

PRACTICES IN TENANT

RADICAL CARE

ORGANIZING

**"THIS SYSTEM
WAS NOT
MADE FOR US"**

THE CASE OF THE
WEST BROADWAY TENANTS COMMITTEE

Erasmus Mundus Master of Urban Studies [4CITIES]

Thesis by: Madeline Mesich

Supervisor: Prof. Andrés Walliser

Second Reader: Joshua Grigsby, MSc.

Date of Submission: 1 September 2025



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Abstract

A global housing crisis reveals deep-seated inequalities where access to adequate housing is shaped by systemic forces including colonial dispossession and racialized poverty. Winnipeg, the city with the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada, exemplifies these structural injustices, where settler-colonial practices and neoliberal housing policies produce widespread housing precarity and homelessness. This thesis investigates the West Broadway Tenants Committee (WBTC), a grassroots tenant-led organizing group in Winnipeg, examining how it practices radical care as a form of collective resistance to housing injustice. Drawing on feminist care ethics through a radical care framework and participatory research methods of systems mapping and zine making, this study centers tenant's lived experiences and organizing practices. As a result, ways in which radical care operates as a survival strategy and political practice are highlighted. This research contributes new insights into how tenant organizing enacts care to challenge systems of power, build solidarity, and envision alternative urban futures. Findings underscore the significance of community led, care-based resistance in addressing complex housing challenges.

Keywords: housing crisis, radical care, tenant organizing, settler colonialism, systems thinking, feminist theory, Winnipeg

Acknowledgment

As a settler who lived and conducted research on Turtle Island, the land we now call Canada, I first acknowledge my privilege and illegitimacy of my place in this country. This research takes place in Winnipeg, which is located on ancestral lands: Treaty One Territory, traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. It is vital to recognize that the ongoing impacts of colonialism, such as dispossession from land and systemic discrimination, disproportionately impact Indigenous peoples in Canada and globally. Therefore, I do not pretend to thank the caretakers of this land for their hospitality, instead I acknowledge their solidarity and continued resistance to ongoing processes of settler colonialism.

Any discussion of housing justice and tenant organizing must confront these colonial legacies and both support and center Indigenous-led approaches to housing, self-determination, and community well-being. This research is centered in a commitment to reconciliation, justice, and the right to housing for all, grounded in respect for the original caretakers of this land. In this thesis, the word Indigenous will be used to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, who are the first inhabitants of this land. The term Indigenous peoples, instead of Indigenous people, is used as it recognizes the diversity and sovereignty of multiple distinct nations, affirms collective rights, and aligns with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Positionality

The motivation for this research stems from my personal experiences and observations in the affordable housing and houselessness* sectors in Canada. Working at an emergency shelter in my hometown in Canada allowed me to interact with a very large variety of people experiencing houselessness, showing how colonialism and neoliberal housing development intersect and create systemic failures for vulnerable people. I faced an above guideline increase in 2019, motivating my involvement in organizing with the o West Broadway Tenant's Committee (WBTC). Subsequent work with the West Broadway Community Organization (WBCO), and research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for persons experiencing houselessness in Winnipeg allowed me to further consider the workings of Winnipeg's housing system with a critical lens. As both a researcher and former WBTC organizer, I was neither neutral nor detached from this project. In order to intentionally draw on this experience, I integrate personal reflections into this work. This process is further explained in *Chapter 4* of this thesis.

*The term "houselessness" is used in this thesis over "homelessness" because it shifts the focus from individual deficiency to structural conditions and acknowledges that "home" is more than just a physical structure.

Thank You

This work would not have been possible with the generosity of so many people. Thank you to the WBCO and WBTC for providing so much of your time, effort, resources, and care for this project. Your commitment to working for better housing in West Broadway and beyond is truly admirable, and your dedication to learning to create a systems map, and creativity in the *Root Problems* zine was vital to this work. Thank you to everyone who agreed to be interviewed, despite very busy schedules. Your personal and professional insights on this topic offered insights into the immense network of housing support in Winnipeg. Thank you also to my supervisor, Andrés Walliser, who offered ongoing encouragement and support in this project. Finally, thank you to all those who live, work, and make West Broadway the place it is. My love for this neighbourhood and all it offers has been a driving force behind this project and hopefully more projects to come.

For all tenants struggling in this system. May we one day live in the future we dream of.

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List of Acronyms

AGI	Above guideline rent increase
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, or Person of Colour
CCPA	Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
CFS	Child and Family Services
CLT	Community land trust
EHW	End Homelessness Winnipeg
NDP	New Democratic Party
NHS	National Housing Strategy
NHSA	National Housing Strategy Act
PC	Progressive Conservative Party
PIC	Prison industrial complex
RGI	Rent-geared-to-income
R2HC	Right to Housing Coalition
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
RTB	Residential Tenancies Board
RTOS	Residential Tenancies Order System
TLC	Tenant Landlord Cooperation
TRCC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
WBCO	West Broadway Community Organization
WBTC	West Broadway Tenant's Commit

1. Introduction

Today, over 1.6 billion people worldwide lack adequate housing, illustrating the scale of a global housing crisis (Purton, 2024). Evidence of this crisis is manifested everywhere, from escalating costs of living, rising houselessness*, evictions and foreclosures, to persistent patterns of segregation, displacement, and urban poverty (Gallent, 2019; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). In 2022, 44% of Canadian citizens expressed deep concern with their household's ability to afford housing, with Indigenous peoples nearly three times as likely to experience houselessness (Government of Canada, 2023). These stark inequalities are especially visible in Winnipeg, home to the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada, where Indigenous peoples remain vastly overrepresented among those experiencing houselessness and housing precarity (Brandon, 2022; End Homelessness Winnipeg [EHW], 2025; Statistics Canada, 2021a). Such patterns are direct outcomes of ongoing colonial dispossession and systemic racism.

However, this crisis is far from new. Friedrich Engels (1872) discussed how the chronic housing shortage is an inherent and universal feature of capitalist societies. The widespread framing of the issue as a *housing crisis* suggests an unexpected emergency demanding an urgent response - yet housing systems that have perpetuated inequality for over a century should not be described as a crisis or malfunction, but as products of structural inequality and economic exploitation (Gallent, 2019; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). The housing crisis is framed as a *wicked problem*, which necessitates complex, multi-level solutions (Gallent, 2019; Stroth, 2015; Zellner & Campbell, 2015). Additionally, the language used to describe crises profoundly shapes how the problem is addressed: Tranjan (2023) argues that what is often framed as a global housing crisis is actually the deliberate functioning of housing that prioritizes landlord's wealth accumulation over tenants' well-being. Hence, real solutions must be political, working to rebalance power dynamics, rather than temporary, technical solutions that dominate policy debates.

Internationally, the *right to housing* is enshrined in human rights law providing an important framework for housing justice (Leijten & De Bel, 2020; UN, 1948, 1966, 1992). However, policy responses to the housing crisis often focus on *technical fixes*, such as increasing supplies of housing, without addressing root causes or the lived experiences of those most affected (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). Tenant and urban social movements have emerged to fill this void, emerging as vital actors building networks of solidarity and care (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024). Housing and organizing are increasingly theorized as an infrastructure of *care*, exploring how housing is provided, experienced, and understood within overlapping systems of power (Fields et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024). Feminist care ethics present care as an embodied, relational, practice that is essential for social reproduction and wellbeing - not just through individual acts, but webs that sustain bodies, environments, and communities (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). By framing the housing crisis as an expected consequence of commodification, this research explores how tenant organizing resists and challenges the harmful logics and wicked problem of current housing systems through practices of radical care.

Winnipeg, the capital city of Manitoba with a population of 750,000, serves as the location for this case study, foregrounding how the *West Broadway Tenants Committee* (WBTC), a small-scale,

tenant-led movement, operates as a dynamic and imaginative force founded on concepts of justice, care, and solidarity (Neigh, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021a; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). This thesis centers settler-colonial, racial capitalist logics as foundational forces shaping access to housing, capital, and property, linking these dynamics to broader neoliberal governance regimes and top down provisions of care (Dorries et al., 2022; Fluri et al., 2022; Thompson, 2024). Through engagement with everyday struggles and institutional frameworks, this project illuminates tenant responses grounded in radical care, using a framework provided by Thompson (2024). It centers a critical, systemic analysis of the WBTC through this lens, providing new insights on the under-researched dynamics of how tenant organizing groups practice radical care. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the following research question:

How does the West Broadway Tenants Committee practice radical care in resisting housing injustice?

To answer the research question, **Chapter 2** contextualizes this case historically, from settler colonial foundations of Winnipeg's housing system to the contemporary work of the WBTC. **Chapter 3** reviews literature on care ethics within housing and tenant organizing scholarship, frames the housing crisis as a wicked problem, and presents the radical care framework. **Chapter 4** details methodologies used, including participatory systems mapping, zine making, and narrative interviews. **Chapter 5** presents and analyzes empirical findings, positing the WBTC as a source of insight on the ways in which tenant organizing groups practice radical care in their work. The thesis concludes in **Chapter 6** with remarks on this project's contributions to theory and practice and directions for future research.

2. Case History

Experiences of housing in Canada are intimately shaped by ongoing practices of settler colonialism - a persistent and violent system of power where colonizers and their descendants occupy land and displace Indigenous peoples from their territories (Barker et al., 2016; Dorries et al., 2022; Tomiak, 2017; Tranjan, 2023). Because the settlers never leave, settler colonialism operates as a permanent *structure of incompleteness*, continuously generating new strategies to erase Indigenous presence, dispossess indigenous peoples, and entrench colonial power (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019). A powerful site of this colonial work is through the regulation and control of property and housing (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019; Nejad et al., 2019; Tomiak, 2017). Indigenous peoples in Canada remain disproportionately impacted by houselessness and housing precarity, consequences that are inseparable from this ongoing violence and practices of systemic racism (Bernas et al., 2023; Dorries et al., 2022; EHW, 2025; Nejad et al., 2019; Tomiak, 2017; Vipond & Greyeyes, 2022).

In this context, tenant struggles in Winnipeg must be understood as resisting an intertwined system of racialized inequalities, structural erasure, and dispossession, enforced through current housing policies and reliance on the private market to meet housing needs (Dorries, 2019; Nejad et al., 2019; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Tenant struggles therefore have the opportunity to challenge not only injustices in market driven housing, but also logics that normalize displacement in ongoing settler colonial projects (Nejad et al., 2019; Tranjan, 2023). *Settler moves to innocence* are strategies

that attempt to alleviate settler guilt and compliance, often obscure ongoing harms of colonization by framing dispossession as either inevitable or consensual - thereby allowing settler colonial projects to maintain themselves by masking the violent theft of land and displacement of Indigenous peoples (Thompson, 2024; Tuck & Yang, 2012). To challenge and decenter this dominant narrative, this case history places Indigenous dispossession and settler colonialism at the root of contemporary housing crises in Canada. This case history traces how historical injustices, policy shifts, and ongoing displacement produce housing precarity in Winnipeg, and responses to it.

2.1 Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Dispossession in Canada

Understanding the context of housing and land rights in Canada requires centering the ongoing effects of settler colonialism, which underpin poverty based issues being faced by Indigenous peoples today (Barker et al., 2016; Dorries, 2019; Nejad et al., 2019; Tomiak, 2017). While the history of Indigenous displacement in Canada is complex and extensive, this section offers a focused overview of the colonial processes that continue to shape experiences of housing insecurity and dispossession today. Central to these histories is the concept of *terra nullis* (nobody's land), a legal doctrine used to justify colonial expansion in Canada, and the forced removal of Indigenous people from ancestral lands (Barker et al., 2016; Thistle, 2017; Tomiak, 2017). This enabled the transformation of land from a communal resource into a commodity, which laid the groundwork for modern housing systems (Barker et al., 2016; Thistle, 2017).

Settler Colonial Practices in Canada

Between the 18th and 20th century, the Canadian government signed 11 *Numbered Treaties* including Indigenous Nations and Canadian settlers, including Treaty One, where Winnipeg is located (Barker et al., 2016; Thistle, 2017). While these treaties were intended to establish binding relationships, promising land reserves, health care, and education in exchange for territorial land, treaty obligations have been largely unfulfilled by the Canadian government, reflecting capitalist state priorities that undermine Indigenous sovereignty (Thistle, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRCC] 2015). Indigenous communities were confined to much smaller reserves than were promised, which were later the inspiration for the South African Apartheid System (Thistle, 2017). While Indigenous peoples viewed these treaties as agreements and protective measures against ongoing encroachments on traditional land, settler government's viewed treaties as a means to secure territory, and assimilate or eradicate Indigenous peoples (Dorries et al., 2022; Thistle, 2017).

Legislative frameworks like the 1876 *Indian Act* entrenched colonial control through policies that actively displaced Indigenous peoples and promoted cultural erasure (Thistle, 2017). Among the most devastating were the mandatory residential schools, opened and operated by various churches from the 19th century up until 1996, with the explicit mandate to 'kill the Indian in the child' through cultural assimilation (Thistle, 2017; TRC, 2015). An estimated 150,000 Indigenous children attended these schools, enduring emotional, physical and sexual abuse, with thousands of children never returning home (City of Winnipeg, 2021c; TRC, 2015). In the 1960s, the *60s Scoop* also removed many Indigenous children from their homes, or "scooped", by Child and Family

Services (CFS), and adopted by non-Indigenous families in Canada and the United States, furthering the goal of Indigenous erasure (Gaetz, 2013; Thistle, 2017; Vipond & Greyeyes, 2022). These practices have been foundational in the displacement of Indigenous persons from their lands, producing intergenerational trauma, and resulting in housing precarity, and houselessness that is disproportionately experienced by Indigenous peoples today (Thistle, 2017).

In 1971, Canada was the first country to adopt a *multicultural policy*, under Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government (Wood & Gilbert, 2005). This policy enshrined a national identity of diversity in the constitution, with results such as overarching positive attitudes towards immigration, when compared to other Western democracies (Kymlicka, 2021). However, this policy was never meant to protect Indigenous rights - ironic given the treaty relations on which Canada was founded (Eisenberg, 2019). Indigenous treaty rights are classified as different from those protected by multiculturalism, and while the Canadian state advertises its recognition and protection of these rights, provision of basic necessities is often ignored (Eisenberg, 2019). Such practices show contradictions in Canada's image as a multicultural country.

Resistance and Land

Practices of resistance in Winnipeg is deeply rooted in struggles over land, colonialism, and power. The province itself emerged from the *Red River Rebellion* (1869-1870), led by Métis leader Louis Riel (D. Smith, 2023; Toews, 2018). Riel's mobilization challenged the Canadian government's purchase of Métis land without consultation, establishing a provisional government that negotiated the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, which promised language protections, land rights, and other freedoms - many of which have been undermined or broken (D. Smith, 2023; Toews, 2018). Riel's legacy continues to represent Indigenous and Métis political resistance against settler colonial dispossession. The often-hidden story of *Rooster Town* illustrates another example of urban resistance and colonial violence. This was Métis community located on Winnipeg's southern edge, until its violent and forced eviction in 1959, driven by the desirability of the land with rising suburban property values (Nejad et al., 2019; D. Smith, 2023; Toews, 2018). Families were displaced through coercive cash incentives in order to build a shopping centre and a public school. This was justified though settler moves to innocent: fear, racist stereotypes, and the continuation of settler-colonial strategies of Indigenous elimination and displacement from 'desirable' areas (Nejad et al., 2019; D. Smith, 2023; Toews, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). In 2017, Indigenous land defenders, local residents, and other activists and environmentalists created the *Rooster Town Blockade* to protect the Parker Wetlands from private housing development by Gem Equities, centering both environmental justice and Indigenous sovereignty (Dark, 2019). This direct action challenged private property systems by asserting that Treaty One First Nations and the Manitoba Métis Federation must be consulted on the use of this land, and that the value of the wetlands lay in more than its potential for commodification (Dark, 2019). Despite legal and governmental repercussions, including lawsuits against the members of the blockade, this resistance sparked public debate about land use and unjust urban development.

2.1.1 Lasting and Ongoing Harms

Intergenerational trauma from generations of abuse continue to reverberate in Indigenous communities across Canada, resulting in major disparities in education and health as well as overrepresentation in rates of houselessness and criminal justice system, among others (City of Winnipeg, 2021c; TRC, 2015). These legacies are compounded by the continued impact of imposed forms of family breakdown through the CFS system, often justified due to class position (Gaetz, 2013; Vipond & Greyeyes, 2022). Cycles of forced removal from families often lead to devastating outcomes for apprehended youth, including experiences of houselessness, premature death, suicide, sexual exploitation, disappearance, murder, or intergenerational continuation of child apprehensions (EHW, 2025; Gaetz, 2013). As a result, Indigenous persons face these issues differently than other minority groups, as demonstrated in a study by Nejad et al. (2019, p. 419):

Traditional kinship ties reach far into the place's history and are more variegated than what can be fit within the jurisdictional boundaries of the city. Participants emphasized that original occupancy is a precept distinguishing Indigenous peoples from other minority groups and recognition of that prior occupancy [...] Yet most participants believed that Indigenous peoples are the most invisible in the city, in spite of it being the centre of the Métis homeland and a highly significant centre for Treaty One territory.

Systemic racism and intergenerational distrust of healthcare, and other state institutions, further constrain Indigenous people's access to vital services, while intersecting factors of poverty, race, and systemic marginalization exacerbate experiences of housing insecurity (EHW 2025; Grift & Cooper, 2020; Khare et al., 2020). This insecurity intersects with disproportionate criminalization, where survival practices such as panhandling or public urination are treated as criminal offenses, perpetuating cycles of incarceration, community breakdown, and houselessness (Herring et al., 2020; Thistle, 2017). In Winnipeg, this criminalization has included clearing people from encampments and bus shelters and imposing fines during the COVID-19 pandemic, actions reflective of longer-standing, targeted, punitive strategies generally targeting Black, Indigenous, or Persons of Colour (BIPOC) living in extreme poverty (Grabish, 2022; MacLean, 2023). These trends were particularly intensified by the *Progressive Conservative* (PC) Harper government's (2006-2015) "tough on crime" policies, which reduced rehabilitative supports and expanded incarceration, thereby intensifying housing instability upon release (Comack, 2019; EHW 2025; Khare et al., 2020). Although recent governments have rhetorically distanced themselves from these approaches, substantive policy shifts remain limited.

2.1.2 Reconciliation and Post-Colonialism?

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRCC) was established in 2008 to address Canada's colonial history and the harms of the residential school system (TRC, 2015). In conjunction with this, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology for the federal government's role in residential schools, alongside financial settlements to survivors as compensation for the harms endured. However, this gesture has been widely critiqued as largely symbolic, failing to address structural roots of colonial violence (Kymlicka, 2021; TRC, 2015). The TRCC's

extensive research and collection of survivor testimonies culminated in a report published in 2015, including 94 *Calls to Action* directed at the Canadian Government and institutions (TRC, 2015). However, implementation of these calls have been repeatedly questioned, with only 15 completed and scholars noting that they are often only symbolically referenced in policy, rather than applied in ways that meaningfully challenge ongoing structures of settler colonialism (CBC News, 2025; Seriola, 2023).

These tensions unfold in a broader political environment that is increasingly at odds with Canada's long standing, but increasingly destabilized, image as a moderate and inclusive state that stands apart from rising right-wing authoritarianism seen elsewhere (Wegenschimmel & McLaughlin, 2024). The rise of right-wing extremism, from the introduction of the *People's Party* of Canada in 2019 to the *Freedom Convoy* protests of 2022, has come with more overt hostility towards Indigenous peoples and racialized immigrants, reflecting deep-seated anxieties of a cultural takeover, similar to rhetoric seen in parts of Europe and the United States (Wegenschimmel & McLaughlin, 2024). As Crosby (2021) argues, such political polarization is rooted in the institutions of white supremacy and settler colonialism on which Canada was built. As a consequence, Canada's self-constructed inclusive, multicultural identity, which positions the country as exceptional, stands in stark contrast to the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and racialized immigrants in urban contexts.

2.2 Housing Policy Context

A guiding concept in housing policy worldwide is the right to housing, repeatedly reaffirmed in international human rights treaties, *United Nations* (UN) resolutions, and declarations such as Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) in 1948, and *Article 11* the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Biss & Raza, 2021; Leijten & De Bel, 2020; United Nations (UN), 1948, 1966). In 1991, the *UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (CESCR) further clarified the scope of this right, outlining standards for adequate housing that include protection from arbitrary home damage, protection from forcible evictions, non-interference with privacy and family life, and the right to choose a place to live and enjoy freedom of movement (UN, 1992). Building through nearly three decades of advocacy, Canada passed the *National Housing Strategy Act* (NHSA) in 2019, embedding the right to housing into federal legislation and affirming the country's obligation to realize housing as a fundamental human right through the *National Housing Strategy* (NHS) (Biss & Raza, 2021; Government of Canada, 2024). While the NHSA established a much needed framework for accountability, its implementation has been widely critiqued as relying on rights-based approaches within a neoliberal policy context that remains uneven, symbolic, and insufficiently regulated (Biss & Raza, 2021; MacKinnon, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Both the CESCR and implementation of the NHSA provide important standards for policy evaluation, establishing an internationally and nationally recognized commitment to housing rights that serves as the backdrop for the evolution of housing policy in Canada. However, the gap between these commitments and their implementation suggests limitations of rights-based housing approaches within unregulated, neoliberal settings.

2.2.1 The Neoliberal Restructuring of Housing in Canada

Canada's current housing landscape is the result of substantial transformations under neoliberal governance. Only 4% of housing in Canada is social or non-profit housing, a sharp decline from levels seen in the 1960s and 1970s (D. Smith, 2023; Tranjan, 2023). At this time, the welfare state had invested high amounts of funds into social housing as a response to the post World War Two housing shortage, with 10% of newly built housing between 1965 and 1973 being non-market units (D. Smith, 2023; Tranjan, 2023). However, the 1980s marked a turning point with federal retreat from social housing, devolution of responsibilities to the provinces, and deep funding cuts driven by new market-driven priorities (Bernas et al., 2023; J. Evans et al., 2023). This neoliberal restructuring developed alongside the broader global shifts: the collapse of colonial empires, the rise of new nation states, and protecting market relations over public need through bodies like the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank (Slobodian, 2018). By design, neoliberalism prioritizes market efficiency over social equity, undermining the capacity of the state to address collective needs and deepening housing inequality (Harvey, 2007; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Slobodian, 2018; Tranjan, 2023). This has greatly impacted the housing landscape in Canada.

Federal policy responses in Canada have reflected these shifts. The *National Houselessness Initiative*, launched in 1999, used a disaster management framework to provide millions in funding to important, short term shelter solutions - however, there was little focus on addressing root causes of lack of adequate housing and houselessness (W. Evans et al., 2021; Gaetz, 2010). Today, the federal government plays a role in funding social housing programs, while provincial and territorial governments manage the delivery of these programs (Government of Canada, 2024). Yet Canada's social housing system does not adequately meet the demands, with long wait lists and substandard living conditions, forcing many low-income people to rely on the private rental market subsidized by temporary government programs (Bernas et al., 2023; Government of Canada, 2024; MacKinnon, 2024). This highlights the reactionary nature of housing policy in neoliberal contexts, offering temporary, crisis-oriented responses to systemic problems.

A Country of Homeownership

There is nothing wrong with owning or wanting to own a home, if that's your thing. It only becomes a problem when society ascribes certain qualities to people who own while holding unflattering views about those who don't. That's the case in Canada, where homeownership is the hallmark of a successful middle-class life, and renting is perceived as a temporary state in one's life, a stepping stone to something better. (Tranjan, 2023, p. 28)

Across Canada, there is a strong cultural and moral emphasis on homeownership even among lower income groups, shaped by historical patterns of suburban expansion and narratives of personal security (D. Smith, 2023; Tranjan, 2023). This context not only creates challenges in building momentum in advocacy for non-market, collective models, but also reinforces mortgage debt and further channels public policy incentives towards supporting ownership, rather than stable, affordable rental housing (D. Smith, 2023; Tranjan, 2023). These dynamics underpin Canada's current housing strategy. The NHS largely relies on strategies such as subsidizing developers to

produce *affordable* units, defined as 80% of market rent, usually for 20-year periods, or providing private household subsidies (Government of Canada, 2024). These strategies are criticized as failing to address structural profit extraction in the rental market, and for privileging developer interests over tenants instead of strong national rent regulations or large-scale investment in non-market housing (MacKinnon, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Critics argue that this reframes the housing crisis as an inevitable outcome that is blameless and intrinsic to market relations, thereby absolving any responsibility and reinforcing a system that channels public money to private developers instead of confronting the root causes of affordable rents, such as the state's allowance of high charges by property owners (Biss & Raza, 2021; MacKinnon, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Such approaches perpetuate commodification, failing to challenge the homeownership, profit-driven motives of Canada's housing system.

Comparative Note: Denmark's "Ghetto" Law

These Canadian issues reflect broader neoliberal challenges seen elsewhere. For example, Denmark's "Ghetto" Law classifies certain non-profit housing areas, often with large numbers of racialized immigrants, as "ghettos" - based on criteria like unemployment, crime, education, income, and non-Western backgrounds (Risager, 2023; Seemann, 2021). Despite official claims of promoting "social mix", the policy stigmatizes communities, enforces redevelopment, and displaces long-term residents. *Almen Modstand* is a tenant organizing group that started in 2018 and has supported public housing tenants in pushing against this policy (*Almen Modstand*, n.d.; Risager, 2023). Plans to sell housing blocks in housing estates like *Mjølnerparken* in Copenhagen, have led to both lawsuits and grassroots resistance, highlighting how market logics and territorial stigmatization impacting racialized persons underpins contemporary housing policy, even in so called progressive welfare states (Risager, 2023; Söderberg, 2024). See *Appendix A* for a zine made on this topic, titled *The Problem with Denmark's "Ghetto Law"*.

Figure 1: Afskaf "Ghettoloven" (Abolish the "Ghetto Law") Protest
(December 1, 2024 - Photograph taken by the author)



2.2.2 Manitoba: Rent Control and other Tenant Protections

Manitoba is one of only five provinces in Canada that has rent regulations beyond annual increase limitations (Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, 2025). Rent regulation is administered through the *Manitoba Residential Tenancies Branch* (RTB), the provincial body responsible for mediating landlord-tenant relations under the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA), first instituted in 1992 (Province of Manitoba, 2025a, 2025b). The RTA applies to most rental units and sets the framework for tenancy rights and obligations, while the complaints based RTB provides information, holds hearings, and issues binding orders through the *Residential Tenancy Orders System* (RTOS) (Bernas et al., 2023; Province of Manitoba, 2018, 2025a).

Manitoba's rent regulations are some of the strongest in Canada, with guidelines beyond an annual rent increase limit (Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, 2025). The RTA operates through three main mechanisms: the annual rent increase guidelines, above-guideline increases (AGIs), and rent discounts. In 2025, the annual increase guideline in Manitoba was set at 1.7%, however, landlords can apply for AGIs to cover costs for renovations of capital improvements (Emms et al., 2025). In practice, these requests are overwhelmingly approved, creating an effective loophole that weakens rent control, often in attempts to improve exchange rather than use value (Emms et al., 2025). Similarly, rent discounts, often presented as move-in incentives or after AGIs, can be withdrawn at any time, without classification as an official rent increase, further undermining tenant security (Emms et al., 2025). Despite Canada's obligations to the right to housing under the CESCRR and the NHS, these responsibilities are largely not reflected in Manitoba housing policy.

The evolution of the creation of these regulations cannot be separated from their provincial political contexts. From 1988 to 1999, PC Premier Gary Filmon pursued austerity measures through budget cuts and privatization, resulting in major losses of social and cooperative housing (Distasio et al., 2020). The RTA emerged amid this broader Canada-wide shift towards disinvestment from public housing stock and reliance on the private markets to provide affordable housing (Bernas et al., 2023). Although the RTA claims that housing is a matter of public interest, it has been criticized as failing to achieve this goal, through loopholes such as 20-year exemptions for buildings constructed after 2005 and reregulation once rents surpass \$1615 per month (Bernas et al., 2023).

From 1999 to 2016, under *New Democratic Party* (NDP) Premiers Gary Doer and Greg Selinger, the province of Manitoba expanded public services through programs such as *Neighbourhoods Alive!* (focusing on community renewal), *At Home/Chez Soi* (a *Housing First* pilot program between 2008 and 2012), and *HOMEWorks!* (between 2009 and 2014, resulting in 1,500 social housing units) - among others (Bernas et al., 2023; Distasio et al., 2014, 2020). The implementation of *Rent Assist* (2014) provided much needed financial relief to low-income families leasing private units, but, like federal subsidy models, is critiqued as channelling public funds into the private rental market rather than expanding non-market housing (Bernas et al., 2023).

In 2016, the PCs returned to power under Premiers Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson, prioritizing market-oriented policies and austerity (Grift & Cooper, 2020). Most notable was the selling of hundreds of public and social housing units, with only 80 new social housing units built

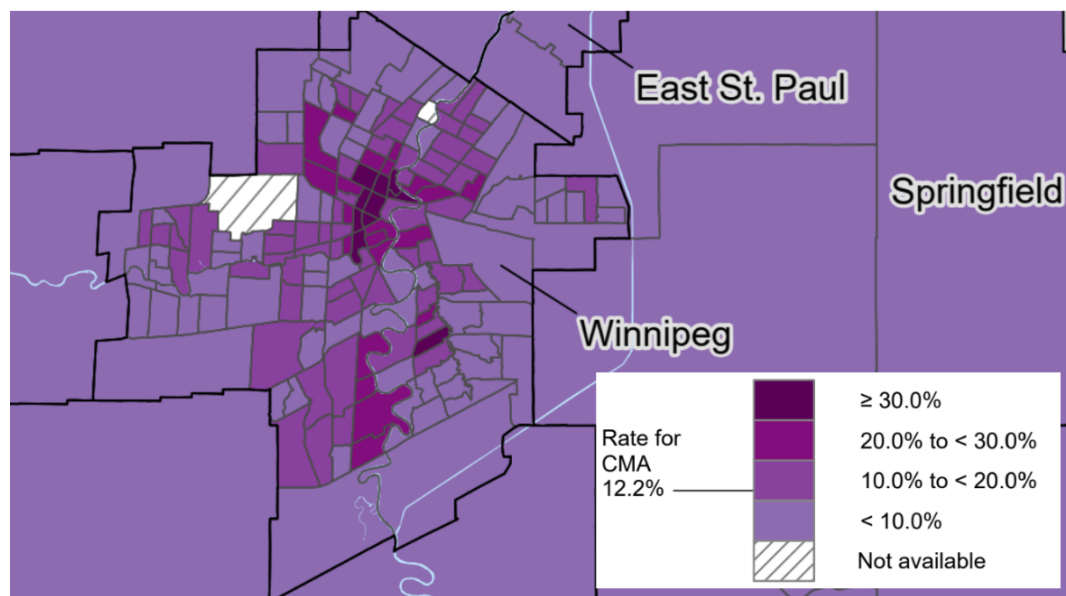
provincially between 2016 and 2022, resulting in a major net loss (Bernas et al., 2023). With the ongoing reduction of non-market units, *Rent Assist* became the primary support for low-income tenants amid shrinking availability of affordable or non-market units (Bernas et al., 2023).

Since 2023, Wab Kinew's NDP government has been in power. Kinew is the first Indigenous Premier in Manitoba, and has committed to prioritizing affordable housing, social equity, and urban renewal (MacKinnon, 2024). While these commitments mark a hopeful direction, critics emphasize that current programs are insufficient in addressing systemic housing issues and providing secure, affordable housing for the province's most vulnerable residents (MacKinnon, 2024).

2.3 The Need for the WBTC: Winnipeg's Housing Landscape

Low-income tenants in Winnipeg are facing significant housing challenges. As shown in *Figure 2*, a considerable proportion of the population in the Winnipeg census metropolitan area (CMA) fall below the after-tax low-income measure, with poverty geographically concentrated in the downtown Inner-City area.

Figure 2: Population Below the After-Tax Low-Income Measure in 2020 (%)
(Statistics Canada, 2022, image cropped by author)



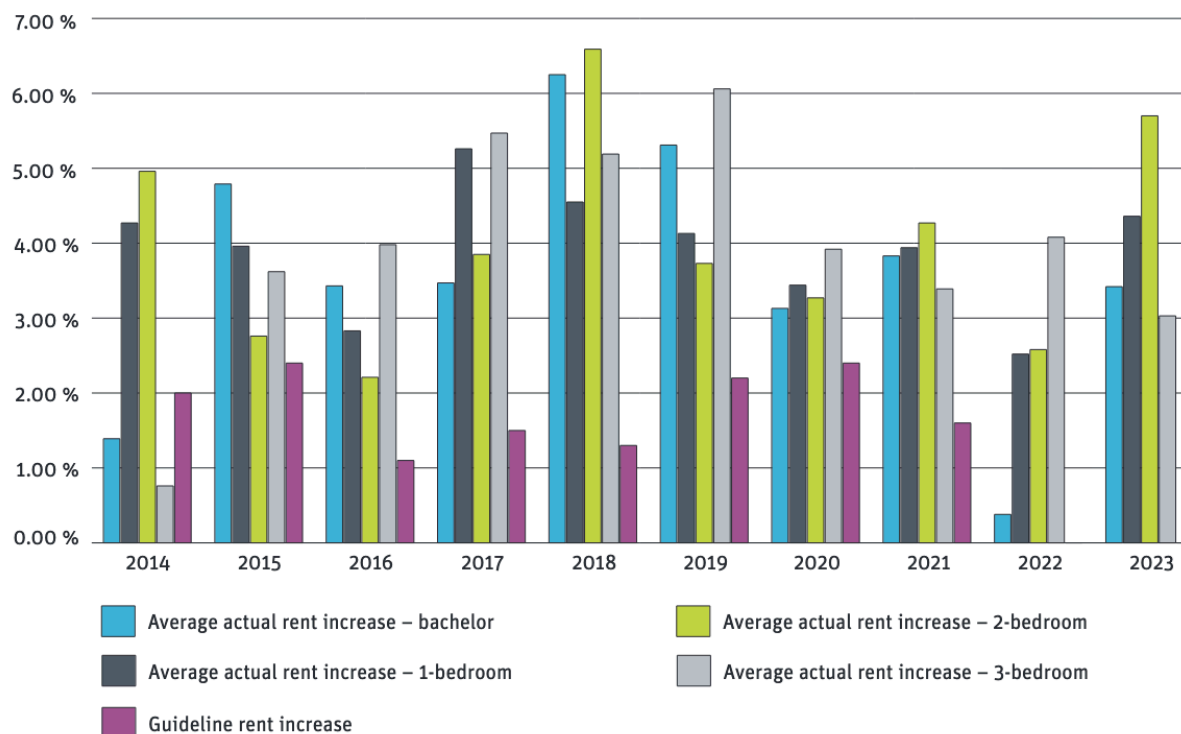
This poverty is reflected in the proportion of residents affected by *core housing need*, defined as spending 30% or more of before-tax income on median local rent (Statistics Canada, 2021b), a marker is generally used to calculate the cost of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) rents in non-market housing as 30% of the households income (MacKinnon, 2024). Spatial concentrations of poverty signal widespread housing unaffordability in Winnipeg's Inner-City neighbourhoods, seen in *Table 1* as disproportionately affecting those in the lowest income quintiles (Q1 and Q2):

Table 1: Proportion of Winnipeg Renter Household Income Spent on Rent and Utilities
(Canada Rental Housing Index, 2021)

Name	Household Income Range	Quartile	Average Income	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4-Bed	All Units
Winnipeg	\$0 to \$30,800	Q1	\$19,400	35%	55%	35%	66%	79%	55%
	\$ 30,800 to \$51,600	Q2	\$41,160	25%	31%	25%	32%	33%	31%
	\$ 51,600 to \$80,000	Q3	\$64,700	17%	22%	17%	24%	24%	22%
	\$ 80,000 +	Q4	\$118,700	11%	14%	11%	15%	15%	14%
		All	\$61,000	24%	22%	24%	20%	19%	22%

Additionally, average rents in Winnipeg have risen at higher rates than the rent guideline nearly every year since 2014, as shown in *Figure 3*.

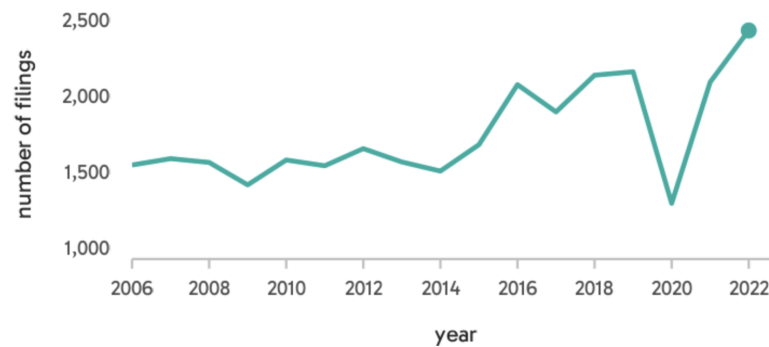
Figure 3: AGIs vs. Average Rent Increases in Winnipeg (2014-2023)
(Emms et al., 2025, p. 13)



Note Actual average rent increases vs. rent guideline increases for units in row and apartment structures of three units and over, 2014-2023. Note that in 2022 and 2023 the Guideline rent increase was set at 0%. (Data: Statistics Canada, 2024; Residential Tenancies Branch, 2024)

Evictions in Winnipeg have also been rising steadily, as illustrated in *Figure 4*, with landlord applications for evictions increasing significantly since 2006, with a drop in 2020 due to the eviction ban during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing to heightened precarity and insecurity within the Winnipeg rental market.

Figure 4: Landlord Applications for Eviction in Winnipeg
(LEMR Housing Monitor, 2024)

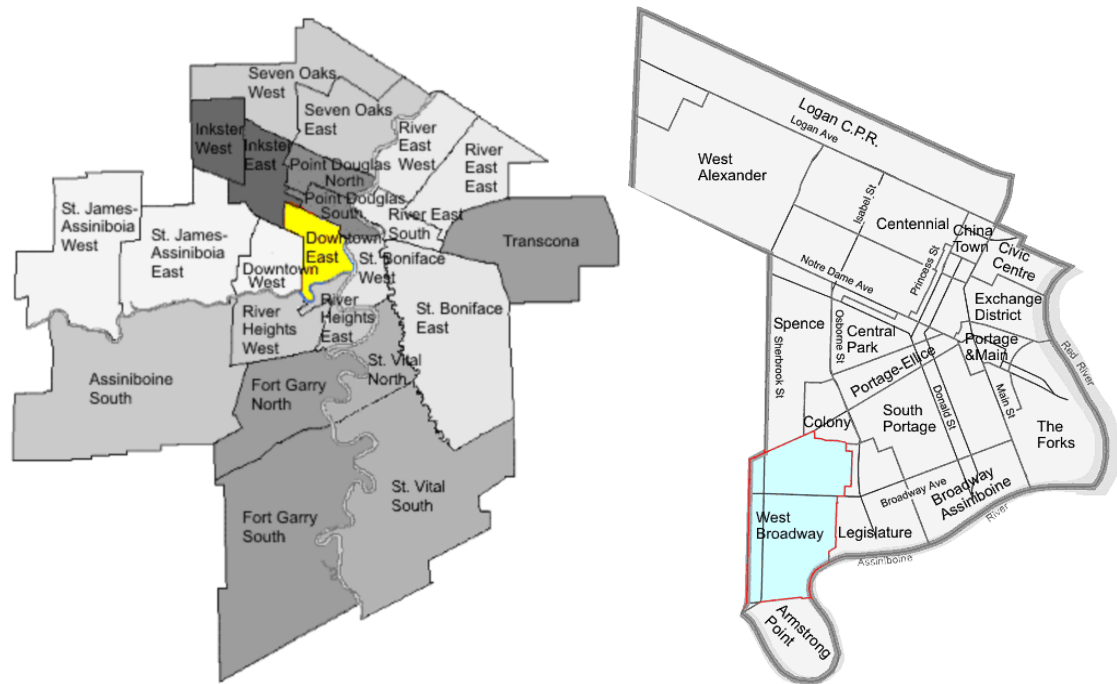


When considering the spectrum of housing insecurity, houselessness can be thought of as the extreme manifestation of housing insecurity. In Winnipeg, organization End Homelessness Winnipeg's (EHW) *Street Census* collects information on people experiencing houselessness over a multi-day survey, offering insight on disproportionate experiences of housing security. The 2024 Street Census shows that houselessness in Winnipeg is the highest it has been since the counts started in 2015, with more than 2,400 identified as experiencing houselessness in November, 2024 – actual numbers of which are thought to be much higher due to hidden houselessness, such as couch surfing (Baxter, 2025; EHW 2025). Of those experiencing houselessness in Winnipeg, 80 % of people experiencing houselessness identify as Indigenous (a population comprising about 12% of the city), and 12% identify as newcomers, mostly from India, Philippines, and Nigeria (a population that comprises about 20% of the city) (Baxter, 2025; EHW, 2025; Government of Canada, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2021a). While the struggles and possible higher numbers of hidden houselessness of newcomers in Winnipeg and Canada should not be minimized, the 2022 Census suggests that these comparably low numbers are a positive reflection of the work being done to settle newcomers in the city (Brandon, 2022). The 2024 Street Census shows that nearly 70% of those consulted have been experiencing houselessness for more than six months prior to the survey, which is classified as chronic houselessness, and most commonly begins at age 18. Additionally, nearly 50% of those surveyed were in the CFS system as youth, suggesting that this is a prominent pathway into houselessness, with nearly 30% experiencing incarceration in the year prior to the survey. When asked what would help people find permanent, stable housing, the top five answers were more affordable housing (82%), a housing subsidy or benefit (71%), more money from employment income assistance (EIA) or Manitoba Supports for Persons with Disabilities (68%), more mental health supports (66%), and more housing with supports, such as healthcare, mental health, and addition support services (58%). 93% of respondents surveyed expressed interest in obtaining housing.

2.3.1 West Broadway: The Site of Change and Resistance

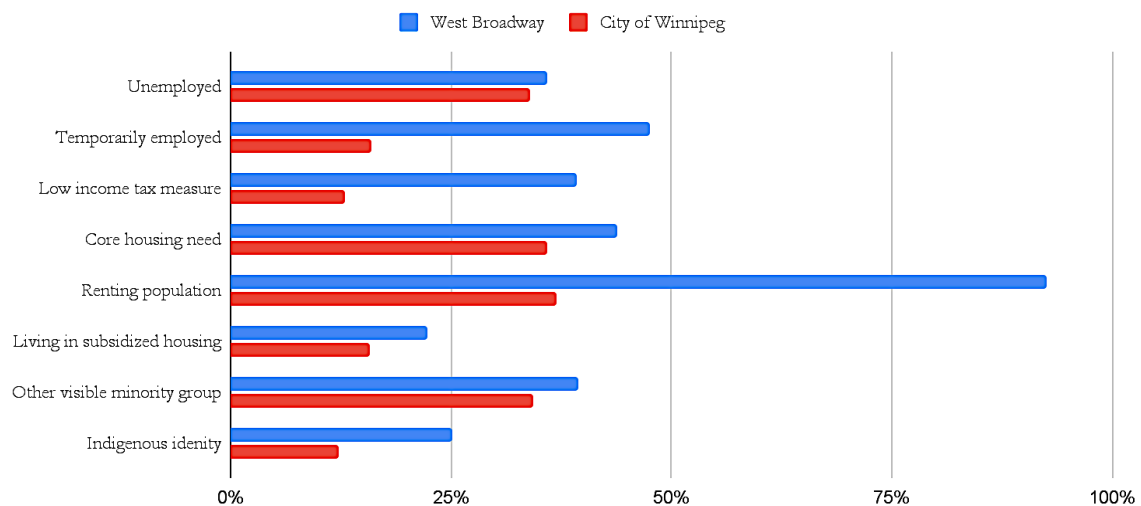
The work conducted in this thesis takes place in the West Broadway neighbourhood, as shown in *Figure 5*, home to approximately 5,500 residents and located in the Downtown East Neighbourhood Cluster of Winnipeg.

Figure 5: The Inner-City and West Broadway
(City of Winnipeg, 2021a, 2021b, images highlighted by author)



Like other Inner-City neighbourhoods, West Broadway is economically disadvantaged - with an average annual after-tax income of about \$32,000 compared to approximately \$50,000 in the wider city (City of Winnipeg, 2021b). However, income figures alone do not capture the complexity of factors of wellbeing faced in this neighbourhood, as illustrated in *Figure 6*.

Figure 6: Precarity in West Broadway
(Information from: City of Winnipeg, 2021b) – figure created by the author.



While unemployment rates are comparable to the rest of the city, West Broadway has a significantly higher proportion of people who are temporarily employed, demonstrating lower rates of income security and need. The renting population is notably larger in West Broadway, with only a marginally higher share living in subsidized housing. Finally, although the visible minority population is relatively similar to the rest of the city, West Broadway has a much higher Indigenous population. Taken together, these demographics depict a community made of predominantly precariously employed, precariously housed tenants with a strong Indigenous presence - a convergence of factors that heighten housing vulnerability.

Distasio et al.'s (2020) report *Divided Prairie Neighbourhood: West Broadway's Story of Hope, Challenge, and Resiliency*, offers an overview of the history and current dynamics of this neighbourhood. West Broadway was a popular middle-class area in the early 20th century, due to its architecturally beautiful, detached homes and proximity to the downtown. However, postwar urban shifts transformed it into a mixed-income and later predominantly low-income area marked by deteriorating housing, poverty, and rising crime. By the 1960s, West Broadway was characterized as a disadvantaged neighbourhood, with low housing ownership rates, high unemployment, and high Indigenous and immigrant populations. The amalgamation of the metropolitan Winnipeg municipalities in 1972 led to a significant period of tri-level government intervention in the early 1980s. From this, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, West Broadway experienced an explosion of grassroots services and initiatives. The *West Broadway Community Organization* (WBCO, formally *West Broadway Development Corporation*) was established in 1997, which has since provided critical services related to housing, safety, and green space. Other programs initiated at this time that continue today include food security organization *Good Food Club*, family and youth services like *Wolseley Family Place*, mental health and outreach through *Nine Circles* and *Resource Assistance for Youth*, Indigenous-led education program *Little Red Spirit*, and community economic development activities through *Assiniboine Credit Union*, among many others – all designed to foster stability, reduce exclusion, and build collective resilience against displacement and exclusion.

On the topic of housing, an important initiative at this time was the *Tenant Landlord Cooperation* (TLC), a community-based program that brought tenants and landlords together to cooperate and build positive relationships. The TLC facilitated communication, dispute resolution, and developed standards for good building management. Landlords actively renovated deteriorating properties, improving safety, and living conditions. The TLC helped prevent evictions, and fostered community cohesion by encouraging cooperation and accountability amid pressures of housing commodification. The first iteration of the program ended in 2008 due to funding and momentum issues, but now exists through the *North End Community Renewal Corporation*, helping mediate landlord conflict and providing direct advocacy to tenants to ensure the protection of rights and responsibilities (Distasio et al., 2020; North End Community Renewal Corporation, n.d.)

Starting in the mid 2000s, West Broadway has been undergoing a slow process of gentrification which has decreased affordability in the neighbourhood and accelerated the commodification of housing (Distasio et al., 2020; Logan & Vachon, 2008; Silver, 2006). However, amid these challenges, West Broadway, like other Inner-City neighbourhoods, has demonstrated strong community resilience, named as limiting complete gentrification (Distasio et al., 2020). A

contemporary example of such resistance is the WBCO creation of the independent WBTC in 2017, which supports tenants in both West Broadway and other Inner-City neighbourhoods (Distasio et al., 2020; Emms et al., 2025; Neigh, 2021). The role of the WBTC will be further discussed later in this section. Just months ago, in December 2024, the WBCO started the process of establishing a *Community Land Trust* (CLT) in West Broadway through a participatory, community grounded process - serving as an example of community based models that continue to resist housing commodification (West Broadway Community Organization [WBCO] 2024). These efforts demonstrate a continuum of resistance-based initiatives in West Broadway. The following section will explore tenant organizing as one of such practices.

2.3.2 Tenant Organizing as Resistance

A famous example of collective resistance in Canadian history is the 1919 *Winnipeg General Strike*. Over 35,000 workers went on strike for six weeks, demanding better wages, improved working conditions, and union recognition, and exposed class divisions with culmination in the dramatic events on ‘Bloody Saturday’, where police violently confronted and suppressed demonstrators protesting downtown (D. Smith, 2023; Toews, 2018; Tomchuk, 2019). These histories and practices of resistance, from ongoing Indigenous resistance to the WBTC, shape activist landscapes in Winnipeg. Resistance specifically through tenant organizing will be further explored in this section.

Tenant Organizing in Canada

The histories of tenant organizing across Canada are deeply intertwined with working class resistance, starting in the 19th century. These movements significantly shaped provincial housing landscapes, introducing rent regulations and public housing programs. Tranjan’s (2023) book *The Tenant Class* examines the state of housing in Canada, conceptualizing landlord-tenant relationships as class conflict. He provides early examples of tenant organizing in Canada including the *Tenant League* in Prince Edward Island in the 1860s, which challenged absentee landlords and successfully pushed for the abolition of land tenure policies; movements in the 1930s in Nova Scotia that engaged with labour-led campaigns for non-market housing alternatives; tenants in the 1960s in Montreal who organized against authoritarian governance and surveillance in public housing, challenging broader urban renewal agendas; and tenant groups in the 1970s in British Columbia that mobilized a province wide movement for rent control and collective bargaining rights.

Today, tenant organizing across the country continues to respond to rising rents, evictions, and the rising influence of corporate landlords. Tranjan (2023) emphasizes the agency and power in these groups, providing contemporary examples of tenant organizing across the country. In Toronto, groups like *Parkdale Organize* have organized successful large-scale rent strikes and eviction defenses in buildings owned by large predatory landlords like *MetCap* (Parkdale Organize, 2022). In Vancouver, organizations like the *Vancouver Tenants Union* have challenged renovictions and pushed for better rent control (Vancouver Tenants Union, 2019). In Montreal, the *Comité d’action de Parc-Extension* and other groups have mobilized against gentrification, displacement, and police violence (Comité d’action de Parc-Extension, 2019). Tranjan (2023) examines how groups across

the country have increasingly connected resisting commodification to confronting settler colonial foundations of Canada's housing systems, as seen through recognizing that Indigenous sovereignty and land restitution is vital in the fight for housing justice. Tenant organizers continuing to build collective power, despite continued state neglect, police violence, and philanthropic co-optations - imagining and enacting new ways of living that prioritize dignity, community control, and the decommodifications of homes.

Comparative Note: Spain's Right to Housing Demonstration

Neoliberal austerity has intensified housing precarity worldwide, sparking increased tenant resistance. Spain, a country that has been long reliant on family-based welfare and weak stake housing support, saw housing insecurity widen after the 2008 financial crisis (Fraser, 2017; Piñeira et al., 2023). In this context, *Sindicato de Inquilinas e Inquilinos de Madrid*, a Madrid Tenant's Union, emerged in 2017, organizing access to legal support, and direct actions against rising rents and speculation (Martínez & Gil, 2024; *Sindicato de Inquilinas e Inquilinos de Madrid*, n.d.). Their efforts recently culminated in the massive Right to Housing protest on April 5, 2025, with an estimated 150,000 participants in Madrid and marches in 39 other cities across Spain (Guillen, 2025), demonstrating widespread demand for housing justice.

Figure 7: Acabemos con el Negocio de la Vivienda (Let's End the Housing Business) Protest (April 5, 2025 - Photograph taken by the author)



Tenant Organizing in Winnipeg

The WBTC, founded in 2017 through the WBCO, stands as the sole formal tenant committee in Winnipeg, but is embedded in a large network of grassroots support (Neigh, 2021; West Broadway Tenants Committee [WBTC], n.d.). Born from the need to fill gaps in tenant protections and advocacy, the WBTC organizes around an array of immediate housing related issues, such as landlord neglect and harassment, maintenance issues, and AGIs (Distasio et al., 2020; Emms et al., 2025; Neigh, 2021; Tranjan, 2023). This includes collaboration with the *Right to Housing Coalition* (R2HC) in Manitoba, a provincial alliance pushing for housing policy reforms across all levels of

government (Emms et al., 2025; Right to Housing Coalition, 2012). The core strategies used by the WBTC is through education, workshops, and advocacy - often through collectively challenging AGIs at the RTB. They host community events, engage with relevant issues on social media, and offer information and support to individuals or buildings facing housing related issues (WBTC n.d.). Examples of WBTC actions include the response to a building water shutoff, where tenants organized demands for repairs and prepared to file claims collectively, and helping tenants in a building challenge an AGI through coordinated resistance, gathering media attention (Rosen, 2021; Waldman, 2022). Beyond supporting tenants in similar struggles, the WBTC increasingly engages in systemic advocacy alongside the R2HC. Together, these movements work towards both immediate and long-term resistance to housing commodification.

3. Literature Review

This literature review provides a critical framework for understanding the commodification of housing and need for tenant organizing in urban contexts. Drawing on *feminist care ethics*, it begins by positioning housing within broader scholarly debates on care, where shelter is not only a material necessity but also a fundamental site of social reproduction and collective well-being (Power & Mee, 2020). As the welfare states' abilities to act as guarantors of housing have been progressively eroded under neoliberal restructurings, a widening *care-gap* has emerged, defined as a mismatch between the needs of tenants and insufficient provision of affordable housing and protections (Fraser, 2016, 2017). This gap is exacerbated by processes of commodification, gentrification, and the racialized dynamics of capitalist urbanization, which work together to dispossess tenants and criminalize those who are houseless (Herring et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). Against this backdrop, scholars of radical care conceptualize care as a collective and political practice (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Thompson, 2024). In the housing field, radical care framing highlights tenant organizing as not only a resistance to commodification, but as an operationalization of care that insists on housing as a right rather than an asset (Fields et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024). This review therefore situates tenant struggles within the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism, and explores why systemic changes, rather than incremental technical fixes, are essential for housing justice (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). In doing so, it identifies a research gap: while feminist care geographies examine care in terms of responsibility and needs, there is insufficient critical engagement with radical care as a collective political practice through tenant organizing as a strategy for survival and systemic change in landscapes of housing injustice.

3.1 Feminist Care Ethics

Care is theorized as being central to our lives and societies.

In the most general sense, care is a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web. (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40).

Five dimensions of care are further identified: *caring about*, or recognizing that care is needed; *caring for*, or taking responsibility for providing this care; *caregiving*, or doing the work of providing care; *care receiving*, or being on the receiving side of the care act; and *caring with*, or working towards equalizing care responsibilities (Tronto, 2013, 2015). The study of care by geographers is relatively recent, generally studying spaces and relationships of *care labour*, often performed by women, racialized groups, and low-income people who are under paid and undervalued in hierarchical relationships (Thompson, 2024). In this section, care in housing studies and the theory of radical care will be explored.

3.1.1 Care in Housing Studies

The welfare state, historically a key provider of care infrastructure, can be understood through Esping-Andersen's (1990) *welfare regime typologies*, expanded by Razavi's (2007) *care diamond* framework, which emphasizes the role of non-profit and community sectors in the provision of care. Considering the failures in housing systems as undermining societal obligations to secure the means for a dignified life expands understandings of care beyond domestic, waged and unwaged labour to include infrastructural and political activism, such as mutual aid, eviction resistance, and tenant organizing (Fields et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020).

Care labour describes practices and labour involving care, while *politics of care* describes the ways that this work is valued, understood, and built into social structures (Tronto, 2013). Considering feminist care ethics in processes of housing reveals the dual nature of the home: both as a key space that can offer care through ensuring safety and stability, as well as a place in which individual and collective care practices are enacted (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024). Failures in housing provision, such as unaffordability, eviction, and neglect, are therefore failures of care in housing at both social and political levels (Power & Mee, 2020).

3.1.2 Radical Care Theory and Practice

Feminist geographers of care have increasingly been pushed to engage with a wider range of theoretical perspectives, including postcolonial approaches (de la Bellacasa, 2012; Raghuram, 2016). One way to address limitations in this body of work is to bring care into conversations of *radical care*, rooted in Black feminist praxis and disability justice movements (Fields et al., 2024; Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Nadasen, 2023; Thompson, 2024).

Radical care extends feminist care ethics, towards collective and political responses to structural inequalities, systemic injustices, and failures of neoliberal institutions, working to create infrastructures and spaces of support and resistance amid conditions of precarity, austerity, and state violence (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Nadasen, 2023). Radical care has re-emerged as a topic of discussion and practice following moments of crisis - for example in the aftermath of the 2016 US election and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Nadasen, 2023). The focus of feminist care ethics versus radical care can be viewed in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Feminist Care Ethics and Radical Care

(Information from: Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Nadasen, 2023; Thompson, 2024; Tronto, 2013, 2015) – figure created by the author.

	Feminist Care Ethics	Radical Care
Goal	Primarily ethical and philosophical: Focus on revaluing care in moral reasoning and social relations.	Explicitly political and anti-capitalist: Seeks to actively dismantle oppressive systems.
Scale	Relational: Prioritises individual and interpersonal bonds.	Collective and infrastructural: Aims to transform systems and institutions.
Focus	Critiques patriarchy and the undervaluation of care work.	Critiques co-optation of care by neoliberal, patriarchal, (etc.) systems as ways of reproducing oppressive dynamics within “caring” structures.
Method	Contextual moral reasoning, recognition of affect/emotion, relational responsibility.	Prefigurative politics, mutual aid, solidarity, survival strategies, collective organizing.
Critique	Potential reinforcement of traditional gender roles, or insufficient attention to wider political contexts.	Acknowledges risk that “radical” care can be weaponized by reactionary forces.

While radical care offers a powerful framework in which to centre collective responses to systemic violence, care and radical care are not inherently liberatory or grounded in social justice. These concepts are situated in, and therefore shaped by, structural forces of state violence, capitalism, colonialism, racism, and more (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). When care is reliant on empathy through “relatable” suffering, groups with less power outside of the dominant may be deemed less “worthy” of care, therefore reinforcing systemic oppressions (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). Without constant collective reflectivity and political commitments to challenging these enduring systems of oppression, radical care risks upholding systems of exclusion and reinforcing hierarchies, even while using progressive language. Therefore, genuine radical care requires ongoing attention and commitment to structural analysis that moves beyond empathy or moral obligation, instead centering on justice, solidarity, and transformation.

3.2 The Housing Crisis: A Wicked Problem

Issues faced by tenants are rooted in urgent, material conditions of everyday life, such as inadequate maintenance, unaffordable rents, and ongoing threats of eviction (Tranjan, 2023). These realities reflect deep class-based struggles and the immediate pressures shaping tenants lived experiences. Recent scholarship has increasingly applied complexity science and systems thinking to understand housing crises as *wicked problems* - a concept introduced by Rittel and Webber (1973) to describe

social issues resistant to definitive solutions. This critical framing highlights the persistent and multifaceted nature of housing crises within neoliberal urban political economies.

The housing problem, or rather, the problem of accessing housing under current conditions, defies singular, definitive solutions, being shaped by competing, often contradictory, ideologies that regard housing as either a financial investment or a fundamental human right (Gallent, 2019; Gibb & Marsh, 2019; Tranjan, 2023). Consequently, efforts to solve systemic housing insecurities rarely happen - as ongoing market speculation, capital flows, and structural injustices continue to reproduce exclusion and instability (Aalbers, 2016; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). Solutions to housing challenges are inherently contested, judged by political and moral lenses that often privilege the interests of homeowners, landlords and investors, over renters (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023).

Systems thinking brings a crucial perspective in understanding and solving wicked problems, offering tools for conceptualizing how structures of power produce patterns of housing commodification both globally and locally (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Gaetz & Buchnea, 2023; Gibb & Marsh, 2019; Petty & Leach, 2020). A key insight from this approach is that quick, superficial fixes to housing crises often fail, or cause unintended consequences. (Aalbers, 2016; August, 2022; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). Cox (1981) argues that technical, problem-solving approaches fail to question the origins of problems or consider alternative futures - thereby maintaining the status quo. For example, simply increasing the supply of housing rarely addresses the root causes of commodification or inequality (Slater, 2014; Tranjan, 2023). Factors leading to the ways in which the wickedness of housing crises are embedded in current housing system and their impacts will be explored next.

3.2.1 The Commodification of Housing and Land

Housing commodification, a term used frequently in this thesis, is the concept of housing, and the land it is on, being financial asset that is valued by its profit-generating potential through buying, selling, and investment, above all other uses (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). In Canada, processes of housing and land commodification is inseparable from colonial practices. Settler colonialism displaced Indigenous peoples from their lands, established private property regimes, and created rental markets (Coulthard, 2014; Tranjan, 2023). Indigenous peoples continue to experience land dispossession, spatial segregation, racialized poverty, and exclusion from adequate housing, often forced into stigmatized and neglected urban areas. Housing inequalities, such as displacement and evictions, are therefore not merely by-products of current economic forces, but explicit tools of racial capitalism and settler colonial projects working to erase BIPOC persons from urban spaces (Coulthard, 2014; Roy, 2017; Thompson, 2023). Therefore, modern housing and land commodification operates as a direct continuation of colonial practices.

Also important in global process of neoliberal restructuring is the *financialization of housing*, where global capital treats homes as tradeable assets detached from social use (Aalbers, 2016; August, 2022). Large-scale, corporate investments elevate housing prices without producing additional affordable units or improving living conditions, which reinforces wealth concentration and housing precarity

worldwide (Aalbers, 2016; August, 2022; UN-HRC, 2017). This process differs from commodification, by extending further into the realm of global capital flows, adding to amassed global concentrations of wealth (Aalbers, 2016).

Racial Capitalism

Racial capitalism, as theorized by Robinson (1983), reveals how capitalism is foundationally intertwined with racial hierarchies, whereby wealth and power accumulate through the exploitation of BIPOC persons. In the Canadian context, racial capitalism intersects with and reinforces settler colonialism, both of which uphold systems of territorial dispossession, white supremacy, and the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous peoples (Dorries et al., 2022; Fluri et al., 2022; Toews, 2018). Property and housing are key sites in which racial capitalism operates, as property ownership in settler colonial states is structurally racialized (Fields et al., 2024; Fluri et al., 2022; Thompson, 2024). Homeowners and landowners hold legally protected rights and the guarantee of the basic need of shelter, while those outside this group (disproportionately BIPOC persons) are excluded from these rights, and are therefore in positions of much higher vulnerability and at risk of displacement and houselessness, leading to criminalization (Dorries et al., 2022; Fluri et al., 2022; Vilenica et al., 2022).

Criminalization of Houselessness

The *criminalization of houselessness* must be understood within the broader system that connects racial capitalism within the *prison industrial complex* (PIC) (Herring et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). The PIC describes the interlocking network of institutions - including prisons, police, and private corporations - that profit from and perpetuate mass incarceration and social control (Gilmore, 2022; Vilenica et al., 2022). Law enforcement and punitive measures are used to police and remove unhoused people from public spaces, instead of addressing root causes of poverty, housing precarity, or mental health needs (Gaetz, 2010; Herring et al., 2020; Khare et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). This system not only expands incarceration, but also actively criminalizes acts of survival in social conditions like houselessness - such as sleeping, resting, eating, or sheltering oneself in public, and resulting in fines and criminal records as additional barriers to securing housing or employment (Herring et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). Such practices can be seen in the clearing of bus shelters being used as places to sleep in Winnipeg (Grabish, 2022; MacLean, 2023). The PIC therefore functions to uphold racial capitalism by protecting private property and capitalist interests, often on stolen Indigenous lands, through logics that criminalize survival.

3.2.2 Neoliberal Restructuring and Urban Inequalities

Neoliberal policy frameworks prioritize private property, developer and landlord profit, and investment opportunities over funding affordable, non-market housing (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). Shifts to neoliberalism, like in Canada in the 1980s, redefines the welfare state into a paradoxical actor: selectively providing care through funding targeted programs and initiatives, while also perpetuating structural inequalities through withdrawing from welfare provision and prioritization of profit (Aalbers, 2016; Bernas et al., 2023; Madden & Marcuse, 2016). These restructured urban governments then become the judge of who is deserving of care, reacting to crises

of housing insecurity through law and policy, while also reproducing systems that generate the crises in the first place (August, 2022; Tranjan, 2023).

Gentrification

A vivid example of the contradictions in neoliberal state care is the minimal regulation of rising housing commodification and uneven urban development, which concentrates wealth and privilege for some while perpetuating poverty and dispossession for others (Tranjan, 2023). *Gentrification*, a politically-loaded term coined by Glass (1964), refers to the class transformation of urban spaces, where poorer residents are displaced from urban areas as they are renewed or revitalized. This process is explained by *rent gap* theory, which describes how low-valued land attracts speculative investment and redevelopment (N. Smith, 1979).

Territorial Stigmatization

Gentrification processes often target areas with high racialized and lower-class populations (Kent-Stoll, 2020; López-Morales, 2019). This connects to the concept of *territorial stigmatization*, where the production of a negative reputation for an urban area marks it as undesirable, which can be used to justify commodification through gentrification (Risager, 2023). Slater (2014) argues that gentrification and disinvestment are not opposites, but that they are part of the large system of uneven development and capitalist urbanization. He states that poor, racialized neighbourhoods that are framed to be ‘in need of’ gentrification do not just lack capital, but also lack power, which connects to the stigmatization of these areas. Examining gentrification from a political lens as opposed to a moral lens helps to draw attention to the motivation behind these efforts.

False Choice Urbanism

Slater's (2014) concept of *false choice urbanism* relates directly to this dynamic by critiquing the dominant narrative that frames urban change as a binary between ‘good’ gentrification (seen as reinvestment) and ‘bad’ disinvestment (viewed as decay). He argues that this reductive framing obscures the deeper capitalist processes that drive uneven urban development, displacement, and social injustice, while legitimizing harmful policies that prioritize profit over community wellbeing.

3.2.3 The Result: The Crisis of Care in Capitalism

Logics of capitalism and care are largely at odds. Fraser (2016, 2017) explains how capitalism relies on unpaid care work: birthing and socializing children, caring for the old, maintaining households, building communities, and other forms of social cooperation. This labour is systematically undervalued, leading to a paradox which she refers to as the *crisis of care* - which, like the housing crisis, can be seen as a feature, not fault, of contemporary capitalism that results in recurring crises, including those in housing, healthcare, and food systems.

Historically, welfare states invested in and facilitated social services and infrastructure, including housing social (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Power & Mee, 2020). However, with shifts to neoliberal

models, many governments have cut back on these supports and shifted responsibility to the market which prioritize capital accumulation over social wellbeing (August, 2022; Harvey, 1989; Madden & Marcuse, 2016). Low amounts of social housing and absence of strong rent control can be understood as the failure of the state to provide care via housing - resulting in a *care gap*, or disconnect between social needs for care (Fraser, 2016; Thompson, 2024). In these conditions, communities and grassroots organizations are often left with no choice but to fill these gaps in service, for example, through mutual aid groups, advocacy networks, and in the case of housing, tenant associations which often are tasked with meeting huge needs in complex contexts, with very few resources or recognition (Fields et al., 2024; Fraser, 2016, 2017; Polanska et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024). Connecting the housing crisis to the larger crisis of care reveals how the failure to provide secure, affordable homes is also a failure of state care, with profound everyday impacts that add another layer to the wicked problem of the housing crisis (Gallent, 2019; Thompson, 2024). Responses and work that is done to fill this gap will be discussed next.

3.3 Resistance to the Housing Crisis

Tranjan (2023) insists that half-measures and technical fixes are inadequate in the fight for housing justice, saying that the structural oppression of vulnerable groups must be challenged, pushing the boundaries of what is considered possible. Tenant movements, like other urban social movements, work to directly to confront systemic oppression and refuse solutions that leave unjust structures intact (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). In this context, the concept of resistance can be used to examine how individuals and communities actively oppose and challenge dominant power structures that produce housing inequalities, displacement, and commodification.

Resistance is a theme in responses to housing injustice. Polanska's (2024) research on tenant organizing highlights the diverse tactics that tenants use to resist displacement and renovations (forced eviction due to rent hikes and renovations). Her work expands on the idea of resistance beyond protest and strike actions to include everyday, informal practices that contest landlord power and build collective strength. Tenants resist pressures of the housing crisis in many ways: through formal negotiation, delaying eviction, public accountability campaigns, knowledge sharing to challenge dominant narratives, cultivating identities, and more. These acts of resistance are described as demonstrate tenant agency and creativity within housing systems designed to individualize and marginalize. Simpson's (2017) work situates resistance within Indigenous frameworks of freedom, emphasizing that settler colonialism and capitalist commodification of land are inseparable. She argues that Indigenous resistance is not only about opposing dispossession, but also about actively reviving Indigenous ways of being, caring for land, and asserting sovereignty. This concept of resistance both includes refusal of colonial property relations, and the rebuilding of Indigenous social, political, and ecological systems as acts of freedom and resurgence. In work for housing justice, this centres on recognizing Indigenous land rights and sovereignty as foundational to any meaningful transformation (Thompson, 2024; Tomiak, 2017; Tranjan, 2023). Resistance to housing injustice is therefore multifaceted and interconnected, conceptualized both a reactive defence against precarity and a proactive site of community building and care.

3.3.2 Theoretical Framework: Radical Care in Housing Justice

Analyzing housing politics and tenant organizing practices through a radical care framework allows for more expansive and critical understandings of the housing landscape, centering responses that envision possibilities beyond constraints of colonial, racial capitalist housing systems (Thompson, 2024). *Radical care in housing justice*, as conceptualized by Thompson (2024), consists of three interconnected “pillars” used in her study to examine rent control policies, politics, and care practices in the housing justice and tenant organizing landscapes in Seattle and Vancouver. The pillars of this framework are presented below:

[F]irst, radical care analyses must engage with the role that structural hierarchies of power play in producing housing injustice, including those of settler colonialism and racial capitalism; second, the approach understands housing justice as relational and shaped by multiscalar care responses; and third, radical care offers a pathway for more expansive sociopolitical imaginaries and actions, that move beyond colonial racial capitalist limits of existing debates and actions around housing crises. (Thompson, 2024, pg. 781)

This framework provides the guide for analysis in this thesis, that not only explores how the WBTC resists commodification and neoliberal policy, but also how they envision and enact alternative forms of housing justice through radical care. These three pillars are further explained and connected to other literature below:

Engaging with Structural Power Hierarchies

Foundational to this research is a critical analysis of entrenched structure of power, including settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberalism. As Thompson (2024) argues, care is not only a practice but a politics that can be harnessed to resist, but also at times to reinforce, structures of dispossession and exclusion. The way that intersections of identity impact individual and community experiences in housing systems must therefore be considered. Crenshaw’s (1989) concept of *intersectionality* can be used to understand how different aspects of one’s identity shape experiences of housing precarity, and the politics of care and resistance. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, institutional care was implemented in many cities through rent freezes and eviction bans, when people with more resources were struggling. These measures functioned to stabilize markets and were eventually lifted, pushing those with fewer resources back into places of precarity. This happened in Winnipeg, with AGIs, often in low-income areas, being overwhelmingly approved during the COVID rent freeze, revealing how logics of care, when captured by neoliberal or state apparatuses, can reproduce rather than challenge core inequalities (Emms et al., 2025). These logics are deeply entwined with ideals of private property ownership and market-oriented housing policy, leading to the need for abolition perspectives in challenging structural power in housing systems (Gilmore, 2022; Herring et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022)

To interrogate these structures, this thesis draws on systems thinking as both a conceptual and participatory tool, used to examine the wicked problem of housing in Winnipeg as a complex, interacting set of forces. Systems thinking encourages identifying *leverage points*, strategic areas

where coordinated, sustained interventions can lead to meaningful, long-term change (Abson et al., 2017; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Meadows, 1999; Schöpke et al., 2024). Systems change is not a singular outcome, but an ongoing process of shifting the conditions that hold problems in place (Gaetz & Buchnea, 2023; Petty & Leach, 2020). When combined with a radical care framework, this approach highlights the need for coordinated, justice-oriented strategies that address the structural roots of power hierarchies in the fostering of collective care practices.

Relational and Multiscalar Dimensions

This pillar emphasizes that housing justice is produced through forces that are simultaneously structural and lived. Therefore, the displacement of tenants or rising rents it cannot be reduced simply to the tenants impacted, but also to the relationships that are disrupted by processes of dispossession, how communities work to fill care caps, and the scales at which these injustices operate and are contested (Thompson, 2024). From evictions on the neighbourhood level, to national and provincial policies privileging private property owners, the disinvestment in public housing, and the global financialization of real estate, this pillar helps link housing injustice in everyday struggles to broader political and economic processes.

Relational perspectives emphasize that housing is embedded in networks of care, support, and belonging that extend beyond individual households (De Gasperi & Walliser Martinez, 2024; de la Bellacasa, 2012; Thompson, 2024). Housing injustice under neoliberal regimes often intensifies isolation and precarity by framing housing security as an individual responsibility (Tranjan, 2023). In contrast, relational approaches foreground webs of relationships among individuals, families, communities, organizations, institutions, and beyond (de la Bellacasa, 2012; Thompson, 2024) (Thompson, 2024). Here, radical care expands beyond domestic or private settings, encompassing community infrastructure, mutual aid, collective action, and networks of solidarity that work to counteract the isolating and individualizing effects of neoliberal housing regimes.

In settler-colonial contexts such as Canada, it is essential to recognize that many Indigenous epistemologies of land and home have long centered relationality in ways that challenge Western notions of ownership and property (Simpson, 2017; Thistle, 2017; United Nations, 2007). While this thesis does not explicitly investigate Indigenous ways of knowing, some themes in the results, such as *connection*, *reciprocity*, and *responsibilities of care* resonate with these epistemologies. As an example, the worldview *Niw_hk_m_kanak* (All My Relations), is an ethical and belief system for many Indigenous cultures in central Canada (Chartrand, 2007). This reflects the interdependence and interconnectedness of all life forms, in which humans are positioned as caretakers rather than owners of land, all beings are recognized as equal, and home is inseparable from community, place, and ancestry (Chartrand, 2007; Thistle, 2017). Colonial practices of forced displacement severed these ties and produced enduring patterns of Indigenous dispossession and homelessness (Thistle, 2017). This overlap in understandings of relationality should not be read as result of this framework, but as a possible point of dialogue. Centering, but not claiming complete understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, challenges Western, individualist, property centred approaches to housing, instead calling for relational and anti-colonial responses to housing injustice (Simpson, 2017; Thistle, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Future research may further explore intersections between

radical care frameworks and Indigenous relational world views in housing justice, highlighting the distinctiveness of Indigenous knowledges and potentials to inform anti-colonial responses.

Alongside relationality, housing justice requires attention to the scales at which injustice and resistance unfold. Housing insecurity is shaped by processes at the neighbourhood level, such as rent increases and evictions, by the policy decisions of municipal, provincial, and federal governments, such as weak rent control protections, and by global, financialized real estate markets and capital flows of property speculation (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). As a result, responses to housing injustice must be multiscale: connecting interpersonal acts of survival and solidarity to broader campaigns for structural and systemic change (Thompson, 2024). Everyday acts of mutual aid, solidarity, and collective organizing confront immediate threats while simultaneously contesting the logics of financialized housing (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso, 2018; Polanska et al., 2024; Simpson, 2017). Relational practices acquire even more transformative significance when linked to wider-scale struggles over governance and policy. In this context, Hobart and Kneese (2020) distinguish solidarity from charity, stressing that the former builds reciprocal relations of trust and shared struggle, while the latter is often rooted in neoliberal moral obligation and paternalism. Multiscale responses therefore prioritize coalitions that cross lines of class, race, and other identities, situating local struggles within relational national, and global movements for housing justice.

Focusing on Expansive Imaginaries and Actions

Dominant responses to crises often reproduce the very logics that created them, relying on market-based solutions and liberal economic frameworks (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). However, moments of crisis also open possibilities for radical shifts in how current housing systems are conceived, leading to the potential for transformative change (Hall & Massey, 2010; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Polanska et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024). Drawing on Thompson's (2024) third pillar comes the exploration of what becomes possible when shifting away from racial capitalist and colonial paradigms and responses to the housing crisis. Tenant organizing, mutual aid, and other forms of community resistance do more than respond to immediate needs - they actively reshape urban imaginaries through challenging dominant narratives and reclaiming urban space through collective visions of justice (Fields et al., 2024; Linder & Meissner, 2018; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). These place-making practices, centered in care and solidarity, offer ways of envisioning fundamentally different futures, where land and home are understood as shared and relational (Thompson, 2024). Sungu et al. (2023) and others present useful tools for conceptualizing divergent imaginaries of the collective good, highlighting that difference can be a source of strength for more inclusive housing futures.

Radical care refuses technocratic or depoliticized solutions to systemic problems, underscoring the need for diverse, justice-oriented paths forward to truly address systemic problems (Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Thompson, 2024). This pillar considers the tension between future visions as reproducing or resisting existing systems of power. For example, Marxist geographers, such as Harvey (2007), argue that land rent and capital accumulation underpin urban inequality, situating tenant struggles within Marxist frameworks of class exploitation. This perspective highlights

tenants' position in contemporary capitalism, where rent extraction is a form of economic exploitation, driven by the commodification and financialization of housing, providing essential insights into how class struggle and housing are interconnected. However, Coulthard (2014) and other Indigenous scholars critique Marxist approaches for often neglecting to confront the connection between colonialism and land dispossession. He states that imagining communal ownership while ignoring injustices of colonial land dispossession risks complicity in colonial and capitalist social relations. Building on this, Tranjan (2023) states that it is vital to also consider the colonial aspect of the (re)accumulation of land alongside class struggle. Abolitionist and intersectional perspectives further expand this work, pointing to contemporary movements that link policing, displacement and private property regimes (Gilmore, 2022; Herring et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). Therefore, this thesis uses radical care not only as a tool for imagining and enacting alternative futures, but also as a way to critically explore contradictions in what these futures mean.

3.3.2 Tenant Organizing as Radical Care

Tenant organizing has recently been conceptualized as a critical form of radical care that extends beyond traditional understandings of class struggle or isolated tenant advocacy. Scholars highlight how tenant movements embody collective care, mutual support, and survival strategies developed in response to the failures of the state in guaranteeing housing as a right (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Tranjan, 2023, 2023). This includes building shared political identities, collective knowledge, and other resistance practices vital for resisting the structural violence of capitalist and racialized housing regimes (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024). These practices can be conceptualized as *caring with* others in struggles against housing injustices (Fields et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024). By reframing tenant housing struggles through a lens of radical care, tenant organizing movements can reimagine cities as urban spaces for justice and solidarity that counteract housing commodification and inspire collective action against systemic oppression shaping housing precarity (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024).

4. Research Design & Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach guiding this research, rooted in feminist participatory principles (Peake et al., 2024). Focused on understanding how the WBTC enacts radical care, the study centres the experiences and knowledge of tenant organizers as vital producers of political meaning. The methodology is designed to connect structural critiques of commodification, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism with the everyday practices of resistance and radical care.

4.1 Research Gap, Problem, and Question

Existing literature on housing justice, commodification, and tenant resistance have developed important insights into the structural contradictions of neoliberal urbanism and the systemic injustices produced by racial capitalism and settler colonialism (Aalbers, 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tomiak, 2017; Tranjan, 2023). Within this body of scholarship, the geography of feminist care ethics have advanced understandings of how care operates as both a moral

and political practice in urban life (Fields et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Tronto, 2015). While scholars have increasingly recognized how failures of housing policy and market-oriented systems generate care-gaps, less attention has been given to radical care as a collective, political practice emerging through tenant organizing (Fields et al., 2024; Fraser, 2016, 2017; Thompson, 2024).

Alongside this, work on housing struggles has documented commodification, gentrification, and tenant contestation of structural inequalities (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Tranjan, 2023). However, even in critical urban scholarship, there remains a tendency to focus on structural critiques without examination of alternative forms of survival, solidarity, and political imagination being cultivated in these groups (Tranjan, 2023). Recent interventions have begun to conceptualize tenant organizing as a radical care practice, but these discussions are still emergent (Fields et al., 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024). There is comparatively little work examining how localized tenant groups in mid-sized cities shaped by dynamics of settler colonialism, such as Winnipeg, practice radical care in their organizing and resistance strategies. Therefore, this thesis asks:

How does the West Broadway Tenants Committee practice radical care in resisting housing injustice?

By engaging with this question, this project addresses a key gap by investigating how the WBTC enacts radical care through its organizing practices. In doing so, it seeks to advance both practical and scholarly understandings of how community led responses can radically shape new forms of urban justice, and what this means for housing futures in Winnipeg.

4.2 Research Paradigm and Approach

A mixed-methods approach guided by principles of feminist methodologies was used for this project. This framing centres relationality, reflexivity, and collective knowledge production, drawing on Peake et al.'s (2024) book *Doing Feminist Urban Research*, alongside methodological reflections from various chapters in the *SAGE handbook of Qualitative Research Design* (ed. Flick, 2022).

This research adopts a critical-realist and feminist-based research approach as presented by Peake et al.'s (2024). This offer a framework for examining systemic housing injustice and tenant resistance. *Critical realism* provides the ontological foundation for this research, asserting that social realities, such as systemic inequalities in accessing housing, exist independently of people's perceptions. It states that these realities are produced and sustained by underlying social structures and mechanisms, like racial capitalism and settler colonialism, which might not be directly observable. This allows the thesis to analyze not only tenant organizers and housing advocates lived experiences, but also deeper systemic forces shaping these experiences. However, critical realism accepts that knowledge of these structures and mechanisms is socially constructed and fallible. This openness aligns closely with *interpretivism* as an epistemological approach, which emphasizes that understanding how people understand and give meanings to their social worlds. Therefore, *interpretive qualitative methods* (narrative interviews and participatory workshops) were employed to explore perspectives, struggles, and practices of resistance, recognizing that knowledge emerges through interaction and is shaped

by social contexts. The choice of these methods is inseparably entwined with the formulation of this research design, centering ethical engagement, reflexivity, and co-production of knowledge.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection in Winnipeg was rooted in a four-part participatory workshop series with members of the WBTC, tenant advocates, and the larger Winnipeg community, from which a systems map and zine were co-produced. Thirteen semi-structured, narrative interviews with individuals active in Winnipeg's housing networks, within and beyond the WBTC, were also conducted to collect information alongside the workshop. My experience living, studying, working, and organizing in Winnipeg situated me not only as an external observer, but as an embedded participant engaged in the housing struggles under analysis.

Although ultimately not pursued due to lack of time, data was also collected in Copenhagen and Madrid. In Copenhagen, I conducted a two-part participatory workshop with the tenant organizing group *Almen Modstand*, resulting in a collaborative zine titled *The Problem with Denmark's "Ghetto Law"* (see *Appendix A*). This work is included in the appendix not for the purpose of analysis of results, but to honour the work of those who assisted in this project and demonstrate the work that went into this. I also joined the December 1st protest organizing team to help plan the annual mobilization against Denmark's 2025 *Ghetto List*. This involvement generated insights from planning meetings, actions, and ongoing informal conversations around housing struggles. In Madrid, data collection was intentionally more exploratory due to the decision to narrow the scope of this project. Nonetheless, I attended the April 5, 2025 first statewide demonstration for the right to housing demonstration, with over 150,000 people marching in Madrid and many more in 39 other cities across Spain (Guillen, 2025). While data from Copenhagen and Madrid are not integrated into the findings chapter, information on these cases were presented in *comparative note* boxes in *Chapter 2: Case History*, in an effort to situate Winnipeg's case in relation to broader examples of housing injustice, while also recognizing and honouring the time, effort, and generosity of those who offered their time and resources in these contexts.

4.3.1 Participatory Workshop: Systems Mapping and Zine Making

Systems thinking and mapping served as a methodological tool for engaging tenants, organizers, and residents of West Broadway, in making visible the interconnections of housing issues. A four part participatory workshop series was designed to foster collaborative learning and knowledge production while creating tools for systemic critique (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022). The support of the WBCO and WBTC was vital in the creation of this series. I worked extensively with one staff member to organize the four sessions, which were advertised and held through their virtual and physical spaces. I also received a WBCO *Small Grant* (\$500) for this project, which was used to purchase lunches, coffee, supplies, and honorariums for guest speakers. Ultimately, recruitment efforts took place through the WBTC and WBCO network. Posters in the neighbourhood and posts on social media accounts resulted in eight workshop participants. A breakdown of the sessions is presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3: Participatory Workshop Process
(created by the author)

	Purpose
Session 1 (zoom)	Seminar exploring the issue of AGIs and impacts on tenants in Winnipeg, joined by a guest speaker who recently went through the process of contesting an AGI.
Session 2 (zoom)	Seminar analyzing possible root causes for housing challenges today, with an introduction to systems thinking. Joined by a guest speaker who talked about the impact of the NHS.
Session 3 (in person)	Workshop centering a practical exercise for creating a systems map of housing issues in West Broadway that comprehensively exhibits connections between issues of housing injustice in the local landscape.
Session 4 (in person)	Zine making workshop to plan what outcomes that we learned should be presented to the community, joined by a local artist with experience in zine making to facilitate this process and lead the “ <i>what if...</i> ” drawing exercise.

Sessions 1 and *2* served as learning sessions, presenting theory and academic literature on the topic of systems thinking, care, and tenant organizing, with two local guest speakers. Participants collectively examined how interconnected forces, like market actors, policy, power dynamics, and community networks, contribute to complex housing challenges in Winnipeg’s Inner-City. These sessions underscored how neoliberal restructuring of cities creates reinforcing loops of housing insecurity preparing participants for the mapping activity in the later sessions. Due to their complex methodological nature, *sessions 3* and *4* will be further explained below, with *Figure 13* providing a visual guide for reading systems maps in *Chapter 5: Results and Analysis*.

Session 3: Systems Mapping Process

Sessions 3 and *4* were hosted at the WBCO space. Here, we engaged in a participatory systems mapping process, as developed by Barbrook-Johnson and Penn (2022), drawing on the workshop tools provided by the Acumen Academy (2024)’s *Systems Practice* program.

Systems mapping is a method used to visualize how an environment works as a dynamic system, identifying leverage points for intervention, and showing why isolated, technical fixes are inadequate in bringing sustained change in the face of wicked problems (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Johnson et al., 2019; Stroth, 2015; Zellner & Campbell, 2015). These maps can be used to trace interconnected feedback loops that link factors of complex problems, and identifying leverage points to create systemic change (Abson et al., 2017; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Schäpke et al., 2024; Stroth, 2015). This tool is increasingly being used in policy and academic research on housing injustice globally as seen in research consortia such as the *UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence* which explicitly advocates for systems thinking methodologies that link issues such as

The first step in *session 3* was identifying the **core forces** of housing (in)justice in West Broadway. This was done through a brainstorming exercise, in which either *inhibitors* or *enablers* of housing justice in the neighbourhood were identified and then grouped into categories of similarities, see *Figure 8*. Inhibitor categories included: AGIs, big landlords, cars and commuters, gentrification, limited supply of adequate housing, the need for maintenance, and neoliberalism. Enabler categories included third spaces, lots of services in the neighbourhood, access to food, alternative transportation options, and lots of housing stock.

add the upland to their rating scale

Shumers
general
disrepair

old
buildings
falling into
disrepair

1. CORE FORCES

INHIBITORS

ENABLERS

Hi Team!

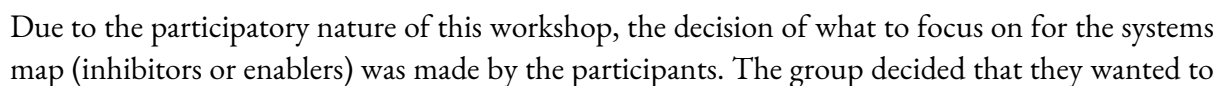
These papers are from our Root Problems Workshop.

I thought you might be interested. Hoping to leave up until ~~some~~ Saturday - but if can take down if there is an issue.

Thx! - Amanda

31

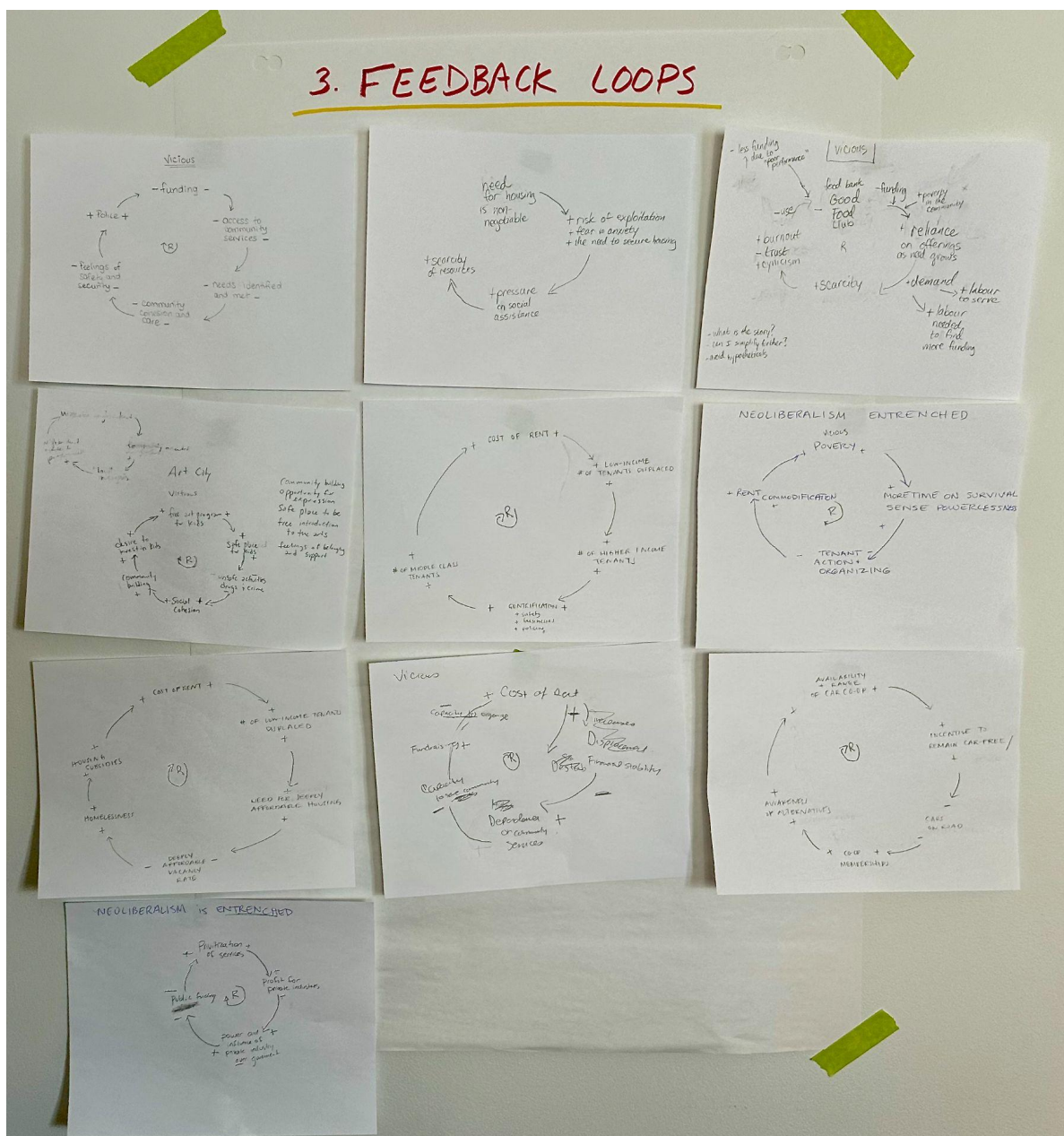
Figure 9: Causes and Effects of Housing (In)Justice in Winnipeg
(Photograph taken by the author)



further examine the inhibitors of housing justice, to be used as a tool to examine where tenant organizing work could intervene in the current system.

Next, groups worked to create a **feedback loop** of the problem, to understand how the upstream causes and downstream effects lead into a repetitive loop of factors on a certain issue. They were then asked to classify the situation pictured in the loop as *reinforcing* (changing) in a *vicious* (with the problem getting worse) or *virtuous* (with the problem getting better) manner, or balancing (stagnant) in a *stabilizing* (keeping things from getting worse) or *stagnating* (keeping things from getting worse) manner. This exercise is presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Feedback Loops for Housing Injustice in Winnipeg
(Photograph taken by the author)



particularly in feminist critical urban scholarship, enabling the co-creation of personal and community narratives, and the demonstration and democratization of knowledge production (Ashtari et al., 2022; Duncombe, 1997; Hall, 2024). The WBTC utilizes zines as a way to locally co-create and publish informative and educational material, forming a significant strategy in their recent organizing efforts. Topics of former zines focus on neglectful landlords, explaining the commodification and financialization of housing, how to form a tenant association, and experiences with AGIs (West Broadway Tenants Committee, n.d.).

Root Problems emerged directly from workshop content and participant discussions, with each page addressing a distinct aspect of housing insecurity, tenant organizing, and leverage points turned into visions for alternative futures. This format was decided upon by the participants, alongside a local guest artist who was invited to help with this process. They lead the group in a “what if...” drawing exercise in which the future of housing in Winnipeg and West Broadway could be imagined. An example of this exercise is provided in *Figure #12*.

Figure 12: Imagining “what if...” Drawing Exercise.

(Made by participant in the workshop – photograph taken by the author)



The zine was locally published in mid-April, after two virtual sessions to finalize its content and design. The final copy of the zine included causal loops, also presented in a systems map, inspired by personal accounts and reflections, accompanied by “re-imaginings” of how the housing system in Manitoba could function differently, inspired by leverage points for change in the original loops. Authorship is attributed to the WBTC as a collective.

4.3.3 Narrative Interviews: Networks of Housing Support in Winnipeg

To complement workshop insights and capture a broader spectrum of experiences, 13 semi-structured, narrative interviews with a of tenant organizers, support workers, advocates, and researchers were conducted in January 2025. Due to my personal connection to this case, deciding who to interview for this project was an organic process, using prior research and common sense as drivers behind the purposive snowball sample (Meyer & Mayrhofer, 2022). Ten interviews took place in person, and three via Microsoft Teams, lasting between 45 and 75 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded on a password protected smartphone and transcribed with *Gladia* audio transcription software, then stored on a password protected device.

Recruitment began with members of the WBTC, and therefore were connected to the work I had previously been involved with in Winnipeg. These individuals have been involved in the WBTC in various ways, and therefore were the logical starting point. The sample then expanded outward via referral chains, resulting in interconnected accounts of both individual and collective strategies for care, advocacy, and resistance. Participants represented a range of networks and affiliations, including but not limited to: the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the University of Winnipeg Institute of Urban Studies, End Homelessness Winnipeg, Manitoba Non-Profit Housing, the WBCO, Legal Aid, the R2HC, the West End Women's Centre, the North End Community Renewal Cooperation, the University of Manitoba Department of City Planning, and Westminster Housing Society. The affiliation of each participant will not be disclosed as to protect their anonymity.

The open-ended interview guide (see *Appendix C*) focused on participant roles, housing system challenges, and responses, relational networks, experiences of tenant-landlord dynamics, vulnerabilities and marginalization, and perspectives on grassroots organizing and support. Not all questions were asked to all participants, and many participants were asked questions as follow-up to a topic they discussed. The narrative format aligns with feminist research methodologies that value life histories, everyday struggles, and collective agency as central to understanding systemic injustice (Hawkey & Ussher, 2022; O'Keeffe, 2017; Peake et al., 2024).

4.4 Data Analysis Methods

The format of *Root Problems* proved useful for analysis, with data generated in the workshop being categorized by a new topic on each page. To analyze interviews, deductive and inductive coding was undertaken using MAXQDA software (Saldana, 2021). Pre-set codes aligning with Thompson's (2024) three pillars of radical care were applied, with development of new codes as themes emerged, guiding both narrative and thematic analysis and complimented by pages in *Root Problems*. Triangulation was achieved through cross-comparison between coded interviews, workshop findings in *Root Problems*, and academic literature (Peake et al., 2024). My personal reflections as a renter and WBTC member were treated as supplementary, supporting contextual analysis, but not coded or explicitly represented in the results.

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

Peake et al. (2024) describe feminist research ethics as an approach that prioritizes the wellbeing of both participants and researchers, centers care as a foundational principle, and is rooted in commitments to intersectionality, reflexivity, positionality, and decolonial practices. *Chapter 7* in their book frames feminist ethics as valuing relationships, attending to power imbalances, and recognizing the diverse social locations and histories of those involved in all stages of the research.

As researcher and a former WBTC member, my positionality supported trust building, relational accountability, and more collaborative forms of inquiry. Reflexivity was intentionally built into all aspects of this research. My own reflections, as a tenant, activist, and researcher in Winnipeg, informed how participants were recruited, how questions were developed, and how group facilitation took place. Rather than claiming neutrality, I acknowledged and embraced my own positionality throughout this project, using personal experience to foster deeper knowledge exchanges and co-creation, while remaining vigilant to not dominating or overshadowing collective voices. This position proved especially useful in coordination of the systems mapping exercise, in which my extensive lived knowledge of the local context allowed me to answer questions about very specific situations and topics. The value found in my position here was a contributing deterrent for conducting this same workshop in Copenhagen and Madrid, as limited time living in these cities did not provide me with this same understanding of local contexts.

The decision to work with the WBTC and others involved in tenant advocacy work, as opposed to directly with tenants who are in positions of acute housing precarity, reflects this commitment to feminist participatory practices that avoid extractivism, centre agency, and capacity through the co-production of knowledge. Given the intersecting oppressions faced by many precariously housed individuals in Winnipeg, including poverty, racialization, and other forms of systemic marginalization, this research design aimed to avoid imposing further burdens on vulnerable populations within the limited scope of this project. By sourcing participants through the WBTC, whose members and network often have lived experiences of tenant injustice and address to additional resources for collaboration and advocacy, the research was better positioned for mutual learning and ethical engagement.

Compensation and attending to material needs are essential aspects of feminist methodologies, recognizing the value of participants time, knowledge, and labour. Workshop participants were offered food and drink, and interviewees received small tokens of gratitude, such as coffee and pastries, to acknowledge their contributions to the research. Careful attention was also paid to obtaining consent. A consent form (see *Appendix D*) was reviewed with each participant, with information such as when to withdraw from the study. Every participant signed and was given a copy of this form with the researcher's contact information. Anonymity was another topic demanding ethical attention, given the small and interconnected activist and housing networks in Winnipeg. Pseudonyms were selected in consultation with participants, prioritizing agency in self representation in the work, and organizational affiliation was omitted as a further protection against unwanted identification.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

This research was constrained by time and resources, requiring changes in scope and preventing a fuller comparative analysis with Copenhagen and Madrid as initially intended. Direct lived experiences of Indigenous persons disproportionately absent in this study, with only one interviewee self-identifying as Indigenous. The decision to not pursue more Indigenous participants was an ethical decision rooted in feminist research principles to avoid extractivism in this small-scale project. To partially address this, the research draws on insights from Indigenous authors that write about lived experiences, such as Thistle (2017). Continuous reflection and adaptation helped the project navigate risks, respect participant autonomy, and create space for agency in this project - even when choices, such as not intentionally involving more vulnerable individuals directly, meant trade-offs in scope and representation.

Systems thinking and mapping offered significant strengths in this setting, helping participants situate themselves within the broader housing system, recognize issues as interconnected, and make invisible structures visible (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022). However, the abstract nature of systems mapping proved challenging for some participants, as translating personal or practical experiences into causal loops could feel restrictive or simplifying. Additionally, due to the time constrained nature of this project, some important system elements were identified as missing later in the process. Although ultimately included in *Root Problems*, the topic of police in the neighbourhood was contested, with some participants feeling that this topic was too radical or out of place in the zine. This led to conversations about the intended audience of this work, and whose opinions should be represented in the final work. Some participants felt that the zine format was too limited to fully displace the nuance of everything discussed in the workshop.

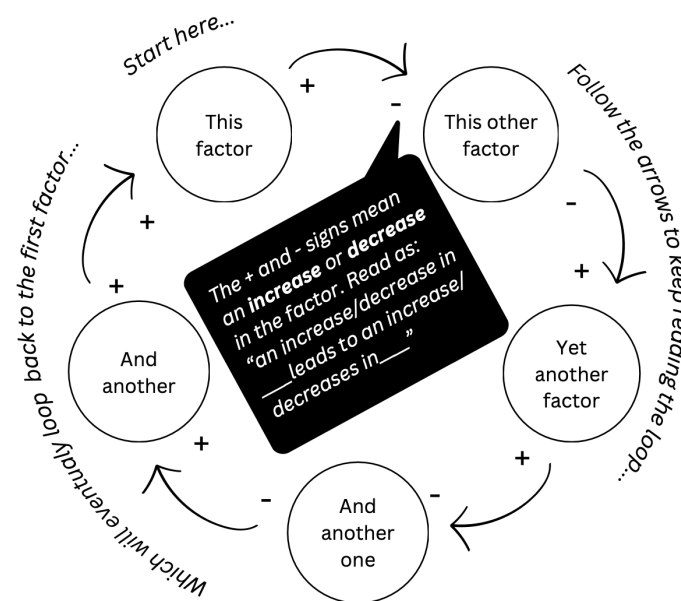
While the methodology for this project is rich in qualitative and collaborative insight, its strength lies in interpreting empirical realities through a lens of power structures and neoliberal urban critique. However, these findings should not be generalized beyond the context of the WBTC and connected organizations in Winnipeg. This study is not intended as an exhaustive survey of housing justice movements, but as an interpretive, situated contribution to understanding resistance within a specific urban context.

5. Results and Analysis

This section presents findings and critical analysis from a study of tenant organizing in Winnipeg, Canada. Drawing on interviews, workshop activities, collaborative zine creation, and material from grassroots organizing, the analysis foregrounds how tenant communities both experience and resist housing injustice across sites shaped by neoliberal restructuring and colonial histories. Results are examined through Thompson's (2024) radical care for housing justice framework, supported by work presented in the literature review.

Causal loops will be presented throughout this chapter, explaining issues being faced in Winnipeg's housing system. *Figure 13* provides instructions for how to read these loops, and can be referred to by the reader as needed:

Figure 13: How to Read a Causal Loop
(Root Problems, pg. 4)



Throughout this section, tenant experiences are situated within intersecting personal, political, and structural domains. Their stories and actions make visible both the harms perpetuated by commodified housing systems and the possibilities of collective resistance, mutual aid, and systemic transformation. The results reveal not only the challenges faced by tenants, but also illuminate how care, solidarity, and imaginative approaches are mobilized as tools for re-envisioning futures beyond managed crisis and market imperatives.

5.1 Engaging with Structural Power Hierarchies

This section critically explores how Winnipeg's housing system is shaped and sustained by entrenched structures of power, including settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberal market governance. Through mapping the everyday realities faced by tenants, the section interrogates how policy, regulation, and market logics reinforce vulnerability and precarity among Indigenous, newcomer, and low-income residents. The focus here is not only on cataloguing systemic challenges, but on revealing the intentional design and functioning of Winnipeg's housing system as a site of profit extraction and normalization of harm (Thompson, 2024). Each subsection explores these dynamics from those actively contesting the system - WBTC members and surrounding housing advocates. In doing so, this section frames radical care and collective resistance as essential practices in the WBTCs work .

5.1.1 Systemic Challenges and Tenant Vulnerability

This section examines the housing conditions to which the WBTC and other tenant advocates respond, highlighting the power imbalances shaping Winnipeg's rental landscape. Interview and workshop results illustrate a housing system that is deeply shaped by precarity, systemic failures, and

a regulatory framework that often reinforces rather than mitigates harms. The rental system was frequently discussed as serving landlords, developers, and market actors rather than tenants, with the RTB specifically identified as perpetuating barriers:

It's a pretty unpleasant experience to try to interact with the RTB. A lot of tenants will talk about how it's really condescending, the treatment that they get, or that it feels very landlord-centric, or that it's just hard to understand the information that they're supposed to understand or that they're given incorrect information, even, or unclear, competing, information. (*Marcus*)

Instead of the ways that we would hope that the RTB would be trying to facilitate tenant participation, they are putting up barriers. (*Nicole*)

The RTBs system for penalizing [landlords] or enforcing [tenant protections] is really lackluster, so there's that gap, definitely, that sort of allows landlords to take advantage of this. (*Chris*)

Recent fear of legal retaliation from landlords was discussed, with tenant organizers having received cease and desist letters from landlords, which has installed insecurity in the group.

It feels like landlords have a much better ability to use both legal and extralegal tactics to put pressure on tenants. And it feels like for tenants, at least, we feel more constrained to do things within the legal realm and to follow proper procedure to try to get what we want. (*Marcus*)

Increased landlord retaliation was discussed as evidence of a clear power imbalance. This alongside lack of capacity is a factor in the WBTC switch towards more “behind the scenes” work, such as workshops and zine making.

“Cowboy Landlords”

Several interviewees characterized Winnipeg’s rental market as ruled by “cowboy landlords”, a term that evokes the self-interest and lawlessness that dominate local rental practices. This included local property companies (*Onyx Properties, Sussex Realty, Thorwin Properties, Clearwater Properties, Globe Property Management, Smith Agency*, and more) and smaller, private, *mom-and-pop* landlords who own and rent a few units. Larger landlords were described as using legal tools such as the RTOS or AGIs to profit, while mom-and-pop landlords rely more on intimidation and personal pressure.

Landlords don't follow the law. In regards to, you know, allowing someone to have peaceful enjoyment of their home, for example. Landlords will bully and harass people, whether it's based on their social status, if that's what we want to call it... or their race, unfortunately. A lot of newcomers get taken advantage of so much because they don't know the laws. (*Alice*)

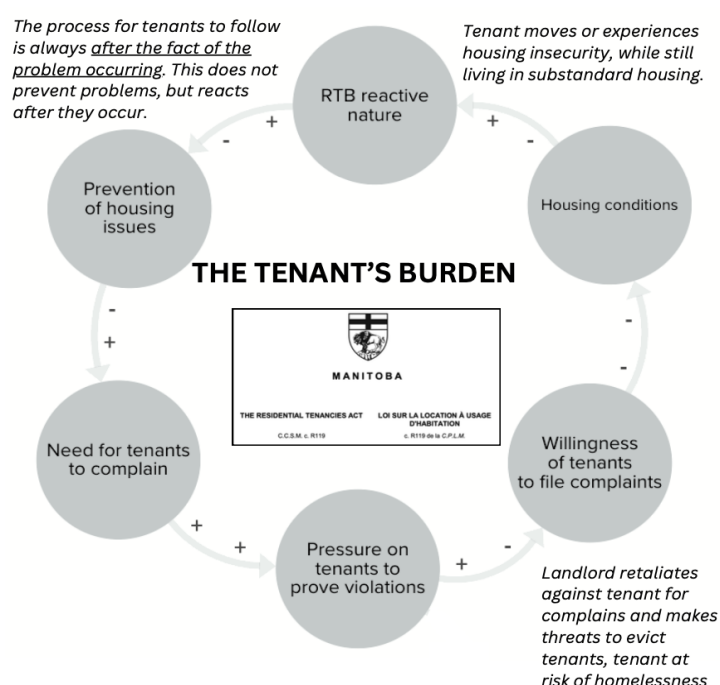
For a lot of the landlords, ignoring the [RTA] is kind of baked into their profit model. And so definitely like... the tenants in our area that are dealing with these mom-and-pop landlords, they're consistently exposed to that. (*Chris*)

Participants specifically described how landlords often disregard regulations, knowing that tenant complaints rarely result in meaningful action by the RTB. In one instance, a landlord repeatedly entered a tenant's home illegally, with the RTB providing no effective course of action. The responsibility for documenting and reporting repeated infractions consistently fell on the tenant, with no comprehensive tracking or accountability mechanisms in place. In these situations, the burden for reporting landlord misconduct was described as always falling to the tenant.

The Tenant's Burden

Workshop systems mapping and interviews revealed that Winnipeg's complaint-driven regulatory system perpetuates tenant vulnerability, as pictured in *Figure 14*.

Figure 14: Causal Loop: The Tenant's Burden
(*Root Problems*, page 7)



When faced with problems in their units, tenants must document infractions, build legal cases, and represent themselves at hearings, while landlords fund legal representation through rent revenue. Neighbourhood organizations and the WBTC attempt to fill this gap by helping prepare tenants for their hearings, but the complexity of these processes and history of landlord favouring rulings was described as often discouraging tenants from pursuing complaints. Several participants emphasized that tenants in deep positions of vulnerability are unlikely to risk complaints at all:

If you're a tenant and you're in survival mode and you're living in a slum place and you literally don't have a door on your apartment, are you going to complain to the landlord? Because at least you're not up in an encampment. So why are we putting that on people who have the most to lose? (*Susan*)

Interviews detailed many concerns with the RTB's dispute resolution process, with the RTOS continually mentioned as being exploited by landlords who can repeatedly file claims - leaving tenants burdened with permanent records in the public database, even when claims were dismissed. The onus of defending these complaints falls on tenants, whose rental reputations can suffer permanent harms.

If a landlord doesn't like you they can file hearing after hearing after hearing [...] each one of those, even if you win, it's on your registry [...] they're not going to read all the orders, they're just going to be like "well she is a problem, I'm not renting to her" [...] when it could be that the landlord is just nitpicking how *Jane Smith* lives her life and trying to use the [RTA] against her to evict her. (*Alice*)

Tenants who do manage to win disputes were reported as rarely receiving compensatory payment due to minimal enforcement by the RTB and difficulties in accessing landlord assets. Orders also permanently remain in a public online registry.

If a tenant has been evicted, they're put on [the RTOS list] never to be removed. You can seek a pardon for a criminal offense, but your name could be on there because you screwed up once 20 years ago? (*Susan*)

Unequal Vulnerabilities

Housing insecurity and tenant vulnerability in Winnipeg is not experienced equally. Indigenous tenants, newcomers, or low-income households were identified as facing pronounced structural and intersectional barriers, described as stemming directly from the way housing policy and regulation reproduces colonial and capitalist logics.

[Housing insecurity] for Indigenous peoples is so connected to colonialism because it's not just about the lack of four walls and a roof. It's about the dispossession from language and land and governance systems and knowledge systems, all of that kind of stuff. Which is where the colonialism piece comes in, because that dispossession for Indigenous peoples is also what enables possession by non-Indigenous people, and private property. (*Rachel*)

Landlords were reported as systemically using fines and threats of eviction against Indigenous tenants carrying out cultural rituals in their apartments. The RTA allows landlords to add *reasonable* house rules to their leases, which are generally related to safety or enjoyment for other tenants, such as prohibiting barbecues on balconies (Province of Manitoba, 2025b). Some landlords have banned *smudging*, a sacred practice of burning plants like sage to cleanse a person, space, or object, using this tool. Smudging is protected under *section 2(a)* of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as a religious practice, and therefore illegal to ban (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, s

2(a)). When challenged by advocates, the RTB was said to have so far refused to make a determination, saying that such cases would have to go to a hearing and this determination would be made by a hearing officer:

So, we're leaving it up to a probably Indigenous tenant who's already disadvantaged because of, you know, racism. And they're now going to have to just be like, okay, well, 'I guess I just have to go to a hearing and I'm going to possibly get evicted for just exercising my right to live' [...] you're forcing a tenant who has been probably treated poorly by [the RTB], and the people around them who were complaining about them, and now they're having to be dragged in and just defend themselves. (*Alice*)

Participants repeatedly noted that administrative penalties against landlords are rare, while punitive measures against tenants are common and disproportionate.

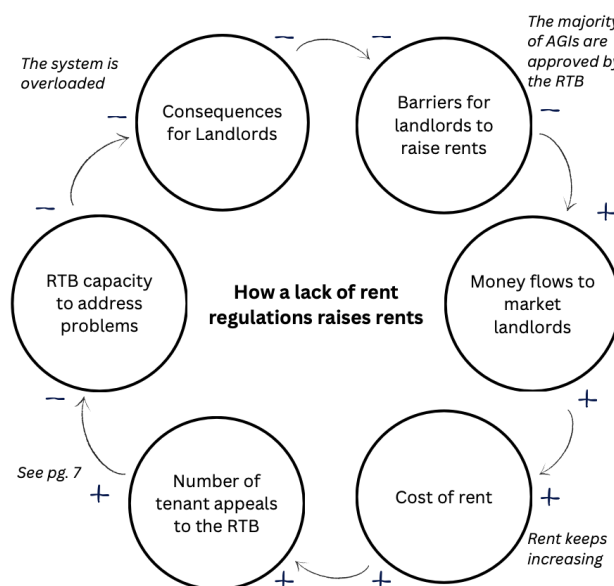
The RTB's lack of willingness to hand out administrative penalties to landlords [...] clearly shows the priorities of the [RTB] and who it really serves [...] the amount of punitive measures put on tenants in comparison to these penalties that landlords are receiving for breaking the [RTA], there's just such a huge imbalance there. (*Monica*)

This imbalance was repeatedly underlined, with penalties for tenants being standardized and punitive, whereas administrative sanctions for landlords are rare.

Inadequate Rent Regulations and Maintenance

AGIs were described in interviews and conceptualized in the workshop as fuelling landlord profit seeking and worsening tenant security. *Figure 15* shows the causal loop that represents this problem.

Figure 15: Causal Loop: Inadequate Rent Regulations
(*Root Problems*, pg. 5).

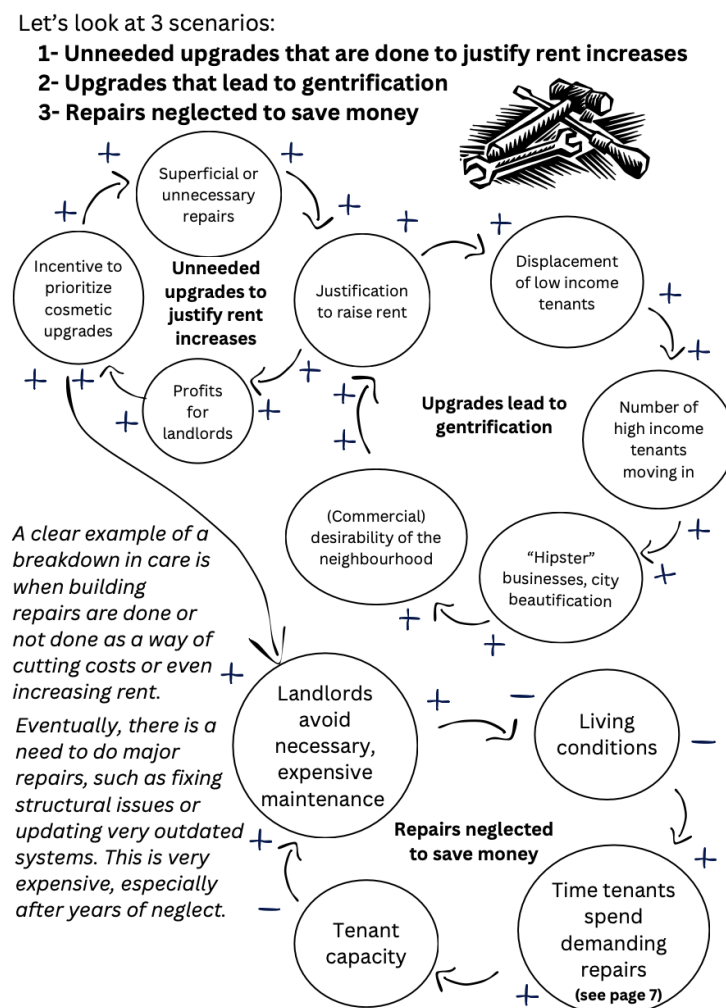


As rents rise, more tenants appeal their increases with the underfunded RTB. The impact of this was explained as leading to a lower capacity for the RTB to address these problems, due to an overloaded system. The lower the RTB capacity, the fewer consequences for landlords - which leads to fewer barriers for landlords to raise rents, as seen in the majority of AGIs being approved by the RTB. Once again, this was brought back to the impact on tenants, with a clear statement on the imbalance of power in this relationship.

[Landlords] do what they want with no recourse. There's a lot of bad landlords, and I'm sure there's a lot of bad tenants. But tenants are way more affected by what landlords can do than landlords are by tenants. (*Monica*)

Interests between tenants and landlords were presented as being fundamentally opposite. An example of this difference in interest was presented in motivations behind maintenance of units, as seen in the causal loop in *Figure 16*.

Figure 16: Causal Loop: (Lack of) Maintenance
(*Root Problems*, pg. 9)



Cosmetic upgrades that are often used to justify rent increases, such as through AGIs, were described as increasing market desirability and gentrification, often at the expense of required repairs and meaningful maintenance. Landlords were said to neglect necessary upkeep and prioritize superficial changes that could lead to a rent increase, contributing to gentrification in the neighbourhood. Other landlords were said to neglect maintenance all together, leading to tenant work through the complaint based RTB system.

Advocating for maintenance is another place where the WBTC offers support to tenants, assisting in writing official letters, putting pressure on the landlord through media, or helping tenants collect evidence to demand repairs. However, a housing system that relies on landlords to provide affordable, high quality, housing to tenants while also profiting was discussed as being flawed:

The reliance on the private sector has been something that we've seen for many, many years, and it's not gonna solve the problem. The private sector is motivated by making profit, and there's no profit to be made in providing housing at a low cost for people who are low-income. (*Tracy*)

The biggest issue is the lack of supply of non-market housing and the ongoing reliance on market housing to meet the needs of low-income tenants. The private market is not intended to be a housing provider that meets the needs of low-income tenants and provides lower-rent housing. The private sector has a profit motive. It just is what it is. And so we can't expect it to provide that kind of housing, and it doesn't provide kind of housing, at scale, that we need to ensure people's right to housing is secure. (*Monica*)

We've just created a dysfunctional market [...] the housing market is a blue-chip asset that has been so monetized, and so now driven by profit, that I don't know how we get out of this. We've created a system somehow to deliver year-to-year returns for far too many people, in proxy for other economic levers to make money. (*Carlo*)

Indigenous persons and newcomers were highlighted as facing higher structural inequalities in accessing good housing, often also along classed and gendered intersections.

Landlords in this area, generally speaking, do the least amount of work and upkeep on their homes and they sometimes use the habits, behaviors of tenants to sort of justify their lack of willingness to upkeep and keep housing in a dignified and maintained state [...] there is a history of discrimination and racism that has sort of seeped into tenant-landlord relationships here, for sure. (*Chris*)

This was again connected back to the role of the RTB's role as supposed impartial, regulating body:

How is the [RTB] supposed to serve landlords and tenants? These are two very different groups with very different power dynamics. The landlords hold such a power over the tenants. And like... they're not serving both. And we're just seeing it time and time again. (*Violet*)

A rare counterexample of a landlord who intentionally avoided maximizing profits from one interviewee highlighted the point that “not all landlords are bad”. However, the problem of a system that relies on the unreliable niceness of landlords to provide good housing, and the inherent landlord goal of extraction and profit, were repeatedly discussed.

Housing Precarity

Lived experiences of housing insecurity were presented as a complex web of precarity, forcing families and individuals to make impossible choices on where to spend limited incomes in a system that undervalues these needs. It was made clear that people are struggling, and poverty is a large barrier to securing stable and adequate housing. Stagnant or fixed incomes, rising food prices, and inflation have intensified the pressure on vulnerable families.

There is just too much pain. Too many households that just can't make ends meet. (*Carlo*)

People aren't able to find another affordable option. They're kind of stuck paying this rent that they can't afford until a point where they get evicted for being behind on rent. (*Marcus*)

These perspectives were continually connected to broader political and economic forces, with discussions on how the rise of speculative private markets alongside decades of disinvestment from non-market housing has created structural barriers. Tenants and organizers consistently described a housing system structured for others, not them. Vulnerability, insecurity, and inequality were presented as being entrenched, with public supports meant to protect tenants often reinforcing, rather than alleviating, these dynamics.

5.1.2 Systemic Gaps in Formal Support

Participants continually stressed the housing system is not broken, but function exactly as it was designed - to generate profit for property owners, developers, and investors.

I just kind of get frustrated when we just keep producing *CCPA* reports and say that ‘we need housing’ and that ‘the housing system is broken’ and it's like, it is not broken. It is doing exactly what it is designed to do. (*Nicole*)

Participants situated issues in housing within broader global shifts towards neoliberal and conservative ideologies, where concepts of who deserves housing are shaped by political values and systems of power. Many connected this directly to intersecting systems of capitalism and colonialism:

Capitalism and colonialism, they go together, right? They're not two separate systems. They're so interconnected. I think that those are the systems that shape who accesses housing, and how they access housing. Even these ideas of private property are shaped by colonialism and capitalism, right? (*Rachel*)

These dynamics were described as being represented in failures of formal housing supports, particularly in inadequate government-led interventions, outdated legislation, and the reliance on a market that prioritizes profit over security of tenure and housing rights.

Government Supports and Policy Failures

The context of the RTAs functioning was discussed at length:

Landlords are in a very different position now than they were 20 years ago [...] before they would just maintain the buildings and move the rents up as needed and maybe a little bit of an increase. But now they're like 'oh we can actually almost double our rents' and do this huge above guideline rent increase of like 30 percent" [...] this economic situation has made it possible, and that has changed how the [RTA] gets implemented. (*Rachel*)

When the [RTA] was created, it was born out of protecting landlords' investments. And the housing landscape was so different then than it is now. The RTB just sort of continues to carry out what are very dated objectives of the RTA. (*Monica*)

Participants repeatedly reflected on the impacts of past and present provincial governments. Ways that PC governments have deepened reliance on the private market through selling social housing stock, neglecting investment in non-market housing, and not investing in tenant protections were repeatedly identified as drivers of housing insecurity. Even when progress was made, participants noted that it was often tied to specific governments rather than being embedded in lasting policy frameworks. For example, the NDP's 2014 commitment to build more affordable and social housing was not maintained after the 2016 PC election. Instead, public housing was sold to the private sector and social housing rents increased. Policy environment under NDP governments were also criticized, with discussions on how bureaucracy and real estate lobbying prevents any meaningful change, even under progressive governments. This was described as a theme for how under PC governments, tenant advocates are left to defend existing policy and commitments, instead of pushing forward for further change.

Our advocacy approach kind of had to change from being proactive and saying, 'we need you to do this to make things better' to kind of reactive and saying, 'you need to stop making things worse'. (*Monica*)

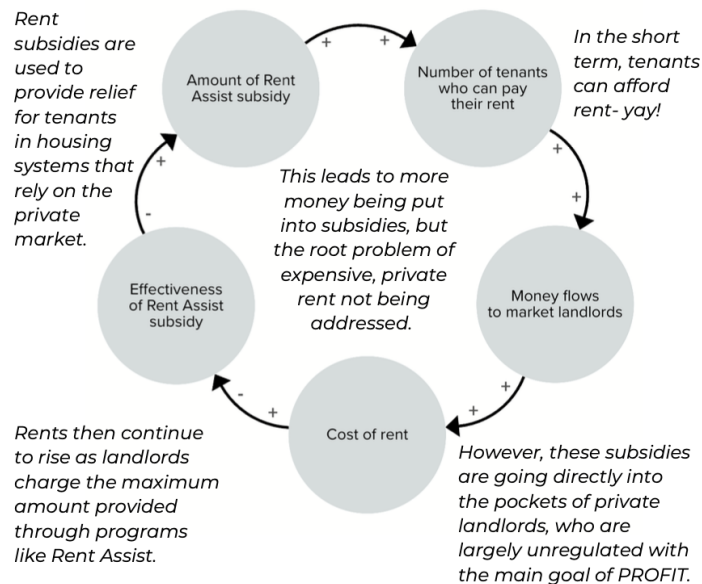
The reliance on public subsidies was another recurring theme discussed:

It's not profitable to operate housing at the low rent levels that we need, and so that's why the private market doesn't do it unless it gets a government subsidy. (*Monica*)

Several participants said that political actors often oversimplify the root causes of housing insecurity and prioritize temporary programs or emergency services that fail to invest in long-term, preventative, infrastructure. One such program discussed is *Rent Assist*. While increased

affordability for tenants with the introduction of this program was described as a win, its model was also criticized as being a form of housing privatization by providing private landlords with a public subsidy. This issue is depicted in the causal loop in *Figure 17*:

Figure 17: Causal Loop: The Problem with Subsidies
(*Root Problems*, pg. 15)



WHY IS OUR PUBLIC MONEY GOING DIRECTLY TO PRIVATE LANDLORDS?

Surely there is a better way.

This loop demonstrates how subsidies provide immediate, short term, relief for tenants, but fail to address the issue of unaffordable rental costs. It shows that as more people receive subsidies, more money flows to market landlords, which then raises the base rent through landlords knowing how to navigate this system:

A lot of [low-income Manitobans] are on social assistance. Their budget for rent is limited. Landlords know those budgets. So even a room for rent, they will put at the maximum amount that they know that someone is going to get for their rent budget. (*Alice*)

While reforms such as subsidies were recognized as meeting immediate and urgent needs, they were framed as reinforcing privatized approaches that do not lead to change on the systems level.

[*Rent Assist*] is a success in that it helps meet a short-term need for people who need housing right now, but it was never intended to be something that governments invested in instead of social housing. We need both [...] but it's easier to just give a rent subsidy than it is to build housing. (*Monica*)

Colonial attitudes were also observed within government-housing provider relationships, with a tendency towards paternalistic and bureaucratic control, particularly towards Indigenous-led organizations. This was connected to the devolution of housing responsibilities to provinces in the 1990s, described as occurring without adequate funding or capacity building systems in place. As non-market housing funding agreements expire, housing providers were described as being left with volunteer-run boards with a lack of governance experience and succession planning:

[The housing providers] weren't allowed to do anything. They weren't allowed to put away adequate reserve funds. They weren't allowed to take care of the buildings the way that they wanted to. They weren't allowed to make governing decisions about the organization, because their budget was set by the government. They couldn't make those decisions. And then they were saying, 'okay, when the funding agreement ends, you're on your own, so good luck kiddo.' (*Emma*)

Reliance on Community Work

With formal supports failing to meet tenant needs, community organization work was presented as filling these critical gaps, albeit under precarious conditions. Libraries, churches, local restaurants, community spaces, parks, community gardens, and more were discussed as providing essential services - from eviction prevention to food access. Yet these organizations face unstable funding, low or no wages, and volunteer burnout. The provincial *Neighbourhoods Alive!* initiative was discussed as an example of under resourced community development:

The intention of *Neighborhoods Alive!* was to legitimize neighbourhood corporations and to provide them with provincial funding to do community development in response to, you know, what was seen as a very substantive increase in urban decline and poverty [...] and we wanted it to be community-led [...] but not professionalized in the way of compensating people for their contributions. And the model would only work if it was underpaid volunteerism, but with the expectations of dramatic transformation. And what you end up doing in these kinds of models is you end up creating wonderfully skilled community leaders who can only do this kind of work for so long [...] before they get scooped up. (*Carlo*)

Some interviewees connected the provision of care in relatively top-down models through community organizations to the continuation of colonial practices. This led to discussions about the economy that has developed in providing support for mostly Indigenous persons struggling to be securely housed, and about the difference between reciprocal relationships and top-down service provision, cited as an area of service that has to be considered critically and carefully as to not perpetuate cycles of colonialism.

Settler benevolence allows us to stay on this land and to kind of take on jobs and positions where we manage Indigenous people, and that can be similar in housing. There's a lot of supportive and transitional housing and shelters and stuff that really promote themselves as systems that provide support and recovery to people. But it's different to provide care to

somebody then to be in a relationship with someone. So, I tend to be kind of skeptical of those kinds of forms of housing. (*Marcus*)

Participants involved in the community organization field talked about how they do this work *because they care*, but that they must find ways to separate themselves from their work to avoid burnout. Building relationships with people who are accessing services for help was cited as vital for the provision of high-quality service, but also as something that some avoid, as being invested in the situations being faced was too emotionally exhausting.

Funding Constraints

Participants stressed that without stable and adequate investment, community organizations cannot retain skilled staff, provide fair wages and benefits, or plan long-term strategies. This instability was said to reinforce reactive work cycles and limit the capacity to pursue systemic change. A recurring point was that while governments frequently discursively present community organizations as central to delivering important services, they rarely provide the resources needed to professionalize these roles. Funding agreements are often short-term or project-based, leaving organizations to continually apply for grants or piece together resources, creating cycles of staff precarity and diverting time away from organizing and advocacy to fundraising and reporting. While community work was described as rewarding, it frequently left long-term workers vulnerable in their own retirement.

There are people who I know who did community work all their lives and once they get to retirement age they don't have any pensions, or a lot of money saved, because they didn't have a lot to save. It's all lovely that we can say 'they did great work' but then they themselves are living out the rest of their lives in poverty. So, we need to have just more respect for the work. And it's mostly women. You know, that's the reality. (*Tracy*)

Participants also pointed out the gendered nature of these dynamics. Much of the staffing in community organization work is done by women, performing high skill, high emotional labour roles for wages far below the public sector. Several participants linked funding directly to the chronic under-resourcing of the RTB, and how this gap in service adds workloads to grassroots organizations. The limitations of insecure funding were presented in the WBTC's advocacy work. Participants discussed the difficulty to sustain campaigns, due to the small number of organizers and volunteers balancing this work with paid employment, involvement with other groups, or home commitments. Without long-term funding to cover staff time, advocacy in Winnipeg remains largely dependent on underpaid or volunteer precarious labour, making burnout more likely and long-term planning difficult.

Rising Police Budgets

Several participants were involved in anti-austerity groups, emphasizing this problem of the redirection of funds away from housing and community services. In discussing supports that help keep people housed, participants reflected on municipal funding priorities, with a disproportionate

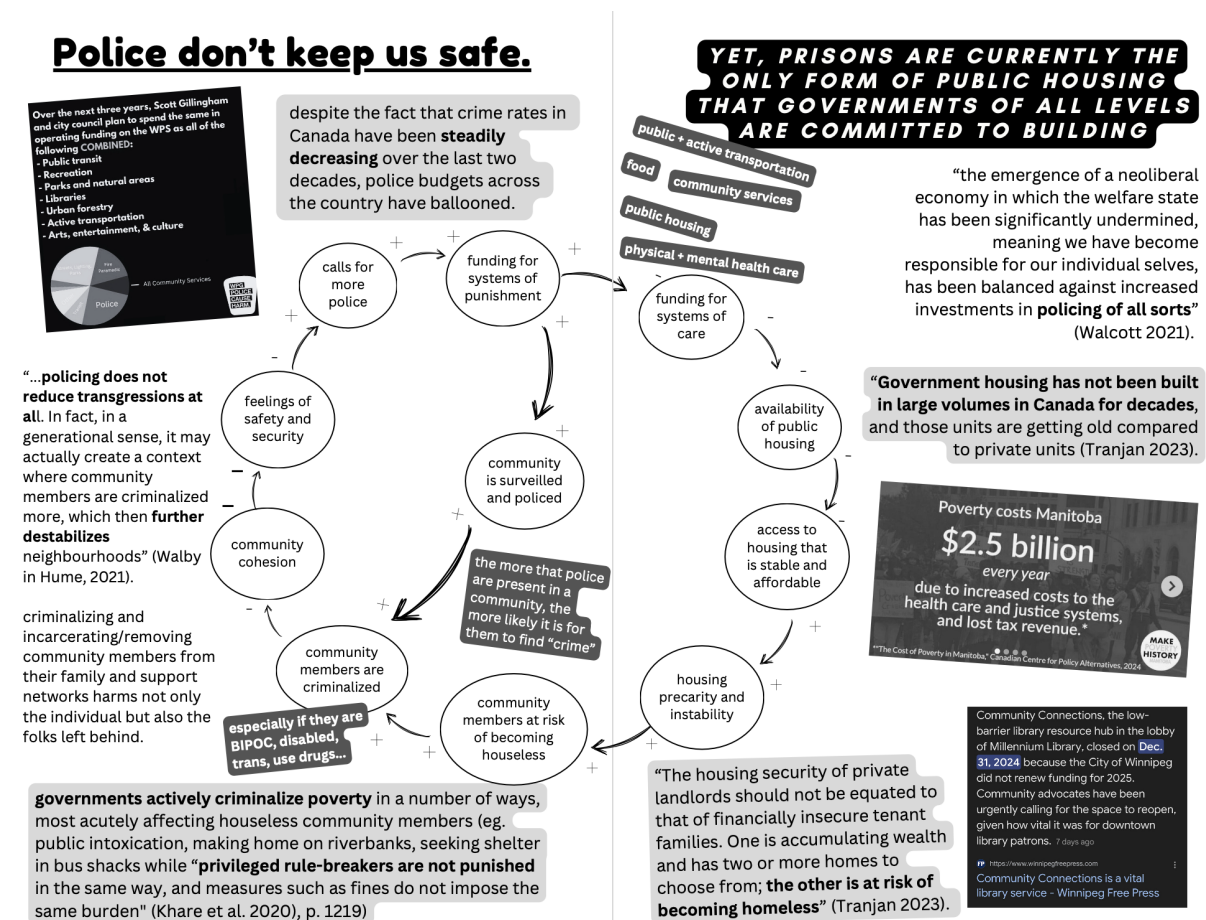
share of resources going to policing rather than supportive and preventative infrastructure in the neighbourhoods, such as public transit, libraries, and recreation facilities.:

All these [community services] are being cut in favour of the police and keeping rich people's property taxes low. (Ryan)

Making the connection between housing and policing, to me, is fascinating. We need to get people talking about community safety and what that means with having cops in our communities taking all the money. (Nicole)

The causal loop in *Figure 18* connects increased policing directly to heightened housing precarity, discussed as pushing people into conditions where they are criminalized.

Figure 18: Causal Loop: Police Don't Keep Us Safe
(Root Problems, pg. 11-12)



This loop shows how increased police presence leads to less safety and more criminalization, especially among racialized people and people experiencing houselessness, while diverting funding from other supports. Participants also highlighted gaps between current crisis response systems that rely on police, and services that prevent crises from happening. Eviction prevention, legal support, advocacy during RTB hearings, conflict resolution or mediation support to avoid RTB hearings,

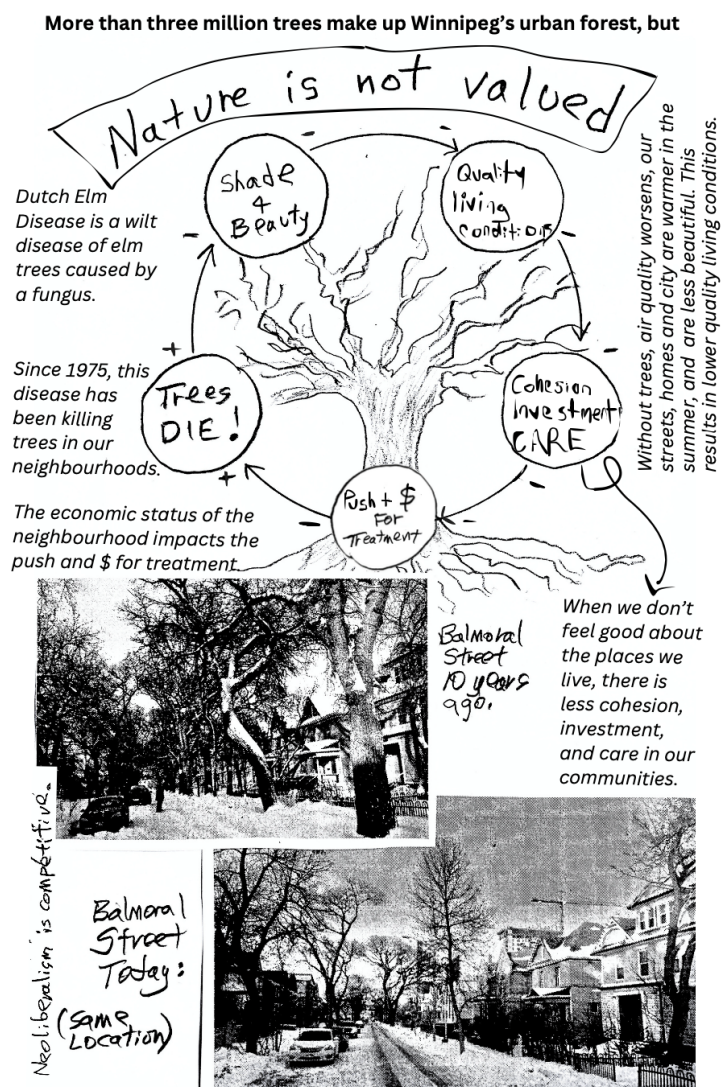
and income stabilization programs were identified as services that prevent eviction and increase safety in the neighbourhood.

People just don't understand, if you want a safe community, police are not the answer. If you want a safe community, you have to have damn good housing so people will want to live in that community and be invested in that community. And when that family thrives, that community will thrive. And housing will be stabilized because people will have pride in what's going on. (Susan)

Environmental Neglect

Another gap identified was the lack of responsibility and support for maintaining environmental infrastructure in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in West Broadway. *Figure 19* shows the striking loss of this green space in the last 10 years, and a causal loop of the impact of the loss of the urban forest.

Figure 19: Causal Loop: Winnipeg's Dying Urban Forest
(*Root Problems*, pg. 17)



In Winnipeg, the Dutch Elm Disease outbreak has devastated tree-lined streets, reducing aid quality, shade, and neighbourhood character. Treatment for the disease is expensive, and in a neighbourhood like West Broadway of which 92% of the population are tenants, this investment is generally not prioritized by landlords in the same way it may be by a homeowner who is impacted by the loss of trees. This loop links tree loss to decreased quality of life and lower community cohesion, under the broader theme of the devaluing of nature. Participants saw this as representative of how environmental quality in low-income neighbourhoods is undervalued and under-protected.

5.1.3 Analysis: “This System Is Not Made for Us”

This analysis frames Winnipeg’s tenant struggle within broader systems of power, connecting local examples to global and historical dynamics. By drawing on systems thinking and a radical care lens, the work highlights how structures of exclusion are both *identifiable* and *contestable* through coordinated, justice-based interventions (Stroth, 2015; Thompson, 2024). In a landscape understood as being shaped by structural inequalities, participants consistently depicted care work and resistance as inseparable. Community work, organizing, supporting neighbours, and contesting systemic injustices were described as not just reactive strategies, but crucial acts of survival and solidarity in a system structured for others. State actions, such as subsidy programs or policing, were understood as reinforcing the commodification and racialization in housing, maintaining tenant precarity. Within this context, radical care emerges as both an ethic and a political strategy (Thompson, 2024). Tenant organizing, mutual aid, and advocacy become practices of collective resistance and survival, contesting not just the outcomes, but the very structures, priorities, and rationalities of Winnipeg’s housing system.

Systems Thinking: Engaging with Structural Power Hierarchies

This research employs systems thinking as both a methodological and conceptual tool, acknowledging the housing system as an interconnected web of actors, institutions, and power relations (Gaetz & Buchnea, 2023; Gibb & Marsh, 2019; Stroth, 2015). By mapping causal loops and identifying leverage points, the analysis presented in *Root Problems* reveals how structural inequalities, embedded in colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal logics, produce and perpetuate tenant precarity. The housing crisis is understood not as an unintended malfunction, but a persistent consequence of political, economic, and social choices. Systems thinking encourages interventions targeted at roots and symptoms of structural power hierarchies, challenging both the market-driven priorities and the policies that uphold exclusionary urban development (Abson et al., 2017; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Stroth, 2015).

Profit Logics

Participants illustrated a housing system designed for commodification and profit extraction. Years of disinvestment in the Inner-City, loopholes in the RTA, the erosion of public housing, and a overreliance on the private sector have entrenched a market where affordability and dignity are out of reach for those with the least access to capital (Bernas et al., 2023; Distasio et al., 2020; Emms et al., 2025; MacKinnon, 2024). Inadequate rent controls were described as encouraging landlords to

pursue extraction through tools like AGIs, fueling gentrification, rising evictions, and permanent barriers to housing security for vulnerable tenants. These harms were conceptualized as being direct products of a market-oriented framework, where the private sector is relied on for something it was not designed to do: deliver affordable and dignified housing (Gallent, 2019; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). The result is a landscape where logics of profit take precedence over inclusion or justice.

Landlords Have the Power

Long-term underinvestment and regulatory neglect have given rise to “cowboy” landlords who exploit loopholes and evade accountability, often engaging in practices that reinforce gentrification and tenant precarity. Regulatory bodies such as the RTB, while intended to represent tenants and landlords equally, were commonly described as lacklustre, punitive, and more effective in maintaining exclusions than delivering justice. When undermined by loopholes like AGI guidelines, rent control in the RTA was presented as providing little meaningful protection. Sanctions against landlords were proved to be rare, with tenants facing disproportionate administrative and legal penalties and increased landlord intimidation and retaliation. This was understood as reinforcing housing insecurity and the normalization of tenant neglect. These dynamics, alongside state reliance on police-based safety and crisis responses, were framed as upholding the PIC, maintaining structural hierarchies of power (Gaetz, 2010; Herring et al., 2020; Khare et al., 2020; Vilenica et al., 2022). This landscape presents a wicked problem for housing justice that demands systems-level understanding and solutions (Gallent, 2019; Zellner & Campbell, 2015).

Colonial Logics

Participant accounts vividly illustrate how regulatory failure and landlord impunity perpetuate ongoing oppressions for Indigenous, newcomer, and low-income tenants. The burden of documentation, self-advocacy, and representation was described as unequally falling on those who face the most survival precarity, stigma, and discrimination. The persistent marginalization of Indigenous tenants, such as through exclusion from legal protection for cultural rituals, over-policing, and regulatory neglect, was presented as exemplifying the colonial roots of Winnipeg’s housing landscape. These cycles of dispossession and harm are sustained by forces of racial capitalism and weak tenant protections, which allow landlords to intimidate, extract debt, and evict as they see fit, fostering fear and insecurity (Dorries, 2019; Fluri et al., 2022; Toews, 2018; Tranjan, 2023). However, acts of resistance to these forces can also be seen. Simpson (2017) argues that reviving Indigenous ways of being is an act in resistance, so practices such as Indigenous tenants continuing to smudge in their apartments despite threats from landlords can be seen as resistance not only a housing system not protecting cultural rights, but to the colonial and racial logics that underlay this system.

A Crisis of Care: Community Intervention

Community advocates and tenant organizations were described as stepping in where the state has relinquished or inadequately fills care responsibilities, offering support in environments marked by

increasing burnout, under-resourcing, and emotional exhaustion. This reflects an overarching crisis of care produced by capitalist housing system in Winnipeg, with essential work that is so relied on to protect and sustain tenants being undervalued, under resourced, and undercompensated (Fields et al., 2024; Fraser, 2016, 2017; Thompson, 2024). Along with compensating for state failures, acts of care through the WBTC were presented as constituting resistance, seeking to disrupt cycles of harm, reimagine mutual aid, and reshape the priorities of local housing systems and policies.

5.2 Relational and Multiscalar Dimensions

Tenant experiences and responses to housing precarity in Winnipeg unfold within complex, layered systems. These span individual opening strategies, solidarity networks, and interactions with formal and informal institutional supports. Struggles against housing commodification are not merely individual or isolated incidents, but are deeply embedded in everyday relational geographies - webs of care, belonging and mutual support that stretch across households, neighbourhoods, and service ecosystems (Thompson, 2024). Understanding housing injustice requires attending to these relational networks in the multiscalar contexts in which they operate, recognizing how personal experiences of displacement or insecurity connect to broader political-economic processes (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Such perspectives emphasize that care, resistance, and survival are enacted within interconnected social and spatial scales simultaneously.

In this context, tenant organizing becomes a vital practice of relational care and collective action. The WBTC emerged repeatedly in participant narratives as a crucial collective response to systemic failures, bridging immediate tenant needs with long-term political education and advocacy. This section unpacks these dynamics in detail, exploring how tenants navigate institutional processes and informal support networks, mobilize collective power amid structural barriers, and sustain solidarity and care in the face of ongoing displacement pressures. It highlights those experiences at multiple scales: the intimate senses of home and community, neighbourhood activism, and interactions with provincial and federal policy arenas. As a result, the interconnected and relational nature of housing justice struggles in Winnipeg is presented.

5.2.1 Tenant Organizing and Relational Landscapes in West Broadway

Participants consistently agreed that formal and institutional supports do not provide adequate protections for tenants, leading for the emergence of tenant-led organizing to fill this gap. The WBTC was repeatedly described as a necessity produced by systemic failures.

If we had solid laws, we wouldn't need tenant advocacy. That's just a fact, right? But we need tenant advocacy because we don't have good systems to protect tenants. So, I think we need to get upstream and deal with that, and fix that, because then you will need less advocacy.
(*Susan*)

Pathways to Tenant Advocacy Work

Participants that live in or around West Broadway described strong attachments to the neighbourhood, valuing its accessibility, amenities, and community relationships:

All the positive things here are community driven grassroots things that are addressing real needs [...] that just shows what an amazing community West Broadway is. It's like, you literally can't go anywhere without running into someone. [...] I grew up in the suburbs of Winnipeg, and that literally never happens. You like, look the other way. It's so different here. (*Nicole*)

Spatially, West Broadway was portrayed as a hub for collective resistance, with decades of solidarity and underpinning efforts to maintain affordability and wellbeing:

West Broadway sets itself apart from most Canadian neighbourhoods in this unified approach that has consistently worked to benefit the community. And that resiliency, that resolute resiliency, has been, you know... just for a simple purpose of just making West Broadway a neighbourhood that somebody can comfortably live in at an affordable - as defined by West Broadway - amount. But that has been fought against by so many different periods of challenge [...] but what's been unrelenting is a set of organizations that came together just to keep West Broadway in a comfortable, affordable place. And a place worth being in. Worth caring about. (*Carlo*)

Several participants became involved in housing advocacy work through direct experiences of tenant struggles. For example, being pushed to take action after receiving a substantial rent increase leading to collective organizing in their building:

It's taken me like a long time to actually call myself a tenant organizer, because I didn't necessarily choose to do this. We were slapped with a 22% rent increase and then it was like, I have skills from organizing that could be used in a very tangible way. (*Nicole*)

Both workshop participants and interviewees identified the housing crisis as the outcome of interconnected systemic forces as opposed to a series of isolated problems. The need to make connections between different struggles, thereby moving beyond single-issue advocacy, building coalitions, and understanding the border context, was identified as a way to create change.

I'm part of a community of people who do political work, many different kinds, that are working on multiple issues, like don't stay focused on single issues. We see the connections between different campaigns, and those struggles. (*Ryan*)

For some, housing work grew out of other areas of activism, such as environmental, abolitionist, or anti-poverty work. Others brought experience from campaigns and advocacy around the *right to housing*. Most participants held multiple roles as organizers, advocates, residents, researchers, and front-line workers, anchored by a shared commitment to systemic change, community building, and

justice. Their diverse experiences collectively shaped a nuanced understanding of Winnipeg's housing systems and connection to other systems, its failures, and proposed strategies for change.

Education and Consciousness Raising

Education and consciousness raising were widely seen as central to building collective resistance through tenant organizing. Participants noted the prevalence of misinformation, individualized narratives, and the need to equip people with the ability to identify structural causes.

The [political] right is incredibly good at presenting a conspiratorial narrative [...] it identifies the same problems [as the left] but proposes completely incorrect and oppressive understandings of what is that root cause. I think if we are unable to help people to think critically, it's really easy to move from a shared position of opposition to the material oppression that they face into some 'blame it on immigrants' position. And so I think that encouraging that kind of critical thinking is very important in organizing. (*Stuart*)

WBTC activities, such as zine-making, information sessions, collective meetings with landlords, media outreach, collaboration with the R2HC, and advocacy through RTB processes, were seen as both practical interventions and opportunities for political education. The existence of the committee in itself was also presented as being vital to this struggle:

[T]he fact that [the WBTC] exists is the crucial thing. The skills to be more effective just feels secondary [...] the important thing is to create organizations like that and in doing so, spread the idea and the feeling that this type of action is possible. (*Ryan*)

Informal Supports and Everyday Care

Participants stressed the importance of informal, relationship-based support structures alongside formalized supports and organizing. Everyday acts, like having accessible spaces, sharing a coffee, and knowing someone will listen, were described as vital gateways to resource connections, community building, and further advocacy.

[The local cafe] Wannabes just up the street is important. There's some people who just go there for a cup of coffee, they know the owner, and hang out at the counter or whatever. (*Nicole*)

It's all about creating these relationships of trust between the organization and the community members. So, if somebody comes in for a beading workshop or something, they get to know [the organization] a little that way. Then when they have a housing issue, they know who to go and talk to and deal with that. So, it's support not just in terms of housing, but in terms of the whole community - through creating relationships and trust. (*Rachel*)

Somewhere like WBCO, you can have a place to meet and to use a printer and to like have some tea and coffee it's like... we need it. And it's crazy how like those aren't huge things but they're also everything. (*Violet*)

Personal connections between residents and housing advocates were described as not only facilitating access to services, but also as strengthening public policy advocacy by centering lived experiences.

Having a direct personal connection to the folks who are experiencing the issues, I think that is actually a really important part of public policy advocacy work because it's not just talking about 'the issue' by pointing to data, right? Like you know 'we have this many people waiting for social housing on the list'. It's useful, but it's not the whole picture. And being able to tell real stories of what people are experiencing helps the overall advocacy effort, I think. (*Monica*)

Persistence

Persistence emerged as a shared value, with participants stressing that substantial change in housing systems requires ongoing pressure, in the face of slow-moving and frustrating bureaucracies. One example was advocacy around *Bill 26*, aimed at restricting AGIs. Despite extensive work and consultation, the bill was dropped at the end of 2024, requiring the organizers to essentially restart the process. However, persistence in doing this important work was highlighted:

I'm very adamant. I want them to know we are not going away. You've killed [*Bill 26*], you've shuffled it over, but we got the new email. It's not going away. (*Violet*)

Persistence was also applied to changing narratives, especially in challenging stigma around social housing and pushing this topic into public and political discourse.

We've got to change the narrative so that people understand that social housing isn't a bad word. Because over the years, the narrative has skillfully shifted towards *affordable* and not *social*, with the idea that public housing is a bad thing. So, we're trying to reverse that stigma. And I think we've made a lot of gains in that. And that's really the activism that's done that by pushing, saying it, defining it, making clear that that's what's needed - that private sector housing is not solving the problem, hasn't solved the problem, won't solve the problem. Just being really clear on that. And that's changed. Like the mainstream media has picked up on that. And they now also look for it when politicians are talking about housing. They know that social housing is something that they need to be doing. So, I think we've made a fair bit of progress in that regard. You can never let up, right? Because the pressure from the other side is constant. They've got a lot more power. (*Tracy*)

Hard won policy gains, while sometimes modest, were attributed to ongoing community pressure. For example, a \$50 increase in the basic needs budget for people on social assistance, previously unchanged for two decades, was achieved through coordinated campaigning.

I don't think that ever would have happened without community groups calling on the government, putting pressure on them, to do that. Like it's just not a politically popular thing that our governments do, to increase welfare rates. So, that was a success. (*Monica*)

Participants situated the WBTC within a broader landscape of grassroots support, advocacy, and solidarity in West Broadway and the Inner-City. Through formal campaigns, informal supports, political education, and persistent engagement, this advocacy network was regarded as vital in resisting systemic forces in housing insecurity in Winnipeg. However, the need for systemic change was constantly highlighted.

5.2.2 Multiscalar Barriers to Systemic Change

Participants described a cycle in which under-resourced tenant groups, systemic depoliticization, precarious funding, and fear of retaliation all restrict the potential for sustained organizing, with pressures from hyperlocal to global levels. While grassroots action was named as a way to win tangible victories, structural conditions were identified as making it difficult to sustain or scale these efforts, even in a neighbourhood like West Broadway with deep traditions of community solidarity.

The lack of local examples of specifically tenant organizing was named as a barrier. Several interviewees compared the Winnipeg context with other Canadian cities, saying that while Manitoba's rental laws offer certain protections not found elsewhere, this was seen as a paradoxical situation, with fewer urgent crises meaning less mobilization:

I think also from when I first arrived it seemed like there was less of a history of organizing as tenants in Winnipeg [...]. In Ontario, the housing crisis is so pronounced. People have to fight for their homes because there is actually nowhere else for them to go. And the law in Manitoba, despite criticisms, is in many cases better here than it is in other places. (*Stuart*)

Ideals of home ownership were described as offering individual emancipation from landlords while simultaneously weakening solidarity with tenants:

I think part of the enduring appeal of home ownership is to not have a landlord [...] it has the effect of depoliticizing people, like the way that debt has sort of always done, right? Like having a huge mortgage to pay for your home will force people to sort of buckle down and narrow their political horizons often. I think that's a striking thing about Winnipeg in particular, the extent to which like working-class people own homes here. The lack of solidarity between homeowners and tenants is striking. (*Ryan*)

Participants linked present-day barriers to histories of working class depoliticization, particularly through high rates of home ownership. Several stressed that responsibility for change must grow from within communities:

There's no point in trying to start a revolutionary movement in this country because we're not at the point of even being capable or ready for that. We need to shift our culture, and we need to become more revolutionary people before we can start a project like that. (*Ryan*)

Even among participants, structural and cultural dynamics fed into feelings of disengagement and hopelessness.

I know rent increases are coming. So, do we try to organize my building? I know how much work it was, and like how much pain [a building who organized] went through. And for what? Like, they were, most of them, ended up being displaced. (*Violet*)

People are upset from experiencing the conditions that we're dealing with and feeling kind of disempowered, I guess. But I don't know why that energy isn't more directed towards formal organizing. (*Marcus*)

Underlying this approach is a broader vision and the need for responsibility for change to come from communities. Part of the WBTC's work was identified as building a collective memory of resistance, along with the skills to do so, through fostering solidarity and developing a shared political identity to shift from individualized coping to collective action.

The Home as Intimate

Housing struggles take on an added dimension when home, normally a refuge, becomes the central site of conflict. This was described as being destabilizing and emotionally exhausting, especially for housing advocates and organizers facing housing insecurity themselves.

The refuge you have away from activism is your home. But if the home is a site of conflict, if home is what you're defending, if this thing that's supposed to be your safe refuge, your safe haven from the world, that's the thing that's at the center of the of your organizing, the center of the conflict, I think it's a lot scarier and can be a lot harder [...] it's easy for me as someone who's not facing eviction in my home to work with tenants who are facing eviction, but that's because I can go home and it becomes like the issue that I'm organizing around or supporting people with. But it's not the issue that I face when I first wake up or come home to. (*Stuart*)

My home is just very sacred, like you know... I got the candles, I got the nice lighting, I have a bajillion plants... and it was like "my home". And it was very hard for me to [face the AGI]. It really broke something in me a little bit and so I had to do some counseling and just... how am I going to manage that? How can I do that? What does that look like? When [housing problems are] in so many parts of my life: my work and my research and my personal life. So, that's hard. It's where your boundaries get kind of torn up. (*Violet*)

In these situations, home was described as changing from a place of refuge to a site of conflict and distress, which blurs the boundaries between personal well-being, activism, and research. Similarly,

many community workers and organizations were described as being in a constant state of crisis response, which makes it very challenging to take the time or build the skills that are needed for long term, strategic systems change.

I think about seeing people who are in this role balance what they need to do for themselves and what they need to do for others. And I would say because a lot of non-profit workers are not paid very well, not trained very well, not very well educated [...] you got just a lot of pressures on you in these types of roles externally and internally, and then maybe not always all of the skills to actually manage that. I wish that these roles were funded better so that they could hire people that had higher levels of education and higher levels of training so that they could do this work without it constantly feeling overwhelming. And like, if I had more skills and more training to make my very difficult job less difficult on me, that that would go a long way. (*Chris*)

The topic of undertrained and undercompensated community workers was connected to unstable and insufficient funding as a significant structural barrier facing community organizations that provide supports to tenants.

Scale of Advocacy: Meeting Needs vs. Systems Change

Tensions between meeting urgent needs and pursuing transformative change was a consistent theme. Participants continually referred to non-profits, community organizations, and advocacy groups that provide essential resources to those who are struggling, through food banks, shelter supports, and programs like *Rent Assist*, as examples. However, many also recognized how these provisional measures were upholding a broken system, allowing deeper structural investments to be avoided and maintaining the status quo.

Food banks are absolutely essential work so that people don't starve. But if those food banks weren't there in our current system, would people revolt and demand change more quickly? We kind of have this system where we're like, 'okay, let's keep it under control, keep the system running', and those things like food banks and community organizations help to keep capitalism running in a way. And they are absolutely taking care of the community, but it's doing it in a particular way that's not necessarily changing the systems that are creating the problem to begin with. That's always what I'm trying to think of, how do we create more non-market housing, or how do we remove housing from the market? How do we actually change the systems? But it's very challenging. (*Rachel*)

Reactive vs. Proactive Mobilization

Participants described the importance of encouraging tenant organization before there is a moment of crisis. Tenants also consistently contact the WBTC when facing an issue in their building, which was attributed to publicity, media attention, and educational resources, however, examples of a tenant association that was created before a moment of crisis was non-existent. A theme, and possible reason for this, that appeared many times was the lack of examples long term, successful tenant

organizing in Winnipeg. However, antagonism towards landlords was cited as common in the neighbourhood, demonstrating that tenants are unhappy and understood as a place in which proactive organizing should be encouraged.

There's such an appetite for housing organizing because it impacts so, so many of us, like it impacts 92% of West Broadway. (*Marcus*)

What I want is for people to feel and understand that they have a shared common interest, and for them to see the possibility of working together. And then figuring out a way for them to do that, so that everyone is on board, or that they all have a stake in it, and they all are able to be involved in addressing the problem. (*Stuart*)

On the topic of relationship building, organizing, and the impact of displacement, participants said.

One of the things that makes organizing very possible and that gives power to organizing is when you have relationships and people that are looking out for each other. People who care about their neighbours and already have relationships and care about like the place that they're in.... feel like a sense of belonging to the place that they're in [...] but when you have a rent increase or an eviction you lose all of that, like that stuff can take years and years to develop. (*Marcus*)

It was also made clear that mobilization work should not be romanticized, as those involved in this work were pushed into doing it out of necessity, not choice.

My biggest role in community over the years has become through activism, but it's not like I want to do this work. I get a lot out of it, but it's just because of the pain that drives it. (*Violet*)

Discussions on the benefits of building tenant networks before a time of crisis were plentiful, especially in the focus on building strong and resilient communities that can respond to issues of housing insecurity when needed, instead of relying just on groups that gather out of necessity in times of crisis.

5.2.3 Analysis: Complex Realities

This analysis explores how housing injustice is co-produced both through structural and lived experiences across intersecting scales. Drawing on participant reflections, it foregrounds how current housing systems disrupt not only individual tenant security, but also webs of care, belonging, and community that extend across households, neighbourhoods, and institutional systems. Relational perspectives emphasize that survival and resistance are embedded in collective networks, where everyday acts of solidarity become infrastructures for more expansive forms of justice (Fields et al., 2024; Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Thompson, 2024).

By tracing connections between personal, community, and systemic processes, tenant struggles in Winnipeg are situated within broader political and economic structures, including policies that

privilege property owners, state disinvestment from public housing, and global practices of financialization (Fields et al., 2024; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Polanska et al., 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Care emerges as political and multiscalar, enacted both in daily resistance and in mobilizing wider coalitions for systemic transformation (Thompson, 2024). This framing reveals housing insecurity and resistance as fundamentally relational, shaped by historic and ongoing multiscalar forces of dispossession, austerity, and collective adaption.

Housing Precarity as Relational and Multiscalar

Tenant responses to housing precarity in Winnipeg unfolded through complex, layered systems that span individual coping mechanisms, grassroots solidarity, and institutional interactions. Formal services such as the RTB, legal clinics, and social assistance, and informal networks in community spaces and neighbourhood relationships were described. In their roles, participants discussed “home” as an intimate refuge and political site, especially among tenant advocates who themselves are renters, and have faced threats of displacement, rent hikes, and evictions while providing support for these situations through their work. This blurring of personal well-being and political struggle complicates housing activism and care. However, relational and multiscalar perspectives were connected to strengthening tenant capacity and reinforcing broader advocacy efforts by centering lived experiences of tenants, and the importance of strong communities.

The Need for Community Led Change

Participants highlighted the necessity of programs that meet urgent needs, such as food banks, shelter support, and anti-poverty programs. While such supports are vital, they were also understood as risking perpetuating current systems unless paired with a push for larger systemic change. This understanding expresses the nuance of advocate efforts in recognizing the importance of programs who that provide immediate support, while refusing purely “technical fix” approaches that rely on problem solving logics and fail to question the origins of the issues being faced (Aalbers, 2016; August, 2022; Cox, 1981; Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Tranjan, 2023). This duality is reflected in organizing efforts that focus on meeting immediate needs and changing policy. Building shared political identities and collective memories of resistance was seen as essential in moving beyond fragmented survival strategies towards community transformation. This process requires nurturing trust and belonging within neighbourhoods fractured by displacement and eviction. Relational geographies are central to these struggles, as reflected in everyday acts of care and resistance that foster resilience amid adversity (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso, 2018; Polanska et al., 2024; Simpson, 2017).

Housing insecurity is deeply entangled with emotional and relational geographies shaping place, belonging, and community (Fields et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024). Everyday acts, like sharing a coffee or talking to a trusted person, were described as helping tenants access resources and sustain community networks of resistance. Participant narratives of persistent motivation amid slow progress echo everyday resistance and *caring-with* as ongoing, relational commitments requiring resilience (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso, 2018; Tronto, 2013). Yet, systemic factors like transphobia and racism were described as manifesting within some community spaces - pointing to the embedded nature of such forces and challenging narratives about the inherent

goodness of concepts like “community” and “care” without intentional and critical consideration of who these spaces are for (Hobart & Kneese, 2020). The overarching theme of relational and place attachments reveals that care and resistance are deeply interwoven, with tenants struggling as a part of a web of connections that can be places of adversity, persistence, and hope. This aligns with Thompson’s (2024) radical care framework, which positions care as political, emotional, and spatial.

Tenant Organizing as a Relational Necessity

The WBTC’s mere existence fostered optimism among many participants, countering the isolation and fragmentation induced by neoliberal housing regimes (Polanska et al., 2024; Simpson, 2017; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Persistence emerged as a critical theme among participants, describing enduring slow bureaucracies and political setbacks, such as the dropped *Bill 26*, with commitments to unwavering resistance. Changes in public discourse, such as social housing again being discussed in the media, and modest policy gains, such as increases to social assistance budgets, were presented as the tangible impact of ongoing community pressure amid systemic pushbacks.

Participants consistently framed the WBTC as a vital community-led response emerging due to the failure of existing laws and institutions to deliver secure housing, which can be understood as filling a gap in care (Fraser, 2016; Thompson, 2024). Deep attachments to West Broadway’s amenities and strong community ties were described as fostering a sense of collective identity that motivated participants to organize, often beginning from direct experiences of housing precarity, such as large AGIs. This presents a topic that requires further investigation, raising questions about whose suffering becomes visible and worthy of care, cautioned by Hobart and Kneese (2020). This highlights the need for the provision of care to move away from motivations of empathy and towards those of justice and transformation. Here comes the need for larger coalition building, as called for by participants through homeowner and renter solidarity, multi-issue advocacy, and intra-activist collaboration, cross-struggle. The WBTC’s organizing efforts were described as grounded in both individual needs and collective resistance to systemic forces reshaping the city. This demonstrates a commitment to critical reflections on how interconnected systemic issues require moving towards political education and consciousness raising (Fields et al., 2024; Stroth, 2015; Tranjan, 2023).

Countering Individualization: Education, Consciousness and Community

Participants reflected on tenant organizing efforts in Winnipeg remaining largely reactive, mobilizing in moments of crisis, such as AGIs or eviction threats. However, there was broad agreement on the need for proactive, sustained networks that cultivate resilience and collective capacity before emergencies arise. Such organizing is rooted in neighbourly relationships that link care and political power (De Gasperi & Walliser Martinez, 2024; Polanska et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). Despite Winnipeg’s relatively strong tenant protections compared to other provinces in Canada, participants highlighted how barriers like systemic depoliticization, precarious funding, and fear of retaliation impede sustained organizing. Cultural dynamics, including the widespread norm of home ownership, were said to complicate building tenant solidarity and contribute to working-class depoliticization (Tranjan, 2023).

Political education was widely identified as essential in combating misinformation and individualizing narratives that blame tenants for their precarious conditions. WBTC activities, like zine production, tenant meetings, and media engagement, and collaboration with organizations like the R2HC, serve not only as practical advocacy functions, but also cultivate critical consciousness. The systems mapping methodology used in this thesis reflects a commitment to this strategy, contributing to skills that can be used to continue to educate the community on the complex, interconnected issue of housing insecurity (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Hall & Massey, 2010; Stroth, 2015; Tranjan, 2023; Zellner & Campbell, 2015).

Navigating Service Ecosystems

Tenant and housing advocate engagements were described as occurring within multi-layered, complex service ecosystems. The WBTC and other community organizations were discussed as being crucial connectors between tenants and bureaucracies, facilitating knowledge sharing and support. Participants described exhausting tenant journeys through formal services like the RTB, legal clinics, social services, alongside informal services, such as churches, tenant groups, and community organizations. The RTB, while central in official housing services, was constantly described as impersonal and underfunded, necessitating this broader network to fill in care gaps. Providers themselves were said to be stretched thin, reflecting the systemic crisis of care underpinning tenant insecurity (Fields et al., 2024; Fraser, 2016, 2017; Thompson, 2024). Root Problems highlighted how housing precarity is not just an individual infrastructure, but a system involved layered supports, community knowledge, and ongoing collective adaptation - central to scales and relationships present in practices of radical care (Thompson, 2024).

5.3 Focusing on Expansive Imaginaries and Actions

While much of the results and analysis so far has highlighted the challenges and harms faced by tenants in the housing system in Winnipeg, it is equally important to examine the creative, future-oriented responses being produced by tenant communities. This work is motivated by the imagining of systems beyond housing existing solely for profit through collectively naming needs, shifting narratives, and actively imagining and enacting alternative housing futures (Thompson, 2024). Rooted in traditions of resistance and *caring-with*, these expansive imaginaries not only challenge present structures of commodification and exclusion, but offer alternatives to these systems (Simpson, 2017; Sungu et al., 2023; Thompson, 2024; Tronto, 2015). In a context shaped by market logics and colonial histories, storytelling practices like zine creation resist narratives that render tenant struggles insignificant or inevitable (Ashtari et al., 2022; Duncombe, 1997; Hall, 2024). Thompson's (2024) radical care for housing justice framework demonstrate that building just and caring housing systems must begin with imagining these systems differently.

5.3.1 Naming Needs and Shifting Narratives

Workshop and zine making exercises helped highlight how current legislation and regulatory bodies, particularly the RTB, operate reactively and largely serve landlord interests. The "*what if...*" activity helped to reimagine these processes, for example through imagining if the RTB was proactive,

enforcing tenant protections, tracking repeatedly offending landlords, and preventing problems before they arise. The themes of these imagined futures will be explored in this section.

Systemic Policy Shifts for Inclusive Futures

Participants were clear on the need for major changes in current housing policy, while repeatedly cautioned against one-size-fits-all policy fixes in a country as large and diverse as Canada. Participants also expressed frustration at misguided policy responses that scapegoat foreign buyers, international students, or other groups, instead of addressing the root causes housing injustice. Despite decades of record investment in homelessness strategies at all government levels, participants also observed that numbers of houseless, or precariously housed, persons continue to climb. This was attributed to failures to address structural issues and localize solutions.

Be careful what you wish for with the federal government somehow trying to find a simple solution to a vastly complex Canadian housing market [... in the 90s] the federal government should have just transferred money to provinces to distribute for bottom-up solutions, not-top down [...] because how can a policy and program that is well suited to high-cost Toronto[...] also fit in Winnipeg? (*Carlo*)

Instead, ideas for shifts centered on national funding frameworks that adequately resource bottom-up, locally driven solutions, with provincial governments channelling money to communities and neighbourhoods who are best positioned to determine their own needs. Such proposals included proactive enforcement bodies, universal rent regulation, anti-displacement legal tools, and the bottom-up distribution of resources. It was emphasized that Winnipeg's housing future can only be shifted towards one of security, inclusion, and care through these forms of systems level change.

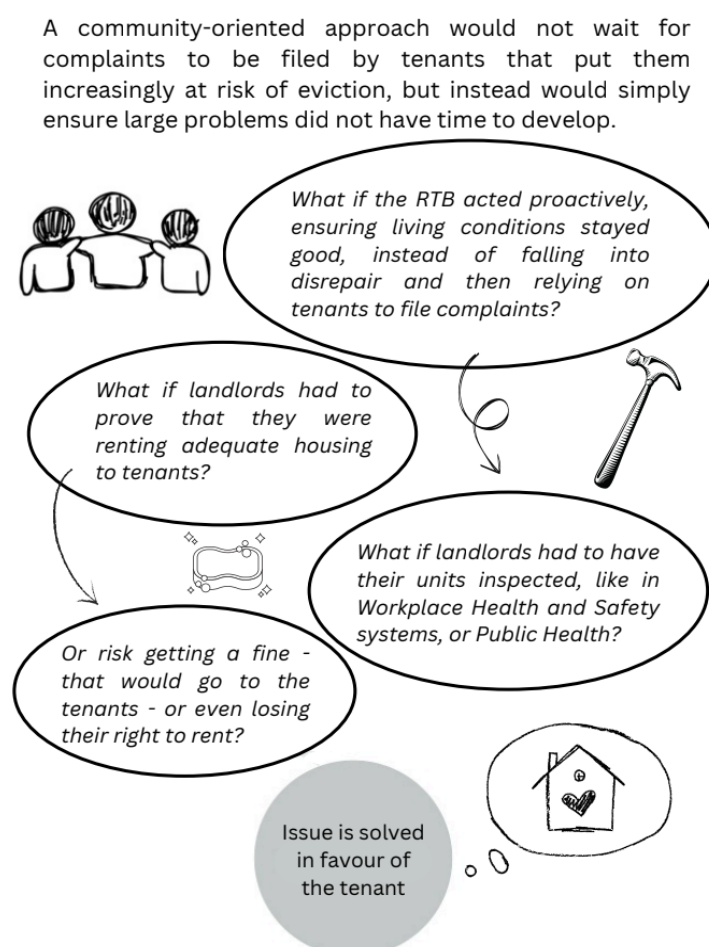
In *Root Problems* (p. 6), participants drew on Emms et al. (2025) to theorize about an alternative future in which strong rent regulations, especially around AGIs, existed in Winnipeg, calling for the following changes in current legislation:

- *Remove the \$1650 cap on when the rent regulation applies to ensure that all rental properties in Manitoba are covered by rent regulation.*
- *Calculate rent increases for capital expenses over a 10 to 25-year amortization period, after which the rent increases should be reversed.*
- *Remove the 20-year exemption for rent regulation on new rental properties.*
- *Limit above-guideline rent increase to no more than 9% above guideline and no more than 3% /year.*
- *Eliminate rent discounting which in some cases has the base rent well above the rent control guideline, with a 50% discount in the rent.*

This page concludes by saying: *What if seeing painters in your building didn't fill you with dread, because you knew this was just a new coat of paint and not a huge rent increase? This could be our reality* - containing a vision of housing regulation geared towards stability and justice, not landlord profit.

Similarly, *Figure 20* depicts an imagination of a proactive RTB system which places the onus of proving high quality housing on landlords instead of tenants:

Figure 20: What if the RTB was Proactive?
(*Root Problems*, Pg. 8)



The interviews further revealed how policy and law can, or could, be mobilized towards tenant protection. For instance, one participant described a legal challenge in Ontario that worked to push government responsibility for houselessness, arguing that as houselessness is a direct result of policy and housing legislation, the state has a duty to prevent this harm under Canada’s commitment to the *right to housing* in the CESC and the NHS. While unsuccessful, they discussed a judge who recognizing the validity of the argument, observing that further work in this direction could result in government obligation to prevent housing precarity.

Decommodifying Housing and Levelling Power

Participants repeatedly voiced the urgent need to challenge the capitalist logic in which housing functions as a profit-driven commodity rather than a social good. This call for decommodification highlighted the need for housing use to be shifted towards a fundamental human right and collective need. Participants discussed how this necessitated making the “business of housing” less profitable:

So how do we decommodify an aspect of the market [...] to help stabilize the market and provide an alternative? Capital chases profit, so the only way to achieve some of that is to make the profitable buildings less profitable. (*Carlo*)

Root Problems visualized how removing profit motives from housing correlates with better maintenance and tenant stability, as seen in *Figure 21*:

Figure 21: What if Our Homes Were in Good Conditions?
(*Root Problems*, pg. 10)



Several participants suggested introducing landlord licensing and training requirements, covering tenant rights, anti-discrimination law, and basic upkeep standards, as a way to address the imbalance of power and create accountability for landlords.

I think the government needs to have a more legitimate relationship with those who get to landlord in Manitoba. There needs to be some sort of body that - if your tenant comes in with a complaint to a landlord - provides some information to a landlord, or threatens a penalty to a landlord, without a tenant having to go to a hearing. I think we need that type of oversight on that, on this business that, you know, on the economy of being a landlord in Manitoba. (*Chris*)

We should have licensing for landlords, and they had to take a course in [discrimination and stereotyping] and what is illegal. That should be explained to them. Because then you have no grounds to stand on. If you've got your license to rent here, then you should know that. (*Susan*)

In this landscape, collective tenant empowerment was seen as one of the most powerful tools for disrupting landlord authority and market norms. Stronger tenant organizing, solidarity networks, and direct-action tactics like rent strikes, were highlighted as ways to reclaim power.

You can point to [the *Parkdale Organize* rent strike in Toronto] and say ‘these tenants went on a rent strike, and they refused to pay their [AGI], and it lasted for months and months, and they had all this harassment by the landlord, but they were able to win’. But yeah, it really requires encouraging people to realize that, and become their bravest self. And I think that’s only possible when it’s collective form. (*Stuart*)

Policy reform campaigns were also cited as pressure points. While a recent push to reform the RTA through *Bill 26* was abandoned under landlord lobbying pressure, participants felt that sustained tenant mobilization could influence future attempts.

There was a conversation in the fall about opening the [RTA] and reworking some of it, and apparently there was pressure from landlords and that’s why [*Bill 26*] got dropped [...] but if there’s more pressure from tenants, and tenant allies, saying like ‘hey this is something that’s really important, we need to change how this is structured’, I think there could be possibilities there. (*Rachel*)

Small acts, such as sending collective letters to landlords, were framed as symbolic and strategic actions to send messages of unity and build tenant power:

Even writing a letter to your landlord is such a statement of collectivity. And it’s a warning to the landlord, basically that there’s more of us than there are of you, and we’re unhappy with you, and we demand these things. But it was the ‘or else’ that everybody was kind of tripping up on... they were like, ‘we can’t force our landlord to do this’ and it’s like, you’re right we can’t, but also we kind of can, ultimately. (*Nicole*)

For some, decommodification also meant re-centering housing around human relationships, with neighbours, the land, and the community, not just financial metrics:

What are our actual human relationships to each other and to the properties like the places that we’re living? How do we connect with our neighbours, or the lands that we’re living in, or the more than human creatures who are around us? [...] Are the values that we want in a housing system actually being reflected in the housing system? And how do we get there if they’re not? (*Rachel*)

Alternative Housing Models

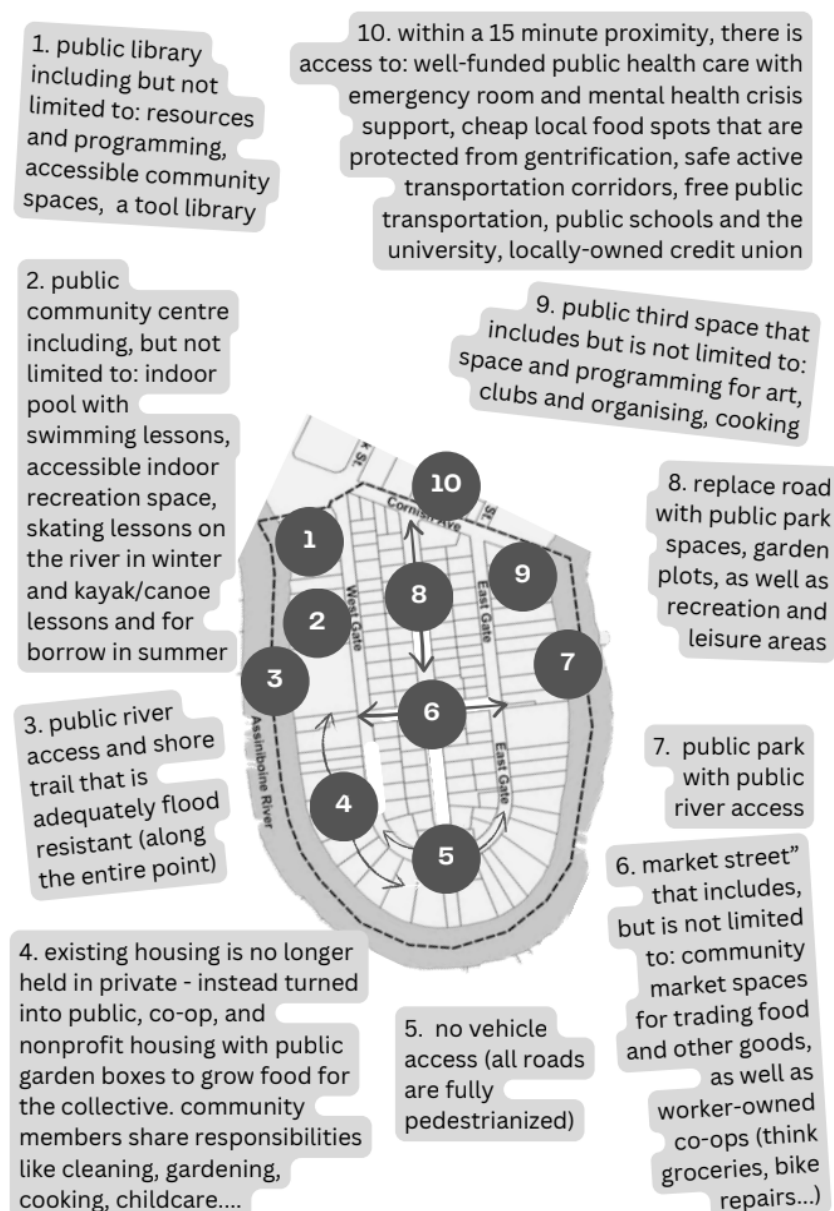
Workshop and interview discussions frequently turned to alternative tenure modes - such as co-operatives, CLTs, and non-profit housing - as systemic tools to permanently insulate housing from speculation and commodification. Co-ops were specifically mentioned as not just as affordable

option, but as social infrastructures that combine governance, mutual aid, and inclusivity, challenging nuclear family norms and fostering community-based living:

I was thinking about different expressions of housing organizing that is not directly about antagonizing a landlord, but sort of like transcending the landlord tenant relationship. Like co-op housing. (*Ryan*)

The “*what if...*” workshop exercise resulted in a number of proposals for alternative housing models, as seen in one page in *Root Problems* imagining turning *Armstrong’s Point*, a wealthy, formerly gated, enclave located next to West Broadway, into a CLT, as presented in *Figure 22*.

Figure 22: What if We Abolished the Gates?
(*Root Problems*, pg. 14)



This page was presented as a tongue-and-cheek response to the West Broadway CLT community consultation meetings, which presented the accumulation of present and former rooming houses as sites for the new CLT. Instead, the seizure of land from the wealthiest residents in the area was imagined. Participants also drew attention to the lack of public awareness about existing non-market housing in Winnipeg, with many residents unaware of nearby co-ops. This invisibility was seen as a current barrier, but also an opportunity to build broader political support for non-market expansion.

A lot of non-market housing in Winnipeg is just overlooked. I think most of the population just isn't even aware of it, like a lot of people don't really know about these co-ops in West Broadway, or the fact that they provide [RGI] housing, and they don't really know about Westminster Housing. (*Marcus*)

Expanding non-market housing was imagined not only through serving those on low-incomes, but also by encouraging moderate and higher-income households to choose co-ops or non-profits, thereby normalizing them as desirable, mixed-income, long-term alternatives to the speculative market.

Non-profit has to start thinking and being more creative [...] right now, if you're in a non-profit, you have to be low-income. Well, maybe not. Maybe the only way to make this work is to turn everything upside down a little bit and say that 'I, as a modest or high-income earner, am choosing to live in this project because it is actually a non-profit making project'. (*Carlo*)

A former CLT in Winnipeg's North End was presented as an example of community stewardship over the land, with participants discussing involvement and interest in the current CLT project in West Broadway. Discussions highlighted how constraining speculative real estate dynamics can help secure long-term affordability.

I'm really excited to see what this land trust is all about in West Broadway, because it feels like a really interesting opportunity to do something different, and also build on a legacy of co-ops and cooperative living in the area. (*Nicole*)

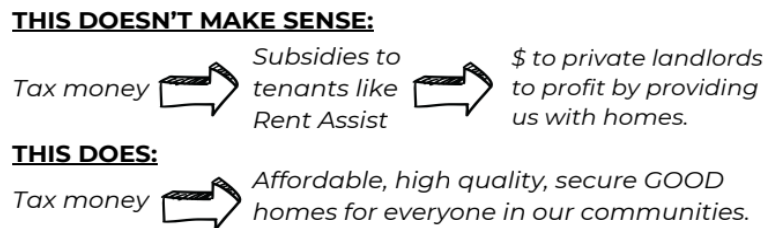
Along with proposals for alternative types of housing, participants repeatedly called for substantial public investment in and protection of existing social housing.

There's just no way around the fact that we need to invest public funding to create, expand, and maintain social housing, to make sure there's housing available at a low cost for people who need it. (*Tracy*)

Another page in *Root Problems* linked this demand to criticisms of current public spending priorities, like *Rent Assist*, that channel large sums of public money to private landlords, instead of

building, repairing, or expanding public housing. *Figure 23* imagines a reallocation of these funds into permanently affordable, community-owned homes.

Figure 23: What if Public Money Provided Affordable, High-Quality Housing?
(*Root Problems*, pg. 16)



Participants repeatedly identified alternative housing models, not as experiments, but as necessary systemic tools to secure community-controlled, secure, and affordable housing. Whether in the form of co-ops, CLTs, or expanded, well-funded public housing, these approaches were presented as concrete ways to resist commodification and re-centre housing as a long term public good.

Decolonizing Housing and Embedding Indigenous Rights

Participants highlighted that any long-term solutions to Winnipeg's housing crisis must go beyond technical improvements to actively dismantling colonial structures and centering Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous houselessness was understood as not simply lacking a place to sleep, but as a direct outcome of systemic colonial dispossession. In this framing, housing insecurity was presented as inseparable from the historic and ongoing theft of land, the suppression of sovereignty, and ongoing colonization. Several participants also explored the question of how non-market housing conditions can reproduce colonial dynamics.

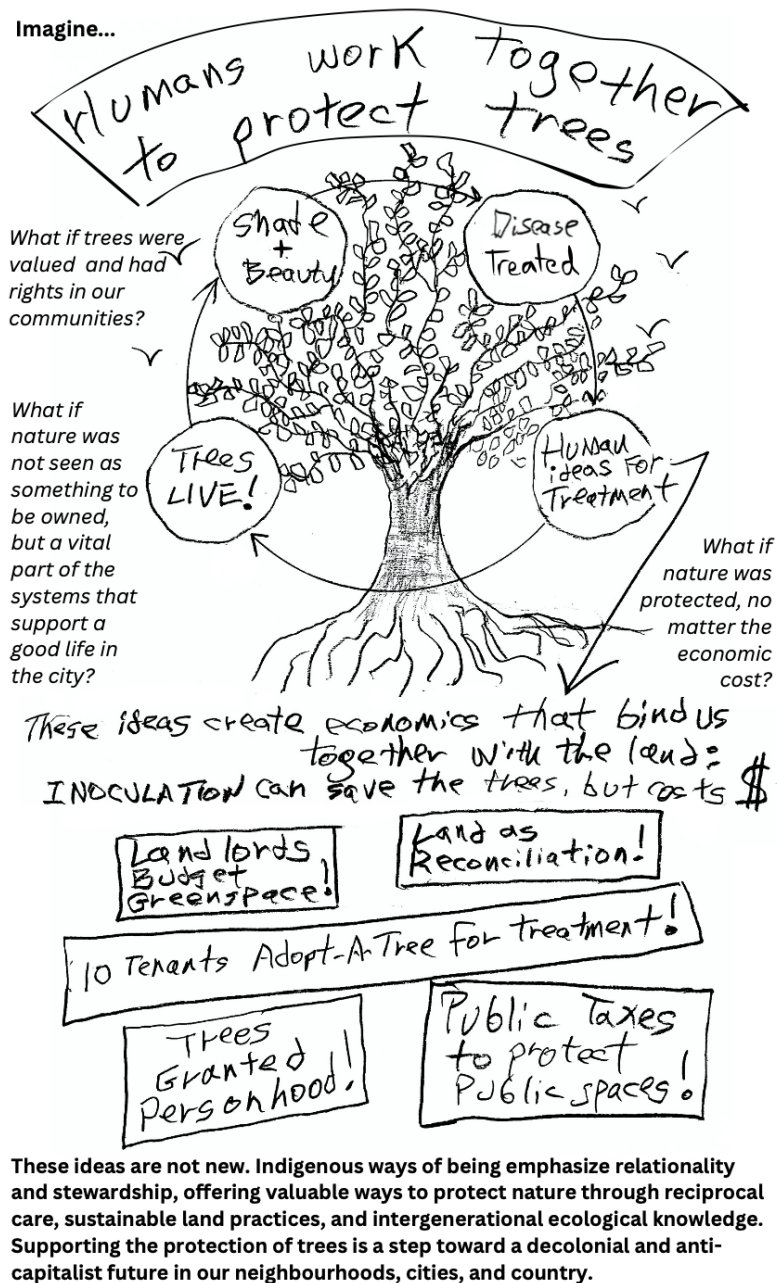
What does housing mean, and especially non-market housing, mean in a colonial context? How do we remove housing from the market? Is it possible to also remove it from that colonial kind of system as well? [Because] dispossession for Indigenous people is also what enables possession by non-Indigenous people and private property. (*Rachel*)

Questions about how to centre Indigenous rights in housing futures were also raised:

How do we recognize and uphold Indigenous rights to land, to culture, to self-determination, to language, all of those kinds of things within an urban space? Because right now they sort of just aren't. (*Rachel*)

Themes of environmental stewardship emerged alongside visions of Indigenous sovereignty, linking the care of the land and community as being inseparable responsibilities. This was echoed in the workshop, with an imagination of a future where the elm trees in Winnipeg are protected, as seen in *Figure 24*.

Figure 24: *What if We Worked Together to Protect Trees?*
(*Root Problems*, pg. 18)



This page connected ecological protection and housing justice with local Indigenous ways of being. Concrete examples of Indigenous-led housing action and visions were offered as both proof of what is possible, and inspiration for future projects:

I think a lot about the *Neeginan Plan* for Main Street as a really inspiring moment where [Indigenous peoples] in Winnipeg were imagining a city of their own making, which would have included a lot of affordable housing. Autonomous, sovereign, housing. (Ryan)

Kinew Housing started out of a group of Indigenous women that saw kids and families sleeping in their cars and said ‘no, we’re gonna get some housing and we’re gonna let people move into them’ and then they eventually got government funding and they became the oldest and eventually the largest of Manitoba’s Indigenous non-profits. (*Emma*)

Participant visions for housing futures in Winnipeg consistently placed Indigenous sovereignty and decolonial practice at the centre, calling for housing systems that not only meet material needs, but also embed Indigenous planning and design principles, restore land relationships, and dismantle colonial structures that continue to govern who has access to a home, and on whose terms.

5.3.2 Analysis: Reimagining the Housing System

This analysis situates practices within the WBTC as central to the process of reimagining the housing system in Winnipeg. Drawing on participant reflections and *Root Problems*, it foregrounds how housing justice is enacted through a collective naming of needs, creation of counter-narratives, and place making strategies that challenge systems of profit, speculation, and bureaucratic exclusion. The collective imagination of emotional, relational, and political landscapes emerges as both personal and political infrastructure for envisioning and building alternative housing futures (Thompson, 2024).

Participants consistently emphasized that changing housing systems requires proactive counter visions, such as the decommodification of housing, embedding Indigenous rights, and new models of housing tenures. Central to these imaginaries was the rejection of a housing system driven by profit and extraction, and the call for a system centred on equity, collective rights, and long-term affordability. By centering future-oriented approaches, tenants can push their imaginaries of housing futures beyond crisis management lenses towards the just systemic transformation of current systems.

Challenging Crisis Logics and Technocratic Fixes

Tenant organizing was described by participants as moving beyond traditional service delivery or individual advocacy, instead working to disrupt dominant legal and policy frameworks that reinforce injustice. For example, legal practices that are classified as unjust, such as unregulated AGIs, and bureaucratic indifference were framed as harms sustained by the current housing regime. Participants discussed the limitations of crisis management and technical fixes, which often reinforce status quo inequalities by treating suffering as apolitical and inevitable (Hall & Massey, 2010; Thompson, 2024). This was done through identifying leverage points in causal loops of the current housing system, and building off of these points of change to imagine different ways the system could work (Abson et al., 2017; Schöpke et al., 2024; Stroth, 2015). Through naming unmet housing needs, participants not only revealed pervasive regulatory failures, such as the reactive RTB system, but actively reoriented urban imaginaries towards transformation through proposals for systems change, rather than perpetual crisis response.

Storytelling: What if...?

The use of creative practices, particularly in zine making, embodies a focus on storytelling as a central strategy used by the WBTC in challenging dominant housing narratives. As requested by the WBTC, the methodology in this project built on this practice. The “*what if*” narrative exercise and desire for the inclusion of future imaginaries in *Root Problems* demonstrates a commitment from the WBTC to using stories to imagine how things could be different, instead of just focusing on current harms. Through this process, participants produced interconnected analyses of housing injustice - shifting perspectives from isolated incidents to the recognition of layered and systemic injustice. These acts reflect the move from surviving in systems of injustice, towards imagining and demanding the conditions necessary for thriving (Duncombe, 1997; Fields et al., 2024). Through this process, the dismantling of racial capitalist, cis-heteropatriarchal, settler colonial systems were understood not just in abstract theory, but in the embodied everyday struggles of participants. Imaginaries of eradicating private property ownership and market-oriented housing policy connect directly to Gilmore’s (2022) refusal of the inevitability of current systems, centering abolition in visions for the future.

Imagining Otherwise: Decommodified, Equitable, Decolonial Futures

Across participant perspectives, transformation of current systems was consistently tied visions for the future. These imaginations highlighted the need for strong public investment and the bottom-up distribution of resources, arguing that meaningful change cannot occur through reforms that merely change the margins of landlord or market logics (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Stroth, 2015; Tranjan, 2023). This included the rejection of a housing system driven by profit and extraction and advocacy for decommodification, collective rights, and long-term affordability. Strategies included proposals for proactive enforcement, expand rent regulation, and support for alternative tenure models, such as CLDs.

This work of reimagining housing futures was informed by engagement with Indigenous land relations and decolonial thinking. While recognising their own identities as largely non-Indigenous, participants drew on visions of Indigenous urbanisms, consistently articulating that housing justice is inseparable from the dismantling of colonial property regimes and ongoing processes of dispossession (Nejad et al., 2019; Simpson, 2017; Thistle, 2017). These decolonial imaginaries were described as practical, not utopian, and relied on pulling on examples of projects, lived experiences, resistance, and the re-centering of local Indigenous conceptions of relationships between people, land, and governance.

Enacting Alternatives and Community Resilience

Tenant organizing in Winnipeg was also discussed as existing in the exactment of real-world alternatives. Initiatives in mutual aid, relational governance, and persistent advocacy were presented as forming the backbone of tenant action in WBTC. Rather than waiting for policy reforms, the WBTC was formed to develop a collective support systems for those excluded by formal institutions, which was shown to challenge harmful regulation and cultivate new forms of solidarity.

Collaboration across neighbourhoods and coalitions was seen as an important part of this work, to enable diverse leadership and knowledge sharing, and a place where the WBTC could continue to grow. The persistence of organizing, even in the face of stalled policy of institutional setbacks, continue to lay the groundwork for future victories and work every day to foster community power. Imagination and narrative changes were continually linked to enactment, demonstrating that the understanding that transformation of the housing system begins with rethinking the possible (Fields et al., 2024; Thompson, 2024; Tranjan, 2023). These efforts embody Thompson's (2024) third pillar in her framework for radical care in tenant justice, underscoring how resistance, hope, and collective visions are inseparable in housing justice struggles.

5.4 Summary: How does the WBTC Practice Radical Care?

Returning to the research question, this section provides a concise summary of this study's results:

How does the West Broadway Tenants Committee practice radical care in resisting housing injustice?

The WBTC practices radical care by first confronting structural power hierarchies inherent to Winnipeg's housing system, mobilizing tenants to directly challenge landlord domination, bureaucratic indifference, and regulatory shortcomings surrounding AGIs. This work entails demystifying legal processes, support through RTB processes, and publicly contesting decisions that disproportionately favour property owners over renters – thereby working to shift power dynamics in advocating for tenants' security and right to housing. The WBTC's persistent focus on policy accountability, reflects ongoing commitments to addressing institutional barriers and economic exploitation.

The WBTC also embeds radical care in its relational and multiscale practices, cultivating webs of solidarity that span personal, building, neighbourhood, and systemic scales – connecting them to a network of advocacy much larger than just the committee. Organizing efforts were described as being deliberately collaborative, within the committee itself but also in encouraging the building of tenant communities that can collectively advocate for their rights. The WBTC and its network continually drew on diverse knowledges, foregrounded lived experiences, and worked to build trust in efforts to foster conditions for resistance and community care amidst recurring adversity and precarity. These actions reflect a recognition of housing as both personal and collective, centering the relational infrastructures needed on all scales for persistence and systemic change.

Finally, radical care was dynamically expressed through the WBTC's expansive imaginaries and actions, with participants using tools like zines to reimagine housing futures grounded in equity, decolonization, and anti-capitalist logics of care. Participants foregrounded storytelling as central to shifting neighbourhood narratives, claiming space for diverse visions of housing alternatives while directly resisting the inevitability of commodified housing. Through practical organizing, persistent advocacy, and alliance building, the WBTC translates these imaginations into material acts of care and transformation, embedding hope, resistance, and justice in tenant action.

6. Conclusion

This thesis explored the housing crisis in Canada as a deeply entrenched, systemic, wicked problem shaped by neoliberal urbanism, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism (Biss & Raza, 2021; Nejad et al., 2019; Tranjan, 2023). In situating housing as a site of care, commodification and resistance, this study examined practices of radical care in tenant organizing as a collective, political response to structural housing injustices (Fields et al., 2024; Hobart & Kneese, 2020; Polanska et al., 2024; Power & Mee, 2020; Thompson, 2024). As a result, this project adds to literature to this new, but very important, area of study.

Through a case study of the WBTC and surrounding networks, conclusions on how this small but important group practices radical care in resisting housing injustice were made, showing that responses engage with structural power hierarchies, are relational and multiscale, and focus on expansive imaginaries. This was done through a process of participatory workshops and interviews. Systems thinking was used as a conceptual and methodological tool in the workshops to study the wicked problem of housing in Winnipeg (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Gallent, 2019; Stroth, 2015). Results were synthesized in *Root Problems*, a participatory zine and systems map, exploring issues being faced and imagining solutions and alternative futures (Duncombe, 1997; Fields et al., 2024; Hall, 2024; Sungu et al., 2023). Narrative interviews added context to the information in this zine through the personal and professional experiences of persons involved in tenant advocacy in Winnipeg (Peake et al., 2024). Ultimately, this research has contributed to filling a key gap: understanding how radical care operates both as a form of survival and strategy for systemic change in mid-sized, settler-colonial cities. The findings underscore tenant organizing as a vital infrastructure of care that challenges exclusionary market logics while enacting and envisioning just and relational housing futures rooted in care and community.

6.1 Contributions to Theory and Practice

This research makes a theoretical contribution by advancing and extending Thompson's (2024) radical care framework for understanding housing politics within Winnipeg's context of a settler colonial, neoliberal housing system. It deepens the understanding of the role of the WBTC through a lens of radical, which had thus far not been applied to the Winnipeg context. This research illuminates how the commodification of housing produces structural inequalities and systemic harm, resulting in a housing crisis that cannot be solved under current conditions. The centering of dispossession of land as a root cause of this crisis foregrounds how colonial logics intertwine within neoliberal housing policies, strengthening the need for decolonial movements to achieve housing justice.

Practically, this detailed empirical analysis of tenant organizing in Winnipeg offers concrete examples of collective power-building as a form of radical care that can serve as a model for activists, advocates, and policymakers aiming to create systems change and advance tenant-centered housing justice. Through documenting specific barriers, such as regulatory grapes, landlord intimidation, and inadequate distributions of resources, this work informs more pragmatic calls for regulatory reforms through an emphasis on narrative change, political education, and community building. As

a result, critical strategies used to sustain movements and broaden tenant participation are highlighted, contributing practical insights needed for radical care-based tenant organizing (Thompson, 2024). Additionally, through systems mapping and imaginary exercises with the WBTC, this research utilizes methodologies to identify starting points for actionable pathways toward systems change that challenges dominant capital-colonial paradigms, and moves towards more equitable, *caring-with*-oriented, and decolonial housing futures. Together, this thesis bridges critical theory and grounded community practices, making a contribution to both scholarly knowledge and tangible tools for fostering transformative and caring tenant organizing in contemporary housing systems.

6.2 Future Research Directions

This research opens several directions for future inquiry. First, the Copenhagen and Madrid case studies, only briefly mentioned in this thesis and ultimately not pursued due to time constraints, have the potential of being continued to provide crucial comparative contexts for deepening the understanding of tenant organizing to create systems change within different policy, cultural, and urban frameworks. Future research could further explore how variations in welfare regimes, housing finance models, and political histories shape current tenant movements and strategies in these diverse cities facing prominent issues in housing. Such a cross-national comparison would enrich the analysis of systemic challenges and amplifications of radical care praxis under neoliberalizing urbanism and commodification in post-colonial/colonizer contexts (Peake et al., 2024).

The findings of this research highlight the value of the participatory methodology, which has the opportunity to continue in a larger-scale participatory systems mapping project. With adequate time and resources, this approach could hold the potential to collaboratively engage tenant activists to co-create detailed visual and analytic maps of housing inequalities and regulatory gaps, and point to potential places for tenant organizing and systems change. By making complex systemic connections visible, such a project could help facilitate collective understanding, strategic developments, and policy advocacy founded in the lived experiences and shared knowledge of participants (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Stroth, 2015). This could also advance theory-practice integration, by centering systemic thinking and relationality within radical care-based tenant organizing work.

Finally, building on this research's emphasis on narrative changes and imaginaries, future studies could further examine the role of storytelling and zines or other informal publications or productions as tools for political education, consciousness building, and systemic transformation in the relatable context of housing. Exploring how these mediums circulate across diverse tenant communities and trans local alliances has the potential to deepen understandings of how expansive imaginaries merge with collective power (Ashtari et al., 2022; Duncombe, 1997). Together, these directions can advance critical urban scholarship and tenant-led practices, contributing to more just, relational, and care-centered housing systems globally.

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Appendix

A. Almen Modstand Zine



WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of internationals, participating in a zine making workshop hosted through Almen Modstand. We are part of the resistance movement in Denmark and the countries we grew up in. We are from western countries criticizing the system that we are in and still benefiting from. We are not directly affected by the so called "ghetto law".

WHO IS ALMEN MODSTAND?

We are residents from almen housing areas in Denmark, fighting the "ghetto law" and its discrimination, non-sustainable demolition and evictions. Over the years more and more people have joined us, including people not living in almen housing themselves. Together we organize against injustice!

"MODSTAND" means "RESISTANCE" in Danish

WHO IS THIS ZINE FOR?

We have made this zine for everyone who wants to know (more) about the so called ghetto law and wants to be a part of the resistance against it. We want to raise awareness about the patterns of systemic discrimination in housing systems, in Denmark and around the world. It is happening here and everywhere! Now is the time to learn from each other and take actions.

WHAT ARE THE "GHETTO LAWS"?

2010 - 2018, 2021 - present.

g-word laws, "ghettoisterne", "parallel societies package", "ghettolover", "parallelismfundpakken"

THE SO-CALLED "GHETTO LISTS" ARE DEFINED WITHIN THE "PARALLEL SOCIETIES PACKAGE," WHICH IS WRITTEN WITHIN THE COMMON HOUSING LAWS (S612). THEY CATEGORIZE AREAS AS "GHETTOS," WHERE RESIDENTS FACE CONSEQUENCES AFFECTING HOUSING, SCHOOLS, POLICING, LANGUAGE, COMMUNITY...

WHAT IS "ALMEN" HOUSING?

(Danish: almene boliger)

'Almen', or 'common', housing is NOT social housing, nor government housing. It is non-profit, resident-driven housing that is open to EVERYONE regardless of income or background. Tenant democracies make decisions about the conditions, maintenance, and futures of their homes.

Why is it so nice to live here?

You meet a special vibe - a RELAXED, COZY, WELCOMING, and INFORMAL atmosphere in the large non-profit general (almen) housing areas in Denmark.

Why is this?

- Maybe... it is because everyone can live here, regardless of income levels, education, age, or background.
- Maybe... it's because of the many social activities, like communal dining, seniors and youth clubs, and specific interest activities.
- Maybe... it's because there is no landlord, and the housing is not for profit.
- Maybe... it's because the inhabitants can make decisions about the area and the budget, including the rent, in a process of tenant democracy.

.....

Our large non-profit areas are not the problem. This is the solution for the need for sustainable, affordable, and democratic accommodation and neighbourhoods for all.

.....

WE HAVE TENANT DEMOCRACY

All inhabitants (or tenants) in almen housing can take part in decision making with our neighbours at the meeting of the department/estate (afdelingsmøde).

- ★ Each apartment has 2 votes.
- ★ The meeting decides the budget for the next year, thereby also deciding the rent, and the need for maintenance and renovations on the building, as well as social activities.



The HOUSING ASSOCIATION level is also, in principle, a process of tenant democracy.

- Yearly meetings of representatives of local areas elect the board of the association, in which there is always a majority of tenants.
- Unfortunately, sometimes inhabitants elected behave like the pigs in "Animal Farm", and decide to demolish the homes of fellow inhabitants.
- Some housing associations, like in Albertslund (West of Copenhagen) instead are governed by a general assembly, where every inhabitant can participate and vote at the local meetings.



TERRITORIAL STIGMATIZATION

TERRITORIAL STIGMATIZATION is when a specific area or neighbourhood is labeled as dangerous, undesirable or problematic, often based on stereotypes, which affects how people living there are treated and how the place is perceived.

"Holes have been punched in the map of Denmark" - Lars Løkke Rasmussen, former prime minister and now minister of foreign affairs of Denmark in his New Years speech in 2018.

Politicians often use negative language to label areas and create stereotypes. In Denmark, with the so-called "ghetto law", neighbourhoods are labeled as "parallel societies", which uses territorial stigmatization to justify actions against those areas.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Territorial stigmatization perpetuates cycles of social inequality by:

- spreading harmful ideas and stereotypes about certain areas
- isolating people who live there
- giving an excuse to ignore or underfund services in these places
- enabling gentrification and displacement of residents
- worsen structural inequalities

What are the consequences?

Racism → An institution, community, individual discriminating against another based on their racial or ethnic group.

- Community breakdown
- making people more vulnerable
- Dividing people

Gentrification → when a neighbourhood changes as wealthier people move in, often causing housing prices to rise and longtime, lower income residents to be displaced.

Displacement → when people are forced to leave their homes or communities, often due to rising costs or redevelopment.

Mjølnerparken → Classified as a "ghetto" by the Danish government under the so-called "ghetto law". The Court of Justice of the EU is reviewing if Denmark's "ghetto law" breaches EU law on ethnic discrimination.

How Did We Get Here?

The so called "Ghetto Law" didn't just randomly happen in Denmark. This is the result of centuries of practices, attitudes, and beliefs.

Let's start with COLONIALISM:

Did you know that Denmark is a colonial country? This history is not widely discussed, but the current concentrations of wealth, power, and racist attitudes towards "non-Western immigrants" can be traced back to this colonial history.



MAP OF THE DANISH COLONIAL EMPIRE

What about NEOLIBERALISM?

Starting in the 1970s, the Danish government started adopting a political and economic approach which prioritizes free markets, privatization, and reduced government intervention, at the expense of the FAMOUS DANISH WELFARE STATE. The selling of Almen housing is a direct consequence in the change to neoliberal policy and practices.

Neoliberalism promotes the commodification of housing, where profit from buying and selling homes is prioritized over providing homes as a basic need.



The commodification of housing is happening all over the world, not just in Denmark.

The perfect storm...

The global rise of the POLITICAL RIGHT, anti-immigration attitudes, colonial histories, and neoliberal practices are some of the systemic factors that have led to the creation of the "ghetto law".

≡ **SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS REQUIRE SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS** ≡

Critiquing the image of Denmark



We as international people hold this idea of Denmark and Scandinavia as idyllic, utopia. But this is far from the case...

International media is paying little attention to this when compared to reporting on other countries. This only furthers the "perfect Scandi" narrative.

Reporting and diffusing information is key. How can we be outraged if we don't know?

HOW ARE THE LISTS MADE ?

IN 2010, THE GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED A SET OF LISTS TO TARGET SPECIFIC RESIDENTIAL AREAS CHARACTERIZED BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC CRITERIA.

• DEFINITIONS AND LISTS :

① **VULNERABLE AREAS** : Residential area meeting 2 of 4 socio-economic criteria

② **PARALLEL COMMUNITIES** : Vulnerable areas where over "ghetto list" 50% of residents are from "Non Western" backgrounds.

③ **TRANSFORMATION AREA** : 5 consecutive years on the above list - subjecting them to stricter policies

• THE FOUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRITERIA:

✱ **UNEMPLOYMENT** : Over 40% of working-age residents unemployed or out of education.

✱ **CRIME RATES** : criminal convictions 3 times the national average.

✱ **EDUCATION** : Over 60% of residents aged 30-59 have only basic education (primary school)

✱ **INCOME** : Average gross income less than 55% of the regional average.

➡ ALL THESE FACTORS ARE DEEPLY INTERWIND AND CORRELATED. THE GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ADDRESS THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM. INSTEAD OF FOSTERING INTEGRATION, THE STATE PERPETUATES EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION.

• WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES ?

- > forced evictions
- > demolitions
- > restricted housing rights

**NO MATTER WHAT
THIS IS NOT
THE SOLUTION !**

the government does not have
our backs
they are on our backs !!

- DISPLACEMENT
- TERRITORIAL TARGETING
- STIGMA
- RACISM

**DO
NOT**

**CONTRIBUTE TO THE
COLLECTIVE GOOD**

HOW TO GET STARTED

- + DEMONSTRATE
- + CONVERSE
- + LISTEN + LEARN
- + RESEARCH YOUR RIGHTS
- + VOTE

Tenant Organising is **CARE WORK**. It is being a kind neighbour, fostering community, and building relationships. Empathy + love are your tools, perhaps also a cup of tea. Start your

journey of activism + change by listening, learning, and supporting. Then you can fight together, as a strong coalition, for your collective rights — for a just future.

LEARN MORE



OPEN SOCIETY JUSTICE INITIATIVE
overview of legal cases

CURRENT "ghetto list" LAW, §61a

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2019/119>

2024 LISTS OF AFFECTED AREAS

<https://bl.dk/viden-kartotek/udsatte-boligomraader/>

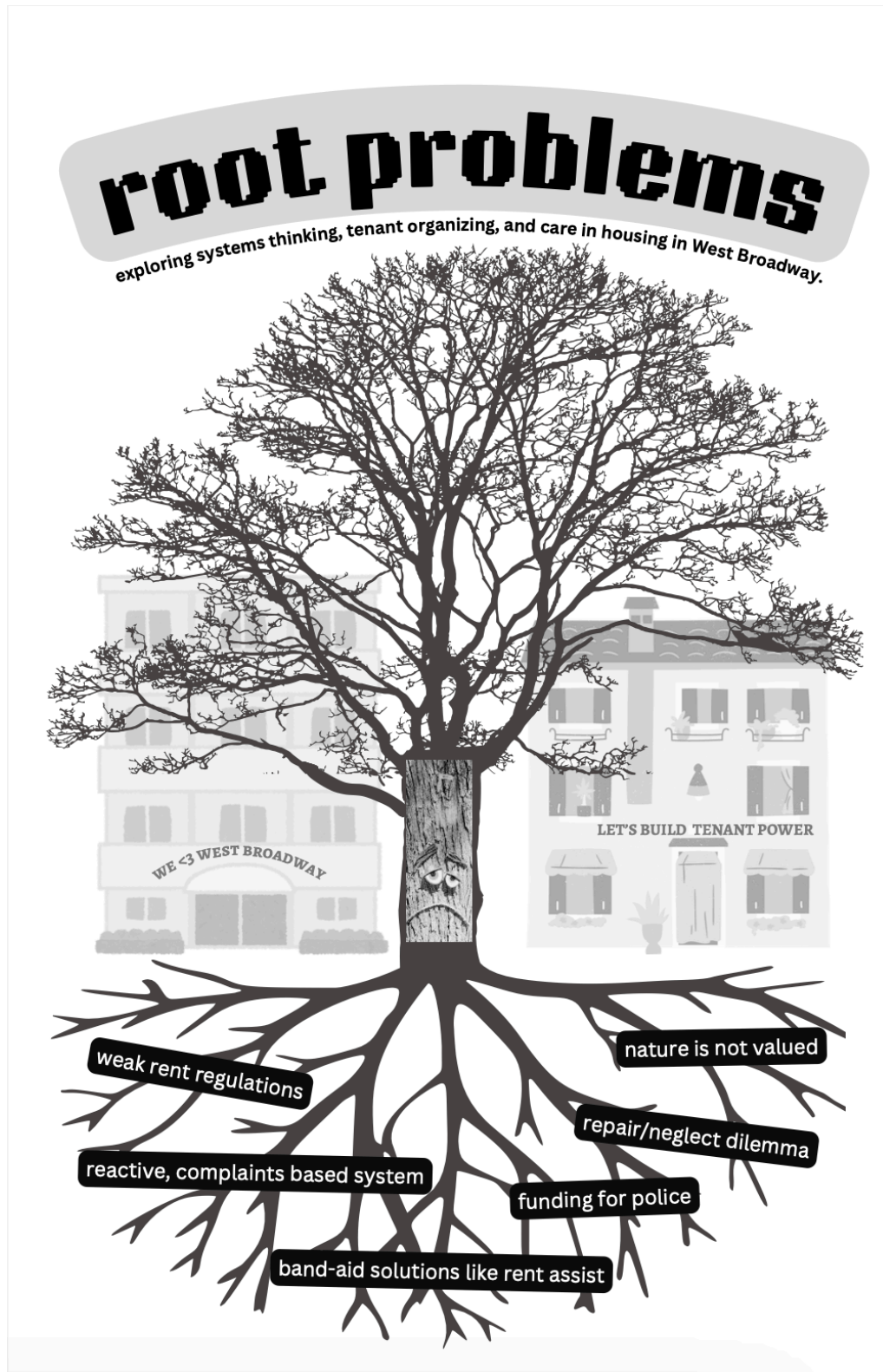
ALMEN MODSTAND

resident-driven activism

info@almenmodstand.dk

IG: almen_modstand







Since December the WBTC has been working on creating a systems map of the housing landscape in West Broadway. This zine is a collection of some of the issues examined in this system, with imaginations of what care based approach to housing in our neighbourhood could be.

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A special thank you to all who participated in this project, and to Rebecca who shared their experience with opposing an AGI (see zine "Together at 149 Langside"), Shauna who talked about research and activism, Kelly who led us through a drawing exercise, and Amanda who organized the space and logistics of this project.

Created with support from:



1

A HOUSING CRISIS?

"A housing system that serves all but one group is not in a state of crisis; it is one based on structural inequality and economic exploitation"

Tranjan (2023), p.3.



A "crisis" suggests that something is unexpected, and needs urgent response. Housing systems that have perpetuated inequality for decades should not be described as a crisis – instead, they should be viewed as products of **structural inequality** and **economic exploitation**

A CRISIS OF CARE

Care theory is the idea that relationships and caring for others are central to how we live, especially when people are vulnerable or depend on others.

Through this zine we will discuss how the so called "housing crisis" is actually a **CRISIS OF CARE** - when the work of caring for people—like raising kids, looking after the sick, or supporting communities—becomes undervalued, underpaid, or stretched too thin. This happens because systems that prioritize profit and efficiency often ignore or take advantage of the essential, everyday care that keeps society running.

To think with care is political. To care is to work together to imagine and create a world in which everyone can flourish.



2

WHAT IS SYSTEMS THINKING?

Some problems in cities can be solved easily. If a streetlight is broken, it can be repaired or replaced. However, there are many problems that are difficult to understand, and therefore difficult to solve.

- **SYSTEMS THINKING** is a way of addressing problems with the goal of creating long lasting social change.
- **SYSTEMS MAPPING** is a tool that can be used to understand how an environment works as a dynamic system. This helps us look beyond immediate problems to identify underlying patterns so issues can be addressed at the root cause.

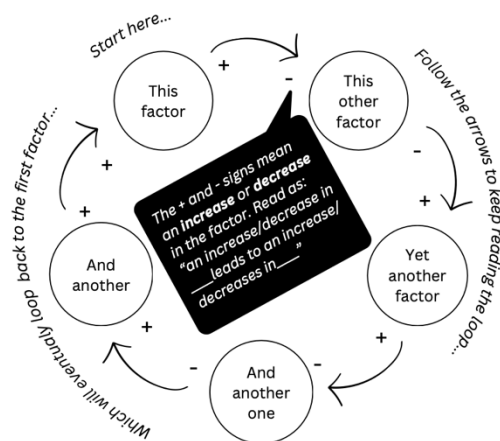
These maps can show us the ways a system is operating, with the individual loops showing:

- How something is getting better
- How something is getting worse
- How something is being prevented from getting better
- How something is being prevented from getting worse

3

How to read this zine

The first page will show a **CAUSAL LOOP**, which is a tool used in **SYSTEMS THINKING** to visualize the way parts of the complex housing system operates in West Broadway.



The second page will focus on **imagining how this system could be different**. Things don't have to be the way they are. We can work together to create better housing futures.

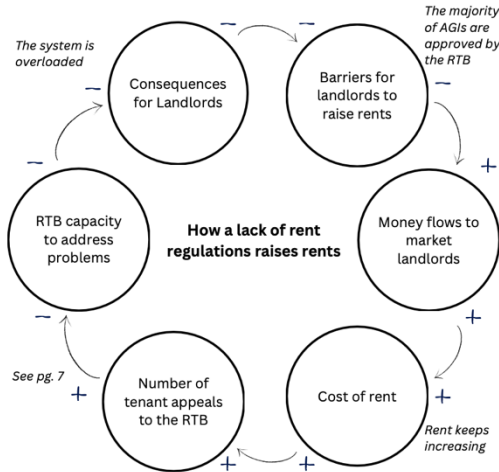
4

inadequate rent regulations

Three components shape Manitoba's rent regulations:

- **Rent increase guideline** sets the maximum amount by which landlords can increase rents
- **Above-guideline increase (AGI)** allows landlords to increase rents beyond the guideline due to changes to the building
- **Rent discounts** are when a landlord allows a tenant to pay less than the full rent for their rental unit

AGIs in particular have been rampant in West Broadway (see *zine Together @ 149 Langside*). Let's look at how this largely unregulated system leads to increasing rents for tenants and profits for private landlords:



Lack of adequate rent regulation and reliance on a private market to meet the needs of low income renters results in a profit driven cycle of commodification of housing.

5

what if we had strong rent regulations?

The new CCPA report *From Repairs to Rent Hikes: Tenant perspectives on above-guideline rent increases in West Broadway* includes recommendations for how the Manitoba government can reverse the trend of AGIs:

Remove the \$1650 cap on when the rent regulation applies to ensure that all rental properties in Manitoba are covered by rent regulation.

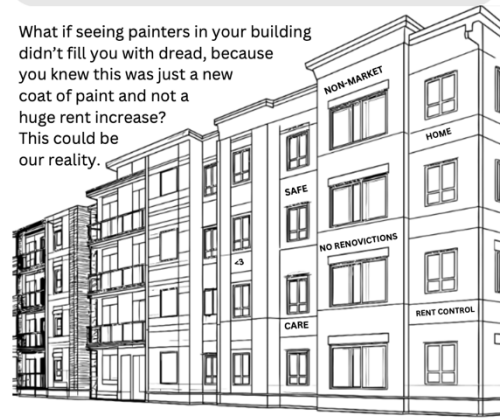
Remove the 20 year exemption for rent regulation on new rental properties.

Limit above-guideline rent increase to no more than 9% above guideline and no more than 3% /year.

Calculate rent increases for capital expenses over a 10 to 25-year amortization period, after which the rent increases should be reversed.

Eliminate rent discounting which in some cases has the base rent well above the rent control guideline, with a 50% discount in the rent.

What if seeing painters in your building didn't fill you with dread, because you knew this was just a new coat of paint and not a huge rent increase? This could be our reality.

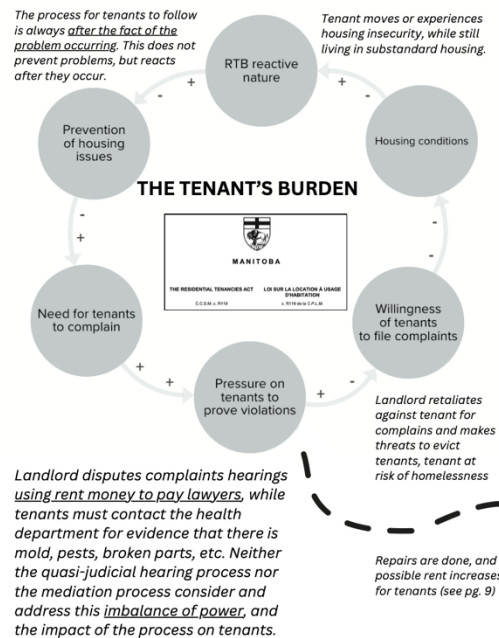


6

The RTB is a reactive system

Right now, the Residential Tenancies Act and Branch have a complaint-based process for tenants to have their rights to safe and secure housing protected. *Why is this a problem?* It puts the onus on the tenants to **PROVE** that landlords are not doing their job, instead of just holding the landlords accountable.

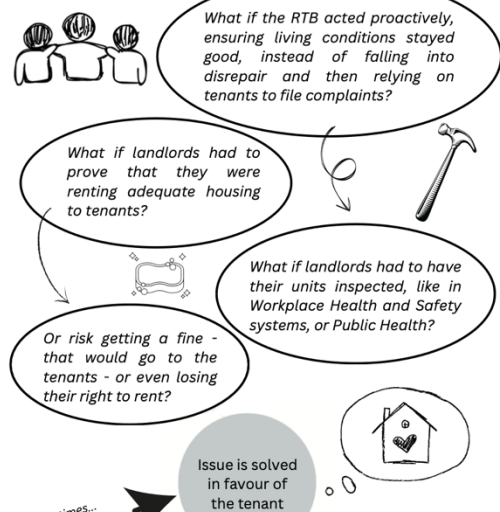
The process for tenants to follow is always after the fact of the problem occurring. This does not prevent problems, but reacts after they occur.



7

What if we had a proactive RTB?

A community-oriented approach would not wait for complaints to be filed by tenants that put them increasingly at risk of eviction, but instead would simply ensure large problems did not have time to develop.



but sometimes...

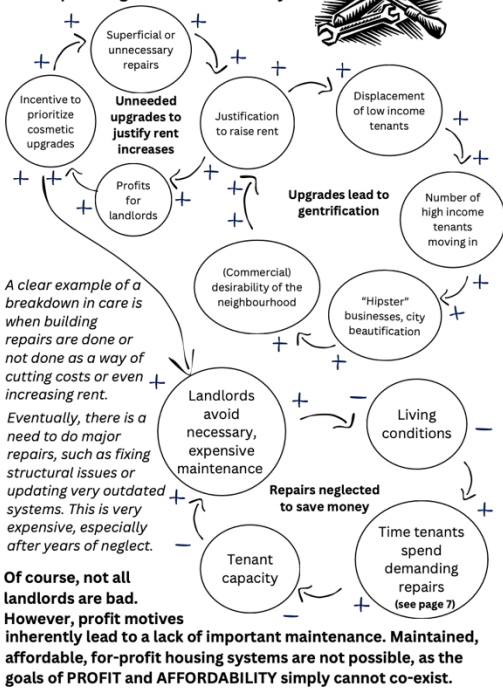
What if the burden of proof of bad living conditions and unjustified rent increases was not on the tenant, but on the landlord to prove that they are to a certain standard?

8

MAINTENANCE

Let's look at 3 scenarios:

- 1- Unneeded upgrades that are done to justify rent increases
- 2- Upgrades that lead to gentrification
- 3- Repairs neglected to save money



9

Our homes are in good condition

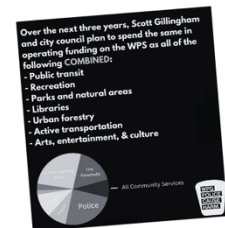
Keeping people housed is a crucial part of a functioning society at every level. There are many ways that this need can be met, and renting a living space remains an important pathway to shelter in our community in this time and place.



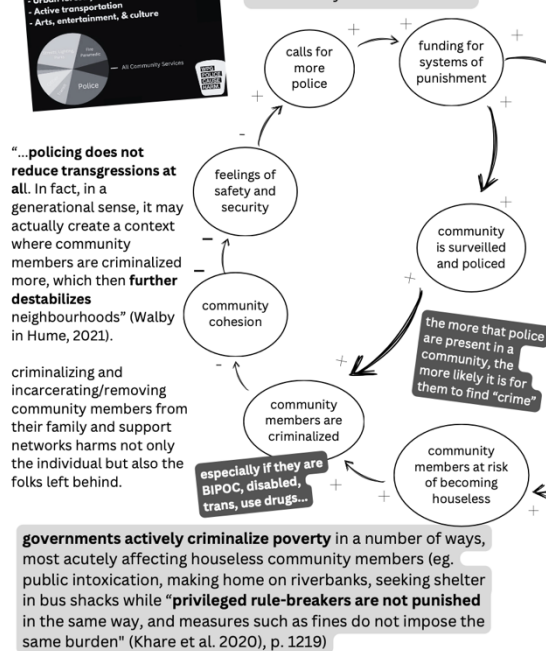
If we imagine a system where profit is not a part of our housing system, then we can ensure that affordability and good living conditions are priorities for whoever is providing the housing. If taking care of the physical structures of homes and tenants is instead the priority, maintenance would be an obvious part of this process.

10

Police don't keep us safe.



despite the fact that crime rates in Canada have been **steadily decreasing** over the last two decades, police budgets across the country have ballooned.



11

YET, PRISONS ARE CURRENTLY THE ONLY FORM OF PUBLIC HOUSING THAT GOVERNMENTS OF ALL LEVELS ARE COMMITTED TO BUILDING



"the emergence of a neoliberal economy in which the welfare state has been significantly undermined, meaning we have become responsible for our individual selves, has been balanced against increased investments in **policing of all sorts**" (Walcott 2021).

"Government housing has not been built in large volumes in Canada for decades, and those units are getting old compared to private units (Tranjan 2023).



"The housing security of private landlords should not be equated to that of financially insecure tenant families. One is accumulating wealth and has two or more homes to choose from; the other is at risk of becoming homeless" (Tranjan 2023).

Community Connections, the low-barrier library resource hub in the lobby of Millennium Library, closed on **Dec. 31, 2024** because the City of Winnipeg did not renew funding for 2025. Community advocates have been urgently calling for the space to reopen, given how vital it was for downtown library patrons. 7 days ago

<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com>

Community Connections is a vital library service - Winnipeg Free Press

12

We keep us safe!

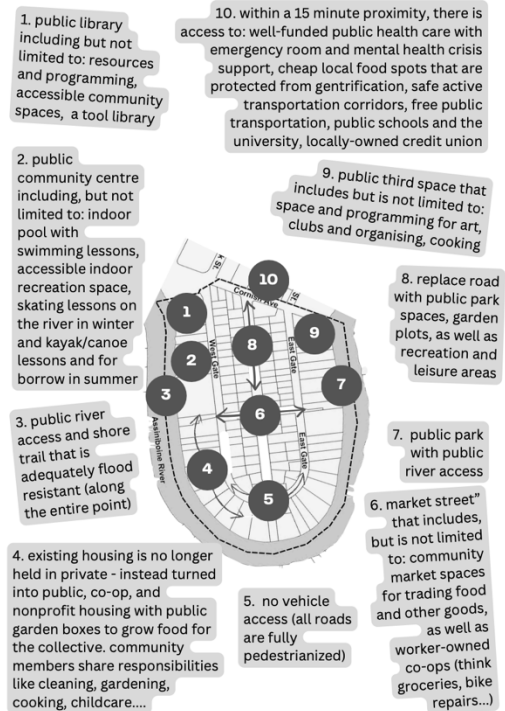
What is the opposite of a prison? I dream of a world where governments of all levels were committed to funding systems of care so that we may, in turn, embody that care to each other and as a collective. I dream because I hope, in the way Mariame Kaba talks about hope as a discipline, something you practice every day (2020). **I choose to hope, an active verb. I hope because I know a better world exists.** One where everyone (yes literally everyone) has no barrier access to stable housing because everyone deserves to be supported in living a joyful and meaningful life *if they want to*. Reparations are paid to those most marginalized by settler colonialism and racial capitalism - namely, Indigenous and Black folks. No one is illegal and drugs are decriminalized. Everyone has access to quality mental health supports and gender-affirming care. Disabled folks are listened to and taken seriously.

.....

You know your neighbours and therefore will never be short a cup of sugar. We share our resources and keep each other safe so there's no need for fences. We abolish private property because it "remains a central roadblock in our collective quest to figure out how to both live differently and better together" (Walcott 2021). We abolish prisons and police as we know them because we know addressing harm with more harm offers no way forward (Walcott 2021) and our **tax dollars are much better spent caring for and supporting each other** than incarcerating them. Ruth Wilson Gilmore speaks about abolition not just as the process of removing or getting rid of (the cops and prisons), but instead as the entire world we build beyond the confines of punishment (2023): abolition refuses the inevitability of our present organization of human life (Walcott 2021). *What would our world look like if folks had what they needed?*

13

ABOLISH THE GATES: DREAMING OF A WEST BROADWAY COMMUNITY LAND TRUST ROOTED IN COLLECTIVE CARE

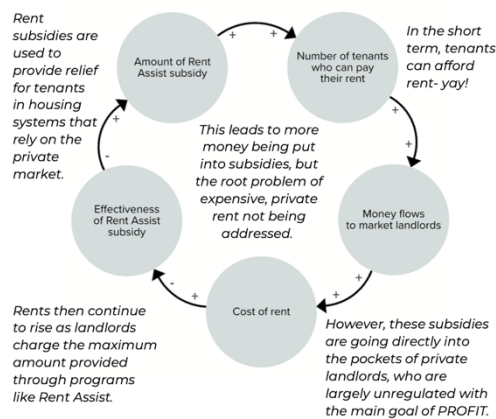


14

RENT ASSIST IS A BAND-AID SOLUTION

Canada's shift towards housing privatization began in the 1990's, with neoliberal policies that cut federal funding for social housing and transferring this responsibility to the provinces. In Manitoba this led to inadequate social housing supply, reliance on the private market, and increasingly unstable tenancies for low-income individuals.

RENT ASSIST is a program that provides financial support for low income private renters. Implemented in 2014, Rent Assist has provided **much needed financial relief** to many families and individuals. **So what is the problem?**



WHY IS OUR PUBLIC MONEY GOING DIRECTLY TO PRIVATE LANDLORDS?

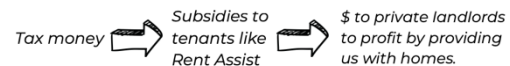
Surely there is a better way.

15

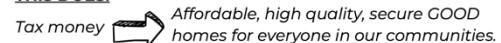
What if our public money went directly to providing us with affordable, high quality housing?

The need for subsidies in the current housing system shows that the private market cannot provide affordable housing - since the motive here is **profit**. So what if money we pay in taxes went directly to providing us affordable housing, instead of to private landlords in the form of a subsidy?

THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE:



THIS DOES:



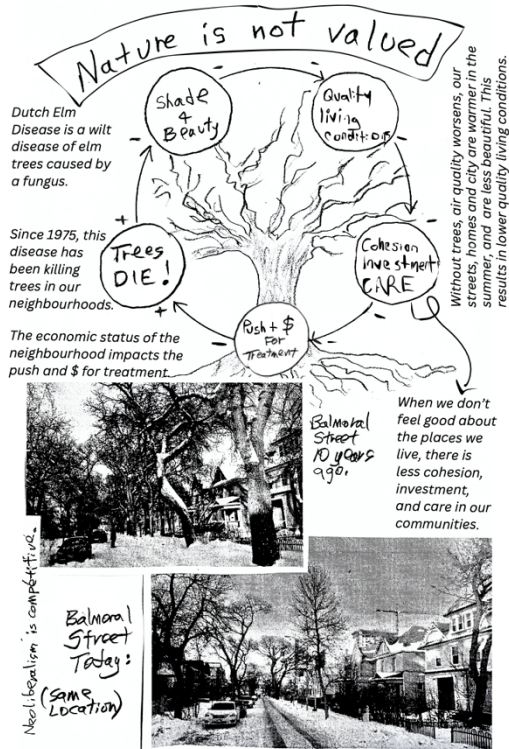
INVESTING IN CO-OP'S, NON-PROFIT HOUSING (LIKE WESTMINSTER HOUSING), AND PUBLIC HOUSING ARE WAYS THAT OUR MONEY CAN GO DIRECTLY TO PROVIDING US WITH GOOD HOUSING, INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE POCKETS OF LANDLORDS WHO VIEW THE ROOFS OVER OUR HEADS AS OPPORTUNITIES TO PROFIT.



Mural created by children at Art City with artist Miriam Rudolf to celebrate 30 years of the Westminster Housing Society. It can be viewed at the Hintsa House Community Garden at 126 Langside.

16

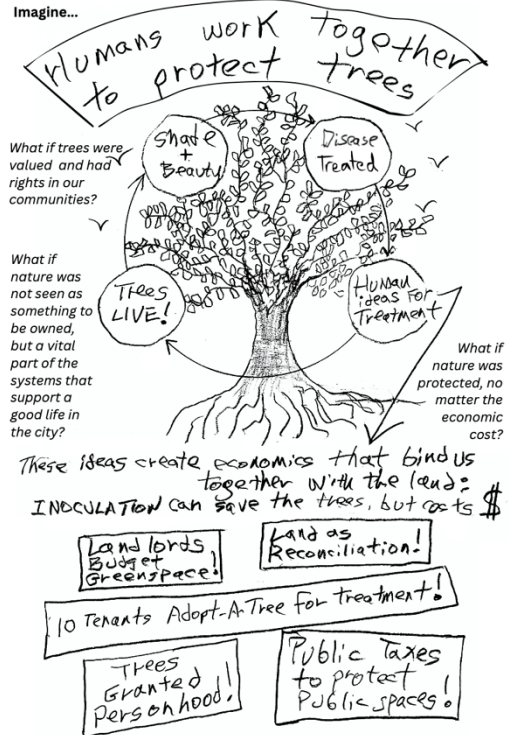
More than three million trees make up Winnipeg's urban forest, but



Elm trees can be inoculated to protect them from Dutch Elm Disease. However, West Broadway's population is about 92% renters. Why don't our landlords pay to protect the trees and living conditions in our neighbourhood?

17

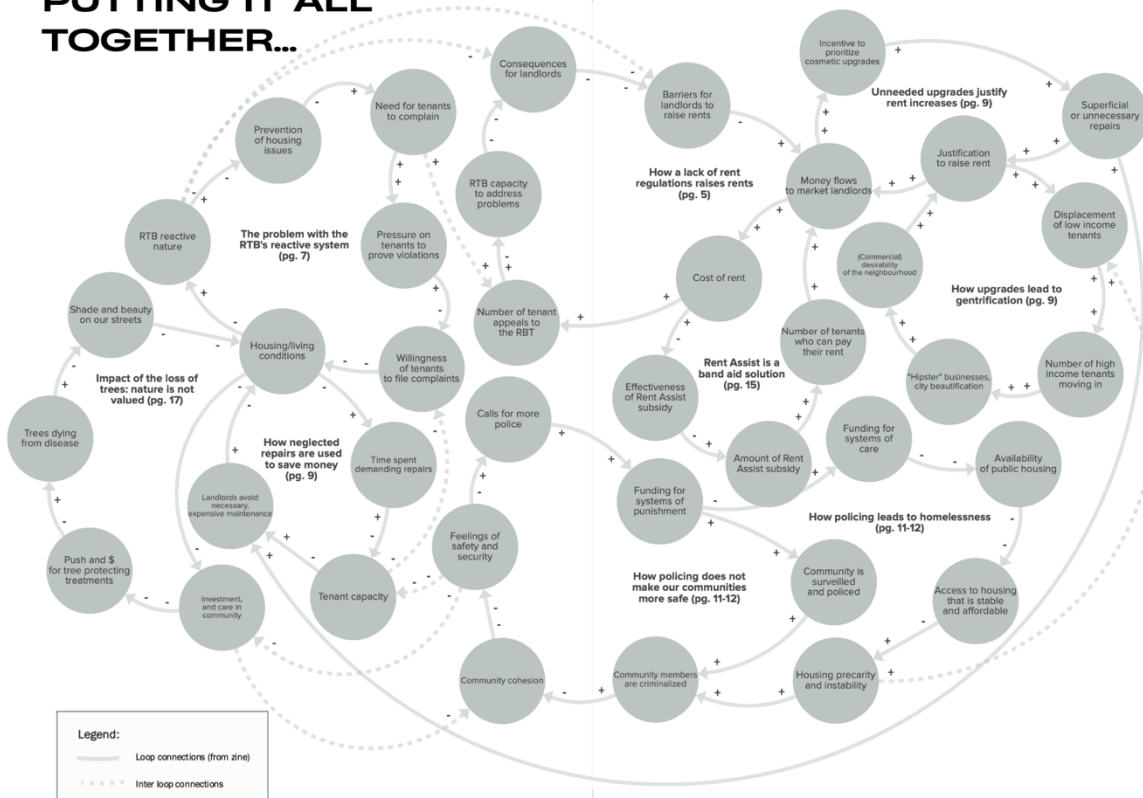
Imagine...



These ideas are not new. Indigenous ways of being emphasize relationality and stewardship, offering valuable ways to protect nature through reciprocal care, sustainable land practices, and intergenerational ecological knowledge. Supporting the protection of trees is a step toward a decolonial and anti-capitalist future in our neighbourhoods, cities, and country.

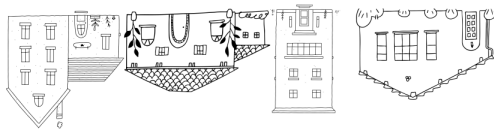
18

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER...



19

20



This map is not just a diagram—it's a way of seeing **the housing crisis as an interconnected system**. Each loop represents a different piece of the puzzle. These loops don't exist in isolation—they feed into one another, reinforcing cycles of neglect, displacement, and profit-driven decision-making.

SYSTEMS THINKING can help us see how everything is connected - rent regulations shape whether landlords invest in upkeep, complaint-based tenant protections allow disrepair to persist, policing reinforces insecurity rather than safety, and the privatization of housing funnels public money into private profit. Even access to green space is shaped by these forces, with some neighbourhoods designed for care and livability while others are left to deteriorate.. Understanding these connections is the first step toward change.

But just as these systems are created, they can also be **reimagined** and **reshaped**. By mapping these connections, we can see not only **how the crisis operates** but also **where we can intervene**—where tenant organizing, policy change, and collective action, and more can disrupt these cycles and build something different.



21

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

First, think about an issue in your building or neighbourhood. Map it here!

Now think about how things could be different. Be as creative as you want, write or draw your ideas here:



22

The crisis we are facing in West Broadway is more than rent increases, evictions, and deteriorating buildings. It is a **CRISIS OF CARE**, a failure of the systems meant to support us. The current private housing system is designed to benefit landlords, investors, and developers - not the people **LIVING** here.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- **GET ORGANIZED.** Get to know your neighbours. Share knowledge. Talk about (or map) the issues in your building. Contact the WBTC for guidance on how to do this!
- **PUSH FOR POLICY CHANGE.** Vote! Write to your city councillor. Demand stronger rent regulations.
- **REFUSE THE HOUSING MARKET'S LOGIC.** Challenge the narratives that say homes are a financial asset. Demonstrate how they are spaces of life, care, and community.
- **IMAGINE DIFFERENT REALITIES.** Dream of and fight for housing systems built on care and not profit values: community land trusts, co-ops, public housing . Another way is possible.

This crisis was created by people, policies, and priorities. It can be undone in the same way - through collective action, care, and the refusal to accept housing injustice as inevitable. **The question is not if change is possible, but how we will make it happen.**

A bigger **SYSTEMS MAP** of housing in West Broadway, covering even more topics, is coming soon. Follow our social media for updates, or contact us if you want to get involved! tenants@westbroadway.mb.ca

SOURCES USED TO
CREATE THIS ZINE:



INSTAGRAM

@wbtenants

FACEBOOK

West Broadway
Tenants Committee



COLLECTION OF
OTHER WBTC ZINES:

23

C. Interview Guide

1. Can you describe your role in relation to housing in Winnipeg? How long have you been involved in this field? How did you get involved?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges that you currently see in Winnipeg's housing system?
3. What is some of the promising work that is being done to improve this system?
4. How would you describe the relationship between tenants and landlords or housing providers in Winnipeg?
5. How are different communities affected by the current housing system? Who is most vulnerable?
6. How would you describe the current network of support in Winnipeg's housing system?
7. In what ways do grassroots organizations and tenant groups offer support in housing systems?
8. What is the role of the Rental Tenancies Branch in supporting tenants and landlords? Is this effective? Why or why not?
9. What alternatives, improvements or reforms do you think are needed in Winnipeg's housing system?

D. Consent Sheet

Caring for Community: Exploring Tenant Organizing in Winnipeg and Copenhagen

Madeline Mesich

4CITIES+ Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Urban Studies

Information for participants

Thank you for considering participating in this study. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you take part.

What is the research about?

This research focuses on how tenant organizing groups in Winnipeg, Canada, and Copenhagen, Denmark, work to counteract the commodification of housing through the provision of care. The study aims to understand how these groups organize and strategize in response to policies that prioritize housing as a commodity over a human right. The goal is to contribute insights that can support the implementation of a care lens to promote and reimagine more equitable housing systems.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any point until May 1st, 2025, without having to give a reason. You can choose to decline to answer any questions or make any comments that are recorded. Withdrawing from the study entirely will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from the study, the information you have given thus far will not be retained, unless you state that we may retain it and use it in the study.

What will my information be used for?

I will use the collected information for student research within the framework of my master's thesis. The thesis may be published internally, on the 4CITIES+ Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree website, with the potential of further publication. If the study will be further published, the researcher will contact you.

Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will I be anonymous?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only the researcher, and respective supervisor, will have access to the files and any audio tapes. The data will be anonymized — your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.

Can I read the study when it is complete?

Yes! If you would like to receive a copy of the finished study, please indicate this on the consent form.

What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher:

Madeline Mesich at



You can exercise your privacy rights by contacting the researcher. If you would like to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet.

CONSENT SHEET

Your rights as a participant

- You have the right to request a copy of all your information used in the study.
- You have the right to request that your information be corrected in the event of inaccuracy.
- You have the right to delete any or all the information you provide.
- You have the right to withdraw consent at any time. Analyses that have been made up to that moment with the relevant personal data will continue to be used for the research.

I have read and understood the study information dated ____/____/____. I have been able to ask questions about the study and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from any part of the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to being recorded.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I understand that the information I provide will be used for a master's thesis and that the information will be anonymized.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree that my anonymized information can be quoted in the research.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I understand that any personal information that can identify me (such as my name) will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than the researcher.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I would like to receive a copy of the finished study.

YES ☐ NO ☐

*Please retain a copy of this consent form. For any information please contact: **Madeline Mesich**.*

Participant

name:

Participant

signature:

Participant

email:

Researcher name: Madeline Mesich

Researcher

signature:

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