:

*“We are part of the Canadian Association of Independent Business, CAIB. They are the voice for Canada actually for any changes like the Ontario pension plan, they are always surveying our opinion about how to*

*lobby the government to make changes. And they are very helpful when you need them but I haven't felt the need. So I could see that they would be a great support. How do they affect our daily business? Not so much."*

The importance of formal business organisation largely lies in the defence of its member's interests (Doner and Schneider, 2000). All organisations mentioned by interviewees targeted larger scales, such as the city of Toronto, or even nationally. They regulated a specific line of business, helped to establish business contacts, or advocated on behalf of a specific type of entrepreneur. The popularity of membership in these organisations reflects the broader outlook and context in which entrepreneurs in our sample commonly operated.

#### *Non-governmental organisations*

In Jane-Finch, a wide range of governance arrangements and initiatives are present, including some targeting the economic performance of residents (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2014). These non-governmental and non-profit organisations, as well as private associations and societies contribute to the opportunity structures in the neighbourhood. Despite the prominent use of those initiatives in our sample, described under *organised entrepreneurship support*, a number of interviewees complained about the difficulties to find these opportunities and offers. One entrepreneur [R1: male, 20s, non-profit, born in Ghana], for example, lamented:

*"There is a lot of support, it is just like a lot of these opportunities are hidden. You know what I'm saying? Is like hidden opportunities, and kids are unable to find them. If I am not able to find them, how are kids able to find them?"*

While some often more experienced entrepreneurs – mostly *self-fulfilment seeking entrepreneurs* – were not aware of existing entrepreneurship support due to a lack of interest in receiving any, assistance by non-governmental organisations was particularly popular among younger entrepreneurs, more recent immigrants as well as first-time entrepreneurs lacking considerable experience in running a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurs lacking strong social networks highly valued support by such instances, both directly related to entrepreneurship and other aspects of life. One interviewee [R7: female, 30s, construction, Jamaican background] who took part in 'Women Moving Forward', a programme supporting single mothers, recalled:

*"No family around, at all. My main support was the Women Moving Forward because whenever I ran into trouble, I was like, let's call them. Who else can I call? Only Women Moving Forward, right? Every time, whenever, I ran over there and they were more than happy to help me and they were taking care of this this that, and, you know, if I didn't have them, I wouldn't know what I'd be doing right now."*

Thus, while awareness of support by non-governmental organisations leaves room for improvement and a number of interviewees stumbled by chance over a respective programme, they frequently perceived the received support as highly beneficial and directly impacting their life and entrepreneurial performance.

## **5.4 Policy priorities for entrepreneurship**

Following questions on their wishes and demands, interviewees' suggestions for policy priorities can be grouped into three categories related to the provision of *organised entrepreneurship support*, namely:

- *Increasing entrepreneurship education and support;*

- *Improving existing entrepreneurship programmes;*
- *Facilitating access to capital.*

#### *Increasing entrepreneurship education and support*

As highlighted in previous sections, the local government's entrepreneurship support in deprived neighbourhoods was perceived as insufficient by many interviewees, causing a lack of funding for neighbourhood-based entrepreneurship programmes. In a previous round of research in Jane-Finch, residents expressed frustration over transportation and the disconnection of the neighbourhood to other parts of the city (Ahmadi and Tasan-Kok, 2015). Entrepreneurs living in Jane-Finch often had to travel outside the area in order to receive business support, especially affecting *resilient survivors* who do not possess the time and resources next to their substantial workload. One entrepreneur active in the fashion sector [R20: female, 50s, fashion, born in Jamaica], for example, underlined the distance and efforts that it required her to partake in an entrepreneurship course, which eventually led her to drop out of it:

*“There is ‘Job Skills’, they help you for 42 weeks and you go to their classes. You go to their classes four hours a day, four days per week. I did apply, and I was qualified. They are good but you are spending so much time in the classroom and sometimes you take two hours on the bus, it doesn’t make sense. [...] It was taking up too much of my time, so I cancelled it.”*

Correspondingly, a frequent suggestion by interviewees was the increase in programmes, support and advisory services in the direct neighbourhood, echoing scholarly recommendations of making entrepreneurial support structures easily accessible in close proximity to potential entrepreneurs (Nolan, 2003). Furthermore, while the amount of existing community support programmes in Jane-Finch was often positively acknowledged, one entrepreneur [R9: female 30s, telecommunications, Caribbean background] who grew up and still lives in Jane-Finch observed that many of programmes miss a focus on business-related skills:

*“There is always this focus on social and arts and stuff like that, but not on business. But I think it’s really important to change that because if you want to change poverty, a lot of people are interested in doing their own business. Or at least show examples of how you can do business.”*

Additionally, according to entrepreneurs that displayed higher degrees of creativity and innovation, many programmes have a rather narrow target groups ‘at risk’. Programmes targeted at for example school children that do very well and who might have the potential to become successful entrepreneurs, on the other hand, were described as lacking. Respondents did not want to reduce existing initiatives or diminish their importance, but suggested to add opportunities for a wider range of people and entrepreneurship education in Jane-Finch.

#### *Improving existing entrepreneurship programmes*

Closely connected were a number of suggestions with regards to existing entrepreneurship support programmes. Nolan (2003:85) argues that entrepreneurship support should be visible and embedded in a well-established referral system with ‘banks, accountants, solicitors, training organizations, chambers of commerce, business associations, and others be encouraged to refer entrepreneurs for support to relevant public services’. In contrast, interviewees criticised the invisibility of many existing opportunities as well as a fragmentation of the different programmes offered in Jane-Finch. Furthermore, some entrepreneurs expressed frustration on the short-term outlook of many

programmes such as one interviewee [R1: male, 20s, non-profit, born in Ghana] who grew up in Jane-Finch and took part in various programmes himself until he found a long-lasting mentor from one organisation:

*“All these little programmes, it’s like what is it doing for these kids after? I know a lot of kids that took a lot of programmes and then went back to square one. What is going on here!? That’s what we have to think about.”*

Similarly, community support workers lamented that long-term plans could hardly be made due to a lack of required funding. Political cycles and new policy priorities by changing governments create constant changes with regards to available budgets. Lastly, existing programmes were described as too uniform, as the entrepreneur [R9: female 30s, telecommunications, Caribbean background] with a telecommunication business explained: *“some of those things are very cookie cutter and it’s just, I’m already thinking outside the box.”* Support programmes that lack flexibility and variable foci to attract different kinds of entrepreneurs were described as repelling entrepreneurs, who are often characterised by a high degree of innovation and creativity, and thus did not feel comfortable to be subsumed under a specific category.

#### *Access to capital*

The lack of capital is a strong impediment for entrepreneurs in deprived neighbourhoods (Johnstone and Linoais, 2004). The same observations were made by interviewees, such as one manager [R43] who explained:

*“The main obstacle is the funding of their own business. If we are looking what is called credit history [which is essential to receive a bank loan], it doesn’t exist for people in Jane and Finch. For the majority of people.”*

Since generally percentages of recent start-ups that fail in the first five years are relatively high, banks do not want to provide loans to people without the necessary resources, such as home ownership, to write off potential business failures. Consequently, entrepreneurs felt that the government needed to be more open to the fact that they were risky and their first ideas might fail, but that it was going to lead them to a succeeding business idea. Entrepreneurs suggested that the local government should improve the access to capital for entrepreneurs from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, the importance of micro-loan programmes and similar initiatives for deprived neighbourhoods was highlighted. Nevertheless, while community workers described the success rates of applications for micro-loan programmes as very limited, entrepreneurs criticised that many of these programmes had very strict guidelines. One interviewee [R27: male, 30s, automobile services, Jamaican background] explained:

*“I was actually [...] helping one of these programmes that the government started for people who wanted to found businesses and could get up to 5000 dollars. But they are putting such strict guidelines on the money that you were getting, that it just deters anybody that is really interested in starting a business. You go to get help and there is fifty red-tape type of objectives that you have to hit and by the time you get to twenty, you kind of give up and think like, you know what, I am going to do it myself. Even when I was starting I was like okay, you can get grants for young people starting businesses, but as soon as you are starting to go through the process, you just start to get derailed.”*

Thus, a number of entrepreneurs suggested to improve access to programmes offered by non-governmental organisations, to increase the number of successful applicants and provide more potential entrepreneurs with required resources.

## 5.5 Conclusions

Institutional support constitutes a crucial aspect for a large amount of entrepreneurs in our sample, particularly in the start-up period of enterprises and for entrepreneurs lacking experience, skills and social support networks. Views on the effectiveness of business support provided by local and central, however, was perceived as rather ineffective. A perceived bias towards entrepreneurs and business developments in areas of affluence created feelings of marginalisation among many entrepreneurs, and was connected to insufficient funding and support programmes for entrepreneurship in Jane-Finch. Furthermore, many respondents felt that policy efforts disregarded their opinion and overlooked the specificity of required entrepreneurship support in these areas.

Due to these conditions, many organisations, programmes and initiatives were located outside the entrepreneurs' neighbourhoods and thus require individuals to actively find and travel to locations where support is offered. Entrepreneurs taking part in these programmes nonetheless, highly valued the given advice and support and directly linked it to increased economic performances. However, overall saw direct influences and benefits of contributions. Nevertheless, the often distant locations created obstacles for some. Hence, forms of improvement interviewees themselves provided a number of suggestions and policy recommendations, particularly with regards to increasing local entrepreneurship support, improving existing support structures and facilitating access to money for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of the key findings

Based on a qualitative analysis of interview data, this report explored the relationship between urban diversity and entrepreneurship in a deprived, dynamic and diverse neighbourhood. We started by examining the backgrounds and characteristics of entrepreneurs in our sample, as well as their businesses and entrepreneurial developments. Following this, we explored the entrepreneurs' main motivations and rationales, which guided their decisions, particularly in the start-up periods of their enterprises. From there, we investigated the factors that influenced the entrepreneurs' economic performances, and lastly, evaluated the impact of institutional support and government policies. An important outcome of our study in Jane-Finch is that the classic ethnic entrepreneurship approach is not enough to understand and analyse the neighbourhood in terms of its conditions that may help individuals to do economically better. We argued that immigrant status alone does not give meaningful information on an entrepreneur's characteristics nor of the neighbourhood conditions that related to diversity. On the basis of our study we could define 3 types of entrepreneurs who have some dominant tendencies: the *societal change seekers*, the *self-fulfilment seekers* and the *resilient survivors*. These categories, although sometimes intertwined on individual basis, are quite interesting to study especially considering the 'arrival city' study of Saunders (2010), who argued that deprived and diverse neighbourhoods as Jane-Finch may become springboards for disadvantaged groups to succeed economically.

By highlighting some dominant characteristics of the entrepreneurs in this diverse and deprived neighbourhood, we were able to show the importance of individual attributes of the entrepreneur in economic performance of enterprises. In neighbourhoods like Jane-Finch, which are not

commercially attractive and not located in attractive areas of the city, the success of entrepreneurs may be more dependent on 'individual attributes' than on the support systems. As Hmieleski and Baron (2009) and Baron et al. (2012) mentioned, the 'disposition' (personality, character) or 'dispositional affects' (personality traits) are important in successful enterprises. What our research in Jane-Finch highlights is that the *individual dispositions* that help the entrepreneur to better perform in terms of financial and societal targets can be triggered by the combination of certain social and spatial characteristics of the neighbourhood.

Is Jane-Finch an arrival city? In certain aspects and for certain forms of entrepreneurship, it is. As our research showed, the neighbourhood provided some entrepreneurs cheap, accessible starting point and social environment to make some business innovations and move beyond the neighbourhood. But for the most part, the economic activity is quite limited here due to its suburban, commercially unattractive characteristics that do not trigger any financial interest to regenerate the neighbourhood (like in other central areas of Toronto such as Regent Park). However, we could define new types of entrepreneurship, which link strong community support systems in the area to individual 'success'.

Throughout the report, a particular focus was placed on the role of diversity in these processes and the *conditions* that turn diversity into an advantage for entrepreneurship. We referred to a mix of broader social structures and individual dispositions that had an influence on the entrepreneurship. Although we did not refer it in this way in our report, the *habitus* of the entrepreneur (his/her individual and environmental conditions) in Bourdieu's terms, is an important aspect to study when trying to understand the conditions in which an individual turns into self-employment and entrepreneurship to survive in a deprived and diverse neighbourhood. We did not, however, define 'success' in terms of economic performance, although we noticed that some entrepreneurs have slightly better economic performance than the others. *Self-fulfilment seekers* were among the most economically successful entrepreneurs in our sample, whereas *resilient survivors* struggled the most financially. Among the *societal change seekers*, however, economic performances differed considerably with some entrepreneurs continuously growing their enterprises while some were forced to give up their business idea. What mattered for the conditions that turned diversity of the neighbourhood into the advantage for the economic performance of individuals was the combination of certain individual and neighbourhood characteristics as summarised below. What is very interesting to underline here is that a neighbourhood like Jane-Finch (suburban, deprived, marginalised, etc) may not offer conditions to entrepreneurs to economically succeed but it may provide the conditions to generate, activate, and highlight individual creativity, survival or social skills thanks to the hyper-diverse and intersected characteristics (not only in terms of ethnic diversity but also in terms of lifestyle, activities and actions) to become resilient to the spatial, social and economic limitations.

*Individual conditions* that positively affect entrepreneurship included educational levels, previous work experiences and personal dispositions. We also highlighted individual's motivation with respect to knowledge, skills and personality traits of entrepreneurs in that respect (Segal et al., 2005). Knowledge and skills, education as well as work experiences that enabled entrepreneurs to have access to larger amounts of capital put *self-fulfilment seekers* into more advantageous positions. The individual dispositions encompassed qualities and characteristics such as entrepreneurial drives, pro-activeness, and a broad outlook beyond the entrepreneur's immediate living environment. For many *societal change seekers*, who often lacked previous work experiences and came from disadvantaged backgrounds, these characteristics turned out to be crucial for their entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, the embeddedness in strong social networks emerged as exerting significant influence on the success of entrepreneurs. Social networks in our sample provided, for instance, familiarity, information and

knowledge of running a business, as well as emotional and financial support. From a perspective of 'hyper-diversity', the diverse personal backgrounds of entrepreneurs proved to be beneficial with regards to factors including but not limited to countries of origin, ethnic backgrounds, gender and religious affiliations. *Personal diversity*, in this sense, can be connected to the awareness of market gaps, the provision of entrepreneurial opportunities and contacts for transnational business deals or collaborations.

*Societal change seekers* who are young, dynamic and better educated individuals, were able to make use of strong community recognition and availability of formal business organisations in the area although they moved on the social ladder mainly based on their individual skills like creativity, innovation and risk-taking. For them diversity in the neighbourhood matters directly. They seek recognition of their social entrepreneurship approach to change the dynamics in the neighbourhood that limit the social mobility of people, such as disadvantaged and marginalised position of the neighbourhood and its stigmatisation. For *self-fulfilment seekers*, who are more conservative when it comes to risk-taking or creativity, diversity of the neighbourhood seems to matter more indirectly as they profit from organised community support as a result of diversity in the area. The *resilient survivors*, who resemble the classic forms of small scale ethnic entrepreneurship, the neighbourhood diversity only supports their daily survival but they usually face the most disadvantages in the neighbourhood as well (competition, financial limitations of scale, location, etc).

*Neighbourhood conditions* that enabled individuals or groups to strengthen their creativity and enhance their economic performance were primarily linked to the provision of opportunity structures. The extensive use and influence of organised entrepreneurship support in our sample highlights the importance of providing residents in deprived neighbourhoods with the options to attend respective programmes and initiatives. The disadvantageous physical circumstances in Jane-Finch, like lacking commercial core of the neighbourhood, which negatively affect local business start-ups, illustrate the need to offer small, affordable office and retail space to strengthen local entrepreneurship. Although entrepreneurs and individuals have found the way in this area that lacks social and commercial space (Galanakis, 2015; Tasan-Kok, 2015), systematic spatial interventions are necessary to recognise the current community and individual efforts and turn them into the advantage of the neighbourhood. Moreover, arrangements outside the formal institutional context play a vital role in providing opportunities, such as the active encouragement and support of newcomers offered by the Jane-Finch community shopping mall, especially for *resilient survivors* who seemed less prone to make use of support provided by non-governmental and community organisations. Benefits of *neighbourhood diversity* for entrepreneurship include the inspiration for and knowledge of potentially successful services and products, the provision of a broad customer base, and acquisition of skills applicable to business such as navigating among people with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, it can cause increased awareness of social differences and connected injustices, affecting both the entrepreneur's goals and company culture.

Nevertheless, it cannot be neglected that entrepreneurs coming from or working in deprived neighbourhoods experience challenges, for example with regards to stigmatisation or the low purchasing power of the surrounding population. Entrepreneurs exhibited a strong inclination to support and improve their original community, but operating in a market beyond their neighbourhood largely determined their financial success. We also found that social networks and social similarity to other entrepreneurs outweighed cooperation based on physical proximity, and that many entrepreneurs left their immediate environment to take part in entrepreneurship support programmes elsewhere. In Jane-Finch, social, economic and spatial contexts including factors such as income

inequality, racialisation and stigmatisation cause many inhabitants to remain and have networks only within the neighbourhood's boundaries. Thus, in our sample individual dispositions, such as being driven, courageous and self-confident to leave Jane-Finch, were more decisive over successful entrepreneurial performance than neighbourhood factors.

## 6.2 Policy recommendations

Our respondents indicated clear recommendations for the policy makers as discussed in detail in section 5.4. This includes *increasing entrepreneurship education and support; improving existing entrepreneurship programmes; and facilitating access to capital*. On the basis of these, and the general conclusions summarised above, we can suggest that *organised entrepreneurship support* at the neighbourhood level is fundamental to strengthen neighbourhood conditions and to outbalance the strong preponderance of individual conditions as being decisive over entrepreneurial success. Our respondents repeatedly indicated the feelings of marginalisation, insufficient funding and support programmes for entrepreneurship in Jane-Finch. An environment has to be created which paves the way to entrepreneurship not only for those with the required predispositions, but also for individuals lacking the skills, characteristics and personal networks to succeed. Increasing levels of entrepreneurship, in turn, might strengthen the cycle of individuals from diverse and deprived areas to turn towards more social forms of entrepreneurship, reinvesting back into their communities and encouraging others to do the same, in order to achieve longer term developments.

More explicitly, our policy recommendations are to:

- i) Recognise non-traditional forms of entrepreneurship and remove narrow target groups;
- ii) Consider context-specific needs of entrepreneurs in deprived neighbourhoods and give communities a voice in the creation of entrepreneurship policies;
- iii) Address constraints to finance for (potential) entrepreneurs from lower socio-economic backgrounds or without credit history;
- iv) Provide technical assistance, entrepreneurship training and education directly in Jane-Finch, and support entrepreneurial programmes operating at the neighbourhood scale;
- v) Tackle the limiting spatial conditions in Jane-Finch, for instance by designating affordable commercial and office spaces to new start-ups and micro-enterprises, or by establishing shared workspaces and a community entrepreneurship hub.

Moreover, as this report repeatedly underlined, recognition and respect from the community for the entrepreneur's work, and the societal contributions of the enterprise are very important motivation factors for entrepreneurs in a deprived neighbourhood like Jane-Finch. Another important policy recommendation is, thus, to increase the motivation at the neighbourhood level with special support programs to increase recognition of the social achievements of entrepreneurs in Jane-Finch. As mentioned in several parts of the report we came across with several entrepreneurs who had social targets beyond personal financial gains. Aiming to set a good example for the neighbourhood youth, and to share their experiences, although in a very minimal scale these individuals contribute to the neighbourhood's well-being. Support programs to recognise their efforts and to invite more entrepreneurs to share their experiences would definitely contribute to the innovation and creativity in the neighbourhood.

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## Appendix 1: List of interviewed persons

### *Entrepreneurs and Store Managers*

Interviewee	Age Group	Gender	Information on enterprise	Information on entrepreneur
R1	25-30	M	Non-profit sector, no employees	First generation, born in Ghana, Canadian nationality, college education
R2	60-65	M	Public health sector, ten employees	Black Canadian, Canadian nationality, university education
R3	30-35	M	Media sector, no employees	Second generation, Vietnamese background, Canadian nationality, university education
R4	30-35	F	Financial service sector (manager), no employees	Indian background, Canadian nationality, college education
R5	55-60	F	Retail sector, seven employees	First generation, Indian background, secondary school education
R6	25-30	F	Retail sector (manager), four employees	First generation, born in India, Indian nationality, university education
R7	30-35	F	Construction sector, no employees	Second generation, Jamaican background, Canadian nationality, college education
R8	55-60	M	Media sector, no employees	White Canadian, Canadian nationality, university education
R9	30-35	F	Telecommunications sector, one employee	Second generation, Caribbean background, Canadian nationality, university education
R10	65-70	M	Retail sector, no employees	First generation, born in Jamaica, Canadian nationality, college education
R11	65-70	F	Wholesale sector, ten employees	First generation, former Yugoslavian background, college education
R12	45-50	M	Media sector, no employees	First generation (refugee), born in El Salvador, El Salvadorian nationality, university education
R12	45-50	M	Media sector, fifteen employees	First generation (refugee), born in El Salvador, Canadian nationality, university education
R14	55-60	M	Tourism sector, nine employees	First generation (refugee), born in Somalia, Canadian nationality, college education
R15	65-70	F	Food sector, informal work, no employees	First generation (refugee), born in Somalia, Canadian nationality, secondary school education
R16	35-40	F	Food sector, informal work, no employees	First generation, born in Mexico, Mexican nationality
R17	20.25	M	Retail sector (manager), four employees	Indian background
R18	30-35	M	Beauty sector, eight employees	Canadian nationality, college education

R19	30-35	F	Fashion and media sectors, no employees	Second generation, Jamaican background, Canadian nationality, university education
R20	50-55	F	Fashion sector, four employees (in Jamaica)	First generation, born in Jamaica, Canadian nationality, college education
R21	55-60	F	Automobile sector, fifteen employees	Argentinian family background, Canadian nationality
R22	30-35	M	Media and music sector, no employees	First generation, born in Grenada, Canadian nationality
R23	20-25	M	Retail sector, ten employees	Second generation, Jamaican background, Canadian nationality, college education
R24	25-30	M	Information technology, no employees	White Canadian, Canadian nationality
R25	30-35	M	Media sector, no employees	Second generation, Trinidad Tobago and Guyanese background, Canadian nationality
R26	25-30	M	Non-profit sector, no employees	Second generation, Nigerian background, Canadian nationality
R27	30-35	M	Automobile service sector, twelve employees	Jamaican background, Canadian nationality, university education
R28	40-45	F	Retail sector, three employees	Italian background, Canadian nationality

*Additional interviews with entrepreneurs who did not sign the consent forms (and therefore were not numbered with R category and quoted directly in the report):*

- 29. Restaurant owner, female, with Mexican background
- 30. Store owner, female, with Southeast Asian background
- 31. Store owner, female, with Somali background
- 32. Store owner with Indian background
- 33. Store owner, male, with Vietnamese background
- 34. Store owner, male, with Indian background

*Additional conversations with entrepreneurs but no official interview:*

- 35. Social entrepreneur from Jane-Finch, female, with Jamaican background
- 36. Social entrepreneur, female, associated to the ‘Social Innovation Hub’ at *Brown College*
- 37. Social entrepreneur, female, associated to the ‘Social Innovation Hub’ at *Brown College*
- 38. Social entrepreneur, male, associated to the ‘Social Innovation Hub’ at *Brown College*
- 39. Social entrepreneur, male, associated to the ‘Social Innovation Hub’ at *Brown College*

*Additional Informants*

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
R40	Community Sector	<i>Black Creek Micro-Credit Programme</i>
R41	Community Sector	<i>Black Creek Micro-Credit Programme</i>
R42	Community Sector	<i>Youth Unlimited – Toronto YFC</i>
R43	Other	<i>RBC Bank</i>
R44	Other	<i>Jane-Finch Mall</i>
R45	Policy Maker	<i>Tower Renewal Programme, City of Toronto</i>
R46	Policy Maker	<i>Tower Renewal Programme, City of Toronto</i>
R47	Community Sector	<i>Access Community Capital Fund</i>
R48	Community Sector	<i>United Way Toronto</i>
R49	Policy Maker	<i>Toronto Region Board of Trade</i>
R50	Other	<i>Researcher on neighbourhood-based local economic development, University of Toronto</i>

*Additional conversations with other informants but no official interview:*

- 51. Professor involved with social entrepreneurship
- 52. Professor involved with social entrepreneurship

**Appendix 2: Impressions from Jane-Finch**



Photo 1: Intersection Jane Street and Finch Avenue. *Source: Author*



Photo 2: Apartment Blocks and Open Green Space in Jane-Finch. *Source: Author*



Photo 3: Inside Jane-Finch Shopping Mall. *Source: Author*



Photo 4: Strip Mall in Jane-Finch. *Source: Author*