

Condominium Towers: Habitus and alienation in the new urban framework

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Since 2002, over 180000 new dwellings have been built in Toronto through condominium ownership, filling the downtown core with towers and locking much of the city's society into a relatively new model of property ownership – the condominium. The social, political, and economic structures necessary to make condominium ownership possible as a strategic form of high-density space production in the downtown, will have a profound impact on how this new residential fabric evolves as an extension of the city. The urban dwelling has traditionally been the starting point for the individual's belonging and agency within the city. *Habitus*, as the patterns and banal practices of everyday life, allow people to create places of significance, comfort, and security in dynamic material and political landscapes. Critiques of the condominium as a product of neoliberal private-property narratives, and extreme urban densification as the result of economic, rather than social forces, however, frame the condominium dwelling as a structure that alienates *habitus* from within the city. As the towers are going to stand within the urban fabric of Toronto for the next fifty to one-hundred years throughout changing social, economic, and political contexts, this condition of alienation will be a key factor in how each tower ages, decays, and is maintained in the urban society. To understand the futures of agency and alienation, each condominium must be considered as a microcosm of the city; first as a fabric of individual dwellings, then as an economic geography, next as a self-contained polity, and finally as a real and dynamic infrastructure. As the product of these four frameworks, we find that the organizational structure of the condominium operates against the human and civic functions of dwelling, and will produce an urban society paralyzed by economics, rather than activated by its own urban condition. While the condominium towers of downtown Toronto are built on economic strategies that alienate *habitus* from the urban dwelling, this vital dimension can be restored through the telling of alternative narratives of their possible futures that disrupt the preconceptions of the people, space, and future of the towers in the city.

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0.1 Introduction:

Cities are complex and wonderful things – infrastructures, economies, ecologies, geographies, works of art, images of a society.^{1,2} In studying and designing the city's complexity, it is common to focus on overarching theories, systems, and discourses, and to lose sight of the city as the space of everyday life for everyday people. In *The Architecture of the City*, Aldo Rossi calls the city the “urban artifact;” an object of study, telling stories about the agendas and agents that produce the city, and of urban life that unfolds therein. The shape of the city teaches us about the people of the city and their daily conflict with the power structures that organize it.³ As different social, political, and economic contexts unfold in a time and place, they give rise to new means of spatial organization in the form of architectural *type*, which reifies these abstract contexts into physical and material form.⁴ Since the 1960's until today, Toronto has seen the rise of a new *type* of urban form – the condominium podium tower. Condominium podium towers are the architectural product of a whole host of contemporary urban issues and ideologies; modernity, sustainability, new building technologies, urban renewal, and the translation of the mid-century tower-in-the-park into a city of increasing density and land costs. Among these, however, one of the most powerful drivers of the condominium tower as an urban form has been the intricate relationship between our cultural conceptions of a *dwelling* or *home*, and the financialization of private property in the urban march of capitalism. Reified in the built form and spatial practice of the condominium tower,⁵ these social relationships of an increasingly financialized urban society are projected into the residential fabric of Toronto for decades to come.

There are two key dimensions of this reification that are fundamental to our understanding of the production of the city and condominiums. The first is found in Lefebvre's *spatial triad* of *conceived*, *perceived*, and *lived* spaces. (*Fig. 1*) This trialectical relationship give

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1. Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman, *The Architecture of the City*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 29.
 2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 73.
 3. Pier Vittorio Aureli, “City as Political Form: Four Archetypes of Urban Transformation,” *Architectural Design* 81, no. 1 (January 2011): 35, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ad.1186>.
 4. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 40-1.
 5. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 75.

rise to the production of social space in the city. When considering the reification of socio-political agendas in the production of the city, our principal consideration is that of *conceived space*, defined as our understanding of space within theoretical discourse and representation. How architects, developers, and politicians understand the functioning of space in society is hugely important in how the space of the city is built. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau uses the word *strategy*, to identify how conceptions of space are used to impose structures and ideologies on those that inhabit the space produced.⁶ *Conceived space* therefore codes *perceived space*.⁷

The second dimension that is important to our consideration of spatial practice in the new urban form of the condominium dwelling is the concept of *habitus*. *Habitus* was originally defined by Pierre Bourdieu as the individual's intuition of negotiating their day-to-day actions in the objective and social structure – culture – that they live. American philosopher Edward J. Casey uses the Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, to frame how habitual spatial practice creates for the individual, the feeling of *belonging* in place.⁸ Our concern with *habitus* is as the content of the residential fabric of the city, and therein, it's capacity to affect change on material space in time.⁹ Bourdieu's original conception of *habitus* was formulated to explain cultural stability and continuity, and as such, he held it to be a subconscious social mechanism – “*docta ignorantia*” or learned ignorance.¹⁰ Both Casey and de Certeau, however, assert that while *habitus* operates within existing structures of the city, it must be more than a sub-conscious behaviouralism if it is to achieve anything beyond the “faithful reproduction” of the existing structure.¹¹ For belonging to be meaningful, and for *habitus* to instil belonging in space, it must be the expression of an individual in negotiation for and against the structure in which they live. Through their daily patterns of *habitus*, the urban dweller both reinforces and subverts – “improvises upon” – produced urban space.

6. de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

7. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33.

8. E.S. Casey, “Body, Self and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the Place-World,” *Textures as Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 409-13.

9. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 48-9.

10. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 19.

11. de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 57-8.

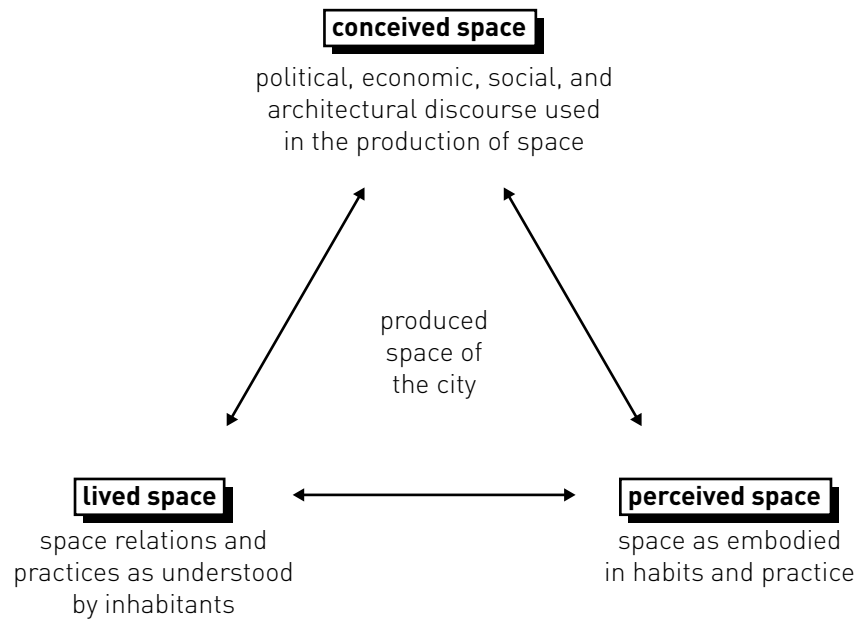


Fig.1 Lefebvre's spatial triad

To this end, de Certeau mobilizes *habitus* through his concept of *tactic*, a mobilization that will frame our understanding of the power of conceived urban space, and the potential for social and spatial change within the structure of the condominium. de Certeau frames the individuals appropriation of structure in the tactical turn, (*Fig. 2*) in which the *strategy* of a conceived space, which he posits as *force*, is confronted by *memory* of an individual. In the occasion (*time*) of confrontation the individual is consciously reoriented (the metaphysical *Kairos*) in their relation to the space that they occupy. This conscious turning allows the individual to change – either behaviourally or materially – the structure. de Certeau calls this moment of appropriative action, *tactic*. He animates the force of this turn by demonstrating that the more totalizing the *power* of the structure surrounding the *habitus* of the subject, the less often that the memory of the individual will manifest itself in *Kairos*. Within more strongly conceived structures, greater amounts of time are required, and produce decreased subversion of the structure itself.¹²

The condominium tower has emerged as a popular *strategy* of city building from neoliberal thought and policy over the past century.¹³ As a form of legal land division (independent of the architectural *type* of the condominium tower), the condominium was popularized around the world in the period following the Second World War. It was the ideological sum of two mid-century dogmas; the high-rise towers that was developed by the European modernists, and the cultural currency of home ownership in post-war industrialized nations. The combined forces of Keynesian fiscal policy, the de-industrialization of North America in the 1980's, and various space planning policies through the 1990's and 2000's changed the economic and cultural roles of real-estate in Toronto and lead to geographies of production through real-estate value. With reviving interest of inner-city renewal, and a growing social consciousness of the environmental impacts of sprawl, condominiums became the means by which to produce private property titles at unprecedented densities. As the ideology of place-based real-estate ownership has become increasingly important in the health of liberal economies, the skyline of condominiums in Toronto has become a physical index

12. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 82-5.

13. Hazel Easthope, *The Politics and Practices of Apartment Living*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2019), 157.

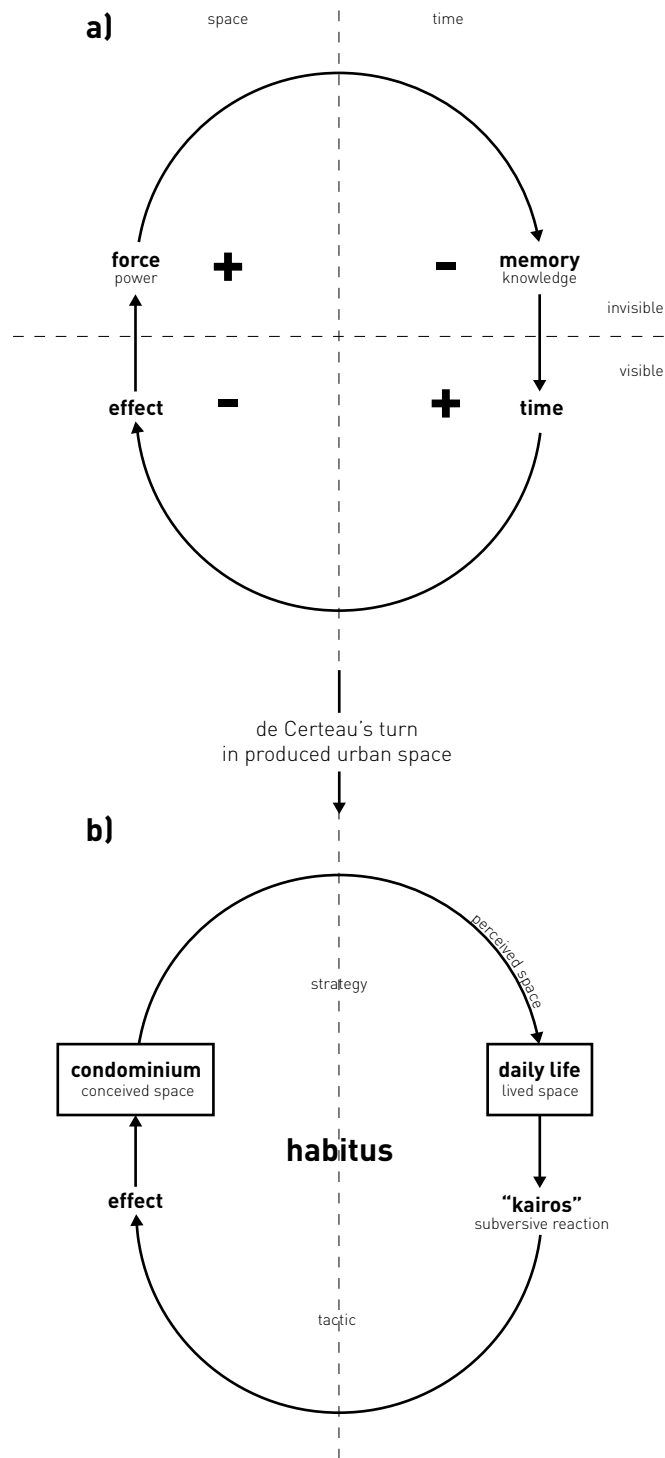


Fig.2 In his spatial turn (a), de Certeau frames tactical action as the de-alienating appropriation of space that has been structured by power dynamics. In the diagram below (b), de Certeau's terms have been substituted to frame the functioning of habitus in the patterns of daily life of the individual and the material appropriation of their dwelling.

of this mentality.¹⁴ Since 2000, the increasing importance of condominiums has been so rapid that it has caused the monetary value of real-estate to become disassociated from the use value of condos as dwellings. This disassociation is the result of nearly a century of cultural financialization, transforming the dwelling into a tool of capital accumulation, speculation, and extraction. This cultural transformation has affected not only developers but anyone with access to capital, especially through mortgage lending. The financial mobilization of vast portions of the residential fabric of a city, which have traditionally been the foundation of the human urban engagement, depends on the creation of radically alienated and a-political downtown societies and on eroding democratic notions of the city which condominium institutions are ideologically but superficially based on. In time, this socio-political alienation from the concrete framework of the condominium itself, will lead to widespread disinvestment, asphyxiating downtown Toronto in the phenomenon of the “tragedy of the anticommons,”¹⁵ – the alienation of use value by the over-fragmentation of private ownership.¹⁶

Insofar as the landscape of towers has already become a structure in which an urban society lives, this gridlock caused by the economic totalization of the urban fabric can start to be undone when architects begin to act tactically within the existing structures. If the urban structure of the condominium relies on a centrally conceived narrative being perpetuated in the daily life of their inhabitants, these structured patterns of alienating behaviour can be subverted through the telling of alternative narratives. By exploring scenarios in which the future of the condominium tower is driven by individual agency and actions which freely

14. The importance of real-estate for the health and well-being of the Canadian economy and Canadian Dollar is based on two considerations. First, real-estate became an extremely important commodity for foreign investment in the Canadian economy, particularly after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Since the global abandonment of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1971, and the normalization of fiat currency, the value of the Loonie has been dependent on international demand, relative to other currencies. Second, the Canadian economy is floated by consumer spending. In the absence of ‘productive’ manufacturing economies, consumer spending must be maintained through debt. In order to prevent this debt-ability from defaulting or being over-extended, it had to be securitized by a commodity, guaranteed to only ever increase in value at a rate faster than inflation. While the financial mechanism of securitizing the debt of a consumer economy through real-estate was popular policy in the States under President Roosevelt, it became necessary for the perpetuation of the post-industrial economy following the flight of industry from North America.

15. Brian Webb and Seven Webber, “The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods for Long-term Urban Revitalization,” *Cities* 61, no. 48-57. (2017): 51-2.

16. Michael Heller, “The Tragedy of the Anticommons: A Concise Introduction and Lexicon,” *The Modern Law Review* 76, no. 1 (January 2013), 6.

transgress the status quo, the architect can disrupt the attitudes of inhabitants within the *lived space* of the tower. In telling alternative futures, the impact of decisions on space is demystified and the inhabitant of the condominium is equipped to take ownership of the space in which they dwell.

0.1.1 Methodology

To understand the contradictory urban condition that condominium towers create in the built fabric of Toronto, it is important to understand the foundational elements of the city that are being alienated through specific elements of the condominium. Within the condominium, there are four foundational elements: the basic principle of the urban dwelling, the conceived function of the condominium unit as a commodity, the condominium as a space of politics and structure of power, and the decay and maintenance of the building in time. Finally, we will consider a toolkit for undermining the determinist output of these four elements to restore the condominium tower as dynamic and functional armature of the urban fabric.

0.1.2 Habitus and the Urban Dwelling

First, we must establish the significance of the individual dwelling, which has traditionally formed the basis of both the social life¹⁷ and the morphology of the city.¹⁸ The rise of high-density living and condominium ownership in the contemporary city have greatly complicated our understanding of this private realm. It is therefore necessary first to re-establish the foundational social and ontological importance that the dwelling holds in the space of the city. The basic value of the dwelling is as the locus of *habitus*;¹⁹ the practice of maintaining oneself. The dwelling gives the individual a place of security and belonging, within the material and political negotiations of the larger city. In Toronto, the cultural understanding of the dwelling in the condominium has been heavily flavoured by preceding decades of suburban sprawl.²⁰ By investigating this chronology of suburban values, we establish a cultural understanding of peoples relationship to their dwelling unit. Establishing

17. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 29-31.

18. George Baird, "Studies on Urban Morphology in North America," *Writings on Architecture and the City* (London: Artifice Books on Architecture, 2015), 129.

19. Hazel Easthope, "A Place Called Home," *Housing, Theory and Society* 21, no. 3 (November 2010): 133.

20. Hans Ibelings and PARTISANS, *Rise and Sprawl: The Condominiumization of Toronto* (Toronto: The Architecture Observer, 2016), 28-30.

this dwelling as the basic building-block and cultural variable within the city, we are then able to unpack the influence of neoliberal codes of production, culture, and politics within the condominium.

0.1.3 Condo Morphology and the Totalizing March of Financialization

The neoliberal codes that structure the production of residential fabric of the city are the next aspect of the condominium to be considered. As condominiums are typologically the product of capitalist codes of speculative city building,²¹ the dwelling has become a commodity, characterized by its homogeneity for the sake of exchangeability.²² With increasing globalization, the exchange value of condominium units became increasingly referential to geographies of real-estate values, and disassociated from the use-value of units.²³ Because it was useful for accumulating large volumes of capital in specific geographies, methods of space production were re-designed around this disassociation. This was endorsed through culturally liberal preconceptions about the purpose of private property and with fiscal and space planning policies. Global super centres of real-estate investment like London, New York, Dubai, and Toronto became important mechanisms for generating and securing capital growth within consumption-based economies, following de-industrialization throughout the 1980's and 1990's.²⁴ Housing in these cities became increasingly viewed as commodities of exchange, rather than as places to live. In a cycle of self-validation, geographies of property values are both perpetuating the artificial inflation of the exchange value of condominiums, and providing financial incentive for the localized hyper-densification of the city through the ongoing construction of taller and denser condominium towers. The conscious disparity between the exchange value and use value of units is creating a socio-economic precipice that increasingly alienates urban political (divergent) action for fear of undermining the precarious accumulation of capital.²⁵

21. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 157.

22. Lefebvre, *The production of Space*, 75.

23. Neil Smith, *Uneven Development* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 104.

24. Manuel B Aalbers, "Housing and Financialization," *A Research Agenda for Housing*, ed. Markus Moos (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019) 32.

25. Webb, "The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods," 54.

0.1.4 Real and Abstract Political Spaces of the Condominium

From this foundational understanding of the unit as an increasingly alienating space within the city, we come to understand the city as a political field; a “space of appearance,” of the negotiation of values, and of the collective imagination.²⁶ The condo-ized framing of political space in the neoliberal-built city transgresses the classical binary of public and private spaces to create a field of incremental publics.²⁷ This incremental field is further politicized through the corporatized control of built space under the framework of the *Ontario Condominium Act (OCA-98)*. This legislation gives each condominium corporation a semi-autonomous constitution, creating islands of micro-democracy within the field of the city. Participation in this micro-democracy is based on share-ownership rather than occupancy, reinforcing neo-liberal control.²⁸ These two conceptions of the city as political space – the space of appearance and the corporatized policy of control over that space – are at odds with each other within the institution of the condominium as both an extension of urban public space, and a space under neoliberal control. Where-as the city as space of appearance is grounded in the appropriation of the built form, the political institutions of the condominium are founded on neoliberal codes of ownership, accumulation, and determinacy. To maintain the function of real-estate as a bank of capital within the global economy, these political codes are used strategically, to protect the integrity of the asset, rather than to promote the emergence of an urban polity.

0.1.5 The Decaying Neoliberal Artifact and the Tragedy of the Anticommons

The fourth consideration which undermines any strategies of stability in the condominium tower is the material tower itself. The material is, after all, the product of space and the provider of function. Material in time is not static. The material of buildings acts counter the expectation of economies of finance and capital growth. While the value of the real-estate asset is always hoped to increase based purely on the appreciation of the land on which it is built, the performance of building systems will only ever decrease.²⁹ Unlike a gold ingot, a

26. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 73.

27. Ute Lehrer and Loren March, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation in Revitalizing Suburban High-rise Buildings,” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2019): 65-85.

28. Legislative Assembly of Ontario, “Condominium Act, 1998,” *Statutes of Ontario, 1998*, (Toronto: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 1998): s. 51(2).

29. Hilliard MacBeth, *When The Bubble Bursts: Surviving the Canadian Real Estate Crash*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2018), ch. 15.

condominium requires constant decisions of capital investment for maintenance to retain its exchange value and, more importantly, its use value. The maintenance of the material tower is, therefore, the intersection of the tower as functional, political, and economic entities, all at once. With the power of agency fragmented into the tens or hundreds of private parcels through condominium title, contradictory views of ownership, common expectations of financial growth, and the natural tendency toward building degradation, create an economic stalemate known as the tragedy of the anticommons.³⁰ In this tragic condition, the politics of ownership, functional potential, and material maintenance of condominiums are compromised to an ever-decreasing state, leading to the complete alienation of the use value of the condominium dwelling and its place in the city.³¹

0.1.6 Restoring Habitus through Disruptive 'Planning'

After considering the framework of the condominium as dwelling, instrument of economic gain, political playing field, and catalyst for alienating decay, the question must be asked, what tools do architects have to subvert these spatial strategies of power? With the awareness of the spatial alienation, engineered by false applications of democracy and collectivism, this thesis proposes that the condominium tower, as a functional piece of the social city, resists comprehensive top-down ideological renewal as only a mechanism to reinforce strategies of power in space and daily life.³² In order to restore the agency of *habitus*, the architect must remove themselves from strategic discourse by using a tool-kit that appropriates the existing city into new futures,³³ but simultaneously opens these futures for public interpretation and mass appropriation, rather than tying space down to a single utopic narrative. This can be done through scenario planning. Scenario planning expands the horizon of future possibilities beyond a single narrative by systematically exploring different outcomes from all facets of uncertainty of a given system or situation.³⁴ In exploring different conceptions of daily life and decision making in the condominium through stories and images, the architect can interrupt the processes of spatial reproduction within the tower. By engaging the public's imagination through spatial narratives, residents of the tower can use *tactic*, and in-so-doing,

30. Heller, "The Tragedy of the Anticommons," 6.

31. Webb, "The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods," 53-6.

32. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 94.

33. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 96.

34. Michael Godet, Philippe Durance, *Strategic Foresight: For Corporate and Regional Development* (Paris: Editions Dunod, 2011), 1-3.

dis-alienate themselves from the space of the condominium. Within the decision making of daily life, the spatial agency of the many residents of the tower can be restored. This thesis will investigate a series of three alternative futures of a condominium tower in Toronto, to understand how decision making with regards to the four variables discussed above, radically influences the ability of these towers to sustain healthy urban life into the future. Acknowledging that the future is subject to innumerable influences and, therefore, beyond any single person's ability to control or predict, scenario building, or in the words of John Urry, "post-modern planning," explores the full spectrum of possible outcomes within the condominium community.³⁵

These scenarios are not intended to provide water-tight solutions to the innumerable problems that condominium towers pose. Rather, by telling stories about the diverse possible futures of the tower, the urban society within the by building can see the armature of the city that they inhabit many new and different lights. These pose as modes of daily operation, alternative to the single capitalist narrative that has generated and perpetuates the condominiums.³⁶ Delving into the condominium towers as living and autonomous pieces of the new urban fabric, their occupants might be emancipated from financialized and institutionalized preconceptions of urban dwelling. This might allow for these tower structures, as permanent artifacts in the city, to evolve to become active and vibrant armatures of city life.

35. John Urry, *What is the Future*, digital (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), ch. 1.

36. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 86-7.

Part 1:

Condominiums as the Urban Artifact of Neoliberal Determinacy

1.1 The Dwelling as Urban Building Block

The glass and concrete condominium towers have become the hallmark of living in Toronto with over 186 100 new units were registered in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area between 2002 and 2018.³⁷ The private dwelling has changed substantially over the past century, both in our cultural understanding of its role within the urban social landscape, and its physical function within the morphology of the city as a dynamic artifact. The need for ‘home’ as a place of identity and security, is a “universal human practice.”³⁸ As a practice, the making of *home* is based on the very personal and material process of appropriating the space that one inhabits to align with their daily needs. Throughout history, these daily practices formed and evolved the city, making it as the sum of many parts, a collective ‘opus’ of a society,³⁹ with the inconspicuous individual dwelling as the monomer unit for this construction.⁴⁰ Over the past centuries, the reality of the city as the sum of its granular parts, has been slowly eroded, in exchange for totalized conceptions of neighbourhoods, districts and armatures. These conceptions are the imposition of structured power upon the otherwise political space of the city.⁴¹ In Toronto, this cultural shift can be traced from the earliest pastoral suburbs like Don Mills, through subsequent modes of city building like the utopic modernist towers, to the condominiums of today. These subsequent modes of producing residential urban fabric reify evolving strategies of political powers and have direct ontological implications for how people dwell in the city. To understand the relationship between hegemonic values of space production and the evolution of Toronto’s morphology through daily practice, we must first dig through the many-layered manifestations of power in the city to arrive at the basic building block of *daily life*, that is the dwelling unit; colloquially, the *home*.

37. *Condominiums: Two Decades of Housing*, Toronto City Planning, digital (Toronto: City of Toronto, May 2020), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/8f4f-City-Planning-Condominiums-Two-Decades-of-New-Housing.pdf>.

38. David Madden and Peter Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis*. (London: Verso, 2016), 53.

39. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 33.

40. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 50.

41. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93-4.

1.1.1 Habitus as the Basis of Dwelling (Maintenance and Change)

Stepping back from condominiums specifically to understand the interrelations of the dwelling to the urban fabric, we must first understand the ontological and material relationship between the urban individual and their dwelling. The dwelling– the private realm – is the foundation for the *daily life* of the urban citizen. Practically speaking, the *use-value* of the house is to accommodate basic corporeal maintenance; sleeping, eating, and hygiene.⁴² The human connection to place and *home*, however, runs much deeper. Hazell Easthope situates corporeal maintenance within the *home* using the word Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, that is the rootedness in place across different scales, arising from the rhythms of daily life in familiar spaces and geographies. Habitus goes beyond purely corporeal care to incorporate the maintenance of the relationship between “nature (being) and culture, [...] consciousness and the body, self and other, mechanism and teleology, determinism and freedom, and even between memory and imagination,”⁴³ capturing the most intimate fibers of the socio-spatial dialectic. *Habitus* does not narrowly define the maintenance of the self – body and mind – but reciprocally includes the relations of these things in corporeal space in a maintenance or reproduction of the mechanisms that form it. It is the maintenance of the space of maintenance – the investment of time, effort, and materials (or capital) in keeping and making one’s dwelling both functional and good according to a certain code.⁴⁴

While Bourdieu, as a sociologist, defined *habitus* as a mechanism to isolate how societies act in a subconscious and cohesive way to reproduce themselves, de Certeau criticized his definition in the very notion of it being a subconscious and “unintentional” practice. While Bourdieu allowed for ‘improvisation’ within *habitus* as practice, he determined it to be regulated⁴⁵ and therefore equally the learned product of the structure within which it operates, thus indiscernible. de Certeau revives *habitus* from within the structure that it operates by insisting that in being the primary driver of social mobility, *habitus*, and the improvisation for which it allows, must operate ‘other’ to the structure.⁴⁶ The daily mechanism for dwelling therefore became the means to subvert structure.

42. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 73-4.

43. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*, 79.

44. Easthope, “A Place Called Home,” 133.

45. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*, 79.

46. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 85.

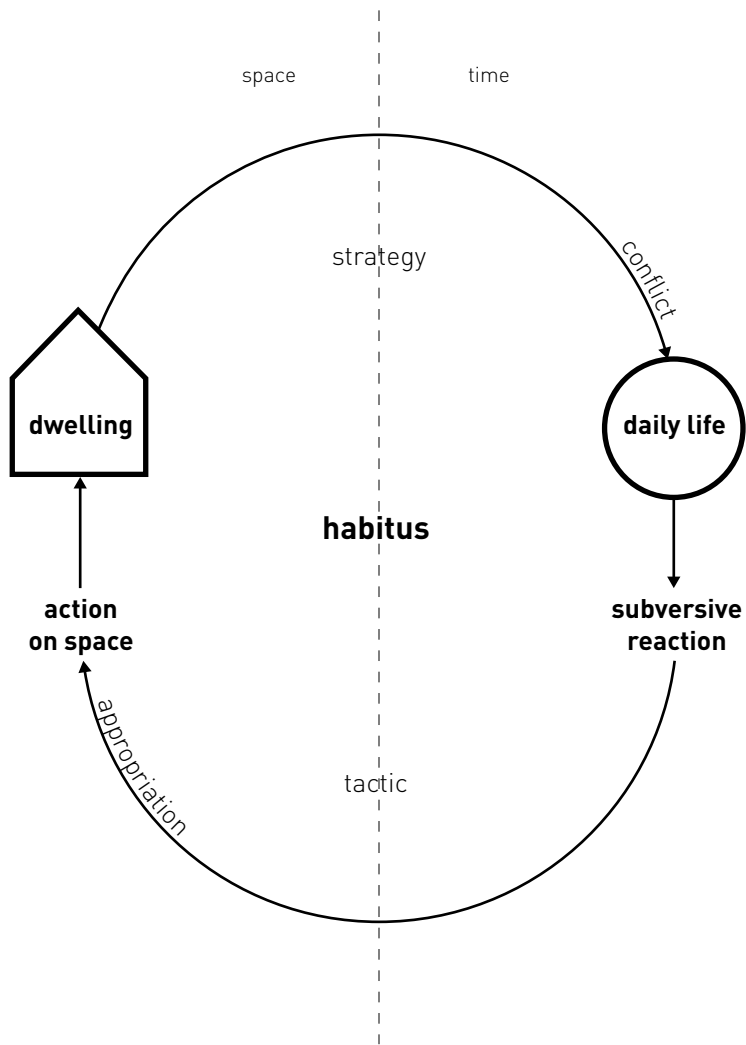


Fig.3 From de Certeau's spatial turn to a theory of *habitus*.

De Certeau's tactical turn translated to habitus and the space of the condominium.

de Certeau frames this reciprocal maintenance of space as appropriation of power; in a moment when space exerts force on the daily life of its inhabitant by being at odds with their tacit values or ideologies, the individual's values manifest themselves, prompting them to appropriative action on space.⁴⁷ de Certeau calls these small acts of appropriation *tactics*. By forming one's home and daily habits according to how one judges best, the inhabitant asserts their individual values, simultaneously realizing their individuality, and the physical use-value of their unit. It is this capacity of adaptation through *habitus* that the individual is able to make a place of privacy and belonging within the city. As the phenomenon of *home* is a basic human need, we are considering this ability for spatial adaptation as the inhabitants of a dwelling so see fit, the basic *use-value* of the dwelling.⁴⁸

The implications of *habitus*, extend beyond the bounds of the private realm to make up the heterogeneous "urban experience." As property lines around private lots collectively delimit the public realm in two dimensions,⁴⁹ so the urban experience of the public realm is comprised of the landscape of many discreet buildings. In the scope of the street, district, or city, the spatial realizations of many individuals' values result in diachronous evolution and heterogeneity of the urban fabric.⁵⁰ This material variation ranges in scale, from paint and potted plants, to building morphology. In this eclectic expression of many individuals' daily lives, the city has traditionally been analysed as the collective "work" – the result of daily, discreet, and decentralized negotiations between individuals.⁵¹ This quotidian cycle of adjustments and adaptations is the practice of *habitus*, establishing familiarity and belonging at the civic scale.

1.1.2 Urbanism and the Extraction of Dwelling

Over the last few centuries, the idea of the city as a 'work' – the outcome of people's unceasing appropriations and negotiations of their places of life and labour – has largely been lost due to totalizing conceptions and visions of what a city *should be*.⁵² This loss of

47. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 85.

48. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 53-4.

49. Baird, *Vacant Lottery*, 24.

50. George Baird, "Studies on Urban Morphology in North America," 129.

51. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 75.

52. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93-4.

the city as an everyday ‘work’ is especially true for the residential fabric of North American cities, which over the past on hundred years was completely extracted from the city proper in the form of suburbs.⁵³ Following modern doctrine, city planning had considered the emergence of the core-periphery hierarchy as a natural and necessary urban phenomenon. This model has cemented the common perception of the ‘city proper’ (*propre*) as the central business district and commercial areas – in the words of Irving Kristol, the city as a “service station”.⁵⁴ What is often lost in this distinction is the ultimate centrality of residential fabric in the daily functioning, and the socio-cultural mobility of the city.⁵⁵ While great public spaces, commercial districts, and monumental constructions are often considered the focal point of city building, it is the residential fabric that gives rise to the shape and ultimate vitality of the city. Residential fabric forms the matrix in which spaces of urban exchange emerge. Even in historic and contemporary instances where functional urban artifacts like fortifications, factories, or shopping centres pre-date a residential morphology, the necessity of daily habits has always been sufficient to reorient the concerns of urban life away from nodes of *exception* towards individual states of domesticity.⁵⁶ From urban doctrines gone by, we have acquired the tendency of thinking that residential fabric as an appendix to the city proper, produced, static and idyllic, removed from sites of urban exchange – landscapes of consumption.⁵⁷ This conception of the dwelling was present in the inception of the suburbs where spacious neighbourhoods were connected to distant shopping centres, employment zones, and the Toronto city centre through sinuous street networks and expressways, and is perpetuated today, when apartment units are stacked up away from the public, to be accessed through anonymous and alienating lobbies, elevators, and hallways.⁵⁸ The extraction of the dwelling from the city has allowed the production of residential fabric to be instrumentalized more fully, concretizing totalized capitalist strategies into the daily life and spatial practices of the city.⁵⁹ In the urban landscape of Toronto, we can trace this tradition from the conception of the suburbs of Don Mills to the condominium podium towers of the past twenty years.

53. John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto’s Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 20-1.

54. Barton Myers and George Baird, “Vacant Lottery,” *Design Quarterly*, no. 108 (1978): 8.

55. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 48-9.

56. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 70.

57. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 42.

58. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 30.

59. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 98.

1.1.3 Don Mills and the Conceived Urban Experience

The building of architecture is the projection of ideals. As the placement of a single wall signifies a decision made, based on particular values, so the complete house is the manifestation of organizing principles. Likewise, the surveying of land and laying of roads projects the values of those in charge onto the urban fabric. Whereas the placement of a wall might impact on an individual's daily life, buildings and infrastructure in cities organize whole societies according to specific socio-political structures. The emergence of master-planned districts, therefore, not only influence rhythms and power structures of the city, but, in some capacity, choreograph them outright according to the ideals of developers, architects and people in positions of decision-making. When engineered as complete communities, armatures of the city precipitate principles of politics, society, and economics, according to views of the city as a finished product. For better or for worse, these prescribe ideologies, social structures, and patterns of life, conceived by an external authority, form the *conceived space* of the city.⁶⁰

The production of residential communities as carefully calibrated and choreographed elements of the city did not begin in Toronto with the construction of condominium tower, but is demonstrated in early master-planned suburbs of the 50's and 60's. Macklin Hancock's Don Mills is a hallmark example of this, not only because its formal qualities and civic ambitions, derived from Garden City principles that were manifested in many early suburbs across Canada and the States,⁶¹ but also because under the guiding management of the industrial E.P. Taylor, it represented the induction of Garden City aspirations into a highly profitable way of building urban fabric in the city.⁶²

The building of Don Mills began in 1954. Recently returned from Harvard where he had been exposed to the latest discourses in European post-war planning, the young planner Macklin Hancock envisioned a clear set of formal principles for Don Mills to create the picture of ideal urban experience across the full ambit of the development. This calibrated experience extended from the scale of the home up to the social equilibrium of the

60. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 10-1.

61. Easterling, Keller, *Organization space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 142.

62. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 95.

community as a whole. He based the organization on the then-emerging concept of the neighbourhood unit as a self-contained community, each with its own internal amenities like parks, schools, community centre, churches, and distinctly separated employment zones.⁶³ Hancock deployed a seemingly arbitrary network of curving streets which, when planted with trees, gave the neighbourhood a highly marketable park-like experience.⁶⁴ More importantly, irregular street distribution made the neighbourhood impractical for people to use as through-ways, discouraging *strangers* – the disruptive *other* – from the streets of this new city.⁶⁵ The most culturally significant design principle, however, was the generous increasing of lot sizes to intentionally isolate the individual homes from each other and give residents ‘elbow room’ – the autonomy to live, move, and alter their homes, free from the need for neighbourly negotiation.⁶⁶ Through these principles, the generation of the pastoral *experience* reduced the new shape of the city to a perfectly inoffensive ideal of city living. The suburb was produced as a quiet and pastoral domesticity – a landscape of consumption.⁶⁷

There was an undeniable social-civic aspiration to the plan for Don Mills as well. In a reformist Howardian spirit, the new city was designed as a passive *experience*, free from confrontation or offence.⁶⁸ The eradication of the stranger and through-traveller, and isolation from the neighbour through the increase of lot sizes removed any need for social or political negotiation. Carefully calibrated mixing of economic classes guaranteed a balanced and agreeable society.⁶⁹ The public *institutions* – school, church, and sports club – were to provide all the necessary amenity for civic and social engagement – erroneously equated with political engagement. Political engagement was envisioned as a bridge club.⁷⁰ This is, perhaps, the core principle of the *sub-urban* experience – that one can live in the city and yet be liberated from the distinctly urban need for interpersonal negotiation. This liberation from negotiation has pervaded our conceptions of urban dwelling ever since.

63. The separation of residential and employment areas of the city was another principle carried over from the quasi-religious zeal of nineteenth century urban reformers, believing places of industry to be damaging to the innocent and natural development of the family. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 10-1, 16.

64. The plan for Rosedale in Toronto, was based on Fredrick Law Olmsted’s 1869 plan for the upper-class neighbourhood of Riverside, Chicago. Gently curving streets were used deliberately to give these neighbourhoods a leisurely and parklike quality of experience. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 21.

65. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 86.

66. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 84-90.

67. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 42.

68. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 22-7.

69. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 90-1.

70. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 85.

Don Mills was a market success and highly profitable for E.P. Taylor, the developer. It had created a new lifestyle for the emerging post-war demographic of young atomic families, giving them places to spread out and to grow. In Don Mills, the marketability of Hancock's spacious and idyllic lot, combined with Taylor's industrialist mastery of financing, incentivized the Fordist development of vast portions of the city. The ideals embodied in this ready-made piece of the city became the codified template for the production of residential areas across the Canada.⁷¹

While Hancock understood the importance of the city as the locus of belonging, for him the phenomenon of belonging was most productive as the experience of a static, preconceived environment, rather than the active participation in place-making and society building.⁷² While Don Mills was a culmination of an emerging tradition of city planning,⁷³ this new neighbourhood represented the intersection of the ideological conceptions of society and urban life with the corporate Fordist production of that space.⁷⁴ In their calculated stability, the production of neighbourhoods by private industry was conceived of as the best means for leading the rapid expansion of Toronto. Extracting the dwelling from the core of the city and placing it in optimized landscapes, the city ceased to be a collective project, but was rather marketed as the experience of pre-assembled cultural ideals.

1.1.4 Towers and the Lifestyle Community

As the city of Toronto continued to grow, the notion of city building as the production of pre-conceived experience was fortified in each evolution of planned built form. This was demonstrated in the rise of modernist tower building projects from the 1960's to the 1980's. While many tower community projects punctuated the ever-expanding suburban carpet, the vision of the new city as a carefully composed utopic experience is seen most aggressively in downtown projects like Moss Park and St. James Town.⁷⁵ These tower communities, founded on the modernist principles emerging from Europe, promised new and streamlined visions of living convenience. Targeted towards young urban professionals, St. James

71. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 93-6.

72. Easterling, *Organization space*, 129-30.

73. Aureli, *City as Political Form*, 32.

74. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 95.

75. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 102, 163-66.



Fig.4 “Move to St. James Town just for the fun of it!”

Town was marketed as an epicenter of casual and hedonistic downtown living.⁷⁶ While the *a priori* image of carefree apartment dwelling was similar for projects across the Metro Toronto Planning Region, the downtown projects are the clearest example of the strategic production of the city under the modernist dogma of urban renewal. For renewal projects in the Toronto core, hundreds of individuals and families were displaced from a functional residential fabric which was deemed unsightly and unprofitable. In a land-clearing strategy known as ‘*block-busting*,’ developers used deliberate neglect and destruction of the existing urban fabric to make entire downtown neighbourhoods untenable, justifying their demolition and replacement.⁷⁷ For St. James Town, 435 homes and private properties were assembled into a tabula rasa, on which 19 rental towers were built. A select handful of planners and developers provided a regenerated vision for what city living should look like. Since their construction, these high-modernist ideals of a preconceived vision of city life produced by the architects, developers, and land management corporations have been unable to adapt according to the true and evolving cultural and every-day needs of their inhabitants, causing disenfranchisement and alienation. The modernist towers have become object of neglect and notorious decay.⁷⁸

While public outrage surrounding *urban renewal* projects, fanned by the writings of Jane Jacobs, George Baird, and Barton Myers put to an end to such wholesale projects at the scale of St. James Town, the heroic vision of the residential tower, as the fetishized production of a complete lifestyle community was firmly embedded in the toolbox of the architect and the developer.

The condominium, now the most common form of dwelling unit being built in Toronto,⁷⁹ emerged in Ontario, in 1967 as the combination of free-hold land title, with the speed and

76. E.R.A. Architects, University of Toronto, *Mayor's Tower Renewal: Opportunities Book* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2008), 18.

77. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 164-66.

78. The statement of morphology being unable to adapt to the lived reality, as purely a dichotomy between form and function according to a simplified application of Soja's socio-spatial dialectic is naïve. The power structures inherent in projects like St. James Town, necessary for developing these utopic socialized communities within the neoliberal framework – rental tenure – is both a product of the vision and a factor of its inhumane ends.

79. “Market Housing Information Portal,” *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*, 2021, https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#Profile/3520005/4/Toronto/#_.



Fig.6 Along Crumbling St. James Street - where the shadow of 200 evictions hangs-Mrs. Alberta Manduck goes house-hunting with her neighbor's children



Fig.7 St. James Town Apartments: Houses being cleared for \$50 million development

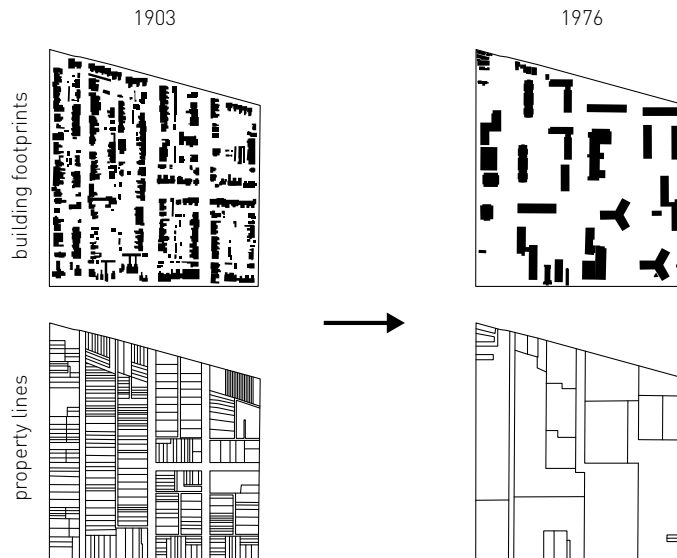


Fig.5 Figure ground morphology and property line evolution, 1903 – 1976.

This reproduction of the figure-ground and parcel studies of St. James Town, taken from George Baird's Upper Jarvis Study, illustrates how the city lots, as parcels of private ideological agency, were assembled to create a highly produced vision for urban dwelling.

efficiency of high-rise development. Despite this rapid growth from suburbs and rental towers, the City of Toronto was facing ongoing housing shortages. The carefully planned but sprawling communities of the suburbs could not provide residences at a sufficient speed or density.⁸⁰ While the modernist towers provided both speed and density, these tower developments were all designed and built as strictly rental communities, which many of them remain today. When real-estate management companies developed land into high-rise communities, they were building long-term investments, paying themselves off over decades of rent income and represented commitments for property management and maintenance. The provincial government at the time believed that the removal of such commitments would accelerate development in high-density development. By allowing units to be sold individually, the private market, the responsibilities of property and maintenance could be passed on to the private home owners. What emerged was a typology that looked very much like the rental tower, complete with common rooms, pools, theaters, and concierges.⁸¹

In the 1970's, the use of condominiums was limited largely to the production of affordable housing. This was promoted through the Federal Assisted Home Ownership (AHOP) program which saw the ability for the accumulation of capital, afforded by mortgaged home-ownership, as the means to lift people out of poverty. Between 1967 and 1981, three years after AHOP was phased out, 85 728 condominium units were built in the Toronto Metropolitan Area. Once the federal incentive ended, the builders briefly tried to reorient into the market for luxury condominiums which could be sold to smaller wealthier households at a premium, but the recession and rising mortgage interest rates of 1980 quickly brought an end to this. At the time, City of Toronto Planning Commissioner Stephen McLaughlin noted how the economic down-turn chilled the initial "bandwagon effect," casting a skepticism over the viability of condominiums.⁸² As a means of dividing a single parcel of land into many privately held titles, the condominium would remain in the background until it found new demand, beginning in the mid 1990's. Smaller white-collar households, emerging urban theories on the necessity of density, and a renewed interest in Toronto's inner city, catalyzed by the Two Kings policy of 1994, slowly coalesced in the form of the condominium podium

80. Jon Caulfield, "Making Toronto safe - once more - for the developers," *The City Book; The Politics and Planning of Canada's Cities*, (Toronto: Charlottetown Group Publishing, 1976): 139.

81. R. C. Risk, "Condominiums and Canada," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 18, no. 1 (1968): 2-3.

82. Stephen G. McLaughlin, *Toronto condominiums – past, present and future*. (City of Toronto Planning and Development Department: Toronto, 1982).

tower.⁸³

Culturally, condominiums are still designed, produced, and marketed in the vision of a complete communities of experience. Marketing campaigns for preconstruction projects are integral for promoting lifestyles of consumptive experience. Architectural renderings depict attractive young people spending their evenings in dimly lit party rooms, or lounging beside the pool (*Fig. 8*).⁸⁴ Developers tailor everything from the architectural messaging to the internal codes of conduct to create enclaves for utopian ways of living, which are only later to be filled with occupants to live them.⁸⁵ Experience, rather than the production of either physical or social space, is portrayed as the new benchmark for civic life, much like the bridge club in the post-war suburbs. While internalized amenities like gyms and lounges create the illusion of an exclusive or insulated community, this rhythm is reinforced by the architectonics of daily life in the tower. As vertical enclaves, the condominium unit is idealized as a lofty retreat, elevated away from the business of life on the street. The feature of private elevators, with the appeal of exclusive service to penthouse enclaves whisk residents up from the public realm of the lobby without having to make eye contact with a neighbour, let alone a stranger.⁸⁶ This is reminiscent of the winding safe and stranger-free streets of the suburbs. Continuing the suburban tradition, condominium towers are designed and constructed as residential enclaves within the city, that are appendix to the dynamism and vitality that we attribute to the city and have therein been ossified in superficial constructs of spatial experience.

1.1.5 The Strategy of Alienation

The idea of city as a produced framework for urban experience to be consumed, even if this consumption is enfolded in daily life, is fundamentally at odds with the idea of the

83. While city planning policy had already tried to reorient real estate investment from the sprawl of the suburbs back into the city centre as early as the *Toronto's Central Area Plan* of 1976, the consecutive financial crises of the 1980's and 90's suppressed any substantial building in the city until global economic turning of the mid-90's. Ute Lehrer and Thorben Wieditz, "Condominium Development and Gentrification: The Relationship Between Policies, Building Activities and Socio-economic Development in Toronto," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 18, no. 2 (January 2009): 86-7.

84. *F, Rise and Sprawl*, 90-9.

85. Evan McKenzie, *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 145-6.

86. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 24, 30.



Fig.8 Maverick Condo marketing images

Marketing images present a vision of a carefully calibrated lifestyle within the tower, strategically conceived for maximum appeal within a target market demographic. These marketing images taken from Empire Communities presents a chic and subdued lifestyle meant to appeal to young, ambitious professionals.

city as a social cultural product, that is as the collective work of a whole society.⁸⁷ Singular visions of what the city should look like are the reification of a power on space and cannot accommodate ‘*other*’ modes of operation, such as the appropriative action of space. The city is, therefore, strategically reduced to an *experience* to be consumed but not acted upon, should its disruption undermine the structure of power. As the residential fabric of the city becomes an increasingly totalized conception of what urban dwelling ought to look like, *habitus*, as the ontological *use-value* of the dwelling, becomes necessarily alien. Singular theoretical visions are threatened by presence of the *other* ways of life.⁸⁸

If the ontological value of the urban fabric is formed through its inhabitants’ ability to daily re-form their dwelling according to their needs and desires,⁸⁹ this value is alienated when external power structures prevent appropriative action. *Strategies*, according to De Certeau, are means by which power structures – social, economic, or political – use space to support the daily reproduction of social structures and practices necessary for their own survival. These strategies can be embodied in *perceived space*, such as the heavy-handed compartmentalization of living space in a condominium unit which physically enforces particular space usage, or abstract by formulations of *conceived space*.⁹⁰ Dwellings of the city are the product of contemporary hegemonic cultural values, fixing those cultural values into spatial practice and habits of daily life. When these hegemonic strategies come at odds with the dynamic individual spatial practice of *habitus*, the socio-spatial dialectic is tested with one of two outcomes. Either the space itself is adapted to the use of the individual, or the hegemonic power that produced the space asserts itself, alienating the ontological *use-value* from the dwelling unit.⁹¹ When the dwelling unit is adapted to meet personal needs, the fabric of the city is changed, cared for, and politicized according to the quotidian activism of the urban dweller. The alienation of the dwelling unit’s use-value through strategic neoliberal structuring, conversely, will result in the de-politicisation and the material and emotional disinvestment of the urban fabric of Toronto. Alienation of *habitus* becomes greater, the stronger the determinism of the dwellings that are produced.

87. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 73-5.

88. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 80.

89. Easthope, “A Place Called Home,” 134.

90. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

91. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 53-4.

Through the increasing determinism of our produced residential space, architects have increasingly fixed the residential fabric as zones of control and stability, justifying strategies for the alienation of the individual city-dweller's values and agency. While this tradition is not new to Toronto, the migration of the dwelling from the sprawling grid of private parcels to the condominium tower, as a singular framework of urban architecture, has progressively obscured and alienated the individual within the urban framework. The residential framework of the condominium has been overlaid with mechanisms of economic and political control that demonstrate how these abstract strategies gave rise to the specific *type* of the condominium tower and perpetuate their internal counter-urban power dynamics into the present and future of the city.

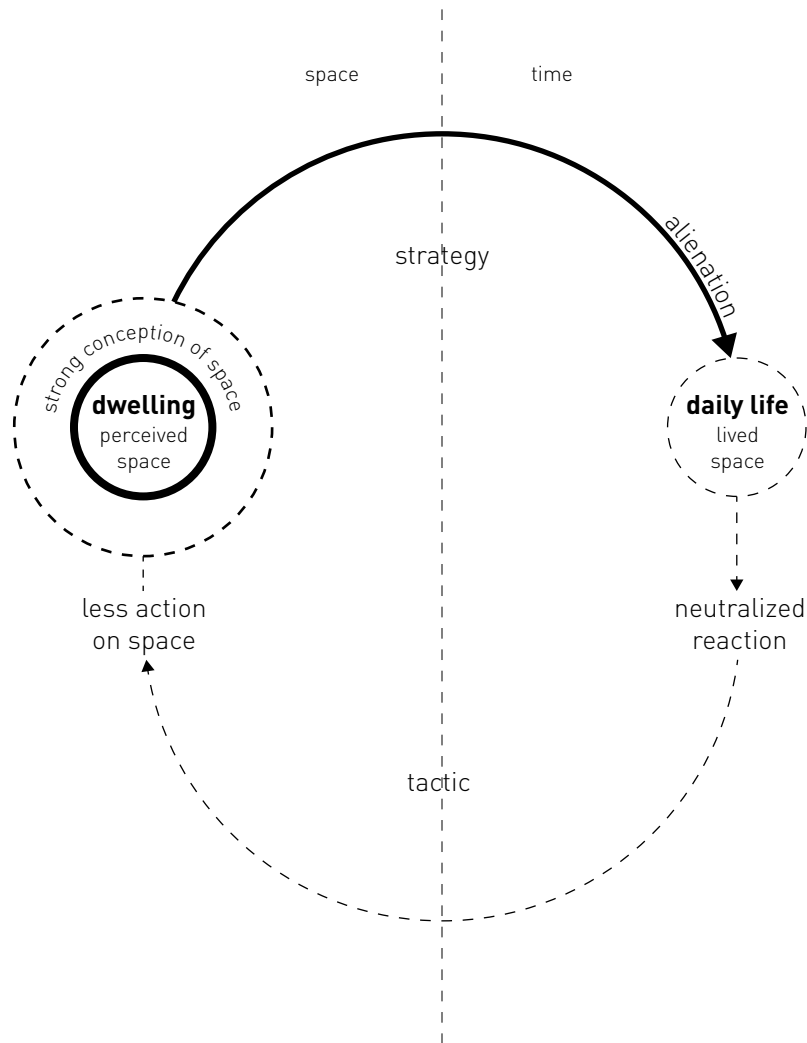


Fig.9 Strong conceptions of dwelling causing alienation

Dwellings that are the product of strong conceptions of space, eg. of economic policy and utopian architectural vision, more strongly suppress their own appropriation. This can be achieved through the strong coding of the perceived space itself, or through disciplinary social structures like mortgage debt and the threat of financial loss.

1.2 The Dwelling Unit as Economic Instrument

1.2.1 The Economy for Parcels of Liberal Freedoms

The condominium tower morphology in Toronto is the reification of the ascendancy of private property ownership in our capitalist-hegemonic cultural and economic practices.⁹² Over the past century, our perception of *home* and its relationship to private property has evolved significantly through the influence of cultural practice and policy frameworks concerning land title. As we have seen in the first section, *home* is central to the human experience. In Canada however, as in many liberal-democratic countries, the ontological understanding of *home* was institutionalized in *private property* as an economic and legal entity. Through a cultural heritage of old English common-law,⁹³ we conceive of private property not only as inherently natural, but as naturally economic⁹⁴ – the dwelling as commodity. Since the Great Depression until today, our use of this dwelling-commodity has evolved through three key modes of financialization.⁹⁵ While considered here chronologically, as they became important to the rise of the condominium tower, these modes of financialization aren't exclusive to specific periods.

In the first mode, following the Great Depression and World Wars, the liberal understanding of citizenship through private property ownership was instrumentalized under federal policies that increased access to mortgage debt as a strategy for giving lifeblood to the young Fordist economy. These policies sold the idea of *home* as an asset that could be used by the consumer class to accumulate capital through equity.⁹⁶ Through the manipulation of cultural values using fiscal policy, the appeal of classical Lockean *estate* liberties prompted the sprawl of the suburbs as economically useful geographies. The second mode of financialization that was formative to the condominium unit commodity was the evolution of the free-hold

92. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 157.

93. Cathy Sherry, "Lessons in Personal Freedom and Functional Land Markets: What Strata and Community Land Title can Learn from Traditional Doctrines of Property." *UNSW Law Journal* 36, no. 1 (April 2013): 283.

94. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 19-21.

95. Aalbers, "Housing and Financialization," 31-2.

96. Colin Crouch, "Privatized Keynesianism: An Unacknowledged Policy Regime," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 11, (2009): 386-7.

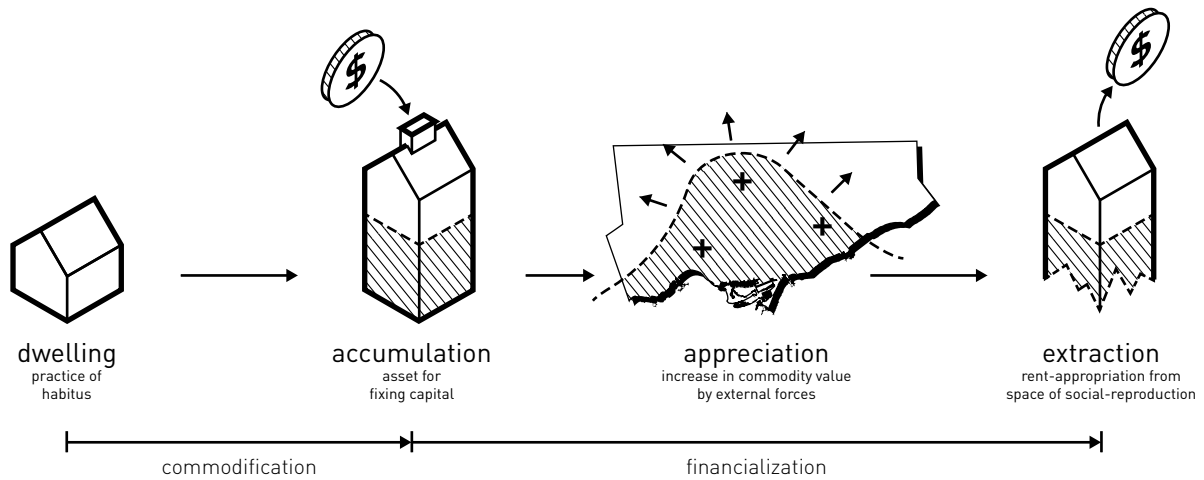


Fig.10 Three observable modes of financialization.

We can use three basic modes of financialization to frame the emergence of the condominium tower as the favoured mode of city-building in Toronto. Once the dwelling has been commodified, it is situated within the economic geography of exchange. Once the frontiers of geography have moved on and the gradual decline of land value makes the dwelling unit useless for speculation, it becomes a mechanism of extraction of ground-rent.

title into a tool of speculation. While the suburbs were consumption-based landscapes,⁹⁷ being non-commercial and non-industrial, they were made economically productive for the average homeowner through dynamic real-estate values.⁹⁸ While this appreciation was important for the individual homeowner, now able to climb up the capitalist ladder,⁹⁹ it became a matter of national importance during the rapid expansion of the global economy and the de-industrialization of the global north-west. With the north-western transition to a principally post-industrial economy, the real-estate commodity became one of the key means of securing national economies.¹⁰⁰ Exacerbated by provincial and municipal planning policies, concentrated demand for free-hold titles has justified the production of smaller and ever-increasing densities of private property parcels in downtown Toronto.¹⁰¹ As the spatial product of capitalist-hegemonic culture and policy,¹⁰² the condominium tower has become a key spatial strategy for fixing the neoliberal economy within our urban spatial practice and daily life.

The third means of the financialization of the condominium unit discussed here is the transformation of the unit as an asset that passively accumulates capital value to an instrument for the extraction of labour value through rent tenancy.¹⁰³ However, in the framework of the of the condominium tower as an urban artifact, this third means of financialization is proposed as the culmination of all four of the critical dimensions of the condominium considered here. We must therefore look at it in the context of the fourth section about the material realities of the condominium towers.

1.2.2 Locke and the Liberal Lens on Privacy

To understand how the private-property title has become the basic building-block within the production of the city, we must go back to our shared cultural understanding private property ownership and how these values have driven changes in the production of the city over the past 100 years. The cultural foundation for the extreme financialization of real-estate

97. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 42.

98. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 83.

99. Urry, *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies*, 151-2.

100. Aalbers, "Housing and Financialization," 32.

101. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 18-24, 41.

102. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 157.

103. Aalbers, "Housing and Financialization," 32.

in Toronto can be found in the political philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704).¹⁰⁴ Locke's well-known motto, "life, liberty, and estate," was not only foundational for the formation of English liberal democracy, which Canada's Constitution and legal systems are based on, but were also foundational to the principles of the American Declaration of Independence of which Canada has a strong *cultural* lineage.¹⁰⁵ It is specifically Locke's understanding for the right to estate – private property – that has allowed for the extreme commodification and financialization of real-estate within the culture of capitalism that have given rise to the condominium unit.

In the Lockean tradition, *estate* was not specifically a dwelling as defined in the ontological dimension of *habitus*. Rather for Locke, estate was the right to appropriate land as a means to produce what was necessary for one's own subsistence.¹⁰⁶ Locke's ability to equate the appropriation of a legally defined parcel of land as a material necessity infused the individual's liberal labour action into the production space, making private property an economic, rather than a social, concept.¹⁰⁷

As an adherent to natural philosophy, Locke defined the individual's need for and right to land as primary, and social institutions like government and currency as derivative. Currency, specifically, complicated his utilitarian idea of private property in a way that he never saw the need to reconcile. While the right to land came with the responsibility to use it to its fullest for one's own survival but without waste, the introduction of currency, exchange, and surplus value without an equitable formulation of profit, sidestepped natural human limits for property use and accumulation. This oversight effectively justified the infinite appropriation of finite land,¹⁰⁸ or conversely assigning a finite parcel of land with a theoretically infinite

104. Sherry, "Lessons in Personal Freedom,": 283.

105. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," is from the American Declaration of Independence. "Peace, order, and good government," from the Canadian Constitution.

106. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 21.

107. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §. 34.

108. In §. 33, Locke qualifies the appropriation of land in his understanding that the supply of land was effectively inexhaustible. "No body could think himself injured by the drinking of another man, though he took a good draught, who had a whole river of the same water left him to quench his thirst: and the case of land and water, where there is enough of both, is perfectly the same." Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §. 33.

exchange value.¹⁰⁹ While the commodification of land which has existed throughout history, Locke's linking the natural need for property to the obligation for labour and productivity set a cultural root that was open to the alienation of the social and ontological necessities of private property, in the name of economic liberty. In connecting the natural liberty of private property to constitutional law, Locke institutionalized the proto-capitalist culture of land ownership.

In Locke's natural-philosophic understanding, rights of life, liberty, and private property preceded the formation of society and state. According to the *Second Treatise of Government*, the basic purpose of the state – or politics at large – was to protect *estate* as the site of 'man's' most natural freedom,¹¹⁰ in much the same way as the condominium corporation was added to private title to protect the individual's unit.¹¹¹ It is our inherited understanding therefore, that the fullest of right and liberties is on land that is owned in free-hold title as it precludes social or political consideration.¹¹² This conception of private property as a basic tenet of a free and moral society led to the innate and largely unquestioned understanding that the fullest of citizenship can only ultimately be attained through the ownership of one's dwelling as an isolated and autonomous parcel.¹¹³ The culturally revered concept of home ownership as both economic instrument and pre-political right has allowed for the widespread financialization of the dwelling unit in Toronto and around the world; first in how the home mortgage was used to promise financial accumulation and security, second, in how the land deed as a means of speculation was leveraged in the global economy, and third, in the generation of passive income through rent extraction.

1.2.3 Fordism and Privatized Keynesianism

The first mode of financialization that reinforced private property into the capitalist-

109. In §. 31 of his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke established the rational boundaries of what an individual could accumulate, on the limits of what they can "enjoy" in a way that nothing goes to waste or spoil. Macpherson asserts, however, that the convertibility of all commodities into currency commodity overcomes, at least superficially, to the limits of what can be enjoyed and accumulated. Crawford.B. Macpherson, foreword to *Second Treatise of Government*, by John Locke (Indianapolis, IND: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), xvii.

110. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §. 124.

111. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 58(1)(a).

112. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §. 89.

113. Easterling, *Organization Space*, 189.

hegemonic practice was the government policies following the First and Second World Wars which cemented the free-hold title as an asset for accumulating equity. While the policy objectives are more clearly demonstrated in American politics, Canadian culture and policies closely mirrored their logics. During the Great Depression, unprecedented unemployment and widespread financial uncertainty made the working class – the consumers on which the emerging Fordist economic model was based – reluctant to spend money on consumer goods. By establishing Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) to securitize medium and high-risk mortgages, U.S. President F. Roosevelt greatly expanded the middle-class capacity to buy private property through mortgage-debt. The financial security ‘granted’ through mortgage debt gave the working class the confidence to buy into a society of consumers and collectively reinforce the growing Fordist socio-economic structure.¹¹⁴ Following the economic shock of the Second World War, this instrumentalization of home ownership through mortgage finance was coupled with emerging Keynesian economic theory of supply-demand moderation to embed real-estate policy as one of governments’ key tools for regulating national economies by the housing market’s capacity to alternately fix large volumes of surplus capital or secure immense volumes of capital debt.¹¹⁵ In 1946, the Canadian Government established the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which insured higher risk loans to expand access to mortgage debt for the working class.¹¹⁶ On the premise of public wealth and well-being, working-class homes were adopted as the cash-reserve for the Fordist economy.¹¹⁷

Vast quantities of new homes became the symbol of autonomy and post-war liberty. The spatial framework of these suburbs was, of course, strongly insinuated with the Lockean ideal of the private parcel. In Hancock’s Don Mills, houses generously spaced along winding streets gave residents “elbow room” to use their property with as little interference from neighbours and strangers as possible.¹¹⁸ As the reformist ambitions of the Garden City

114. In *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies*, John Urry describes how the superstructural elements of a hegemonic power-base are in constant need of adjusting the common liberties that they present, in order to maintain system hierarchies. He makes this argument directly responding to the widely held belief that democracy will only emerge under the conditions of capitalism. The expanded access of property ownership, granted by easier access to home mortgages, can be seen as one such concession made by those in power, for the sake of securing Fordism. Urry, *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies*, 151-2.

115. Crouch, “Privatized Keynesianism,” 383-6.

116. Andre Sorensen and Paul Hess, “Building suburbs, Toronto-style: land development regimes, institutions, critical junctures and path dependence,” *Town Planning Review* 86, no. 4 (January 2015), 431.

117. Crouch, “Privatized Keynesianism,” 394.

118. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 86-8.

were subsumed into the “corporate suburb” of Don Mills through private land sale,¹¹⁹ the ideal of the *American Dream* became one of the Canadian Government’s key strategies for moderating the consumer economy.

While the values of the suburban *American Dream* were a powerful cultural driver to mobilize the consumer-class, it was the prospect of capital accumulation and financial security in home equity that became the most powerful draw for the working class to mortgaged property ownership.¹²⁰ CMHC and Fannie Mae not only allowed the consumer class to afford ‘ownership’ of homes much more readily than before. The increased accessibility of mortgage debt effectively lowered the bottom rung of the capitalist ladder, and the mortgaged property became the culturally normative way for the individual to accumulate wealth.¹²¹ Buying a home through mortgage debt became an unquestioned step towards civil liberties and long-term financial security.¹²² The financial dimension of the title became as important as the home itself.

1.2.4 Economic Geography as Monetary Policy

Once the home-owner’s asset for saving was placed in the economically unproductive landscape of the suburbs, the dwelling commodity was further financialized to become a widely accessible means of real-estate speculation. In his analysis of economic geographies, Neil Smith notes that, “the more it develops, the more capitalism depends upon the appropriation of relative surplus value.”¹²³ In the culture of capitalism, therefore, the accumulation of equity through paying off a home-mortgage was perceived as no longer enough. It became the homeowner’s greatest concern that the value of the commodity increases through the appreciation of the real-estate.¹²⁴ In this desire for appreciation, the dwelling turned to the second mode of financialization; the manipulation of value through economic geographies.¹²⁵

119. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 95.

120. Crouch, “Privatized Keynesianism,” 384.

121. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 41.

122. Crouch, “Privatized Keynesianism,” 383-4.

123. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 89.

124. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 43.

125. Aalbers, “Housing and Financialization,” 32.

Toronto sprawl before and after 1951:

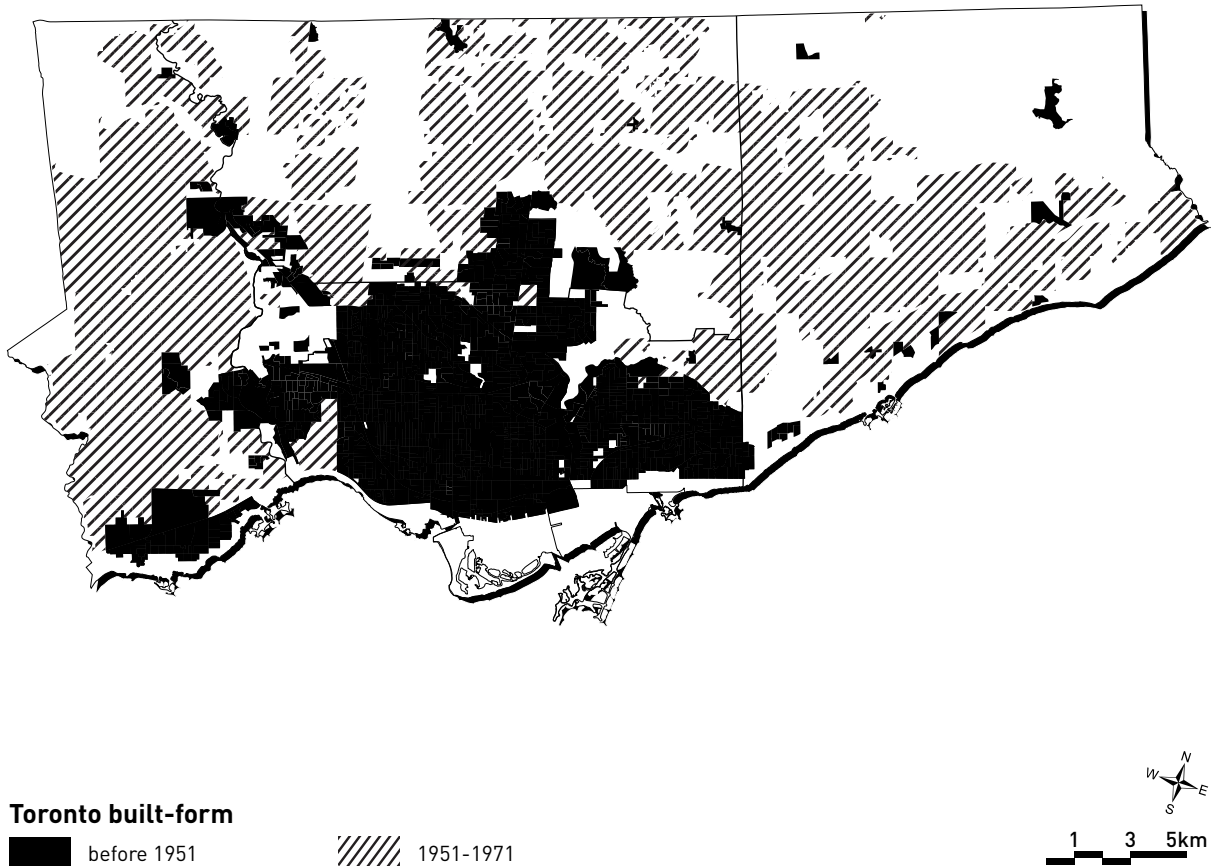


Fig.11 Toronto sprawl before and after 1951.

Following the expanded access to home mortgages through the founding of CMHC in 1946, the City of Toronto rapidly sprawled outwards in the suburbs. While there were nodes of mid and high-density dwelling like at the core of Don Mills, the majority of land-use was for low-density single-family homes.

Real-estate equity only becomes meaningful when the property title is sold, liquidating the exchange value of the dwelling commodity. As a commodity, however, the exchange value of real-estate fluctuates based on factors other than use value, such as demand.¹²⁶ Throughout history, the demand of land was based on proximity to natural and artificial resources, limited by mobility. Over the last century, as mobility got faster and cheaper,¹²⁷ functional proximity becomes less of a factor, and land values become increasingly defined by the values of properties around them. While this is a simplification of many factors at play, this core principle creates geographies of economic differentiation across the space of the city, with shifting frontiers of high and low values, determined only by pre-existing values. In this fluctuation, homeowners stand to win or lose considerable capital on their home as an asset. Property values mobilized the geography domestic real-estate into the capitalist expectation for growth, ‘striving for relative surplus’ in the eventual sale. While land speculation is probably as old as private property itself, with examples coming to us from ancient Rome and beyond,¹²⁸ once the need for functional proximity had been substantially diminished, the speculative value of the dwelling became the key factor of relative exchange values in the landscape of economic differentiation.¹²⁹

The geography of economic differentiation was important not only on a regional scale but also globally across national borders. While suburban development was important in New Deal and Post-war economies, the deindustrialization of the global north-west has pushed real-estate to the forefront of Canada’s monetary policy. As manufacturing and the production of real goods began to leave North America for south-east Asia in the early 80’s, Canada and the U.S. consumer economies became increasingly dependent on the import of goods and services. The consumer spending that the Fordist economic model had been predicated on, was not sustainable within the contained currency in the absence of the internal production of value by primary and secondary economic activity. Real-estate was one of the principal commodities, within the Canadian geography and economy that was both widely accessible, and virtually guaranteed to increase in value based on sustained demand and inflation.¹³⁰ This increase in value was necessary to provide a continuous source of value in the absence of real economic growth through production, diminished by the vacation of manufacturing from

126. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 40-1.

127. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 104.

128. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 71.

129. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 136-8.

130. Crouch, “Privatized Keynesianism,” 390-1.

the Canadian economy. In the words of M. Aalbers, housing became, “both a way to fuel the economy by propping up consumption and to ‘compensate’ labor for decades of negligible or even negative real income growth.”¹³¹ The health of real-estate growth was necessary for the healthy growth of a countries GDP and to maintain the value of the currency.¹³² Sustaining the constant increase of real-estate values has become a key concern for central banks in managing national economies.¹³³

As the relative exchange value of real-estate scaled up from being a private matter to becoming a matter of the federal economy, the scope of economic geography expanded globally. The production of increasing amounts of capital requires the increased concentration of capital investment.¹³⁴ For real-estate to continue to be profitable as a speculative commodity, it requires the perpetual increase in demand and, therefore the continued growth of concentration and centralization.¹³⁵ This centralization of capital investment in real-estate has led to the rise of “global cities” and financial centres like London, New York, Singapore, and Toronto, which are strategically used to geographically secure currency through real-estate investment.¹³⁶

1.2.5 Policies and Neoliberal Strategies

Throughout the 1990’s and early 2000’s the City of Toronto published a series of policies with the ambition of securing the city’s place within the new post-industrial global geography. In 2000, council commissioned the *Toronto Competes* audit of the city’s economic competitiveness on the world stage. The express intent of this audit was to determine how city-building strategies could be used to attract foreign investment and

131. Aalbers, “Housing and Financialization,” 32.

132. The Asian Financial Crisis was initiated when the Thai Baht lost over half of its value against the USD from which it had been recently floated. This was caused in large part, by the rapid collapse of foreign real-estate speculation in the developing economy. Achara Deboonme, “What have we learnt from the Tom Yam Keung Crisis?” *The National Thailand*, June 23, 2014, <https://www.nationthailand.com/opinion/30236928>.

133. Stephen Punwasi, “Bank of Canada Wants a Housing Bubble, While Other Central Banks Try To Pop Them,” *Better Dwelling*, March 9, 2021, https://betterdwelling.com/bank-of-canada-wants-a-housing-bubble-while-other-central-banks-try-to-pop-them/#_.

134. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 123-4.

135. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 121-3.

136. Lehrer, “Condominium Development,” 90.

prompt capital development in the knowledge economy.¹³⁷ The innovative *Secondary Zoning Area Plans 15 & 16 – “The Two Kings Policy”* – enacted six years earlier by Mayor Barbara Hall in 1994, had already de-regulated zoning in two ex-industrial districts on East and West King St, ¹³⁸ and set a framework for the translation of the existing industrial fabric into the new post-industrial city-scape.¹³⁹ In 2003, the city’s *Toronto’s Culture Plan for the Creative City*, outlined the strategy for creating a dense and consumable cultural landscape which was imperative for attracting and housing a new class of *knowledge workers* to form the core of the emerging economy.¹⁴⁰ These policies had, and still have, the unequivocal intent of reinforcing Toronto within the post-Fordist economy, and bringing “employment and wealth” to the city. They reinforced the conception of the city as neoliberal product, rather than a socio-cultural work. The body of planning policies produced by the city is unequivocal in this point; encouraging free-market competition for the construction of a highly calculated and consumable urban experience to appeal to the young and mobile *knowledge-worker* class.¹⁴¹

The condominium has become the key tool in this calculated production of the new urban fabric. Though the condominium form of ownership was created in Ontario in 1967, it was not until the shifting of the economy that it became a useful tool in the neoliberal agenda. This began as early as the 1980’s when the termination of the federal government’s AHOP program caused a marked geographic transition from high-affordability condominiums being built in the suburbs as their purpose-built-rental predecessors, to luxury condominiums in the core for speculative investment.¹⁴² With the emerging knowledge economy, however, that the concentration of knowledge capital became dependent the Condominium Act as the tool by which, free-hold-title commodity could be produced at the necessary density. While early condominiums like the Palace Pier Condos (1978) model the tower-in-the-park logic, projecting luxury by being built out of the central core, the of lofts and condos built after in the mid 90’s and onwards are decidedly within the downtown core or subsequent nodes of intensity.

137. Lehrer, “Condominium Development,” 88-9.

138. Stephen Wickens, “Downtown Toronto went all in with a pair of Kings,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/property-report/going-all-in-with-a-pair-of-kings/article28745451/#:~:text=Paul%20Bedford%20believed%20so%20much,his%20career%20on%20the%20line>.

139. Lehrer, “Condominium Development,” 92.

140. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 123.

141. Lehrer, “Condominium Development,” 89.

142. McLaughlin, *Toronto condominiums – past, present and future*, research bulletin.

**Distribution of condominiums
built in Toronto in two eras:**

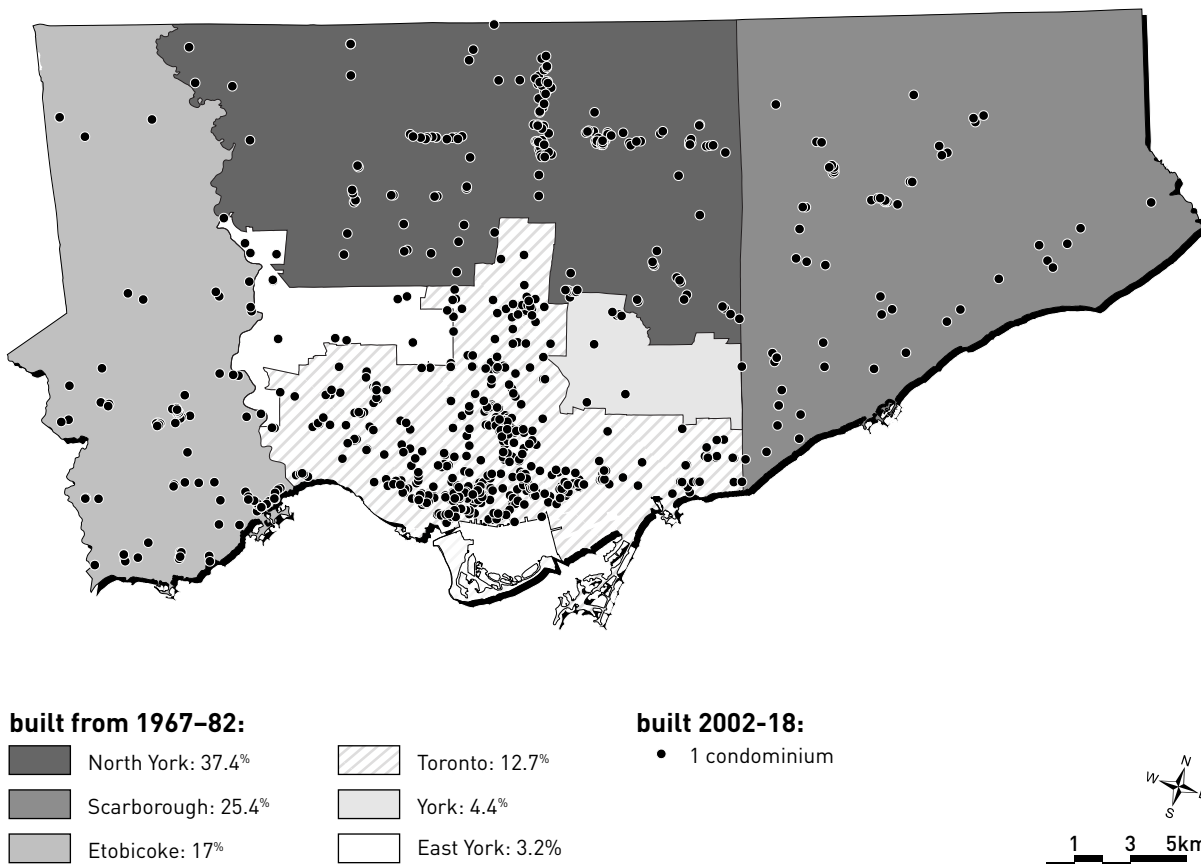


Fig.12 Historic and contemporary distributions of condominiums.

Early condominiums were located on cheap land in the suburbs, as they were built as affordable, privately owned housing under the Province of Ontario’s Assisted Home Ownership Program. Following the end of this program in 1978, the luxury condominium market emerged, seeing a reversal of distribution. Condominiums built from 2002-2018 are concentrated in the city core as they require concentration to validate them as a speculative investment.

Like the luxury condos of the 1980's, density has become a guarantee of the title-commodity's value for the buyer. While the physical use-value of the condominium unit is substantially less than the suburban parcel, the extreme density of high-value titles makes up for the use-value disparity by affirming the increased exchange value to the investor, albeit self-referentially.¹⁴³

1.2.6 The Strategy of the Condominium Experience – The Unit Itself

Under the neoliberal regime of space production, the podium tower condominium has become the product of escalating forces of capitalism under the auspices of neoliberal policy. Opening the space of the city to the capitalist forces of space-production,¹⁴⁴ with the expressed intent of creating a high concentration of capital within the city, it is only to be expected that the dwellings produced would be increasingly reflect these capitalist logics.¹⁴⁵

To increase the fix of capital within the space of the city, unit-commodities had to be increasingly fixed in their form; increasingly totalized according to capitalist organizational logic. The production of the sprawling suburbs was made profitable through the Fordist standardization of home-building.¹⁴⁶ As the production of housing became increasingly integrated into the strategy of the neoliberal agenda, the condominium unit became the bond of choice at an even greater homogenization and fixity. As construction techniques got more elaborate to provide property titles at greater densities, the units themselves became more standardized and locked into structural grids. Ibelings observes that this homogenization of units is desirable and expected, not only for the sake of efficient production, but for the security of the produced asset. The increasing similarity of the unit to every other unit in the city acts as an assurance to the buyer that it will be sellable again, when the time comes.¹⁴⁷ Similarity guarantees a certain fungibility that uniqueness and openness cannot,¹⁴⁸ allowing the purchaser to believe that whatever dimensions of dwelling that are lost in the purchasing of the prescriptive condominium will be made up with profit, once someone else buys it.¹⁴⁹

143. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19.

144. Lehrer, "Condominium Development," 88.

145. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 75.

146. Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 95.

147. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19.

148. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 75.

149. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19.

The totalizing force of this conception goes beyond the unit to the architecture of the condominium itself, as the production of a self-contained community experience. The legal structure of the condominium demands some form of communalism. There has emerged a list of commonly agreed upon amenities – party room, theater, gym, rooftop terrace, pool, and business centre – that seem obligatory in every condominium building.¹⁵⁰ While many of these amenities such as green space and pools could be better supported as public amenities within the density of the larger city, these features have become part of the marketing language that assures the condominium buyer that their investment provides the promise of a ‘vibrant,’ fulfilling, and effortless urban life. Yet, with the need to provide specifically marketable amenity programs, any generosity of common space is fragmented into hyper-specific situations of use. As a direct response to the compromised liveability of individual units, these spaces are designed as necessary extensions of intimate conditions of the dwelling. In the need to be quantitatively commodifiable, they are sold as hyper-defined extensions of the dwelling ‘experience.’

With the cultural appeal of isolated suburban dwelling still living in the imaginations of many young people targeted to live in the towers, it is no secret that condominiums have become a necessary stepping-stone-investment for ‘*getting into the market.*’ Using both the mortgage capacity to build capital through equity, and passive land-value appreciation, the demographic residents of the condominiums understand their units not first-and-foremost as dwellings, but as economic instruments for private wealth accumulation by which to move elsewhere.¹⁵¹

The combination of policy shifts and the cultural predilection for private property have given rise to the condominium tower as the favoured mode of city building in Toronto, as an explicit product of the commodification and financialization of the dwelling. These new frameworks of condominium ownership will reciprocally influence how occupants dwell in them. Through this process that has taken the better part of a century, our cultural understanding of private property and its associated liberties has become intrinsically and paradoxically tied to neoliberal institutions of finance and governance. Aging and fermenting, our institutions of space production have created the condominium unit, not as a dwelling,

150. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19-20.

151. Webb, “The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods,” 49.



Fig.13 Ten York Condos – The spin room



Fig.14 Lighthouse West – The jam room



Fig.15 DNA3 – The rain room



Fig.16 The Wyatt – The bouldering cave

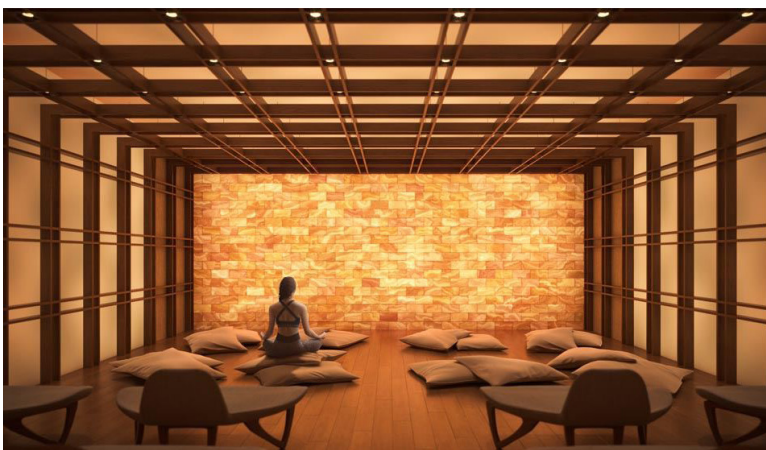


Fig.17 The Saint – The salt room

Social life within the condominium is situated within the hyper-specific contexts of amenity spaces which have been pre-programmed for marketing purposes.

but as a stock in the economy.

1.2.7 The Need for Growth

Through our cultural foundations of private property as an economic, rather than ontological necessity, the dwelling has been transformed from the dynamic grain of the urban fabric, to a bond of stability within the emerging city. Promoted by fiscal and planning policies, and the cultural drive for accumulation, the condominium unit has become the vehicle by which developers and architects delivered necessarily high densities of free-hold land titles within the core of the city. While these cultural and economic forces have produced Toronto as we see it today, the physical condominium projects the cultural need for capital accumulation into the future life and culture of the city. The continued expectation for capital real-estate gains by whoever has invested in a unit justifies, not only the determinist architecture of the unit itself, but also a whole set of social and behavioural practices meant to secure the commodity stability of the unit. Under increasing architectural determinism, the condominium unit's capacity as a dwelling that can accommodate change is being alienated. The architecture produced by neoliberalism reproduces its own totalizing logic onto the lives of those who dwell in the towers. If hegemony is the ability for capitalism to survive in spite of itself, the political structure of the condominium corporation is the hegemonic practice by which the residents and owners of condominiums participate in their own alienation from the place that "they" call home.

The ability to sell a condominium unit with predictable capital gains is to ensure that nothing about the property-title is objectionable to any potential buyer.¹⁵² Disruptive noises, mis-matched curtains, shoes in the hallway, any sign that any *more* negotiation between neighbours is required in condominium life than in the spacious suburbs will undermine this composed stability and compromise the exchange value of the unit. Anything that disrupts the space of appearance, requiring civic negotiation, becomes a threat to everybody's financial well-being. The material space of the condominium is stabilized by the widespread distribution of financial stake across the entire body of owners.

152. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 18-21.

1 bedroom + den unit

25 Telegram Mews, Toronto, ON (2009)
55.3 m²

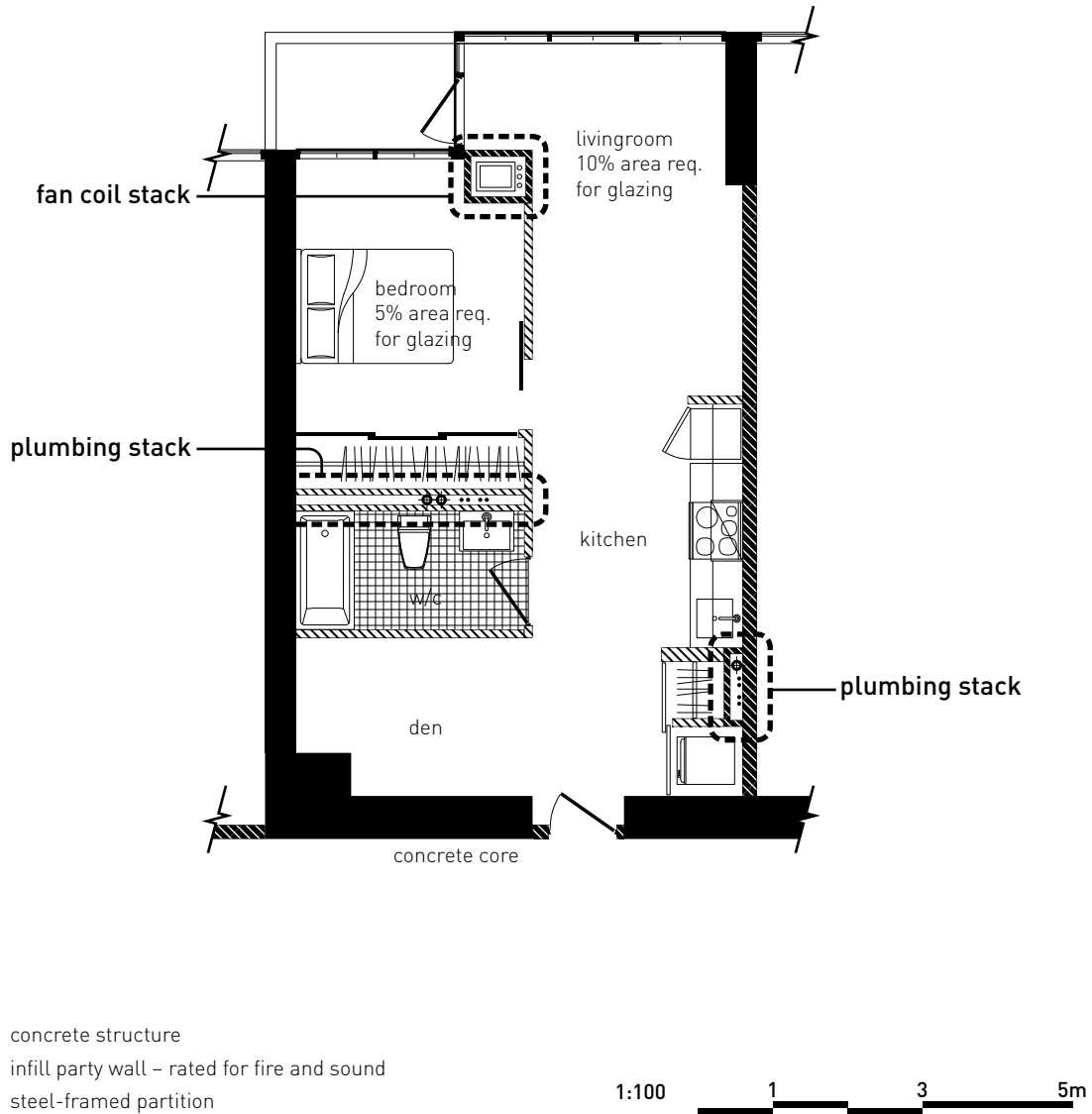


Fig.18 The condominium unit as an exercise in fixity.

In construction, efficiency and economization are achieved by repeating unit layouts from floor to floor. This stacking locks each dwelling into a specific configuration. Structural shear walls limit the possibility to combine adjacent units to accommodate larger households. Units that are not at corners, receive light from only one side, limiting the location of living spaces. Hot, cold and chilled water for general use and for heating and cooling restrict the location of plumbing fixtures and fan-coil units. It is, however, the waste-water stacks that provide the greatest limitation as they have a greater diameter and rely on gravity to flow properly. None of these utilities can be interrupted or relocated without compromising service to the floors above and below.

1.3 Real and Abstract Political Frameworks

Having established that the condominium is not pure material artifact, built of concrete and glass, but rather a vertical armature of the city fabric, made up of many discreet private dwellings, and produced by the unleashed forces of neoliberalism, it becomes necessary to consider the collective framework of the condominium tower as inescapably political. The condominium as an armature of urban and political space poses a unique condition in the city for two reasons. The first is the physical form in what Hannah Arendt calls “the space of appearance” within the condominium tower.¹⁵³ Unlike the classical models of public space – the agora, forum, or street – the space of appearance within the condominium tower is made up of fragmented utilitarian spaces, divided over many floors. For this reason is often not considered as a site for ‘political’ appearance in the city.¹⁵⁴ In reality, it is these banal spaces of the condominium that form the site of an emerging urban polity within the tower community, despite the functionalist logic that produced them.¹⁵⁵ The second political condition of the condominium tower that makes it distinct from the surrounding urban fabric of the city is that the tower exists within in its own of internal government, below municipal, provincial, and federal governments. This internalized structure of control, legitimized under the *Ontario Condominium Act of 1967 (OCA-67)*, creates situational publics within the public field of the city. The neoliberal ideological base of this situational polity corporatizes the structure of social relations within the condo, functioning in opposition to the *space of appearance*.¹⁵⁶ According to Stefan Kipfer, the essence of hegemony is for “capitalism to survive despite itself.”¹⁵⁷ The strategically a-political *spaces of appearance* and the institution of corporate decision making as a simulacrum of democracy within, form a disciplinary structure to reproduce neoliberal spatial practice within the framework of everyday life. While these two structures each give the impression of agency and liberty, they are both engineered to safe-guard the value of the unit-commodity and protect each unit-owner’s individual financial stake. At its most extreme, this stabilization of space through the absolute

153. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 197-98.

154. Lehrer, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation,” 67.

155. Lefebvre, *The production of Space*, 75.

156. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt speaks at length about the western cultural evolution from the *political* as the content of the public to the *social*, the consensus of acceptable behaviour. The displacement of the *public* with *social* is the product of the cartesian appeal of behaviour, and is required for and reinforced by the corporate deterministic rational of the neoliberal hegemony.

157. Stefan Kipfer, “Urbanization, Everyday Life and the Survival of Capitalism: Lefebvre, Gramsci, and the Problematic of Hegemony,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 13, no. 2 (June 2002): 126.

division of a shared space into many private property titles will result in what Columbia real-estate law professor Michael Heller has coined as the *tragedy of the anticommons* – the alienation of property’s use value, caused by the inability to negotiate between a large number of private stakeholders with opposing agendas.

1.3.1 The Space of Appearance

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt defines two co-dependent definitions of the *public*. She identifies the first definition as *the space of appearance*, which is an incidental condition that arises between two or more people – neighbours and strangers – each time that they interact through speech or action.¹⁵⁸ These deliberate appearances become political in that they demonstrate *other* values and spatial practices to both the actor and the observer. It is through the negotiation of this shared demonstration that the humanity of both the witness and actor are realized.¹⁵⁹ This making real of the individual through exchange with neighbours and strangers is, above all else, the allure of the city; it defines urban existence.¹⁶⁰ The *space of appearance*, therefore, makes political any place in which two individuals might run into each other, be that a sidewalk, an elevator cab, or a hallway.

While the *public* is on one hand, the temporal *space of appearance*, it simultaneously describes the very real and material shared world that these exchanges necessarily occur in.¹⁶¹ In the words of Hannah Arendt:

“[...] the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. [...] To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is located between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every

158. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 175-6.

159. Action and appearance do not include what is only overtly political demonstration. The simple act of occupying the same elevator cab as another person, even in silence, is an act of mutual appearance, despite being apparently negligible in its disruption, impact, or the conscious negotiation that it requires. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198-99.

160. George Baird, “The Space of Appearance,” *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 306-7.

161. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.

in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.”

The form of this “shared table” as the real space of political negotiation becomes incredibly important. When we consider the condominium tower, not as a single work of urban architecture – homogenous in ideology and content – but rather as the assembly of private residences, our conceptions of the interior space of the tower are inverted from being passive circulation cores and amenities spaces, to being public and political urban interstices.¹⁶²

The political nature of this interstitial space between dwelling units in a condominium is validated, not only in the nature of the space as being outside the realm of the private dwelling. More importantly, the interstices of the condominium become political because of the social heterogeneity that the liberal dimension of the condominium rhetorically allows.¹⁶³ The natural plurality of humans living out *habitus* within the parceled units of the tower makes the interstitial spaces, inescapably the space of negotiation of private values.¹⁶⁴ This simple sociological dimension is often forgotten because of the totalizing cultural homogeneity presented in the conception and representation of most condominiums; condo marketing campaigns provide a convincing argument that all condominium owners have largely the same guiding values when looking for a place to live.¹⁶⁵ The homogenization of space necessary for the condominium unit as space-commodity, seeks to eliminate the reality that an urban population is always necessarily the collection of diverse individuals that need and often desire to navigate these differences, from passively brushing shoulders in a narrow hallways, to actively debating the modification of the space that they mutually inhabit.¹⁶⁶

The true *publicity* of the perceived space within condominiums is, fairly enough, called

162. Lehrer, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation,” 79.

163. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 157.

164. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 158-9.

165. Hans Ibelings with Partisans Architects’ analysis of the colour schemes within recently constructed projects suggests that the neoliberal hegemony has universalized urban dwellers taste in paint colours. While this conclusion of cultural totalization has some truth, hegemonic forces have not yet advanced so far as to render unnecessary the need for Condo Boards to have the authority of arbitration amongst residents. A condominium community is still very much a society of independently willed individuals. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 88-103.

166. Baird, “The Space of Appearance,” 306.

into question but only insofar as one subjects the urban analysis of the condominium to the classical public-private dichotomy of the polis.¹⁶⁷ The common interstices and amenities of condominium towers are not *public* places in the sense that they are universally accessible to every individual in the city. The space within the condominium is, after all, private property, owned collectively by the *condominium corporation*. Furthermore, condo tower communities are almost always ‘gated’ with fobbed access and usually have a concierge or security guard. This restriction of access controls who is allowed into the towers and creates a space of curated appearance.¹⁶⁸ While all of this signifies the space within the condominium as private, nevertheless, the simple reality of the social heterogeneity of the occupants of the condominium tower give rise to the possibility of *spaces of appearance*, occurring anywhere within the communal space of the tower making it simultaneously private *and* public. This superimposition of the two states gives shared condominium space an ambiguous nature.¹⁶⁹ But the urban realm is full of such ambiguity – space that can be defined neither simply as public, nor purely as private. This blurring of two designations is counterposed to the clear classical distinction of the public and the private.¹⁷⁰ The reality of urban engagement is that it exists in a field of incrementalism.¹⁷¹

The incrementalism of urban public space is the product of the emergent *neo-liberal* city as a means of regulating urban behaviour. In the modern (and post-modern) absence of predetermined social roles or demonstrations of power through building, as was in the polis and the baroque cities, the ubiquity of the public realm became ‘policed’ through the fragmentation of spaces using conditions of ‘situational freedoms.’ This was achieved through the fragmentation of space into architectural compartments of powers and the framing of situational codes of conduct.¹⁷² In time, the form of these situational freedoms evolved from normative behaviour and prohibitions on the use of civic space, through the ‘altruism’ of privately owned and controlled public spaces,¹⁷³ to the gating of spaces shared by a community with collective financial interests, such as the common spaces of a condominium.

167. Lehrer, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation,” 67.

168. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 156.

169. Lehrer, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation,” 67.

170. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28-31.

171. Aureli, “City as Political Form,” 35.

172. Aureli, “City as Political Form,” 35.

173. Lehrer, “Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Residential Participation,” 67.

While a great deal of the strategic control is codified into the *space of appearance*, daily life presents broad segments of human behaviour that condominium architecture alone, is unable to control. In this gap of strategic control that architecture cannot choreograph, a second framework of power was required to ensure the security and continuity of the condominium asset. This framework is the *OCA-98*.

1.3.2 The Democratic Structure in the Ontario Condominium Act

In *City as Political Form*, Pier Vittorio Aureli traces the how urban typologies are direct responses to paradigms of urban power structures.¹⁷⁴ As the synthesis of liberal suburban planning, heroic modernist tower, and the totalizing dominance of capitalism, the podium tower condominium is the apotheosis of neoliberal urban control through situational legislation.¹⁷⁵ The framework for this legislation which was institutionalized in the *OCA-67*, is divided into four strata – *Declaration*, *Description*, *By-laws* and *Rules* – each with particular types of control over the spatial practices within the condominium tower. Through the *Ontario Condominium Act*, mechanisms of corporatist democracy,¹⁷⁶ control of social behaviors,¹⁷⁷ and alienating codes of ownership are normalized into the conceived space of the city.

As previously discussed, condominium ownership was created by the Province of Ontario in 1967, to allow for the production of high quantities of free-hold homes with the speed and efficiency of the mid-century apartment towers.¹⁷⁸ To allow for free-hold home ownership in this highly efficient and buildable way, governments had to create a new legal definition of property ownership. This was done in the creation of the condominium. The private ownership of units within a tower created a very pragmatic problem. While the traditional definition of free-hold title stipulates that the use of one parcel cannot and should not impact the use value of any adjacent parcels, stacking parcels in a tower creates a very immediate mutual dependency for all units on a shared structure, electrical and mechanicals systems,

174. Aureli, “City as Political Form,” 35.

175. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 157.

176. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 123.

177. Cathy Sherry, “Lessons in Personal Freedom,” 299.

178. Risk, “Condominiums and Canada,” 2-3.

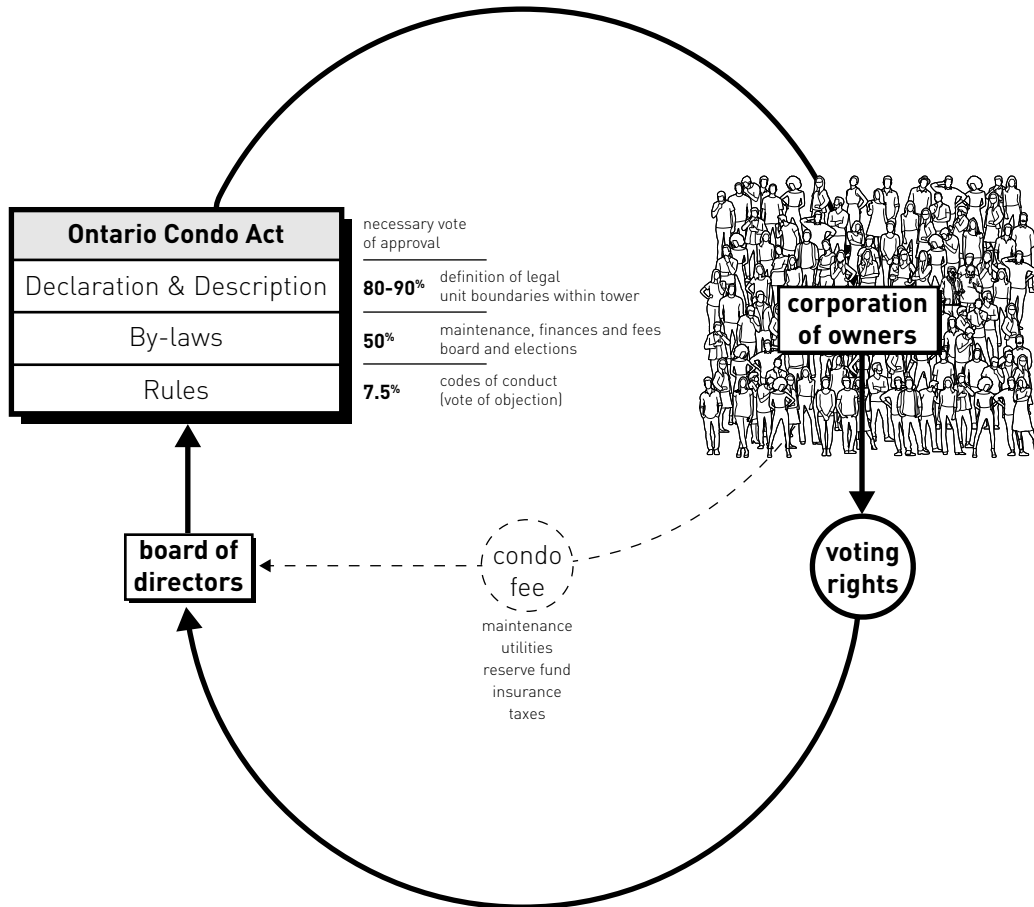


Fig.19 The structure of decision-making in Ontario condominiums.

The structure of decision-making, provided by the *O.C.A.-98* is theoretically consensus-based. Unit-owners have the right to vote on amendments to declarations and by-laws, and can requisition meetings to oppose rules created by the board. While amendments to the Declaration and Description require an 80 or 90% super-majority, depending on the nature of the change, and making them virtually impossible to change, rules and restrictions require a simple majority from a meeting with a 15% quorum. These polarized thresholds of restriction create a culture of protectionism towards the tower as the only shared common interest.

circulation, and enclosure.¹⁷⁹ The common dependence of each free-hold title on systems that must be collectively maintained for the simple continuation of their existence creates a legal paradox in the traditional common-law understanding of private property.¹⁸⁰ It attached the *estate* – the Lockean parcel of utmost freedom – to a circumstantial ‘*covenant*’ obligation – the mutual responsibility for the tower structure. This leveraging of *covenant* for the creation of free-hold apartments titles was not resolved, but was rather instrumentalized to create a corporate-democratic governing structure to enforce apparently voluntary maintenance of the neoliberal solution to dwelling.¹⁸¹ The nature of power within each of the condominium’s guiding documents, demonstrates how the *OCA-98* strategically regulates the actions of individuals within the mutually dependent tower asset.

At the foundation of every condominium is the parcel of land. While the tower is being built, there is legally no differentiation between units in the tower. The property exists in one title and address. This changes on the day that the developer files a *Declaration and Description (D&D)* with the Land Registry Office.¹⁸² Though filed and often discussed as a single document, the *Description* and *Declaration* are two separate documents and fulfil two important but distinct functions within the condominium. The *Description* is spatial – in fact architectural. The *Declaration* is political. The two of them work together to create the socio-spatial co-dependency that becomes the condominium.

At an architectonic level, there is very little difference between a rental apartment tower and a condominium tower. They both fundamentally consist of floors of dwelling units arranged around a central hallway and stacked around vertical circulation cores. What differentiates the condominium from the rental apartment is the superimposition of abstract private property lines onto the real structure, creating individual free-hold units. These property boundaries are spatialized in the *Description* with text and diagrams, locating the legal boundaries of

179. Risk, “Condominiums and Canada,” 2.

180. Common law only recognized eight distinct forms of land tenure. Free-hold (fee-simple) and covenant are two distinct classifications which, under the principle of *numerus clausus* cannot be blended to create new or unprecedented combinations of tenure. While condominium purchasers are hopefully fully informed when buying into the obligations of the condominium, Sherry argues that the ability for the board to enact unforeseen by-laws and obligations in the future effectively creates a “New Feudalism” in the city. Cathy Sherry, “Lessons in Personal Freedom,” 289-96.

181. Sherry, “Lessons in Personal Freedom,” 296.

182. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 2(3).

each unit to the physical structure and ‘monuments’ of the building itself.¹⁸³ The *Description* takes a building as a whole title and fragments it into tens or hundreds of individual property titles. The *Description* is responsible for tying the abstract situational legalities of the private ownership of space to the material tower.

While the *Description* of the condominium situates private property within the material, the *Declaration* of the tower institutes the social, political, and financial structures regarding the collective ownership of the tower. The *Declaration* establishes the condominium corporation in attachment to the property on which the tower is built. Once the *Declaration* is registered with the Land Titles Office, the newly formed corporation becomes the owner of the common elements and structure of the building. In that the *Description* is responsible for the definition of the lawful status of the individual apartments as *real-estate* within the tower, the ownership of a unit is inseparable from membership in the condominium corporation.¹⁸⁴ Home ownership within a condominium is therefore corporatized and the political function of the community is formulated according to the corporate structure.¹⁸⁵

Through the totalizing authority of the *Declaration*, the residents of the condominium tower – owners and tenants – are organized under corporate codes of conduct.¹⁸⁶ While codes of conduct are common in most corporations of all types, for the purposes of condominiums the *OCA-98* breaks them up into two bodies of legislation, namely the *By-laws* and *Rules*, managed internally by the corporation’s elected board of directors.¹⁸⁷ Fully enforceable under the *OCA-98*, *By-laws* and *Rules* institute the situational control of behaviours and the use of space of the condominium over its internal public.

The first structure of control is the condominium *By-laws* which outline the governance of the corporation itself. Everything from the structure of the board of directors, to the procedure of elections, to the all-important managing of finances and building maintenance

183. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 8(1).

184. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 11(4).

185. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 124-6.

186. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 144-5.

187. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 56(1).

are outlined in a condominium's *By-laws*.¹⁸⁸ While *Declarations* follow a standard format issued by the Province, *By-laws* made and maintained independently by each condominium corporation. As such, they vary from community to community and tower to tower. Strategies of maintenance, determining monthly condo fees, permission for taking on debt, and the capacity for arbitration between tenants gives the *By-laws* significant sway over the culture maintained and promoted within the tower.¹⁸⁹

The practical authority of the Condominium Board over the public behavior of the occupants of the condominium falls within the fourth level of legislation – the *Rules*. The *OCA-98* gives two objectives for the creation of rules within a condominium. The first is to “promote the safety, security or welfare of the owners and of the property and the assets, if any, of the corporation [...]” The second reason is for the prevention of “unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of the units, the common elements or the assets, if any, of the corporation.”¹⁹⁰ Within the bounds of these two objectives is the whole range of residents’ daily activities, not only in the public spaces of the tower, but also within the confines of the private dwelling units that can be qualified as inhibiting the use and enjoyment of neighbouring units.¹⁹¹ The *Rules*, therefore, become a very powerful tool for managing even the most mundane aspects of daily life of the residence of condominium towers. Through the *Rules*, the board of director’s authority over the use of both common and privately owned space, *Rules* create an intersectionality between *habitus* of the dwelling unit and the structure of corporate governance.

1.3.3 Joint Neoliberal Structures of Alienation

Perceived space and corporate governance work jointly within the condominium to reproduce neoliberal power relations within daily life and the dwelling. While the board of directors is itself based on the appearance of democratic engagement (and agency), the nature of the corporation’s authority over the occupants of the tower reduces the politics of the tower to corporate managerialism.¹⁹² While this managerialism is a necessary strategy for the

188. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s. 56.

189. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 127.

190. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 58(1).

191. Sherry, “Lessons in Personal Freedom,” 310-1.

192. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 146.

disciplining of spatial relations in the tower where architecture is insufficient to do so, the space of the tower works to diffuse the emergence of a true polity, leaving management of the community by the board of directors unchallenged in its crusade to protect the asset of the unit and alienating daily urban life from the tower.

During initial conception of each individual condominium development, *Rules* and *By-laws* are used by developers, to produce marketable and profitable life-style experiences. Registrants are responsible for writing a condo's first *By-laws* and *Rules* and use these tools to institute lifestyles that appeal to their target buyer market.¹⁹³ Habits and behaviors in the private and semi-public spaces of the tower are therefore enfolded into the market-based logics of space production. After hand-over of the tower from the declarant to the condominium corporation *Rules* are a Board's authority for maintaining the original conceptions and values of the tower, both explicit (marketed) and tacit (hegemonic).

Now in typical corporations, codes of conduct are intended to restrict the actions of employees and to optimize the productivity of the corporation. Corporate codes of conduct can never concern the rights and freedoms of employees and shareholders as corporations are legally private entities – neither public nor political.¹⁹⁴ Insofar as condominium decision making is limited to the issuing of restrictions on private and semi-public spaces, rather than the collective maintaining of rights within space, decision making is not driven by discussions of community need.¹⁹⁵ Rather, *Rules* and *By-laws* are issued by boards in defense of the corporate interests and assets – the real-estate value of the tower.

The basis for the board's authority over the residents of the condominium tower is in preventing negative action¹⁹⁶ for the protection of the property¹⁹⁷ rather than the promotion civic engagement and the appropriation of the space as a community's own. This prioritizing of the market value of a unit over rights commonly associated with privacy is, in effect,

193. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 127-8.

194. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 147-8.

195. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 146-8.

196. Sherry, "Lessons in Personal Freedom," 301.

197. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 58(1)(a).

the substitution in the condo-dwellers mind of “rights” in a political sense, with “property rights,” in an economic sense.¹⁹⁸ Having prohibitive jurisdiction over both common and private spaces, the Board of Directors has direct power over the manifestation of *habitus* within the condominium dwellings.

Even though decision making for condominium regulations is set within an ostensibly consensus-by-majority process,¹⁹⁹ it is neither political nor democratic, but rather a strategy for coercing hegemonic accord within the framework of financialized dwellings. With codes of conduct widely recognized as the prohibitive mechanism that they are, individuals are typically reluctant to engage the decision-making process, save to defend personal economic interests.²⁰⁰ It is worth noting that the OCA-98 establishes the quorum for Annual General Meetings, where board members are elected, to be as little as 15% of the tower’s voting owners.²⁰¹ This piece of legislation is the provincial government’s admission to an expectation of low political engagement. When compared with suburban dwelling, the bureaucratic structures of condominiums are considered a necessary inconvenience for the maintenance of mutually dependent investments rather than a platform for political engagement. The board is relegated to a managerial position, doing what is required protect the real-estate value of every owner’s unit.²⁰²

Though cynical, this utilitarian view of board governance is in step with the neoliberal attitude towards the nature of corporations in 1967 when the *Ontario Condominium Act* was first written. In his influential New York Times article titled, *The Social Responsibility*

198. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 140.

199. Provision is made in the *OCA-98* for unit owners to contest rules that have been enacted if at least 15% of unit owners requisition a meeting in which to discuss and vote on the rule. While the argument has in the past been made that by buying a condominium, a person is putting themselves into under the *Rules and By-laws* by their own will. Sherry contests this argument by pointing out that while an individual might be aggregable to the restrictions at the time of purchase, the power-structure allows for the board to create and enforce unforeseen restrictions which the members of the community must then adhere to or move. She equates this dynamic of control to a new feudalism within our cities. Sherry, “Lessons in Personal Freedom,” 302.

200. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 145.

201. While the official quorum is set at 25%, the *OCA-98* has included a clause stipulating that if a quorum is not met at two consecutive meetings, it shall be lowered to 15%. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 19, c. 50(1.1)(c).

202. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 148-9.

of *Business is to Increase Profits* published in 1970, Milton Friedman argued that corporate executives have the sole responsibility to their shareholders to perpetually increase profits, rather than to engage in social improvement.²⁰³ To see condominium directors as corporate executives and unit owners as corporate share holders, which they both by policy definition are,²⁰⁴ the basis of the condominium tower is for individual profit, not for ontological actualization of a place to live. The board of directors, albeit probably unwittingly, takes its position as the disciplinary arm of a capitalist grip on daily dwelling, with the authority to restrict peoples' daily lives. While the board does hold the very real authority to discipline residents for violating codes of conduct, the widespread cultural understanding that the Board and *Rules* exist for the financial preservation of the investment – a necessary evil. The corporation's disciplinary authority is through the threat of financially compromising the condominium asset, rather than actual executive discipline.

The *perceived space* of the typical condominium only acts to promote the ambiguity of political engagement on behalf of residents. While the shared *space of appearance* within condominiums is indisputably located on the spectrum of the public-private realm,²⁰⁵ it acts against the formation, or even the awareness of the political society within the tower. The vast majority, of the common space within the average Toronto condominium tower (excluding balconies and parking garages) is in circulation spaces, divided over forty, sixty, or even eighty floors. While hallways can be political space, each hallway becomes the space of representation for the very small percentage of occupants that live on that floor. This hyper-division of common space neutralizes the possibility for the community to ever assemble as a whole, or even as a meaningful special-interest group. Now one can say that this is hardly a strategy for political oppression, and that creating the tight core is simply the most practical way to configure the building, but that only serves to reinforce the point. It is the logic of economy at the expense of *habitus* and place-making that prevents the formation of a polity and maintains the productivity of the unit-commodity through the space's very neutrality.²⁰⁶

203. Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits," *Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance*, ed. Walthur Zimmerli et. al. (Berlin: Springer, 2007) 178.

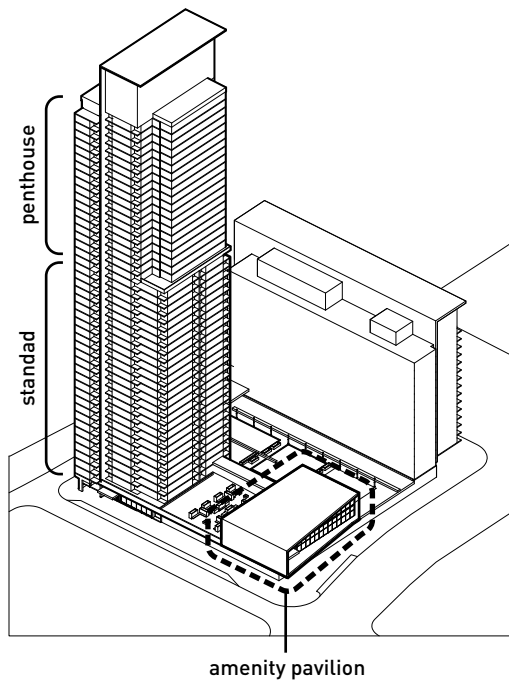
204. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 19, s. 11, and s. 27.

205. Lehrer, "Verticality, Public Space and the Role of Resident Participation," 67.

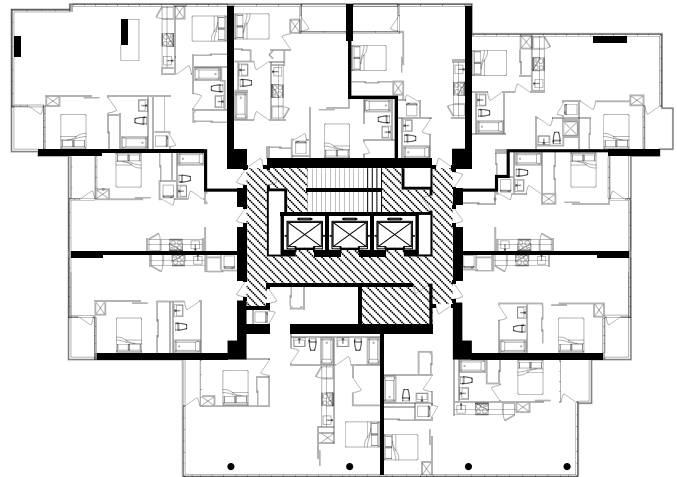
206. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 55-6.

allocation of common space

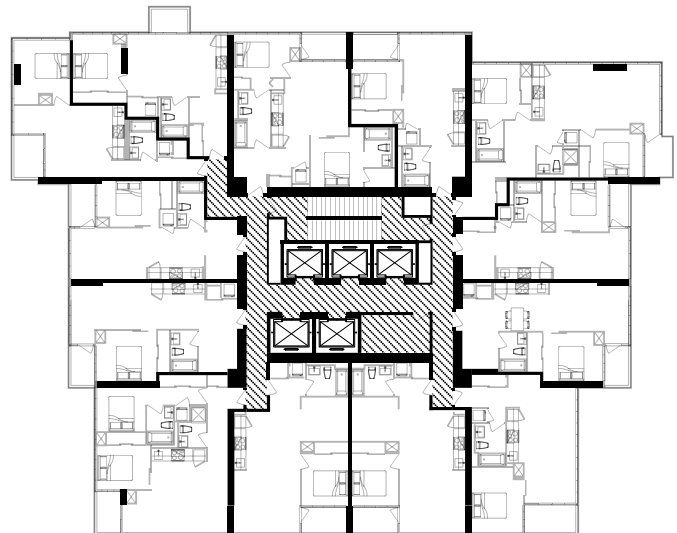
25 Telegram Mews, Toronto



hallways on residential floors



penthouse: floors 26-47

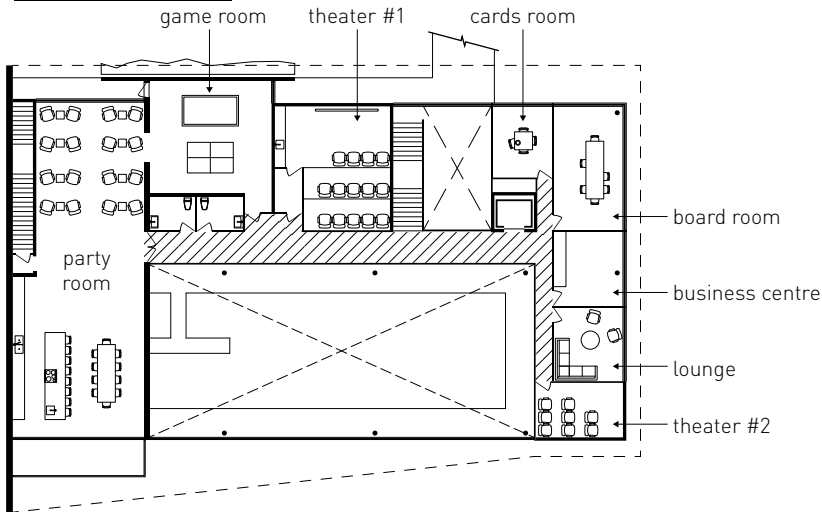


standard: floors 02-25

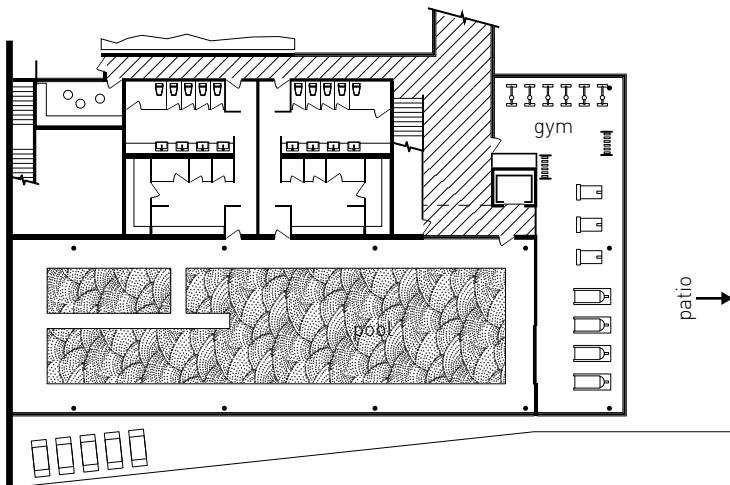
Fig.20 Floor area distribution of common spaces in 25 Telegram Mews.

In Montage Condominiums (25 Telegram Mews, Toronto, ON), the example provided above, the amenities have been placed in a pavilion on top of the podium, apart from the tower itself. In this example, comprise 66.4% of the interior common space, divided over 46 residential floors. While the largest common space – the party room – represents a little under 3% and can accommodate small gatherings, the remainder of the assembly space is split up into specific programs, including two theaters, a cards room and a games room. Montage Condominiums, completed in 2009, contains 529 dwelling units. The parking garage have been excluded from floor-area estimates.

amenity pavilion



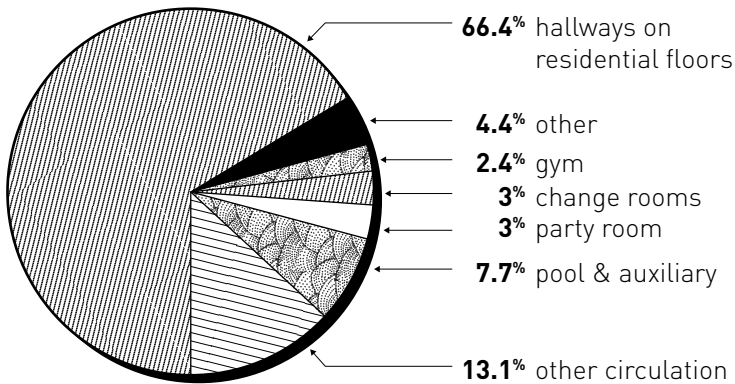
amenity pavilion: 2nd floor



amenity pavilion: 1st floor



floor area comparison



Beyond the space of the hallways, the formal amenity spaces, likewise, resist the formation of societies and politics. What condominium has ever included an assembly space large enough for all of the voting members to assemble at once, let alone the entire community?²⁰⁷ The aforementioned pantheon of amenity spaces all imply hyper-specified purposes for use, and thus defy spontaneous gathering or appropriation. This lack of spontaneity is often only further reinforced by the dogmatic managerialism of the board, creating booking schedules, damage deposits, insurance requirements, and additional codes of conduct within common spaces. Though common, these are not civic, but anti-civic spaces, that keep the community compartmentalized in predetermined relationships. Through the dispersion of any political society, the space of the condominium strategically resists the formation of any ideas, ideals and social discourses that might threaten its stability.

As the product of the neoliberal hegemony and the site of an emerging urban culture, the condominium tower is the hallmark of strategic instrumentalization in the contemporary urban fabric and elements of everyday life.²⁰⁸ While the social density of condominium towers gives them more in common with cities of history and antiquity than the *Garden City*, the condominiums are still expected to provide a dwelling experience like that of the suburb, that is as disassociated from the vitality and dynamism – the need for negotiation – as the spacious suburbs that they are culturally derived from.²⁰⁹ As in the suburbs, this engineered isolation of the condominium is the key strategy by which the social and political landscapes of the city are neutralized, stabilizing the residential urban fabric as a safe investment.²¹⁰ It is with this image that condominiums are marketed and sold, and it is in this image that the board and inhabitants of condominiums strive to maintain their home.²¹¹

This combination of restriction-based managerialism and the obstruction of political formation is the toxic combination which creates the socio-economic condition that Heller coined as the *tragedy of the anticommons*. As the complimentary inverse of Garrett Hardin's *tragedy of the commons*, Heller, a professor of real-estate law, characterizes the tragedy of

207. Votes are distributed one per unit. The community of residents within the tower can be two or three times the size of the 'electorate.'

208. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 84-5.

209. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19.

210. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 28-30.

211. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 42.

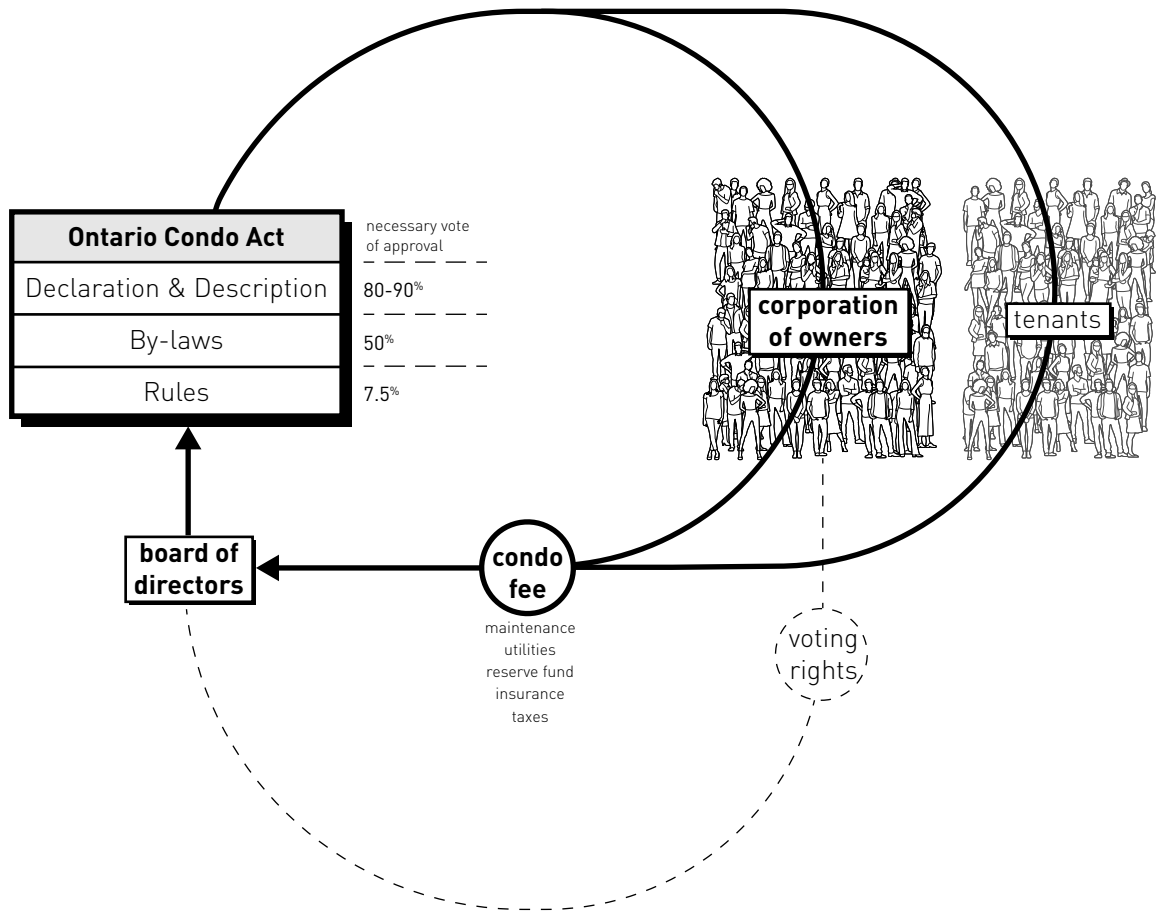


Fig.21 The structure of decision-making under financialization.

The prioritization of financial interests in the tower creates a culture of disengagement from decision-making in the tower. In this condition, the owner's only responsibility to the community is the paying of their condominium fee, while the board is relegated to a position of managerialism, making decisions for, rather than on behalf of the tower occupants.

the *anticommons* by as an *underuse* of commonly owned land, rather than its *overuse*. This underuse is caused by too many people having private ownership interest in the land and being unable to agree on its best use.²¹² As a simple example, we can look at a condominium party room over which the board, in protection of the room itself, has enacted a series of booking and insurance policies. While many owners may agree that these policies are a good and sensible measure for the protection of the common asset, the cost and convolution of the booking process makes many tenants reluctant to use the space at all. It therefore sits vacant and unused for most days of the year, of no practical benefit to anyone, even in its well-maintained condition. This capacity for action-prohibition extends through all layers of condo management from the *rules* that govern space-usage, all the way up to the *declaration* and *description*. A key dimension of good space-use is its ability to adapt to changing needs. The super-majorities required to adapt the *declaration* and *description*, however, make such adaptations in condominiums nearly impossible, either from neighbours and owners willingly obstructing the changes out of personal economic interest, or simply by failing to meet majority approval because of political disengagement.²¹³

In the following statement, Heller reflects both the cause and effect of the tragedy of the *anti-commons*. “Cooperative mechanisms may break down if there are too many newcomers coming and going, if people don’t know each other, or if it is otherwise hard to discipline deviants.”²¹⁴ While the board maintains the full authority to “discipline deviants,” the lack of community familiarity²¹⁵ – the absence of a political society – through the fragmentation of space, reduces the cooperative mechanism from the common interest of the condominium. In its absence, the board is left to issue compounding restrictions on space, further limiting its use.

212. Heller, “The Tragedy of the Anticommons,” 6-7.

213. Webb, “The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods,” 51.

214. Heller, “The Tragedy of the Anticommons,” 12.

215. Beyond being a strictly architectural problem, the lack of community familiarity is also a demographic problem, this also being influenced by the architecture of condominium units. While the StatCan 2016 census records the one-year mobility rate – the number of households that have moved into their current dwelling over the past year – as 14.2% in Census Dissemination Area (DA) 35204820, in Concord CityPlace between Spadina Ave. and Telegram Mews/Brunel Court, the one-year mobility rate was 33.8%. The five-year mobility rate was 80.1% despite all construction in the DA being completed more than five years earlier.

1.4 The Material Realities of Condominium Real-estate

We have to this point, considered the condominium towers of downtown Toronto to the extents of the forces that form them – as dwelling places, as instruments of financial accumulation, and as armatures of the urban-political matrix. As an artifact of neoliberal space production, each dimension of the condominium depends upon fixity and the alienation of spatial agency.²¹⁶ Owners, investors, the FIRE sector,²¹⁷ and governments at all levels hope, if not expect, the trend of upward property value appreciation to continue indefinitely.²¹⁸ At the heart of these abstract dimensions, however, we are left with the artifact of the produced space – the material tower as urban artifact. While our common understanding of condominiums is based on stasis, the material reality of the towers is opposed to this expectation. On one hand, the infrastructure of the reinforced concrete tower will remain as an artifact in the Toronto skyline for quite some time. As the structure that enables stacked real-estate titles, the durability of the concrete framework could project the power structures of condominiums over a century into the future of the urban fabric. On the other hand, the actual use value of the dwelling unit is provided by systems of common assets such mechanical, plumbing, electrical work, elevators, interior finishes, and the building envelope. Each of these material assets have functional lifespans ranging from just a few to fifty years.²¹⁹ To perpetuate the exchange value of the condominium units, the inevitable decay of these systems creates the need for maintenance – a reinvestment of some kind. As the towers age, these financial responsibilities compound. Even if the abstract attributes of the condominium such as the neutralized polity and rising property values were to continue, at a certain moment the cost of maintenance in an aging tower will surpass the expectation of capital gain, undermining the expectation of infinite financial accumulation. Without the reprioritization of the condominium dwelling’s use value over its exchange value, the increasing need for maintenance will push its many unit owners to maintain margins of capital extraction at the expense of the physical tower itself. In time, this will cause architectural decay and the alienation not only of the condominium’s ontological value, but also of the tower’s basic capacity to provide shelter and safety. Despite this decay, the over-

216. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore, (London: Verso, 1991), 230.

217. Finance, Insurance, and Real-estate

218. Punwasi, “Bank of Canada Wants a Housing Bubble,” webpage.

219. David Albrice, “How Long do Buildings Last?” *RDH Building Science*, website (RDH Inc, January 2015), <https://www.rdh.com/blog/long-buildings-last/>.

fragmentation of ownership that made the condominium so valuable an instrument to the neoliberal agenda in the first place, will only now lock the tower into its state of decay and urban (economic) sclerosis, reinforcing the *anticommons*.

1.4.1 A Durable Urban Infrastructure

With increasing land costs downtown, the production of free-hold title commodities at economically profitable densities could only be achieved through tall building, ranging from nine to over eighty storeys. Depending on the area of the floor slab, each storey can accommodate anywhere from four to twenty-five or more units per floor²²⁰ – each unit its own free-hold parcel. Through the structure of the condominium tower, property boundaries have been abstracted from two dimensions to three. By defining private units according to the material building itself, the *Description* inverts the function of the private parcel in urban morphology by making the material of the built tower the *a priori* condition to the stacking of the private units. The titles for these units are only registered once the tower has been constructed.^{221,222} The function of the *Description* as part of the registration package, is to delimit the bounds of each unit-in-space, “by reference to the buildings or other monuments,”²²³ meaning that the title of the land is not simply a perceived space as traditional property lines, evolving beneath the urban fabric.²²⁴ While a normal parcel of land is bound to the relatively static real geography, the condominium title is dependent on the material tower itself.²²⁵ The artifact of the tower becomes the legal lynch pin for the stakeholders of the corporation.

As the majority of the condominium towers in downtown Toronto have been built with reinforced concrete structures,²²⁶ they are of typological interest here, not only because they are so commonly used for condominium structures, but because of their durability within the fabric of the city. The concrete skeletons of the condominium towers are projected to

220. Above fifteen units per floor seems to be atypical for podium tower condominiums.

221. While the Ontario Condominium Act covers several types of condominium, that the building be substantially complete for the property to be registered, is specifically true for condominium apartment towers which are classified as *Common Element Condominium Corporations*. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 6(2).

222. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 8(1)(e).

223. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 8(1)(c).

224. Baird, “Studies on Urban Morphology,” 126.

225. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 11(4).

226. Ted Kesik, “The Glass Condo Conundrum,” *University of Toronto*, 2011, 1.

last from seventy to one hundred years or more.²²⁷ There is the temptation to think that they will stay in their economically privileged position as high-demand real-estate for the duration of their life. However, this is not the nature of capitalist real-estate geographies. Nor can we assume that the towers will *just* be torn down once they become obsolete or lose their economic edge. While the environmental cost of that would be unconscionable, it is the economic considerations that would make it improbable. The cost of disassembling forty-storey reinforced concrete towers from dense urban environments is as-of-yet, not well known but is projected to be quite high.²²⁸ If the economic forces that are currently shaping the downtown persist, the cost would have to be a functional investment, clearing the way for an architecture of even greater profit extraction. While such economic conditions that would make demolition of the dense concrete landscape profitably viable are possible, they are extreme and unlikely, especially given the number of towers now built.²²⁹ It is therefore necessary to consider the condominium towers as permanent monuments and infrastructures within the city landscape, capable of hosting both good and bad emerging urbanities for at least a century to come.²³⁰

1.4.2 Inescapable Maintenance

Within the urban space of the durable tower structure, society's spatial practices of *habitus*, *politics*, and *economics* impact the care given to less durable systems of the building. While the *exchange value* of the unit is inalienably tied to an abstract parcel in the space of the tower structure,²³¹ the *use value* is in the alienable capacity of the unit to provide security and shelter.²³² Within the concrete skeleton of a structure, the function of home is provided by eight systems layered over the concrete structure. The enclosure (roofing membranes, facades) and interior finishes provide shelter, security, and privacy. Electrical, mechanical and elevator systems provide practical services and comfort, and fire safety systems protects the wellbeing of the building and its occupants. Finally, amenity spaces and site work

227. David Albrice, "How Long do Buildings Last?" webpage.

228. Jon Kelly, "How do you demolish a skyscraper?" *BBC News*, November 30, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20535821>

229. Easthope, *Politics and Practices*, 135.

230. Sandra Löschke and Hazel Easthope, "Postproduced: How adaptive redesign and participatory approaches can transform ageing housing," *From Conflict to Inclusion in Housing*, ed. Georgios Artopoulos, Graham Cairns, and Kristen Day (London: UCL Press, 2017), 74.

231. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, s.s. 11(4).

232. Ted Kesik, "The Glass Condo Conundrum," 1.

frame the corporate structure of the condominium into a collective spatial experience – a tangible delivery on the promise of a complete community experience.²³³ As each of these systems works for all of the units in common, they are common assets of the corporation. Unlike the concrete structure which we are here considering inert, however, these systems have much shorter lifespans, from three to fifty years.²³⁴ The natural decay of any of these systems compromises the use value of the unit and challenges the exchange value of the unit-commodity.

It is therefore these eight manipulatable systems that tell stories about agency, decision-making, and structures of power within the space of the towers. The lifespans and maintenance of these systems become a key factor when observing the societies, politics, and economics of the tower, responding year over year to the decisions made by condominium owners and boards.

The eight volatile systems are separated into three “durability classes,” the shortest spans from 1-16, the medium durability class spans from 17-29 years, and longest spans from 30-50 years. Different components of each of the eight systems can fall within more than one durability classes. For example, while water recirculating pumps and the central boiler are both considered part of the mechanical system, the former falls into the short durability class while the latter is considered medium. Furthermore, the lifespan of all durability classes is cyclical so if short term overhead gate motors for the parking garage must be replaced in the first ten years of the tower’s life, it can be assumed that the gate motor will need to be replaced every ten years thereafter. Maintenance concerns therefore compound as the tower ages. While there are many technicalities, nuances, and eventualities that could be unpacked

233. ASTM-1557, Uniformat II has organized the systems of the building into nine categories which, with the addition of structure, are listed here; enclosures including roofing, finishes, electrical, mechanical, elevators, fire safety, amenities and site work.

234. David Albrice and Tsai-Sun Lee, “The capital load of the building enclosure system relative to other systems and its impact on the total cost of ownership of condominium buildings in British Columbia,” *International Conference on Building Envelope Systems and Technologies*, (Aachen, Germany; RDH Building Science ,2014) 3.

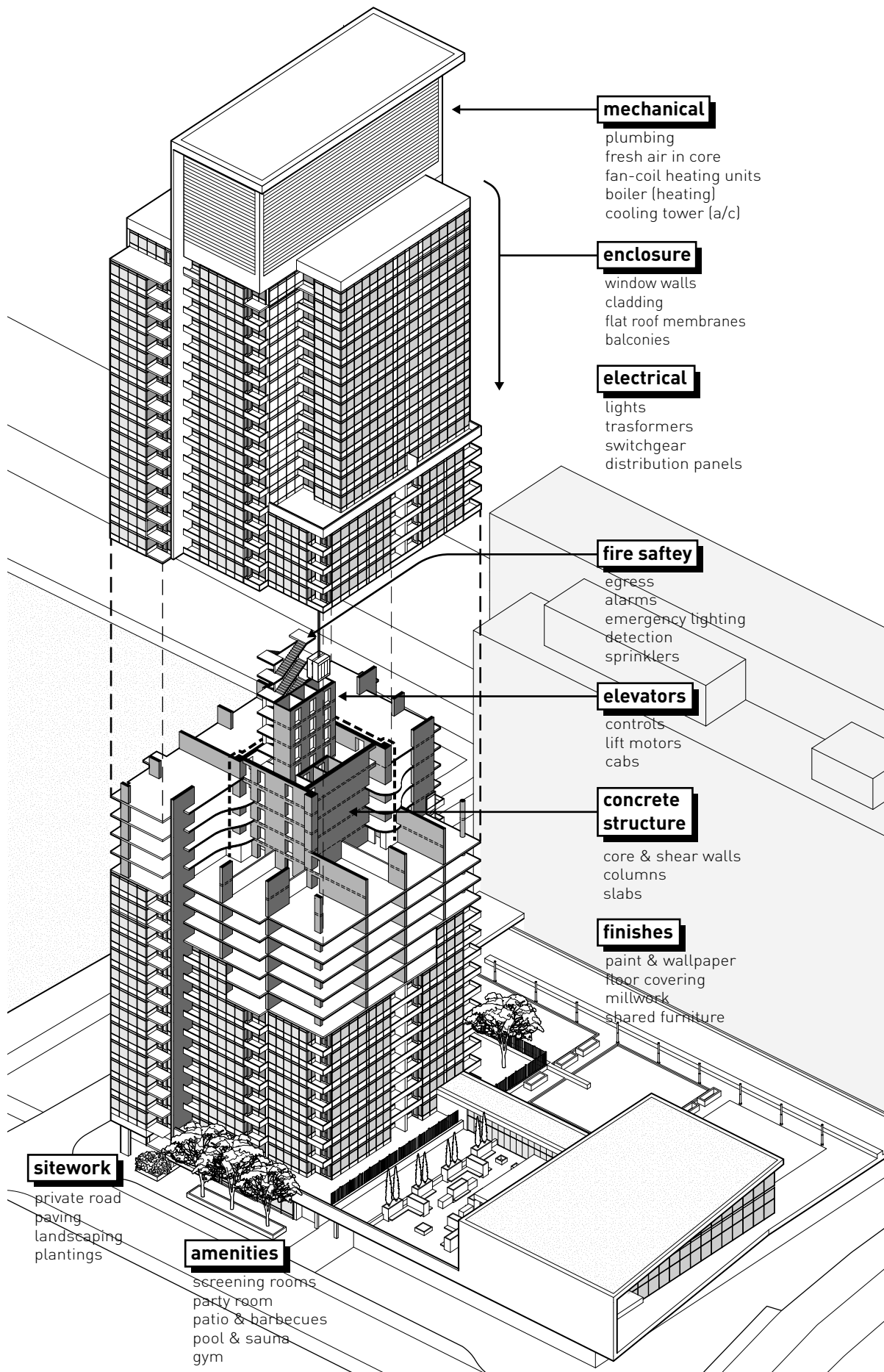


Fig.22 The nine systems in a condominium tower.

for the durability of each of the building systems,²³⁵ what is important here, is that the decay of each component represents the periodic and quantifiable devaluation of both the *home* and the asset, and the necessity for capital reinvestment.²³⁶

235. Many of the short-life common assets within the condominium tower are elements that undergo constant or periodic use. Water-heaters, water circulating pumps, and garage door motors often need to be replaced in the first three to ten years and every three to ten years after. For high-use systems like water pumps, the quality (or conversely, the *economy*) of the replacement fittings has big implications on the periodic need for capital re-investment in the tower.

Many of the high-capital maintenance and repairs occur happen in the medium-life horizon of the building. One reason for this is simply obsolescence. Technology for things like elevators, fan coil units, and fire safety are continuously evolving. Because of obsolescence, many elements will in time, not be able to be repaired but will rather need to be replaced. Furthermore, in this time-frame, many of the systems will simply have reached the end of their functional life-span. System wide infrastructures like plumbing and electrical can be expected to need a complete overhaul between seventeen and twenty-nine years.

The most significant element which has many building-systems experts particularly anxious about the future of the condominium towers in dense urban areas is the enclosure – roofing and cladding. Condominium towers are typically clad with glass window-wall systems. Over the past twenty-five years of rapid condominium tower construction, especially in Toronto and Vancouver, window-wall construction has evolved significantly, getting faster, lighter, and cheaper. It seems almost gratuitous to state just how important the enclosure is for the function of the building. Especially in Canadian climates, the enclosure is the singular protection for the occupants of the tower against the cold and damp. Degrading window walls can severely compromise the liveability, longevity, and safety of the tower.

While most of these common assets operate hidden from view, only considered by the average owner if they fail, interior finishes and amenities spaces are unique because they directly influence the resale value of condominium units in their visual appeal. Amenity spaces such as lounges, theatres, party rooms, and pools are notoriously underused, they are regarded as an indicator of the wellbeing of the tower and its financial management. These largely vacant spaces are “the space of appearance” which, in their respective conditions, testify to a potential buyer, how well or unwell – how politically or how neutrally – the society of the corporation, and specifically the board, are using and moderating the condition of the collective building. The state of the amenity spaces indicate the stability of the hegemonic vision that a buyer hopes to buy and an owner hopes to sell. As the amenity spaces relate back to a specific yet generic (“fungible”) vision of urban living, contrived by the developer, here again, we see the creation of a least-objectionable common denominator. Amenity spaces must, in general, never accumulate any material indications that have been appropriated – made home of – by any specific person or society. They stay universally accessible and appealing in their market exchangeability in the maintenance of their peerless and generic state.

236. Albrice, “The capital load of the building enclosure systems,” 6.

1.4.3 In Spite of Neoliberal Logic

Within the legal framework of *OCA-98*, the owner's obligations for maintenance were reduced to the single factor of the condominium fee.²³⁷ The monthly fee, based on the square footage and class designation of the unit, goes to the daily maintenance of the building systems, retention of staff, and the reserve fund to be used for high-cost and emergency repairs. There has been rising concern over the past twenty years that many of the condominiums in Toronto are maintaining reserve funds that are not equipped to deal with the full breadth of maintenance and repairs that will be necessary to keep the buildings as functional fabrics of the city.²³⁸ The cause for this under-contribution is, of course, the desire by boards and residents alike, to keep condominium fees low for the sake of maximizing capital extraction from the property.²³⁹ High condo fees can scare off potential buyers.

Here we arrive at the core of the conflict of values inherent in condominiums as the neoliberal mode of city building. The increased exchange value of the condominium unit cannot be generated simply by maintaining the building in perfect condition, even if it was possible to do so. Material buildings must age and lose material value.²⁴⁰ Condominium prices can rise, only based on the increase in local land value. It is the "location, location, location" within the economic geography that investors rely on to create profit, with the functional unit principally as bond to the location. On average, only ten percent of the real cost of a condominium unit accounts for the cost of the land that the tower is built on. To maintain the functional value of the tower – of the ninety percent material cost – the value of the land must appreciate at a rate that keeps pace with the accelerating cost of maintenance. For the unit to be worth more for the owner at the time of sale than at the time of purchase, the use value of the unit – the physical state of the building – must have decayed less than local and global forces of economic geography have driven real-estate prices up. While this has been the case for the condominiums in Toronto so far, most towers are no more than 16 years old and are quite early on in the fifty-year maintenance cycle. It is an economic paradox, but one all too commonly believed, that the labour cost of maintenance can be paid for indefinitely – and with surplus – by increasing real-estate value.²⁴¹ This tension between

237. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 149.

238. Webb, "The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods," 55.

239. Webb, "The Implications of Condominium Neighbourhoods," 56.

240. Neil Smith, "Gentrification and Uneven Development," *Economic Geography* 58, no. 2 (April 1982): 147.

241. MacBeth *When the Bubble Bursts*, e-book, loc. 3099.

real material and abstract market values of the condominium are demonstrated graphically in the timeline on pages 74-5.

For the individual unit owner, the increase in exchange value has become the ultimate barometer for reinvesting in the maintenance of the tower. As the condominium towers grow into middle and old age, however, investors will go to increasingly extreme ends to stabilize the value of their unit assets against the ever-increasing cost of maintenance. Those who own units to dwell in them, as a means of buying into the real-estate market ladder, will find that this strategy is no longer logical or appealing. Therefore, resident owners will be displaced. While the tenure by resident owners in condos is approximately 66.7% across the Toronto CMA, it falls as low as 26.6% in some CityPlace towers. This is down from 58% in the 2011 census and is only expected to decrease even farther.²⁴² The first and second normative modes of financialization as investigated in the economics section, will be displaced, in favour of the third, that is the instrumentalization of the unit as a means of extraction. Rental of the units will, in time, become the only way to extract capital from the condominium units.²⁴³

As seen in the structure of the constitutions set out by the *OCA-98*, the condominium was based on a premise of liberal democracy and cooperation – the negotiation of individual values for the best common outcome.²⁴⁴ Through the emergence of capitalist hegemonic understandings of private property ownership in Canada, however, the ontological value of the condominium unit has already been consensually made secondary to the financial instrument of the free-hold title. This creation of hundreds of liberally minded economic stakeholders, each with their own ambitions of financial extraction, creates the condition for Heller’s *tragedy of the anticommons*. Decision-making is reduced to the creating of rules and regulations to maintain the appearance of financial stability, while simultaneously minimizing personal financial obligations like condo fees for maintaining the material of the tower with any long view to the future.²⁴⁵ Beyond alienating the situational use-value of space within the

242. These statistics are based on the Dissemination Area 35204819 at the west end of Concord CityPlace from 2011 and 2016 StatCan data. “MountainMath: CensusMapper,” *MountainMath*, website (MountainMath Analytics, 2016), https://mountainmath.ca/mountain_math/canada_census_map.

243. MacBeth, *When the Bubble Bursts*, e-book, loc. 3143.

244. Risk, “Condominiums and Canada,” 39.

245. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 146.

condos through *rules*, this political stalemate of the *anticommons* will in time lock out the physical safety and maintenance of the tower.

As the scope of various rehabilitation projects within the tower grows, so does the number of unit owners, required for consensus. Amendments to unit boundaries, responsibilities of repair, and elements like balconies that are commonly held but have limited access, require an 80 or 90% super majority as prescribed by the *OCA-98*.²⁴⁶ In such cases, a very small number of unit owners hold the “rights of exclusion” and can prevent beneficial repairs from being done for any number of personal reasons. In the absence of a healthy polity and collective vision, important reinvestment would be left undone. A current example of this is found in the City of Toronto’s High-Rise Retrofit Improvement Support Program, which is working with the Tower Renewal Partnership for high-efficiency retrofits to mid-century towers in Toronto. While there are ongoing projects with privately owned rental towers, not a single condominium has qualified for the City’s program because it requires 100% supermajority among the unit owners.²⁴⁷

A more distant concern is when the tower reaches a point of obsolescence or decay, and the best option is for the corporation to be dissolved and the tower liquidated. Even so, the likelihood of engaging over 90% of the owners and achieving consensus is highly unlikely, resulting in a condition identified as the tragedy of the anticommons. Reasons for this would be highly circumstantial, for example the irreparable damage to a certain number of units.²⁴⁸ The result is the economic and functional stagnation of a common asset caused the inability of members in a commons to negotiate their different values. The trait of the anticommons is underuse, rather than overuse.²⁴⁹

Through the collective will to exploit the financial value of the condominium units, both

246. Votes to determine the amendment of unit boundaries, the fees associated with each unit and unit class, and the dissolution of the corporation itself require a 90% supermajority. All other issues require 80%. Ontario, *Condominium Act*, c. 107(2)(d).

247. Lösckke, “Postproduced,” 74-5.

248. Webb, “The implications of condominium neighbourhoods,” 51-3.

249. Heller, “The Tragedy of the Anticommons,” 9.

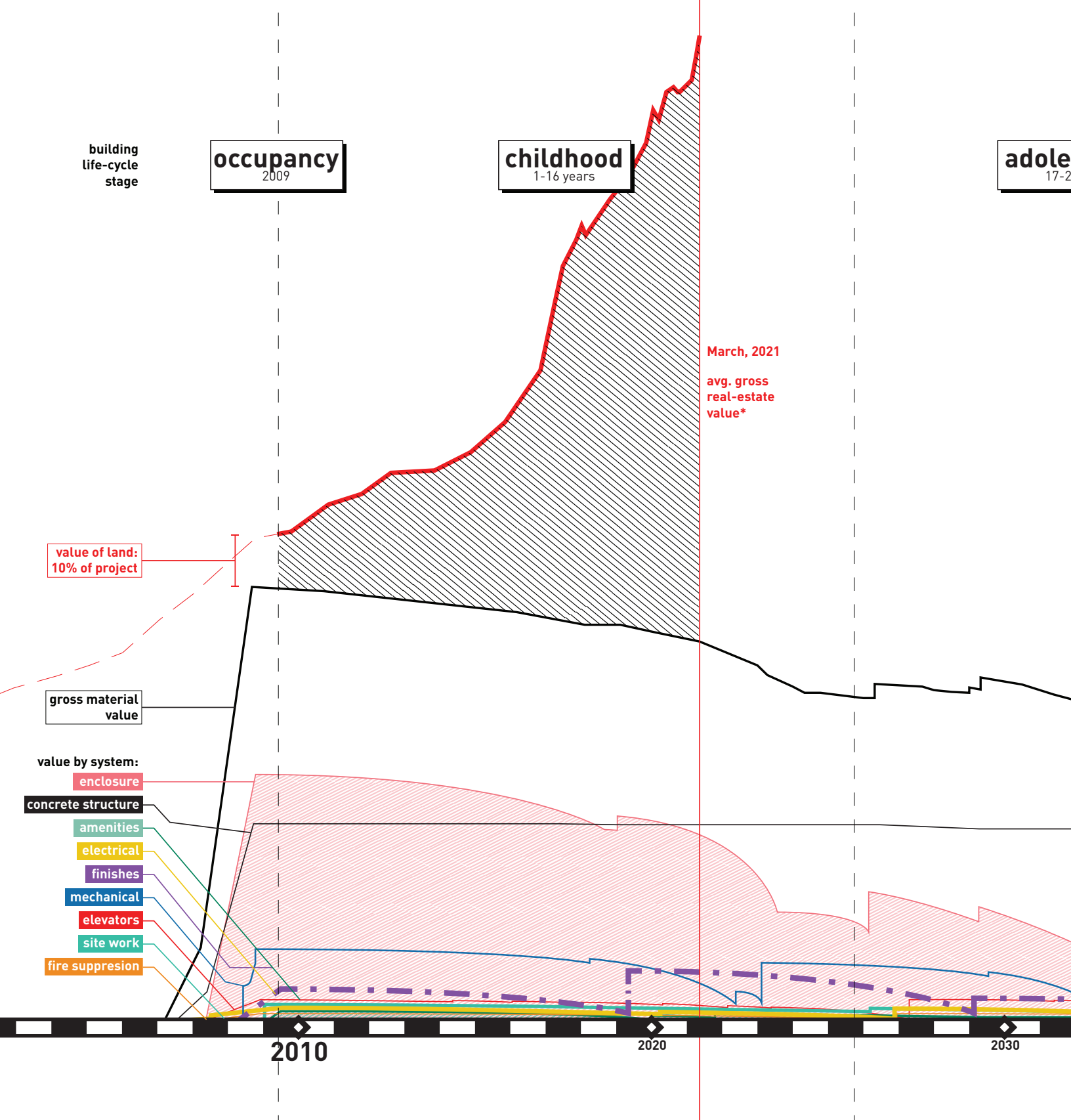
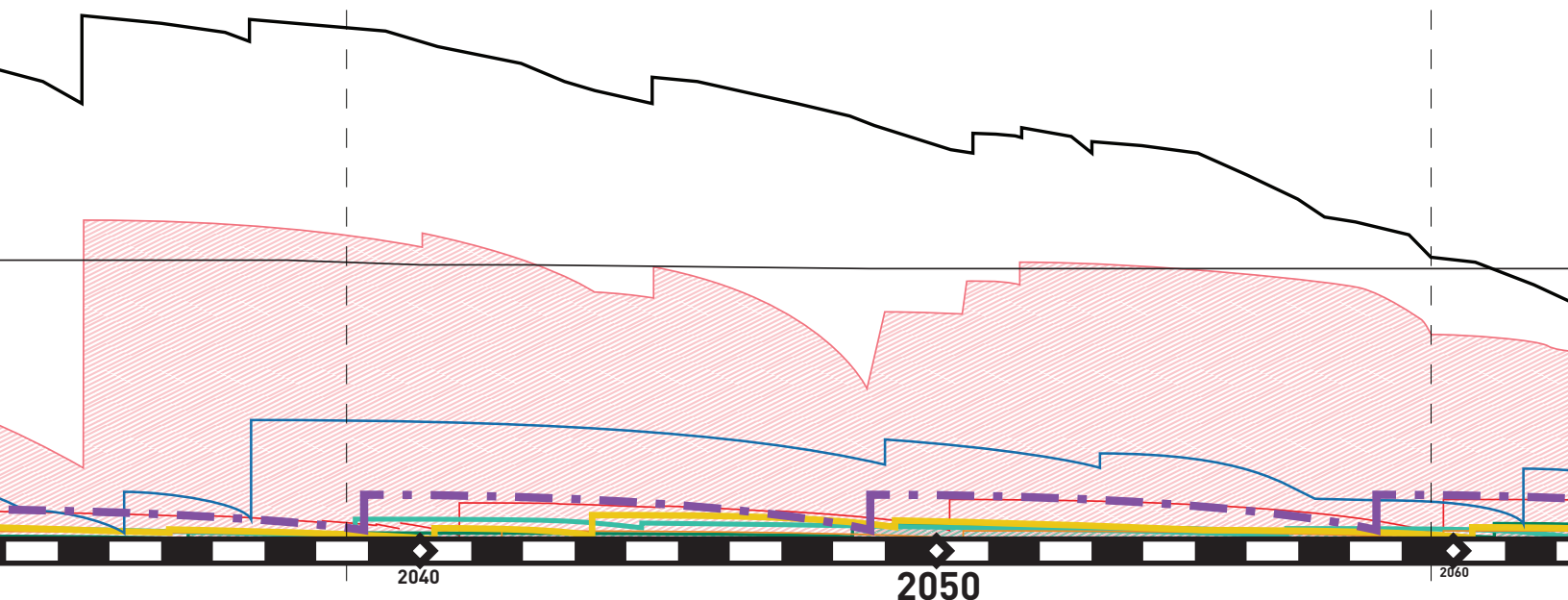


Fig.23 Timeline of tower's exchange values and projected maintenance reinvestment

The timeline above is a speculative projection of the relative values of the various systems in Montage Condo, completed in Toronto CityPlace in 2009. The cumulative real-estate value of all of the units within the tower is shown in red at the top of the graph. 10% of this cumulative value is accounted for by the cost of land.

science
9 years

adulthood
30-49 years



*Value ratio estimates and trends are based on real estate values in the Toronto Waterfront Communities.

The remaining 90% is comprised of the hard-costs of the remaining 9 systems. As the building ages, these systems functionally decay, declining in value. Upward notches in each systems line represent a moment in time, when the board makes significant investment into the repair or maintenance of the system. Despite these compounding investments, the net material value of building will decrease in time, creating a looming disparity between use-value and speculative real-estate value.

the ontological and material use value will be slowly but progressively alienated. With the abandonment of resident owners, democratic representation that was framed into the constitution of condominium through voting rights will be extracted completely from the space of the tower. As tenants, the new occupants of the tower will have no representation in decision making over the place where they live. There is often a concern in condominiums about the board's *Rules* that are oppressively restrictive for the sake of maintaining the investment appeal of the condominium assets. While this is already the case when there is a substantial presence of owner occupants to object to unfair restrictions,²⁵⁰ once occupants of the tower have no representation in decision making, the board will have no regulation for the restrictions to be enforced on the spaces, both public and private, within the tower.

As the margin of capital gains extracted from private titles within the towers continue to fall, as is the nature of capitalist flows, the owners will deem it necessary to maintain profits through the absolute minimization of maintenance reinvestment costs. It is reasonable to expect that the physical state of the building will degrade in time.²⁵¹ In Toronto, there is already precedent for this in the mid-century rental apartment blocks, notorious for being poorly maintained. The comfort, security, and personal dignity that should be intrinsic to the architecture of *habitus* and of *home*, will be alienated, in a slow but diminishing exchange for exchange value.

Our understanding of *home* as the locus of identity within the city demonstrates the immense capacity that the condominium tower as a novel morphology in the urban fabric, has of generating complex and socially rich political landscapes. At the same time, the short but relatively dense history of private property in Canada reveals to us how these towers are the reification of neoliberal policies and cultural values. The dwelling has become an instrument of financial accumulation. If we do not reorient our collective valuation of the residential fabric of the city, the political and spatial stasis required to maintain the illusion of surplus real-estate value will alienate us from the new city until the towers themselves become materially and socially untenable.

250. MacKenzie, *Privatopia*, 140.

251. Webb, "The implications of condominium neighbourhoods," 56.

In the words of Hans Ibelings, “One does not have to be clairvoyant to foresee that the swift and unyielding condominiumization of Toronto has all the right ingredients to become a recipe for the future’s past mistake on a scale that will likely dwarf the Gardiner.”²⁵²

252. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 39.

Part 2:

How to Start a 30 Year Revolution

2.1 Urban Indeterminacy

The role that architects have played in bringing about the present form of the city as the product of capitalist-cultural and financializing forces has been to this point understated; in trying to understand the condominium as an urban artifact, the apparently responsible approach is not about unpacking poor design decisions of the past but understanding the city as it now is and what these buildings hold for the future. While a critical understanding of what has led to the extreme condominiumization of Toronto can help dismantle extractive driving forces in the future development of the city, at this moment, we are still faced with the critical question of what the city of towers as it now stands, is to become. Based on their internal conflicting structures of cultural-capitalist expectations and cooperativism, it's safe to assume nothing good.²⁵³ When looking at this emerging problem, it's tempting for architects to want to come up with design solutions; to conceive of architectural answers for a problem that is much deeper than architecture itself. In the past few decades, several architects have made notable critiques, proposing how designers should respond to problems posed by high-rise urbanism in Toronto. The first is the work of Graeme Stuart and the Tower Renewal Partnership in addressing the maintenance, performance, and the transformation of the urban fabric around tall buildings in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas.²⁵⁴ While Tower Renewal and its many partner organizations address a very comprehensive range of problems surrounding aging apartment towers, including sponsoring the new RAC zoning by-law in Toronto which provides huge opportunities for urban growth and transformation,²⁵⁵ their model of intervention currently focuses on purpose-built rental towers with single corporate owners.²⁵⁶ The second critique is *Rise and Sprawl: The Condominiumization of Toronto*, written by Hans Ibelings with PARTISANS in 2016 which explores the form

253. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 39.

254. E.R.A. Architects, *Mayor's Tower Renewal*, 4-5.

255. Between 2013 and 2016, the Tower Renewal Partnership and E.R.A., along with other organizations, worked with the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Planning Board to create the Residential Apartment Zoning Commercial zoning (RAC) by-law which allows for mixed-use development on what were previously strictly residential sites of mid-century apartment towers. While this policy initiative does create possibilities to transform the civic fabric surrounding the mid-century towers in very positive ways and is therefore worth acknowledging, the policy does not address the anticommens condition that is created in the prevention of diachronous and 'economic' evolution through defensive neoliberal attitudes. City of Toronto, *By-law no. 569-2013*. (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2013), Vol. 1.

256. Tower Renewal Partnership, *Retrofit Finance Towards a Resilient Canadian Housing Stock – Summary*, (Toronto: Tower Renewal Partnership, 2018): 1.

of condominium architecture as the product of economic functionalism.²⁵⁷ While these projects are extremely valuable in different ways, neither of them addresses the particular *civic* problems posed by the ageing of the towers of deeply fragmented ownership and how this will exacerbate alienating power dynamics within the city. Though they have different focusses, together these critiques outline a blind spot in our strategies for the future of condominium towers as a unique civic construct in the urban landscape. Most strategies to address ageing towers present top-down solutions, either on behalf of the municipality or of free market. Coming from within the discourse that produced alienating structure of the condominium towers, these solutions propose revolution, without providing any real framework for restoring the architecture profession or society's understanding of urban living; solutions designed from within the discourse promote no systemic cultural change.²⁵⁸ It is my proposal that critical theories of individual agency and plurality in everyday life prompt architects to look at the emerging field of *planning by scenarios* as a toolset to better understand and transform the relation of societies to and within condominium towers. This can be achieved by altering space as it is conceived by architects, policy writers, and most importantly those who will live their daily lives within the condominiums decades from now. It is not by refreshing utopian conceptions of failed urban structures that we restore the value of good space to people.²⁵⁹ Rather, it is in liberating people to act on their space and to live in it as they best know how, that people *realize* ontological value of space.

2.1.1 The Problem with Revitalization Plans

While the future of condominiums in Toronto as they currently stand, is one of alienation, decay, and exploitation, for architects to authorially design a way out of this problem would only perpetuate power structures within the space of the city as the work of architects is usually commissioned by the corporate free-market or the state.²⁶⁰ In *Walking in the City*, de Certeau, seems to say that capacity of the architect in the renewal of urban space is not the production of healthy social frameworks, but merely the reinforcing of alienating frameworks

257. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 116-7.

258. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 49.

259. Kipfer, "Urbanization, Everyday Life and the Survival of Capitalism," 133.

260. This is not to be taken for saying that architects and planners shouldn't rise to the challenge of either emancipating condominiums from commodification through the capacity of their profession, or work to mediate decaying and inhospitable cityscapes. Nevertheless, they should do so conscious of their role within economic and political geographies and the impacts of their interventions.

from a different perspective within the same discourse.²⁶¹ Such interventions on the city are necessarily based in theory and the projection of ‘utopian’ visions of what the city should be, other than what it is. The product of logical conception, singular utopian visions cannot accommodate for uncertainties – “pollutions that would compromise them” – and so, these uncertainties must be displaced.²⁶² Individual agency cannot, therefore, be a driving urban factor in such a conceived city. This is necessarily true for state-sponsored housing policies which, despite good intentions, have the inescapable tendency to politicise and bureaucratize matters of housing.²⁶³ The projection of power dynamics would only be all the more extreme in corporate free-market projects for urban regeneration of towers as it is specifically the corporate need for profit that produced the condominium framework in the first place. Within their existing logics of space production and reproduction, when architects act as the agents of either of these entities, the space produced can only be for the continued alienation of spatial agency among the residents of the city tower, insofar as the space produced will be the product of pre-existing discourses. The exception to this, and not to underappreciated, is the work of many architects and organizations who have operated tactically within their role as designers to advocate for the social and human needs of the people who are to inhabit projects.²⁶⁴ Nor do I intend to discourage such efforts in the future where opportunities are made, but insofar as these projects are *tactical* – David not playing by Goliath’s rules – they remain exceptional in the fullest sense. Operating within the existing concrete structure of Toronto and the neoliberal forces that have produced it, normative top-down means of planning and design struggle to affect meaningful reorientation of social and political space within the condominiums because they necessarily operate within existing structures of finance-driven urbanization.

2.1.2 Daily Life as Activism

To find an alternative to the inescapable closed-ness of the discourse of urban decay

261. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 96.

262. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 94.

263. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 119-20.

264. A well-known example of such tactical operation is Alejandro Aravena with ELEMENTAL’s affordable housing in Quinta Monroy. Working within a structure of economic constraints, the architects used an architecturally disruptive half-house model to afford and advocate for a site that better suited the long-term well-being of the houses future occupants. A second popular example of architects acting strategically *within* the framework of architectural production is Giancarlo di Carlo’s advocacy for the participation of future residents in the design of workers housing for the Terni Steelworks.

and renewal, we return to the basic building block of the city – the dwelling as the site of everyday life.²⁶⁵ When considering the form of the city, architects typically disregard private action and *habitus* as an urban force, even if they acknowledge their importance on an individual ontological level. In his *Critique of Everyday Life* however, Henri Lefebvre dresses down “intellectuals [and] cultivated men,” for dismissing the practices of daily life as “trivialities.” Rather, he directs us to study daily practice as the core artifact of each person’s consciousness (ontology), and by extent, the driving force of society and the city.²⁶⁶ In the capitalist spatial practice for daily life which has evolved over the past century into the form of the condominiums, lived space has been fixed as the reproduction of the means of production. Daily habits are guided – controlled through strategies of space and codes of conduct where architectural language is insufficient – to uphold the economic productivity of the real-estate commodity.²⁶⁷ The use of force to guide peoples’ daily lives creates a disparity between how people are living in condominiums and how one might live in an apartment tower in a self- and socially-actualizing way.²⁶⁸ As the alienation of ontological value, this disparity is commonly recognized but not widely engaged. Yet, the broadening of this gap in the daily lives of people gives rise to the creation of choice to act in a way ‘*other*’ than what is prescribed by structures in what de Certeau calls *tactics*.²⁶⁹

We return to the diagram in which de Certeau’s frames the *tactical* turn. Produced space is codified with strategic structures intended to reproduce their own power in the spatial practice of their inhabitants. These *strategies* of power are disrupted in moments when they conflict with the memory – “invisible knowledge” – of the inhabitants.²⁷⁰ Outside the bounds of strategy, memory is the individual’s knowledge toward agency. This conflict between strategy and memory results in action that appropriates space and action that transgresses the totalizing logic of strategy.²⁷¹ *Tactics* are not revolution; they do not take part in a coherent theoretical discourse. Rather, *tactics* arise in the form of decisions – “opportunities that are seized” – in which the individual acts against the *strategy* governing the space that they

265. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 164-5.

266. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 239.

267. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 53-4.

268. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 53-4.

269. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 32-9.

270. de Certeau calls these moments *Kairos*. They are not simply the conflict between *strategic* and personal ideologies. Rather, *Kairos* is the specific *occasion* – the set of conditions – in which strategy and memory conflict in a way that moves a person to ingenuity and the desire for appropriative action.

271. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 83-6.

occupy.²⁷² While on an individual level, *tactics* in daily practices are the basis of ontological actualization – “of goals and desires”²⁷³ – they collectively comprise the sustained power to disrupt and redirect the predetermined structure of the condominium tower. As the place where people make the most consistent and intimate decisions about how they desire to live, the dwelling unit becomes the principal site of *tactics* and disruption of the neoliberal institutions of the condominium.²⁷⁴

The capacity for disruptive *tactics* is especially present within the parallel structures of the condominium tower where the notion of home is subjected to *strategic* architecture and politics. The increasing fixity and lack of generosity in condominium units by which to their exchangeability as commodities is maintained, prescribes daily routines and household politics in a language that is unprecedented in residential development.²⁷⁵ The standardization and economization of units alienate the practice of *habitus*, and the hyper-fragmentation of common space defies the formation of the civic. Where architecture has been insufficient to moderate behaviour within the space of the condos, the board of directors is given the authority to create codes of conduct which, we have seen, are based on enforceable restrictions, and not enabling liberties.²⁷⁶ With these strategies totalizing the lived space of the condominium towers, the alienation of dwelling is high. This increases the context, though not necessarily the motive power, for tactical action to occur.²⁷⁷

The possibility for tactical improvisation against conceptualized space is heightened by the tenuous language of power and enforcement within condominium corporation. Situational power is not demonstrated in the condominium through explicit architectural languages as it was in Imperial, renaissance, and baroque cities.²⁷⁸ There are few, if any, spatial signifiers of the authority of the Corporation.²⁷⁹ Rather than visual representations of authority, more

272. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

273. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xxii.

274. Madden, *In Defense of Housing*, 94.

275. Ibelings, *Rise and Sprawl*, 19.; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 75.

276. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 146-8.

277. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 30, 37.

278. Aureli, “City as Political Form,” 35.

279. Logos and branding around front lobbies, concierge desks, and posted notifications on rec-room doors are the few explicit signifiers of the corporation and board’s authority in the perceived space of the condominium.

totalized space relies on the agreement between authorial conceptions and daily uses of space to be upheld through everybody's subscription to hegemonic cultural ideals.²⁸⁰ The condominium relies on self-policing and 'cooperation' to uphold its totalizing vision of wealth accumulation.²⁸¹ This cooperation is, of course, only nominal if you consider that the Board of Directors *also* has the authority of a judiciary to enforce penalties (economic) for the violating the rules,²⁸² but in the gaps of visible power, the alienating structure is maintained by the banal decision of the common resident, even if it is maintained unconsciously.²⁸³

If hegemony is this unconscious cooperation with *strategies* in daily life, Lefebvre holds that "commoners" exist in a gap between reality and possibility, caught up in the capitalist narrative of the condominium and unable to imagine alternative values of operation.²⁸⁴ When considering de Certeau's diagram of the socio-spatial turn, stronger strategies of power in space, be they perceived (embodied in material space) or conceived (the narratives that overlay that space) suppress the appropriation of space in imagination.²⁸⁵ The conceived image of the condominium community, sold in glossy renderings and the promise of capital gain, lives on in the collective making of mundane decision, according to the rules, written and unwritten.²⁸⁶ What is necessary to free the condominium for appropriative action is to disrupt the authority of hegemonic conceptions over the lived space of the condominium, thereby disrupting the consciousness of decisions made by occupants of the tower. While the representation of the *Creative City* condominium narrative is necessary for propelling preconceptions of lived space into the public imagination,²⁸⁷ the representation of alternative spatial narratives can be used to overturn the spatial practice of a condominium community.²⁸⁸ If the proposal of renewal projects into the realm of conceived space is too prone to fix space under structure of control because it is necessarily based on discourses of conceived ideology, the only tool to bridge the gap between reality and possibility within the urban practice of the condominium tower, that does not reinforce hierarchical power

280. Kipfer, *Urbanization, Everyday Life and the Survival of Capitalism*, 127-8.

281. Risk, "Condominiums and Canada," 3.

282. McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 129.

283. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 38.

284. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 246.

285. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 83-5.

286. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41-2.

287. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 42.

288. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 86.

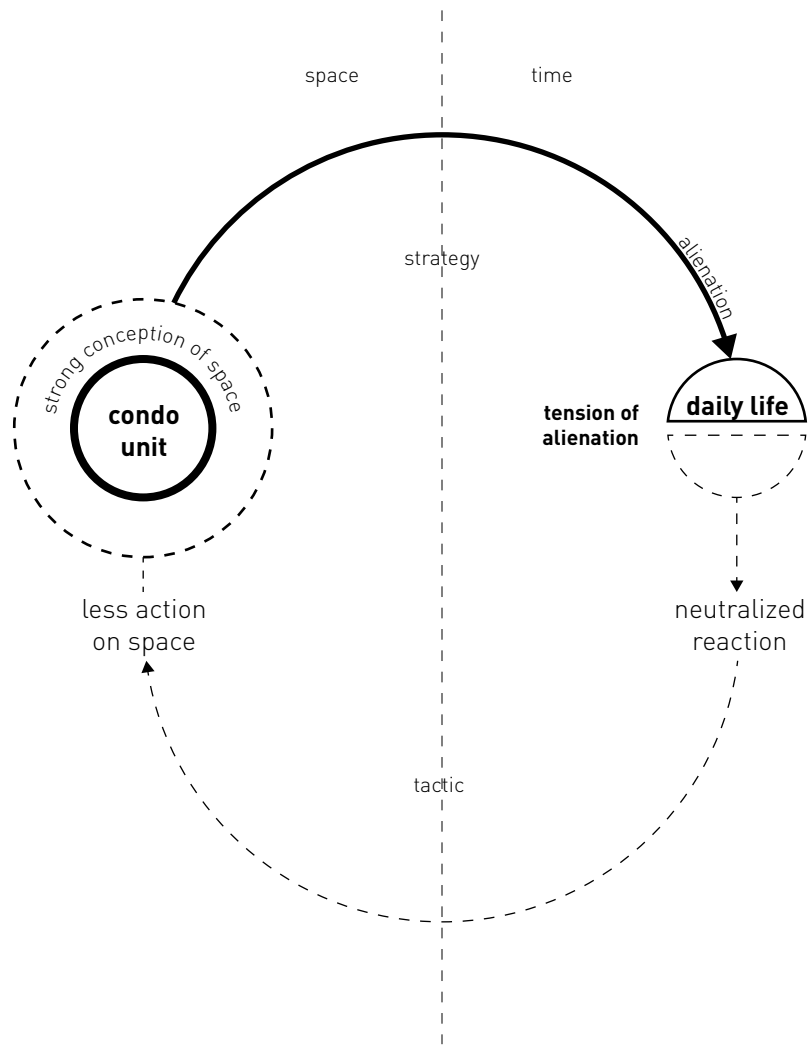


Fig.24 The increasing strength of the strategic structuring of daily life creates the potential for rupture where tactic begins to react against strategy.

structures, is through the creation of memory in representational space through the telling of alternative stories.²⁸⁹

2.1.3 Alternative Narratives as Catalyst

de Certeau spends a good deal of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, discussing the importance of myths, stories, and spatial narratives in the creation of tactical – “other” modes of operation. He cites many writers and urban theorists who rely on “*narration*” to engage theoretical discourse, rather to produce pure descriptive (object) theory. Unlike objective theoretical production, narrative engages with, and maintains the importance of the spaces and actions of everyday life. Narratives therefore use language and representation as *ways of operating* rather than purely observing or representing, as to obscure as little as possible, the “practice” of operating itself.²⁹⁰ While the production of narratives for the condominium towers by developers and marketing team present singular *ideologies* of space as structures to which ‘*consumers*’ are subjected,²⁹¹ narratives about the past and speculative futures of space can propose ways of operating in space, rather than merely consuming it.²⁹² While real life is the process of making decisions and the acting upon of values in and upon space, these habits are confronted and questioned through the exploration of alternative narratives – “successive configurations of knowledge [...] providing a panoply of schemas for action.”²⁹³ Using narratives that show the production or diachronous evolution of space as the product of daily action,²⁹⁴ the story-teller creates memories that engage with real spaces and patterns – habits – of daily life.²⁹⁵ When occasions for appropriation and tactic arise, the occupant responds beyond the status quo of habit, from their own translations of narratives banked in memory.²⁹⁶ The creation of *other* spatial narratives supplants previously unquestioned ways of operating in lived space. The banal opportunities of daily life are accounted for, if not celebrated, and the sterilizing gridlock of heterogeneity is broken.

289. “Stories turn spaces into places and places into spaces.” de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117-8.

290. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 77-8.

291. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv.

292. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xi.

293. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 70.

294. “Memory mediates spatial transformations.” De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 85.

295. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 89-90.

296. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 84-6.

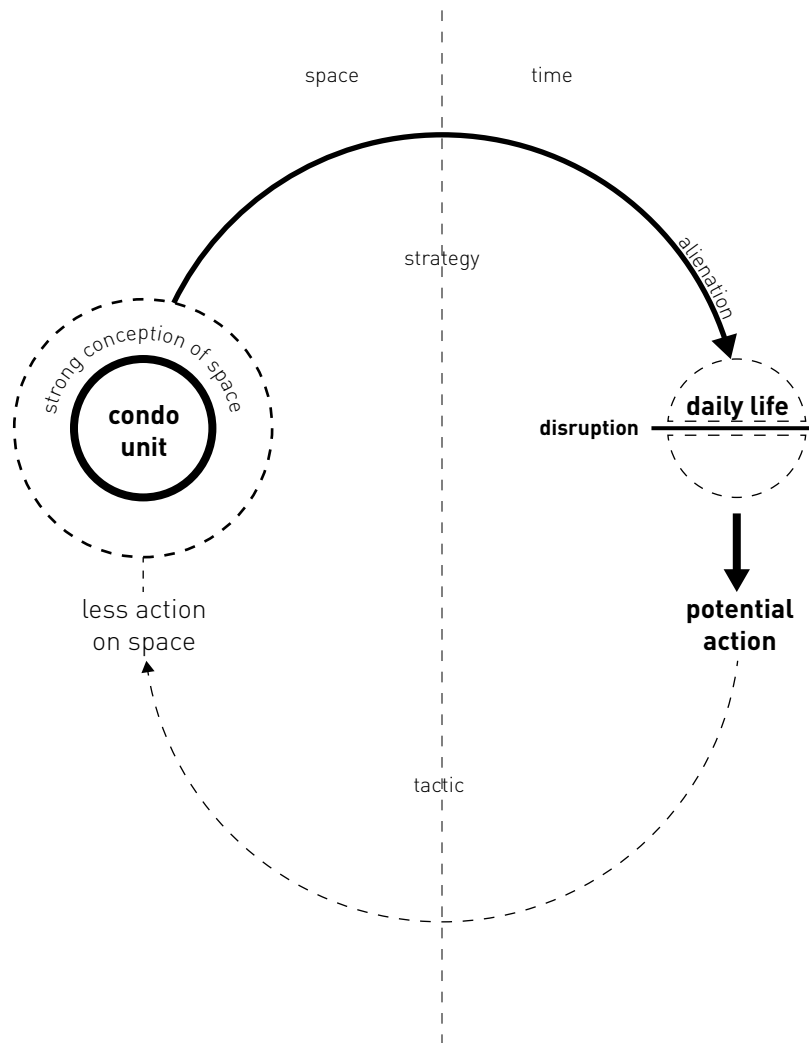


Fig.25 The margin between the daily life of alienation and the appropriative potential that space holds presents a margin for intervention.

Is it enough for the architect to sit down, pen in hand, and draw fantastic images of radically transformed condominiums at some distant and uncertain future? Maybe, but probably not. Fantasy, unlike myth, legend, and history, are not grounded in familiar territory and language – *utopos*. Through raw creativity, the architect might generate a fascinating spatial story about the space of a condominium tower in the future, but being un-grounded, it would be equally alienated from *modes of daily operation* of the occupants.²⁹⁷ What is required is a method that enables the architect to tell stories and appropriate the existing structural logics of the condominium as future histories, in a convincing way.²⁹⁸

In recent years, there has been a growing interest among urban planners in the practice of planning by scenarios as a means of envisioning futures in cities with innumerable actors and endless uncertainty.²⁹⁹ Developed as a more resilient alternative to business forecasting, planning by scenarios is being coopted by planners and designers as an instrument for generating visions for futures, independent from authorial, utilitarian, or purely economic goals.³⁰⁰ Planning by scenarios was developed by the military and Shell Oil throughout the middle of the twentieth century as a way of operating resiliently in an increasingly globalized world with “unknown unknowns.” Scenario panning takes advantage of uncertain futures through the construction of narratives that explore the entire breadth of possible, rather than probable or “inevitable”, real-world events as they relate to a certain complex problem.³⁰¹ When coopted by humanities and design, scenario planning explores the power of pluralist agent-based decision making on complex systems like urban landscapes.³⁰² By exploring futures of the condominium in the full breadth of its strategic frameworks, scenario planning is totalizing in its scope, capable of creating various narratives of varying possibility. Yet through developing multiple narrative timelines, it is entirely pluralistic in its execution, not operating within any single set of totalizing ideologies.³⁰³ It therefore blends the language of existing logics with an expanded field of speculative possibility to create alternative spatial narratives that are on one hand, unlikely, and on the other, engaging in their logical

297. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 246.

298. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 79.

299. Milica Stojanovic, Petar Mitkovic, and Mihailo Mitcovic, “The scenario method in urban planning,” *Facta universitatis*, series: Architecture and Civil Engineering 12, no. 1 (January, 2014): 82.

300. Urry, *What is the Future*, ch. 1.

301. Stojanovic, “The scenario method in urban planning,” 84.

302. Urry, *What is the Future*, ch. 1.

303. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 25-7.

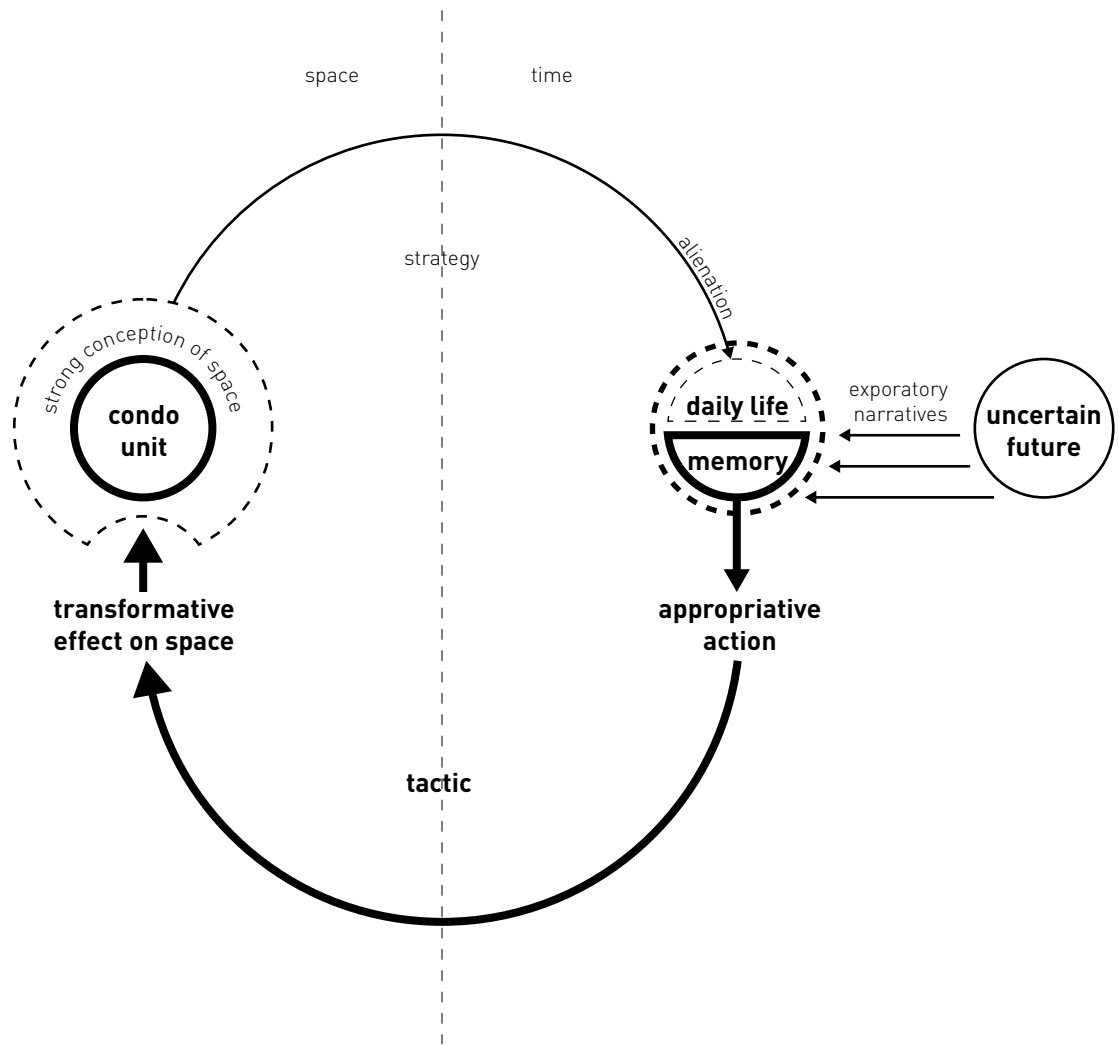


Fig.26 Writing speculative narratives that overlay the space and time of real futures, disrupts the alienation caused by strong conceptions of space and restores to residents of the condominium, the potential for tactical action.

plausibility.

In his exploration of scenario planning of the future, John Urry refers to the practice as post-modern planning because it is a tactical departure from the planning tradition of master-narrative objectives and probabilities in favour of an exploration of unexpected possibilities.³⁰⁴ This decentralized visioning exercise can be appropriated by architects and planners to disrupt collective but destructive and extractive practices of decision-making within the tower.

2.1.4 Generating/Undermining Narratives through Scenario Planning

Scenario planning upends traditional authorial methods of urban space production through its dependence on uncertainty of the future and the likelihood of single-author visions to fail because of this uncertainty.³⁰⁵ At its simplest, scenario planning exercises are systematized ways of breaking down the full scope of causal uncertainty in a way that is neither naïve, nor cripplingly complex.³⁰⁶ The first step in this is determining a timeframe for inquiry through a planning horizon. (*Fig. 26*)(1) Facilitators then identify the full range of drivers or factors of uncertainty that are relevant to the timeframe and system in question – in this case, the condominium tower. (2) This expansive set of drivers is categorized into component buckets, or key questions, that sum up the uncertainty of the system. (3) The plausible outcomes to these key questions represent the full possibility of futures for the condominium. (4) Components are then configured into plausible (though not necessarily probable) sets which together, capture the full diversity of possibilities that the future holds. (5) These outcome sets are written into narratives that use people and events through time to show how futures might emerge.³⁰⁷ Because the process of scenario planning relies heavily on intuition, creativity, and plurality in an aim to overcome constraining linear logics, it thrives on the

304. Urry, *What is the Future*, ch. 1.

305. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41.

306. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 22.

307. Michel Godet, “The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning: Tools and Pitfalls,” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 65, no. 1 (September 2000): 11.

broad engagement of the community, stakeholders, and experts.^{308, 309}

The first step in scenario planning is to establish a planning horizon.³¹⁰ The creation of a horizon concretizes the relation of time and space in both conception and materials of the condominium. To ask, “Where will this condominium tower look like in 30 years?” confronts the capitalist expectation of perpetual economic growth and undermines the public conception of the condominium tower as an ageless artifact.³¹¹ Establishing a planning horizon also creates a window for both action and patience. As a passing decision, *tactic* never possesses space. It is therefore a conquest of time.³¹² For daily life to be effective as activism, it requires a social durability – a persistence of action through time.³¹³ To create a planning horizon sets the temporal bounds in which *tactic* becomes significant.³¹⁴ To set a planning horizon unites a disparate group of community actors into a single understanding of the *present*. While different owners, owner-occupants, and tenants each have their own agendas for when to buy, sell, move in, and move out of the towers, to set a planning horizon relates the heterogenous present to a common future.³¹⁵ The scope of the timeframe can vary, depending on the purpose of the individuals engaged in the planning exercise.

If the purpose of scenario planning is to fully explore unknown unknowns through viable yet unexpected narratives, it is important to understand all the dimensions of the future in question. All moving parts of the question must be named and systematized to understand their relations. This naming requires input from both professional experts and stakeholders. Professional experts are necessary to understand the technical parameters of all problems (eg. building science and global economic forces). Discussions with resident owners, landlords, and tenants are necessary to establish *strategies* of operation within the tower.

308. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 26.

309. The scenario building exercise completed for the purpose of this thesis, as an exploration of the future lives of condominium communities, was completed independently by the author. While this, no doubt, impacted the logical constraints of the output narratives, the value of the narratives is still twofold. The first is in familiarizing the reader with uncertainty and the logic framework of scenario planning. The second, and more salient is the output narrative as a tool for engaging discourses of urban space.

310. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 6.

311. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 246.

312. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

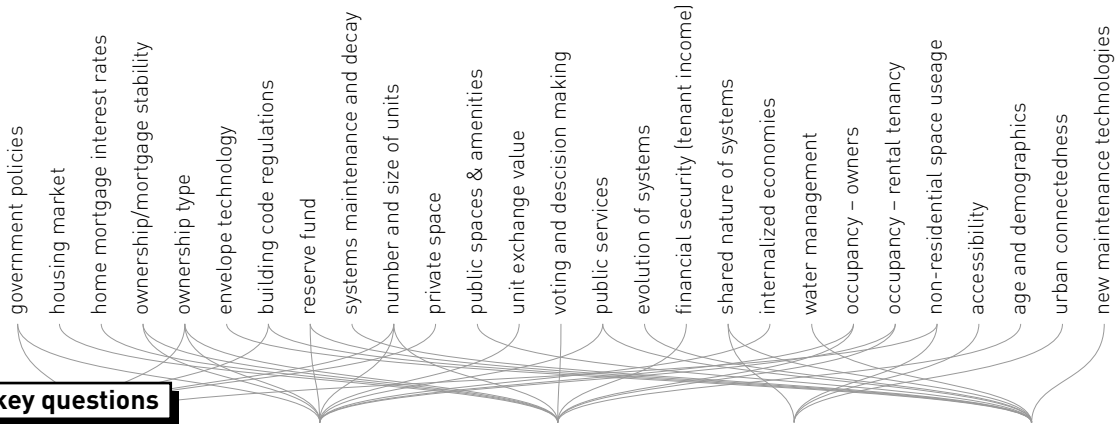
313. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 49.

314. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 82.

315. Urry, *What is the Future?*” ch. 1.

scenario planning – organizing uncertainty

1) variables



2) key questions

“... what will the condominium’s description look like?”

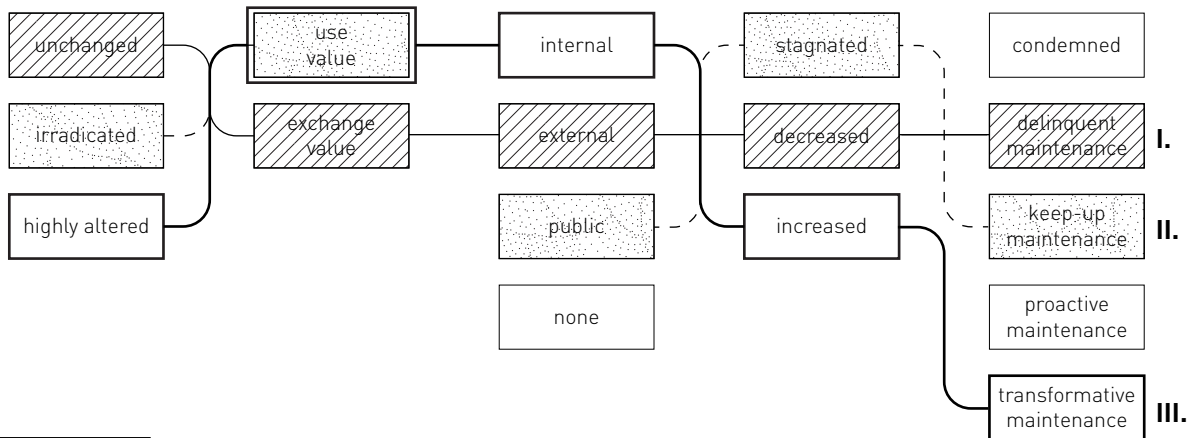
“...what values will those who control of the tower prioritize?”

“... who will own and control the tower?”

“... how will the shared space of the tower have evolved?”

“... what state will the maintenance of the tower be in?”

3) possible outcomes



5) narratives

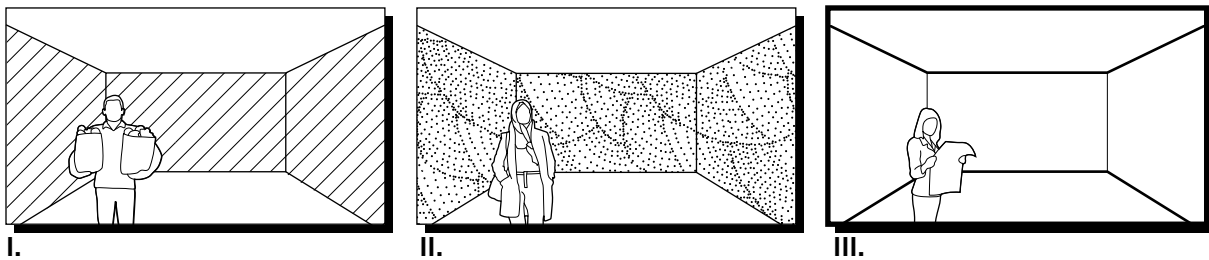


Fig.27 Method for building planning scenarios.

Building scenarios clarifies the uncertainty of future decisions by organizing the full spectrum of a system’s variables into a sent number of key questions.

These strategies form the critical relations between the drivers-in-time. It is in the process of creating an exhaustive list of variables that participants identify the full scope and complexity of the system in question.³¹⁶ To capture the full extent of relevant uncertainty, these lists can range from thirty to eighty variables, depending on the complexity of the system.³¹⁷ Once the extent of the system is grasped, participants work together to organize the variables into component buckets. Participants [unconsciously] use their own perceptions of the relations of spatial practice to resolve the associations within the list of drivers. They are, in effect, identifying the syntax of *lived space*. These associations are used to form buckets of drivers; each bucket forms a key uncertainty or question within the future of the system. In order to maintain the scope of possibilities that can be considered, the components should capture as many of the variables as possible, with as little overlap between them as possible. The number of components generated will also vary from exercise to exercise but participants must generate as few component questions as possible without compromising their comprehensiveness as each component question becomes a multiplier of possible outcomes.³¹⁸ Ten or fewer components is ideal.

By organizing the variables into broad component questions, the future of the tower is delaminated and then repackaged into a series specific of questions, and the discussion of the tower's future expands beyond the single question of exchange value. As participants in the futures exercise work through the process of generating outcomes for these component questions, these outcomes become understood as active causal results, rather than passive occurrences. Because the components together represent the entirety of uncertainty surrounding the future of the tower, bringing together one possible outcome from each of the component buckets creates a comprehensive and viable – though not necessarily ideal or probable – alternative for what the future could look like. When creating possible combinations, it is important to remember that the purpose of exploratory futures is not to generate specifically ideal or viable futures. Rather, its function is to create a discourse around potential and unexpected futures based on the actions of individuals over the timeline of the planning horizon.³¹⁹ While the number of outcome sets being created can vary, in this step as well, it is beneficial to have as few options as necessary to capture the full spectrum

316. Godet, "The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning," 9-14.

317. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 63.

318. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 74-5.

319. Milica Stojanovic, Petar Mitkovic, and Mihailo Mitkovic, "The scenario method in urban planning," *Facta universitatis - series Architecture and Civil Engineering* 12, no. 1 (January 2014): 83-4.

of possible outcomes; the creation of more than six possible narratives typically generates too many nuances and becomes incomprehensible, thereby uninformative and impractical.³²⁰ Furthermore, too few narratives often leads communities to fall into the convention of creating ‘good,’ ‘bad,’ and ‘neutral’ options.³²¹ Michel Godet from La Prospective, a French thinktank that specializes in scenarios methodology, encourages that such convention and predictability be avoided at all costs as it compromises the methodological strength of generating scenarios that capture the full scope of possible futures. Conventional thinking is often the product of insinuated *strategic thinking*, which precludes disruptive and unconventional, but nevertheless possible, outcomes.³²²

2.1.5 Narratives in the Restoration of Habitus

Once component outcomes have been combined into a diverse and comprehensive set of futures, the author creates narratives of how the component outcomes could occur within the given planning horizon. It is in this process that the full scope of uncertainty and agent-causality are explored, presenting the future of the condominium as the result of individual agency.³²³ The *strategies* of the condominium institution, and the tactics of residents play out within the represented space of the tower. While in the context of business and military scenario planning exercises, these narratives are often written by economists, technologists, and specialists, in scenario planning for a condominium, the architect would fill the role as the narrative writer, blending abstract and technical dimensions into engaging representations of a society in place. Drawings and visualizations do not promise a stylized world that will never be. Rather, self-conscious of their own narrative speculation, they can embrace decay, ad-hoc adaptations, and highly individual appropriation.³²⁴ Through the telling of these stories, owners and residents become active participants in the uncertain

320. Michel Godet, “The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning,” 20.

321. This is, undeniably, what happened in the creation of scenarios, later in this thesis. While the three narratives produced are presented as the objective outcomes of individual actions, because the scenario planning exercise here was created within the framework of a larger systemic critique of the futures of the condominium, the component outcomes were already understood within this critical spectrum. In an isolated scenario planning exercise, the unbalanced use of narratives as critiques – that is to say the idealization of one scenario over another – can be a warning sign of inconsistent and unobjective logics. This neutralizes the exploratory power of scenario planning in which case, the people engaging in the exercise might have been just as well off, creating a single idealized plan.

322. Godet, *Strategic Foresight*, 22-3.

323. Godet, “The Art of Scenarios and Strategic Planning,” 11.

324. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 89.

future of the tower. In much the same way these scenario outcomes are not generated as predictions of the future but rather, when read as a series, in their comprehensiveness, they illustrate many viewpoints *around* what the future could be, leaving the future open for action.³²⁵

Planning by scenarios will not cause radical change in the space of the city over a week, month, or year. That radical and immediate transformation is not its purpose here.³²⁶ If we build to last, we need to adapt our social and personal obligations to act accordingly; to play the long game. Through the creation and telling of stories around the futures (since we have erased stories of the past), we as architects can revive in peoples memories, shadows of how they might reclaim the spaces that they inhabit; how on a daily basis, they can make decisions that ground them in, rather than alienate them from structures that were never produced for them in which to feel grounded. In his expansion of the socio-spatial dialectic, de Certeau integrates memory and time so that “at the right moment,” memories created through future fictions of inhabited space rise to challenge patterns of life that alienate human existence. In these moments, value-based action appropriates space giving rise to the production of social space.³²⁷

This disruption of daily action and the creation of social space will, it is hoped, thaw the internal political framework, used to control the space of condominiums. While the current board-led structure allows owners to avoid condominium politics in alienation and apathy, disrupting the static narrative of a tacit common future will inspire residents to engage and negotiate their space and future with their neighbours. Addressing people face-to-face concerning noise violations can be either destructive or productive but is, either way, mutually beneficial for the mutual realization of both parties need to coexist. This is a

325. Janae Futrell from the Journal of the American Planning Association identifies the power of scenario planning with three possible outcomes; *strategic direction*, *action identification*, and *education and awareness*. While all three outcomes have the potential to be impactful in **liberating** the condominium towers of downtown Toronto from the complete alienation of human value, it is the third outcome of *education and awareness* that has the most capacity for impact in the context of the complex socio-political condition of the condominiums and our interest in daily action as the production of the city.

326. Lefebvre asserts that revolution is an illusion, comparing it to a ‘magic wand,’ a conceived ideal that causes immediate social transformation. Rather, in recognizing the reinforcing power of daily practices and habits, we are encouraged to adopt farther reaching temporal horizons. Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, 49-50.

327. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 84-6.

rather simple example, but the principle extends all the way from discussing the colour that someone paints their hall door, to negotiating project financing strategies with the board at the annual general meeting. Engagement is key, not only for the survival of the tower, but for the ontological realization of belonging and the survival of the city.

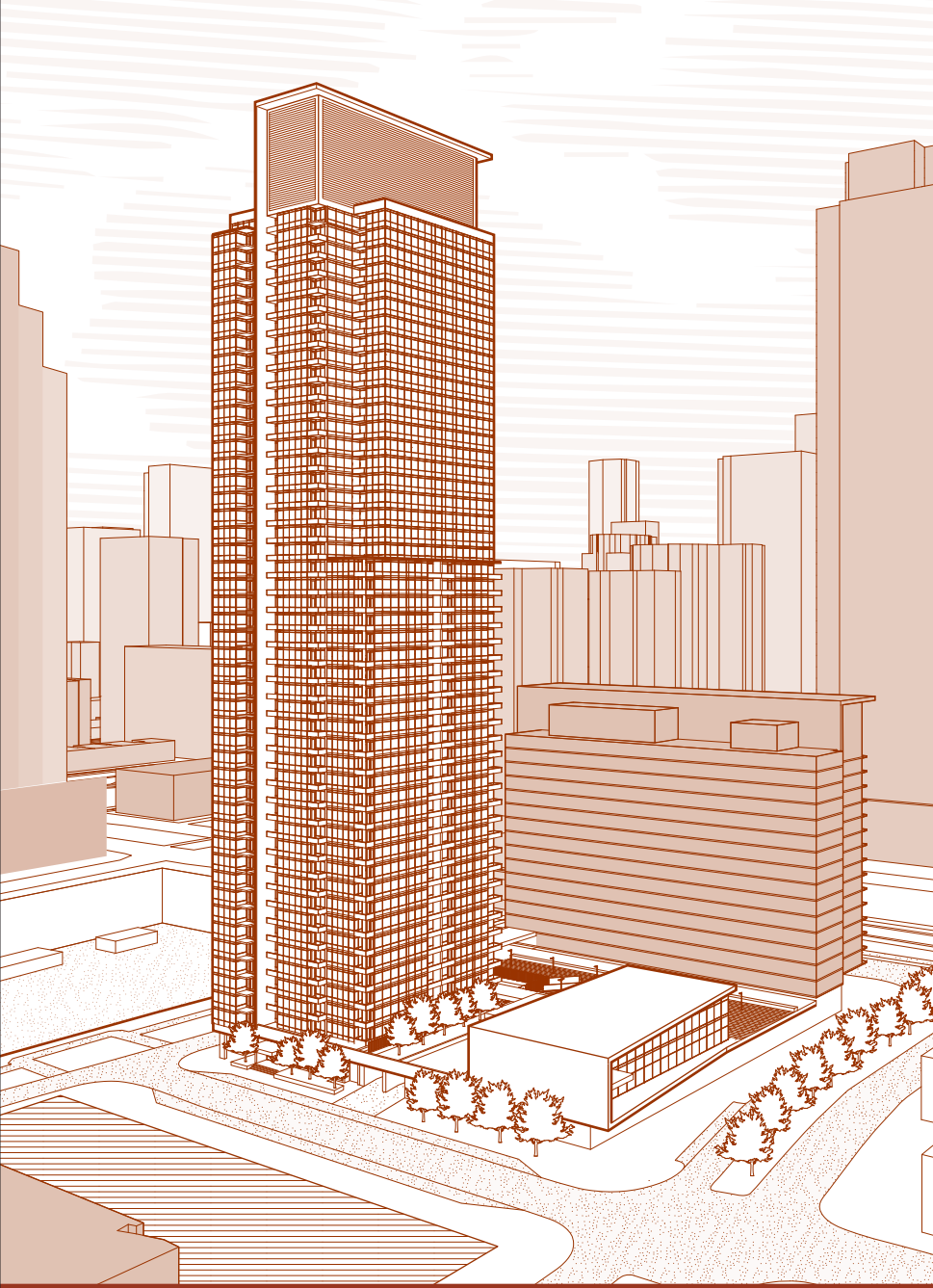
2.2 Scenario Planning Exercise:

Montage Condominiums – 25 Telegram Mews, Toronto, ON

Montage Condos

Futures Study

Corp No. TSCC-2016



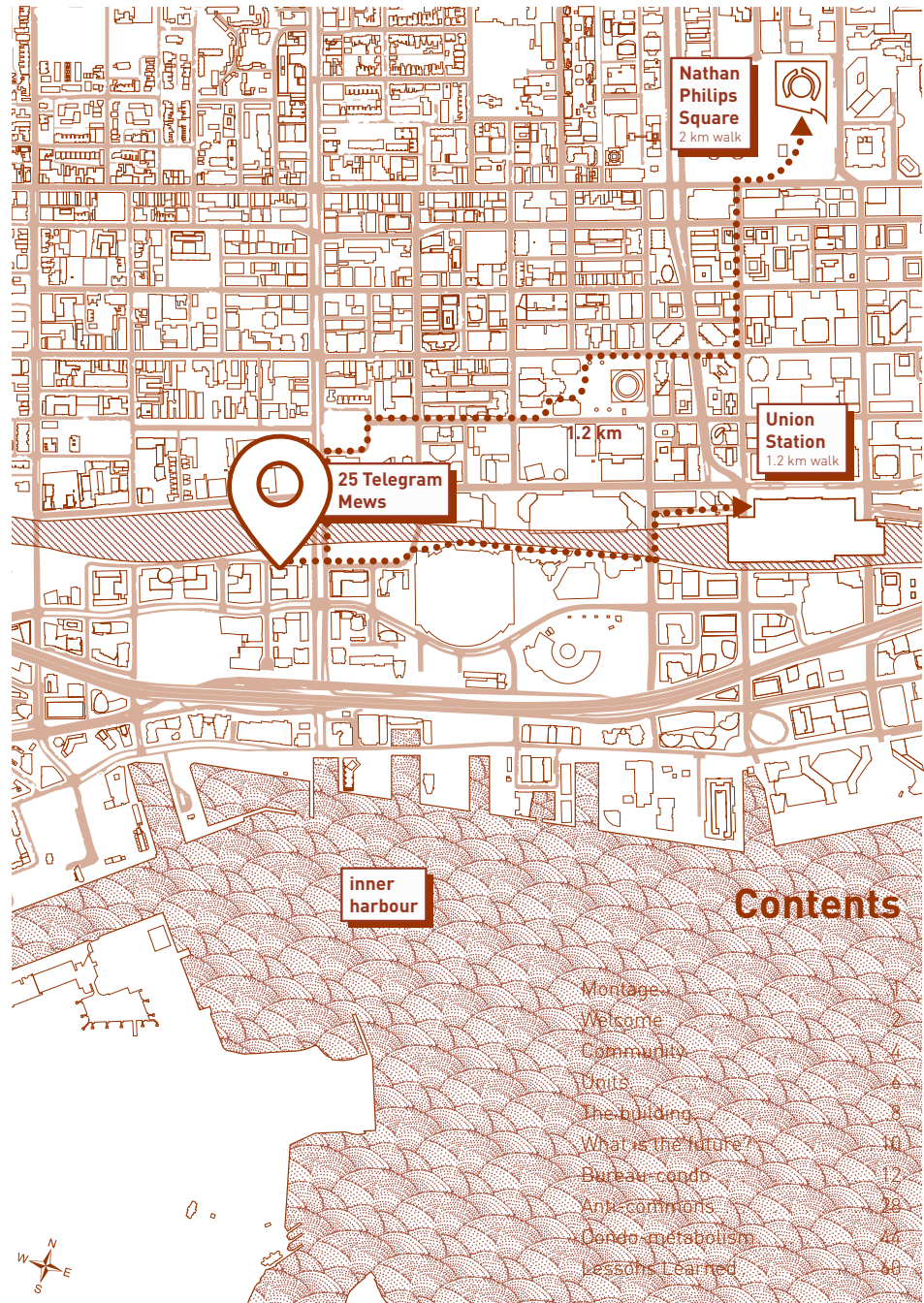
25 Telegram Mews

Toronto, ON

August, 2021

Montage Condos
Introduction
August, 2021

Welcome



Montage Condominiums

Hello!

Have you ever wondered what your condo will look like in the future? If look out from your unit onto the city, vibrant and dynamic, we know it will look much different in thirty years time, but what if you look back at your unit; your kitchen, your bedroom, your washroom – your home. How will it look in thirty years? Have you ever thought about it? Our homes play an important role in how we live our daily lives. They slowly evolve with us as our daily needs and habits change. These changes can be small things like reorganizing the furniture, or it can be bigger changes like moving walls. The condominium unit, like any other house, will change over time, if you are able to adapt it to make it a home. In this way, the city itself evolves in time.

Many things influence how the city, your condominium community and your unit will evolve in time. The different people in your community, how they work together to live in the building, the economic wellbeing of the residents and the surrounding city and the well-being of the tower itself, will all have an impact on how the tower ages, according to the decisions of people such as yourself, that inhabit it.

You and your neighbours above, below and all around you share the tower as a home. How you get along with your neighbours can have a big impact on the tower's future. The condo tower is, after all a democracy of owners who all share the power to vote for the board and collectively make decisions about how the building is managed and maintained. Your relationship with your neighbours and your personal investment in the spaces that you share will impact how you, the board of directors, and the whole community decide to use and care for these spaces.

Real-estate and economics will also strongly influence how people in your community relate to the tower they call home. If you own your unit, you probably hope to sell it sometime in the future and hopefully for more than you bought it. The value that you place on your home influences how you take care of it. For example, in strong real-estate market, you might feel less pressure to re-paint before selling. If the condominium market takes a turn for the worse, however, you might be willing to invest more time, effort, and money to boost its market value. The same principle applies if you are renting your unit. There is likely a very specific standard of maintenance that your landlord wants to keep the unit in. For better or worse, their attitude towards the value of the condo will greatly influence how they expect you to live in the unit.

Finally, there is the tower itself; something that we tend to take for granted. While the physical tower is a very robust concrete structure that could stand in Toronto for more than 100 years, the many systems, such as electrical, mechanical and plumbing, that make it a comfortable place to live require constant maintenance. While your Condo Board often takes care of these systems, every time that they invest in maintenance, it represents a decision made. In time, these accumulated decisions can have a big impact on what your condo looks like.

When we move into a condominium, we like to think of it as static. Condominium towers, however, are complex things. They are made up of a community of diverse people with diverse tastes and needs, all trying to make their home in the heart of the city. Juggling the needs of the community, economics, and the tower itself, it could not stay exactly the same for thirty, twenty, or even ten years! So what will your condominium look like in the future? Let's explore!



Community

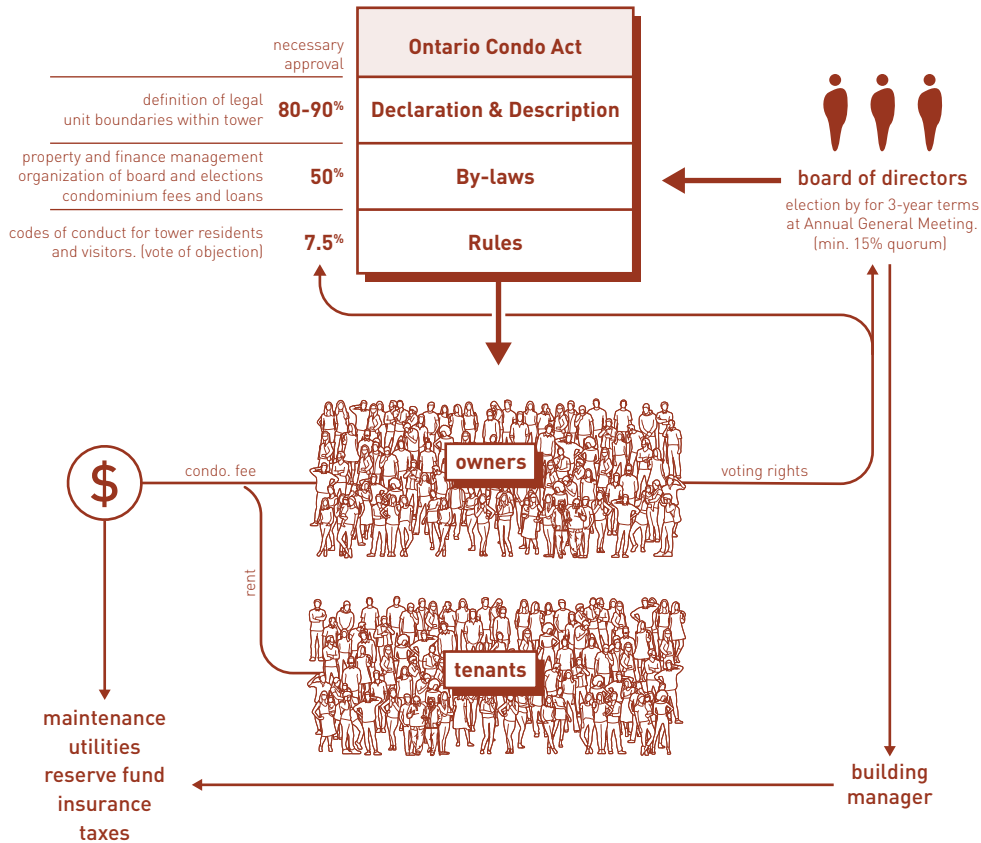
population: 825



managing the condo:

The day-to-day decisions for managing your condominium are made by the Board of Directors whom you elect at the annual general meeting. As outlined in the Ontario Condominium Act, there are three key ways in which the Board governs your condominium and community; the Declaration and Description, the By-laws, and the Rules. While the Board manages and changes these documents as necessary, most big changes require voting owners to approve the Board's decisions before coming into effect. Owners can vote on rules if +15% requisition a meeting to contest the boards decision.

governance structure:





0-39

36.3%



40-49

7.8%

50-59

9.7%

60-69

1.8%

70+

1.8%

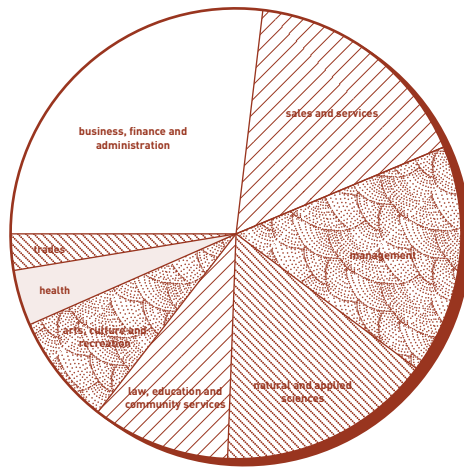
demographics:

employment:

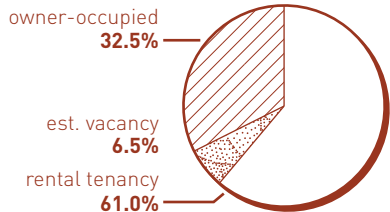
labour participation
94.6%

employment rate
81.8%

- trades **2.4%**
- health **4.0%**
- art, culture, and recreation **7.9%**
- law, education, and community service **9.9%**
- natural and applied sciences **15.4%**
- management **16.4%**
- sales and services **16.8%**
- business, finance, and administration **26.9%**



occupancy and cost:



median household
income after tax
\$61,639

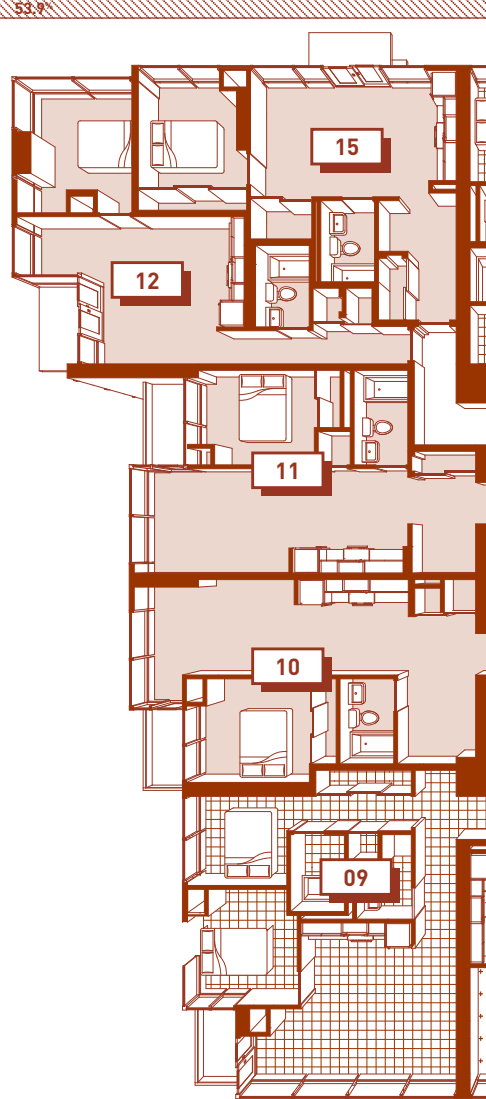
households paying +30% of
income for mortgage
45.7%

households paying +30% of
income for rent
45.5%

Typical units

household composition:

1 person



condo fees & rent

fees for typical units: 0.54 / ft²
"LE" units (fl.31-47): 0.70 / ft²

average rent: 3.02 / ft²

unit sizes

count:

1 bedroom: **297**

area: 540-628 ft²
est. value: 589,930.00

condo fee: 291-440
rent: 1 600-1 900

1 bedroom + den: **49**

area: 670 ft²
est. value: 697 470.00

condo fee: 362
rent: 2 000

2 bedroom: **135**

area: 762-1 186 ft²
est. value: 950 040.00

condo fee: 548-830
rent: 2 300-3 500

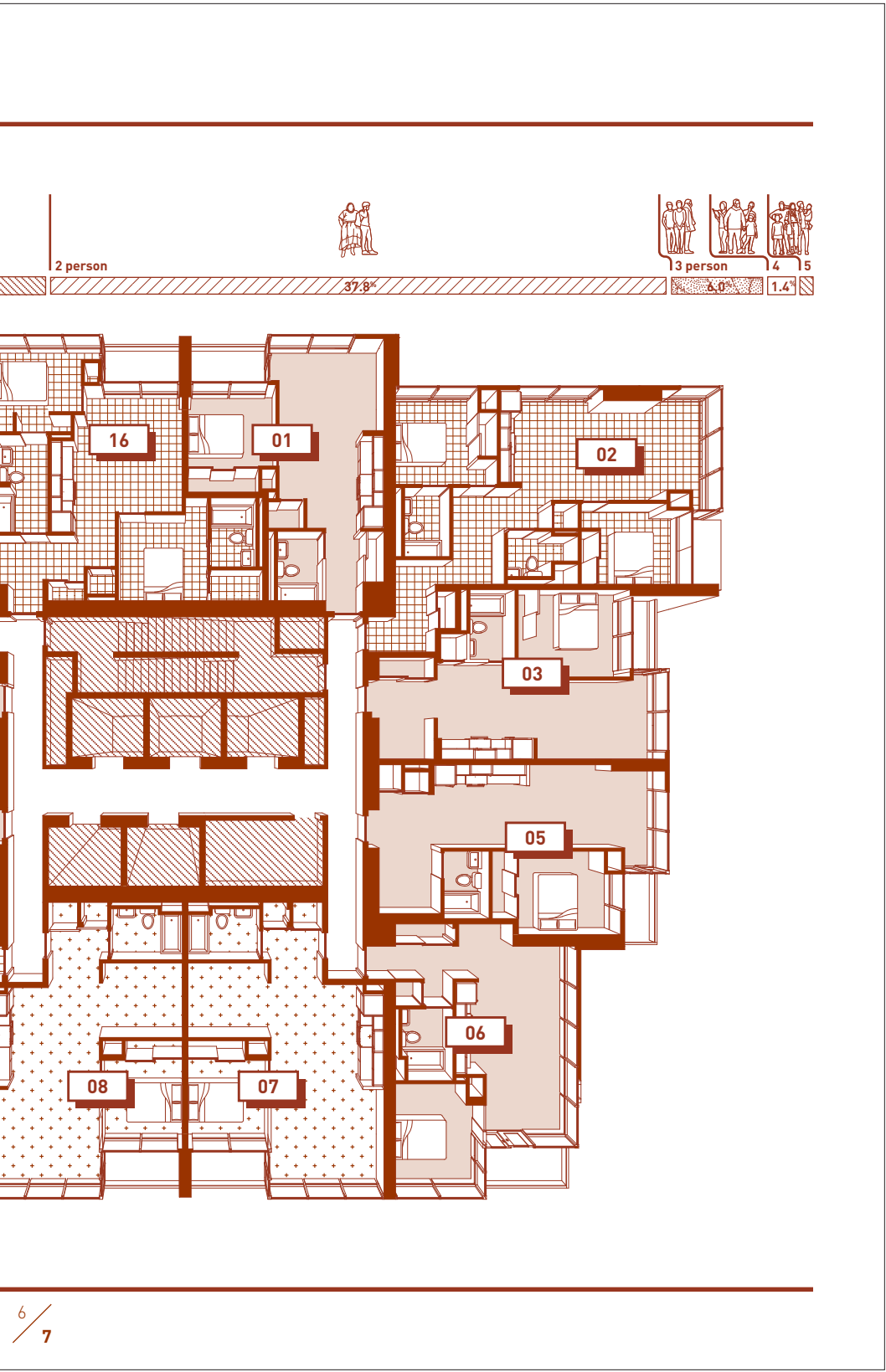
2 bedroom + den: **40**

area: 950-1 170 ft²
est. value: 996,280.00

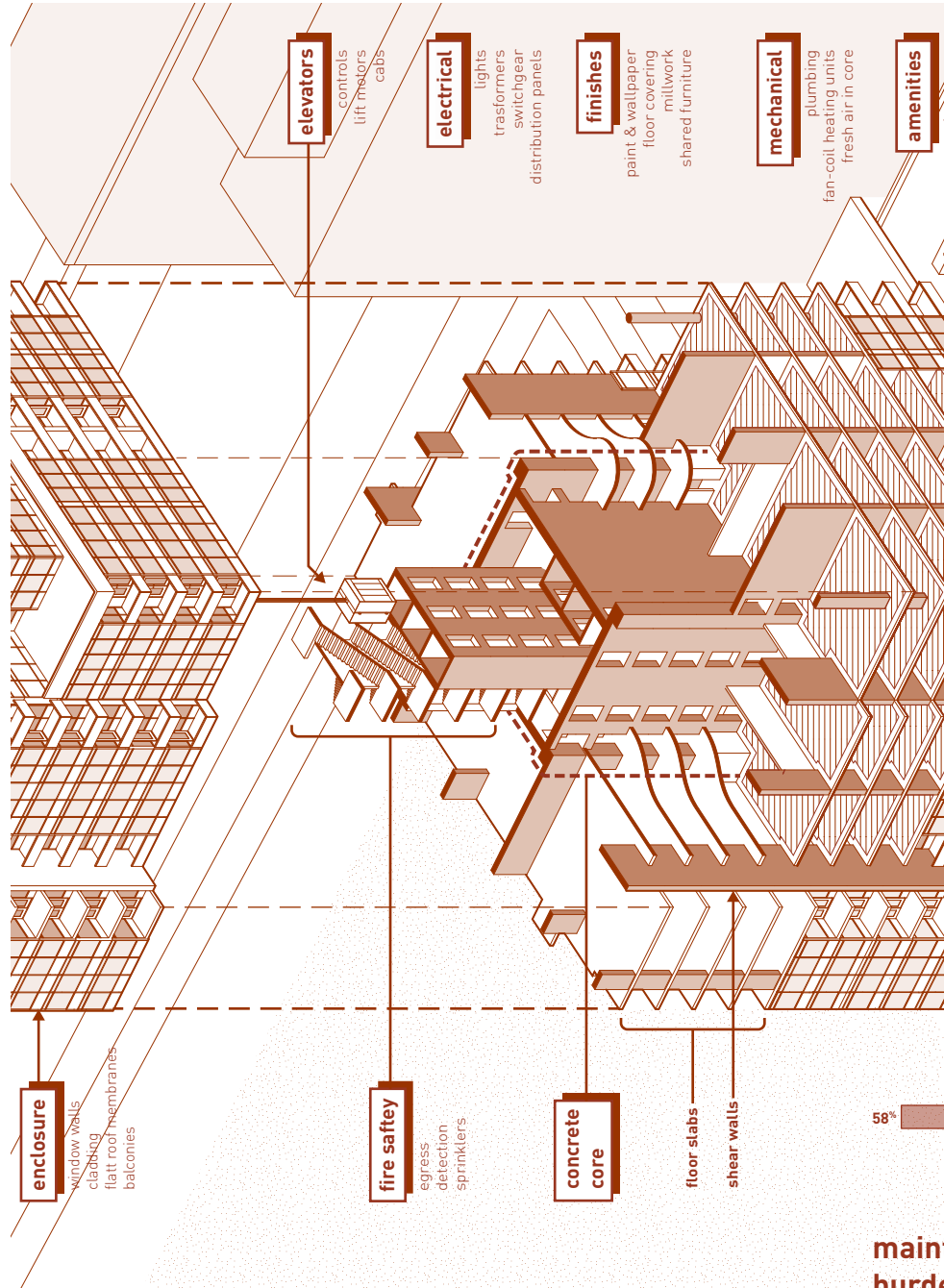
condo fee: 665-819
rent: 2 800-3 500

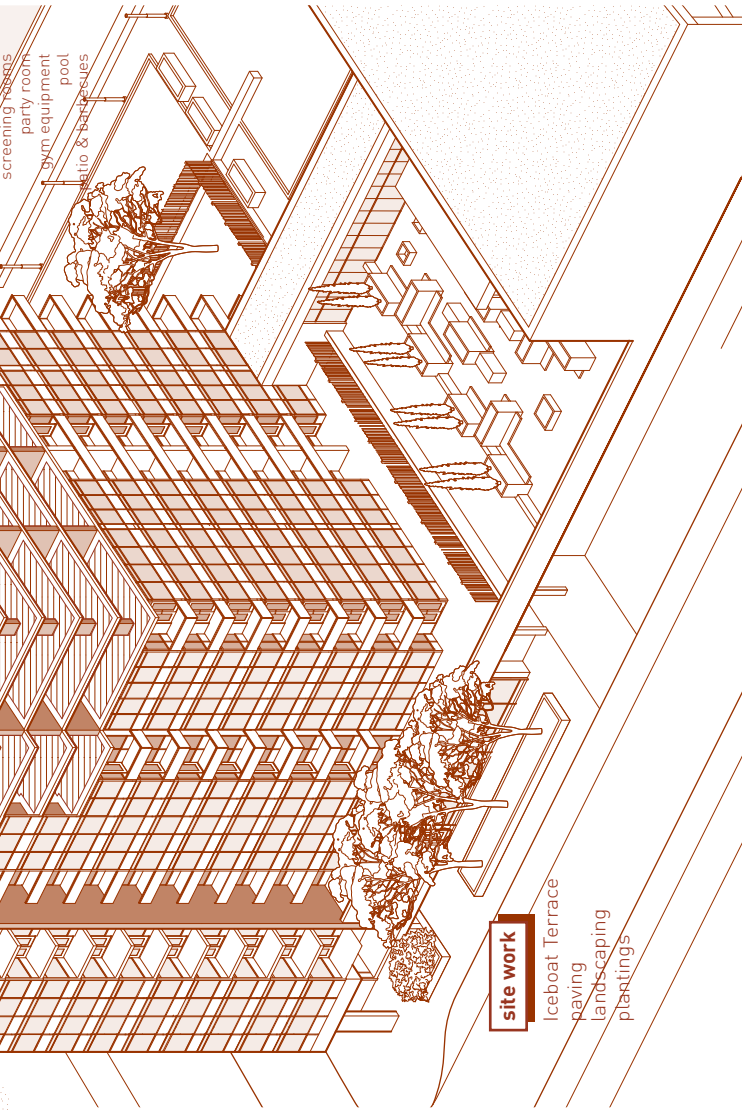
total units: 529

Montage Condominiums

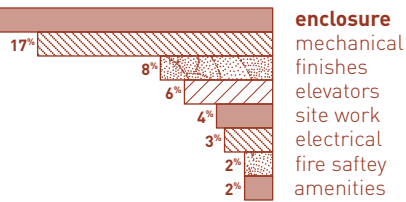


The building





**maintenance cost
broken down by system**

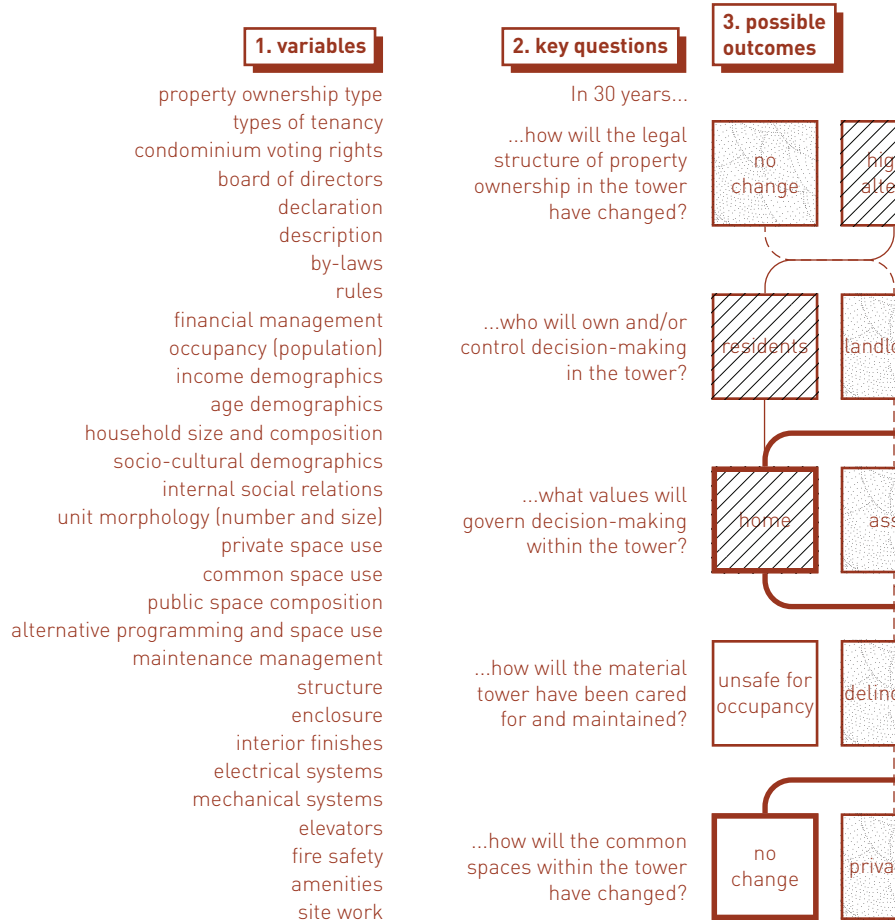


Maintenance of the condominium tower can be considered in eight systems. Each system has unique components and rhythms of maintenance which have different cost burdens on the condominium's budget. As you can see to the left, while fire safety systems consume just 2% of capital costs over 50 years, the enclosure will cost more than all of the other

systems combined. Holding up all of these systems is the robust concrete structure.

How the board and residents decide to invest in maintenance during the tower's lifespan will have a big impact on the comfort and quality of dwelling in the tower.

What is the future?



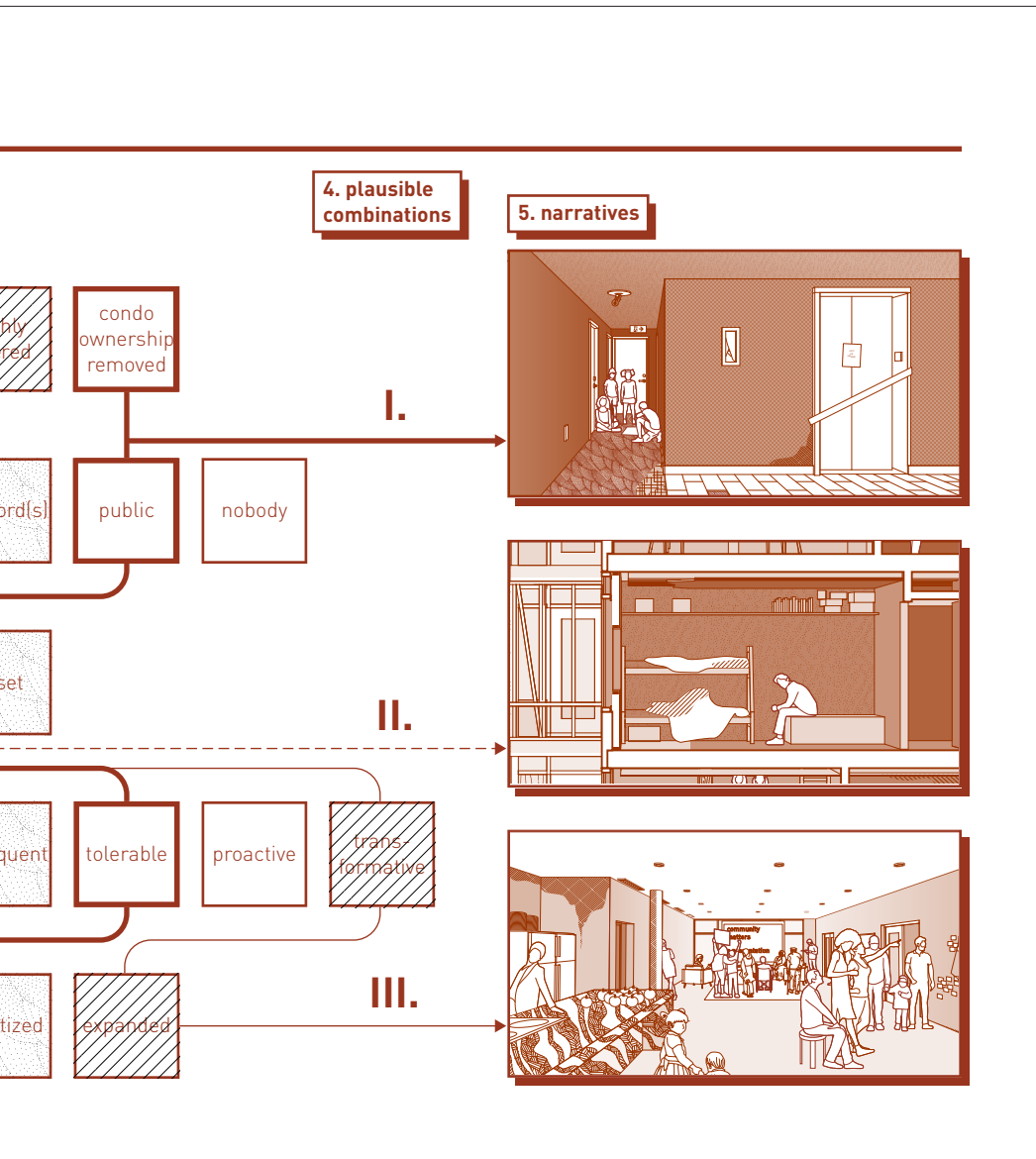
View to the Future

So what is the future of Montage Condominiums? You live in a community of nearly one-thousand people who each day, make decisions about how to feel at home in one of the tower's 529 units. Countless internal and external forces such as economics and government policies inform how and when people move in and out, and the tower itself, ages and decays with time, destabilizing your relationship to the unit as an investment. With so much complexity and uncertainty, we are faced with 'wicked problems' where the answer to one question

is blocked by numerous other unknowns, making the future impossible to project.

If we can't predict one future, why not explore many? By considering the full range of possibilities based on all of these unknowns, we can explore the fullness of opportunities, good and bad, that your condominium tower holds.

In the first step of our exploratory framework, we look at all of the different things that influence your life and decisions in the condominium tower on a



daily basis(1). This is the full complexity of all the elements controlling the tower's future and contains far too many uncertainties for us to break down into a useful speculation of the future, so we reduce the list into a few key questions (2). These key questions allow us to consider the future of the tower within a long time frame, without getting lost in detail. We then explore all the possible answers for each question (3) and create sets of outcomes that make sense together. These sets make up possible future scenarios (4).

As hypothetical proposals to what the future of the tower could look like, we then use these sets of outcomes to tell stories about the everyday lives and small decisions of occupants of the tower (5). Together, we will walk through three such stories about the possible futures of Montage Condos. Each of these stories takes place over 30 years, ending in 2051.

- I. Bureau-condo 12
- II. Anti-commons 28
- III. Condo-metabolism 44

Bureau-condo

It was the fall of 2021. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic disrupted production and supply chains around the world, causing rippling effects in the availability of goods and services. With central banks injecting unprecedented amounts of money into economies, inflation rates of the Canadian Dollar skyrocketed. While high rates of inflation worked to cool the exuberant housing market down from the spring of 2021, it prevented a much-needed pricing correction. Rather, the cost of living was rising to meet overinflated housing costs.

While many young owners who lived in Montage Condominiums wanted to move out of the towers into single free-standing houses, widespread economic uncertainty brought the real-estate market to a standstill. With rising costs and disruptions in building materials, housing starts across Toronto slowed to a halt, despite the ongoing housing shortage. Rates of land transfer radically slowed and condo dwellers felt locked into their position. They had very little option but to try to maintain their units in a stable and desirable condition and wait for the housing market to thaw.

Landlords who rented out units in the tower, on the other hand, realizing that rental income did not have nearly the currency that it used to. Encouraged by an ongoing demand for rental housing, they were in a race to increase rents quickly and by any means they could. Rising rents across the city exacerbated the already unaffordable living conditions.

Between 2020 and the end of 2021, the provincial government had placed a moratorium on rent

increases across the province in response to the ongoing pandemic. As 2021 was drawing to a close, many landlords had already sent notices to their tenants that they were going to increase rent by the maximum of 1.2% as set by the Residential Tenancies Act, in alignment with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and inflation. Across 2022 and 2023, however, inflation rose to an average of 7.4% per year. To increase rents by this amount year-over-year, would only exacerbate unaffordability in the city. To protect tenants, the provincial government locked the permissible annual rent increase at 1.5%, well below inflation.

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments looked at the housing situation in Toronto with trepidation, unable to agree on whether what was happening was in any way better than had there been a rapid market correction. With wide-spread over-leveraged mortgage debt from the extended market exuberance in late 2020 and early 2021, a rapid increase in interest rates would cause high levels of mortgage default rates. The rapid and widespread devaluation of housing stock would threaten the Canadian economy from the top, down, by destabilizing the housing asset that stored so much of the Canadian economy's value through mortgage debt.

While both landlords who had invested in the tower, and resident owners of units wanted to sell their units as soon as possible, that this should be caused by a decrease in house prices was out of the question. They went on paying condo fees, to maintain the building in a good and marketable condition.

Narrative I

In 30 years...

...how will the legal structure of property ownership in the tower have changed?



...who will own and/or control decision-making in the tower?



...what values will govern decision-making within the tower?



...how will the material tower have been cared for and maintained?



...how will the common spaces within the tower have changed?



I.

□□.

□□□.

A financing by-law

2024

In the early spring of 2024, the board of directors for Montage Condos was struggling to balance between the cost of maintenance and ongoing inflation. While they had managed this, in part, by slowly increasing the condominium fees, rising maintenance costs had thrown the operating budget out of equilibrium. A recent building performance audit revealed that increasing costs had eaten away contributions to the reserve fund, the balance of which had virtually stagnated.

The building inspection had also found that the pool filter and heating system were not working properly but was culturing high volumes of bacteria in the water. This was a costly and unexpected repair. The replacement pump needed to be brought from the States; the inflated Canadian dollar would drive costs even higher. The board considered closing the pools and putting the repairs on hold until funds could be raised but after several complaints from owners, it was determined that delaying the repair of such a significant amenity would further drag down the already lagging resale value of the units in the tower.

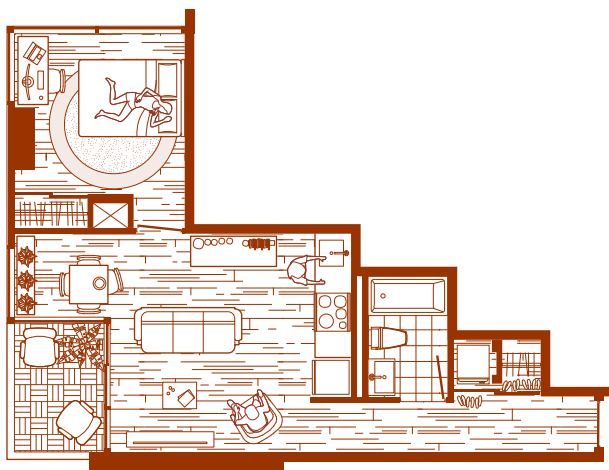
Instead, the board decided to enact a borrowing by-law that would allow them to cover the cost of the necessary repairs with a loan. Until now, the Bank of Canada had fought to keep borrowing costs low. Even in the face of high inflation, the bank had maintained interest rates at a balance to avoid catastrophe with over-leveraged debt across the country. Even the moderate increases in interest rates had forced people to sell their units and settle their mortgages. The board decided that it would take advantage of this low rate despite the minor risks. Their only other option was to issue a special assessment, collecting the necessary funds directly

from the condo owners in a one-time payment. Rhetorically, they realized that with rising costs of living, many unit owners would be unable to afford a special assessment. In reality, members of the board did not want to pay a lump-sum fee when the cost for the pool repairs could be defrayed over ten or more years and pushed off onto future owners. Nevertheless, once the board secured the loan, the condominium fee once again increased, in order to cover monthly loan payments.

2026

As condominium fees and mortgage interest rates continued to creep higher, many owners who lived in their units – mostly young professionals whose incomes were not rising with inflation – became hard-pressed to meet monthly obligations. Those who were unable to sell because of the depressed market, had their homes repossessed bank auctions, often picked up by opportunistic investors. Landlords in the tower were in the constant process of adjusting rents to maintain their own cash-flows while pushing unaffordability higher and higher. For them, it was an act of between how much they could legally raise rent from year to year, and the ever-encroaching cost of condominium fees.

To compound this upward pressure, the province introduced new policies that dictated reserve fund contributions as a function of the towers height, age, and maintenance records among other factors, rather than simply the balance of the budget after standard maintenance. This policy had been made to combat a growing concern that with rising costs, condominium corporations would become increasingly delinquent preparing for the future. As a result of the policy, condominium fees rose even higher, and the standard of maintenance fell even farther.



2028

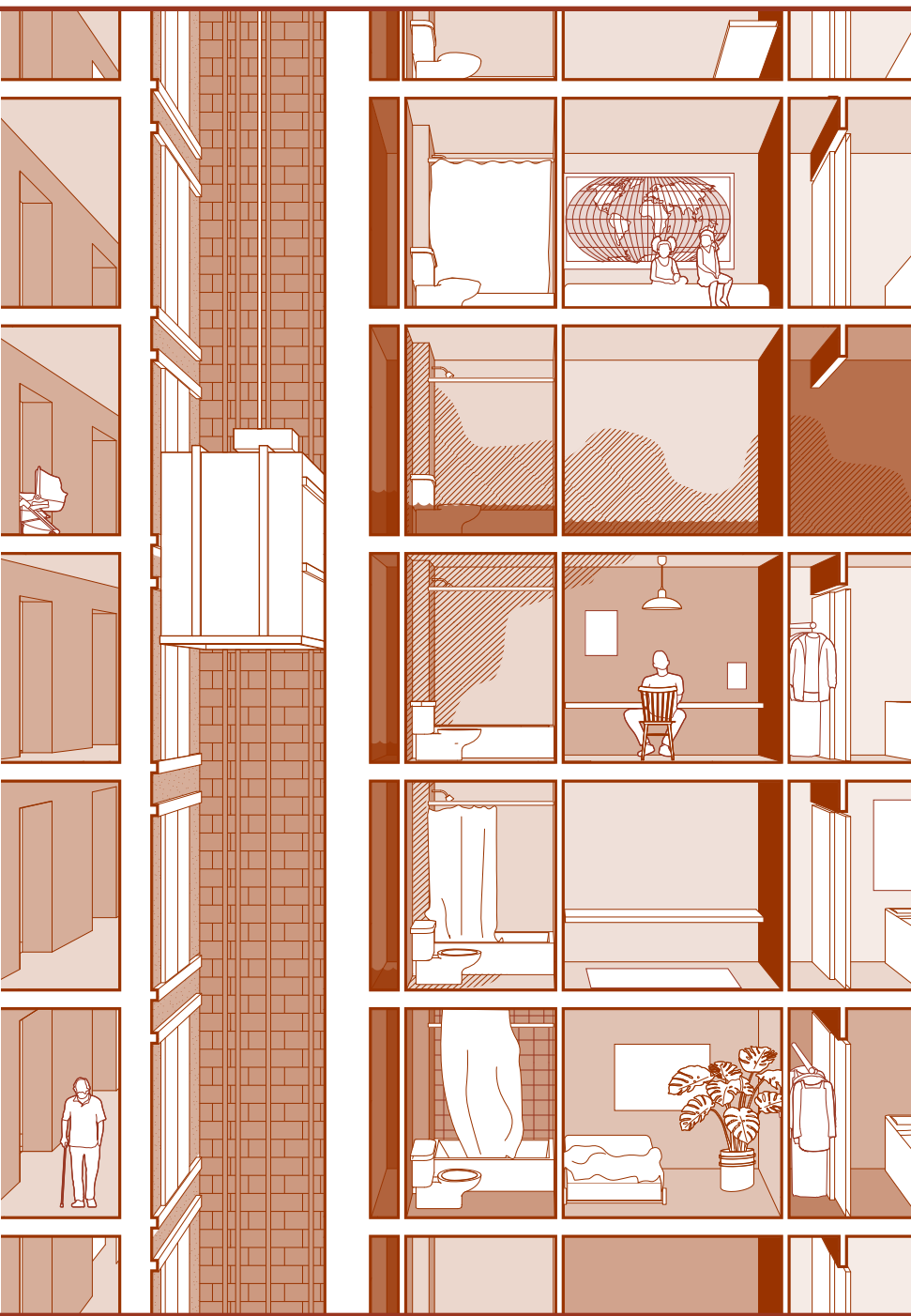
It was in this context, caught between the condominium corporation's ever-rising fees, and tightening rent restrictions that landlords and investors of the tower began to get vocal about the board's financial decision-making. They lobbied the government to lose restrictions, and the board to do anything to decrease monthly fees. Over three years, they elected to the seven-person board, representatives who shared their agenda to prioritize money over matter. Their efforts were effective but at the expense of building maintenance and contributions to the reserve fund.

Montage Condominiums was not the only tower community facing this financial impasse. Across the city, condominium corporations were taking on increasing debts to finance emergency repairs. The corporations became increasingly financially unfeasible and were falling into disrepair. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing blamed this rapid deterioration to financial mismanagement – an accusation that was at least half true – and became increasingly involved in the operations of each condo corporation. A seat on the board of each struggling corporation was reserved for an advisory member from the Ministry. As they cut costs, calibrated maintenance regimes, gave landlords directives on how much should be charged for rent, and desperately tried to balance budgets, it became clear that efforts were futile and only causing great consternation among many investors. Realizing the tenuous situation of their investments – that they were not actually making secure income from rental units – many investors were in the constant frame of mind of being ready to sell should the opportunity arise. To this end, they were still concerned about the investment appeal of Montage and how it compared with neighbouring towers. They were opposed to the Ministry-recommended cuts to staffing, window washing, and floor cleaning. On the other hand, there was a growing group of investors who had given up all together. Their goal now was to extract from the tower all that they could, before it came to an inevitable end of abandonment.

2030

These differing attitudes towards the tower became flash-points when certain big decisions had to be made about maintenance expenditures. In July of 2030, a fresh-water pipe in a vacant unit on the forty-first-floor burst, causing tens of thousand of dollars in damage to units beside and below. While the level of damage from this occurrence was unprecedented, bursting pipes were getting increasingly common in the past few years. The board was concerned that the plumbing distribution system in the tower would need to be completely refitted – a costly undertaking. Instead of continually patching pipes when they burst, the board grudgingly voted to use the reserve fund that the government had mandated, in order to pay for the system replacement. This decision polarized the community of landlords. On one hand, owners who were still hopeful of selling their units or who still lived in the tower, recognized that continuously doing remedial maintenance was damaging to the reputation of the tower in real-estate circles. Though costly, taking advantage of the reserve fund would be a good opportunity to give potential buyers confidence in the tower. Those who did not expect the tower to be around for too much longer, however, thought it a lost cause. Most plumbing incidents did not cause this much damage and were cheaper to replace piecemeal, for now, than replacing the whole system. They expected that depleting the reserve fund on this project would drive condo fees higher yet again or introduce some new legislation. The discussion got heated. When the board planned to move ahead with the system renewal, owners requisitioned a meeting to contest the action. One year and eleven burst pipes later, the board received a court order to secure contracts for the project.

As sure as thunder follows lightening, condominium fees were raised once again to begin rebuilding a capital reserve. To meet the increasing fees, landlords began renting their units beyond legal capacity. Maintenance of individual units stopped entirely. A few investors – mostly from out of country – abandoned their units all together, refusing to pay condo fees. Payment arrears, and long power-of-sale and eviction processes only multiplied the administrative duties of the board.



16 / 17

Bureau-condo

2035

By 2035, everyone was exasperated. Landlords had exhausted all avenues for making money from rental properties, outmaneuvered on all sides by policy. Governments at all three levels were likewise at their wits end. In spite of the never-ending stream of legislations, trying to re-engineer the condominiums as affordable communities in the downtown core, negotiating among the hoards of landlords, each with their own agendas and strategies for exploiting loopholes or simply operating outside of the law, they were running out of options. Exorbitant rents and the high cost of living compounded with poor maintenance were forcing tenants into crowded and poor living conditions.

With rising financial unfeasibility, there was a movement among absentee owners to disband the condominium corporation all together. Similar initiatives were talking place in other condominium towers across the city. Recognizing that they were no longer able to sell their units and that any attempt to maintain them as rental properties was economically unsustainable, many landlords wanted to sell the land and tower in hopes to recuperate whatever they could. There were two problems with this. The first was finding a buyer who would consider the tower, or at least the land that it stood on, worthwhile. The second problem was that 18% of the unit owners – corporation members – still lived in the tower. While they recognized that the finances of the tower were in bad shape and units were nearly impossible to sell and they had nowhere to go. As much as they disliked it, the condominium tower was their temporary home. Disbanding the tower would inevitably leave them unable to afford houses anywhere else. Even if a buyer came along, the purchase was not likely to receive the 90% approval that it needed from the tower's voting population to proceed.

A few condominiums across the city had been dissolved and sold wholesale to Real Estate Investment Trusts (R.E.I.T.s) who could manage the

tower much more economically as a rental. Many of the towers were not yet that old, so if a deal could be made, such investment trusts were willing to buy out towers.

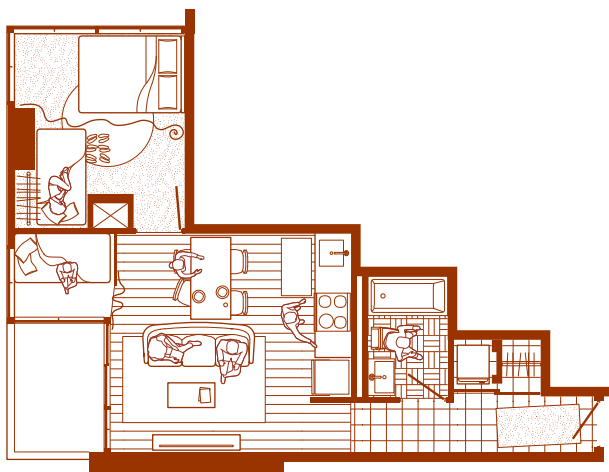
Montage Condominiums, however, found itself in a particularly difficult situation. Investment trusts looking to buy out condominium towers controlled the market and could be selective about which towers to buy. While the Montage tower was only 26 years old, the window-wall façade was quickly reaching the end of its life. A significant portion of the annual budget was already directed to patching and resealing leaks and repairing water damage in units. The most recent reserve fund audit estimated that the rapidly decreasing performance of the building enclosure was increasing heating and cooling costs by about 30%, and that the entire envelope would soon need to be replaced. No investment firms were willing to buy a property that presented such a high initial cost of refurbishment. The tower community was trapped.

2036

Governments at all three levels were deeply concerned about the declining situation in the city. Increasing housing shortages and unaffordability were ironically coupled with rising vacancies as landlords pushed to empty and sell their condominiums to large land-holding firms. Housing in the downtown core could soon be monopolized by a few private companies or left completely abandoned. The municipal government felt it had a responsibility to set standards of affordability and maintenance, so the city council made the radical policy choice to purchase some towers and put them in the management of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (T.C.H.C).

After a brief period of negotiation with the residents and owners of the tower, the province received a court order to acquire 25 Telegram Mews from TSCC 2016 for an at-market price.

Montage Condominiums



Standardizing units

2037

Once T.C.H.C. took control of the tower, a huge percent of their tower-renewal budget was directed to re-cladding the building. While a few nearby towers that were still privately owned had recently replaced their window-wall facades at great expense, the committee overseeing the renovation of the tower found that they could save considerable amounts of money by replacing the window walls with prefabricated wall panels containing punched windows and then over-cladding the building from the outside. This would also improve the thermal and energy performance of the building, and lower long-term operation costs. It wasn't the most aesthetic solution, but aesthetics was not really a concern for the steering committee.

Since the T.C.H.C. took full control of the tower, the Description that had previously defined each of the units within the tower dissolved into air. In their original feasibility studies, the City recognized that the greatest needs for stable housing in the downtown core were for seniors and large households. The city converted seventy-five of the 521 units to fully accessible units on the lower floors and ninety units were merged into three and four-bedroom apartments for families. While the project was receiving funding from municipal, provincial, and federal governments, all funding streams these days were meager. Work was economized as much as possible through the standardization of units. While units had been slowly adapted by previous owners, the city's renovation brought the units back to a consistent baseline where as little work as possible was done to make them tenant-ready as soon as possible.

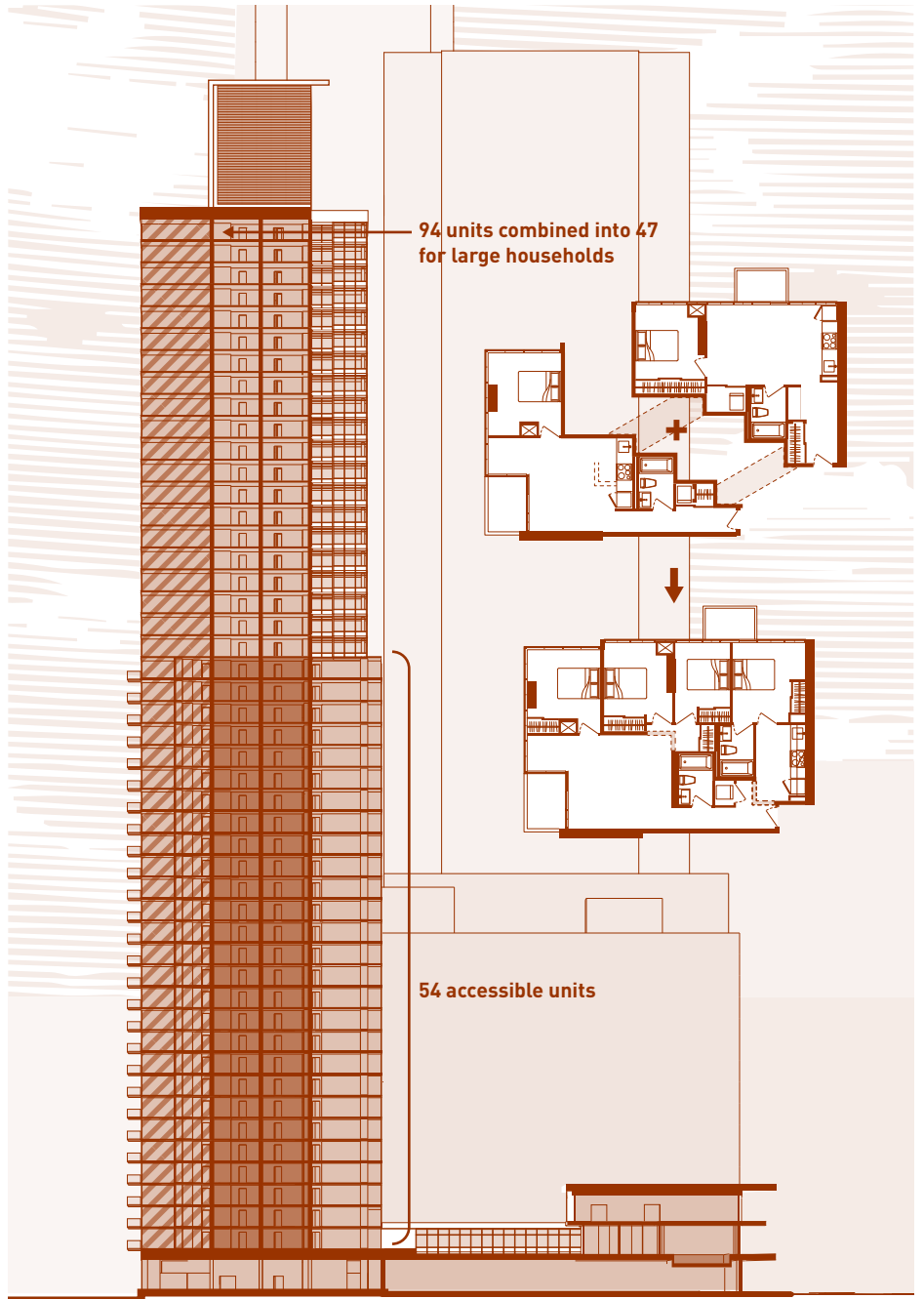
The committee responsible for the tower renovation had committed to revitalizing the amenities to promote a strong community within the tower. A pool, two small theater rooms, a games room and a party room with a kitchen had all been built and maintained under a shared facilities agreement with the neighbouring Neo Condos. However, because so much of the city's project budget had to be directed to building necessities such as the façade, work on the amenity spaces was kept to a minimum. After a fresh new coat of paint and a few new armchairs, all that was left was for administration to write a

use-policy and event booking forms. The gym and pool would not require booking of course. The original building had featured a small climbing wall on the outdoor terrace. This was deemed a liability so the 'rocks' were removed and the committee hired a local artist to paint a community oriented mural, revitalizing the outdoor gathering space.

2038

In the fall of 2038, residents began moving into the tower. The entire tower was dedicated as subsidized and deeply affordable housing. Many of the units newly renovated for accessibility were given to individuals who would have retired in the last five years, had they also not been unemployed by the decade of economic disruptions. Left without retirement savings or pensions, these people needed a secure place to live. On the other hand the municipality hoped that the accommodation of families would create an economic fly-wheel effect, activating business and services in the downtown core. The T.C.H.C. implemented a rent-g geared-to-income scheme promoted that would allow tenants to remain in place longer, hopefully, in time, generating an economic sustainability. Many of the households that moved in were comprised of middle-aged people who had been participants of the original surge in the knowledge economy but now, with age and families, were unable to adapt to the shifting economy, emerging at the peripheries of the city. Displaced from the suburbs, they moved downtown both for the promise of affordable housing, and the chance of finding work in the businesses that remained.

Even though many of the residents, were seniors and retired, and therefore not expected to be active in the labour force, there was still a significant number of unemployed people who, according to StatCan, could. Unable to find work, they spent much of their day in and around the tower, either in their units or in the common spaces. To promote social programming within the tower, and to stave off depression and other challenges associated with joblessness, a local charity helped the city in hosting employment and entrepreneurialism workshops in the event room of the amenities pavilion.



94 units combined into 47 for large households

54 accessible units

Emergent community

2042

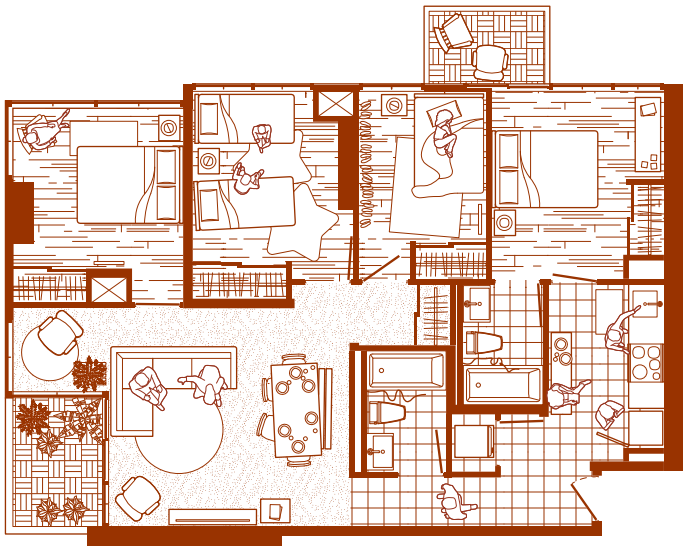
Seven years, after being converted into deeply affordable housing, life in the tower seemed to be going well. The effort to diversify the downtown population through the creation of three- and four-bedroom units provided new populations for reviving service and knowledge-based economies downtown. While the economic framework was slowly being rebuilt, employment within the tower was still below the provincial average. While the dwindling community employment sessions had been only partially successful in helping to revitalize the local economy, they had provided a setting in which residents of the tower had gotten to know each other, forming networks within the tower. They had all moved into the city and into the tower for a common reason. This emerging society began to spill out into the common spaces of the tower. With little reason to leave the tower, people started going up five floors or down three, to visit friends. Run-ins in the spartan hallway turned into half-hour discussions about the great weather or the bad economy. During the summer, the rooftop patio, one of the few amenities that was not locked, was full of neighbour-kids playing soccer on the pavers. On winter afternoons, a small group of old people sat in the front lobby in the late afternoon sun from across the rail corridor, watching kids walked home from the school just across Fort York Boulevard.

Life in the tower was by no means idyllic. The tower itself became a point of conflict between the residents and the management team. In the speed with which the municipality had renovated the tower, they had made some functional oversights. In the name of economy when the making of larger units for families and bigger households, the project architect had designed the new kitchens simply as replacements of those that had originally been built into the condominium. These kitchens had been designed as tight and efficient for one and two-person households who ate out often. Many residents complained that the kitchens were simply too small to be practical for a family. The use and care of the common spaces also became a talking point among tower residents. With relatively small and crowded apartments, people wanted places to meet. Parents had expected that the amenity spaces would be open access as a place for kids to go and in bad weather. The superintendent, however, maintained the event

space booking policy to the letter of the law. The rooms in the amenity pavilion were kept locked up most of the time. Many residents of the tower felt that maintenance and programming funds were being wasted or mis-directed but had no tangible way to raise their concerns with management.

2043

For a while, someone put a suggestion box in the lobby, but it is difficult to tell if it had any real impact. In the fall of 2043, a watershed municipal election precipitated cultures change at city hall. City staff from housing wanted to resurrect the T.C.H.C. Tennant Engagement System from years gone by, in which each housing property nominated tenant- representatives to discuss concerns and bring initiatives for the community. This initiative from the city was greeted with great enthusiasm from the communities and tenant-representative council was set up. For the first year, four representatives from Montage Condominiums met diligently, discussing concerns from the community, and improving life within the tower. They accomplished a few things; getting the emergency exit signs on the seventh, twelfth, nineteenth, and forty-first floors replaced, reviving the planter boxes by the front entrance, and organizing a community potluck in late August. Despite their strong desire to better their community, however, some of their most important initiatives were failing to be taken up by management. Among their requests were for for some of the smaller common rooms, like the poker room and theater, be merged into an open-access art room for kids. The second request was for staffed hours of the pool area, which some parents felt had fallen under-maintained and un-safe. The building representatives also requested that T.C.H.C. review the adequacy of the kitchens provided in many of the four-bedroom units, possibly renovating them to accommodate larger households. Finally, they asked for more collapsible tables and chairs to be provided in the events room, and that booking process be streamlined, and fees removed, as to actually promote community and family gatherings. Last that they heard, the management team was “considering the implications” of a streamlined booking process.



Operation conflicts

projects of maintenance.

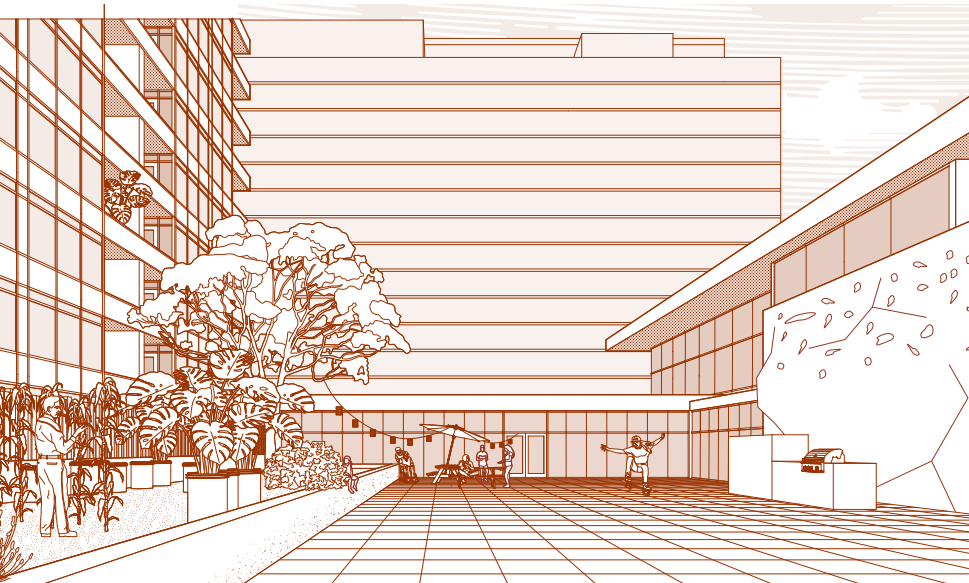
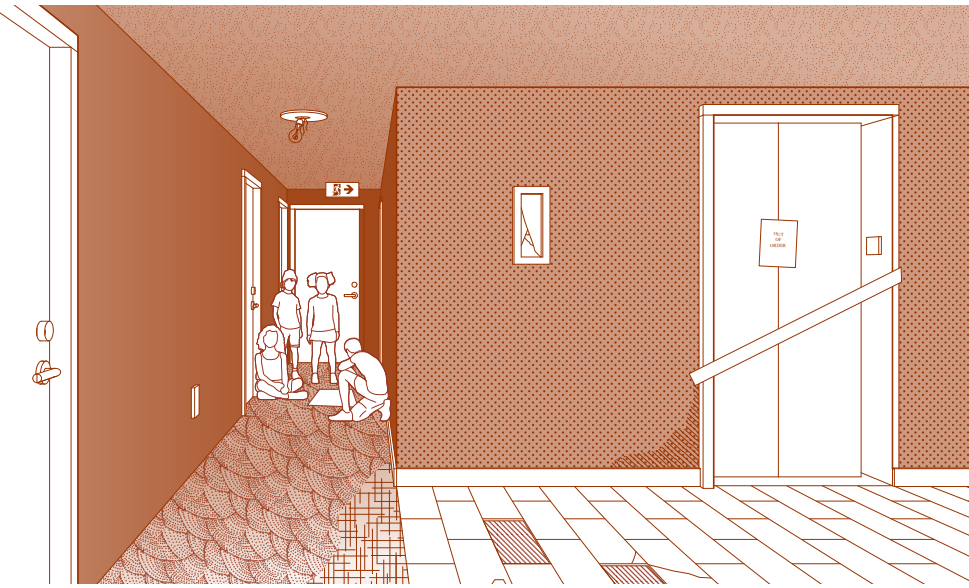
2047

In 2047, an electrical fire broke out in the distribution panel on the 33rd floor. While the electrical system in the tower had been maintained piecemeal, the overall infrastructure was now close to forty years. As the years progressed, regular inspections had become increasingly lax. As families and communities had begun to settle in place, the occupancy of the tower had slowly climbed over what the systems were designed for, under the management's radar. While the fire was suppressed and contained, residents from the 33rd and 34th floors had to be moved out for several months for repairs and an investigation. It was determined that the whole system would need to be brought up to standard.

This was going to be a costly undertaking. Wiring within individual units was fine to stay as it was but everything leading up to each unit's breaker box had to be replaced. Bus-conduits bringing power to each floor, transformers, and distribution panels on each floor, and all the wiring to each unit's breaker panels had to be replaced. Most of this could be done without tearing out the ceiling on each floor, but drywall did have to be removed at some places to give electricians access to electrical conduit. Each block of development in CityPlace was developed with a shared podium, containing the parking garage, amenities and transformer vault for all the towers within that block. While each of the towers on the block had their own transformers and could be retrofitted independently, a building-system audit determined that the neighbouring Neo Condos, also owned by T.C.H.C. and the commercial spaces in the podium would need to have their electrical systems overhauled as well. This significant and unforeseen cost to the maintenance of the project and caused a shift in the municipality's attitude towards the ex-condominium programs. As the inner-city economy was reaching new heights, the city was dedicating much of its attention to high-profile civic improvement and public infrastructure projects, with little patience for such costly but less exciting

In order to make up for the sudden cost of the electrical overhaul, the TCHC moved to temporarily suspend some community programming and maintenance of common spaces within the tower. Committee members already had ambivalent feelings about the pool. Some felt that as what was technically a city pool, a lifeguard should be present during fixed hours of operation, to avoid lawsuits. Most other TCHC properties didn't have pools. Furthermore, as it had been some time since the pool had been renovated, the deck area and changerooms were in bad shape. Tiles were coming up around the hot-tub, rust was peeling paint off the steel structure, and most of the change-cubicles were missing doors. Without public consultation, the committee voted to close the pool and gym until further notice. The property representatives committee found their budget for community events halved. The on-site super-intendant was replaced with a new digital portal where tenants could report maintenance issues. Property maintenance once again fell to state that was constantly trying to catch up; management lost touch with the daily needs of the community in the tower.

In this rift between the external management of the tower and the ever-growing community within, a dichotomy emerged. While the municipality thought about the tower from the outside-in, as a stack of identical floorplates, serviced by an economic spine of services, the community had a much different conception. They viewed their daily life to be at odds with the serializing efficiency of the management, seeking, if only subconsciously, little opportunities to express their lives in the community. Social connections crossed the boundaries of units; people used their neighbour's laundry when theirs went unrepaired for months on end. Shoes on the floor mat in the hall were an invitation to stop and say hi, the lemon tree revived on the neighbor's balcony a reminder that that get-well-soon card was no longer needed. A complex community emerged in spite of the neglected common spaces and locked-up amenities.



State of Description:

A condominium's Description is the document that legally defines each unit in the tower as a distinct free-hold property, allowing one tower to be owned by many different stakeholders. When TSCC-2016 (Toronto Standard Condominium Corporation) was bought out by the city, the corporation was disbanded, and the description no longer had legal effect on the tower. The property became owned by a single entity – the city. When the city took full ownership of the tower, the Description was voided, giving T.C.H.C. free reign to adapt and combine units according to their housing agenda. The removal of the Description also signifies that the power of decision-making is no longer distributed throughout the tower. There was no longer the relationship between ownership, occupancy, and control.

Control:

When the city bought out the condominium corporation, control over the tower was centralized in T.C.H.C. as a single administrator. Many of the management team's decisions were based on efficiency, economy, and predictability, rather than habitability. While on paper, the community was given some voice through consultation about big decisions, these efforts weren't sustained in a way that would positively affect daily operations of the building or its transformation into a thriving community. External control of the tower eventually alienated the purpose of management for the tower and became an extent of political negotiation.

Use-relationship:

Because the tower and all its units were removed from the real-estate market, the dwelling units in the tower were de-commodified. They therefore became used as homes rather than as assets for accumulation. The public and de-commodified ownership of the tower also affected how people appropriated the units as their own. While on one hand, the bureaucratic standardization of units for management efficiency gave all the units a more rigid formulation and prevented tenants from modifying the physical space

by moving walls, because the tenants no longer had financial stake in the units, they were much more open to using spaces as they wanted or saw necessary. Laundry on balconies, shoes lined up in hallways, mis-matched drapes, and well-used lawn chairs on the rooftop patio were only some of the material evidence that the tower had become a home for many.

Common Spaces:

The good ambitions for the committee that was responsible for the conversion of the condominium to affordable housing were lost as the years progressed. While the economic agenda was moderately successful – affordable housing allowed people to find jobs and rebuild the inner-city economy – much of the community programming and spaces that the politicians had used to sell the project, were now underfunded. The pool and gym were completely out of commission. Inconvenient booking and event policies resulted in the common rooms being largely abandoned. Hallways and lobbies were poorly maintained. This is not to say that communities and societies did not emerge within the tower, but when they did, it was often in un-sanctioned meeting spaces; a cluster of parents at one corner of the patio, a group of seniors sitting on the edge of, a raised planter-bed outside the front door, or a group of teenagers sitting on the floor of the hall on the 17th floor, community emerged outside the exacting structure of the rental tower.

Condition and Maintenance:

As the conversion for the condominium into an affordable housing project aged, the vision for the tower also aged and lost much of its transformational drive. This was in large part, due to ever-decreasing funding from the city. Maintenance of the tower was economized. The building was safe, halls were well-lit, if units leaked or heating units failed, a serviceperson usually came within the week or two – three at most depending on the urgency of the repair. It was the common spaces, however that bore the brunt of neglect.



Anti-commons

Context

Over 2020 and 2021, mortgage interest rates, lowered by the Bank of Canada to increase liquidity in a stagnating economy, prompted a surge in housing prices across southern Ontario. The exception to this growth was the prices of condominiums in downtown Toronto which fell by 8%, caused largely by people's desire to leave the city and the temporary decline of rental demand. Rents decreased around 20%. By the summer of 2022 with wide-spread vaccination, people returned to downtown Toronto to live, work, and study. Despite the strength of the rebounding condominium market, the Covid-19 pandemic had undermined investors' faith in the condominiums. People had seen how quickly and unpredictably markets could shift.

Within the robust but cooling investment interest, the board of Montage Condos was doing its best to maintain the appeal of the units in their tower. If CMHC had difficulty predicting what the markets were going to do, the seven directors on the board felt especially unprepared. They worked with the condo manager to balance between investing enough

to keep the building systems operational and the communal elements looking fresh and vibrant, while not over-extending the operating budget or breaking into the reserve fund for something that a future board could justifiably pay for. Having received complaints from some residents who were looking to sell their units, the board turned their attention to the amenity spaces which hadn't been renovated since the tower was completed in 2009 and were looking tired. Early in the spring of 2023, the board finalized plans for the complete renovation of these spaces. They committed a little over \$800,000 to this work of retiling the pool and replacing the pumps, reorganizing the locker-rooms to be universal, replacing the furniture in the party room, new barbecues on the roof, and fresh flooring and paint everywhere. The cost represented almost one third of the corporation's annual revenue from maintenance fees, totalling the past three year's contribution to the reserve fund. The work took a little under a year to complete but when it was finished, it made the tower community feel almost as good as new.

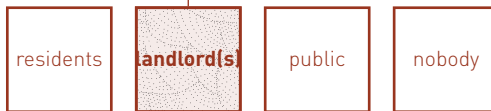
Narrative II

In 30 years...

...how will the legal structure of property ownership in the tower have changed?



...who will own and/or control decision-making in the tower?



...what values will govern decision-making within the tower?



...how will the material tower have been cared for and maintained?



...how will the common spaces within the tower have changed?



2024:

Over the next few years, the prices of condominiums continued to rise slowly, spurred on by the market appeal returning to the city. Suburban house prices were stabilizing after the pandemic rush in 2021. The re-balancing of demand allowed for many young people and households who had bought condominiums as first-time homes, to now sell their units and move out of the downtown core. Buyers were taking advantage of the rebounding condominium demand to invest in property downtown. While some of them were young urban professionals, who like their predecessors, were trying to buy into the real-estate market, many condo buyers were prompted by the ongoing increase in rental demand, upheld by the Federal Government's Immigration 2023 policy. Montage Condos, with its freshly renovated amenities spaces, was highly competitive in the warming market.

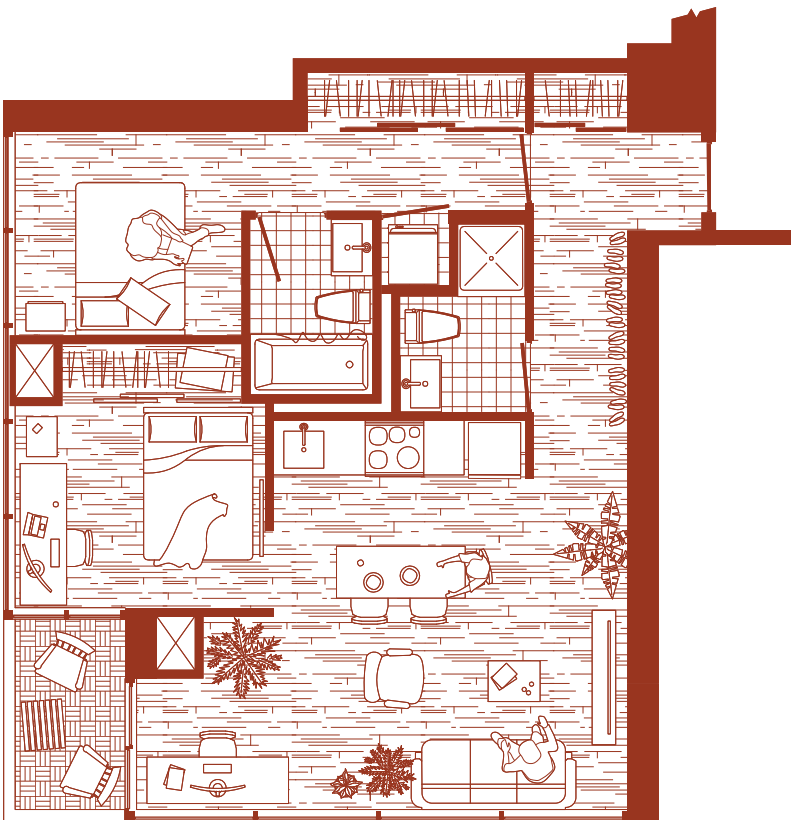
2026

Throughout this time, the board continued to work to keep the building operating smoothly. The tower was now 17 years old and some of the main systems were showing age. The water distribution pumps which had been replaced in 2018 needed to be overhauled again. There were ongoing issues with the buildings drainage system. An obstruction in one of the drainage stacks had caused water damage in several penthouse suites. Parts of the façade had to have sealants replaced. To keep up with the ever-increasing maintenance costs, the board was in a constant game of slowly increasing condominium fees, juggling discontent condo owners and tri-annual warnings from the auditor that their reserve fund was ill-equipped to deal with sudden lawsuits or

emergency repairs.

In October 2026, two of the five elevators suddenly stopped working. As some of the most used machinery in the building, they were subject to frequent maintenance, but a technician sent by Otis told management that because of the building's age, replacement parts could not be sourced. Emergency work needed to be done to bring them up to standard; the system would need to be completely overhauled. Rather than paying for the work by leveraging a special assessment which nobody wanted, the board decided to pay for it in a lump-sum and raise condominium fees to facilitate a quick recovery of the books. As one of the board members reasoned, while nobody wanted yet another increase in condominium fees, this would at least push the bulk of the cost for this necessary work down the road.

While most people accepted that the elevator overhaul was a necessity, some owners were angry over the dramatic increase of the condominium fees. As the building continued to age, these emergency repairs were going to become increasingly common. Wanting to disincentivize the board from repeating this, a group of owners petitioned the directors to enact a borrowing by-law that would permit the corporation to secure financing in the case of another emergency. The special interest group was adamant. They personally collected enough proxy ballots to pass the by-law by a 50% majority at the next annual general meeting. It was not difficult for them to convince their fellow unit condo owners; allowing the board the option of financing repairs gave the corporation greater budget security and allowed for the condo fees to be kept low.



2027:

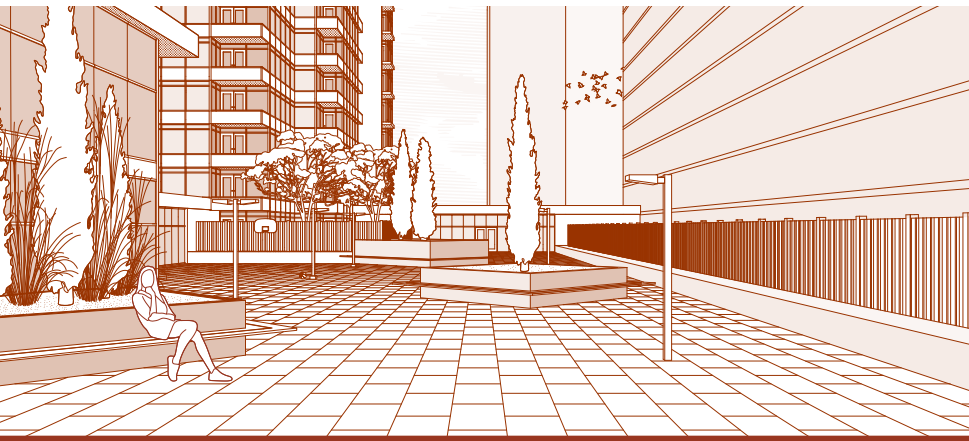
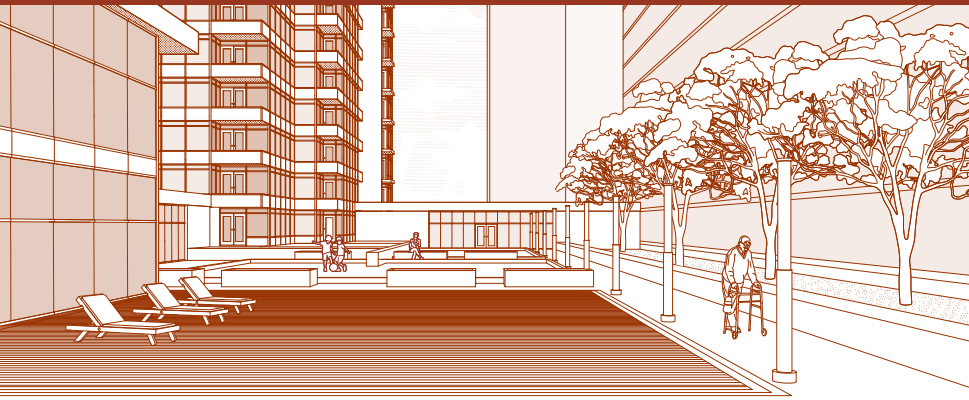
The winter of 2027 was particularly warm with temperatures hovering around freezing. Under the many freeze-thaw cycles, the membrane under the rooftop terrace finally gave way. The recent Reserve Fund Audit had found the membrane to be rapidly approaching the end of its lifespan. The grocery store under the podium had been complaining about leaks for a few years. In the past, these could be fixed with patching but the damage from this winter required a full replacement of the membrane.

The board saw this damage as an opportunity, once again, to boost the market appeal of the building. The shine had worn off the amenity spaces, renovated five years previous and the board members that had overseen the project had since moved on. The board and building management decided to retain a landscape architect to re-imagine the roof-top amenity space. Still hesitant to use their new capacity to loan against the building – it reflected poorly on the condo's Status Report – they planned to finance the project using a combination of loan and special assessment. There was some hesitancy about the cost, but the board felt that the pros in re-sale outweighed the cons.

In early September of that year, the board sent a copy of the proposal to each of the unit owners, along with the breakdown for the mixed project financing. They expected people to be pleased. The reaction they received, however, was quite negative. Most unit owners thought that paying for the upgrades with a special assessment was not in their best interest. A special assessment would disrupt their mortgage payments of younger owners and rental income of investors. The owners requisitioned a meeting with the board.

The board and the unit owners who attended the meeting reached a compromise to cover the entirety of the project by a loan to make up the difference by economy-engineering many of the proposed features. Because many of the concerned owners leased out their units and did not see the use-value of the roof space, were not to be convinced of the advantages of additional landscaping, even for marketability.

In the end, the project was completed on about two-thirds of the original proposed budget with the decreases used to reduce the special assessment, rather than the loan.



A failing facade

2033:

In March of 2033, it became too much. The façade was starting to fail so badly that it could no longer be maintained with patch repairs. Many owners were reporting mould, water damage in the drywall, and bad condensation between the panes. Shrinking and broken seals caused draughts, making the units expensive and difficult to keep warm in the winter. The façade of the tower was also starting to look terrible from the outside, damaging market appeal. That spring, the board of two residents and five landlords worked with the condo management team to prepare an RFP for a contractor, capable of replacing the façade.

The board awarded the contract to the lowest bidder. Even the lowest bid would consume nearly a decade of the board's total operating budget. The reserve fund was in no shape to handle even half of the cost and with the pre-existing loan from the roof-top replacement, the board could not find a brokerage that would secure a loan for the entirety of the repair. They were left with no choice but to levy a special assessment against the unit owners for the bulk of the repair costs.

Many residents and owners simply could not afford the special assessment and were forced to sell their units. Some tried to hold on until after the renovations were complete so that they could take advantage of the new façade to reclaim lost market value. Those that could not secure short-term financing were left trying to sell their unit with a significant lien against it. Because part of the façade restoration had also to be covered by loan, the board felt pressure to increase the condominium fee. Overextended, unit owners were vocally opposed to this. The state of both the reserve fund and maintenance in the rest of the building slowly started to decline.

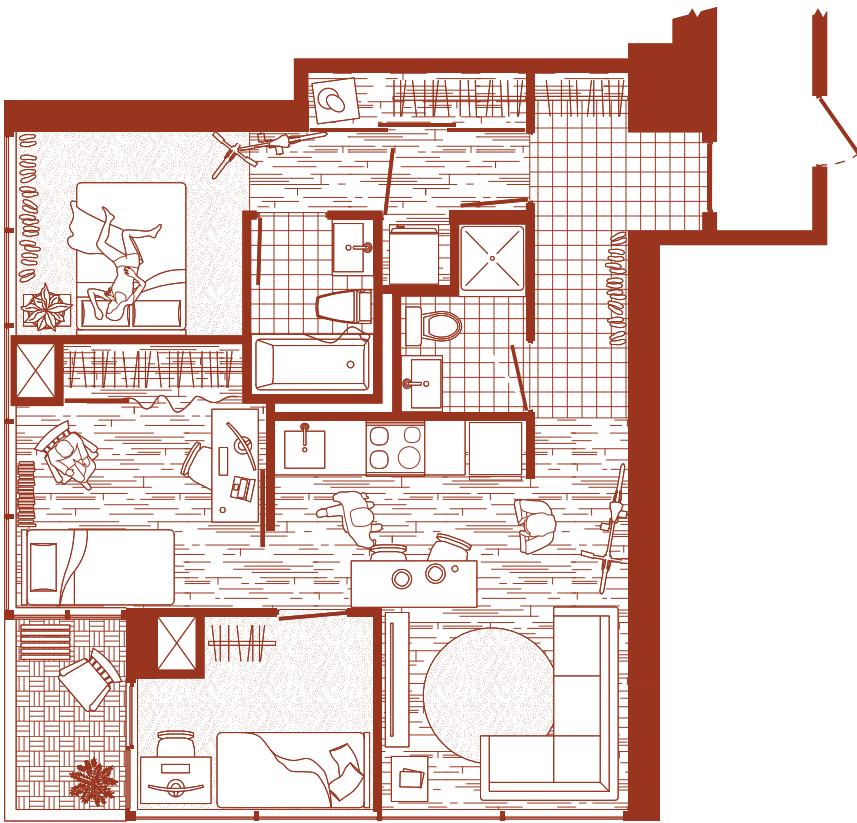
During the replacement, units needed to be vacated, two weeks at a time. Landlords, now owning a little over eighty percent of the building, took this as an opportunity to raise rents under the allowance for renovated units. Landlords who had to re-finance

their mortgages at higher rates found ways of framing additional bedrooms out of the living spaces that could be used to generate additional revenue. Most of these retrofits were done without approval from the board.

2034

Then in January of 2034, the economy went into a recession. Foreign corporate investment had been waning since the late 20's which was devaluing the Canadian dollar and inflating national debt. In an effort to calm fleeing investors, the Bank of Canada increased interest rates by 8%. While the theory was sound, it initiated a wave of mortgage foreclosures and gutted small business and innovation. Rising unemployment, increased cost of living, and skyrocketing costs of mobility outside of city centre prompted many younger people to move downtown. For the first time since 2018, detached homes significantly decreased in price. For those who recognized these trends early and had money to invest, the increased demand for down-town rental units properties created a utilitarian appeal in the condo apartments. Middleclass owners living in the towers on floating mortgage rates were forced to sell to incoming landlords.

While many of the amenity's spaces and sellable features were showing their age, nobody complained about them. Investors were not bothered as long as rental demand was rising. Tenants could not afford to be picky. To sustain the appeal of Montage Condos, the board just made sure that the status certificate that was in good shape – signalling, if only symbolically, some financial stability in uncertain times. The status certificate had been deeply damaged by the façade repairs and increasing proportion of leased units. In order to increase competitiveness with surrounding buildings, many of which were in the same state anyways, and to gloss over any inquiries into the status certificate, the board voted to stall any further increases in raising HOA fees. Lowering monthly costs also provided an antidote to the increased cost of monthly mortgage payments for those seeking a larger margin of return on rental properties



Rough repairs

2039:

As the state of the towers continued to decline, so did their market value. Montage Condos was not alone in this. While the rental shortage was ongoing, it was becoming increasingly evident that rapidly escalating costs of maintenance negated any of the original benefit of investment. While the condominium units were radically depreciated, their cost was still more than most people could afford with the extreme mortgage rates. Because of increasing maintenance costs, banks considered units to be very high risk. Accordingly, mortgages became unattainable for the average person or family looking to buy a home. It was understood that the only investment value for condominium was for the extraction of rent.

The board took several drastic measures to direct as much capital to keeping the building systems operating properly as economically as possible while avoiding fee increases. Landlords would pass increased fees directly on to tenants. If rent went too high, tenants would stop paying, landlords would go into arrears on their condominium fees and the corporation would be left even more stretched for cash. It had happened a few times already, where international investors who could not be bothered to close on the units now radically depreciated, simply stopped paying condo fees and stopped all communications with the board. In such situations, tenants were obliged to pay their rent directly to the corporation while the board managed the long and expensive process of liens and power of sale. Power of sale units often ended up being purchased at a major discount by a landlord who already owned one or two other units in the tower. By now, 485 of the 521 units were owned by landlords in the secondary

rental market. The board was comprised entirely of landlords.

In 2039, in a bid to reclaim profitability to the tower, the board moved to replace the condominium management team that had been with Montage since the tower was built. They found a new property management company that focused on finding efficiencies in the building's management; ways of cutting costs and maintaining positive cash-flow. Knowing that they were dealing mainly with tenants, rather than free-hold residents, the new management made it their specialty in being ruthlessly economic and selective with the maintenance that they deemed necessary. This suited the board quite well. Cleaning of the common spaces was all but stopped. Carpet was thread-bare and in some places, removed all together to expose concrete. Burnt out lightbulbs were seldom replaced. In less than a year, the pool was drained and locked. The hallways became dark and inhospitable places in which tenants actively avoided each other. In order to promote security and stabilize the internal community, the board agreed to add locks on the stair doors so that people would only have access to their own floor. The space of the tower was further stratified.

As a result, many dimensions of interpersonal relations in the building continued to break down. Relations between tenants and landlords became increasingly stressed as the unit maintenance continued to decline. Maintenance complaints filed to the management team were rarely acted on. Leaky faucets, broken heating units, and plagued life in the tower.

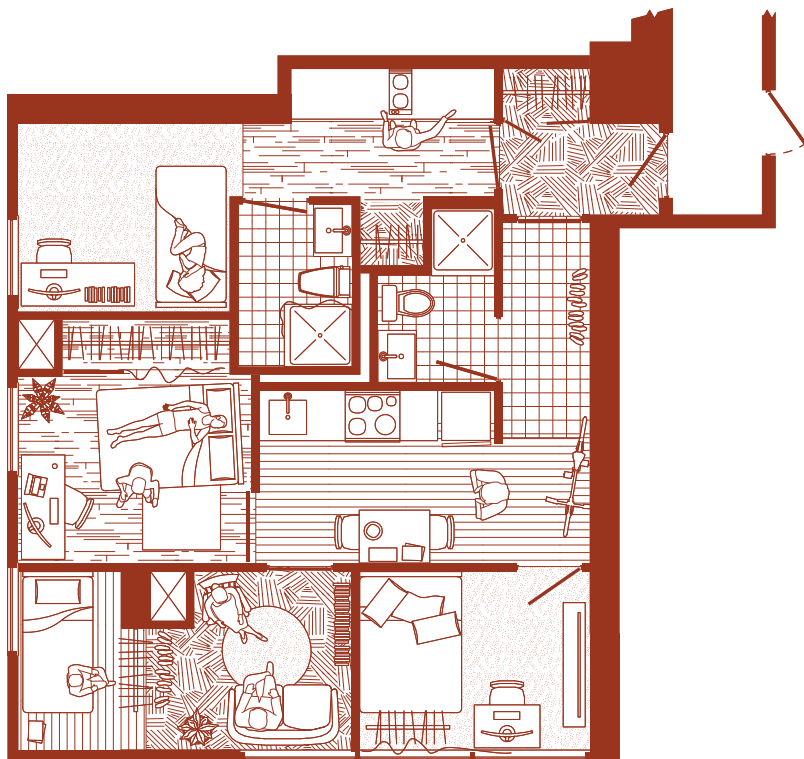


2044:

By 2044, another economic cycle came to a shuddering end. Relentless inflation outpaced income. The economy was slowly and painfully grinding to a halt. There was widespread unemployment and displacement. This was unlike the recession of 2032 in which large groups of young individuals moved into the city as renters to find work. Toronto was now one of the few cities in Ontario where work could still be found. As a result, tenants were no longer just young workers and students – single – but whole families. Over the next few years, landlords adapted their units to the shifting demands by re-configuring walls and fitting in ad-hoc kitchens and washrooms where they could, to appeal, albeit spartanly, to families of tenants. Water pressure in the tower was always low, the waste system was often overwhelmed, the garbage chute had not worked in months. Only three of the original five elevators were consistently maintained – one for the lower twenty-five floors and two for the upper twenty. The buildings legal residential capacity had long been exceeded but nobody did anything about it. The downsized municipal staff did not have the

means or time to inspect. Even if they did and were certainly to find the tower in illegal condition, what could they do about it? At best estimate, the condo now housed upwards of 3000 people who would all have to be resettled if the tower were condemned. Setting the precedent, countless other towers across the city would have to be condemned. There were not the resources to rehouse so many families.

Unit prices were buoyed only slightly by occasional individuals thinking that they had a clever new way to still turn a profit from rent. This was usually accompanied with some alteration of the unit – doing as little as necessary to accommodate as many tenants as possible. They were not ‘easy money,’ and difficult to sell. Many of the units started to violate the condominiums maximum occupancy standard by-laws, either by having more than the prescribed 2 people per bedroom, or by creating new bedrooms below the legal area and without windows. While each landlord knew that each of their fellow landlords was violating the community by-laws and rules, they all knew that it was necessary to turn a profit against the unmanageable maintenance costs.



2047:

Shortly after the new façade had been installed, it had become abundantly clear that the board selected the most economic of the three window wall selections. Within the first few years, several corporate-action warranty claims were filed against the façade consultants. It was mostly patching and re-applying of sealants. Thirteen years on, the façade had all but failed. The units on the south and west facades – the sunny and lake-exposed sides of the building – windows seals were visibly pulling out of their frames. On rain driven surfaces, water was seeping through nearly every joint and under the lapped flashings. Flooring was swelling, drywall was sagging, hardware was rusting and seizing. Window condensation had long been a problem throughout much of the building. With degrading low-e coatings and failed argon seals, the units quickly became frigid in the winter and unbearably hot in summer. Seized window fixtures made the units impossible to ventilate. Many tenants had to rely on space-heaters at astronomical rates to keep their units habitable. Utilities were not usually covered by rent. In an effort to decrease living costs, tenants and landlords tried to insulate and re-seal the façade ad-hoc from the inside.

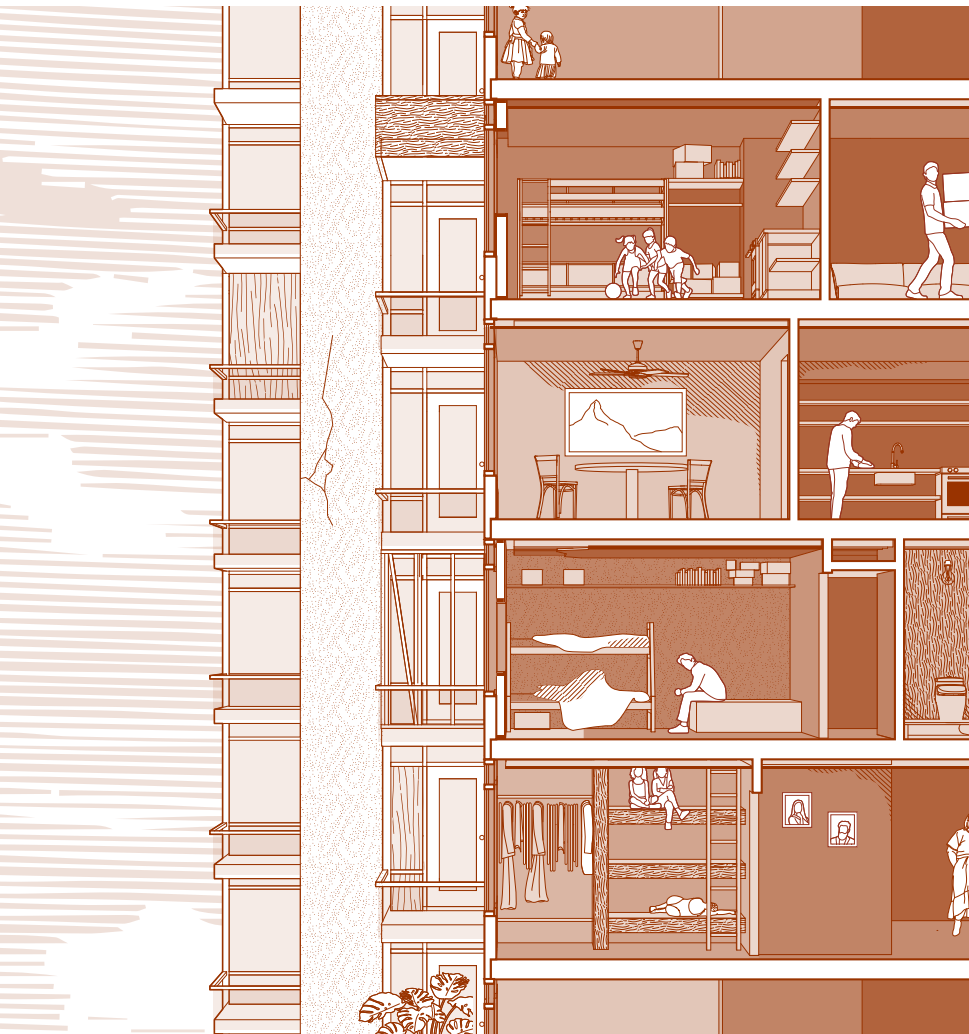
With depleted books and little support for taking out a loan against the corporation, the building manager sent out a decisive statement on repairs that the corporation would and would not pay for, to the owners as well as the tenants. If life-safety was clearly an issue, if water was visibly pouring into the interior, if any other building systems were put at risk, the corporation would try to repair. Drafts, mould, discolouration because of moisture, “superficial problems,” were no longer the priority

of the board and would not be addressed at this time. The budget was over-extended.

To help pay for maintaining this baseline tenability, the board converted many of the amenity spaces into leasable commercial space. The declaration already classified most common spaces in the tower as ‘units’ for ease of management, so converting the spaces required fairly little administrative effort or illegal activity. The lobby along Telegram Mews was converted into a storefront which has since been subdivided into a small convenience store and barber. The “exclusive penthouse lobby” became a cafeteria-eatery which has become popular with tenants. In summer, when cooking in the poorly ventilated units becomes unbearable, people buy a cheap dinner and eat out on Iceboat Terrace, overlooking the abandoned rail corridor.

Some landlords also informally assembled titles for spots in the parking garage to be rented out as cheap workshops – no welding, fire or compressed gases. Some landlords are vocally opposed to this because the risk of liability seems so much higher but at the end of the day, it was paying the bills.

The amenity pavilion was renovated into as budget office space. Owned under a Shared Facilities Agreement with the neighbouring Neo Condominiums (TSCC 2009), the two boards of landlords had to work together to determine the best way to do this and to share the profits. Not many tenants complained, or if they had, the manager had not forwarded their complaints. The pool had been out of commission for years anyways.



Status of Description:

After forty-two years, the tower Description was still firmly intact, with 527 individual residential titles. New terms of lease were added in order to convert the common spaces into rentable commercial space, but the basic spatial definitions of the original description still upheld the towers matrix of individually owned real-estate titles.

Title Control:

None of the units were lived in by owners. As such, the entire tower existed in an absentee-landlord-ship. Any economic benefits of ownership were displaced from the community of the tower itself, and were dispersed across southern Ontario and, to an extent, around the world.

With ownership of the real-estate titles falling entirely with landlords away from the tower, all powers of decision making were also alienated from the urban space of the tower. The residents had no say in the maintenance and management of the spaces that they occupied. The owners – landlords – themselves did not engage with the board unless decisions made were going to jeopardize their margin of profits from rent income.

Use-relationship:

By 2051, none of the units were lived in by their owners. Each one was under a subsequent, if not entirely legal, rental tenancy agreement. While some tenants sought to make homes in the rapidly decaying tower, the actual owners of the unit titles had no

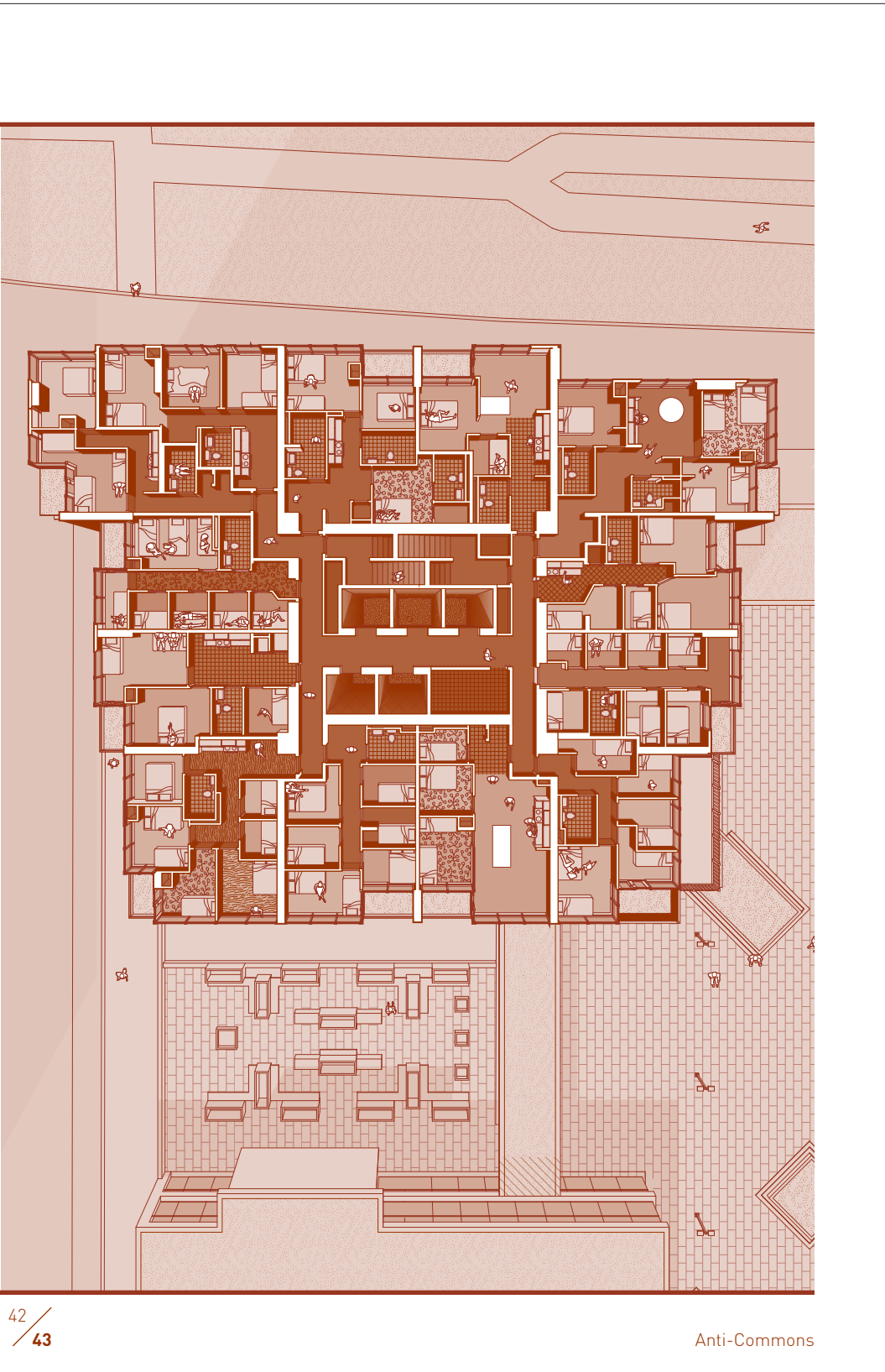
interest in creating places of home and belonging. They regarded the units solely as a mechanism for extracting rent-capital.

Condition and Maintenance:

A lack of long-term planning in the early life of the tower situated the current owners in a continuous game of catch-up. On-going attitudes of rent extraction exacerbated this condition. While people still lived in the tower out of desperation, it's difficult to say that the condition of the tower was tenable. Over time, the management team had just slowly given up on maintaining many of the common elements of the building beyond what was absolutely necessary. Central heating and fresh air-supply no longer worked, only one elevator worked consistently, and the façade did little to keep wind and rain at bay. The roof-top terrace, once planted with trees, grass, and geraniums, now resembled a prison recreation yard.

Public Space:

By-laws intended to stabilize the security of the tower as an asset greatly restricted the movement and sociability of the tower's tenants. Not only had the amount of public space been physically decreased through this and through the leasing of the amenities spaces as commercial units, but the maintenance and quality of the spaces that remained – mostly hallways – was greatly declined. Poor lighting, bad ventilation, and escalated security made the common spaces physically inhospitable.



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Anti-Commons

Condo-metabolism

In the late summer of 2021 Canada, like much of the rest of the world, was in a race against a new variant of Covid-19 that was targeting broader segments of the population and seemed undeterred by anti-bodies. Housing markets came to a standstill, particularly in the high-density urban market. With the race for even more effective vaccines underway, work and learn-from-home seemed to be indefinite futures. Global migration halted. Rent demand began to fall again. People were trying desperately to move out of dense urban areas and suburban house prices continued to rise. Condominium values fell nearly 20% by mid 2022. While many condo owners wanted to sell, especially younger people who had bought units as a means of breaking into the market, they were largely stuck, unable to find willing buyers. Many of them looked forward to the near future, either when new vaccines would once again be rolled out or the virus became endemic, and for public life to fall back to a semblance of normality. While a small number of unit owners sold out at a loss, most accepted their small units as their home for now.

As the recovery from the pandemic dragged on, the transfer of condos stayed depressed. Residents – especially young people – felt trapped, not only in their economic outlook, but also in their daily lives. Cycles of lockdowns had decimated “city life.” Many restaurants had closed or become very expensive; concerts; festivals and gatherings were few and far between. Within the halls of the tower, people fell into daily rhythms of life, establishing routines and forming social circles. Encounters in the

gym turned into book clubs. Asking the neighbour across the hall for two cups of flour turned into a walking group. Slowly, societies emerged among the floors. Curiously, there was some social mixing between resident-owners and renting tenants of similar ages, but mobility of rental tenancy inhibited a full integration. While many of the rental units had initially been left empty in the first year of the pandemic, the rental market was slowly recovering.

2023

As the prices of condominiums were approaching the bottom of the curve, residents of the tower and the board of directors took a very conservative tack on the maintenance of the property. Aware that their units were losing value, they were reluctant to invest more than what was absolutely necessary to keep the building functioning. Maintenance was economized wherever possible. The immediate implications of this economization weren't drastic. Business carried on more-or-less as usual, but small preventative maintenance jobs fell off the board's to-do list. Hallways were vacuumed less frequently, light-bulbs stayed burnt out for a little bit longer, some building inspections were pushed off indefinitely, and the repainting of the front lobby was postponed. In this atmosphere of delinquency, condominium fees hovered, unchanged, for a few years; the reserve fund grew slowly as people looked towards the time when they might sell, and move to the suburbs.

Narrative III

In 30 years...

...how will the legal structure of property ownership in the tower have changed?



...who will own and/or control decision-making in the tower?



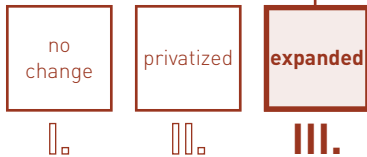
...what values will govern decision-making within the tower?



...how will the material tower have been cared for and maintained?



...how will the common spaces within the tower have changed?



Conflicting commons

2024

Four years after the pandemic, it was taking much longer for things to get back to normal than what had originally been hoped. Financial optimism was low and condominiums were slow to regain their market traction.

As markets thawed, young couples and families the tower held on to their plans to move out to the suburbs in the near future and prospects were looking up. Investment interest was slowly returning to the city. Some developers were renewing permit applications for condo projects that had been shelved at the end of 2021. Unit prices were slowly returning to pre-pandemic highs, but of course with moderate inflation and rising suburbs, there were still gains to be made before they reclaimed their original selling power. Suburban house prices had leveled. Many investors who had also felt locked into their condo ownerships were eager to sell off units. Pre-pandemic, the rule of thumb had been to hold on to a new-build for no longer than seven years. Montage Condominiums was now 16 years old, and many investors had been holding out for ten or twelve years. Some had managed to sell to a growing trickle of a hopeful new generation, looking to get into the market.

In this growing optimism, some enterprising landlords on the board proposed to revitalize the condo's image by renovating the amenity spaces which they claimed was long overdue. Renovation projects that had previously deemed too expensive were now considered wise investments to restore Montage Condo's appeal in the market upswing. The gym had gotten quite a lot of use as health restrictions were slowly being lifted. While the event room and guest suites had gotten less use, they were also due for an update, along with the theaters, card room and lobbies.

When the board published their intentions for the renovation in the newsletter, they had not expected the feedback that they would receive on what the new space should achieve. Many of the investors, who formed the majority of the ownership, were proposing a face-lift or modernization of what was already there; fresh paint, new furniture, up-to-date fixtures. There was a small but enthusiastic minority of owners who lived in the tower, however, that was

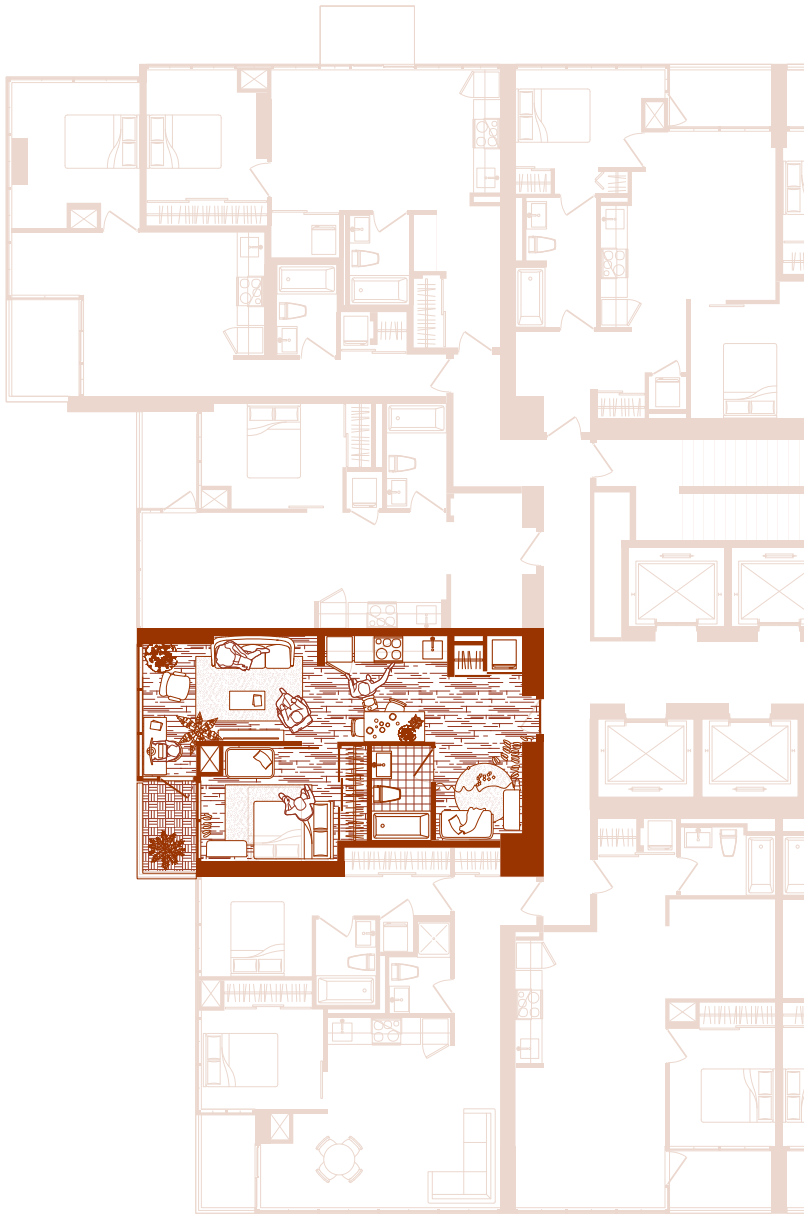
advocating for changes that they wanted to see made to the spaces – things that they thought would make the amenities more useable and marketable based on their experience. They wanted the integration of a family change-room for the pools, more stackable chairs and tables for the event room, and for one of the theaters to be converted into a craft room for kids. Someone proposed that the 'study' off the ground floor lobby be turned into a locker for strollers, a surprisingly polarizing suggestion. The board felt that some of these changes would send the wrong message about the community and undermine resale value. Strollers in the lobby was effectively advertising the presence of noisy children in the building. While everybody agreed that renovations were required to boost the market value of their units, there was wide-ranging disagreement about what that should look like.

2025

All throughout the fall of 2025, the board held consultations with the voting members of the condominium. While attendance at these consultations was generally low, there were two small but dedicated groups of residents who dutifully attended all of the meetings. These groups were broadly categorized into landlords, advocating for a straightforward face-lift of the amenity spaces, and resident-owners who believed that making the amenities more family and child friendly would improve marketability. Beyond the nature of the renovation, these two groups also participated in discussions about the financing of the project. While contributions to the reserve fund had been declining over the past few years, the two interest groups agreed almost unanimously, that a special assessment would not be a good idea to pay for this project. Rather, they agreed it best for the corporation to pay for the project through a loan. With the market looking upwards, any future cost of servicing the loan would be easily offset by appreciation of the units' values. The market disadvantage of having the corporate loan against the corporation would be offset by an intact reserve fund and with fresh and bright common spaces in the tower.

The board secured a loan, and the renovations were well underway by the spring of 2026.

Montage Condominiums



2030

Five short years later, the economic optimism of the mid 20's dried up, the housing bubble across Canada finally burst and value of the condominiums began to fall, slowly but certainly. Not only housing, but Toronto as a city was slowly losing its appeal on the world stage as global economies turned. It wasn't a crash, but a kind of sclerosis; the slow emptying of a shell. The inner city was feeling it the strongest. Many people still hoped and believed that this was a "crisis" – the trough in an undulating cycle – and that things would again swing upwards. While they were in some sense correct, the upswing would never-again, return the city to the conception of itself that had been lost. Slowly, residents of the tower came to the realization that the units were virtually unsellable.

2031

In 2031, with falling employment in the city centre, rental demand also fell. Under growing financial pressures, maintenance in many of the towers was falling behind. In September, four of the five elevators in Montage went out of commission for over a month. There was a problem with the control panels, but the repair contractor was having difficulty sourcing replacement electrical components. While these broken elevators would have been a problem at the best of times, many senior occupants of the tower had increasingly limited mobility and depended on the elevators to get to their units. Likewise, the increasing number of young parents in the tower, unable to move to suburbs, relied on the elevators to move strollers to and from their units. To alleviate some traffic from the single operational cab, parents started leaving strollers along with the growing number of bikes in the lobby. Some owners and landlords complained about the unsightly troupe of strollers in the lobby but at then end of the day, people realized it was a matter of necessity.

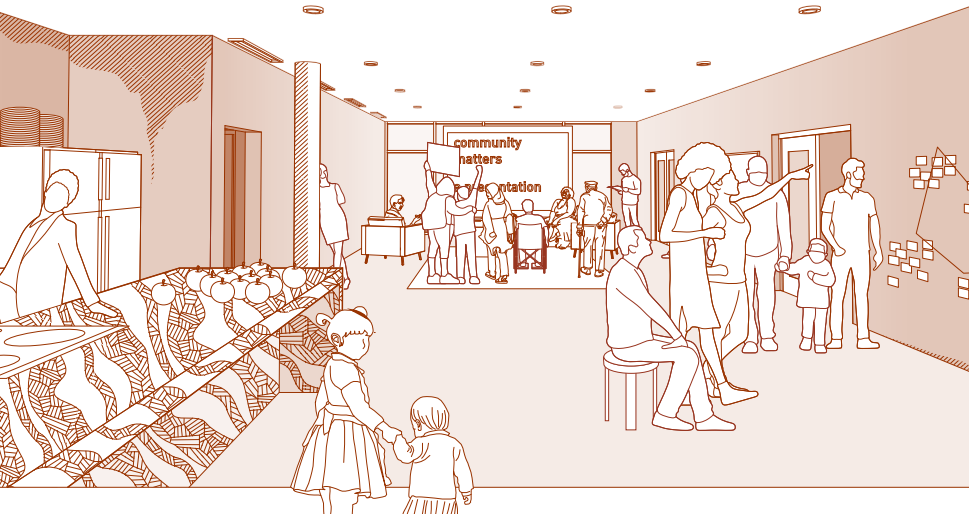
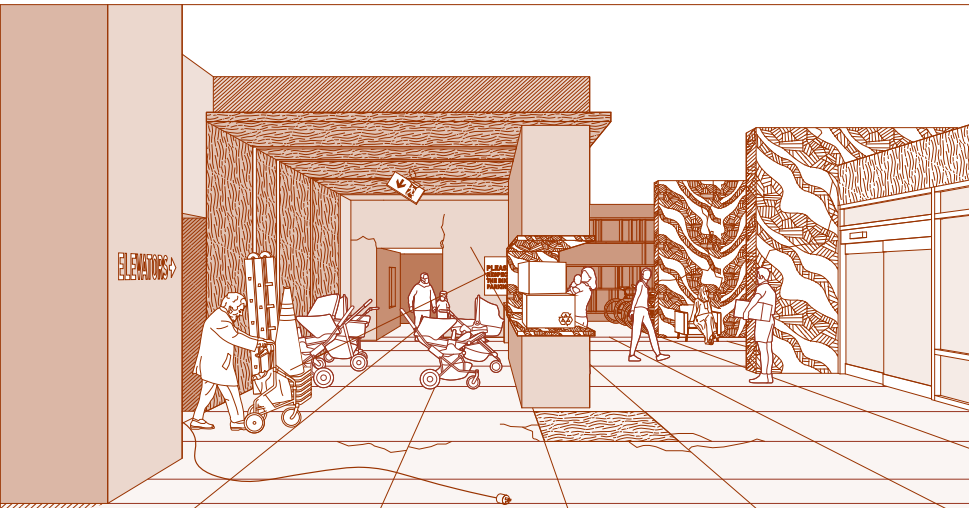
Nevertheless, significant work had to be done on the elevators. In the constant hope of a recovery, condominium fees had not been raised for the past four years despite having been used for several emergency repairs. The reserve fund was now going to take a severe hit. The condo board needed to raise emergency funds for the repairs. Many of the absentee owners wanted to take out another loan to cover the cost of the work, to maintain the state of

the reserve fund and keep condo fees low. Resident owners, on the other hand, were starting to worry about constantly pushing off costs. With fading prospects of selling their units, they were reluctant to saddle their community with more debt. They lobbied the board to pay for the repairs from the reserve fund and significantly increase the monthly condominium fees for a quicker recovery. Though financially risky, the residents wanted to keep capital within the tower, and avoid debt servicing. In the long run, it was deemed to be a wiser use of money but was risky for several reasons. First, it would leave the condominium relatively ill-equipped to deal with emergencies in the immediate future. Second, the rapid increase to condominium fees was certain to displace some residents and tenants. Taking advantage of the still wide-spread disengagement of many landlords and residents from the decision-making of the condominium, this small and vocal group successfully pressured the board to pay for the repairs up-front and restructure the reserve fund.

2032

Condominium fees in Montage were now tactically above the average of surrounding towers to rebalance the reserve fund. Any landlord-investors that were still investing in the collapsing market were taking on enough risk as it was and were not eager to buy into a tower where high monthly fees would compromise their cash-flow. This decrease in relative demand, in turn, lowered the purchasing threshold for units, opening them up to buyers with smaller down payments. The units were by no means affordable; the increase in condominium fees counteracted any decrease in mortgages. Nevertheless, the shifting of payments, began to favour those who were looking for a place to live, rather than those who were looking specifically for investment returns.

In that year's board elections, the small group of vocal residents submitted their names as candidates for the board and rallied their neighbours to vote. The resulting composition of residents to absentee owners on the board was, four-to-three. In their daily operations of the tower, the new board slowly began to favour the qualitative liveability of the tower over economy and re-sale value.



2033

The economic melt-down of 2030 hadn't exactly been a crash; nothing so spectacular, nowhere exactly to point fingers. It was more of a slow rot that took some time to work its way through the whole tree. In the spring of 2033, the grating decline was reaching its slow end. The "knowledge economy" which had driven Toronto's building boom in the 2000's, had shrunk to a few key corporate headquarters; there was some young entrepreneurial activity happening on the fringes of the downtown, but many mid-sized employers had closed offices in Toronto to move around the world. In their place, tertiary economies began to grow into the urban framework. While the economies outside of the downtown core were still relatively strong, suburban real-estate had stayed unaffordable. There was a small and subtle movement of younger households and individuals moving back into the downtown core, out of necessity more so than desire.

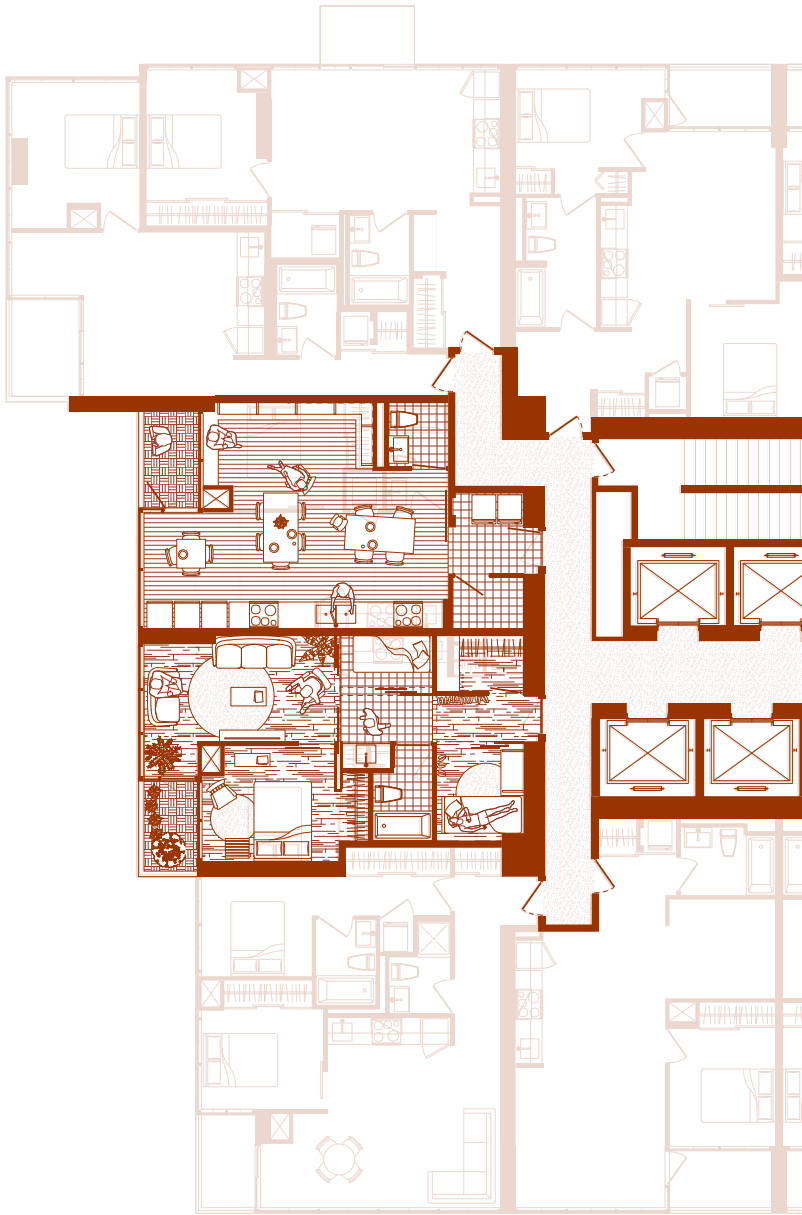
At that time, there was a group of three young families on the ninth floor who had been involved with the decision not to get financing for the elevator repairs. They were finding condominium living increasingly confining. They were unable to move out of their one- and two-bedroom units as their families grew and the outside world of the city contracted. The units were ill suited to their lives. Some residents on other floors managed to purchase adjacent units and join them but adjacent units were rarely available, and few individual families could afford the mortgage on a second unit.

One evening, as this small group was sharing dinner together, as they did about once a month, someone mentioned unit that was being sold on their floor by power-of-sale for arrears in condo fees. Jokingly at first, they talked about co-purchasing the unit and turning it into a shared space for all of them – a shared kitchen, an office space by day, play area for kids in the evening. While they realized they would be giving up some individual conveniences to share a kitchen, they felt that the move could free up space, allowing to better use their own units. With a solid dose of idealism, they put an offer in under asking

price and got it.

While there were certainly problems that had to be worked out – many of them interpersonal – the shared kitchen was largely a success. Over the next three years, seven other communal kitchens and 'living rooms' emerged across 46 storeys of the tower, varying in use and community composition based on the needs and desires of different groups. Many of these nodes in the tower thrived, so much so that for a flicker in time, prices within the condo rose. Internal desire created demand. As a result, new shared spaces slowed. After an initial optimism, many of communal kitchens had their problems to iron out. One ended in fighting and was sold, and one unit was converted back into a rental apartment that the co-owners managed together. The collapsing communities sobered the ecstatic development of these ad hoc shared spaces for both residents and owners. At the same time, the small thriving communities that were growing around these spaces wanted to keep growing in a way that could include more people in the tower for greater leeway. While the kitchens were communal, they were reserved for only the few families that co-owned the repurposed units. Even residents who weren't co-owners started contributing to book and tool libraries. Friends of friends were often invited to join for dinner.

Both investors and residents of the tower noticed this trend with mixed reactions. On one hand, investors and landlords who were more engaged with the board, tried to increase by-laws and restrictions that would limit the purchasing of multi-owner kitchen units. They realized, correctly, that these communal spaces would continue to push down unit prices as they destabilized both the financial security and the aesthetics of the tower. At the end of the day, however there was very little within the constitution of the O.C.A. that could be done to limit the use of units to such a degree, and new restrictions were often opposed by the board, which was now often controlled by resident-owners, and an increasing number of non-board members who were diligently attending condo meetings. A strong political discourse was emerging within the tower.



An expanding polity

2039

As the micro-communities throughout the tower evolved and grew, there emerged among them, a coordinated group of individuals who worked together on small maintenance projects in the tower, fixing water heaters, caulking windows, and painting hallways on a volunteer basis. They wanted to take ownership of their home while helping the board to decrease the operating budget. In the high-rise, however, there were many specialized maintenance tasks that needed to be contracted out to specialists such as elevator repairs and maintaining the bigger plumbing and electrical systems. The system of greatest concern to the board was the façade. Accumulating an intimate knowledge of the building, the self-appointed maintenance committee had been involved with inspecting the facade to advise the board and building manager but in 2039, the system decay got too bad for simple patch-and-mend maintenance. The board, now made up of seven residents and three land-lord owners, sent out an RFP for the replacement of the window wall. They received three proposals at varying price-points, all too expensive. The board planned to move forward with the lowest bidder. Even with the high condominium fee and a robust reserve fund in place, the lowest bid would have consumed nearly six years of the boards total operating budget.

The reserve fund was in no shape to handle even half of the cost and with pre-existing loans from other repairs, the board could not find a brokerage that would secure a loan for the entirety of the repair. They were left with no choice but to levy a special assessment from the unit owners for the bulk of the repair costs. In early May, they sent out a notice of the special assessment to the of the condo community.

Many households were living paycheck to paycheck and would be unable to pay the full amount of the special assessment. The notice was discussed around communal dinner tables throughout the tower. A group of residents from the twenty-eight floor reached out to the communities on the ninth and seventeenth floors and a movement started. The group requisitioned a meeting with the board to discuss the viability of the special assessment.

The meeting was scheduled for a warm Wednesday evening in April. The board had booked the event room, arriving early to set out one-hundred chairs. As start-time approached, however, they quickly realized that was not going to be enough seating. Owners and residents had mobilized in full force to discuss the

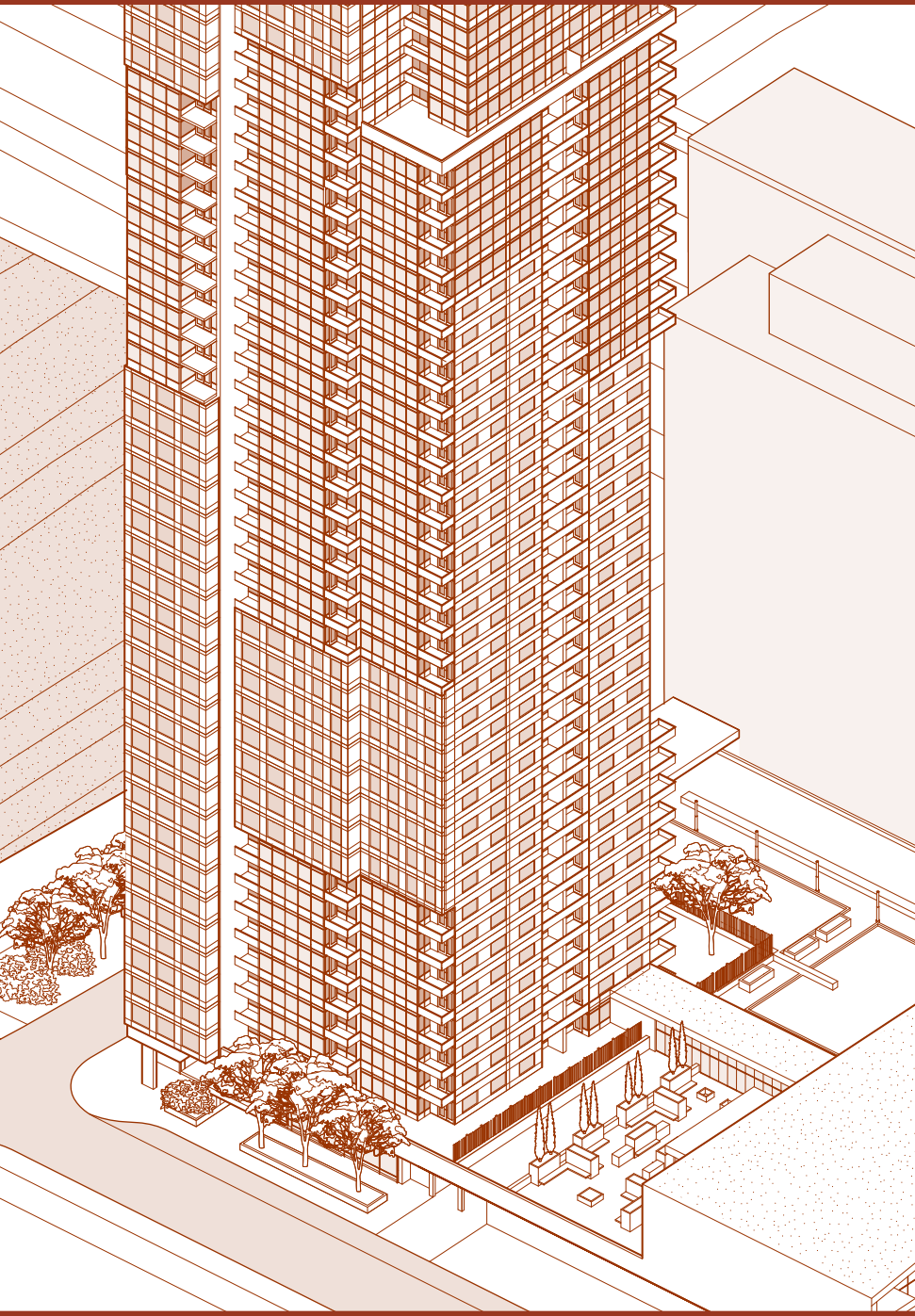
issue of the façade special assessment. In the end, the meeting was held outdoors on the rooftop patio so that everyone could participate.

By the end of the meeting, the board had reached several strategies to work through, for bringing down the special assessment. The first was to recognize that not all of the building envelope was equally in need of replacement. All the flat roofs had to be redone as soon as possible. The south façade, facing the lake and the sun, was in bad shape and would have to be completely replaced. The east and west façades had weathered quite poorly along the top and bottom and were only a few years behind the south façade, but the middle portions were still in passable condition. Second, perhaps more contentiously, the board had taken for granted, to replace the existing window-wall with an architecturally comparable system to maintain the external continuity of the building. A few residents pointed out, however, that to maintain the image of the building in this way came at a premium that many of them could not afford. The expanses of glass were both costly, and would continue to compromise the building's performance, increasing utilities and environmental costs. They proposed a replacement system that used wall panels and punched windows instead. These would also require less maintenance in the long term. This would have both immediate cost benefits and decrease costs for the future.

At the end of various rounds of discussions, research, and proposals over the following months, the community voted on a phased façade replacement that would defray the cost of the project over twenty-five years. The board worked with a contractor to find a replacement wall system that was both high performance and could be deployed without the need for costly additional infrastructure.

2040

Despite all these things, the project was going to be costly. The board did need to acquire corporate loans which, in turn increased condominium fees, threatening yet again to displace some residents the tower. After months of debating different options, people realized that there was no way to finance the façade work so that nobody felt the pinch. As a result, members of the various communities rallied to support their neighbours in any way they could. Sharing meals, offering child-care, and in some cases helping with condo fees, helped to fortify the community in the tower through the façade repair work.



2044

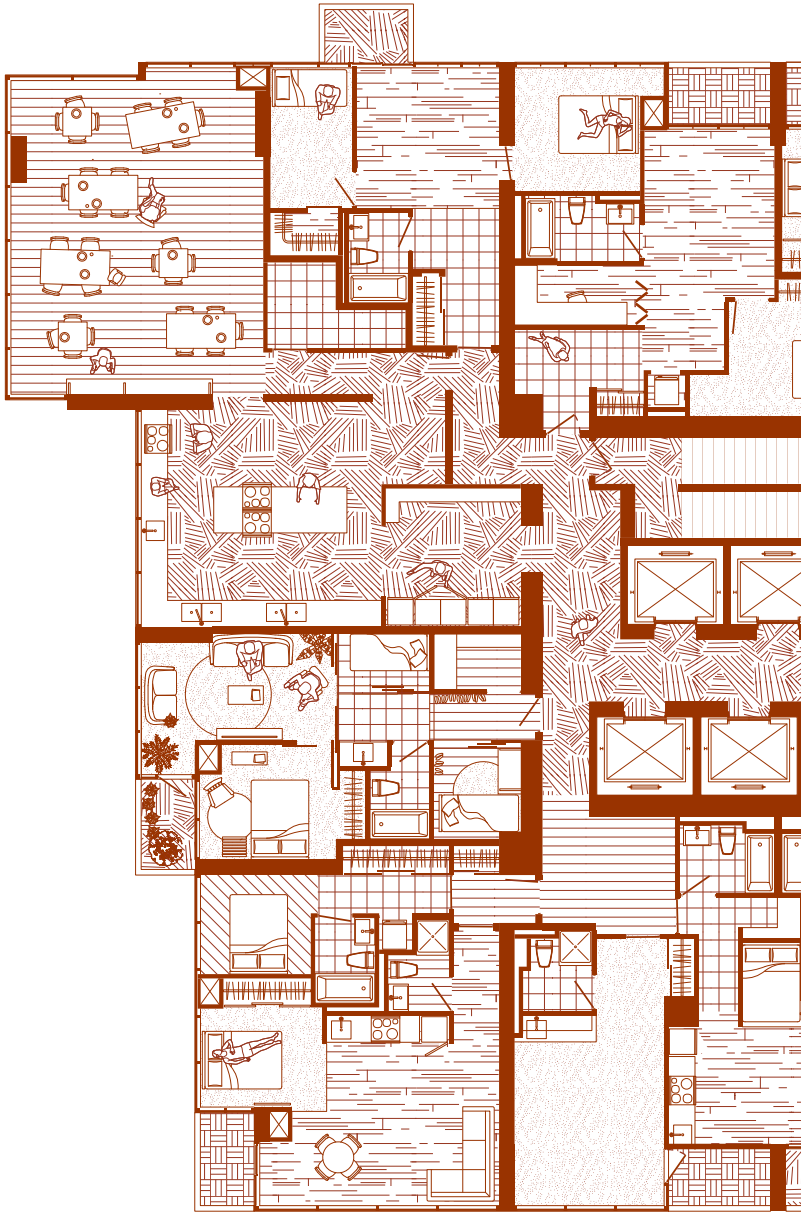
By 2044, the condominium reached a critical tipping point where 90% of the units were lived in by their lawful owners. The board had been supportive of the development of community hubs in the tower for some time, through less restrictive rules and regulations. They felt that it was now in the best interest of the community to formalize these hubs as public, to be used by the whole community. This required the purchasing the units by the corporation, from the individual ownership groups. In time, the hubs had evolved from the insular multi-family kitchens to become important community centres with special identities throughout the tower. The hub on floor 3 had the greatest book exchange. People often took the stairs to floor 3 on their way home from work, to pick up some new evening reading. The community group on the 16th floor somehow got a small grand piano up to their floor. They made rules about no playing after 8 pm on weeknights, but on Fridays, it was common to hear small ensembles playing well past midnight. People gravitated towards their 'local' hub, usually within three floors above or below their own, but a cycle of community events brought people from round the tower crowding to certain spaces on certain occasions. Following the negotiations of the façade replacement, the board also recognized that these nodes were important points of discussion and decision-making in the tower. Through them, people became invested in the problems of the whole community. To this end, there was a movement in the tower to ratify the 'community hubs' as common elements within the tower.

While title ownership had already become mostly a legality for many of these co-owned community hubs, these spaces were very much the extension of owners' homes. It was understandable that they didn't want to relinquish any control of these spaces. Everyone wanted to make sure that each micro-community didn't feel as though it had lost control or identity of its own space. Combined with the conviction for productive discussion that everyone had witnessed during the façade negotiations,

the community conceived of a new structure of management within the tower. Like wards, each community hub was assigned one director to the board with whom they met monthly. While the monthly meetings usually just turned into social events, their importance became clear when there were serious questions pertaining to the maintenance and future of the tower. The meetings provided a framework for the board to get input from the entire community thoroughly if not quickly. In this way, the board could operate with the certainty of support from the community, and not feel like they were in a position of managerialism.

These changes also impacted how modifications to the condo's Description were made. Because these changes require 90% approval from the votership, they were often very difficult to pass, if only for a lack of participation in the vote. Nevertheless, the approval majority provided a valuable backstop for accountability. Within the new framework, applicants proposing amendments were required to present and discuss their proposal with each of the community groups. This was an inconvenience and immense investment of everyone's time, but it ensured a healthy dialogue and awareness about changes coming to the tower, and the investment of time ensured that people only pursued amendments that they firmly believed to be worthwhile and necessary.

As part of this restructuring, some community members also proposed a by-law amendment that expanded voting rights, not limited to unit ownership, but rather for every 'permanent' resident of the tower, age fifteen and over. This by-law amendment was struck down by the Land Registry Office as it completely overstepped the parameters of the Condominium Act. The board is still trying to appeal the amendment to the province. The 10% of residents who were still renting tenants would also be granted the right to vote, as registered residents, which was significant, but made the landlords of their respective units are strongly opposed to this by-law.



2047

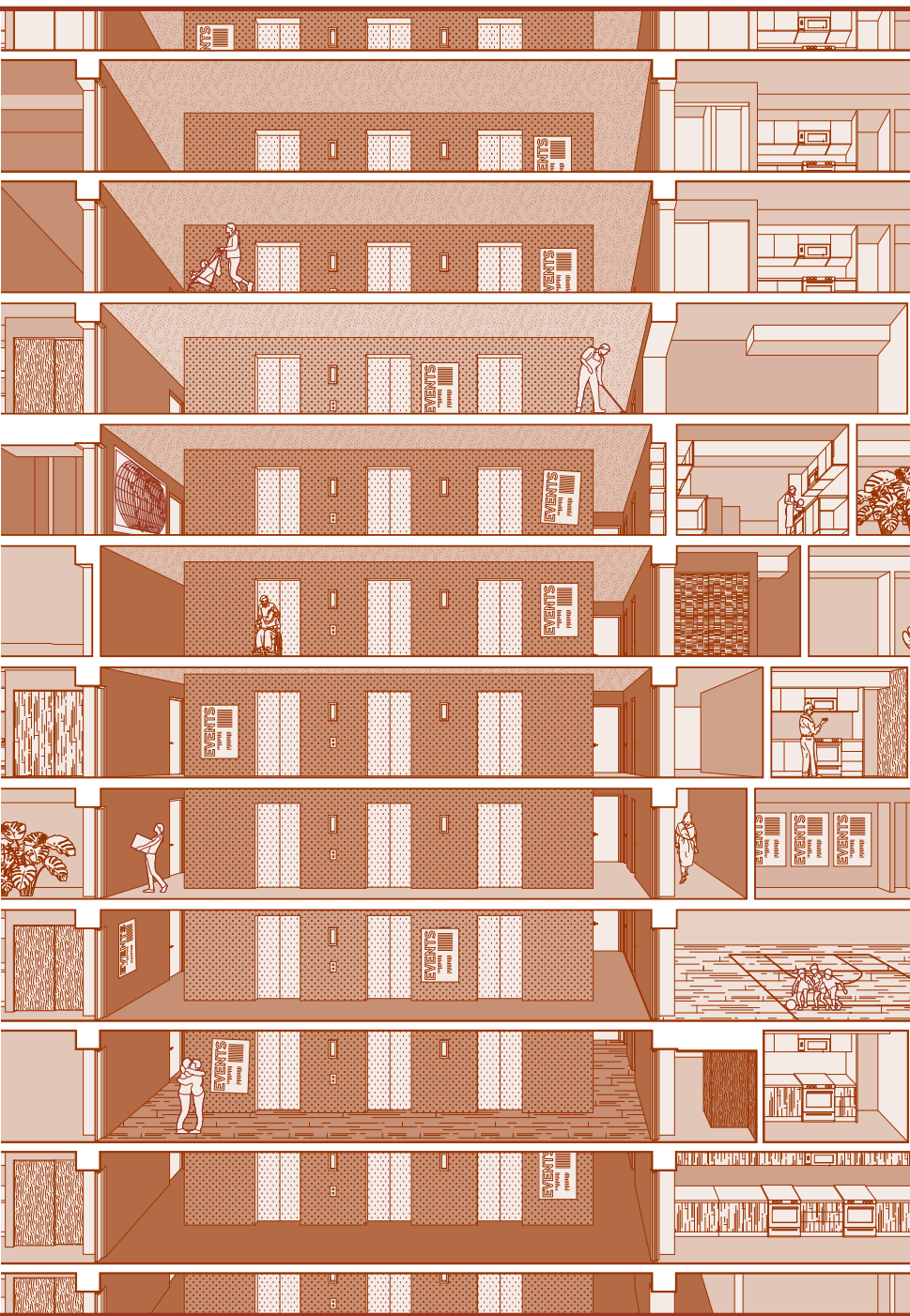
In 2047, the condominium faced another challenge. The rooftop air-handling unit that supplied fresh conditioned air to the core hallways broke down. The maintenance committee had been effective in keeping the system in good condition for many years now, but the roof-top unit would soon need to be entirely replaced. To replace the unit was going to require the erection of a crane to lift it into place. The community within the tower was still adjusting to increased operational and debt costs from the façade replacement. While the Canadian economy was now stable, the CAD had never recovered in exchange against the US dollar and shipping replacement units from the States would be prohibitively expensive. There was one other concern growing within the tower which was that of fire safety. The original communal gathering spaces had been contained within units – enclosed fire compartments. As the community nodes continued to grow to reflect the increasing importance of gathering in the life of the tower, some of these fire enclosures had been compromised. Ducts for the central air supply had fire and smoke dampers but the de-compartmentalization of the places where people commonly cooked was technically illegal and made everyone a bit anxious.

The solutions presented themselves simultaneously. When the tower was constructed, it made sense, for efficiency, that fresh air was piped down to each floor from the roof. As floors slowly began to evolve and change, however, this centralized approach was no longer the best solution. Instead, the board contracted out an order for 47 small-institutional air-supply units – one for each floor. These were fit discreetly into common spaces and vented through the replacement façade on each floor. Not only could these new units be hooked into existing vents floor

by floor, but they provided an additional capacity of fresh air, improving supply to expanded common areas that the roof-top unit had never been sized for. The ducts running from floor to floor were fire-sealed and allowed for even greater liberty in modifying and appropriating the floor plates.

As management of the tower became increasingly less centralized, the floor plates continued to evolve. As communal kitchens and living areas got larger and became more central, units and private living spaces became smaller and smaller, reflecting what residents understood to be ‘enough’. Within the concrete framework of the tower, they merged and subdivided, creating new units according to what they needed to live comfortably. Though kitchens were mostly centralized, many households preferred to have a small kitchenette. Some residents insisted on keeping their own laundry, while others wanted just a bed, and a desk, willing to share even a washroom. These usually maintained a sub-lease structure within a collectively owned unit as selling a unit without a washroom would have been difficult.

Around these multiform homes, patterns of life and interaction emerged. People knew when their neighbours had breakfast and planned their mornings accordingly. There were often conflicts, but they were usually worked out and negotiated before they could evolve into serious issues. Life in the tower became messy and undefined. There was very little that could be done that didn’t require some kind of negotiation; outside the privacy of your unit, there were few places of solitude within the building. It was in many ways inconvenient; it didn’t work for everyone, but in time, the community worked and evolved the structures to take ownership of them and care for them in a way that gave back and made them feel at home.



Status of Description:

At a certain moment, representation within the tower shifted from being title-based to being registered as a resident of the tower. This by-law undermined the significance of the description of parcels as a structure of power when daily life in the tower was no longer defined strictly between the privately owned unit and the common space, principally as circulation. Once life expanded beyond the bounds of the unit, it became increasingly important that everyone who participated in the public space, had representation in how it was shaped and managed.

Title Control:

The title control became mostly internal. A few landlords still owned units in the tower but high ratio of condominium maintenance fees to the average rent in surrounding towers made it difficult to maintain rental units in the tower with a worthwhile cash-flow. Most landlords who still held onto units and voting rights within the tower lived in the suburbs but were curious to be a part of what was happening within the tower. For the rest, titles were held by their residents. A more open attitude towards the forms of the units and the tower's Description allowed for many of the units to be merged and subdivided quite freely. Voting rights were de-coupled from ownership rights to sidestep complications with cooperative owned parcels. Registered residents now vote on the affairs of the tower.

Use-relationship:

In 30 years, the building was transformed by the restoration of use-value over exchange value. The "unremarkable actions" of daily life changed the building's internal morphology from a stack of standardized floorplates into a complex and diverse 3-dimensional extension of the city. Once the socio-political structure of the tower community was opened to accommodate the particular spatial needs of a heterogeneous community, each floor was individually adapted to reflect the needs of the emerging communities from floor to floor – remarkable in its banality.

Condition and Maintenance:

This tower was, in theory, no cheaper to maintain than any of the condominiums around it. Yet it was better maintained in many regards. The first reason for this was the rebalancing of condo fees to mortgage payments within the tower. While unit prices in the tower were undermined, lowering the cost of mortgages, the increased condominium payments effectively made tenants no better or worse off than their neighbors in adjacent towers. More capital was maintained within the tower itself to be used for maintenance and repairs. The second reason for improved maintenance was a shifting of priorities. In the early days of the tower, the board had struggled to maintain the marketable image of the tower as an asset, spending substantial capital on cosmetic repairs. While comfort and quality of space were still considered important after thirty years, the maintenance team was no longer chasing an external ideal of what the spaces should look like. The final, and most significant cause for improved maintenance was a newfound understanding of the building's durability. Residents were now committed to the longevity of the tower and made maintenance decisions accordingly, taking a long view. Rather than trying to maximize value extraction from the tower, owners were now willing to invest in proactive and preventative maintenance, bringing down operational costs in the long term.

Public Space:

With more fluid unit relations, the tenants and board had few objections for the corporation re-possessing vacant units for development into collective space. While many of the common spaces were open access, their centrality to daily life of the people in the community ensured that visitors were always engaged in the community. Likewise, the segregation caused by the many floors of the high-rise, created natural barriers to space. While you could go down and hang out at the community hub on the 22nd floor, you wouldn't without good reason because it was too many flights of stairs down. In this way, people naturally organized themselves to their general topographies; two flights above and two flights below their own unit.



Lessons learned

Narrative I:

In the first ten years of the Narrative I exploration, extreme economic conditions, paired with owners' collective desire to make money from the tower, created an economic grid-lock. Because those who lived in, and made decisions for the tower were unable to balance individual financial gain with the maintenance of the tower itself, the tower fell into disrepair. Once this gridlock was broken by government intervention, the transition of the units from condominium to rental effectively de-commodified the property. Because the principal powers of decision-making were held by city employees outside the daily life of the tower itself, the physical tower as an urban artifact did not evolve to reflect the changing needs of the occupants. Nevertheless, the occupants made the most of the space, modifying and appropriating spaces in small habitual ways that would probably not have happened, had they perceived of their homes as first-and-foremost commodity assets.

Narrative II:

Narrative II explores a 30 year scenario in which the ownership of the condominium was sustained and the implications of this ownership on the tower itself. Even though the tower remained entirely owned by private individuals, ownership of the tower was extracted from the tower itself by absentee landlords, so the financial value of the tower became exchanged for the value of home. As rent extraction became increasingly necessary to maintain the tower as profitable, it was done increasingly at the expense of maintenance and livability of the tower. By the end of the scenario, individual units had been subdivided into five or six bedrooms or micro-units with bad ventilation, little temperature control, insufficient plumbing and electrical, and a complete lack of natural light for the individual tenants. Most units did not have their own kitchen or washroom. While the boundaries of the original unit ownership remained largely unchanged, within the boundaries of the units, the floor plans were altered to accommodate more rentable sub-units.

Narrative III:

In Narrative III, residents of the tower had to reconcile with the decreasing asset value of their units, and the inability to move out of the tower. There was a migration of values from the financial value of the unit to its ability to function as a home. In search of space and livability, they allowed their lives and societies to spill out past the boundaries of their individual units to occupy the common spaces of the tower. Over the thirty years of this exploration, the growing social importance of this common space for those who live in the tower, allowed for the radical transformation of the material tower and the relation of the individuals to the society of the tower as a whole. To this end, the boundaries of the individual units and the morphology within the tower became increasingly negotiated and modified to suite the evolving needs of the occupants. In time, the perceptions and uses of the tower were adapted and conformed to the need of the residents.

Montage Condominiums

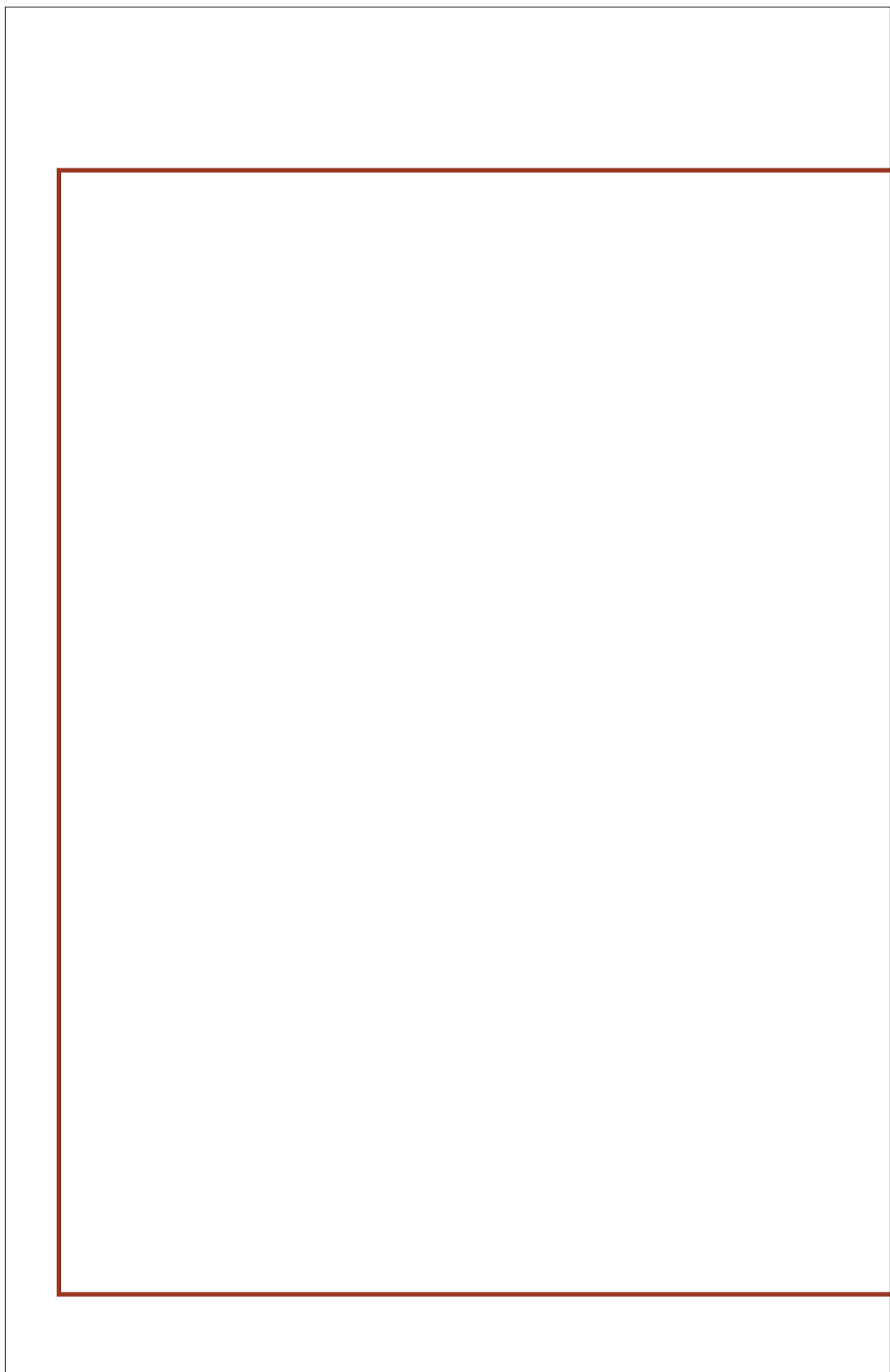
Lessons learned

Daily life within the condominium is comprised of sets of pre-existing structures, from the structures of your community, management, and decision-making, to the physical structure of the condominium tower, to the structure of your unit. These structures shape our daily experience within the condominium tower. Our rituals for getting to and from work are structured by movement through the elevator and lobby; how we use the amenity rooms are structured by the board's booking policies and if we feel comfortable in the rooms; our social awareness of the tower is structured by how we make friends with the people on our floor that we run into in the hallway. These structures aren't static things and in the lifespan of the tower, they form only a starting point for a not-so-distant future. In time they can and will evolve into radically different forms; either like something explored in one of these stories, or something completely different, not yet imagined.

What we have learned through our explorations of different futures of the tower, is that our daily

decisions – how we interact with the different structures of living in the condominium – shape this shared future, no matter how insignificant our decisions currently seem. Over ten, twenty, or thirty years, the smallest attitudes compound into radically different pictures of the future. The starting point is your own framework for making decisions; how do you understand your relationship with your home and to your city? How do you understand your relationship with the community in your condominium and how do these relationships influence the decisions you make in regard to your home?

As our condominiums continue to age in the heart of Toronto, how we live in them and maintain them will undoubtedly change the future of the city. As we continue to make our homes downtown, let's carefully consider what a city we would want to live in looks like, and how our daily lives contribute to that vision.



2.3 Conclusion

As condominiums are the defining artifact of Toronto today, their implicit structures are setting the new stage for what the city will become in the near future. Having investigated four different aspects of this new urban stage, I would like to conclude by pointing to the need for urgency of architects to become interested and invested in the future of these towers. As advocates of space, architects must pay attention to the implications of the condominium's paradoxical structures on the vital life of the city. The social, political and financial structures that enable condominium property ownership rely on the strategic alienation of the life and culture of spatial practice. This need becomes all the more urgent in the context of Toronto, which traditionally thrived in a strong cultural pluralism. A product of Toronto's role as a gateway city for immigrants into Canada, this pluralism has influenced both the practiced cultural, and morphological fabrics of the city. As the built city becomes increasingly fixed in structures that commodify and suppress diverse practices of daily life, what space will be left for appearance, representation, and appropriation by the people who live there? Because of their abundance and economy in the city, condominiums pose a threat to the emerging culture of daily life in the gateway city through their power to marginalize and exploit. On the other hand, their density provides unprecedented opportunities for individuals and cultural groups to reclaim enclaves of the city, synthesizing new and valuable spatial practices within the fabric of the city. Finally the uncertainty between these two futures prompts architects to look for new ways to engage with the city of towers that Toronto has become.

Affordable housing is an important feature of arrival cities, and on their trajectory of unmanageable decay, condominiums will likely fall into this position in the fabric of Toronto. Structured and maintained on a strong cultural hegemony of a curated urban experience, the condominiums will not form a city that promotes the pluralist expression of a diverse but vulnerable immigrant population. The threat of condominium towers becoming instruments of both economic and cultural suppression is foreshadowed in the mid-century modernist towers. While the mixing of diverse populations into the structure of condominiums creates certain vulnerabilities, it also creates unique and exciting opportunities for the future of Toronto. Looking districts built over time by specific cultural groups, we can see how the architectural expression of daily cultural pluralism builds a city that is welcoming, meaningful, and interesting. In the broad horizon of possible futures, threats and opportunities

of condominiums, architects must work proactively to advocate for this more optimistic future. The first step of this is to understand the strategic coding of the condominiums – the legislation, hegemonic institutions, and architecture that allow them to exist as urban fabric. Only in knowing these codified structures, can architects begin to act tactically upon them. In exploring future narratives of the towers, architects can subvert and recode the hegemonic-normative cultures of the new urban dweller, and advocate for these people in the writing and amendments of public policies in the city. It is within the context of a new hyper-urban matrix of appearance and representation that architects will find urgency and opportunity to act. The advocacy of architects can set the trajectory of Toronto to either thrive within the diversification of people or relegate the condominium towers to states of exploitation.

At the crossroads of real-estate economics and diverse domestic spatial practices, Toronto's important role as a key gateway city in Canada³²⁸ makes the future of the condominium towers a crucial point of development and adaptation for the near future. In his 2011 book, *Arrival City*, Doug Saunders documents settlement patterns of many immigrants in low-income rental housing in arrival cities around the world. In recent years, this need for affordable housing by immigrants has been fulfilled with modernist rental towers like Thorncliffe Park. Privately owned, mid-century towers have become notorious for poor maintenance and the isolation of immigrant communities struggling to engage with the city.³²⁹ In our pessimistic projections for the highly structured space of condominiums, it is likely that vast enclaves of Toronto's new towers will also become affordable rental housing in the near future. While affordable housing plays an important role in the migration of populations, the synthesis of economic exploitation, paired with the disciplinary structures of condominium corporations may well cause the condominiums to become a landscape, not only of economic exploitation, but additionally of the suppression of cultural practice.

As we have seen, the hegemonic frameworks within which the condominiums were conceived, preclude specific and personal representation in space, be it cultural or economic. These frameworks will expel culturally significant performance from the public space

328. George Baird, "Thoughts on "Agency", "Utopia" and "Property" in Contemporary Architectural and Urban Theory, 2013," *Writings on Architecture and the City*, (London: Artifice, 2015): 150-1

329. Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The final migration and our next world city*, (Toronto: Allen & Unwin, 2011): 314-5.

of the towers. Something as simple as drying laundry from a balcony to minimize utility costs, could be a prohibited behaviour which, in its own unassuming way, perpetuates unaffordability and marginalization. As the condominium towers fall increasingly into decay, their cultural codification will ossify the space of the tower based not only on economic othering through the landlord-tenant relationship, but also suppress discreet yet important cultural practices of the daily lives of those seeking to build homes for themselves in Toronto. The space of the decaying tower, reserved for those who cannot afford to play into the real-estate game, will only ever-increasingly exclude the political action and representation of cultures that might disrupt it, diminishing their right to exist politically and autonomously within the space of the city itself. Unless the socio-political structures of the condominium can be decoupled from the commodification of dwellings in the city, multiculturalism will remain only an aestheticized dimension of the conceived urban experience, rather than a legitimate dimension of daily life.

Nevertheless, within the richly diverse city of Toronto, the new urban stage of the condominium towers presents the possibility for an exciting urban future of unprecedented cultural synthesis and architectural improvisation. The condominium tower is recreating the city of Toronto for unprecedented densities of human coexistence, and with un-precedented conditions of cultural and individual plurality. With so many unique people living, conflicting, and interacting in such a high density, the condominium towers hold the potential for immense social complexity and cultural synthesis, if only the plurality of cultures becomes part of daily life. When we consider unique urban conditions like Kensington Market as a work – a palimpsest of distinct successive immigrant groups negotiating and appropriating the urban framework into a highly nuanced urban enclave – we begin to see the urban armatures of the condominium towers holding the potential for similar spatial phenomena to unfold in time; the practices of daily life take over from conceived design. As many cultural enclaves in Toronto like Little Portugal or Chinatown are in decline due to gentrification, commercialization and the aestheticization of the cultures that made them distinct,³³⁰ the abundance of condominiums might provide the ideal medium for a renaissance

330. Goonewardena and Kipfer criticize the aestheticization of cultural practices for the sake of “neoliberal” schemes for the urban city. These efforts to sell diversity neutralize bona fide cultural practice and representation in the grip of a culturally stabilized city. Kanishka Goonewardena, and Stefan Kipfer, “Spaces of Difference: Reflections from Toronto on Multiculturalism, Bourgeois Urbanism and the possibility of Radical Urban Politics,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 3 (September 2005): 672.

of democratic action and non-aestheticized representation in the space of the city. Privately ownable and cooperatively managed, entire condominium towers might become new enclaves of culturally specific and unique practices of daily life where collective cultural values of dwellings supplant the real-estate economy. Practices of daily lives that do not conform to the current neoliberal hegemony of the new Toronto, would disrupt the rigid structures of the towers. What this will look like cannot be said. The bay-and-gables of Kensington afforded their inhabitants a generosity of space that the concrete towers don't. Improvisations on the tower will likely not be as architecturally apparent or consistent, but regardless of emerging material expressions, playing outside the cultural codes of the commodified condominium will provide both their challenges, and their opportunities to become vital and meaningful communities within the city. As successive communities make their homes in these towers according to their own cultural practices, the buildings will themselves, evolve to become expressions in architecture, of the life of the pluralist city.

As advocates of space, architects have a vital role to play in how this new concrete topography will evolve in time and under emerging cultural and economic pressures. While the future is vast and uncertain, there are two generally concluded possibilities; the first is the eventual decline and exploitation of the tower architecture under the fixity of neoliberal real-estate values, and the second is the enabling of architectural appropriation of the towers through decommodification. To ensure that this new landscape does not become instrumentalized for economic exploitation of vulnerable populations, architects must advocate for the 'restoration' of the right to appear in the city. There are no "magic wands" by which to restore representation, cultural salience, and *habitus* to the city, especially not within such deeply ingrained pre-existing political, economic, and built structures. Rather, only when people use, appropriate, and take ownership of these spaces tactically – playing outside the rules – can the highly structured space of the condominium be restored as space of urban appearance and negotiation. It is the architect's urgent task to decode the implicit rules of space that constrain them, to reveal contradictions and opportunities of improvisation within them but more importantly, to shed light on them so that the actors of space can confront them in their own daily decisions and actions. Architects can advocate for the urban actor in the space of the condominium in three ways; understanding the cultural origins and structures implicit within the form of the condominium, the envisioning of alternative futures, and advocating for meaningful policy changes that reflect lessons being learned from condominium communities in real time.

Firstly, architects must acquaint themselves with the cultural background, the actual structure and operations of the condominium and with the *O.C.A.-98*, allowing them to design tactically in the new urban fabric. It is my hope that the opening sections of this thesis began this undertaking. It is not enough to simply deem condominiums as unhealthy urbanism. Rather, recognizing the systemic contradictions that doom many of these towers to decay and abandonment, we must work to understand tall-building systems, structures, and mechanics, along with politics, policy, management, and real-estate laws that govern condominiums. In working to understand these things, we learn to read the new city with a mind for tactic and an eye for opportunity. Renovations, retrofits, adaptations, and modifications, and advocating for the individual resident within (or against) the corporation, become important tactics for revolutionizing the single unit, the whole building, or the entire city of Toronto. As the mid-century towers give us an example of decay through structures that stagnated, they also provide a model for beginning work on the condominiums through Graeme Stewart and the Tower Renewal Partnership. The Partnership's rigorous and multifaceted approach to improving lives in and around the towers, and strategies for upgrading building environmental performance, demonstrate the necessary far-reaching understanding of the complexities that impact the wellbeing of the city at the scale of the building and the block. Such understanding and expertise cannot be achieved when the architect works in isolation, but it relies on cooperative knowledge-sharing with experts and community members, each bringing their own perceptions of the patterns of the city. Only in understanding the rules by which the city of condominiums is being built and inhabited, can we learn to play and design by a different set of rules.

This deep knowledge of the various structures within condominiums allows architects to write exploratory narratives. Unlike tactical design, which acts on the architecture in the present or near future, speculative narratives project condominiums into the pluriform uncertainty of the distant future. In both the cooperative writing and the telling of future narratives, architects generate discourse and awareness around the asphyxiating structures of strategic urban space. While this discourse promotes, on one hand, discussions and explorations of urban theory surrounding the future of the Toronto condos, recalling de Certeau's emphasis on the importance of daily action in creating revolution in the city, these explorations will move people to a new active understanding of their high-rise homes. With a new critical understanding of the condominiums, urban citizens will be empowered and emboldened to act tactically within the structures, seeing them for what they are, as

the artifact of a specific and detrimental cultural practice. Daily improvisation upon these structures according to ‘othered’ and external daily cultural practices will restore *habitus*, ‘maximal difference,’³³¹ and patterns of personal significance to the urban skeleton. The recoding of space will be no longer reserved for the tactical design of the architect, but restored to the tactical everyday life of the urban citizen.

Finally, as condominiums across the city begin to evolve and take on lives of their own with a critical movement of tactical action and design, the knowledge of the architect as a specialist, will be paired with the accumulated knowledge of the daily activist, empowering architects to advocate on behalf of the community for real policy change. The manipulation of policies such as the *O.C.A.-98* is necessary to deconstruct the deep-rooted systemic factors that maintain the neoliberal grip on the space of the city and the realm of political appearance. There is no doubt that we can and should already advocate for innumerable policy changes in how condominium are built and managed, but policy discussions will continue to be more-or-less an extent of theoretical discourse and ideology until policy writing becomes the reflection of what people need rather than the hegemonic guise of the neoliberal organization of space. Listening to the banal, yet infinitely interesting daily life within these evolving towers, architects can promote policies and a city that is the *opus* of its inhabitants.

By engaging with real populations and structures of the condominium tower, there is an ever-increasing recognition that any production of architecture is only just a beginning. In becoming the site of *habitus* and of daily life, what is designed and built becomes merely a framework for the innovation and appropriation of others, and so it should be if spaces are to become truly socially and politically valuable. To peel back singular conceived narratives of condominiums as urban utopias, architects can look to the power that Michel de Certeau affords memory and narrative. Stories of everyday life are not radical in-and-of themselves, nor do they appeal to some urbane experience, but simply because in their banality, they subvert the preconceived narrative of a stable and well-curated experience on which the reproduction of neoliberal space depends. In decoding the structures of the condominium through the investigation of possible futures, we create the possibility for narratives in space, not that make appealing renderings, drive investment interest, or win competitions, but that

331. Goonewardena and Kipfer, “Spaces of Difference,” 676

appeal to people in their capacity to tell stories of an engaged and purposeful urban life. A small booklet of such stories could create within the community, very small and unassuming changes which, in time, could precipitate the transformation of the tower from an economic proposition into a place to dwell. In being empowered to take ownership of their space, not simply economically, but actually in their daily lives and actions, an affirmative practice of *habitus* can be restored to the people of the city.

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