

DISTINCTIVE DEALINGS: FORMAL AND INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

by

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Dedication Page

For my beautiful wife, Tania, who has stuck with me as I have chased my dreams (while putting her own on hold) for the past fifteen years. I love you.

And

In loving memory of Mark Adams (1983-2008), one of my closest friends, whose own dream of pursuing a PhD will never be fulfilled. I miss you.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past fifty years, the informal economy has emerged as a concept in contradistinction to the formal economy. Literature often assumes that informal economic activities result from precarity and a lack of access to formal employment. Over time, informality has been explained as a residue of traditionalism; as resulting from capitalist exploitation; as resulting from cumbersome regulations and registration processes; or, as resulting from exclusion from the formal economy. These approaches rely on information collected in the Global South and can be difficult to apply to the Global North.

Drawing on this literature, this thesis is a qualitative investigation of formal and informal entrepreneurship at two used-goods vending sites in Halifax, Nova Scotia. It also considers how notions of “the local” and “community” affect seller practices, as well as the roles that class distinctions, gentrification and social interaction play at each site. I argue that these sites enable vendors to focus varying goals including engaging in social relations, experimenting with new businesses and to make some pocket money. For a small subset of vendors, selling at these sites is part of a long-term agenda to build enough capital to “platform” to their own brick and mortar stores or to stay in business after the failure of their own stores. I contend that the practices of these sellers do not fit neatly into expectations found in informal economy literature from research in the Global South because most vendors choose informal entrepreneurship despite having access to formal employment and benefits.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CBSA	Canadian Border Services Agency
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
CTV	Canadian Television Network
G1	Generation 1
G3	Generation 3
G4	Generation 4
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
HST	Harmonized Sales Tax (Canada)
ILO	International Labour Office
MLP	My Little Pony
POS	Point of Sale
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

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My parents, Valerie and Rocky, have continued to offer me their unwavering support as I pursued this mysterious thing called anthropology that neither had ever heard of before I switched into the discipline. I was originally supposed to be a pharmacist and then a journalist. I think my parents always envisioned me as a different kind of doctor or scientist but warmed up to the idea of anthropology over time. Thanks for always having my back.

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important and interesting things. An indirect result of your amazing accomplishments is that they deflect attention away from my own pursuits. I'm boring by comparison and I like it that way.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Root of the Research Problem

This research project began as little more than a worried thought: my suspicion that flea markets in North America were failing during and after the financial crisis of 2008. At the time, I had spent a couple of years “moonlighting” as a video game vendor at the King’s Place Flea Market in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, while I worked on my Master’s thesis. As the financial crisis took hold, my wife and I were in the midst of spending six months travelling around Canada subsisting on eBay and selling items out of the back of our car. Across the country, my eyes and my heart led me to believe that flea markets and their vendors were struggling to make ends meet and this situation deteriorated as the financial crisis worsened. On our travels, we came across shuttered flea markets on many occasions and when we did attend markets (mostly as buyers in cities like Charlottetown, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver), we listened to vendors complain about their situations and pine for the “good old days.” The economic crisis was apparently having an effect on flea market vendors across the country.

After returning to Fredericton to become a sessional lecturer at St. Thomas University, I spent much of my spare time reading about the informal economy and searching for news articles about failing flea markets in North America. The King’s Place Flea Market where I worked seemed to be dying a slow death, but the literature I was reading led me to believe that informal economic activities such as selling at flea markets should proliferate during times of economic crisis. What I witnessed seemed incompatible with such expectations. Head counts were down at the King’s Place Market and vendors were not happy. Rumours abounded that the market was on its last legs. A year after I left Fredericton, the King’s Place Market shut its doors for good. My hunches and the rumours, regrettably, were more than flights of fancy.

As I started to identify these gaps in the literature, I proposed an examination of the role that the informal economy plays at flea markets to the Social Anthropology PhD program at Dalhousie University. By this time, my wife and I were operating one of the largest eBay stores in Atlantic Canada, called East Coast Toys and Games. We continued to operate our company while I was in the field and are still in business today. My experience in the used-goods trade as a specialist in pop culture collectibles had a major role in the inspiration for this project, as well as its methodology. My prior knowledge of the flea market industry in Atlantic Canada meant that I could “walk the walk and talk the talk” (see Appendix B).

As I prepared to move to the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), a few things started to happen that would affect my research. In 2009, the Harbourview Weekend Market opened in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (a major community in the HRM) around the same time that I moved to the city. This new market had a different business model than the markets that had been standard fare in Atlantic Canada, as the entire building was leased and only housed the market. Vendors were able to open booths and build pseudo-brick-and-mortar¹ businesses in ways that are more similar to present-day farmers’ markets than the classic flea market model, where a space is rented for a day and vendors have to set up and strike down in that period. I thought that the Harbourview could be a game changer in Atlantic Canada, the type of permanent market where people could have semi-permanent shops.

¹ The term “brick and mortar” business generally refers to a company that possesses or leases a retail space or retail store. As such, people who vend at flea markets are generally not considered to be operating a brick and mortar business. It is also important to extend this terminology to vendors who rent space within a group shop (like at Plan B). Such vendors exist and vend within a brick and mortar store, but do not own the store and cannot refer to their operation as a brick and mortar business unless referring to the store itself.

In October, 2011, the Plan B Merchants Cooperative opened on the Halifax Peninsula. The shop was the brainchild of a handful of Harbourview vendors who wanted to take the next step and set up their own shop. It was envisioned as an antiques and collectibles shop, community space, art gallery and café. Vendors would operate the shop as volunteers, pay much smaller rent for their spaces than if they were to open a shop alone and maybe make enough money to open their own shops down the road.

After I began conducting research at Plan B in autumn 2013 and then at the Harbourview in February 2014, I came to learn first-hand that there was a wide difference in vendor attitudes and goals between the two venues and there was little overlap between the types of clients who attended the market and the shop on a regular basis. With some exceptions, the people who sold or shopped at Plan B were not the same people who sold or shopped at the Harbourview. For this reason, and because Plan B had its roots in the Harbourview, the two sites offered an excellent opportunity for comparative research.

1.2 Research Questions, Central Thesis and Chapter Outline

Used-goods vendors exist in a market economy that relies on the consumption processes of the first-cycle economy, while participating in a second cycle of consumption that runs counter to the dominant economic model of contemporary Western society. Used-goods markets are part of a history of markets and bazaars that dates back to antiquity. Traditionally, such markets were home to vendors selling myriad goods from comestibles to artisanal crafts to used goods and beyond. By the middle of the 20th century, used-goods markets in the Global North had mostly split off from traditional markets to become “flea markets” (among other names). In such contexts, food vendors have more recently been reconfigured as farmers’ markets. Despite the traditional relationship of used-goods and food vendors at more broadly defined markets and

bazaars, there is now little overlap between these two distinct types of markets in the Global North. As part of an offshoot of an archaic form of market vending, used-goods sellers in places like Canada now occupy distinct venues in order to sell their wares. Some of these market vending entrepreneurs are operating formal businesses, while others are not and the relationship between informality and entrepreneurship at such venues has become the most prominent part of this research project.

Literature about informal businesses has suggested that such businesses proliferate during times of economic crisis. This is related to assumptions from research in the Global South that positions informal employment as an outcome in situations where people are unable to find employment in the formal sector. Informal entrepreneurship in the Global North amongst used-goods vendors does not necessarily conform to such assumptions. My experiences at a flea market in Fredericton, NB, during the recession of the late-2000s calls this into question. During the recession, this long-standing flea market quickly failed and the people who relied on the market as part of their livelihood strategies found themselves in a situation where they could no longer make enough money vending to justify continuing on at said market. At the same time, the intentions and goals of market vendors played a large role in whether or not they survived during the economic downturn.

At flea markets across Canada there is a wide range of vendor types with varying goals. Some vendors are moonlighting, others are divesting themselves of unwanted goods and some sell in order to engage in the social atmosphere that markets provide. Other vendors rely on markets as their primary source of income. Some vendors operate formally registered businesses, but many do not. That said, the degree to which vendors are involved in the economy formally or informally also depends on individual vendor intentions. Some vendors actively engage in tax

evasion or avoidance, but most are too small to justify registering their businesses formally, if they even see their activities as constituting businesses at all.

This dissertation answers two sets of questions that are framed around how used-goods entrepreneurs rely on market venues and formal and/or informal economic activities as part of their subsistence strategies:

1. How do used-goods vendors in Atlantic Canada engage in formal and informal economic practices as part of their entrepreneurial goals? How do these practices differ from or confirm expectations about informal economic activities found in contemporary debates, which predominantly focus on activities found in the Global South?
2. What factors affect how used goods vending markets and vendors in Atlantic Canada make a living (or not)? How do venues and vendors address issues such as community involvement, gentrification, clientelization and cultural distinctions as characteristics of the re-configuration of the used-goods trade in this region?

Throughout this dissertation, my focus is on the used-goods vendors and the places where they vend.

The informal economy is the primary research framework that directs this project. Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of the history of literature dealing with the informal sector and informal economy. I begin by discussing how these terms find their roots in Arthur Lewis' (1954) "dual sector model," which was created after WWII as part of development-oriented economics. I then explain how early incarnations of the informal sector concept (Hart, 1973; and ILO, 1972) rely heavily on the Lewis model. I provide an explanation of several other, competing explanations, specifically the structuralist, legalist and voluntarist schools (see Chen, 2012). I then offer an overview of more recent, holistic frameworks. Most of these models,

schools of thought and frameworks derive from research conducted in the Global South. As such, I discuss possible avenues for applying some of these approaches to my research in the Global North. In doing so, I discuss Guy Standing's (2011; 2014; and 2015) precariat concept and criticism of it outlined by Munck (2013).

Chapter 3 outlines the three secondary research frames that have guided this project. First, I examine the importance of markets as sites for social relationships, showing how the economy is embedded in social relationships through a discussion of how weekly, periodic and public markets facilitate social interaction and social relationship building through exchange, barter, the search for price and quality information about products and the social performances of vendors and shoppers. This section establishes the expectation in anthropological literature that it is impossible to dis-embed economic relations from social relations at small-scale markets.

The second section of this chapter examines the term *local* as a family of concepts that invoke community, emphasize geographic scale, and can also be used as a form of value-added labelling. Much of the literature about definitions of the local stems from food research, but I use it as a springboard to show how an uncritical understanding of "local" is both pervasive and persuasive due to the ambiguity of the term, which in reality has multiple, complex and contested meanings. The purpose of this section is to set the stage for later examination of how vendors at Plan B and the Harbourview attempt to channel localism as part of their sales strategies.

The last section of this chapter provides an overview of Bourdieu's concept of *distinction*, which links economic class with the discernment of taste(s) to consider how vendor relations can be based on class-based distinctions. I compare the distinction concept to the culture industry concept and explain how the culture industry helps to blur class distinctions among vendors and shoppers because the consumption of the goods derived from popular culture

can act as a class levelling device. I then consider the role that gentrification can play in the discernment of taste as a result of the different *gentrification aesthetics* that exist around each research site.

In order to situate my research in the larger context of the used-goods economy, I provide a historical overview of how academics have examined the many facets of used goods trading. Chapter 4 presents the many kinds of used-goods venues that have been identified, such as flea markets, garage sales, street vending, scavenging, antiques stores and online shopping. There are several reasons for profiling the broader used-goods economy here. First, the vendors who I met at Plan B and the Harbourview do not exist in a bubble and rely on strategies such as attending flea markets, garage sales, frequenting thrift and antique stores (and to a lesser extent scavenging) in order to procure their wares. Second, an examination of all of these parts of the continuum of the second-cycle economy helps to establish why, in certain cases and contexts, the used-goods trade can take on positive or negative connotations in the eyes of governments and the public. Finally, a consideration of how some vendors orient their selling strategies and inventory procurement around collectibles, nostalgia and vintage items helps to establish how such vendors are part of a larger chain of a collectibles industry where dealers spin narratives about the authenticity and significance of the items that they are brokering. Such considerations move the conversation beyond the material culture considerations of divestment and the social life of things that are prominent in research about “stuff.”

In Chapter 5, I provide an overview of the research sites, including a history of urban development in Halifax’s North End (where Plan B is located), downtown Dartmouth (where the Harbourview is located), the origins of Plan B, the political hierarchy at Plan B, and a brief explanation of the history of flea markets in the HRM. I also discuss the difference between

antique group shops and cooperatives regarding Plan B before explaining how I gained entry at each site. This chapter helps to set the stage for specific encounters that I had in the field by situating Plan B and the Harbourview in historical context.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are the substantive parts of this dissertation. Each chapter presents material from my field work that is relevant to the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 provides an overview of community relations at Plan B and the Harbourview, considering the role that *the local*, distinction and gentrification play in the lives of sellers at both places. In profiling how people at each venue attempt to attract attention through the media and involvement in neighbourhood events (or not), this section points to the major differences between the sites that stem from the cooperative nature of Plan B and the competitive nature of the Harbourview. In this section, I also point to how Plan B and the Harbourview are on different sides of the *gentrification aesthetic*, arguing that engaging the surrounding neighbourhood of each site in a concrete way plays a major role in their economic success.

Chapter 7 considers the role that the informal economy plays at each site in relation to the informal economy and regulation of it. It presents various examples of how vendors deal with issues of taxation and government loopholes regarding certain types of items (for example, taxidermy). I follow this by discussing how vendors deal with theft. I also discuss vendor paranoia about “tax spies,” as well as actual bureaucratic hurdles that some vendors faced. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the wide range of formal and informal strategies that are employed by vendors and the ways that each research site juggles informal and informal practices from taxation to bylaw compliance.

Chapter 8 considers how vendors make a living (or not) through their market vending. The chapter begins with an example of attending auctions with a Plan B vendor and how

auctions are a microcosm of the interplay of informal and formal businesses attempting to acquire goods for resale (with varying degrees of success). The chapter then addresses the concept of *platforming* and how a certain subset of vendors at both research sites envision their activities as an attempt to build enough economic capital and a large enough clientele to justify opening their own brick and mortar businesses. Both Plan B and the Harbourview rely on this concept (without necessarily utilising the term) as part of their identity narratives. I show how platforming is a rare phenomenon that few vendors actually achieve. I also profile how some vendors use places like Plan B and the Harbourview as refuges after their own brick and mortar businesses fail or close. I argue that few vendors actually make enough money to make a living in the used-goods trade and that vending for most people is only one part of their broader subsistence strategy with most vendors either moonlighting, experimenting or attempting to take part in the social atmosphere of the market.

Chapter 9 concludes this dissertation. Opening with a narrative of my last days at the Harbourview, it then makes comparisons between Plan B and the Harbourview Weekend Market in relation to my research questions and theoretical frameworks. I then outline the theoretical contributions that this project makes. First, I consider the significance and success of each research site as community hubs and how attempting to engage surrounding neighbourhoods is crucial for each location's survival. I then examine issues facing the sites in terms of the local community, gentrification aesthetic and distinction concepts, arguing that all three avenues for inquiry are wrapped up in the quest for recognition for these venues and vendors by attracting a loyal clientele. I then discuss the various ways that informal economic activities are manifested at each site and how this affects the entrepreneurial strategies of my research participants. I also argue that the classic and contemporary approaches to informal economy research that stem from

insights from the Global South are not perfect fits in this particular context and make generalizations about how my research may be applicable to other used-goods vendors and venues in the Global North.

As a final note about the structure of this dissertation, methodological issues are presented in the appendices. The reason for this is to help with the flow and pacing of the document. For readers who are interested in my methodology, I recommend reading the appendices prior to reading Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: The Informal Economy

Since the informal sector concept was originally developed in the early 1970s (Hart, 1973; ILO, 1972), research about informal economic activities has proliferated across many disciplines such as anthropology, economics, sociology, development, management and urban planning. Informality has also been addressed by various levels of government worldwide, though policy makers have initiated very different responses to the phenomenon from place to place. Terms such as “the informal sector,” “informal work,” and “informal entrepreneurship” permeate historical and contemporary debates about the informal economy. The crossover between disciplines regarding informality, as well as the different approaches to the topic, has led to a vast body of work. As a result, Chen (2012) claims that informal economy research is essentially an academic field in its own right (p. 4).

In this section, I provide a broad overview of historical theoretical approaches/schools of thought regarding informal economic practices. I then provide an examination of contemporary debates and approaches. Due to the many topics that have been researched through the lens of informality, I narrow my focus towards the end of this section to research about informal entrepreneurship, which is most clearly applicable to my own work with used-goods vendors. Prior to delving into historical and contemporary debates, it is useful to provide some definitions and examples of informal practices to avoid misinterpretations or ambiguity.

2.1 Definitions and Examples

As a starting point, it is useful to present perhaps the most common definition used by researchers today. Castells and Portes (1989) say that the informal economy is “a process of income generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated” (p. 12).

Clearly, Castells and Portes identify regulation as the critical ingredient of the formality/informality distinction, emphasizing how economic activities are regulated.

Definitions like this one took time to develop and were not always articulated in early informal economy literature, as will become clearer later. In early informal economy literature, there are three similar, but distinct terms that are often used in parallel (and sometimes interchangeably). Citing the International Labour Organization (ILO), Chen (2012, p. 8) provides the following definitions:

1. The *informal sector* refers to the production and employment that takes place in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises (ILO, 1993a). The idea of a sector is more common in early research into informality and reflects assumptions that there are two distinct sectors in any given economy that exist separately or in opposition to each other. The sector terminology is most common amongst the earliest approaches that I will cover in this chapter.
2. *Informal employment* refers to employment without legal and/or social protection—both inside and outside the informal sector (ILO, 2003). Note that although Chen does not say this in her report, the terms “informal work” and “informal employment” tend to be used interchangeably in informal economy literature. Some people act as informal entrepreneurs, while others act as informal wage labourers.
3. The *informal economy* refers to all units, activities, and workers so defined and the output from them. Together, they form the broad base of the workforce and economy, both nationally and globally. Essentially, such phrasing acts as a catchall for informal economic activity.

In addition to these definitions, informal economic practices have been referred to by several different names, including the underground, hidden, shadow, and parallel economies. A common way to describe the informal economy is through the legality of activities that take place in it; that is, activities that occur outside a legal framework, but are not criminal in nature. Such activities are either completely unregulated or insufficiently regulated by governments, resulting in them not being officially recorded or counted in GDP measurements or other government statistics.

For example, Feige (1990) and Sassen (1992; 1994) provide a similar definition of informality that relies on a taxonomy with the “underground economy” as a starting point. Formal, informal and illegal economic activities are all included under the umbrella of this taxonomy. Castells and Portes (1989) also distinguish between these three types of economic activity. However, they argue that the basic difference between formal, informal and illegal activities resides in the mode of how goods and services are produced. These modes are more significant than the final product in terms of what is permitted and what is not.

Generally speaking, the types of practices that occur within the informal economy are multiple. Examples of informal work include self-employed labourers, such as street vendors, garbage pickers and home-based producers of petty commodities. Additionally, the issue of squatting can be significant for interpreting the informal economy in contexts where informal entrepreneurs lack land or property rights and are forced to squat in certain places in order to maintain their place of business. This is a particularly common situation amongst street vendors and market traders in the Global South, where acquiring permits or licenses to legally vend in a specific space can be difficult and where legal rights to operating in a space are not guaranteed (see De Soto, 1989; and Smart & Smart, 2017). However, informal work is not the exclusive

domain of the self-employed. Any wage work that is normally assumed to be formal can be informal if the employers are skirting government regulations. Examples include labourers working under the table for either formal or informal enterprises. One characteristic of informal wage work is that such labourers do not receive the same benefits that they would if they were to be formally employed (such as health benefits, pensions, etc.), nor do they achieve the legal protections that governments offer formally employed workers. The relationship between employers and employees can be exploitive or not, depending on the circumstances.

One of the key features of debates on informality is that it is often seen as negative in comparison to formality. Such expectations stem from development literature and precede the use of the informal/formal dichotomy and related terminology. Recent scholarship does not necessarily see the informal economy as inherently negative, but more as a response to changing economic situations in specific contexts. However, formality is usually seen as being better than informality by policy makers. In order to understand how the informal economy is conceptualized today, it is necessary to describe the beginnings of the concept and how approaches have changed over time.

2.2 The Dual Sector Approach

Before the informal sector concept was first developed, economists were talking about the “dual sector.” The dual sector was framed in terms of the opposition between modern and traditional practices in postcolonial economies, particularly in Africa. It was conceptualized based on economic changes in developing nations, after WWII, where unemployment and poverty were rampant and many people were not engaging in the modern capitalist economy, instead relying on traditional subsistence practices.

Arthur Lewis (1954) first introduced the “dual sector model” (which has also been called the “Lewis model” and was so influential that he would win the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1979). The model explains the growth of developing economies in terms of two sectors: the capitalist sector and the subsistence sector (or modern vs. traditional sectors, respectively). Lewis’ perspective was that development-oriented economic policies could/should lead to the traditional sector—petty trade, small-scale production and casual jobs— being absorbed into the modern sector and eliminated over time. In the long term, such policies would generate enough jobs in the modern sector to completely absorb the surplus labour of the traditional sector. Lewis assumed that all of this would lead to a turning point (the “Lewis Turning Point”) where wages would rise above subsistence level.

Much of the dual sector model was reinforced by the success of rebuilding Japan and Europe after World War II (Chen, 2012, p. 2). However, by the 1970s it was becoming clear that the model was not working as expected in developing countries. Hans Singer (1970) argued that unemployment and under-employment were on the rise in developing countries (even those that were growing economically). Singer attributed this imbalance to technological advances and suggested that the dualism in such markets could actually lead to economic crises. One result of critiques of the dual sector model was the establishment of the informal/formal sector dichotomy.²

Although a small number of authors were discussing informality in the late-1960s (Nisbet, 1967), the term “informal sector” first found an audience as a result of Keith Hart’s

² In fact, Singer was one of the ILO investigators who participated in the 1972 report on employment in Kenya, which is one of the most influential early texts that focuses on the informal sector (see below).

(1973) study of urban income opportunities and employment in Accra, Ghana. He positioned the informal sector as an unorganized, unprotected, traditional sector existing in opposition to the organized industrial formal sector. Hart considered the informal sector to take place outside of the formal labour market and considered it synonymous with the self-employed:³

The distinction between formal and informal income opportunities is based essentially on that between wage-earning and self-employment. The key variable is the degree of rationalisation of work – that is to say, whether or not labour is recruited on a permanent and regular basis for fixed rewards. (p. 68)

This distinction was particularly acute in Ghana because forms of formal employment often have low wage ceilings. One difficulty, however, is that a key feature of this distinction is that formal labour is amenable to enumeration by surveys, while informal labour is not (*ibid.*). This is significant because, as Hart recognizes, “informal activities encompass a wide-ranging scale, from marginal operations to large enterprises” (*ibid.*).

Hart (1973) argues that in Accra, income from employment in the formal sector does not generally meet the subsistence requirements of workers. As a result, it is common for labourers to engage in moonlighting in order to make ends meet. Hart saw potential in such activities for generating growth in the incomes of the urban and rural poor, noting that:

The 'way out' of this persistent dilemma for urban workers is seen by many to lie in emulating the role of the small-scale entrepreneur, as exemplified by the success of some of their fellows who started off with similar life-chances. (p. 67)

For Hart, petty capitalism can be both a supplement to wage income and a means of salvation from penury and the spiral of debt in a context where wage income in the formal sector does not cover one's bills: “denied success by the formal opportunity structure, these members of the

³ Subsequent scholarship is clear that self-employment is only one possible avenue for informality (and being self-employed is not necessarily informal). Many informal labourers work for formal enterprises. I return to this in subsequent sections of this chapter.

urban sub-proletariat seek informal means of increasing their incomes” (*ibid.*). In this way, informal employment can become a buffer against unemployment (p. 79-81).

Shortly after Hart’s ideas were articulated, Hans Singer and Richard Jolly’s ILO (1972)⁴ report about employment in Kenya was published. The ILO recognized that, in Kenya, the traditional sector not only persisted but was expanding and included profitable enterprises in addition to marginal activities. By employing the dual sector model in their interpretation of the relationship between the formal and informal sectors, the ILO report claims that, “the bulk of employment in the informal sector, far from being only marginally productive, is economically efficient and profit-making, though small in scale and limited by simple technologies, little capital and lack of links with the other (‘formal’) sector” (p. 5). Going further, the report is clear that, in Kenya, employment in the informal sector outpaced employment in the formal one. This is particularly true when considering migration from rural parts of the country to urban centres such as Nairobi. The report recognizes that informal self-employment in the urban informal sector is an important income strategy for rural migrants whose earnings, as a result of such activities, tend to be substantially above those available in rural settings (regardless of whether or not the rural employment is formal or informal) (p. 223-224). The authors state that, “vigorous action must be taken to facilitate employment and raise incomes in the informal sector, where the migrant will seek a livelihood if he cannot find wage employment through the formal recruitment system” (p. 223).

One of the major hurdles, according to the ILO (1972) is that government policy towards the urban informal sector has mostly been negative and/or punitive, resulting in either inaction,

⁴ Note that despite the ILO citation I am using here being from 1972 and the Hart citation being from 1973, Hart’s ideas predate the 1972 ILO report.

restriction or harassment (p. 226). The report highlights how Kenyan government bodies actively demolish shanty towns to remove squatters in order to guard against health, fire and social hazards. At the same time, governments tend to be incredibly restrictive when it comes to awarding licenses and permits for various activities, including hawking and street vending. Such actions actually prevent policy makers from achieving their goals of attracting people into the formal sector by erecting boundaries and creating hurdles for the people they are supposed to help (p. 227-229). All of this leads to the report arguing in favour of policies that promote the informal sector (p. 228-232).

Part of the reasoning behind this is the report's recognition that the Lewis model (modern vs. traditional) is limited in explaining the expansion of the urban informal sector in Kenya (1972, p. 503-508). Instead, the report argues that both the formal and informal sectors are modern, as the expansion of squatter settlements and self-employment resulting from an influx of migrants to urban centres from rural parts of the country are part of modernization.⁵ The squatter settlements would not exist if it was not for an influx of rural migrants looking to take advantage of the capitalist system and cannot be thought of as a residue of traditionalism.

The report instead argues that the real cause of these dualistic sectors are the differences in wealth and income between these two sectors, with the lower-income (informal) sector growing on the periphery of the wealthy urban zone (or formal sector) (ILO, 1972, p. 503). Both sectors attempt to take advantage of modernity and are the consequence of urbanization in Kenya over the course of several decades (p. 504). However, the informal sector in this interpretation results from under-employment or unemployment by those rural migrants who are attempting to

⁵ In this way, movement to urban centres is seen as an attempt to become modern and to leave traditional avenues for subsistence behind. This assumption continues to rely on economic dualism, rather than acting as a challenge to it.

join the formal sector. The authors note that the imbalances between the two sectors are based on government restrictions that create benefits for formal sector enterprises at the expense of informal ones (p. 504-505). The report is clear that the informal sector will continue to proliferate in Kenya (and that this is an opportunity to promote economic development), but that the government needs to initiate policy changes that enable the informal sector to flourish. Otherwise, the gap between formal and informal sector wealth will widen. The report also calls for strengthening linkages between different sectors in order to increase employment and improve income levels (p. 506-508).

There are several things at work in these dualistic approaches to the informal sector. First, the earliest assumptions about informality being a residue of traditionalism are already being challenged by the ILO (1972), despite the organization relying on a dualistic approach. The difference is that focusing on urban settings in a developing country like Kenya enables the ILO to recognize that urban informal workers are actually attempting to leave behind traditional subsistence methods employed in rural settings. In pointing to informality as being part of a modern attempt to gain employment, the ILO is setting the stage for subsequent approaches insofar as they highlight the different wage opportunities between formal and informal sector workers as being the cause of market dualism. The recognition by the ILO that governments play an active role in the creation of informality through enacting policy is also an especially important insight from this early literature.

A second issue worth reiterating is Hart's (1973) assumption that informality is akin to self-employment. Subsequent scholarship would take issue with this narrow view of informality by recognizing that not all informal workers are self-employed (in fact many work for formal

enterprises). Even so, the issue of informal entrepreneurship continues to permeate informal economy literature today.

Relying on dual sector models, scholarship in the late 1970s and into the 1980s came to consider the informal sector not as a residue of traditionalism but resulting from capitalist exploitation. These approaches also started to emphasize linkages between informal and formal sectors. It is to this approach that I now turn.

2.3 Structuralist Approaches

In the two decades following the development of the informal sector concept by Hart (1973) and the ILO (1972), scholarship about informality proliferated. Early studies relied on a break from the modern-traditional dichotomy popularized in the modernization theory found in development literature, but retained one of its basic features, economic dualism (Feldman and Ferretti, 1998, p. 4). At the same time, policy prescriptions tended to take the ILO's position during the remainder of the 1970s (*ibid.*). By the late 1970s, critical reviews started to identify the failure of dual sector models to recognize the heterogeneity of informal sector activities (p. 5). Critics were troubled by uniform policy initiatives across the globe that attempted to make use of a catchall solution instead of considering specific solutions for different national contexts. For example, Bromley (1978a) critiques subsequent uses of the ILO approach to the informal sector because of the absence of adequate guidelines to classify activities, the assumed separateness of the two sectors, the use of the informal sector as exclusively urban (and the tendency to equate the urban informal sector with the urban poor) and the belief in uniform policy solutions. Elsewhere, Bromley (1978b) argues that even though the street traders he researched in Colombia tended to be independent entrepreneurs, they were tied to complex

networks of suppliers, money lenders, government officials and customers and often ended up being disguised wage earners of larger enterprises.

Already, through Bromley (1978a; 1978b), the economic dualism of the early descriptions of the informal sector was being questioned. This is echoed by Peattie (1980) who, also relying on research in Colombia, critically analyzes the conceptual language of economic dualism, urban marginality and the informal sector. Ultimately, Peattie concludes that dualistic conceptions of informality are misleading because they divert attention away from the diversity and complexity of informal enterprises, while failing to recognize the linkages between informality and the rest of the economy. In fact, identifying linkages between the informal and formal sectors was a major part of the critique of economic dualism during this era. No longer were these two sectors seen to be in opposition to each other. Instead, new interpretations of informal economic activity highlighted the exploitative character of these linkages which positioned informal workers in unfavourable positions. For example, Birkbeck's (1978; 1979) study of garbage pickers in Cali, Colombia identifies linkages between this informal work and the formal economy, since these garbage pickers often sold raw materials to nearby factories. Birkbeck shows how the downward pressure of low international prices for raw materials led to poor earnings for pickers. Whereas these pickers could not engage in collective bargaining, international prices enabled factory owners to keep the price of collected materials low, maintaining advantages in their procurement system (Feldman and Ferretti, 1998, p. 5).

As part of this emphasis on linkages between sectors, Hart's (1973) original assertion that the informal sector is akin to self-employment came into doubt. As Birkbeck's (1978) example shows, garbage pickers can be considered as self-employed, but also as informal wage earners depending on their relationship with factories. At the same time, Bromley and Gerry (1979)

promoted a conception of economies as consisting of a continuum of activities ranging from wage earning to self-employment. For them, the work categorized as informal in the dual sector approach does not necessarily correspond with self-employment. Instead, they see informal work as casual work marked by a lack of income and employment security (*ibid.*). The works of Birkbeck (1978; 1979), Bromley (1978a; 1978b) and Bromley and Gerry (1979) are part of a shift away from the oppositional dual sector approach towards one that examines linkages between the two sectors. No longer are formal and informal practices seen as disconnected sectors of economic activity. Instead, everything is connected.

This shift away from economic dualism is what some scholars have come to call the “Structuralist School” (Chen, 2012, p. 4-6) or “Structural Articulation Approach” (Chaudhuri and Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 4-6). According to Chen (2012, p. 5-6), the structuralists argue that the nature of capitalism and capitalist growth drives informality. Researchers who employed the structural approach highlight: a) attempts by formal firms to reduce labour costs and increase competitiveness and the reaction of formal firms to the power of organized labour, state regulation of the economy (notably, taxes and social legislation); b) the use of informal practices by formal firms in order to gain an edge in global competition; and, c) informal employment as part of the process of industrialization (notably, off-shore industries, subcontracting chains, and flexible specialization). Chaudhuri and Mukhopadhyay (2010, p. 5-6) present the Structural Articulation Approach similarly. For them, this approach is marked by attention to ways dependent structural linkages between the informal and formal sectors are shaped by the wage and labour strategies of capitalist enterprises, which seek to lower costs by maintaining a reserve army of surplus labour (*ibid.*).

Unlike explanations and assumptions found in the dual sector model, Chen (2012) is clear that the structuralists view the formal and informal sectors as being fundamentally intertwined. They see both informal enterprises and informal wage workers as subordinated to the interests of capitalist development, providing cheap goods and services. They argue that governments should address the unequal relationship between “big business” and subordinated producers and workers by regulating both commercial and employment relationships.

In reality, this approach is a manifestation of structural Marxism that found prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. This was a shift away from the modernization paradigm found in the dual sector approach. In Marxist analyses of the formal and informal sectors, modern capitalism is dependent upon the informal economy (rather than the other way around). Marxist orientations emphasize how the dependent structural linkages between the formal and informal sectors result from the wage and labour strategies of capitalist firms that endeavour to maintain lower wages and a reserve army of surplus labour (see Portes and Walton, 1981, p. 67-106; Richardson, 1984; and Roberts, 1978, p. 159-177). Here, the formal economy becomes dependent on the informal economy through this unequal exchange of labour.

Alejandro Portes and his associates were a major force behind this becoming one of the dominant approaches to informality from the late-1970s into the 1990s. Relying on the world-system formulation of core-periphery relations, one of the key arguments made by Portes is that informal labour in peripheral nations offers indirect subsidies to core-nation workers which increase their purchasing power. In order for core-nation workers to reap these benefits, informal labour in peripheral nations is used to keep production costs down. Informal workers act as a reserve pool of labour that maintains the dominance of capitalist firms in core nations. One of the threads that runs through Portes’ work is that the informal sector is not transitional or dependent

on the formal sector, but instead is a survival strategy among the poor in peripheral nations that is part of the functioning of the global capitalist economy and processes of accumulation (see Portes, 1978; 1979; 1983; and 1994). In fact, in this view, it is the nature of capitalist development (rather than a lack of economic development) that contributes to the growth of informality. The formal sector comes to rely on the informal sector because it is subsidized by it.

By the mid-1980s, this structural-Marxist emphasis had arguably become the dominant approach for interpreting informal activities. The shift away from economic dualism was also marked by a shift from emphasis on sectors to an emphasis on informal work, particularly sweatshop-style workshop and factory-based production, as well as subcontracted home-based production for international marketers. All of this was seen as part of a shift in global capitalism. Some of this scholarship relied on a petty commodity production framework that considered such activities to be examples of precapitalist production, relying on assumptions that petty commodity production was subordinate to capitalist relations (see Moser, 1978). Such interpretations echoed the dualistic approach, but quickly fell out of vogue in favour of interpretations of informal work that underscored the linkages between petty production and capitalist development (Feldman and Ferretti, 1998, p. 7).

Also part of this shift in approaching the informal economy was an emphasis on the role of women as informal labourers in petty commodity production (United Nations, 1990). A major avenue for examining petty commodity production was in terms of how women in developing countries started to engage in home-based production of items intended for global export.⁶ Such

⁶ The sheer amount of research into this topic constitutes its own subgenre of informal economy literature that continues today. Some publications that highlight the geographic reach of such projects from the era, include studies of women's home-based petty commodity production and

women were not exactly self-employed, as they found themselves exchanging their labour with formal firms for informal wages as part of burgeoning export markets. In many cases, male members of households acted as middlemen with formal firms and controlled the wages earned by the women. In such chains of production and exchange there could be several middlemen in between the home-based producer and the export company, resulting in a small number of successful local entrepreneurs and a large mass of informal workers. Yet, this is only one example of the feminization of the workforce in developing nations being linked to informality.

As research into informal work began to focus on the feminization of the workforce in developing countries, analyses continued to assume that informal work was an enduring feature of postcolonialism (Feldman and Ferretti, 1998, p. 11). Researchers started to pay attention to increasing evidence of informal work in North America and Europe, as home-based and sweatshop production expanded in industrialized countries too. Scholars started to view informal work as part of the complex processes of late twentieth-century capitalism as, by the mid-1980s, increasing unemployment in industrialized countries led to increasing reliance on part-time, temporary and non-formal income in both core and peripheral nations. As a worldwide phenomenon, informality could be conceptualized as part of a new era in advanced capitalism highlighted by a process of global economic readjustment. However, it also became clear that homogeneous approaches to informal research were inadequate due to the great variability in explaining the domestic circumstances around the emergence of the informal economy in different national contexts (Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987).

trading in places like Ghana (Clark, 1986), India (Bhatt, 1989; Singal & Balakrishnan, 1988), Korea (Cho & Koo, 1983), Mexico (Alonso, 1988; and Cook, 1990), Malaysia (Sulaiman, 1984), Peru (Babb, 1998; originally published in 1989) and Sri Lanka (Blake & Goonatilake, 1980). I could easily add dozens more examples to this list.

The structural approach faced sharp criticism by the late 1980s from authors such as Peattie (1987, p. 857-858) who argued that, like researchers subscribing to the dualistic approach, the Marxist orientation relied on economic dualism. Peattie argued against the continued use of the sector terminology because of its dualistic connotations and suggested that researchers examine specific economic institutions rather than supposed sectors. It was around this time that the phrase “informal economy” gained traction.

2.4 The Legalist/Neoliberal Approach

The 1980s and 1990s were a period of massive economic restructuring across the globe. Globalization resulting from organizational integration of production across national boundaries and technological advances that expedited the flow of global capital and communications led to production occurring on a global scale. The economic rise of some countries (particularly in East Asia), the increased indebtedness of other postcolonial nations (particularly in South America and Africa), perpetual recessions in the Global North and the collapse of the planned economy in Central and Eastern Europe (see Sassen 1992; 1994) are just some examples of how economic changes across the globe were occurring heterogeneously during this period. Despite this, the process of global economic restructuring led to changes in labour forces worldwide. This was the era when neoliberalism took hold (Harvey, 1989), marked by economic liberalization policies that promoted privatization, austerity, deregulation and free trade, as well as ever increasing flows of global capital and international trade.

Wealthier nations in Europe and North America saw massive job losses in industry as these jobs were transplanted to countries in the Global South, where poorly paid female factory workers took them up. What was once seen as marginal amongst informal economy researchers was now a major source of research: the feminization of Third World labour forces was not only

a consequence of economic restructuring, but also led to changes in previously dominant divisions of labour in many countries. This offered a new avenue for research regarding informality: as firms came to depend on a flexible, compliant and low-cost female labour force as part of a new regime of export-oriented industrialization, women remained underpaid in comparison to their male counterparts and unprotected as workers (all the while being exposed to unsafe working conditions). As part of a focus on informal work during this era, female factory workers became an example of how formal firms engage in informal practices by skirting regulations (depending on whether or not regulations of various kinds are even in place).

As evidence mounted that the informal economy and informal work was proliferating across the globe as part of a restructuring of global capitalism, older approaches that treated the informal sector as something negative that would eventually disappear were challenged by what Chen (2012) calls the “Legalist Approach.” For legalists, the notion that the informal economy was a residue of traditionalism (such as the dual sector model) or the result of the proletarianization of the workforce (as found in the Marxist interpretations of petty commodity production) did not apply in the real world. However, policy makers and governments continued to rely on economic dualism and became more focused on the eradication of informality in various national contexts. This created legal barriers for informal workers to who planned to work in the formal system.

According to Chen (2012) the legalists argue that a hostile legal system leads the self-employed to operate informally with their own informal extra-legal norms (5-6). Chaudhuri and Mukhopadhyay (2010) refer to this as the “Neoliberal Approach,” which relies on the same explanation of informality (p. 5-6). Here the emergence and survival of the informal sector is the result of legal instruments created through government bureaucracy. Lengthy registration

processes, complex administrative steps and economic costs associated with operating legally/formally become prohibitive and encourage informal activities. Rather than being a residue of traditionalism, the informal sector is presented as a coherent response to government bureaucracy.

Chen (2012) is clear that, like the structuralists, the legalists view the formal and informal sectors as being fundamentally intertwined. However, the approaches interpret this differently and the legalists offer an opposing policy prescription to governments (p. 5-6): The legalists focus on informal enterprises and the formal regulatory environment to the relative neglect of informal wage workers and the formal economy per se. However, they acknowledge that formal firms collude with governments to set the bureaucratic rules of the game. They argue that governments should introduce simplified bureaucratic procedures to encourage informal enterprises to register and extend legal property rights for the assets held by informal operators in order to unleash their productive potential and convert their assets into real capital. Here, the argument is that excessive government regulation leads to informality.

The legalist/neoliberal approach centres on legal reform and is most often associated with the work of economist Hernando de Soto (1989). De Soto examines the role of informal entrepreneurs in housing, transport and trade to highlight the reasons behind urban migration and a growing number of informal enterprises in Peru's urban centres (Feldman & Ferretti, 1988, p. 104). He argues that in Peru, systemic government intervention on behalf of specific enterprises has led to biased interventions against small-scale entrepreneurs who are constrained by lower productivity than that expected of the formal economy. He then suggests that informal entrepreneurs react to formal barriers by creating new institutions to facilitate their economic activities. He highlights land rights, particularly informal housing (de Soto, 1989, p. 17-58) and

the legal limbo facing street vendors (p. 59-78) as major barriers created by government policies that prevent informal entrepreneurs from working in and taking advantage of the benefits of the formal system. The main crux of de Soto's approach is that changing laws will enable informal practices to become part of the formal system. In this view, formalization is the most desirable outcome for informal practitioners. This is because the relationship between formal and informal sectors is exploitative. It is government policy that enables the continuation of informality.

Informality can act as a response to (and survival strategy in the face of) burdensome government regulations. By the late 1980s, other researchers were starting to take notice of how government policies could in fact lead to informality. For example, Ferman, Henry and Hoyman (1987) prioritized the state's role in the formation of informal economic activities: "Government policy on tax, welfare, and crime shapes—if not creates—informal economies by defining what is formal and legitimate and thereby what is not" (p. 165). The authors are clear that the relationship between government intervention and the emergence of fledgling forms of informal economic activities has serious implications for the successful implementation of policy:

...When tax policy and its enforcement are altered, changes occur in the relationship between informal economies, the formal market economy, and the redistributive economy, and we need to know more about these changes if we are to formulate and implement effective policy. (p. 168)

As a final point about this approach, it is worth noting that since the work of de Soto (1989) and others is rooted in the neoliberal shift of the 1980s, there is an undercurrent of laissez-faire suggestions to legal reform in this approach. In many ways, the argument for making better laws is a call for deregulation to spur more opportunities for informal entrepreneurs and wage earners.

The legalist and structuralist approaches described thus far would continue to play a prominent role in scholarship throughout the 1990s. Policy prescriptions (particularly from the ILO) would continue to emphasize economic dualism, but became more focused on good jobs

vs. bad jobs during the 1990s and the protection of workers' rights.⁷ However, by the early 2000s a shift by economists towards emphasizing the role of informal entrepreneurs would lead to a new set of debates.

2.5 The Voluntarist Approach

The voluntarist approach was first articulated by World Bank economist William Maloney (2004). Here, the idea is that the informal economy is a result of informal entrepreneurs who choose to operate informally after weighing the costs and benefits of informality versus formality. This argument breaks away from the idea that informal entrepreneurs engage in informal practices as a survival strategy in the face of precariousness. Maloney considers the informal sector as an unregulated, developing country analogue of the voluntary activities of entrepreneurs in advanced countries and not a residual effect of disadvantaged workers pushed out of "good jobs" (p. 1159). In fact, he is critical of the ILO's position about good vs. bad jobs and the policy implications of such assumptions. He says:

If in fact much of the sector is voluntary, in the sense of workers preferring their present job to one in the formal sector, then the informal job must be at least of equal quality measured along [a] broader set of relevant job characteristics. (p. 1159-1160)

With this in mind, Maloney is clear that in arguing that workers becoming voluntarily informal does not imply that they are not living in poverty (p. 1160). Instead, his argument is that workers who voluntarily become informal see themselves as better off working informally than working formally. He is also clear that the informal sector is heterogeneous and that his argument will not apply to all subsectors (*ibid.*).

Maloney's (2004) research relies on statistical data from Argentina, Mexico and Brazil. In each case, he demonstrates that informal workers tend to leave formal work voluntarily. He

⁷ See the ILO's (1998) "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at *Work*."

identifies two main motives: a desire for greater independence and the possibility of higher pay (p. 1160). One of the most telling findings from his data is that informal entrepreneurs tend to be happy with their current job and do not wish to look for a “real” job in the formal sector. He notes that these motivations are similar to the reasons behind people becoming self-employed in advanced countries such as the USA, England and Germany (*ibid.*). Self-employment is not part of a holding pattern while waiting for a “real job” and, for informal entrepreneurs, informal self-employment is not a safety net (though it may be for other types of informal workers, particularly if they enter the sector involuntarily) (p. 1161-1162). That said, the majority of the informally employed workers captured in Maloney’s data tend to enter the sector voluntarily (*ibid.*). All of this leads the author to suggest that labour market segmentation may not be the cause of informality. Instead, he suggests that, “it may be the attractiveness of informal self-employment that causes dualism rather than a segmented market causing informality” (p. 1163).

Much of the remainder of Maloney’s (2004) article examines several common assumptions made in informal economy literature. The first assumption he tackles is the idea that informally self-employed workers earn less than formal sector workers. Maloney’s data suggests that this is not the case and that successful informal entrepreneurs tend to earn more than if they were working for a formal wage. What does occur generally is that voluntary informal entrepreneurs have better wages, but lose other benefits. This realization leads to Maloney arguing against wages as the best way to measure the success of informal workers. Instead, he says that a better way to measure success is to look at the “total package” of wages and benefits (p. 1164).

The second assumption that Maloney (2004) challenges is that these people are the poorest workers in the economy. He is clear that informal workers (both self-employed and

salaried) tend to be drawn from the poor. But whether or not poverty is the result of a job, or the job a result of poverty is difficult to determine. If informal workers are more likely than not to engage in such practices voluntarily then this assumes that the opportunity costs associated with informality are equal to or better than the costs associated with finding formal work. One key finding is that informal workers tend to have lower levels of education than workers in the formal sector. As such, Maloney notes that working informally does not imply that one is happy or well-off. Instead, it implies that one would not necessarily be better off in the formal sector and that workers are making their choices based on the best options available to them given their low levels of education (p. 1164).

The third assumption examined by Maloney (2004) is that it makes little sense for informal workers to give up the benefits and protections of the formal sector. Maloney argues that there are several reasons why informal workers may not see these benefits as being cost-effective. First, he notes that social protections are not free and that workers pay for them either explicitly or through lower wages (p. 1165). According to the author, if an alternative exists at a lower cost, or which better suits the needs of a worker, there is less incentive to participate in the formal institutions that provide such protections (*ibid.*). A second issue is that formal social services in developing countries are often of poor quality. This is particularly problematic when governments have dubious track records in providing such services (p. 1166).⁸ Finally, Maloney notes that protections can be noxious to talented workers, especially if they enable other workers

⁸ Maloney is specifically referring to how some governments in developing countries have a dubious track record when it comes to pensions, which are paid for through the contributions of formal sector workers. The fear that a government may raid pension funds and leave formal sector workers with little to show for their contributions down the road is Maloney's main example (p. 1166). In my opinion, this can be extended to any type of benefit that is part of a government promised social safety net that formal sector workers pay for through mandatory contributions to government coffers.

to gain promotions in their formal jobs instead of them (*ibid.*). What is clear is that part of voluntarily entering informal work is that the supposed benefits and protections offered to formal workers are not inherently the best options available for such workers. Going further, Maloney argues that similar motivations are present amongst entrepreneurs in advanced countries, as these formally self-employed workers also take on the burdens of social protections and benefits themselves (having to pay for their own health care in the USA, not earning pensions, etc.) (p. 1167).

Another assumption that Maloney (2004) addresses is that informal self-employment is precarious. He says that it is not. Instead, he suggests that becoming informally self-employed carries larger amounts of risk. Small firms have high failure rates and it is common for informal entrepreneurs to find that their businesses are not viable. As such, it is common for people who are considering becoming informally self-employed to work formal jobs too as a form of risk management at first (p. 1168). But these issues are not exclusive to the informally self-employed in less developed nations. Instead, the author is clear that, “the riskiness is intrinsic to small businesses anywhere and that operation within the accepted institutional framework may be incidental” (p. 1175). What is also telling is that successful informal businesses tend to become more formal over time as they grow (p. 1168).

A final assumption that Maloney critiques is that the large informal sector implies a large amount of labour market distortions (p. 1170-1172). Here, the author critiques dualistic frameworks that assume that poorer countries have progressively more labour market distortions. Instead, he argues that there are no labour distortions and that there is nothing intrinsically inferior about self-employment (p. 1170). Instead, he thinks that dualistic approaches are overlooking the fact that most informal self-employment is in the service sector (rather than

production), which means that productivity tends to grow less amongst the self-employed than those working in production jobs in the formal sector (p. 1171).

All of these challenges to assumptions about the informal sector through the lens of self-employment lead Maloney to suggest that urban informal microenterprises in less developed nations are part of a voluntary small firm sector similar to those found in advanced countries. These firms only operate informally because the laxity of enforcement of labour and other codes allows informal entrepreneurs to choose the degree of their participation in formal institutions based on optimizing their costs and benefits (p. 1173). Although Maloney does not discuss agency, in my opinion this is implicit in his approach because of informality (at least for entrepreneurs) being based on choice rather than coercion or precariousness. This is a significant shift from previous explanations of why people enter the informal economy found in dualistic approaches. Ultimately, the author argues against dualistic interpretations because he sees these as only relevant for explaining informal self-employment in times of deep recession or large labour market distortions that lead to people becoming self-employed involuntarily (*ibid.*).

2.6 Contemporary Scholarship

The four main approaches to interpreting the informal economy that I have outlined above—dual sector approaches, structuralist approaches, legalist/neoliberal approaches and voluntarist approaches—continue to be influential, even though the reliance on economic dualism characterizing earliest approaches has long ago fallen out of favour. Today, there are remnants and facets of each of these approaches that still find prominence in informal economy literature. Nevertheless, current research has changed emphasis, with the issues of employment and enforcement taking centre stage. Chen (2012) identifies the following approaches as being significant for contemporary scholarship amongst informal economy researchers:

1. The employment-centred focus
2. Holistic conceptual models
3. The formalization debate

According to Chen, the Employment-Centred Focus is an attempt to analyze informality through defining and interpreting different types of informal employment (p. 7-8). Chen identifies two major sources of informal employment: self-employment and wage employment. Examples of informal self-employment include: employers in informal enterprises; own account workers⁹ in informal enterprises; contributing family workers (in informal and formal enterprises); and members of informal producers' cooperatives (where these exist). Informal wage employment, on the other hand, refers to employees hired without social protection contributions by formal or informal enterprises or as paid domestic workers by households. Certain types of wage work are more likely than others to be informal. These include: employees of informal enterprises; casual or day labourers; temporary or part-time workers; paid domestic workers; contract workers; unregistered or undeclared workers; and industrial outworkers (also called homeworkers).

Today, informal employment is widely recognized to include a range of self-employed persons, who mainly work in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises, as well as a range of *wage workers* who are employed without employer contributions to social protection (Chen, 2012, p. 8). The issue of employment has become a significant part of the holistic conceptual models that Chen outlines. In fact, the reasons behind informal employment have become one of the central issues in informal economy research since the turn of the century. Amongst

⁹ The ILO (1993b), defines own account workers as those who, “working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the type of job defined as a 'self-employment job,' and have not engaged on a continuous basis any 'employees' to work for them during the reference period” (para. 10).

mainstream economists, one popular view is that the informal economy is largely composed of informal entrepreneurs who choose/volunteer to work informally (Maloney, 2004). On the other hand, the idea that informality serves as a safety net during times of economic crisis (particularly during recession) is also a popular point of view amongst economists. Economists also recognize the ever-increasing number of informally employed workers across the globe, which has led them to explain of the phenomenon as a feature of economic growth in the global economy. All of these recent approaches emphasize the linkages between formal and informal practices. Hence the emphasis on holistic models that seek to capture the components of (as well as the different factors driving) informality.

One model identified by Chen (2012) is the “World Bank Latin America Division Model,” which William Maloney helped develop (p. 9-10). Based on a report published by the Latin American Division of the World Bank, this model presents two casual theories for explaining how people come to be informally employed: exit (voluntary informality) and exclusion (involuntary informality) (Perry et al., 2007). The authors of the report identify several different forms of exit and exclusion. Here, voluntary informality is framed as a kind of evasion from formality. These forms of exit include: a) opportunistic evasion such as tax-evasion, illegal activities and avoidance of labour codes; b) defensive evasion in response to burdensome or weak state activities, benefits and protections; and c) passive evasion due to state irrelevance (including participation in pre-modern or bazaar economies, as well as informal or non-state institutions). At the same time, several forms of involuntary informality result from exclusion from the formal sector. These include: a) labour market segmentation preventing workers from getting formal jobs; b) burdensome entry regulations preventing enterprises from formalizing; and c) hiring practices of firms in response to excessive tax and regulatory burdens.

Another model identified by Chen (2012) is the “Six-Segment Model by Status of Employment.” This is a holistic framework developed by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) (p. 8-9).¹⁰ This model features six statuses in employment that form a hierarchy. The statuses are explained in terms of their degree of economic risk (such as losing a job or wages) and the amount of authority that a particular economic agent has over other workers (p. 8). From top to bottom, these include: informal employers, informal employees (wage earners), own account operators, casual wage workers, industrial outworkers or subcontracted workers (as well as homeworkers), and unpaid but contributing family workers (p. 9). Men tend to be at the top of the pyramid (with the lowest amount of risk and highest amount of authority), while women tend to be at the bottom. Chen et al. (2005) tested the model by examining data from six countries.¹¹ When segmenting employment type by sex, average earnings and poverty risk, the researchers were able to demonstrate that a similar percentage of workers in different segments experiencing the same situation in these different countries (p. 36-57).

Part of what WIEGO highlights in this model is that all four of the casual explanations/theoretical approaches that I have profiled in this chapter are valid, but only for certain segments of informal employment. They position each of the earlier approaches in this way (“WIEGO Network Holistic Framework,” n.d.):

1. Dualists = Exclusion (Mismatch between demand for and supply of labour)

¹⁰ Chen refers to the model as the “WIEGO Model” and is the lead author in the report that first develops this approach. Chen is also a co-founder of WIEGO and is currently WIEGO’s international co-ordinator.

¹¹ The statistical data in question is derived from the United Nations and compares gender-based employment, types of employment (formal and informal) and earnings in Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, India and South Africa.

2. Structuralists = Exploitation (Subordination of informal units and workers to capitalist firms)
3. Legalists = Entry Barriers (Unreasonable regulations and hostile legal environment)
4. Voluntarists = Exit (Calculated decision by informal entrepreneurs to exit the formal system).

Applied to the six different segments by status of employment that WIEGO identifies, the organization insist that in general each segment relates to two of the causal frameworks identified (“WIEGO Network Holistic Framework,” n.d.):

1. Informal Employers = Exit + Entry Barriers
2. Informal Employees = Exclusion + Exploitation
3. Own Account Operators = Exclusion + Entry Barriers
4. Casual Day Labourers = Exclusion + Exploitation
5. Industrial Outworkers = Exclusion + Exploitation
6. Unpaid Contributing Family Workers = Exclusion + Exploitation

Of note is that the WIEGO model utilises parts of the World Bank model in explaining their framework with the exit and exclusion terminology. At the same time, the WIEGO model is subtly critical of the World Bank approach in showing that the issue of exit that predominates in their model only really applies to the top of the status of employment pyramid. Such debates about employment continue to be significant in terms of the formalization debate, which I will explain in the next section of this chapter.

The third model identified by Chen (2012) is the “Ravi Kanbur Model” (Chen, 2012, p. 10-11). Unlike the other two contemporary models identified by Chen, Kanbur’s (2009) conceptual framework emphasizes the relationship between regulation and enforcement. Kanbur

is highly critical of previous approaches found in informal economy literature, arguing that the topic is of maximum policy importance, but has little conceptual clarity or coherence (p. 33). He proposes that any account of informality lacks context if it does not centre on specific instances of state intervention and regulation (p. 33-34). He notes that what makes something formal or informal (such as requirements for business registration) differs across countries, but that the tendency among researchers to highlight informality over issues of regulation and enforcement has led to this lack of definitional coherence (p. 35-36). As such, he suggests that each study should set out to describe exactly what regulations it is concerned with (p. 37). In order to simplify the issues of regulation and enforcement, Kanbur distinguishes between four types of economic responses to regulation, as follows (*ibid.*):

1. Stay within the ambit of the regulation and comply.
2. Stay within the ambit of the regulation but do not comply.
3. Adjust activity to move out of the ambit of the regulation.
4. Outside the ambit of the regulation in the first place, so no need to adjust.

Under this framework, only the first category is “formal.” Activities under category 2 are likely to be informal or illegal. However, regulations do not apply to activities in either category 3 or 4, making them neither formal nor informal. As such, Kanbur argues that using a single label, “informal,” for the latter two categories reveals little about the specific economic activities that people partake in and instead obscures what is actually happening. Instead, he presents these as distinct categories that derive from the regulation(s) under consideration. At the same time, he is clear that, “the intensity of enforcement affects decisions which permeate through the different categories—in particular, how many and which sorts of activities will be found in each category” (p. 38). Hence, emphasizing the relationship between regulation and enforcement is necessary

for interpreting the nature of formality and informality (*ibid.*). This becomes particularly significant in situations where regulations exist, but are unenforced. Kanbur's approach centres on his claim that, "specificity on regulation and on enforcement is the key to achieving conceptual clarity in the analytical literature and in the policy discourse on informality" (p. 41).

Ultimately, contemporary debates in the informal economy literature now focus on issues of employment and enforcement, which is why the three models identified by Chen (2012) are worth discussing here. Recent approaches are much more holistic in nature than historic approaches to the subject of informality, but the one issue that continues to permeate scholarship about the informal economy (regardless of the approach being utilised) is the assumption that formalization should be the end goal of policy makers who are tackling the phenomenon.

2.7 The Formalization Debate

Despite a lack of definitional clarity and coherence regarding informality and numerous competing analytical and theoretical approaches (both historical and contemporary) towards the subject, there is one major thread that has permeated policy since the concept was first presented in the 1970s: how to formalize the informal economy (Chen, 2012, p. 15-16). Early approaches relied on assumptions about the informal sector that positioned it negatively and the formal sector as ideal. This has not changed, but the emphasis and rationality have.

In the dualistic approach, the idea is that informality is an inferior residue of traditionalism that stands in the way of modernization in developing countries. In the structuralist approach, informality is seen as a negative result of capitalist exploitation in less developed countries (rather than being an inferior residue of traditionalism). As such, informality results from flaws in the formal system. This is one of the assumptions grounding the legalist approach but its emphasis is on reducing legal barriers that prevent informally employed people from

practicing formally (particularly in terms of property rights, as well as access to permits and licenses). Of the early approaches that I have profiled, only the voluntarist approach assumes that informality is not inherently negative (as either standing in the way or progress, or resulting from flaws in the formal system) due to its emphasis on informal entrepreneurs choosing to practice informally. Even so, this approach points to flaws in the formal system as part of the reasoning behind people engaging in informal economic activities.

Contemporary holistic models also tend to assume that informality results from flaws in the formal system. This is true for the World Bank Latin America Model where both exit and exclusion can be explained this way, as well as in Kanbur's model regarding the relationship between regulation and enforcement. As such, the common thread that permeates much of the literature is that formality is preferable to informality because of the benefits and protections that the formal system is supposed to offer. If the formal system is not providing these benefits or protections in a concrete way or is making it too difficult to practice formally due to difficult to navigate bureaucracy then people will participate in informal economic activities. Major policy promoters such as the ILO (2007) and the World Bank (Perry et al., 2007) recognize these insights and actively promote formalization as the better path.

Chen (2012) points to several ways through which formalization can improve the lives of people working informally (p. 16). She separates the informally employed into informal enterprises (aka informal entrepreneurs) and informal jobs (aka informal wage earners, including piece-workers and contract workers). There are significant benefits to formalization for each segment of the informal labour force. Regarding the formalization of informal enterprises, Chen highlights the following ways through which informal entrepreneurs could be encouraged to operate formally (*ibid.*):

1. Registration and taxation policies can be altered to encourage formalization through simplified registration procedures and progressive registration fees.
2. Appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks can be developed to encourage formalization, including: enforceable commercial contracts, private property rights, use of public space and occupational health and safety regulations.

Chen provides similar insights into why the formalization of informal jobs will help informal wage earners. This can be achieved by legally recognizing and protecting workers (p. 16). If states actively pursue such legal protections and recognition, then informal wage earners will benefit in the following ways: freedom from discrimination; a minimum wage; occupational health and safety measures; employer contributions to health and pensions; the right to organize and bargain collectively and where applicable, membership in formal trade unions.

Bromley and Wilson (2018) are somewhat critical of calls for formalization, depicting “formal” as an aspiration and ideal that results from the historical agenda of the ILO. They point to the ILO as being caught up in its original mission of convincing governments of the need for economic social justice since its inception in 1919, which coincided with the rise of Keynesian economics and the Fordist contract (p. 6-7). For them, the ILO’s mission has always been about improving the lives of labourers in the formal economy, with the interest in informality since the early 1970s barely predating the shift to neoliberal economics. They note that neoliberalism has eroded the ability for people to make ends meet in the formal economy due to globalization and national policies. Quoting Munck (2013), they note that:

Since the structural adjustment crises of the 1980s the informal sector has grown three to four times faster than formal sector employment. Multinational corporations have taken advantage, of course, of this phenomenon through their subcontracting networks now central to commodity production change. (p. 755, as cited in Bromley & Wilson, 2018, p. 8)

For Bromley and Wilson, this is compounded by the reality that, first, many very low-wage jobs have been outsourced to some of the poorest countries in the world as part of a race to the bottom to reduce wages (p. 8-9). As a result, people who were once marginal to the formal global economy are no longer marginal, but are among the most exploited (*ibid.*). Their second point is that government policies during the era of neoliberalism have tended to reduce job security, pensions and family healthcare benefits associated with full time employment in the formal sector, replacing them with minimalist alternatives (p. 9). As such, the neoliberal era is marked by increased informality around the world as the benefits of formality are eroded. Going further, the authors point to four reasons why the informal economy persists in the neoliberal era (*ibid.*):

1. The failure of the formal economy to expand and create full employment.
2. The overall weakening of the concept and advantages of formality.
3. The formal economy's constant generation of temporary, casual, and part-time jobs.
4. The many casual labour and microenterprise opportunities that arise in societies with widespread poverty, expanding professional and upper classes, and the large numbers of people seeking livelihoods.

These are all the result of the instability of labour markets under neoliberalism and point to the failures of governments and international organizations in attempting to direct economic policy with Keynesian aspirations during an era of neoliberal change: “under neoliberalism, both the formal and informal economies have been changing, and the gap between the two has been narrowing” (p. 10).

Bromley and Wilson (2018) do not provide solutions to the policy-making problems they identify, but do offer some suggestions that are worth mentioning. First, they are clear that it is inadequate to make generalizations about the informal economy as expanding or contracting,

arguing that place plays a major role in any given context (p. 11). They are also critical of the assumption among economists who employ the World Bank Latin America approach that exit is more important than exclusion for understanding informality, particularly for understanding gender differences in informal employment. They are clear that gender plays a significant role in informal strategies in places like Latin America and that women tend to be forced into informal activities due to economic constraints and necessity, while men are more likely to participate in the informal economy voluntarily.¹² They state that the fact that, “marginalized groups such as women and the poor take most of the informal employment suggests that exclusion is more important than exit” (p. 14).

Nevertheless, the key problem with formalization for Bromley and Wilson (2018) is that the costs outweigh the benefits of becoming formal for the poorest and most marginalized participants of the informal economy: precarious work is not the exclusive domain of the informal economy and the, “costs of formalization are often higher than the benefits for those employed in the informal economy. Benefits seem to accrue mostly to governments that receive more tax revenue” (p. 14). As such formalization as an aspiration and ideal may not actually provide the benefits that economists hope for in an era of neoliberalism where such benefits have already been eroded and the boundaries between formality and informality are less clear than ever before.

2.8 The Precariat

Geographer David Harvey (1989) explains that “flexible accumulation” is part of the reorganization of the capitalist mode of production under a new regime of accumulation, post-

¹² This insight is clearly compatible with the WIEGO model noted previously in this chapter.

Fordism. Harvey traces this transition away from Fordism as resulting from increased international competition for the major Fordist countries; tensions between capital, government, and organized labor; decreasing production and profits, increasing inflation; and heightened social tension between those inside and outside privileged production jobs. As a condition of the turn away from Fordism, flexible accumulation has several effects: the restructuring of the labour market into more flexible forms, cutting away at traditionally well-compensated core jobs in favour of a peripheral group of employees (such as part-time and contract workers who do not receive the same benefits as full-time employees). The advantages for capitalists employing flexible accumulation is twofold: it simplifies reducing the number of employees during slow times and makes it more difficult for labour to organize (p. 150-153).

Guy Standing (2011; and 2014) has recently argued that the emergence of flexible accumulation that has replaced the Fordist contract as part of neoliberalism has led to the emergence of a new global underclass (or “class-in-the-making”) that he calls “the precariat.” He explains the precariat as, “a neologism that combines an adjective ‘precarious’ and a related noun ‘proletariat’” (p. 7). This new class has emerged from a fragmented global class structure and is highlighted by a lack of labour-related security (p. 10-11). Indeed, the way that he originally presents the precariat is as the types of workers who are affected by flexible accumulation. The types of work that the precariat rely on include temporary jobs, part-time employment, contract work, call-centre work and internships (p. 13-16).

All of these types of jobs lack the security that full-time employees received under Fordism (such as benefits and pensions). This is not a romanticization of Fordism, but a critique of how flexible accumulation has led to an underclass that lacks any sort of job security. Standing also highlights how migrants and convicted criminals face a similar lack of job

security, due to their marginal status, which places such individuals among the precariat. The employment that members of the precariat rely on also lacks maneuverability for moving up the ranks within a company and prevents workers from developing a work identity. Standing refers to all of this as “precaritisation,” which he explains in this way: “To be precariatized is to be subject to pressures and experiences that lead to a precariat existence, of living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle” (Standing, 2011, p. 16).

Standing (2015) highlights how the precariat is divided into three different angry and bitter factions of labourers who have directed their anger towards each other, rather than rich elites and governments whose decisions have led to the phenomenon. This is not an accident. It is desired by global capitalism. The three factions Standing identifies are (2015, p. 7-8):

1. Atavists: workers who do not have university educations, but who come from communities that were built on industrial jobs (mining, manufacturing, etc.) and whose parent’s achieved status within their communities through their jobs—which no longer exist. This is the group that Standing sees as looking backwards at previous eras of employment and who are angry that the opportunities that their parents had are not available to them. For Standing, this faction is the one most likely to find appeal in neo-fascist, nationalist and populist political rhetoric.
2. Nostalgics: mostly migrant and refugee workers. These are people who have no sense of home and who keep to themselves in foreign lands as they attempt to make ends meet as marginalized others.

3. Progressives: this is the university and college educated group whose parents told them that getting an education would provide them a future. Instead, getting an education saddled them with debt in a world where having an education does not translate to jobs.

All three of these factions are angry and ready to rise up against something, but so far they have been engaging in conflicts with each other. Standing worries that an inability for governments to address the needs of the precariat will lead—and perhaps already has led—to a “politics of inferno” (p. 132-154) which is highlighted by the “panopticon society” (p. 132-133), invasion of privacy (p. 133-135), workplace discipline (p. 136-138), states becoming libertarian paternalists (p. 138-145), demonization of the precariat (p. 145-146), and the thinning of democracy and the rise of neo-fascism (p. 147-153). It is frightening to reflect on some of these propositions less than a decade later as populist governments with pseudo-libertarian agendas have gained traction in certain parts of the West whose followers may include large groups of neo-fascists (particularly in the United States). Standing’s solution to all of this is “a politics of paradise” (p. 155-183) where he calls for unconditional basic income and deliberative democracy.

The notion of the precariat has become extremely popular amongst academics in the Global North, but Munck (2013) rightly challenges whether or not this is really new, pointing to labour in the Global South from the era of modernization paradigms directing dualistic approaches to development in the 1950s-1960s to the present, providing a genealogy of the following concepts and terms as all pointing to similar trends: marginality, informality, and social exclusion and a culture of dependence. Through tracing the genealogy of these concepts, Munck contends that:

To be ‘marginal’, ‘informal’ or ‘socially excluded’ is to be beyond the parameters of the capitalist development process, if that is seen as a harmonious process of course. It is about being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural mechanisms of social integration. Policy makers might thus design programmes to address marginality

and exclusion, much as capitalism has always sought to address poverty in one way or another. But the prospects for social engineering would be limited if poverty and exclusion are structural and inherent features of an unequal system based on power differentials. The recent emergence of the term ‘precariat’ needs to be situated in the context of these earlier attempts to theorise a form of work (and living) which does not appear to conform either to liberal notions of harmonious development or Marxist theories of capitalism generating a proletariat which was to be its gravedigger. (p. 750-751)

Ultimately, Munck argues that the precariat underclass is problematic conceptually because it is Eurocentric and fails to consider similar observations that have come from research in the Global South. As such, he argues that the concept adds very little to the issue of the Northern working class under the aegis of neoliberal globalization (p. 751). Munck then proceeds to deconstruct the assumptions underpinning Standing’s (2011) conceptualization before offering ways through which it might be reconstructed more usefully.

Munck (2013) also argues that precariousness has long been part of how researchers have examined work, pointing to how Castel popularized the notion of precarious work amongst researchers interested in the sociology of work (p. 751).¹³ Criticizing Standing’s lack of a clear definition, Munck says,

The precariat is defined more or less by what it is not—a mythical, stable working class with full social and political rights—and by its vague feelings of anomie and distance from the orthodox labour movement. At a certain point Standing becomes aware that this is quite a weak basis on which to construct a new class and he then retreats to treating it as a class in the making. (p. 751-752)

Munck then challenges that Standing’s “class-in-the-making” thesis does not hold either. He states that class locations are constituted through the relation of production and reproduction and that, likewise, social classes are relational and do not emerge on their own (p. 752). Munck suggests that in order to verify that such a class exists or is in the making that attention must be

¹³ See Castel (1995).

directed towards specifying the antagonistic relations of production that social classes are based on (*ibid.*). Following Munck, Standing does not present any of this in his explanation of the precariat underclass. Instead, Munck argues, Standing relies on a series of premature identifications and generalizations that lead to an umbrella concept that “best describes a certain phase of Europe’s post-Fordist working class history” (*ibid.*).

Munck (2013) also takes Standing to task for the “Northern-centric” attitude exhibited in his account of the precariat, noting that precariousness has long been a feature of working class in the Global South and that Fordism and the welfare state may be an exception to the rule from a global perspective (p. 752). The notion that work in the Global South has always been precarious calls into question the idea that Standing is really presenting something new. Instead, Standing may actually be expressing a nostalgia for a Eurocentric past, just like his faction of atavists. However, this Keynesian/Fordist/welfare state nostalgia does not speak to the reality in the Global South, which never experienced welfare state capitalism in the way that nations in the Global North once did. Going further, the experience in the Global South finds its roots in the colonial past.

Despite the problems outlined by Munck (2013), there is value in thinking about the precariat in terms of my research sites. People working in the informal economy/used-goods trade in Halifax may or may not be precariats. However, the potential is there and, if there are precariats among used-goods vendors in Halifax, it is imperative to consider that the ways precariatization may occur could differ dramatically between people at each site.

2.9 Discussion: Informal Entrepreneurship and the Used-Goods Trade

Having provided a general overview of the history of informal economy literature, it is worth discussing how researching informal entrepreneurs involved in the used-goods trade in a

North American setting fits into this literature. As a starting point, it is beneficial to reiterate that the issue of self-employment was front and centre in Hart's (1973) initial conceptualization of the informal sector. In fact, entrepreneurship plays a major role in each of the four historical approaches to the informal economy that I have identified in this chapter. That said, the issues that early descriptions were directed towards are not necessarily compatible with researching the relationship between informality and the used-goods trade in Nova Scotia. Part of this has to do with the approaches employed by these schools of thought. However, the geographic context also plays a significant role in the difficulty of transplanting these approaches to my research sites.

The focus of early informal economy research was on how rural migration to cities in the Global South led to the establishment of an urban informal sector in less developed countries in places like Africa, South America and Asia. In the dualistic approach, the assumption was that these migrants relied on traditional practices in order to make ends meet and that their informal sector work resulted from an inability to engage with the modern, formal sector. As a residue of traditionalism, the informal sector was expected to eventually disappear by being absorbed into the formal sector. In reality this did not happen and we now know that informal economic endeavours have continued to proliferate in the Global South. Economic dualism fell out of favour in informal economy circles some time ago. Even if this were not the case, it would be difficult to apply the dualistic approach to my research sites: it is unlikely that used-goods vendors in Nova Scotia are engaging in informal practices because of migration to urban centres and the used-goods trade is not necessarily a residue of traditionalism.¹⁴

¹⁴ That said, the petty trading and used-goods industries certainly predate modern capitalism.

In the structuralist approach, entrepreneurship is called into question by researchers who see informal self-employment as exploitative. This is because of the linkages that informal entrepreneurs have with formal firms. Researchers employing this approach point to home-based petty commodity production and market trading as examples of how supposedly self-employed informal practitioners are caught up in global capitalist chains that keep wages down elsewhere through the creation of a reserve labour force in less developed countries. In this way, the informal self-employed are forced to engage in such practices due to a lack of opportunity to participate in the formal economy. In this approach, the informal sector is thought of as subsidizing the formal sector.

Economic dualism is still prominent in this approach, but the explanation for dualism is radically different from that found in the dualistic approach. Like the dualistic approach, it is incredibly difficult to apply the structuralist approach to used-goods vendors in the Global North. Some used-goods vendors may rely on the formal sector as part of their informal economic practices, but this does not mean that they are subject to the sort of capitalist exploitation that the structuralists identify in the Global South. This is because used-goods vendors are not likely to be part of the first-cycle supply chains that are part of the underpinnings of this approach. At the same time, such assumptions may not be true for all situations in the Global South either, as it is likely that informal entrepreneurs are not exclusively engaging in self-exploitation. As such, one should be cautious in expecting this to occur in all situations regardless of the geographic region where informal entrepreneurship is taking place.

Of the historical approaches that I identify, the legalist and voluntarist approaches may be more compatible with my research sites and subjects than the other two approaches, but neither are perfect fits. The legalists envision the informal sector as being made up of plucky

entrepreneurs who are unable to engage in the formal sector due to bureaucratic red tape that puts them at a disadvantage in favour of formal entrepreneurs who are more connected with policymakers. Legalists argue for a neoliberal agenda that involves deregulation and looser laws that enable easier formalization of informal practices. This may or may not be of use for informal entrepreneurs such as used-goods traders in North America, but one of the major issues highlighted by the legalists—property rights for informal merchants who rely on squatting in order to safeguard their illegal places of business—does not apply to flea markets or used-goods shops.

The voluntarist approach is by far the easiest one to link to the used-goods trade in Nova Scotia. The idea is that informal entrepreneurs enter the informal economy voluntarily. My assumption is that people who are operating their used-goods businesses as primary sources of income, moonlighters, pensioners and people on disability who participate at markets to subsidize their incomes and even artisans and artists who do not see their endeavours as constituting businesses at all, are likely to engage in their endeavours at markets or used-goods shops voluntarily.

The more recent holistic frameworks that I identify in this chapter are much more applicable to my research sites and participants. The WIEGO model is, perhaps, the least obvious, but this has to do with my strategic choice to not focus on gender dimensions among used-goods vendors in this research project. However, this model does clearly delineate differences between types of informal work and there are some insights that are applicable insofar as this is an employment-centred approach. Self-employment (here called “informal employers”) is only one type of work that can be informal. This type is found at the top of the hierarchy of informal labour. However, for my purposes, this is where the value of the model

ends. My experiences vending at flea markets prior to commencing this project leads me to assume that the majority of people working at similar sites in Nova Scotia are either working as sole proprietors or as family units (with younger family members serving in apprentice roles). As such, it is unlikely that the types of hierarchical relationships identified in the WIEGO model will occur at used-goods markets in Nova Scotia.

The World Bank Latin America and the Kanbur models are much more applicable for my research than any of the other approaches that I have presented in this chapter. The World Bank model follows on from the work of Maloney, but is more robust because it does not assume that all informal labourers have entered the informal economy voluntarily. By focusing on exit and exclusion, the model provides a holistic framework for interpreting the reasons behind people working informally. For entrepreneurs this tends to be voluntary, with the exit from the formal economy resulting from the benefits of informality outweighing the costs. For others (particularly employees), exclusion from the formal economy necessitates becoming an informal labourer. This model makes sense for used-goods markets in Atlantic Canada because of the likelihood that vendors work as sole proprietors or as part of family units, as predicted above.

The Kanbur model's emphasis on regulation and enforcement is helpful for considering how these two issues affect informal economic practices at both of my research sites. Research participants who are aware of regulations that may affect them are likely to develop strategies in order to formalize or avoid such regulations. At the same time, it is to be expected that selective enforcement of legislation occurs in cities like Halifax and that enforcement strategies will have particular effects on used-goods sellers that would not apply in other jurisdictions that have different regulations and enforcement regimes in place.

Despite Standing's (2011; 2014; and 2015) assertion that there is a class-in-the-making that he calls the precariat becoming quite popular in academic and policy circles, the concept of the precariat may be difficult to apply to my research sites. Munck's (2013) criticism of Standing as relying on a Eurocentric approach that overlooks the ongoing precariousness of work in the Global South, as well as Standing's analysis ignoring the informal economy literature that deals with the phenomena adds to this difficulty. Without Standing providing an overview or understanding of the informal economy literature, the precariat loses some of its appeal.

Interpreting Standing's (2011; 2014; and 2015) analysis through the World Bank Latin American model (which Standing does not seem to be aware of) also points to some potential weaknesses in employing the precariat concept. A major part of Standing's description of the precariat is that this class is made up of people who lack the job security under neoliberalism and flexible accumulation than existed under Fordism. Entrepreneurs seem to be overlooked in Standing's account and this may be due to the self-employed being part of a different class altogether. Nevertheless, when one thinks about the precariat in terms of the language used by the World Bank—exit and exclusion—it becomes increasingly obvious that the precariat is not a fit for an analysis of entrepreneurship (formal or informal) because entrepreneurship tends to result from choice. If entrepreneurs are more likely to start their businesses voluntarily than involuntarily then this is a completely different experience than that of Standing's precariat who (despite often having jobs for which they are underemployed) are experiencing various forms of exclusion in the name of flexibility and a lack of security. Nevertheless, I have to leave open the possibility that there may be members of this supposed precariat class working in the used-goods trade in Nova Scotia.

Of course, it is impossible to isolate used-goods vending from the rest of the economy. The used-goods trade is often part of, or intersects with, the informal economy. Used goods are not the exclusive domain of informal economic agents in the Global North and the used-goods trade exists all over the world. However, the reasons behind people engaging in informal practices in places like Nova Scotia are not necessarily compatible with the reasons found in the Global South. This is why I have highlighted the World Bank Latin America and Kanbur models as being most useful for my research in this chapter's concluding section: neither necessitate an approach that is oriented towards research in the Global South. Instead, both models can help to make sense of why people become informal entrepreneurs in places like Canada, while also considering how regulations and enforcement affect the trajectories of such entrepreneurs.¹⁵

As a final point, it is worth noting that being self-employed does not always mean that a person is operating informally. For example, one of the major aspects of operating formally in Canada is paying one's taxes. Used-goods sellers may operate registered businesses or declare their incomes (if their revenue is not high enough to justify registering for a GST/HST account¹⁶). For such individuals, the used-goods trade is a formal job.

¹⁵ I recognize that my research participants are not representative of all informal economic activities found in this country or region. It is worth acknowledging that approaches that are applicable to other contexts are almost certainly happening simultaneously, but do not have the same relationship to informality as the used-goods trade.

¹⁶ In Canada, businesses are not required to be registered unless they have an annual revenue of greater than \$30,000. Once a business is registered it will receive a GST/HST account number. GST refers to "goods and services tax," which is 5% across Canada. Some provinces (Ontario, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia) have HST, which refers to "harmonized sales tax." HST combines the federal GST with provincial sales tax. Registered businesses are required to collect and remit GST or HST to the government every quarter. If people are operating a business, but have not achieved the \$30,000 per year revenue threshold, then the revenue is supposed to be declared as personal income. People who are not registered, but not declaring revenue as income are seen to be abusing the system and operating informally.

In addition to the history of the informal sector, labour and economy concepts, there are other issues that affect how used-goods vendors conduct their businesses. Examples include clientelization, gentrification, procuring inventory, relationships with other channels in the second-cycle economy, deciding to engage with the buy local movement (or not) and engagement with one's surrounding community. It is also useful to situate used-goods vendors and vending into the history of such activities, as well as the larger second-cycle economy. As such, the next two chapters will examine these issues broadly prior to my presentation of the ethnographic research that I conducted at Plan B and the Harbourview.

CHAPTER 3: SECONDARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the major approaches to informal economy research that have emerged since the informal sector was first described by Hart (1973). Despite research into the subject focusing predominantly on economic activities in the Global South, I consider the issue of informality as an implicit characteristic of how used-goods economies function in North America. That said, I acknowledge that in my own research into used-goods sellers some people are operating formally and others informally. Being a used-goods seller does not mean that a person is automatically operating informally, but informal practices are a common part of the used-goods trade.

Understanding the activities of used-goods entrepreneurs in a place like Canada requires additional approaches. Relying only on informal economy research is inadequate for understanding how and why people enter the used-goods trade, how they make a living (or not) and how they navigate various situations that are less likely to occur in the Global South. Since my research sites are located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, the assumptions about and emphasis on the Global South that predominates informal economy research is not necessarily applicable. Nevertheless, some of the more recent holistic informal economy frameworks that I profile in Chapter 2 are applicable to this project. This is because my research focuses mostly on the pursuits of self-employed used-goods sellers. Certainly, there are similarities between how informal entrepreneurs conduct their businesses across the globe and generalizations may be possible, but there is also a need to provide an approach that takes into account the specific contexts that affected the livelihoods of the people who I conducted research with from 2013-2014.

In addition to the informal economy, my research is augmented by another three theoretical avenues that are presented in this chapter. First, I consider how the used-goods markets involve the entanglement of economic and social relations. This is manifested in how vendors attempt to clientelize shoppers in various ways. Second, I consider how discourses centred on the buy local movement shape market and vendor practices. Third, I consider how class distinctions are manifested between and within used-goods venues, particularly in terms of how gentrification affects different research sites. Other issues that I profile in this chapter include the role of community and the relationship that used-goods collectibles vendors have with mass culture and the culture industry. An overview of these topics provides readers with additional avenues for understanding the used-goods economy that move beyond situating it only in terms of the informal economy.

3.1 Entanglement of Economic and Social Relations at Weekly Markets

As a starting point, it is worth asking, why do people shop at used-goods markets? There is no simple answer to this question. For some, market shopping is a leisure pursuit for hobbyists looking for specific collectibles or who enjoy the “thrill of the hunt” for such items. For others, it may be an opportunity to procure cheap goods and to save money on purchases. Some market shoppers may not have any interest in shopping at all, instead hoping to engage in the spectacle and social atmosphere that markets provide. Markets rely on economic exchanges in order to be viable, but economic relations are not exclusive from social ones. In fact, the entanglement of economic and social relations are a key element of what enables markets and their vendors to thrive.

Watson and Studdert (2006) explain that the social importance of markets has received minimal attention as a result of research emphasizing the economic aspects of markets (p. 3).

They emphasize that markets cannot only be sites for economic transactions, but must also be sites for social interaction if they are to succeed. In order for this to happen, markets must cater to a wide array of social groups that are looking to interact amongst themselves and with others. The authors are clear that there is a social life amongst traders (p. 14-15), as well as between shoppers and traders (p. 15-17), but that in order for a market to function well, both economically and socially, it must accommodate different groups of shoppers, such as: families with children; adults without, or not accompanied by, children; young people (teenagers and people in their early 20s); people with physical disabilities; and people from various ethnic and racial backgrounds (p. 17-28). Senior citizens could be considered an important additional category here. When such groups are able to co-mingle in an inclusive space, markets become more than sites for economic transactions, but also important sites for building social relationships that help to differentiate such markets from other transaction-oriented spaces. Watson and Studdert note that, "...a market clearly cannot be viable if no one goes to shop there. Thus, the economic success of a market bears some relation to its success as a social space" (p. 31). This entanglement of the economic and the social is necessary for a market's success.

Discussions about periodic markets located in the Global South that are found in anthropology, social geography and other social science disciplines have generally assumed that economic and social relations are entangled, but tend to prioritize the economic role of the market. This is based on Polanyi's assertion that economic relations are embedded in social relations (see Babb, 1989, p. 44-45; Piot, 1991, p. 407; and Rankin, 2004, p. 23-29, for specific uses of Polanyi). By economic relations, I am referring to any relations between individuals or groups that are initiated with the express purpose of completing transactions; the buying and selling of stuff. By "entanglement" I mean the degree to which economic and social relations can

be considered connected or separate. Perhaps the most common way that the issue of entanglement has been examined in anthropological literature about weekly and periodic markets is through issues of information search, bargaining and clientelization.

3.1.1 Information Search and Bargaining

According to Appadurai (1986), commodities are embedded in social relations (p. 3). Exchange is not a by-product of the mutual valuation of objects, but its source (p. 4): human actors encode things with significance and it is when things are in motion (through exchange) that their human and social contexts are illuminated (p. 5). He states that commodities are “...things with a particular type of social potential, that...are distinguishable from ‘products,’ ‘objects,’ ‘goods,’ ‘artifacts,’ and other sorts of things – but only in certain respects and from a certain point of view” (p. 6). The social potential of a commodity is that it is intended for exchange between individuals and/or groups (p. 9). However, just as there is a social element to the stuff being exchanged, exchanges themselves require a social dimension in order to be successful. One of the more prominent ways that social scientists have considered the social dimension of economic exchanges at markets (especially bazaars in the Global South) has been through an examination of how buyers and sellers engage in practices of information search and bargaining at such markets.

Documenting the micro-level interactions of bargaining and the search for commodity price and quality information necessitates approaches that consider the entanglement of economic and social relations at weekly and periodic markets. This is evident at the bazaar where Geertz (1978) conducted participant-observation in Sefrou, Morocco. Geertz positions “information search” at bazaars as the primary factor for generating and maintaining social relationships: a lack of information can lead to buyers and sellers making poor choices regarding

quality and pricing (p. 28). For this reason, market participants rely on elaborate social networks that are oriented around the search for (and protection of) knowledge about goods and prices (*ibid.*). Appadurai (1986) uses Geertz's (1978) example of the search for information at the Moroccan bazaar to suggest that knowledge discontinuities create problems for authenticity and expertise (p. 44-48). Since vendors and clients are in direct competition with each other, being able to assess the authenticity of the commodity or the expertise of the opposite party is imperative to completing a transaction. The relationships that are formed in the search for information may be complementary (through "clientelization") or adversarial (through bargaining) (Geertz, 1978, p. 30). Clientelization is the tendency for repeat customers to establish continuing relationships with particular vendors, rather than search widely through the market during each visit (*ibid.*). This can be thought of as customer loyalty and is, "The best way for a customer to obtain reasonably accurate price information" (Alexander & Alexander, 1987, p. 46). In order for a vendor to gain loyal clients, said vendor is involved in a delicate balance that requires positive social relations with the repeat customer in order to achieve the end goal of completing a transaction. In the case of information search, trust is crucial.

Bargaining tactics, on the other hand, are directed towards each participant receiving the best price possible for the goods that they have for sale or intend to purchase through intensive negotiation (Geertz, 1978, p. 31). Pre-acquired information is imperative for each party to not feel exploited. Based on their research at markets in Java, Alexander and Alexander (1987) argue that bargaining tactics not only to complete a transaction, but allow each participant to feel as though they have taken advantage of the other (p. 44). What is important for understanding the tactics being employed by buyers and sellers is the degree of their personal relationships with each other.

Stoller (2002) notes that there are two ways to distinguish one's business: have superior merchandise, or establish a loyal clientele (p. 15). He is clear that there are two types of transactions in markets: impersonal, where there are no social contours outside of exchange and personal, which are embedded in networks of social relations (p. 49). Alexander and Alexander (1987) identify a similar distinction (p. 46). Javanese traders differentiate between three types of customers: *Sing tuku*, who are casual buyers that the vendor may never see again; *Langganan biyasa*, who buy on a regular basis, but not exclusively from a particular trader; and *Langganan tetep*, who make purchases almost exclusively from a single trader (p. 46-47). In thinking about these types of relationships as part of a continuum, Alexander and Alexander (1987), Geertz (1978) and Stoller (2002) are all arguing that the number of social ties that an individual has with trading partners dictates his or her success in getting the best deal. Participants who have not been clientelized still have social interactions with other market participants, but do not share the same quality of social networks or access to information as market-goers who have deeper social relationships with vendors.

Yet, not everyone agrees with this stance: by drawing on his research at the Kalakkadu bazaar in south India, Fanselow (1990) argues that the search for price and quality information becomes less significant in situations where the quantity and quality of goods are standardized in terms of price, packaging and provenance (brand names) (p. 253-254). Standardization decreases the amount of suspicion (and hence bargaining and information search) in markets because it makes products more predictable (p. 263). On the other hand, the absence of a reliable means of quality and price verification leads to a general loss of confidence, bringing about a situation in which everyone accuses everyone else of chicanery (*ibid.*). Since access to information is a source of power in economic relations, Clark (1994) notes that bargaining is the way that

vendors are able to maintain control: “Personalized commercial relations with colleagues and steady customers offer traders definite advantages for capital accumulation and enterprise survival” (p. 216). This is why Geertz (1978) asserts that clientelization is a key process at peasant bazaars. Yet, Fanselow’s (1990) analysis assumes that price and quality standardization, not social relations, are a better catalyst for building trust.

Granovetter (1985) examines the interplay between malfeasance (opportunism) and trust in exchange by looking at practices of business firms in the industrial world (p. 487-493). If people are truly being opportunistic then malfeasance will happen at the expense of trust, regardless of the venue. The potential for malfeasance in any market system (not only at periodic markets) underscores the importance of trust. Even though institutional arrangements may help to prevent malfeasance, deceit still happens. This leads Granovetter to stress the importance of embeddedness: the role of concrete personal relations and structures (“networks”) of such relations generate trust and discourage malfeasance (p. 490). For Granovetter, the widespread preference for transacting with individuals of known reputation implies that, “few are actually content to rely on...institutional arrangements to guard against trouble” (*ibid.*). This is why social relations, rather than institutional arrangements or other factors, are mainly responsible for the production of trust in economic life (p. 491). Trust is undoubtedly extremely important in the clientelization process that Geertz (1978) describes taking place at peasant bazaars. At the same time, it is not a stretch to consider standardized pricing (Fanselow, 1990) to be one such institutional arrangement.

With the exception of Stoller (2002) and Granovetter (1985), all of the researchers cited in this section worked at markets and bazaars in the Global South. Nevertheless, the issues of clientelization and trust building that are found in the analysis of the search for commodity price

and quality information at weekly and periodic markets are just as important for understanding social relations as an important contour of market behaviour in the Global North. As a general principle of market trade, the successful search for price and quality information has more to do with the degree of continuous, positive social relationships between vendors and clients than spending power or any other practice that might be considered strictly economic.

3.1.2 The Performative Role of Market Vendors

Gaining access to information is only one avenue for generating social relations at a market. Indeed, vendors often develop performances that encourage buying through haggling and other kinds of socio-economic interactions. An emphasis on the performative role of vendors is a more recent idea in the literature, but again it is broadly applicable. In fact, the performative role of vendors can act as the glue that generates and holds social relations together.

In her research on the Carpentras market in France, de La Pradelle (2006) promotes the idea that one significant role that vendors take (at least in the eyes of their customers) is that of the “familiar stranger” (p. 71-80). Stallholders are seen by market-goers as strangers, with whom they are not acquainted and are not constrained by the same economic relations they would encounter in a shop. Paradoxically, most of these vendors are not really strangers: they live in or around the market and most regular clients know who these vendors are (p. 73). By taking on the role of a familiar stranger, the everyday social hierarchies of non-vendors are suspended and social status becomes blurred in the crowd (p. 178). This is also expressed in de La Pradelle’s discussion of “generalized friendship” at the market in Carpentras: “People participate unthinkingly, as a matter of course, in multiple interactions with strangers that allow for the momentary limning of a micro-society around each stall” (p. 201). No one truly forgets their social identity at the market, but the reason people are willing to ignore each other’s social

identities is that each expects the other to recognize his or her *local* identity in lieu of their ethnic, class or gender identity (p. 211). Being seen as a market “native” is imperative to this social role (p. 221). Herrmann (1997) identifies a similar phenomenon at garage sales: most exchanges happen between strangers, but there is a common ethos of generalized friendliness and overall egalitarianism that serves to mute social distinctions (p. 915).

Taking on the role of the familiar stranger and engaging in generalized friendship at markets can be considered a passive performance insofar as these are not statuses that are acted out as much as they are assumed by market participants. Simultaneously there are also active performances that occur at markets and both buyers and sellers engage in such performances. For example, the success of any vendor at the Carpentras market relies on what de La Pradelle (2006) calls the “commerce of the imaginary.” This refers to performing imaginary local notions of authenticity that come to justify market commodities for clients as better than those in shops, especially in terms of the qualities of supposed “freshness,” being “homemade,” being “local,” or being “typically” Carpentras (that is, appearing to be from Carpentras in an expected, stereotypical way) (p. 110-125). Yet this is a contradiction: the supposed “local,” “homemade,” “authentic” products sold by stallholders are actually purchased from the same wholesalers who sell to local shops. To obscure this contradiction, vendors must perform in a certain way: “For the product to be ‘typical,’ the seller should be too. In accordance with the logic of appearances characteristic of advertising rhetoric, clothes not only make the man but also guarantee the quality of the cheese” (p. 125).

The issue of performance through personal appearance is a highly specific manifestation of the types of performances that Medlin (2008) describes in her dramaturgical analysis¹⁷ of a North American flea market. Medlin notes that vendors and shoppers “dress down” in order to appear impoverished and gain an edge in haggling for deals. Yet, instead of dressing down to gain the sympathy of buyers, performing a role of “authenticity” solidifies the validity of the products on offer in the minds of market clients. By believing in, performing and producing these kinds of social interactions at the market, clients and vendors guarantee the longevity of the market as a site for local sociality, while simultaneously obscuring the economic relations and macro-level processes on which the market rests (de La Pradelle, 2006, p. 173).

There is a deeper level to this. Sherry (1990) observed ceremonial and ritualistic dimensions in the structure of flea market dealing in the southern United States: vendors perform highly patterned and repetitive behaviors (such as banter) that integrate dealers and consumers into a social unit, no matter how temporary or ephemeral (p. 190). At the same time, rituals allow buyers and sellers to create a profoundly charged constellation of meaning associated with the commodities they seek (p. 190-191). In particular, the ritual substratum of dealing involves the transmogrification of a second-hand good into a unique antique or art object (p. 195-196). This is an example of what Kopytoff (1986) calls *singularization*: since culture plays a major role in the biography of a commodity, it ensures that some things become sacred, singular and precluded from being re-commoditized after changing hands (p. 73). Singularization is also evident in how

¹⁷ The dramaturgical analysis employed by Medlin (2008) and that is also implicit in some of the other ideas that I discuss in this section is derived from the work of Goffman (1959). Goffman’s description of face-to-face interactions relying on the theatrical performances of people interacting with each other being shaped by the context of the audience (aka the person being interacted with) has been incredibly influential amongst sociologists since *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was first published. Despite this, the application of Goffman’s ideas to behaviour at weekly and periodic markets in the Global North is a relatively recent phenomenon.

sentiment guides the ways that people who operate garage sales distribute goods, as explained by Herrmann (1997, p. 919). In complex societies, singularization is evident in the value of antiques, collectibles, personal possessions and “priceless objects” (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 80).

Another way that market vendors can attract customers is through performing and catering to specific ideologies. For example, Gagné (2011) analyzes how market-goers that she interviewed at an urban farmers’ market in metropolitan Washington, DC, rely on an ideology of alternative consumption in order to validate their purchases from local farmers. This involves a conscious attempt to participate in the buy local movement and to support sustainability (p. 284; also see Chapter 3.2). She argues that valuations that support alternative practices and local farmers are deliberately played up in the market (p. 285). Farmers must take the ecological ideologies of their customers seriously and attempt to downplay the significance of their own economic goals with customers (p. 287).

Stoller (2002) identifies a similar contradiction between performance and authenticity that plays on the expectations of buyers amongst street vendors in New York City. African-American clients buy kente (a traditional Ghanaian cloth) from street vendors in order to appear more African (p. 45-49). At the same time, immigrant vendors emulate North American fashion in order to fit in (p. 47). Kente is part of the broader catchall of Afrocentric marketing (p. 49): since Afrocentrism generates pride among African-Americans (p. 81-82), West African vendors perform Afrocentrism to their advantage, while resisting a stereotypical image of what it means to be African in their daily lives (p. 82). In all of these examples, vendors are actively performing an identity that encourages participation and social interaction between their clients, products and themselves.

In the examples presented in this section, the performative role of vendors demonstrates that vendors' engagement with market participants and passersby helps determine their success in completing transactions. Vendors who perform their roles in ways that are perceived positively by potential clients have a much easier time establishing a loyal clientele than those who do not. Sometimes the performances of vendors do not line up with the expectations of passersby. This can be problematic if municipal governments take notice of vendors who are performing roles that they see as inconsistent with their own agendas.

3.1.3 Scapegoating and Struggles Over Space

Macro-level processes directly affect weekly and periodic markets, from the role of various levels of government in determining the legality of such practices to “Business Improvement Districts” taking the onus upon themselves to “clean up the streets” in cities such as New York (Duneier, 2001; Stoller, 2002; and Zukin, 2011). Such processes are also evident in regional trade networks and trade organizations that provide support for market vendors (Clark, 1994). In this section, I will provide an overview of how economic and social relations become entangled in these macro-level processes.

Government policies can create challenges for market vendors, especially when such policies are part of broad national contests over race, gender and/or economic development. Numerous instances of scapegoating can be found in scholarship regarding street and bazaar vendors in the Global South. For example, Clark (1986; 1994) describes the clashes that took place between Ghanaian governments and Kumasi Central Market traders in the 1970s and 1980s. These clashes resulted from successive governments placing blame on “greedy traders” for the country's economic problems (p. 372-426). In 1979, the government invoked the systematic seizure of market and storefront goods in Kumasi. The military simultaneously

demolished the largest market in the city of Accra and other markets in the country (p. 380-390). This campaign was officially referred to as a street cleaning campaign. In reality, it was intended as punitive action and scapegoating directed towards women who were seen as having too much power in the country as a result of their market activities (p. 389).

Babb (1989) describes similar attempts at scapegoating market women in Mercado Central, captured in the Peruvian government's 1980s "from the field to the cooking pot" policy. A severe earthquake levelled Huarez, Peru in the 1970s and this led to a proliferation of indigenous women engaging in petty commerce at the local market in order to make ends meet (p. 17-22). The low social status of these women is marked by their language, clothing, residence and lack of education (p. 22-29). During an economic crisis in the late 1970s, the Peruvian government pointed fingers at wholesalers and middlemen for increasing the costs of food in the country and this was compounded by an already prevalent middle-class sentiment that poor, indigenous market women were social parasites (p. 179). Policies involved increased regulation of petty marketing, particularly by placing limits on the quantities and types of goods that marketers could sell (p.180-192). These policies were a strategic distraction intended to turn attention away from the source of the crisis and generate sympathy among the middle and upper classes for the government's benefit (p. 192). The government believed this would enable farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers for lower prices. The plan did not work because farmers did not want to invest their energy into marketing their goods at the expense of farming itself.

Similar forms of scapegoating can be identified in the Global North. In particular, much has been written about the inimical relationship between city officials and street vendors in New

York City.¹⁸ In October, 1994, Mayor Giuliani arranged for the forced relocation of street vendors (not dealing in books or magazines) from the streets of Harlem to the Malcolm Shabazz market as part of a broad urban renewal strategy (Stoller, 2002, p. 136-143). The intention behind relocation, from the city's point of view, was to clean up the streets and promote urban renewal in Harlem; yet the removal of vendors ended up hurting local, small-scale shop owners because foot traffic slowed to a crawl. In the end, many of these shops did not survive and small businesses were replaced by corporate retail outlets (p. 139-141). This contributed to the commercial gentrification of Harlem. Similar situations are found elsewhere in New York City, including Greenwich Village (Duneier, 2001) and Red Hook (Zukin, 2011).

I am not arguing that scapegoating necessarily leads to commercial gentrification, but the two phenomena are often connected in how governments treat unwanted street and market vendors in the Global North, insofar as scapegoating used-goods vendors can be part of a broader civic agenda that has gentrification as its end goal. However, this is not always the case, as some used-goods vendors can be active participants in the gentrification process. I will discuss residential and commercial gentrification in detail in Section 3.3.3 of this chapter. For now, I will highlight a few points regarding how gentrification affects street vendors in the Global North in terms of scapegoating and struggles over space.

The term gentrification originated in Ruth Glass's research (1964), but contemporary scholarship is heavily indebted to the work of Neil Smith (1979) and Sharon Zukin (1982). According to Smith (2006), gentrification displaces working-class residents from urban centres (p. 193). The forms that gentrification takes are highly varied and unevenly distributed because they spring from local economies and specific cultural ensembles that are connected to wider

¹⁸ Also see Chapter 4.4 for a broader discussion of street vending as part of the used-goods trade.

national and global politics, but can involve housing, retail space and other urban locations (*ibid.*). Gentrification relies on state intervention, penetration by global finance, changing levels of political opposition, geographic dispersal and the gentrification of non-residential sectors (p. 201).

For Zukin (2011), gentrification also relies on establishing a sense of authenticity, which has become a tool to control not just the look, but the use of urban spaces (p. xiii). This puts pressure on working class and lower middle-class residents, who can no longer afford to live in “authentic” gentrified urban spaces (*ibid.*). Gentrification creates and depends on new consumption spaces that respond to changing consumer lifestyles and tastes that, backed by affluence, become a form of power (p. 28). When a new group of “hip,” educated young men and women infiltrate inexpensive residential and commercial spaces, this causes prices to increase and pushes out long term businesses and residents. Eventually, the settlement of these hip, educated, affluent young men and women attracts the attention of large corporations, who in turn take over the space, raise rent and push out the people who generated the location’s new image of authenticity.

One of Zukin’s examples involves street vending in Red Hook (a neighbourhood in New York City’s Brooklyn borough), where food vendors sell at a local soccer field (p. 159-192). Since 2007, government scrutiny has increased regulation: vendors now require licenses, permits and food trucks (p. 161). Vendors feared that the costs associated with the food truck requirement would either leave them destitute or destroy the physical intimacy between vendors and customers that had become a major part of the “authentic” atmosphere (p. 164). The municipality saw these vendors as a nuisance and hoped that these requirements would lead to the decline of food vending in Red Hook (p. 187-189). Vendors feared that not only their

businesses, but the social relations that they had created with people at the field would be forever altered or destroyed due to the government and large corporations taking interest in the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, it is also possible for small-scale markets to proliferate as a direct result of government loopholes. One such example can also be found in New York City. Duneier (2001) explains how, after a poet was arrested in Soho in the early 1980s for selling his own poems on street corners, City Council created a bylaw that allowed vendors to sell written material without a permit (p. 132-136). This created a legal loophole that enabled homeless men to freely sell books and magazines on the sidewalk as part of their First Amendment rights (p. 136-143). By the mid-1990s this became a major point of contention for the Giuliani government. Policymakers saw street vendors' indecent behaviours (urinating in public, bothering pedestrians, selling supposedly stolen goods and sleeping on the sidewalk) as a catalyst for crime (p. 159). The Giuliani government teamed with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in order to limit the use of public space (Duneier, 2001, p. 231-252). The government did this by actively dismantling tables and confiscating goods if nobody was present; passing laws restricting the number of tables that could be used (p.234-239); and by requiring vendors to pay for the use of space (p. 245-247). In addition to this, BIDs began to actively plant trees or place other obstacles on parts of the sidewalk, limiting available selling space (*ibid.*). Examples such as these suggest that governments in the Global North are often willing to antagonize street vendors (and perhaps other types of market vendors) as part of agendas that are linked to gentrification and urban renewal.

3.1.4 Discussion

As the examples in Section 3.1.3 show, struggles over space, scapegoating and gentrification generally put market vendors and venues at a disadvantage. Despite this, vendors take it upon themselves to rely on existing networks of support and generate new networks in order to navigate broader social processes that have adverse effects on their uses of space and ability to make a living. As such, the relationship between governments and street and market vendors, as it relates to scapegoating and gentrification, is part of a broader entanglement of economic and social relations. Whereas the entanglements profiled earlier in Chapter 3.1 (information search, bargaining and dramaturgical performances of vendors) foster positive relationships that enable the completion of transactions, the relationships just profiled are generally antagonistic.

The evidence from ethnographic studies that I present in Chapter 3.1.1 suggests that it is impossible to dis-embed economic relations from social relations at any of these markets because the success of face-to-face exchanges (directed by bargaining and the search for information) rely on social ties between buyers and sellers, the social role of vendors as performers and the social life of things themselves. Even though social interactions take place at markets between parties who may never see each other again, the reality is that many transactions occur between people who are entangled in a clientelized relationship. In order for specific markets to continue to function, many market-goers must be embedded in a wider set of social relations.

The various issues that marketers face in places such as New York City, Carpentras, France, Kumasi, Ghana, Morocco, or Peru, are very different and are based on their particular regional, ethnic and historical situations. In grappling with scapegoating, gentrification, and struggles over space, vendors rely on their social networks in order to cope with changing

economic situations. The success of any market when dealing with macro-level forces depends on the quantity and quality of social relations that market vendors and market organizations can generate with the broader public, businesses, governments and so on. Existing literature shows that the relationship between street and market vendors and the state tends to be antagonistic. Yet, as the example of the Carpentras market shows, if a market can become positively embedded in a local setting it can be heavily promoted by macro-level entities. Otherwise, vendors and their markets have to find legal loopholes and employ informal economic practices (that rely on social relations) if governments treat them as a nuisance.

3.2 Making Sense of *The Local*

I often overhear people use the term “local” to uncritically connote and promote something that is, in their minds, good. It seems that people conflate “local” with “good” because they assume that they are protecting small, locally owned and operated businesses that they value and promote as being important. Yet, when thinking about the word critically and unpacking its uses (including the assumption that it is automatically positive), it becomes ambiguous and problematic. It is possible to identify at least three conflated descriptions of “local” that suggest that local is composed of a family of concepts: the local community; the local scale; and local as value-added labelling.

In what follows, I will examine the various meanings that are attached to the concept of local, paying close attention to various strategies that are used to promote the local. My aim is not to argue that local is bad or good, but instead to gain a better understanding of what is at stake when using the concept. Much of the academic literature about the “local” involves studies of local food, but in discussing this literature my goal is to apply these concepts to the used-goods trade. The justification for delving into the various ways that people use the word “local”

results from its pervasive use amongst vendors who I encountered in the field. Invoking the local (especially the “local community”) can also be interpreted as a way through which economic and social relationships can become entangled.

3.2.1 The Local Community

Like the “local,” “community” is a demanding concept, due to its ambiguity. Approaches to the concept in anthropology highlight the ways that community acts as a symbolic construction that creates boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, as well as how community is linked to history, politics and geography. Certainly, a local community is only one kind of community: communities and their boundaries can be physical, legal, linguistic, local, ethnic, and so on, and some exist only in the minds of their beholders (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). In addition to the types of community that Cohen identifies we can talk about global communities, diasporic communities, virtual communities and so on. The authors that I profile in this section use the community concept in a more general, abstract way than I do. Nevertheless, the assumptions and criticisms attached to the community concept can easily be extended to the local, as a specific type of community based on proximity to place.

Defining “community” is difficult. What actually defines a group of people as a community is rarely, if ever, specified; this is due to people assuming a common sense meaning (Creed, 2006, p. 4). The difficulty facing community is that despite its ambiguity, it has become a central concept in both everyday language and the theoretical and methodological core of anthropological inquiry (Winland, 2010, p. 373). According to Crow and Allan (1994), community refers to people having something in common and this shared element is often understood geographically (p. 3), but includes characteristics other than place (*ibid.*) Finally, the authors point to people’s “spirit of community” or the “community of attachment” (p. 4). Here,

there are three things being highlighted: shared place, shared characteristics/interests and a feeling of attachment. Community thus has to do with the generation of social relationships based on one or more of these three characteristics. In a broader sense, however, “the emergence of community life...requires not only favourable local social structures, but also the active creation of ‘community’” (p. 5). People must be actively involved in the community-building process and there must be something at the local level that acts as the glue that holds community together. In this view, community is an integrating mechanism.

For Cohen (1985), the word community implies two related assumptions: members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups (p. 12). This implies boundaries and the word community serves to express such a distinction: community is a boundary-expressing symbol and the reality of community in people’s experience inheres in their attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols of inclusion and exclusion (p. 16; 19). In this way, community is not only an integrating mechanism, but also a social construction that creates situations of inclusion and exclusion.

Rather than thinking of community as an integrating mechanism, Cohen (1985) argues that community is a mental construct that derives from people’s cultural perspectives and the meanings which people attach to them, rather than as a structural form (p. 98). All of this comes down to maintaining community members’ sense of belonging: since community is a mental construct, it plays a major role in individual and collective identity construction and objective manifestations in locality give it credibility (p. 108). The most striking feature of the symbolic construction of the community is its oppositional character: “The boundaries are *relational* rather than absolute; that is, they mark the community *in relation to* other communities” (p. 58, original

emphasis). These symbolic boundary formations are based on personal network formation, rather than considering community and its boundaries as part of a structural process. This position has continued to influence how community is theorized in the social sciences today, but has recently met with criticism.

Khan (2006) argues against Cohen's emphasis on culture over structure when studying communities (p. 143). She cautions: "Both interior and exterior views of community necessarily contend with more encompassing, hegemonic hierarchies of societies' ideas about their social organization and cultural practices, real and imagined" (*ibid.*). For Creed (2006), community is a moment in the modern state that is saturated with affective power (p. 11-12). Race, gender, ethnicity, etc., are not communities, but are instead "identity vectors" that may indicate one or more reactive strategies against hegemony (p. 14). For this reason, it is crucial to discern who is deploying the term "community" and with what (if any) objective (*ibid.*).

Amit (2002) is concerned that since Cohen (1985), anthropology has rejected the notion of community as the outcome of a structural aggregate in favour of the notion that community is the cumulative outcome of a set of choices and strategies employed by individual agents (Amit, 2002, p. 16-17). This decouples the idea of community from an actual base of social interaction because it conflates personal social networks with community. Such networks are ego-based and arise from individuals' experiences and histories and extend across many different categories and situations. Personal networks are, thus, structurally ephemeral and do not exist beyond the individual (p. 23). Hence, personal social networks and communities (though potentially related) are not the same thing.

In a subsequent publication, Amit (2010) argues that when speaking of community, we are dealing with a family of concepts of sociation. Her goal is to establish a broad working model

for investigating a class of related concepts (p. 358). She identifies three strategic, intersecting points at which the ambiguities of community arise (p. 359): joint commitment; affect-belonging; and forms of association. Joint commitment is the notion that in order for a community to be actualized there must be a joint commitment between participants. However, people may share common knowledge of some fact without necessarily sharing an important social link and joint commitment alone does not establish the types of social bonds that one would expect from community (p. 360). Affect-belonging, refers to a sense of belonging to a collectivity (*ibid.*). This notion of affect-belonging is positioned in popular language in terms of how community is “good” and is a warmly pervasive concept (Watts, 2006, p. 102).

The concept is not only pervasive. It is also persuasive. As “warmly persuasive,” community has a positive connotation that assumes cohesiveness (Khan, 2006, p. 145). For Watts (2006), this is misleading: community is not inherently cohesive and community-making can fail when its social imaginary disintegrates and erodes to the point where a base of unity dissolves (p. 104). Amit’s (2010) final category is the forms of association that can foster both joint commitment and affect-belonging. This is not necessarily the case, however, so keeping the range of associational forms open allows us to pose community as a question of sociation to be investigated across a variety of circumstances and qualities (p. 362).

This overview of community suggests that we can think about community as the result of social relations between individuals who share joint commitment, affect-belonging and forms of association. It also suggests that we can think about community in terms of physical or symbolic boundaries that are created through invocations of community. By prioritizing social relations, the boundaries become less significant in invoking community than when thinking about community as a symbolic construction. Despite this, when applying the community concept to

the “local community,” it is easy to prioritize boundaries over social relations. This has to do with the fact that invocations of a local community are usually directed against other scales.

3.2.2 The Local Scale and Local as Value-Added Labelling

The local is not just a place: it is a scale that acts in relation to other geographic scales. The political role of community cannot be understood apart from considerations of scale; that is, how units conceived of as communities articulate with smaller and larger units of identification and analysis (Creed, 2006, p. 19). Communities nest into larger units such as nations; hence, local communities are part of nested hierarchies (p. 19). Yet, the local has come to be defined in common usage as a barrier that stands in opposition to the global and the negative connotations that are attached to it. This is hardly adequate: the local exists in relation to all other geographic scales.

According to Massey (1993), an examination of place has little real purchase if it does not consider social relations and relations of power (p. 64). The uniqueness of a locality is constructed out of particular interactions and social relations, but “a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself” (p. 66). The most important point for present purposes is that places do not have single, unique identities: they are full of internal differences and conflicts (p. 67). In terms of scale, the theoretical problem is that the local is often conceptualized as existing in opposition to the global.

The spatial content of “local” in particular contexts needs to be examined critically to take account of how scale is socially constructed and to understand how social relations themselves are spatialized (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 43). Such considerations have already been applied in the province where I conducted research, in terms of the power relations that frame Nova

Scotian organic farmers' construction of "local." According to Hetherington (2005), farmers in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley use "local" to connote a set of values, experiences and political arguments associated with particular uses of space. When organic farmers speak of "local," it is an abstract local envisioned in opposition to an abstract "global" (p. 80). However, conventional farmers' construction of "local" refers to people near to them—a specific place implicated in memory, history and kinship. Here, locality and community remain primarily experiential, not abstract concepts about space, but constructions embodied in years of practice (p. 82). As such, organic and non-organic farmers in Nova Scotia are employing competing strategies in the articulation of the term "local."

Born and Purcell (2006) argue that scales are not independent entities with inherent qualities, but strategies pursued by social actors with particular social agendas (p. 195). They critique moral assumptions about inherent positivity and negativity of specific scales: this is *the local trap*, which they define as the, "tendency of food activists and researchers to assume something inherent about the local scale. The local is assumed to be desirable; it is preferred a priori to larger scales" (*ibid.*). They identify three problems with the local trap that should give us pause: the assumption that the local is desirable does not always hold; the local trap conflates scale with a desired outcome; and, the local trap obscures other scalar options that might be more effective in achieving a desired outcome. Their point is that the achievement of a goal will depend "not on the scale itself but on the agendas of those who are empowered by the scalar strategy" (p. 196). The concept of scale also implies interscalar relationships: the local scale is embedded in the national scale, which is embedded in the global scale. Each scale, therefore, is inseparably defined by and tied to the others (p. 198).

There is something almost tautological about the problems that lead to the local trap. This is particularly true regarding “the assumption that the local is desirable does not always hold”: it does not apply when it does not apply. Yet, there is something useful about cautiously approaching the local in terms of scale: just because something is local does not make it inherently good. It is the practices of people, not the scale itself, that matter when considering the success and value of the local conceptually.

That said, recognizing that scales are not inherently ends in themselves and that they are relational overlooks why it is that the local has become such a pervasive and persuasive force in the way that people conceptualize themselves in opposition to a different, abstract scale. There must be something more to this; there has to be something happening on a practical level that leads to the local trap. Regardless of how scale is theorized, people are attaching value to the local and de-valuing the global. One way that this can manifest in certain contexts is related to the local trap; that is, instances when the local becomes a value-adding label.¹⁹

As a form of value-added labelling, the “local” label is attached to things and ideas in order to promote them as good. This can occur in two ways. First, by people using the term to connote something positive about things that are in close proximity to them; second, by companies using the label “local” in order to sell products. This leads to a struggle over who controls the label “local.” As a result of the buy local movement, the local as an in vogue value-added label is a more recent phenomenon that has parallels with other value-added labels, such as environmentally friendly, fair trade and organic (which may be older labels but exist today concurrently with the local label to assert a positive attribute to certain products).

¹⁹ This is not to say that “global” does not become a value-added label in some cases. For example, cities may attempt to become “world class” or “global cities” evoking a sense of cosmopolitanism.

Goods labelled like this transmit a message, while increasing revenue for businesses that may or may not embody the message in a concrete way. Regardless of the label, the importance of “imageability” is a main selling point (Benton & Short, 1999, p. 199). Semiology is at work here because, “...by purchasing a T-shirt, car or video, you purchase more than just an object, you buy the concomitant message of materialism” (p. 202). Benton and Short’s study focuses on how environmental groups in the 1970s became formidable propaganda machines, successfully manipulating language, images and ideologies in the construction of a discourse that paradoxically antagonizes mass-production and mass-consumption while relying on the same practices as part of their revenue stream. Nevertheless, this logic behind the environmentally friendly value-added label is easily applied to other value-added labels, such as local. As Benton and Short say, “The variations of the product may be endless, but the message is always the same: buy me” (p. 204). They take this even further when they say, “We must remember that when we purchase merchandise, even environmental merchandise, not only do we perpetuate the profits of some industry, but we also condone a set of ideologies” (*ibid.*).

What is perhaps most damaging about this is that this ideological paradox has been internalized by the same corporate giants that environmental organizations stood against when the movement gained traction in its early days. In the decade and a half since Benton and Short published their critique of the commodification of environmentalism, the process has sped up and matured to the point where *greenwashing* has become an important marketing tool. This term refers to when companies or organizations spend more time and effort marketing and advertising themselves as being “green” (or environmentally friendly) than actually implementing business practices that decrease their environmental impact.

There are obvious parallels between the commercialization of environmentalism and the marketing of organic and local foods as being better for consumers than their competitors' alternatives. It is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that value-added labelling is the be all and end all of making *the local* an authentic something or other, but this is not enough when we think of the local as being part of a family of concepts. The dangers here are obvious, but people are smart enough to recognize the possibility that they are being duped. We can perhaps think of this sort of value-added labelling as a kind of *localwashing*, but as I have tried to show, there is more to the local than added value.

3.2.3 Discussion

In this section, I have examined various meanings that are attached to the term “local” in terms of its identification with communities, scale and value-added labelling in order to gain an understanding of why the idea of localness is both pervasive and persuasive. Despite the fact that much of the research that I have highlighted in this section emphasizes food, the recent interest in the buy local movement amongst used-goods sellers at both of my research sites follows similar sets of discourses, motivations and practices. Perhaps used-goods vendors are lagging behind the buy local movement in their use of such terminology and maybe invoking the local is merely bandwagon jumping.

In considering the local as a type of community, I have identified two avenues for inquiry: the exploration of boundaries as constituting community or the emphasis on what is shared through social relations as constituting community. Regarding the local scale, I have considered criticisms of how the local is seen as an end in itself, rather than a scalar strategy. As a scale, the local is not intrinsically good or bad. Finally, through my examination of value-added labelling, I have considered how the local can be used as a means to add value to specific

products and how this labelling is part of a struggle for internal or external control over specific visions of a label.

Clearly the local is an ambiguous social construction that has multiple, complex and contested meanings. As such, we need to take into account the various overlapping connotations that are attached to the concept in order to understand how people in specific settings use it: it is a family of concepts.

3.3 Distinction, Mass Culture & Gentrification

Throughout this chapter, I have presented various theoretical issues—embeddedness, community and *the local*—that have served as secondary frameworks directing my research questions and orientation towards fieldwork. Like the informal economy literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2, all of these issues are important for understanding and interpreting the lives and practices of used-goods dealers at my research sites. Since this research project is comparative, it is important to present how these frameworks are compatible. As a starting point, there are two ways this compatibility issue can be explored. First, there are differences between the two venues compared in this project (Plan B and the Harbourview Weekend Market). Second, there are differences between the key actors who participated in my research; that is, differences among vendors within each venue. These differences are related to how individual vendors interpret and act upon the informal economy, community and *the local*.

Many of these relationships and actions likely stem from the class positions (and hence class distinctions) that my research participants find themselves in. Additionally, vendors within the venues and the people who operate these venues employ practices that sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally lead to distinctions between vendors, the venues where they operate, and their customers. At the same time, vendors, the venues and customers

alike participate in practices that can obscure class distinctions. Such distinctions can manifest through transactions, space and place, as well as the connotations attached to the goods for sale.

3.3.1 The Distinction Concept

The concept of *distinction* was developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984a). The theoretical concept most commonly associated with Bourdieu is arguably *habitus*. Habitus refers to a system of dispositions that function as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices. Habitus can be understood as framing our sensibilities, tastes and cognitive understanding of the world. These sensibilities are influenced by a person's position in the social hierarchy. Habitus is a structuring feature of life and is determined by a series of influences on the individual, such as socioeconomic status, family, religion, education and ethnicity.

As such, we can think of habitus in terms of how the attitudes, mannerisms, ideologies, actions and habits that a person has been subjected to in their life manifests to create the person that they are today. Essentially this has to do with how we make choices to act in certain ways and not others. However, there is more to this than choices: habitus unifies structure and agency. This deeply rooted habitus gives rise to tastes in food, clothing, art, and so on (Gartman, 1991, p. 424). Habitus is a generative structure that provides the unifying principle of the specific practices in different cultural fields. At the same time, it is a social structure/class structure that is so deeply embodied in individual dispositions that it appears natural, which obscures their social origins (*ibid.*).

Beyond habitus, Bourdieu also develops the concept of *fields*. Fields are the setting in which social actors and their social positions are located. Bourdieu (1993) writes: "Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analysed independently of the

characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them)” (p. 72). As Savage (2011) explains, fields allowed Bourdieu a means for “delineating social relationships through their spatial organization” (p. 514). As such, physical space and social space are not separate. Both types of spaces are defined in terms of exclusion or inclusion,²⁰ which can be a form of distinction. Savage claims that, “physical space is the concretization of social space” (p. 515) and that distinction leads to separate zones of social space (*ibid.*).

Taken this way, a field is a physical and social space that imposes norms on its inhabitants. Yet, these norms are developed by the social relationships of the inhabitants themselves and these norms are also directed at excluding would-be participants who do not share the same class backgrounds. In fact, the position of each individual agent in a field results from the interaction between the specific rules of the field, agent's habitus and agent's capital. For Bourdieu, there are four main types of capital that enable individuals or groups to have power or influence in certain social spheres: social, cultural, educational and economic. In order to understand how the distinction concept works, one must regard it as being related to these three other theoretical concepts developed by Bourdieu.

Distinction refers to a system of dispositions produced by the social conditionings associated with a particular class. According to Bourdieu (1984b), “The aesthetic disposition is one dimension of a distant, self-assured relation to the world and to others which presupposes objective assurance and distance” (p. 205). For Bourdieu, a distinctive expression of a privileged position in a social space occurs as a result of (and is framed by) difference.

²⁰ This is similar to Cohen's (1985) discussion about how communities are created through the erection of symbolic and physical boundaries. However, Cohen does not cite Bourdieu or talk about distinction in his book.

Distinction is deeply associated with taste: “Like every sort of taste, it unites and separates” (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 205). Tastes unite those exposed to similar conditions and distinguishes them from others. Bourdieu notes that, “Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference” (*ibid.*). One’s tastes are justified by the refusal of other tastes; that is, horror, disgust or visceral intolerance of the tastes of others. He also says, “Aversion to different life-styles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes; class endogamy is evidence of this” (*ibid.*). As such, distinction (as a process involving the discernment of taste) hinges on and is directed by an individual or group’s habitus, accumulated capital and position in a field, all of which are closely related to an individual or group’s class background.

Bourdieu (1984b) juxtaposes the tastes of the bourgeoisie in comparison to artists and explains differences in tastes in terms of capital: the bourgeoisie have economic capital, but the artist has social or cultural capital. Of course, each class group will have some of the capital that other groups have, but to a different degree. All of this relies on upholding rank and keeping social distance. He notes that aesthetic stances adopted in matters like cosmetics, clothing or home decoration are opportunities to experience or assert one’s position in social space (p. 206).

We can consider it this way:

1. Bourgeoisie = conscious, elective choices
2. Artists = inventors of choices
3. Petite bourgeoisie = striving for distinction; anxiety in making the right choices
4. Working class = a reference point for negation

Here, the artists are the class of people who create the stuff through which the discernment of taste can be cultivated. The bourgeoisie is the director of tastes and the petite bourgeoisie spends

its time trying to cultivate tastes in order to emulate the bourgeoisie in order to distance itself from the working class. The working class is treated by the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie as a group with a debased discernment of taste, which makes distinction an inherently boundary forming conceptual container. As a result, distinction (as the discernment of taste) becomes a source of cultural capital for some and the negation of cultural capital for others.

Bourdieu (1984b) points to various activities and aesthetics associated with the working class that are looked down on by the bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie and gives folk dancing as a specific example. He says, “Explicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate” (p. 207-209). In fact, Bourdieu studied how different classes interpret art in order to develop the distinction concept. But, this is merely his example of choice: distinction is not really about art, but the social logic of taste. It certainly can be thought of in terms of art: how admiration for art, appreciation of music, and so on, comes about for different groups. However, it is really about how “superior” taste does not stem from an *a priori* superiority inherent in a thing or concept. Instead, distinction is an avenue for understanding and conceptualizing class-based taste based on differences in degrees and types of capital that lead to internalizing different types of habitus as part of overlapping fields.

3.3.2 Distinction and Mass Culture

So, how does this apply to used-goods dealers? Much of what is on offer by used-goods vendors are responses to what clients want to buy. For Bourdieu those in power define aesthetic concepts such as taste. That said, it is not the peddler of video games or vinyl records or NASCAR memorabilia who constitutes how and why these things are desirable for certain

people. Instead, it is the companies that produce these things in the first-cycle economy (and in the examples just provided, the artists and athletes who produce the works which form the things themselves) who control the message. Used-goods vendors are following the lead of various cultural industries and accommodating the desires of their clients based on what is popular. The vendors merely help to foster and develop tastes for pop culture because they have become curators of pop culture goods, rather than their producers. It is the producers of various cultural industries that set the agenda of what is popular. Since used-goods vendors are dealing in popular nostalgia, it is important that the culture industry, broadly speaking, helps to dictate what is popular, vintage or nostalgic through reboots of old pop culture franchises. For example, when a new *Star Wars* movie comes out, old *Star Wars* memorabilia becomes popular again and highly sellable. Yet, what does any of this have to do with distinction?

Whether a vendor deals in collectible or non-collectible goods, it is up to the individual vendor to foster good-will amongst clients by catering to their tastes. As curators of hard-to-find stuff, collectibles dealers in particular have a deeper role as intermediaries. In order to succeed, such vendors have to navigate the interplay of various decisions that lead to a client seeking out their wares: What is in demand? Why is it in demand? Why does the customer want it? And, how much money does the customer have to work with? The first two questions certainly play a role in the kinds of things that vendors attempt to stock as part of their inventories, but the last two questions happen in the moment of the encounter with a particular client and are calculated quickly by vendors as they try to make a sale and build a loyal clientele.

This creates problems for the distinction concept. Demand, desire and the amount of money that a person has to spend in a particular moment are not the same thing as class habitus. It is impossible to make correct assumptions about a person's class because he or she is

interested in *Star Wars* memorabilia, New York Yankees jerseys, Wonder Woman comic books, Pink Floyd records or mid-century furniture. It does not matter the example: insert whatever collectible or pop culture genre, character or franchise you want into this list and the problem remains. It is also difficult to guess what a person's class is based on how much money they have to spend at a particular moment in time. This is even further obscured at flea markets because, as the literature suggests, market goers tend to dress down in order to achieve better deals through haggling. A love of *Star Wars*, Pink Floyd, or baseball tells us little about class and virtually nothing about distinction because mass culture obscures class.

When thinking about how popular culture becomes reified in consumer goods today, it is impossible to tell what a person's class is because they purchased their favourite video game, spy novel, action figure, record, sports jersey or whatever. It is not the role of the popular culture industry to create distinction, but its effect is that it obscures class differences. The goods of popular culture—the collectible goods of used-goods vendors—do not openly reproduce class differences; they mask them. If everyone loves *Star Wars* then the culture industry has done its job. As Gartman (1991) says, in regard to the critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer, “critical theorists argue that culture performs its ideological function for the class system by preventing any recognition of class differences, even a mistaken one. For them, culture makes classes totally *unrecognizable* by burying them beneath an indistinct mass of culture shared by all” (p. 426, original emphasis).

Adorno and Horkheimer's (1944) culture industry concept relies on the following key point: we live in an era where mass media and the entertainment industry have monopolized and commodified culture. Now commodified by the culture industry (in the form of film, music, radio, etc.), all of this is mass produced and sold to us. Pop culture is mass culture. It no longer

attempts to create a sublime, authentic individual experience, but relies on formulaic clichés and special effects in order to make us passive and unquestioning in the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment. As a result, the culture industry cements its audience in the status quo and serves as an ideological medium of domination. Popular culture appears to be offering a refuge and distraction from work, but in fact it causes the worker to further dwell into a world of products and consumerism.

The fact that collectibles-oriented used-goods dealers rely on some type of product stemming from the culture industry creates problems for employing the distinction concept. Here, cultural preferences obscure class through the reification of mass culture, rather than pointing to class differences through symbolic distinctions revolving around taste. The culture industry, creating a mass culture, makes us blind to class differences in favour of a sort of mass consumer culture where, whatever one's class, everyone understands the rules and norms of consumerism. As Gartman (1991) says, "In an urban department store or a suburban shopping mall, it is hard to know if a customer has a blue- or a white-collar occupation" (p. 431). This does not mean that class differences have been obscured to the point that they no longer exist.

Despite these major problems for employing distinction regarding the items that collectibles-oriented used-goods vendors sell—pop culture memorabilia—Bourdieu's theories are still useful for considering how the venues and the vendors attempt to distinguish themselves from their competitors. They do not, however, help to explain why certain vendors sell certain things or why certain clients seek out certain types of collectibles. There may be room for employing the distinction concept in terms of the differences between collectibles and non-collectibles vendors and shoppers, but again this becomes somewhat slippery. As Gartman (1991) says, "When people of different classes meet at leisure, they can talk the common

language of consumerism and feel very much at one with each other” (p. 445). A person buying used household goods may be working class or bourgeois. It is impossible to tell at the flea market or shop: everyone uses household goods and no consumer is going to turn down a good deal.

That said, there is a possible solution to these problems that results from employing the “cultural omnivore” thesis. First coined by Peterson (1992) to address anomalies derived from his work with Simkus (Peterson & Simkus, 1992), he shows that, “people of higher social status, contrary to elite/mass models of cultural taste, were not averse to participation in activities associated with popular culture” (Warde, Wright, & Gayo-Cal, 2007, p. 144). Instead of being cultural snobs, the omnivore thesis suggests that people with high amounts of cultural capital (particularly those with high amounts of education, but not necessarily true economic elites) have been adding diverse practices and cultural forms to their repertoires. This runs counter to some of the assumptions about the relationship between socio-economic position and cultural competence found in Bourdieu’s (1984b) work. The thesis does not imply an indifference to distinctions, or an appetite to embrace lowbrow culture. Instead, omnivorousness seeks to appreciate and critique numerous genres, with an emphasis on rejecting snobbishness. The thesis also relies on the ability of omnivores to participate in and like more activities and things than non-omnivores.

Warde, Wright and Gayo-Cal (2007) employed a mixed methodology, which included interviews and survey data, to test the omnivore thesis and found that there were several types of omnivores. Conducting research in the UK with individuals who, for the most part, had higher levels of education than the national average, they found that the reasons behind people becoming omnivores (or not) were based on three dimensions: taste, knowledge and participation (p. 146). Being an omnivore requires an eclectic mix of tastes and knowledge about things that

one may not have a taste for. Participating in various cultural forms (be they related to mass or high culture) is also a prerequisite. As such, consumerism for omnivores relies on an appetite for embracing or becoming tolerant of (if not knowledgeable about) numerous cultural forms.

By employing the omnivore thesis as a possible corrective to Bourdieu's snobby elites, it is possible to consider buyers and sellers at used-goods marketplaces as being omnivores. As I have shown in this section, the culture industry obscures class relations, but the omnivore thesis provides an alternative to thinking of the culture industry as only being the domain of low culture. The common language of consumerism that Gartman (1991) highlights is part of omnivorousness: popular culture is not the exclusive domain of the low-brow. At the same time, one does not have to be rich or elite to be an omnivore. As such, it is possible to make guesses about people's economic class based on what they are buying and how much they are spending.²¹ Economic elites can and do cultivate tastes and knowledge. They also participate in popular culture in the same way as people who are not economically advantaged. The difference is that

²¹ Perhaps a good way to think about this is by suggesting that not all collectibles are equal. Take, for example, Superman comic books. Many people have some knowledge of the character, regardless of their tastes. Not everyone is a fan of Superman, but among fans there are many opportunities to purchase collectibles related to the character that have been on the market since Superman first appeared. The very first Superman comic, Action Comics # 1, sold over a million copies when it was released in 1938. Today, only around one hundred specimens are still known to exist. When brought to market, copies of this comic can achieve sales of over \$1,000,000 USD. This price almost every person out of the market for this particular item. This once "low brow" comic book has been transformed into a highly desired collectible that only an economic elite can ever purchase. The buyer's tastes and knowledge come into play and have advanced beyond cultural snobbery to embrace additional cultural forms. People who do not have \$1,000,000 USD to spend on a single comic book purchase Superman memorabilia all of the time. Only their purchases are much less expensive. Having a taste for Superman and purchasing Superman memorabilia does not tell us much about a person's economic capital. On the other hand, the types of memorabilia that a person purchases can tell us much about one's economic position.

elites have more money at their disposal and can make expensive purchases that non-elites cannot. In this way, distinctions can be applied to the goods of mass culture.

3.3.3 Distinction and the Gentrification Aesthetic

Despite the difficulty in applying distinction to the goods of mass culture, there is another way to examine distinction that is worthy of consideration for my field sites. That is, the interplay between gentrification and distinction. First, however, it is beneficial to provide a short overview of the history of the gentrification concept and some of the debates about gentrification that are prominent in the academic literature.

The term “gentrification” was first coined by Ruth Glass (1964), who was writing about links between housing and class struggle in London, UK. In the introduction to her book, Glass describes gentrification in the following way:

One by one, many of the working class neighbourhoods of London have been invaded by the middle-classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation—have been upgraded once again. Nowadays, many of these houses are being sub-divided into costly flats or ‘houselets’ (in terms of the new real estate snob jargon). The current social statuses and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly, until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (p. xviii)

As is evident in this quote, her concern regarded the accelerated rehabilitation of dilapidated Victorian housing in the city leading to tenurial transformation, increased property prices and the displacement of the working-class residents by middle-class newcomers. At the outset, Glass’s description of gentrification emphasizes the role of housing transformation as a key catalyst in this process.

Glass (1964) highlights several demographic, economic and political pressures to which Central London has been subjected, which she presents as having led to gentrification. She says:

Competition for space has become more and more intense in London. Various factors combine to sharpen this competition—the ‘natural increase’ of commerce and related activities; the emergence of new occupations and pursuits; the demands for travelling and parking space made by the rapidly growing motorcar population; the improvements and consequent spatial expansion of social, educational and ancillary services. (p. xviii-xix)

In presenting gentrification in this way, Glass provided the template through which the concept has been examined subsequently. In the half-century since, the concept has become one of the most studied in the social sciences and has been extended well beyond housing to examine transformations of entire neighbourhoods (including businesses) in the name of development (where such development pushes out working-class and small-scale entrepreneurs).

Much of the current scholarship about gentrification finds its roots in the work of geographer Neil Smith (1979; 1998) and sociologist Sharon Zukin (1982; 1991). Smith (1979) argues that gentrification relies not on the movement of people, but the movement of capital. Using gentrification in Philadelphia as an example, Smith suggests that it is not the preferences of prospective home buyers or renters (such as the appreciation of urban life) that drives gentrification. Rather, he highlights property markets as a primary motivator. Smith argues that gentrification occurs only in previously disinvested areas where there exists a substantial gap between current property values and potential rent values, making such neighbourhoods ripe for reinvestment by developers. Smith’s explanation is often referred to as rent-gap theory. Much of Smith’s subsequent writing on the subject continues along these lines. In later publications, he suggests that gentrification is part of a broader movement to reclaim city centres from poor and working-class residents to serve the interests of the middle-class and wealthy elites (1998).

On the other hand, Zukin (1982) prioritizes the role that social movements play in her ethnography about loft living in Manhattan. She documents how various coalitions of artists, preservation groups and politicians acted in conjunction with each other to ensure the transformation of industrial areas into residential lofts and artist studios. Rather than prioritizing the movement of capital amongst elites, Zukin's ethnography shows how several groups of actors converged in Manhattan for various reasons (artists' need for studio space, preservationists' appreciation for certain buildings and politicians' efforts to spur economic development) leading to gentrification. Subsequent research by Zukin (1991; 2011) has continued to prioritize the role that social movements, as well as social policies and economic and cultural processes have played in shaping the gentrification process.

Following Brown-Saracino (2010), these different approaches have helped to frame the debates around gentrification in terms of both how gentrification occurs and who the gentrifiers are. Brown-Saracino presents the "how" question in terms of two possibilities: does gentrification result from production (supply-side) or consumption (demand-side) factors? (p. 7; 64-65). The production/supply-side explanation refers to factors such as cycles of divestment and reinvestment in city centres, neoliberal state policies that sustain capitalism, deindustrialization, the rise of the service economy, and liberal mortgage lending policies (Brown-Saracino, 2010, p. 64). Scholars promoting such factors as the primary motivator for gentrification may advocate Smith's rent-gap hypothesis or argue that a shortage of middle-class housing in the suburbs may lead to members of the middle-class moving to inner-city neighbourhoods. Brown-Saracino explains this hypothesis as such: "In short, supply side explanations suggest that economic and political conditions enable gentrification and that in some places and times conditions align to

produce the buildings, funding, and state policies required for the gentrification of a particular neighborhood” (*ibid.*).

Consumption/demand-side explanations, on the other hand, are more akin to the scholarship originated by Zukin (1982), but were actually first articulated by Ley (1986). Ley argued that a market cannot exist without consumer demand and preferences. As such, housing stock, government policies and access to capital play a role in the gentrification process, but gentrification cannot occur without gentrifiers who wish to participate in the process. There has to be something more than the availability of inner-city dwellings or rent-gaps that explain why so many people move to inner-city neighbourhoods as part of this process: otherwise, people would move to where the cheapest housing is. Following Ley, demand-side explanations assume that markets and governments respond to consumer demand for gentrification, rather than the other way around (Brown-Saracino, 2010, p. 65). As such, there are ideological and cultural shifts that lead to gentrification, such as an interest in diversity or historic properties (*ibid.*). Otherwise, gentrification would not occur. Part of subscribing to the demand-side explanation involves taking into account the tastes of gentrifiers (see Bridge, 2001), which I will return to later in this section.

Despite Brown-Saracino (2010) pointing to a major difference in approaches towards and the interpretation of gentrification in terms of production/supply-side and consumption/demand-side stances, she does suggest agreement regarding the process of gentrification itself, as well as who participates in the process. Regarding the former, she explains that gentrification’s defining traits are an influx of capital and resultant displacement of long-term residents by gentrifiers, as well as the transformation of a neighbourhood’s social, economic, cultural and physical character (p. 12-13). Where things become more complicated (and where emphasis differs amongst

researchers) is the question of who the gentrifiers actually are. Brown-Saracino points to three overlapping elements that help to answer this question (p. 168-169): the demographic characteristics of those who scholars identify as gentrifiers; how one defines “gentrifier”; and how gentrifiers’ traits shape their relationship to their place of residence, as well as to gentrification.

Ultimately, the answer to this question and these related elements involves numerous potential actors. As such, gentrifiers can include prospective home buyers and renters (who may be artists/creative types or members of the middle-class depending on the stage of the process), various levels of government which hope to initiate and continue some kind of urban renewal strategy, real estate agents who cater to prospective buyers and renters, as well as businesses (which may be owned by the artists/creative types or at least cater to them early in the process or may be multinational corporations who have replaced such businesses later in the process). This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible gentrifiers, but this list does capture the most commonly described participants in the process as found in the literature.

Most of these types of gentrifiers are beyond the reach of this particular project. Having spent a year conducting research into the lives of used-goods vendors at two distinct markets/venues (which happen to be located in two neighbourhoods that are experiencing gentrification differently), my emphasis here is on the relationship that these venues (as businesses) have with their surrounding neighbourhoods. As a key element in how Brown-Saracino (2010) tackles the question of “who are the gentrifiers?” understanding the role that each site plays in the gentrification process, how each site engages its surrounding neighbourhood and how the owners of these businesses see themselves in the process and

understand gentrification are all significant factors for understanding gentrification and gentrifiers at each research site.

One of the difficulties in approaching this topic is that gentrification literature tends to either focus on the experience of home buyers or renters on the one hand, or on the outcomes of gentrification after a neighbourhood has been transformed and small businesses have themselves been pushed out, on the other hand. Each of my research sites is located in a neighbourhood where the gentrification process is ongoing, so neither of these common priorities in the literature about gentrification are great fits for this project. Certainly, small businesses have been examined in the gentrification literature through the lens of retail gentrification. However, my interest on how businesses participate in both distinction and gentrification is less common. Examples include Bridge and Dowling's (2001) research regarding how the relationship between identity and spaces in the city of Melbourne, Australia, affect consumption practices; Zukin and Kosta's (2004) examination of how stores and building owners manage aesthetic distinctions in order to cater to a cosmopolitan clientele in New York's East Village; and Deener's (2007) explanation of how Venice, California, has attempted to brand itself as an "anticorporate" commercial culture and community as part of a distinction making process.

Nevertheless, the concept that I find most applicable to my own research questions is not derived from this small subset of retail gentrification literature. Instead, it is developed by Bridge (2001) in a separate study of residential gentrification. Bridge examines the relationship between distinction/taste and gentrification through a concept he calls the "gentrification aesthetic."²² He

²² Bridge is not the first person to think about gentrification in terms of aesthetics. He cites Michael Jager's (1986) "Class definition in the esthetics of gentrification" as linking social class, aesthetics and housing form (see Bridge, 2001, p. 91-92). Jager's discussion of the "esthetics of gentrification" in Melbourne certainly influenced Bridge's discussion of the relationship between distinction and gentrification. Elsewhere, the significance of aesthetics is prominent in

uses the term “gentrification aesthetic” to highlight how real estate agents act as key intermediaries in the encounter between housing taste and price amongst prospective buyers. Hence the term refers to the way in which housing taste results in market prices, revealing the boundary marking of gentrification as a form of distinction (Bridge, 2001, p. 87).

Part of what real estate agents do when trying to sell houses in gentrifying neighbourhoods is move between working-class vendors (home owners) and middle-class purchasers (Bridge, 2001, p. 90). Real estate agents have to cater to the expectations of the purchasers in their advertising by anticipating their tastes if they want to achieve high prices for the sellers. These buyers are generally highly educated (have a lot of cultural capital) but do not have a lot of money yet (economic capital). Hence, there is an interplay between economic and cultural capital at work in both the tastes of the buyers and the practices of the estate agents who cater to such buyers. The buyers see these homes in a different way from the sellers (who often have inherited the home of deceased parents). Sellers see their childhood homes as distinctly working class, while the gentrifying buyers see them as having a kind of authenticity or inherent historic value (*ibid.*). There is a difference in value judgments regarding the value of the properties expressed by the two different classes that the estate agents navigate between. The aesthetics of the working-class sellers (or property inheritors) are markedly different from the

gentrification literature. This is particularly evident in the work of Zukin (1982), beginning with her book *Loft Living*. Zukin’s ethnography examines the role that artists play in the gentrification process insofar as they contribute to displacing former businesses and residents. These same artists and the cultural industries they engage in are subsequently used by real estate investors to attract capital as part of a process where the artists and their industries are themselves eventually displaced as part of what Zukin calls the “artistic mode of production” (p. 177-182). Indeed, the role that artists and creative types play in various stages of the gentrification process has been a continuous source of debate since the publication of Zukin’s ethnography (see, for example, Florida, 2002; Ley, 2003; and Slater, 2011).

middle-class buyers, so estate agents have to acknowledge the differences in taste without alienating the working-class sellers (p 91).

Bridge presents gentrification as a “field”²³ in Bourdieusian terms and muses about whether or not gentrification may be part of a new cultural habitus of a putative new middle class (p. 92). For this new middle class, urban living becomes invested with ideas of status, style and cosmopolitanism, while engaging in a kind of symbolic violence against working-class residents: “This is the aesthetic border that is the equivalent of gentrification-induced displacement in those inner urban neighbourhoods themselves” (*ibid.*). Going further, living in the centre of the city becomes a form of cultural capital amongst members of the middle class and is an act of class power (p. 93).

When considering housing in this way, “One of the features of gentrification has been that the deployment of a cultural aesthetic to provide social distinction has in turn enhanced material capital” (Bridge, 2001, p. 93). Taste can be transformed into price. This is manifested in home renovations: the Victorian home, for example, might be desirable but only to the extent that it does not impede the implementation of modernization through renovation projects. As Bridge says, “This balance of symbols of the old and the new is at the heart of the socially differentiating nature of the gentrification aesthetic” (p. 94). Additionally, he notes that too much “authentication” cannot be tolerated and leads to lower sale prices for houses that do not have the right blend of authenticity and modernity. Bridge calls this “overgentrification” (p. 96-98) and explains that this is itself a taste boundary: overgentrification prevents the gentrified home from being a display of good taste.

²³ Ley (2003) also presents gentrification as a Bourdieusian field.

Building on this body of Bourdieusian scholarship, Slater (2011) suggests that gentrified districts “are nothing short of the spatial expression of a new middle-class habitus” (p. 576). Relying on Bridge (2001), Slater (2011) champions employing distinction in examining gentrification, in order to investigate the gentrification aesthetic. He defines this as, “the aesthetic strategies that gentrifiers (and those who produce space for them) employ to distinguish themselves from other social class groups” (p. 577). Like Bridge, Slater uses the gentrification aesthetic as a way to examine the relationship between real estate agents and home buyers.

One of the difficulties in applying Bridge’s (2001) idea and its subsequent uses by people like Slater (2011) is that their focus tends to be on the relationship between real estate agents and potential home buyers. The argument hinges on the idea that real estate agents must cater to the tastes (aka gentrification aesthetic) of prospective buyers if they hope to sell a property. Despite this emphasis, I see room for other types of actors to engage in (or not) and to be affected by the gentrification aesthetic. My goal in presenting the idea here is so that I may adjust it in a way that can be applied to businesses.

Different kinds of businesses experience gentrification in different ways. There can be advantages and disadvantages for businesses depending on their role and the stage of the gentrification process they find themselves in. The gentrification aesthetic concept promoted by Bridge (2001) can help to ascertain and explain the success or failure of such businesses in terms of how they are catering to (or not) the tastes of the home owning or renting gentrifiers.

Framing the relationship that businesses have with gentrification in this way relies on a certain set of assumptions. For example, I assume that pre-existing businesses will participate in the gentrification aesthetic differently than new businesses will. Older businesses may not share the same aesthetic orientations or tastes as emerging gentrifiers because they would have instead

catered to the tastes of their pre-existing clientele. As the gentrification process unfolds, such businesses will either attempt to change their practices or not. Depending on the strategies and responses of pre-existing businesses, such enterprises may either find themselves at odds with gentrification or becoming gentrifiers themselves. Ultimately, success or failure depends on whether or not such businesses take into account and cater to the desires and tastes of their emerging gentrifier clientele (probably at the expense of catering to the tastes of their pre-existing clientele).

A second assumption is that newer businesses—those which opened at the commencement or during the gentrification process—will be more likely to cater to the tastes of other gentrifiers at the outset, rather than having to change pre-existing business strategies. Newer businesses have an easier time catering to the gentrification aesthetic because they themselves are owned and operated by the emerging group of gentrifiers. In fact, owners of these newer businesses are as likely to rent or own residences that are gentrifying or have already been gentrified prior to opening their businesses. As such, newer businesses are more likely than not to be in line with emerging gentrification aesthetics because their owners and employees are active participants in the process itself.

Despite the use of the “gentrification aesthetic” concept being rare in the literature, Zukin and Kosta (2004) talk about the relationship between distinction and gentrification in way that is compatible with what I am envisioning in their discussion of the East Village (at least preliminarily). They say,

For consumers, distinction implies the serendipitous discovery of unique elements among the aesthetic and social diversity of the city. For store owners, it implies the adroit management of diversity, mainly by concentrating, channelling, and coordinating uniqueness. At some point—when consumers move on to less-traveled quarters of the city, or when storeowners are unable to maintain a desirable cultural edge—a shopping street risks losing its distinction and falling into a cycle of decline. (p. 113)

What differentiates Zukin and Kosta's description of the relationship between shoppers and stores in terms of gentrification and distinction from what I am imagining is that the authors are emphasizing the issue at the street or neighbourhood level, rather than in terms of how individual shops participate in gentrification (or not). They do talk about various individual shops in their article, but their findings are discussed in the aggregate. For my research, the ways in which each of my research sites participate in gentrification and distinction making processes is more significant than whether or not their streets or neighbourhoods are succeeding or failing to participate in such processes. This is why Bridge's (2001) concept of the gentrification aesthetic is particularly relevant for examining each of my research sites.

My aim in adjusting Bridge's (2001) gentrification aesthetic concept is to demonstrate through my research sites the role that individual businesses play in catering to the tastes of gentrifiers. Otherwise, such businesses may find themselves at odds with the gentrification of their neighbourhoods. Struggles over space in particular neighbourhoods or areas of any city can be examined in terms of the habitus and discernment of taste that is involved in the broader class struggles of working-class or racialized neighbourhoods that find themselves facing the influx of others looking to take over such spaces. As such, individual businesses that are already situated in gentrifying neighbourhoods are not always part of the new aesthetic and may be pushed out or left behind as part of this process. New businesses, on the other hand, can play prominent roles in disrupting established aesthetics as part of the gentrification process. Such insights are useful for comparative studies such as this one because they allow for interpreting the differences between businesses in neighbourhoods that are gentrifying at different paces, while also recognizing that individual businesses engage in such processes differently than others.

3.4 Connecting the Theoretical Frameworks

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted the secondary theoretical frameworks that have guided this project in addition to literature about the informal economy. One question that I want to address is how the frameworks discussed in this chapter are compatible with the informal economy literature I discuss in Chapter 2. What do any of these secondary theoretical frameworks have to do with the informal economy?

Ultimately, this dissertation is the result of anthropological research. In Chapter 2, I noted that Chen (2012) claims that informal economy research is essentially an academic field in its own right (p. 4). Whether or not this is true is a debate for another day. However, one of the implicit characteristics of this statement revolves around the interdisciplinary nature of the informal economy literature. Despite the fact that the notion of an informal sector was first popularized by an anthropologist (Hart, 1973), academic and policy-oriented research focusing on informality has never been the exclusive domain of anthropology. Nevertheless, it is useful for my purposes to disentangle anthropology from informal economy research before going any further.

Anthropologists in general have long followed Polanyi's (1965) assertion that economic relations are embedded in social relations, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, several of the anthropologists working in the informal economy that I discuss are explicit that economic and social relations are entangled at their research sites (Babb, 1989, p. 44-45; Piot, 1991, p. 407; and Rankin, 2004, p. 23-29). This is a crucial element of how anthropologists deal with the economy, but this is not necessarily a major thread within the informal literature beyond anthropological research/perspectives.

The secondary frameworks presented in this chapter are all facets of the social character of my research sites. For the sake of argument and to assist readers who have now inspected nearly one hundred pages of my theoretical approach and literature review, I want to provide a concise foundation before moving to the substantive chapters of this dissertation. There are four interconnected constellations of concepts at work here:

1. The entanglement of economic and social relations at weekly markets.
2. The informal economy.
3. The local community.
4. The relationship between distinction, mass culture and gentrification.

What needs to be addressed is how these frameworks are connected. At the outset, embeddedness is the glue that holds everything together: economic relations at the market and the shop do not exist without being directed or affected by social relations. The issues and concepts that I have presented in Chapter 3 all hinge on social relations. The way that people talk about community and the local, as well as how these ideas manifest in practice (or not) are all based on social relations. Clientelization, information search and bargaining, engaging in performances at markets, and creating and maintaining distinctions (be they between vendors, sites or shoppers) are all social elements that affect economic practices. Gentrification and participating in a specific gentrification aesthetic (or not) are also social processes that affect businesses differently depending on context. Even speaking the language of mass culture and sharing an interest in specific products of popular culture explicitly involves social relations.

Though it might be easier to think of informal economic practices as existing in a separate bubble from social relations for the sake of theorizing or analysis, this does not happen in the real world. In practice, despite the cooperative atmosphere of the shop in contrast to the

market's competitive flavour, all economic activities (formal, informal or otherwise) can be explained in terms of the social characteristics of said activities. The reason why the theoretical containers that I discuss in this chapter are secondary for my research is because the informal economy literature directed my research from the outset. On the other hand, these secondary conceptual frameworks were developed as a result of what I encountered in the field. These are my attempt to connect theory and practice based on the specificities of the sites themselves. Whether or not any of these particular secondary frameworks can be applied to other informal economies around the world is not something that I can comment on, but the possibility is there so long as embeddedness is assumed *a priori*. In the substantive chapters that make up the second half of this dissertation, I will provide specific case studies from my two research sites that will help to establish how all of these conceptual frameworks are evident in the experiences and practices of research participants. Before then, it is my goal here to show how everything is connected at the theoretical level.

When discussing how all of these frameworks coexist in the aggregate of real-world practices, the connections become clearer. As the venues that I compare and the vendors within them struggle to define their business identities, their roles in gentrifying neighbourhoods, and attempt to attract clients and government recognition, they do so by channelling the local community—or not—in specific ways (while trying to downplay ties to informality). Distinction is another way that all of these facets of my research sites are connected. Vendors try to make themselves distinct from each other by cultivating and catering to the tastes of their clientele. All of these social elements are directly connected to and guide economic practices in terms of the relationships the are created and maintained between vendors and clients, as well as vendors themselves. These social elements also play a role in how the people in charge of the venues

situate these sites as part of the larger economic fabric of the community, in relation to other businesses engaged in similar practices (such as other flea markets or antiques shops), but also in relation to other types of businesses that are in close proximity to them on the streets where they are located. Commercial streets change over time and these changes are both economically and socially driven. In the real world, processes such as gentrification, community building, channelling the local and even distinction-making can happen simultaneously and these processes are both social and economic when applying them to businesses.

For example, discourses about community and the local, particularly when combined as “the local community,” can be thought of in terms of distinction. As I have shown, community establishes symbolic boundaries between people and places that are based on forms of association, joint commitment and affect-belonging (Amit, 2002; 2010; and Cohen, 1985). Such boundary formations and relationships between individuals that constitute community can be based on shared tastes. By themselves, these connections are social. However, when adding brick-and-mortar businesses or markets to the mix and also considering how commercial gentrification affects said businesses, the social character of distinction and community building become explicitly economic.

Likewise, discourses about the local, especially the local as a type of value-added label, involve the entanglement of social and economic relations. Additionally, the local can become something desired as better than something else and seeking the local may in fact be the result of a class-based discernment of taste. Yet, uncritical uses of “local” and “community” can point to a sort of “jumping on the bandwagon” that demonstrates a lack of understanding and discernment of taste that may also be class related. When taking the two concepts together as “the local community,” the concept of the gentrification aesthetic (Bridge, 2001) may become a useful

theoretical container for understanding how some businesses succeed or fail in neighbourhoods that are undergoing change due to being on the wrong side of a prevalent class aesthetic that is the catalyst for such changes as part of an ongoing process of gentrification.

As a final point regarding how economic and social relations are connected through the theoretical frameworks that I am dealing with, distinction again takes centre stage. Where the issue of distinction becomes blurred for used-goods collectibles businesses is through their relationship to the culture industry. Specialized collectibles vendors act as nostalgia brokers and cultivators of taste, but are not necessarily the creators of taste. It is impossible, in itself, to know what a person's class background is if that person is interested in a specific artefact of popular culture because the culture industry acts as a class-leveling device. In the moment of exchange in a consumer society such as ours, class becomes blurred: rich people may be as interested in a particular comic book character, video game, athlete or sports team, as poor people. The corrective for this problem may be found in the cultural omnivore thesis first presented by Peterson (1992). Socio-economic elites seem to be rejecting snobbery when it comes to the genres and cultural forms of popular culture as exhibited by increased tastes, knowledge and participation in the products of mass culture. As the example of cultural omnivorousness suggests, tastes and class are not necessarily linked. With this in mind, it is often only possible to make assumptions about a person's economic class based not on the types of popular culture goods they are interested in or knowledgeable about, but instead on the amount of money they are willing to spend on the artefacts of the genre that they have a taste for.

It should now be clear to readers that all of the conceptual frameworks that I describe here in Chapter 3 involve the entanglement of economic and social relations. This will become explicit when I present the case studies from my research in the second half of this dissertation.

The issue of how all of these secondary conceptual frameworks are connected to the informal economy is what now needs to be addressed as the final piece of the puzzle that holds everything together.

In Chapter 2, I presented four major historical approaches to informal economy research. In doing so, I problematized each approach insofar as these approaches are derived from research from the Global South that are not necessarily compatible with research in the Global North (particularly my research sites in Halifax, NS). To reiterate, I have presented them as such:

1. The Dualistic approach: informality is a residue of traditionalism that stands in the way of formalization.
2. The Structuralist approach: informality is the result of capitalist exploitation.
3. The Legalist approach: informality results from burdensome and contradictory laws and enforcement regimes.
4. The Voluntarist approach: some people choose to work informally, rather than being forced to as the result of exclusion or precarity.

I also presented three modern holistic frameworks, but only rely on two of them in how I am approaching my research material:

1. The World Bank Latin America model: informal entrepreneurs exit the formal economy by choice because the benefits of informal work outweigh those of formalization) (Perry et al, 2007).
2. The Kanbur (2009) model: researchers must identify what regulations are in place and how they are enforced in order to make sense of how formality, informality and other options manifest.

There are several threads that run through each of these approaches. One is that the issue of entrepreneurship has been at the centre of informal economy research since Hart (1973) first popularized the informal sector as an avenue for research. The second is the expectation that a majority of people who participate in informal economic activities do so as a result of precarity and/or exclusion from the formal economy. A third issue is in regard to the issue of choice. This is a more recent development in the literature that is present in both the voluntarist approach and the World Bank Latin America model (Perry et al., 2007). Here, the idea is that some people choose to practice informal economics in contexts where the benefits of operating informally outweigh the benefits of working the formal economy. The final thread that is noteworthy for this project is the ways that regulations create avenues for informal practices. This thread is present in both the legalist approach and the Kanbur (2009) model.

Remaining at the level of abstraction (and as a result not giving away anything from the case studies that I present later in this dissertation), there are several ways that these issues can be made compatible with the social dimensions that I have conceptualized in this chapter. In practice, entrepreneurship and choice are not easily separated. It is my assumption that people become entrepreneurs voluntarily as a result of weighing the costs and benefits of the risks involved in becoming one's own boss (and determining that the benefits outweigh said risks). Certainly, becoming an entrepreneur does not necessitate that individuals are operating informally. This is only one possible result of making such a choice.

By extension, becoming a used-goods vendor (as a specific type of entrepreneur) should, generally speaking, be voluntary. However, choosing to operate at a flea market or at a group shop is even more specific. Why would an entrepreneur choose this option? There are two ways to deal with this question. First, assuming that informal economic practices are a common feature

of the used-goods economy, choices are made in general to operate informally (avoiding paying taxes and/or skirting regulations in a specific context) because this creates an economic edge. Flea markets and working cooperatively with a group shop are ways to increase an edge for people who are operating informally because these low-cost settings help to mitigate risk.

That said, the issue of choosing to vend at these types of venues cannot be strictly economic. Community building/making processes, clientelization, bargaining, channelling the local, performing as vendor, acting as a nostalgia broker (at least for collectibles dealers), managing distinctions and participating in gentrification and gentrification aesthetic are all social processes that have economic dimensions. Ultimately, the ways that used-goods vendors (as, presumably, voluntary entrepreneurs) end up in places like markets and shops, their success and failure as business owners and even their decisions around operating formally, informally or even both all revolve around the social aura, atmosphere and relations that are part and parcel of what makes venues such as these thrive.

Having now provided an in-depth overview of the primary and secondary theoretical frameworks that have guided this project in Chapters 2 and 3, there is one more area that needs to be discussed in order to frame my arguments prior to presenting my overview of research sites and research findings. The used-goods trade is a large, multi-faceted subsection of the economy that encompasses many practices and outlets for vending and procuring inventory. As such, Chapter 4 will consider the used-goods trade more generally by examining academic literature that focus on economic practices that are part of the wider nexus of the second-hand economy.

CHAPTER 4: THE USED-GOODS TRADE

One of the most striking things about the academic literature on markets in North America is that there is a plethora of studies of farmers' markets, but very few focusing on flea markets. There are few ethnographic studies of North American flea markets and there is little current anthropological research on the subject. The weekly flea markets depicted in these studies, which take place in the southern and mid-western United States, do not differ significantly from weekly Canadian flea markets. However, each of these studies considers flea markets to be informal marketplaces without going into detail about the informal economy concept (see LaLone et al., 1993; Medlin, 2008; and Sherry, Jr., 1990).

Cross-culturally, anthropologists such as Alexander and Alexander (1987; 1991), Dewey (1964), Fanselow (1990), Geertz (1978) and Sik (1999) have published research on "peasant bazaars" in Java, India, and Europe. These studies describe such bazaars as important institutions that are part of a complex cultural milieu. There are many similarities between these bazaars and weekly Canadian flea markets in terms of spatial arrangements and the goal of selling wares, but the general emphasis of anthropological research about peasant bazaars has often concerned the embeddedness of social and economic relationships. Discussion of the informal economy in such studies is often peripheral, if discussed at all. Instead, informal economy literature about markets in the Global South tends to focus predominantly on street markets.

Flea markets are only one part of a broader used-goods economy that has often been linked to the informal economy and the urban poor. There have been numerous robust studies of the relationship between different forms of the used-goods trade and the informal economy in anthropological literature that can provide insight into flea markets. It is for this reason that much of the remainder of this chapter widens the scope of inquiry to include various other occurrences

of the used-goods economy, including street vending, garage sales, thrift stores, antiques stores and scavenging. This overview is useful for considering how some types of used goods vending are perceived negatively by governments and the public and how informality plays a role in the successful operation of such endeavours. There is also some overlap between the examples that I profile in this chapter and my research sites, as many of the used-goods vendors who I met relied on some of these wider branches of the used-goods economy in order to acquire their goods or to sell their wares.

In addition to this, the separation of flea markets and farmers' markets is a recent phenomenon, as I will show in this chapter. According to Brown (2002; and 2010), the actual number of farmers' markets in the United States increased rapidly towards the end of the 20th century and this growth appears to be ongoing. It is, therefore, not surprising that academic interest and publications have increased at the same time.²⁴ Given that flea markets have not experienced the rapid growth and have not garnered the government and public interest that farmers' markets have in the past few decades, this is an understandable trend.

²⁴ For example, Dollahite, Nelson, Frongillo & Griffin (2005), examine the nutritional benefits that consumers gain from shopping at farmers' markets. La Trobe (2008) and Zepeda (2009) have both researched who shops at farmers' markets. Elsewhere, two separate studies have examined the prominence among farmers' market customers of educated women with high income levels (see Kezis, Gwebu, Peavey & Cheng, 1998; and McGarry Wolf, Spittler & Ahern, 2005). Social geographers have examined the spatial organization of farmers markets (see Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000; and Smithers, Lamarche & Joseph, 2008). The most common research, however, considers how farmers' markets actually benefit local farmers, local food systems and/or the environment (see Andreatta & Wickliffe, 2002; Hamilton, 2002; Hinrichs, 2000; and Hunt 2007). Though somewhat dated, there are even a few ethnographic publications regarding informal economic activities occurring in farmers' markets (see McGrath, Sherry & Heisley, 1993) and studies considering the relationship between informality and farmers' markets without taking an ethnographic approach (see Lyson, Gillespie, & Hilchey, 1995).

4.1 The Historical Relationship between Flea Markets and Farmers' Markets

The idea of an open-air central market is as old as antiquity (probably older), with the Greek *agora* providing one of the most well-known examples. However, the separation of vendors into different types of markets in North America is a 20th century phenomenon. Today, the most notable commonality between flea markets and farmers' markets is that they tend to be held on weekends in North America in similarly designed indoor or open-air settings. Flea markets tend to attract professional used-goods vendors or individuals who are trying to divest themselves of unwanted household goods. On the other hand, farmers' markets attract food vendors who use direct marketing strategies that aim to avoid the middlemen of supermarket chains. Amongst food vendors, the majority tend to be selling fresh produce (as opposed to ready-made food). Craft vendors and prepared food vendors serve a different, perhaps secondary, role at such markets insofar as even though they tend to use direct marketing, it may not be as significant for them as it is for farmers who are bringing their produce for sale and who attract the majority of clients. Only recently have flea markets and farmers' markets become distinctly separate entities. That said, the history of such markets in North America (particularly in the United States) shows that food and used-goods markets did not necessarily occupy the same space in the past.

According to Le Zotte (2017), at the end of the 19th century, urban American food and used-goods sellers tended to sell their products separately. This was because farmers, crafters and artisans tended to occupy public market stalls at the time, while used-goods sellers tended to hawk their wares on the street through the use of pushcarts (p. 56; 69-76). In Le Zotte's account, increased pressure for improving sanitation in urban centres such as New York and Chicago was compounded by the need to relieve congestion on streets as cars became a standard part of urban

landscapes. At the time, these “pushcart peddlers” tended to be Jewish immigrants and xenophobia played a role in increasingly negative perceptions of such practices during this era (p. 69-70). As these peddlers came to be seen as more and more of a nuisance in large American cities by lawmakers and retail merchants who saw the congestion and peddling as unfair competition, newspapers across the United States started to describe the situation as “pushcart wars” (p. 70).

In Chicago in particular, pushcart peddling amongst Jewish immigrants grew at a rapid rate around Maxwell Street. These enclaves flourished in the 1890s as a result of rebuilding after the Chicago Fire in 1871 (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 70). According to Le Zotte, “By 1893, pushcart peddling had become enough of a spectacle to warrant a special mention in the World’s Fair guidebook as one of the city’s most interesting sights” (p. 71). But non-Jewish retailers and lawmakers did not have the same point of view about these “Shylocks” (*ibid.*) and wide-ranging municipal efforts attempted to limit pushcarts. By 1896, Chicago’s pushcart operators had to pay a yearly license tax of \$50 that was higher than the taxes that storefront merchants had to pay (*ibid.*). But the numbers of used-goods sellers continued to increase and despite a series of additional ordinances, vendors were not deterred. By 1912, the city relented and established Maxwell Street as an official open-air market. As Le Zotte suggests, this was not an attempt to favour street merchants, but an attempt to confine these used-goods sellers in order to broaden the effectiveness of enforcement and oversight (*ibid.*).

Conflicts continued over unfair license fees at the newly formal market and the supposed nuisance of continuous noise at the Maxwell Street market. All of this came to a head in 1913 when the peddlers engaged in a protest and riot, which led to “recurrent fistfights and public law suits” (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 72). By the 1920s, the situation became normalized, but into the 1930s

the former supposed threat of Jewish immigrant peddlers was redirected towards African American migrants from the Deep South who were fleeing Jim Crow laws and looking for opportunities to survive during the Depression. By this point the children of the Jewish immigrant peddlers had succeeded in integrating into American society in ways that their parents could not and the makeup of marketers changed. As African American vendors took on prominent vending roles at the market, the old issues that faced the previous generation of peddlers re-emerged (p. 72-76).

The emergence of Maxwell Street as a public market in Chicago was part of a shift towards transplanting street vendors to public markets throughout the USA between 1890 and 1920. In cities like New York that already had established public markets, the increasing number of used-goods peddlers was occurring at the same time that food vendors were declining in number. Farmers who relied on public markets in order to sell their produce faced the growth of supermarkets, which put them at a disadvantage. By the 1920s, food sellers operating at public markets were few and far between. With nearly empty public markets and an increasing number of used-goods vendors working on the streets, New York opened up the public markets to used-goods vendors because the space was available and because it solved the problems of noise, sanitation and traffic congestion that street vending created. This solution was repeated across the urban centres of the United States. As Le Zotte (2017) says,

More “efficient” food systems—such as the chain grocery stores belonging to The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, better known as the A&P—left huge public markets half-empty, and the same city officials who worked to eradicate peddling from the urban streets invited secondhand salespeople into the dying public marketplaces, for a fee. Agile secondhand economies slid into the modern age like able shape-shifters, sacrificing form, retaining content, and strengthening function. (p. 56)

As such, the 20th century flea market—as a place made up of almost exclusively used-goods vendors—was born. Here, the explanation of the total separation of used-goods and food vendors into different markets in North America takes shape. Food vendors declined as farming became less lucrative and shoppers shifted to supermarkets for their food. The farmers' market movement today originated as a response to and critique of the exploitative relationship between grocery chains and farmers. Even though Le Zotte's (2017) research points to when the separation between food and used-goods vendors occurred in the USA, one has to look back further in time to understand the origin of flea markets.

There are three competing, though unconfirmed, explanations of the history of the term *flea market*. LaFarge (2000) claims that the term is derived from the French term *marché aux puces*, which is a literal translation (p. x). Here, the idea is that the term originated in reference to an outdoor market in Paris, France, where vendors sold rags and furniture that happened to be infested with fleas.

A counterclaim, also of supposed French origins, is that during the reign of Napoleon III, the imperial architect Haussmann embarked on plans to create broad, straight streets in Paris with rows of housing to accommodate marching army divisions. Supposedly, these changes forced second-hand goods dealers to flee the area as their old dwellings (slums and alleyways) were demolished. As the story goes, these sellers were allowed to continue to hawk their wares in the north of Paris, outside of the gate Port de Clignancourt and when market stalls were erected in the 1860s, the market was dubbed the *Marché aux Puces* (Eberle and Baudot, 1982). Presumably, in this counterclaim, the origin of the phrase has to do with the low economic class of hawkers, but does not mean that the goods for sale are infested with fleas.

The third claim comes from outside of France. According to Rogerson (2013), the lower part of what is now Maiden Lane in Manhattan was once known as “Smee’s Vly,” during the era when New York was known as New Amsterdam and was a Dutch colony (p. 98). *Vly* is the Dutch word for meadow and referred to the local marshlands. After the English captured New Amsterdam, Smee’s Vly was anglicized to “Smith’s Fly.” When a meat and fish market was established at the intersection of Maiden Lane and Pearl Street in the early eighteenth century, it became known as the “Fly Market” and the street became known as Fly Market Street (p. 42). Overcrowding at the market led to a myriad of different types of entrepreneurs trying to hawk their wares. This led to shop keepers at nearby Front Street to file a petition to have the “hucksters” removed from the streets and placed somewhere else. A committee was formed and after a few years, the mayor of New York designated an area of Pearl Street to house these vendors in 1803. By 1822, this was the site of the Fulton Fish Market (p. 44), which remained at the same location until it moved to the Bronx in 2005. Rogerson does not make a link between the Fly Market and the term flea market, but it is possible that the later term can be traced to the Fly Market.

Whatever its etymological origins, there is a similarity between all three claims: in each case, the market is associated with low economic class and in the latter two scenarios, there is a clash between low class vendors (hawkers) and members of upper classes who see such markets as a nuisance.

The perceived issue of low economic class and limited capital is pervasive in how flea markets and street markets are conceptualized today, despite the fact that historically open-air markets would have been centres of commerce for different types of vendors and tradespeople such as fishmongers/fishwives, husbandmen, cobblers, coopers, cordwainers, fletchers, glaziers,

bakers, butchers and haberdashers. Used-goods peddlers were only one possible type of market vendor for whom negative perceptions of low economic class could be applied.

What separates used-goods sellers from other potential vendors in terms of possible negative class associations has to do with used goods or inferior quality goods themselves. The first supposed origin of the term flea market that I mention above (LaFarge, 2000) insists that the term's origin is due to its literal association with the fleas found on the mattresses, furniture, etc., of hawkers at a Paris market. The association of used goods of questionable quality being sold by the poor is a class distinction. In America at least, this perception was compounded by the xenophobia directed towards Jewish hawkers (Le Zotte, 2017), as noted above.

Another thing is made clear by this examination of the etymology of flea markets: predominantly used-goods markets in France predate the emergence of such markets in North America by a few decades. Public markets in the United States were more heavily directed towards food vending and this is the case for even the Maiden Lane Fly Market. This is also true for rural public markets in the United States.

In North America, this separation seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon. For example, what is often dubbed the oldest flea market in North America is "First Monday Trade Days" in Canton, Texas (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 76-77), began in the 1850s when the regional judge made his stops in Canton on the first Monday of every month. People came to town on this day to conduct their business, purchase food, auction stray horses and witness court (and the occasional hanging). According to LaFarge (2000), by the 1870s, people were coming from all over the region to attend the horse auctions and bring their own goods to trade as well (p. x-xi). By the 1960s, the automobile had completely replaced horses as the dominant mode of transportation and the city of Canton purchased a sizeable acreage to host the open-air market and began

renting space to vendors (LaFarge, 2000, p. xi). Today, First Monday Trade Days is usually described as a flea market, as the sale of animals is prohibited and only food concession vendors are allowed to sell food at the market. However, earlier manifestations of this market were much closer to what now we associate with farmers' markets.

Used-goods sellers would not have been in the majority during the early days at a place like Canton. Scales and systems of production and distribution would have been radically different than they are today. In particular, the role of the craftsperson would have been much more significant. This has to do with the particular history of the frontier in North America. According to Dolan (1964), 90% of all Americans depended on agriculture (crops or domesticated animals) for a living during the colonial period (p. 113). As a result, many frontier families relied on itinerant peddlers to procure the goods and services they needed for their households. Non-farmers travelled the frontier in order to trade their skills, labour or products for goods to bring back to major cities. Dolan lists myriad goods and services that could have been on offer depending on the peddler, such as cobbling, weaving, cabinet making and carpentry, tinkers specializing in repairing pewterware, metal grinding, silhouette cutting, portrait painting and gunsmithing (p. 117-140). He also explains that it was during this era that a large trade in brassware and clocks, as well as trade in items that we take for granted today, such as combs, buttons, shoelaces, knives, cookware, eyeglasses, baskets and razors, became important for itinerant frontier peddlers (p. 149-190).

The rural American proto-markets of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries would have hosted a variety of farmers and peddlers selling goods and services. They would have been like the hybrid markets or peasant bazaars found cross-culturally today, outside of North America. Today, farmers' markets and flea markets in Canada and the United States

occupy different venues, but they are a much more recent phenomenon when one considers that periodic markets were not as clearly separated between food and used-goods sellers prior to the 20th century. As I have shown, the present-day separation of types of markets in North America is the result of a complex history. An important part of this history derives from shifting perceptions of used-goods economies in North America (as well as Europe) over time.

Indeed, these perceptions can be positioned as class distinctions. However, this does not mean that all parts of the second-cycle economy are perceived in the same way. Even before entering the field, I was aware of the reality that used-goods vendors generally rely on a combination of avenues to procure goods for resale because of my own experiences as a flea market vendor in the past. For this reason, I anticipated that this would be true for my research participants in Halifax, even if certain avenues for procurement may be more likely than others. It is for this reason that the remainder of this chapter examines the broader second-cycle economy.

4.2 Scavenging and Garbage Picking

A reasonable point of entry for considering how historical perceptions of used-goods economies are manifested today is the now archaic trade of the rag pickers or “rag and bone man.” Although only loosely related to the used-goods trade found at flea markets today, there is a broad literature cross-culturally about scavenging and garbage picking amongst the urban poor in developing countries (Medina, 2007). There is also academic literature in North America about more recent phenomena such as bottle picking and scrap metal collecting that bear similarities to the rag and bone men of yesteryear (see Atchison, 2012).

Rag pickers were once much more common (or at least more visible) than urban scavengers are in North America today because they provided a necessary service in urban

Europe in the time before municipal garbage removal services. These men and women would travel by foot or by horse and carriage along urban streets looking for rags, bones and metals that they would then resell to industry in order to make ends meet. Some of these scavengers would also sell their wares out of their pushcarts on streets in places like New York City (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 69-70). This was an extremely low-class profession with participants living in perpetual penury. In the second volume of *London Labor and the London Poor*, Mayhew (1861) describes them:

The bone-picker and rag-gatherer may be known at once by the greasy bag which he carries on his back. Usually he has a stick in his hand, and this is armed with a spike or hook, for the purpose of more easily turning over the heaps of ashes or dirt that are thrown out of the houses, and discovering whether they contain anything that is saleable at the rag-and-bottle or marine-store shop. (p. 139)

Mayhew's characterization of rag pickers resembles descriptions of bottle pickers and scrap metal pickers that are common in cities across North America today. Rag pickers were the predecessors of such modern-day scavengers, but there is a major difference: rag pickers existed in a context where their activities were necessary for removing refuse from cities in an era prior to the wide establishment of municipal waste removal services. In a context where such services are made available by governments, scavengers are often treated as a nuisance. The activities are quite similar, but the economic context of a given era leads to certain types of refuse being worth reusing or scavenging in the first place.²⁵

²⁵ In perhaps what can be described as an example of history repeating itself, a similar shift towards waste management in the Global South in recent decades has precipitated major changes for informal waste pickers in developing nations. Medina (2007) describes how *Pepeñadores* in Mexico (p. 128-151), waste pickers in Colombia (p. 152-166), Argentina (p. 167-182), The Philippines (p. 183-197), India (p. 198-211) and the *Zabbaleen* in Egypt (p. 212-228) have all had to face the consequences of urban waste removal systems being established in their countries since the 1980s. In some cases, such as in Colombia, governments and NGOs have worked with waste pickers in order to create a mutually beneficial system through the modernization process (as Colombia now has a scavenging cooperative movement that has empowered individuals and

For example, in Colonial America and Canada, scavenging resulted from Britain restricting industrial activities in its American colonies in order to ensure that colonists would purchase British goods and to prevent industrial activities in the colonies from competing with British interests (Medina, 2007, p. 27). Necessity under these circumstances led to nearly every home in the colonies manufacturing items in small quantities, such as producing soap from animal fat for personal use (*ibid.*). Poverty, scarcity and the lesser effort required made reusing and recycling materials sensible in early Colonial North America, particularly in the face of an economic system without the infrastructure to propel large scale mining and refining industries, for example. As such, scrap metal recycling was common in the colonies.

The political economy of early colonial America necessitated and promoted reuse and recycling in the face of perpetual scarcity. This changed with independence from Britain, as industrial activities increased across the fledgling nation, and demand for raw materials grew as well. This opened up the ability to scavenge various types of refuse for resale to industry. As a result, “scavenging activities satisfied industrial demand for raw materials while providing a livelihood for many immigrants” (*ibid.*).

By the middle of the 20th century, scavenging was no longer an invaluable part of the American economic system; scraps no longer had the value that they once did. Industry no longer required these services and waste was now the domain of the municipal landfill. Scavenging came to be met with derision by governments and citizens. By the end of the 20th century, such activities became part of the informal economy, in competition with municipal services. Many municipalities and metropolitan areas construed the activities of garbage pickers

transformed public perception) (p. 165). In other cases, governments have outsourced waste removal to international firms. In the case of Egypt, this outsourcing has a negative impact on the Zabbaleen, as shown in the film *Garbage Dreams* (Iskander, 2009).

as theft: that is, stealing recyclables from municipal waste removal systems that relied on selling recyclables to pay for waste removal infrastructure. In the 1990s, aluminum and paper were so attractive to scavengers that Los Angeles claimed to have lost an estimated four thousand tons of newsprint each month to “paper poachers” who would steal the paper right out of source separated recycling bins at a cost of \$2 million dollars in lost revenue in 1995 (Medina, 2007, p. 43).

Informal garbage picking and scavenging have not disappeared. Regardless of how scavenging is perceived in a specific locale, government policies can open up the potential for new sorts of profitable scavenging practices. For example, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, today, this occurs in the form of bottle picking, where scavengers acquire (or steal) bottles from HRM curbsides to sell them at bottle depots for 5 or 10 cents each (see Atchison, 2012). This practice only exists because of a bottle deposit that Nova Scotians pay on refundable drinking containers. In the province of Ontario, for example, there is no bottle deposit system and bottle picking as an economic strategy is virtually non-existent (except for near towns that border on the province of Quebec, which has a redeemable bottle deposit system in place). Opportunities for scavenging and garbage picking vary dramatically depending on the context. The forms such practices take are often directly related to government policies that create value combined with a lack of enforcement attempting to curb such practices.

The practices of bottle pickers in places like Nova Scotia exemplifies the approach to analyzing the informal economy promoted by Kanbur (2009) insofar as such practices are informal because bottle pickers stay within the ambit of regulation (people are supposed to redeem their bottles at depots) but do not comply with regulations regarding the ownership of bottles once they are put on the curb (as bottle pickers are technically stealing the bottles from

the municipality). This is an example of individuals exploiting a loophole in the system for their own gain due to the difficulty for the municipality to prevent curbside theft of waste. Bottle picking exists because of the relationship between regulation (bottles are redeemable for money) and a lack of enforcement of regulations regarding bottle theft.

In general, scavengers and garbage pickers are not the same people who sell at weekly or public markets. Nevertheless, the reality that scavenging and garbage picking still manifest as economic strategies throughout North America suggests that the same is true for Halifax (beyond bottle picking) and that some market vendors may be using this strategy as part of their broader vending practices.

Most used-goods vendors, on the other hand, rely on other methods to acquire items for their inventories. They go to thrift stores, auctions, estate sales, garage sales (seasonally) and online venues (such as Kijiji or Craigslist). The search for goods discarded after first-cycle consumption is a commonality between scavengers and used-goods vendors and, as noted, there is some overlap between scavenging and used goods vending. Even if the methods for procurement are quite different, both types of pursuit are part of the broader second-cycle economy. What is important here is the contrast between these practices in terms of how they are perceived by governments, the general public and even among used-goods sellers.

4.3 Garage Sales

Scavenging has a negative connotation not generally applied to other practices in the second-cycle economy and this may be a class distinction. For example, garage sales do not share the same connotation and tends to be treated as a leisure activity. Even so, attending garage sales is similar to scavenging insofar as dealers will drive around, scouring what is on offer and hoping for a lucrative find. In such cases, the garage sale is transformed from a leisure activity to

a business opportunity. This can be problematic: while garage sales involve monetary transactions, the logic behind them differs from commodity exchange in the first-cycle economy.

Garage sales (also called yard sales, porch sales, barn sales, moving sales, lawn sales and many other terms depending on geographic region) generally involve people having a sale on weekends using space on their property with the intention of divesting themselves of unwanted goods. According to Le Zotte (2017) the garage sale emerged as a mainstream leisure activity in the United States during the 1950s (p. 93), a practice closely related to the emergence of suburbs after WWII. As predominantly white Americans moved from cities to newly built homes in the suburbs, patterns of consumption quickly changed. Following Le Zotte, “garage sales signified changes in the relationships between individual consumers, material goods, and the act of shopping” (p. 92).

In Le Zotte’s (2017) account, garage sales were a significant innovation, changing perceptions of used goods in the United States (p. 92). This account highlights certain changes in consumption and domesticity during this period that revolved around the suburban home, such as: garages becoming common attachments to homes; the tendency for homes to have one vehicle, which men relied on to travel to work from the suburbs into the city; shopping malls, supermarkets and other businesses not keeping pace with or expanding into the suburbs as quickly as homes were built; and increased amounts of consumption. These factors played a role in the isolation of suburban women due to a lack of opportunities to engage in community activities to the same extent as they would have in cities (stemming from a lack of shopping places and the inability to leave the suburbs) (p. 92-121).

By the mid-1960s, garage sales had become mainstream in suburbia. The mass production of consumer goods in the post-war era was another catalyst. Shopping was promoted

by advertisers as recreational. A preoccupation with material possessions and buying stuff led to people accumulating clutter in ways that would not have been possible decades earlier. Garage sales enabled women to divest their households of unwanted goods, while maintaining the cultural expectation of domesticity. This was accomplished through transforming peripheral, semiprivate areas (like garages, porches and lawns) into public arenas of consumer exchange (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 94).

For some buyers attending garage sales was a kind of treasure hunt. Collecting, as a hobby, spiked in popularity after WWII due to the increased affluence of Americans who could afford the leisure and expense that antiquing and collecting entailed (Le Zotte, 2017, p. 113). Of course, the societal pressures, constraints and gender norms that played a role in the emergence of garage sales have changed dramatically since the 1950s. However, garage sales remain a significant activity for collectors who hoped to find cheap and novel items to add to their collections.

Since anthropological research into garage sales first emerged in the early 1980s, the focus has been on sellers and the issue of divestment. For example, Habenstein (1983), compares the motivating factors behind participating in auctions and garage sales. Both are common ways for people to divest themselves of unwanted, but still useful items. He argues that the latter is a much more stress-free, low risk, occasion for sociability (particularly among seniors) than the former (p. 138). Habenstein's interest in these topics is related to the over-accumulation of consumer goods and their eventual disposal. He says:

The continuous acquisition of material goods produces for many a glut of things people are not much interested in keeping. To relieve the pressure of over-accumulation, they increasingly resort to garage, yard, and patio sales. These provide a different and more socially positive form of relief than that which comes through devaluation of ownership of mass produced property followed by outright discard. Since the discard of only partially used possessions often produces discomfort, regret, or guilt, the garage sale

expediently serves both to recycle useful goods and provides some personal gratification to the seller, who does not have to bear the onus of throwing away useful goods. (p. 135)

In this account, the appeal for garage sales is that they are a low-stress environment for buyers and sellers who do not feel the same obligation to buy and sell that they would inside a store (*ibid.*).

Around the same time, Herrmann and Soiffer (1984) wrote about how garage sales became an important way for people to relieve the pressure of continuous acquisition, as well as a means to feel less guilty about divesting themselves of unwanted things because they are recouping some of their original investment. Other authors, such as Maxwell and Maxwell (1993) and Miller (1988) have also analyzed these aspects of garage sales. Essentially, all subsequent publications about garage sales with an anthropological orientation have come from the work of Herrmann²⁶ who, since the 1990s, has been publishing about garage sales prolifically (1995; 1996; 1997; 2003; 2004; 2008; and 2011). She understands garage sales in terms of class, gender and haggling.

Elsewhere, social geographers Combs, Bauer and Burger (2008) have studied the spatial distribution of garage sales in urban neighbourhoods. Their statistical analysis of garage sale distribution in Jonesboro, Arkansas indicates that, “There is a clear connection between income, race, and the fact that most advertised sales in Jonesboro are typically held in higher-income, white neighborhoods” (p. 343). Combs, Bauer and Burger are proposing that garage sales tend to be held in white neighbourhoods and that this is correlated with income. They also suggest a

²⁶ In addition to Herrmann’s work, a number of social geographers wrote about car boot sales in Britain during the 1990s (see Crewe & Gregson, 1998; Gregson & Crewe, 1994; and 1997). Car boot sales are very similar to garage sales (with larger car boot sales being similar to open-air flea markets). The main difference is that these sales involve selling one’s goods out of the back of the trunk or “boot” of a car (or other motor vehicle).

shift in participant intentions, noting that what was once a pursuit that enabled young families to acquire good, used household items to place in their new homes has transformed into a treasure hunt of sorts, where the opportunity to find something unexpected or valuable has become one of the garage sale's biggest draws (p. 336). This is relevant because garage sales can be an important source of items that to re-sell at places like flea markets.

Herrmann's focus has been on the people hosting garage sales, rather than the intentions of those who frequent them. Herrmann (1997) asks why prices are so low at yard sales if they offer an opportunity for the recommodification of personal possessions. Money does change hands, but she sees this as a token payment:

There are many instances of almost giveaway prices; outright acts of giving are common, especially to children, struggling young folks, the elderly, and those who appear in need. In some cases the price is lowered in a giftlike gesture or as a result of bargaining. (Herrmann, 1997, p. 910)

What changes hands at a garage sale creates a dynamic tension for sellers between gift and commodity. Whether or not the object is a gift or commodity fluctuates depending on the role of the buyer and seller: "Here transactors actively construct meanings that are unique to specific exchanges, often rendering them inalienable, even within the context of overtly commodified exchange" (p. 910-911).

For Herrmann (1997), the market metaphor is not adequate for explaining what takes place at a garage sale:

The U.S. garage sale is a complex site that provides the potential for specific exchanges to be constructed as gifts or commodities, or as exchanges with elements of both; these constructions occur at the moment of exchange according to the style of social interaction involved and according to various perceptions of transactors. (p. 911)

Part of this potential involves the fluctuation between alienability and inalienability that is a characteristic of used goods: "The Maussian gift is inalienable, in that something of the original

owner always remains with it and it establishes ties of reciprocity or interdependency between people” (Herrmann, 1997, p. 911). Following Marx, commodities are seen as manufactured products intended for market exchange within the capitalist mode of production; they are marked by the alienation of production and the impersonality of their exchange (*ibid.*).

Used goods that are exchanged at garage sales may take on the characteristics of either or both of these ways of thinking about exchangeable things. Herrmann (1997) argues that the garage sale is modelled after commodity exchange, but that exchanges that take place at a garage sale are not confined to the rationalized economic exchange based on this market template (p. 912-913). This allows for a potential hybridization of types of exchange that have long been considered opposites.

The low price of garage sale goods exists in part because garage sale hosts are not retailers and do not have command over the retail value of each of the goods that they have for sale (Herrmann, 1997, p. 917). This throws the idea of commodity exchange into question:

In that sellers do not need to derive a profit from the sale of their possessions, the garage sale defies the formal logic of the marketplace. This is the key point about recommodifying possessions in the garage sale the price need not cover the sellers’ costs, since these are personal possessions, which have presumably already been bought, paid for, and used. (*ibid.*)

The fact that the garage sale is modelled after market exchange serves to mask the degree to which it is socially engaged or gift-like (*ibid.*). In reality, payment would not be a prerequisite if the sale was not modelled in this way: “...in an advance capitalist context, some payment is needed to bring it into conformity with the expected market model and to confer some value on the items” (p. 917-918).

Since the goods exchanged at garage sales are personal possessions, they transmit something of the original owners and can be thought of as inalienable commodities (Herrmann,

1997, p. 918). Even though these goods were probably mass produced, they have become singularized or transformed into unique items because of their role as personal possessions (*ibid.*; also see Kopytoff, 1986). Sentiment plays a role in how sellers deal with the transmission of these items (p. 919). It is for this reason that many of the items sold at a garage sale are exchanged for such little money that the items can be seen as being practically given away²⁷ (p. 920-922). This is also why professional dealers are treated with disdain. Tellingly, the appearance of a person looking to buy something at a garage sale in order to make a profit essentially throws a wrench into the intentionality of the garage sale itself. However, used-goods dealers employ a similar use of physical space in order to sell their wares in many cities across North America, acting as street vendors.

4.4 Street Vending in North America

In the North American context, street vending and garage sales do share some similarities. As I have already discussed, Le Zotte (2017) argues that flea markets in North America came into being due to pushcart vendors being moved from the street to public markets in urban centres during the early 20th century. Le Zotte also presents garage sales as a recent phenomenon that finds its roots in mid-twentieth century suburbia (p. 92-121). The reason why these activities are important is that street vending and garage sales are part of a broader continuum of the second-cycle economy of used goods that overlaps with, and can be part of the procurement strategies of, used-goods sellers that are found at flea markets. Street vending and garage sales should not be confused with each other, though there are some parallels with respect

²⁷ Of course, there are yard sales that are organized for the sake of making money, particularly when such sales are organized for charity. Although charity-oriented sales happen regularly, these are not the types of events that Herrmann is profiling in her work.

the physical use of space. However, street vendors tend to rely on creative uses of public or semi-public spaces, rather than using their own property to display their goods.

There is also a major difference between how street vending has been researched in the Global North and the Global South. Unlike garage sales, street vending and bazaars date back to antiquity. As such, academic literature focusing on street vending is much more abundant than that about garage sales. That said, most of this literature deals with examples of street vending from the Global South. Similar to the informal economy literature, early approaches to street vending and bazaars in the Global South assumed that street vendors were a residue of traditionalism. For example, Bromley (2012) explains that early literature about street vending was by anthropologists who highlighted the exotic nature of hagglers and higglers (p. 20). Such publications emphasized rural marketing or presented vendors as “unsophisticated rural migrants maintaining their old traditions” (*ibid.*).²⁸

According to Bromley (2012), academic interest in street vending shifted with the advent of the Lewis dual economy model in response to rapid urbanization in the Global South (p. 21). Street vendors came to be viewed as part of a traditional sector and were seen as a reserve army of surplus labour that would eventually disappear as economies in the Global South transitioned to modernity through development (*ibid.*).

After the ILO appropriated Hart’s informal sector definition in the early 1970s, street vending became one of the most prominent examples of informality in development literature. The shift towards structural Marxist approaches at the end of the 1970s led to vending being

²⁸ Bromley provides a few examples from mid-twentieth century anthropology (specifically Dewey, 1962; Katzin, 1959; and Vansina, 1962). Other examples include Bohannan and Dalton (1962) and Phillips (1959). The work of geographers Hodder and Ukwu (1969) is another example. Also, see my discussion of the significance of information search and bargaining at bazaars in Chapter 3.1.1.

treated as a form of exploitative underemployment or disguised employment (Bromley, 2012, p. 21-23). As a result, street vending as a primary example of informal sector activities was generally disdained by policy makers. Advocates of modernization who relied on the dualistic approach treated street vending as “a disorderly and superfluous activity that cluttered the urban environment, interrupted efficient traffic flows, and competed unfairly with new, large, hygienic commercial establishments” (p. 23). Street vending was seen as a parasitic drain on modernizing economies in the Global South and emphasis on the eradication of such activities became commonplace.

Yet, street vending was not disappearing, irrelevant or parasitic as these older approaches assumed. By the time de Soto (1989) published *The Other Path*, a shift in emphasis was taking hold. As a proliferating activity in the Global South that faced legal barriers stemming from the policy prescriptions of dual sector and structuralist analysts, de Soto presented activities like street vending as a “laboratory for studying entrepreneurship” (Bromley, 2012, p. 24). Twenty years after de Soto (1989) provided the framework for the legalist approach to the informal economy, street vending continues to grow in the Global South and research into the phenomenon continues to be commonplace. The same is not necessarily true for street vending in the Global North.

There are significant differences between how street vending occurs in the Global North and the Global South. In the Global South, vendors tend to be part of large market sites (such as bazaars or street markets) which bear similarities to flea markets and farmers’ markets in the Global North in terms of spatial organization. Other street markets also exist in the Global North, but it is more common to encounter less organized forms of street vending in countries like Canada and the United States where a smaller number of vendors set up on streets without the

ability to participate at an established market. Nevertheless, some issues facing street vendors tend to be typical regardless of the scale or location.

Generally speaking, one of the major criticisms of street vendors worldwide is that they often set up on property that they do not own or have permission to use, specifically sidewalks, streets and other places that are owned by cities or municipalities (Bhowmik, 2010, p. 6-7). Business owners thus perceive street vendors as a nuisance and also perceive their lack of overhead/lack of paying taxes as an unfair competitive advantage. In reality, informal vending can be the means for traders to make ends meet in situations where formalization may not be possible. As Smart and Smart (2017) say, in reference to informal street vendors in Hong Kong, “Doing things informally, thereby avoiding red tape and various formal standards, is often the main advantage of micro-entrepreneurs” (p. 439).

The nuisance issue is more acute for street markets than it is for smaller-scale vendors who operate on sidewalks. However, regardless of scale or location, policy makers can either aim to make allowances for such practices or focus on their eradication (with the latter being, at least traditionally, the more common approach). Either way, regulation of large street markets is quite difficult. Regarding street markets in Mexico, Cross (1998) writes,

If streets can be invaded by street vendors, the ability to control traffic flow, regulate commercial zoning, and administer urban services such as fire protection is compromised. Regulating incidental consequences of informal real estate, commerce and industry, such as urban planning (keeping parks and reserve areas available), public health inspections, and environmental contamination is almost impossible. (p. 4)

Issues like the ones identified by Cross can be legitimate nuisances for businesses, travellers and governments when streets are taken over by street markets who prevent the street being used for its intended purpose. Sidewalk vendors also face similar issues in places like North America, despite the smaller scale of activity. Class biases may permeate relationships between sidewalk

vendors, shop owners and government officials because of the perception that such vendors are a nuisance for passersby and that they are part of the informal economy. The reasons for this are worth delving into in more detail.

Although some jurisdictions in the Global North—particularly in North America—have bylaws in place regarding garage sales, public policy debates and legislation directed towards street vending are much more common. In some cases, policymakers make room for street vending in their constituencies as long as certain conditions are met (particularly licenses and permits). In other constituencies street vendors are targeted by police or municipal officials and are forcibly removed from urban centres as part of urban renewal policies that are clearly tinged with class bias²⁹ (Bhowmik, 2010, p. 6-7). However, as Smart and Smart (2017) show regarding street hawkers in Hong Kong, government policies change over time. Policies have at times focused on tolerating and regularizing informal practices, while at other times policies have focused on eradication.

Bhowmik (2010) argues that opportunities for formal work in many urban centres worldwide are disappearing. For low-skilled, uneducated members of the urban poor, hawking is an important means of earning a livelihood as it requires low capital investment and does not require a highly specific skill set (p. 8). This is particularly true in parts of Asia, Africa and South America. Yet, there seems to be a marked difference in how cities in the Global North (particularly Europe) treat street vendors in comparison to how they are treated in poorer

²⁹ As discussed in Chapter 3.1.3, where the Giuliani government teamed with BIDs in New York City. Examples include limiting the use of public space by actively dismantling tables and confiscating goods if nobody was present; passing laws restricting the amount of tables that could be used (Duneier, 2001, p.234-239); by requiring vendors to pay for the use of space (p. 245-247); and actively plant trees or placing other obstacles on parts of the sidewalk to limit available vending space (*ibid.*).

countries. Bhowmik notes that, “Many of the cities in the developed world have liberal policies towards street vendors. They have weekly markets where vendors can participate, and in some cases vendors can be allowed in some areas in the city” (p. 17). Even in the Global South, government regulations and policy implementation vary greatly from country to country. For example, the Philippines, India and Singapore have national policies that make provisions to protect street vendors (*ibid.*). Yet, many street and market vendors cross-culturally face hostile working environments and a life of uncertainty as they attempt to make ends meet, even in places like North America and Europe. Academic literature about street vending has covered these scenarios quite well.³⁰

One example is Stoller’s (2002) research on migrant street vendors in New York City. Male Senegalese migrants were the first West African street vendors in the city (and thus, marked certain regions of the city as their selling territory); latecomers were forced to set up in other parts of the city (p. 19). The early Senegalese vendors initially attempted to run their enterprises “above board,” only to be assessed heavy fines on a routine basis by inspectors for minor infractions. This necessitated entry into the informal economy in order to mitigate the costs associated with the barriers created by the formal system (p. 88).

It is not only migrants who have become street vendors in New York. Duneier’s (2001) ethnography concerning African-American book vendors selling on the streets of New York City begins with a description of one vendor, Hakim Hasan, who is an educated man who vends by choice. Duneier considers Hasan to be a “public character,” referencing the work of Jane Jacobs, who saw the public character as being among the “eyes on the street”; that is, a person who is

³⁰ For a more detailed overview of how street vendors and market traders deal with issues of gentrification, scapegoating and struggles over space see Chapter 3.1.3.

seen by passersby and makes the sidewalk seem safe and welcoming (Jacobs, as cited in Duneier, 2001, p. 6-8). Yet, the sidewalk where Hasan works is filled with homeless book and magazine vendors who, despite being a type of public character, do not necessarily make passersby feel safe. These magazine vendors acquire their goods by scavenging through the trash (p. 44). They only become vendors after becoming homeless and many of them are addicted to crack or other drugs (p. 49-52). As such, their opportunities for formal work are limited.

Although Duneier's description of Hasan as entering into informal street vending by choice and that of the homeless magazine and book vendors entering the trade out of necessity predates the holistic World Bank Latin America framework (Perry et al., 2007), these examples can be interpreted through the framework regarding informal employment as resulting from either exit (Hakim Hasan) or exclusion (homeless vendors). In this way, this discussion has implications for the interpreting similar practices in the second-cycle economy in terms of this informal economy model.

Like scavenging and garbage picking, as well as garage sales, street vending is part of a broader continuum of the second-cycle economy in which used-goods trades flourish. What makes street vending particularly significant is its prevalence amongst informal economy research in the Global South. For this reason, it is virtually impossible to have a serious discussion about the informal economy or the used-goods trade more generally without paying some attention to street vending. However, as I have already pointed to in this section, there are some major differences between how street vending occurs in the Global North and Global South.

4.5 Comparing Informal Markets in the Global North and Global South

In the Global South, street vending tends to take place at large scale markets and is one of the two major types of informal market vending common in less developed countries. In reality, it is typical for informal markets in the Global South to be located on the street. There are also numerous examples of open-air locations where vendors can rent stalls (see Babb, 1998, originally published in 1989; Clark, 1986; and 1994). These open-air street and stall markets are often made up of petty commodity and food traders, as well as used-goods traders and vendors selling new products.

One of the major issues that have faced these street market vendors has been a lack of property rights (de Soto, 1989). Hence, street markets in the Global South are often occupied by squatter-entrepreneurs who occupy spaces illegally. In the past, it was not uncommon for governments to demolish street markets due to perceived problems such as congestion, noise pollution, fire hazards and health and safety issues. As part of such eradication programs, governments would limit opportunities for street market vendors to formalize by preventing access to licenses and permits. Today, governments in the Global South are more inclined to recognize the value of formalization opportunities, by demarcating trading zones and issuing permits more easily. Part of such processes has been a shift towards moving street vendors to public markets. Generally speaking, the emphasis today is less on eradication than regulation and enforcement, while facilitating opportunities for informal entrepreneurs to formalize.

In the Global North, street markets are far less prevalent and where they do exist they tend to be highly formalized.³¹ Instead, flea markets and farmers' markets predominate. Such

³¹ One does not have to look beyond Canada to find examples of entirely formalized street markets. These markets tend to be heavily oriented around the sale of foodstuffs. Some are daily and others are periodic. Notable examples include the Richmond Night Market in Richmond,

markets can be open-air or indoor, as well as weekly or periodic, though the organization of space and the intentions of vendors do not differ. Farmers' markets, particularly in North America, have become entirely formal economic affairs, with the bulk of vendors operating registered businesses and subject to numerous health and safety protocols oriented around selling food.³² North American flea markets are, perhaps, best thought of as being semi-formal. The venues themselves tend to be operated as formal businesses whose owners have procured specific permits and licenses, regardless of the activities of the vendors who sell their wares within said venues. Whereas farmers' markets tend to cater to the direct marketing strategies of farmers and ready-made food vendors, as well as artisanal and craft vendors, flea markets tend to cater to used-goods vendors.

One of the difficulties in writing about informal market vending at North American flea markets is that literature about informal markets tends to focus on the Global South. On the other hand, literature about North American farmers' markets has been prolific, but rarely considers the dimension of informality. Nevertheless, there is some writing, albeit outdated, about North American flea markets that utilises the lens of informality (see LaLone et al., 1993; and Sherry,

British Columbia, the Bastion Square Public Market in Victoria, British Columbia and the ByWard Market in Ottawa, Ontario (which has a central building for year-round businesses and open-air stalls during summer months). Also of note is that some indoor markets in North America call themselves "street markets," but this is really a misnomer as the activities do not occur on the street. This is true for New York City's Dover Street Market and Atlanta's Krog Street Market.

³² Nevertheless, recent evidence from a CBC News investigation in the province of Ontario demonstrates that there are opportunities for malfeasance (and potentially fraudulent activities) at farmers' markets. Some vendors have been caught claiming to be farmers and pawning off their wares as local and/or organic produce, when in reality said vendors are actually middlemen selling food procured from corporate farms at the Ontario Food Terminal (Denne & Foxcroft, 2017, November 30).

Jr., 1990). The earliest publication linking flea markets with informal vending tends to channel the same sort of terminology that is found in dual sector approaches, assuming that the informal sector is a residue of traditionalism that exists apart from the formal sector. For example,

Sherman, McCrohan and Smith (1985), write:

Flea markets are a fascinating retailing institution that at first appear to be definitely out of sync with the twentieth century. In an era of the universal product code, stringent consumer regulations, shopping malls that resemble Hyatt hotels, and telemarketing it is of more than academic interest to explore the motives of these consumers. One would expect flea markets in feudal Europe or parts of the present day middle east, not in major metropolitan areas of the United States. (p. 205)

More recent scholarship about informal market vending in North America tends to combine dramaturgical approaches (that emphasize how vendors engage in performances in order to achieve clientelization) with issues of informality (see Abrams, 2007; and Medlin, 2008). Prior to examining recent scholarship about informal market vending in the Global North, it is worth considering how scholarship about street markets in the Global South may also be applicable to the types of markets I am focused on (especially when the issues of squatting and property rights are omitted).

One of the striking features of street vending in the Global South is the total number of informal entrepreneurs engaged in market trading compared to cities in the Global North.³³ So, why might this be the case? One possibility is that there are fewer opportunities to make a living

³³ For example, Cross's (1998) research on street vending in Mexico City estimates that in the 1990s approximately 185,600 individuals were permanent street vendors (p. 102). Most of these vendors were unlicensed. Given that the population of Mexico City was just under 8.5 million people in 1995, Cross's number only represents around 2% of city residents. Nevertheless, the percentage of informal street vendors in Mexico City is much higher than in similar sized cities in the Global North. For example, Browne *et al.* (2011) estimate that there are approximately 20,000 street vendors in New York City. Of this number only 6,000 vendors are estimated to be unlicensed. The population of New York City in 2011 was just under 8.4 million people. This is a significant difference.

formally in the Global South and that informality offers refuge in the face of penury. That said, Cross (1998), who conducted research with street vendors in Mexico City, challenges dualistic assumptions that his research participants are taking refuge in the face of a lack of formal employment opportunities (p. 112-113). He also criticises the structuralist assumption that these vendors are likely disguised workers who are tenuously employed by formal firms (*ibid.*). Instead, he argues that street vendors tend to be involved in informal trading by choice, have the opportunity to make more money than if they were to work in the formal sector and that these benefits outweigh those of formal employment (*ibid.*). This view anticipates the World Bank Latin America model's explanation of informal employment as resulting from either exit from the formal economy (by choice) or exclusion from the formal economy (without choice).

As entrepreneurs, most street vendors that Cross (1998) discusses are working for themselves and have entered the business of their own accord. Cross's explanation predates the holistic World Bank Latin America model by a decade and he does not use the same terminology, but his argument is in line with the expectations found in the model. If informal market vendors are mostly informal entrepreneurs (with some larger operations having informal employees) who have entered into vending by choice, it makes sense that the large number of people working as street vendors in places like Mexico City has not resulted from a lack of opportunities for formal employment. Instead, it is more likely that the benefits of being informally self-employed are greater than the benefits being formally employed in urban contexts in the Global South. This may also explain why there are fewer self-employed market vendors in places like North America: formal employment may offer greater benefits than informal self-employment in the Global North than it does in the Global South.

However, this is not always the case. As Goldstein (2016) shows in his research on street vending in at the Cancha mega-market in Cochabamba, Bolivia, there is a major difference between legal street vendors in the country who operate in permanent stalls (called *fijos*) and illegal and itinerant street and sidewalk vendors (called *ambulantes*). Goldstein argues that the Bolivian state has deliberately neglected and criminalized the poor, making them more exploitable and easier to govern. The assumption that informal market vendors are all plucky entrepreneurs who have entered into trading by choice may not hold true in all contexts. Instead, in this case, there is a distinction between the legally sanctioned stallholders (who are not necessarily operating other facets of their businesses formally) and vendors who are squatting. The former are more likely to be operating by choice, while the latter are more likely to be operating as the result of precariousness. Such divisions also preclude differences in capital, income and clout with government officials. Hence, some vendors may be in more advantageous positions than others, depending on the status of their selling spaces (legal or illegal) and their reasons for entering the vending business.

Perhaps the best way to explain the difficulty in applying a specific framework to street economies cross-culturally is that such economies are “embedded with cultural practices and norms shaping vendors’ life worlds and their spatial and organizational shifts are in conflict with, or accommodation to, regulatory efforts at different levels of society” (Hansen, Little and Milgram, 2013, p. 3). For example, the emergence of flea markets in the United States in the early 20th century as profiled by Le Zotte (2017) only makes sense in the context of the proliferation of grocery stores and changing shopping patterns leading to a decline in food vendors at public markets. This opened up spaces for street vendors whose pushcart peddling was becoming a nuisance for city governments who were concerned with increased traffic

congestion due to the proliferation of automobiles in cities, as well as a declining need for professional scavengers in an era where urban centres were investing in waste removal. These overlapping changes in urban America led to a decline in street vending and a change in shopping patterns that did not occur in the Global South during the same era. As such, street vending became dis-embedded from wider social norms and cultural patterns in North America as other shopping patterns became mainstream. On the other hand, street vending remains an embedded part of cultural practices and societal norms in many places around the world, particularly in the Global South.

Flea markets tend to be spaces where people buy and sell used goods from cheap household items to collectibles. While some shoppers seek to save money, others are spending their money and time pursuing a leisure activity. Take, for example, automobile flea markets in Canada where vehicles, vehicle parts and automotive memorabilia are exclusively on offer (Mau, 1995). Such markets tend to be periodic and contain formal, informal, semi-formal and even non-businesses selling wares. The buyers and sellers are both part of a wider network of hobbyists and buyers in particular are engaging in a leisure activity. Here too, informal market vending and shopping are embedded in wider cultural norms and expectations. The existence of automobile flea markets only make sense in a context where automotive collecting and restoration are leisure pursuits. At the same time, collectibles vendors in the Global North cater to such pursuits in both their procurement strategies and their promotion of collecting as a valid leisure activity. This is another marked difference between how informal markets operate in the Global North and Global South, as such pursuits (of both buyers and sellers) in places like North American may not be easily transferable to the vending and shopping patterns embedded in contexts in the Global South.

4.6 Collectibles, Nostalgia and Vintage as the Catalysts for Procurement

There are numerous additional venues that can be significant sources of inventory for used-goods sellers. These include antiques stores, thrift stores, charity shops and online shopping (via eBay, Amazon, Etsy, Craigslist, Kijiji and so on). For the most part, these sorts of venues and used goods more generally have not been heavily researched by social scientists.

Researchers have tended to focus on material culture through frames such as circulation and consumption, authenticity, memory and nostalgia (see Douglas & Isherwood, 1996). Most of this literature focuses on the social life or cultural biography of the objects being circulated or the relationships that individuals have with things that they are either looking to buy (nostalgia/authenticity) or thinking about divesting (memory) (in ways similar to how Herrmann, 1997, describes exchanges at garage sales). Until recently, the role of used-goods dealers has been a gap in this literature.

In this section, I will profile recent work published by social geographers and anthropologists regarding the antiques trade in brick and mortar and online store settings. As I will show, the focus on divestors and end-users of second-hand goods is limiting because vendors and shop owners are not merely middlemen, but are the custodians of these authenticity narratives who rely on spinning such narratives in order to cater to the expectations of divestors and end-users as part of a spectrum of exchange in the second-cycle economy. In this way, the procurement and vending strategies of used-goods dealers is explicitly linked to my discussion of the culture industry in Chapter 3.3.2 and the gentrification aesthetic, as discussed in Chapter 3.3.3.

Swedish anthropologists Appelgren and Bohlin (2015) provide the most recent overview of how second-hand goods have been treated in the literature. They discuss the reasons why second-hand markets have become successful and note that,

Explanations for the rapid development of second-hand markets have pointed to a range of factors, such as the playful reappraisal and aestheticization of the past as an inventory of styles for adorning homes and bodies; the growth and popularisation of environmental and ethical concerns; or recreational aspects of socializing with friends and hunting for unpredictable ‘finds.’ Others have emphasised consumers’ need to keep up previous levels of consumption in the face of economic hardship. (p. 4)

Again, the role of the used-good vendor is absent from such approaches to used-goods markets. Instead, current emphasis tends to be on how stuff becomes nostalgic or significant as a used good rather than becoming unwanted trash.

Such a trajectory relies on discernment and taste, but is also related to an emerging moral-affective interpretation of waste. The rebranding of “stuff” into vintage, retro or second-hand is a particular phenomenon especially relevant in the wealthy countries of the Global North. There is an asymmetrical relationship between what ends up as valuable commodities for second-hand shops and the mass disposal of unwanted stuff to the Global South:

Discarded objects tend to travel downwards through social hierarchies, which has meant that locally, in affluent societies like Sweden, the market for reused objects have [sic] been associated with a certain social stigma, and that globally, poor countries in the Global South have increasingly become destinations for unwanted used goods from the Global North. (Appelgren and Bohlin, 2015, p. 4-5)

The circulation of used goods prevented from becoming waste, “creates socially embedded objects that potentially engage people aesthetically, morally, socially, economically and ecologically” (p. 5).

Such circulation of used goods involves distancing from the conventional market system, involving a “complex cluster of moral-affective rationalities” that include ethical and environmental concerns in regard to recycling, reuse and anti-waste:

At moments of transition, when the object is about to be discarded, its entanglements are laid bare, so to speak, asserting themselves through placing limits on what is deemed acceptable ways of handling it...these entanglements can reach back in time, such as the obligations of looking after an item that used to belong to a loved one, or reach forward, towards future generations, as when making sure something is recycled even though it has no personal meaning or value. (Appelgren and Bohlin, 2015, p. 5-6)

As such, these moral-affective entanglements involve memory and nostalgia because the circulation of used goods is “grounded in things being historically, socially and narratively embedded” (p. 5). There is an entire rationale behind the circulation of used goods in the Global North that allows for old things to take on historical, social and narrative significance for the people who divest themselves of unwanted stuff and for the people who purchase this stuff second-hand.

Appelgren and Bohlin build on previous research about used goods through the material culture lens that is heavily indebted to the social life/cultural biography model of commodities. The emphasis continues to be on the moral-affective rationalities of divesting unwanted goods and on buyers who, presumably, are looking to purchase items to repurpose for themselves. This serves to mask the wider distributive chain. Although the original owner who is divesting the item and the final owner often meet face-to-face, this is not always the case. What is overlooked, however, is the figure of the used-goods vendor in this spectrum of activities. The labour involved in the procurement of goods, as well as the skill and expertise necessary for the creation of (and catering to) various types of nostalgia are gaps in the current literature that has continued to focus on buyers, rather than sellers.

In seeking out a professional dealer, whether this person operates an antiques store or sets up at a flea market, the original owner is able to quickly end his or her relationship with any particular item. The original owner may sell an item for cash or trade it for credit. Such a relationship is strictly economic in the sense that the goal of the original owner is to earn

something tangible for his or her efforts and that the goal of the used-goods dealer is to make a profit down the road. In such a scenario, the integrity of the item is physically preserved and the original owner can only hope that the end user will bring about a relationship that will provide the thing with a good home. The charity shop or thrift store serves a more immediate purpose in the divestment of stuff. There is no immediate financial or tangible gain for the person who donates unwanted goods, but the expectation is that revenue generated from their sale will help a charity.

The notion of finding a good home that authors such as Herrmann (1997) highlight as significant for garage sale hosts is problematic in the grand scheme of this distributive chain. Any used good that changes hands multiple times is stripped of its context and its cultural biography dissipates with every step. Stripped of its context, the used good takes on a different meaning as a raw collectible to be consumed. Only when such a used good (now collectible) can be traced to someone deemed important (because of notoriety or celebrity) or a particular historical event does it maintain its distinctly singular biography.

Contemporary researchers have succeeded in dissecting the appeal of used goods for end users, but the role of used-goods dealers remains a gap in understanding how used goods can become collectibles. Changing conceptions of used goods and the labelling of such items as “vintage” is a useful example. Fischer (2015, p. 45-66) examines how the vintage concept has become pervasive in the fashion industry and continues to have clout, despite the faddishness of fashion trends, given that vintage fashions have been continuously popular for the past forty years. According to Fischer, this has to do with an authenticity discourse. She says,

The emergence of vintage occurs as a form of alternative consumption alongside changes in the garment industry that led many American consumers to seek more ‘authentic’ consumption experiences. Rebranding used clothing as scarce and desirable through the moniker ‘vintage’ is wrapped up in cultural constructions of authenticity and is

symbolically deployed in opposition to mass production and standardized shopping experiences. (p. 46-47)

She calls this “anachronistic dressing” and notes that this practice can be achieved through wearing used clothing or by wearing new clothing that is designed to look old (p. 47). She asserts that the term “vintage” is generally used to describe the former type of anachronistic dressing, while the term “retro” is often reserved for reproductions of old styles (*ibid.*). As part of an authenticity discourse, vintage and retro have contested, politicized meanings: “In a sense, the term ‘vintage’ represents a semantic attempt to claim authenticity for genuinely old clothing and objects, distinguishing them from ‘retro’ reproductions, as well as serving as a marker of distinction from contemporary secondhand clothes” (*ibid.*).

Fischer (2015) spends a great amount of time trying to trace the history of the continued interest in vintage fashion by identifying multiple reasons why such an interest continues. She mentions an abundance of retro-themes in popular culture (in television, movies and so on), while also noting that vintage fashion is associated with the clever consumption and searching for “a diamond in the rough.” This is part of the appeal of shopping at thrift stores, which is related to pleasures of spontaneity and bragging rights that are part of the thrill of the hunt (p. 48-49). Using second-hand clothing to express individuality is also part of the appeal of vintage fashion: it enables a person to stand out in the crowd (p. 50). All of this involves a certain amount of cultural capital that requires a keen knowledge of how to mix and match old clothing to achieve a fashionable look (*ibid.*).

And, yet, expressing one’s authentic self through consumption is only one side of the story. This is where the gap in the literature remains: it is the shop owners who benefit most from spinning the authenticity narrative when it comes to employing the word “vintage.” The shop owners provide the avenues for acquisition. They are the brokers of authenticity and this is why

the focus on end users and original owners of used goods in academic literature is limiting. It is in this way that the practices of used-goods collectibles dealers are linked to the culture industry. It is the used-goods vendors themselves who are the custodians not only of the stuff, but of such narratives, regardless of the term employed, be it vintage, collectible, retro, nostalgia, antique or whatever—the meanings of specific terms differ, but the value in employing such terms in order to justify the significance of a particular used-good or genre of used goods is an important part of the entire spectrum. Additionally, when used-goods sellers use their shops to highlight these narratives/terms, they may in fact be participating in the gentrification aesthetic of their neighbourhoods.

4.7 Discussion

This overview of literature pertaining to weekly markets and facets of the used-goods economy demonstrates the need to think about used-goods sellers as part of a larger chain of procurement, distribution and consumption. Presenting the various ways that used goods are acquired and sold is helpful for understanding the importance of used-goods sellers in the broader continuum of the second-cycle economy. Flea market vendors are only one part of this broad spectrum of the used-goods trade. This chapter is a point of entry for considering the history of flea markets, as well as the broader ways in which people become involved in used-goods trades.

What is apparent in this history, as well as the used-goods trade as it exists today, is that there are specific negative connotations that can be directed against used-goods sellers. Historically, such sellers have been looked at with suspicion and/or derision because of fears of hucksterism. Likewise, used-goods sellers have been seen as dirty, an embodiment of the goods that they have on offer. However, this is somewhat selective and perceptions about merchants

being problematic are likely structural. Indeed, the political context in which used-goods sellers find themselves plays a significant role in whether or not their economic activities are derided, encouraged or tolerated. In the Global North, some second-cycle economy jobs tend to have greater negative connotations than others.

As much as some parts of this continuum of the used-goods economy face negative perceptions from governments, the public and others, there are types of used-goods selling, procurement and divesting that generally do not have such negative connotations. Garage sales and going to thrift stores searching for vintage, nostalgic collectibles do not contain negative economic (or even class) connotations. Garage sales manage to avoid such negative perceptions because of their role as social events that mimic the norms of rational economic exchange, but have a different purpose that is more akin to gift exchange. However, because garage sales can be opportunities for used-goods sellers to acquire rare and valuable items cheaply, such sellers frequent garage sales whenever possible. Since the goals of used-goods sellers differ dramatically from the goals of people hosting garage sales (and the people who they hope to meet and attach to the goods they hope to divest), used-goods sellers are often seen as outcasts by people who host garage sales.

The negative connotations associated with the sale of used goods are much more apparent in the world of street vending, particularly in the Global South, where the “gift-exchange disguised as rational economic activity” found at garage sales is missing. In academic literature, the people hosting garage sales (as well as shoppers/collectors who are actively looking to consume vintage, nostalgia items) tend to be of a higher economic class than street vendors (sometimes immigrants or homeless people) who receive short shrift and are looked at disparagingly by governments, neighbouring brick and mortar businesses and passersby.

Following Le Zotte (2017), part of this is explained through the history of the emergence of garage sales in suburban North America as a distinctly middle-class leisure activity.

In this chapter, I have also pointed to the difficulty in applying existing informal economy literature from the Global South to my research sites in Halifax. Part of the difficulty stems from the widely differing contexts through which informal market vending manifests in different parts of the world. One significant difference between examples from the Global North and Global South is the large number of informal traders who work as street vendors or bazaar peddlers in the Global South compared to the Global North. The World Bank Latin America model suggests it is likely that informal entrepreneurs in the Global South earn greater benefits from practicing informally than their counterparts in the Global North. Hence, exit from the formal economy may create greater opportunities for subsistence in these contexts. In the Global North most used-goods vendors at markets are moonlighting (having formal day jobs and access to the benefits they provide, such as health care pensions) and where the markets themselves are formal enterprises. That said, these differences may not apply to other the second-cycle economies and there may be more similarities than differences between the Global North and South when examining other used-goods oriented professions.

The procurement and divestment strategies discussed in this chapter are not the same as those found in the world of flea markets or used-goods shops, but they are part of the broader world of the used-goods trade. As I have hinted, there is overlap between these parts of the continuum. Scavenging, garbage picking and frequenting garage sales are only some examples of how used-goods sellers acquire goods and in the case of my research these avenues were mostly peripheral for the people who I met. The same is true for using street vending or garage sales as a divestment or selling strategy. That said, they are part of the larger scene, part of the history and

continue to exist as pieces of the broader scope of the used-goods economy. Now that I have examined the multi-faceted world of the used-goods trade, it is time to turn to the research sites themselves.

CHAPTER 5: COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH SITES AND GAINING ENTRY

Now that I have presented a broad overview of the history of flea markets and the used-goods trade in Chapter 4, my aim is to situate my research sites in the context of their locations in the city of Halifax. This chapter provides a short history of Gottingen Street (where Plan B is located) in order to highlight the ways that the street and neighbourhood have changed over the last century. Plan B is located in an area of Halifax that is currently undergoing rapid gentrification, but still faces stigma because of its working class and racialized background. I also provide a history of the flea market industry in Halifax as explained to me by Bill Mont, the person who first brought modern-day flea markets to the city. This chapter also explains the origins of both Plan B and the Harbourview and the process gaining entry to each site.

5.1 A Historical Explanation of the Stigmatization of Gottingen Street

In recent years, North End Halifax has been undergoing gentrification, and research about change in the North End has proliferated in the past decade. Examples include residential changes (Childs, 2014); public housing risks around Uniacke Square (Silver, 2008); development on Gottingen Street (Roth, 2013); the effects of gentrification and development on the African Nova Scotia community in the North End (Baker, 2014); and the health effects of gentrification on the African Nova Scotian population in the area (Waldron et al., 2015).

Peninsular Halifax is separated into four zones: North End, South End, West End and Downtown (which is effectively the “East End”). Technically, Plan B is situated between the boundaries of what are generally thought of as Downtown Halifax and North End Halifax (what some people call “Central Halifax”), but the shop positions itself as being proudly part of the North End.

There are arguably two major historical events that have become part of the symbolic identity of Halifax's North End: the Halifax Explosion and the eviction of Africville residents, leading to the creation of Uniacke Square. The Halifax Explosion occurred on December 6, 1917, when the Norwegian ship SS *Imo* colliding with the French cargo ship SS *Mont-Blanc*. The French vessel was fully loaded with the explosives TNT and picric acid, as well as high-octane fuels (Armstrong, 2002, p. 3). The collision led to the SS *Mont-Blanc* catching fire. The cargo detonated shortly thereafter, causing a blast wave that was felt hundreds of kilometres away. Every building within a 2.6 km radius was destroyed or badly damaged. The disaster left approximately 1,600 people dead and another 9,000 people injured (Armstrong, 2002, p. 3). Approximately 12,000 residential buildings and another 1,600 commercial buildings were destroyed and as many as 6,000 people were left homeless and 25,000 people were left without sufficient shelter (see Kernaghan & Foot, 2015). It took decades to rebuild the affected parts of the city. As such, this event had stalled the development what is now considered the North End.

It was not until WWII and the post-war era that Gottingen Street grew into a booming commercial district in the city. According to Roth and Grant (2015), Gottingen Street was the second highest performing commercial district in Halifax during the 1950s, with approximately 130 retail and commercial uses lining the main corridor between Gerrish and Cogswell Streets, which constitute only a few city blocks (p. 43). In 1948 the street's most iconic space, the Vogue Theatre, opened and the neighbourhood also attracted many other businesses and amenities (such as Glubes, the French Casino Restaurant, Klines, Sobeys, Scuba Maritime Ltd., CIBC, Niagara Loans, a furniture store and more). Despite the working-class identity of the area, this was a time of affluence and prosperity on Gottingen Street. Never really considered a part of the North End

or a part of downtown, Gottingen Street became something of a hub insofar as it was a buffer zone between downtown and the North End.

Of all of the neighbourhoods affected by the Halifax Explosion, Africville is the one that, to this day, has affected the development of Gottingen Street. The original Africville is quite far from where Plan B is located. It was an area on the outskirts of Halifax that was settled by African Nova Scotians, who formed a thriving community in the face of racism and discrimination that they were subjected to elsewhere in the city. After the explosion, Africville did receive some financial assistance from the city, but none of the reconstruction or modernization invested into other parts of the North End (Hébert, 1996, p. 4-15).³⁴ This left Africville's residents in a position of economic and political strife. By the late 1950s, the City of Halifax used this situation to help classify the neighbourhood as a slum, which became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the 1960s, the city forcibly evicted residents of Africville as part of a program based on institutional environmental racism.³⁵ Many of the 500 people evicted from Africville were moved to housing projects in Uniacke Square (opened in 1966), which is approximately a block and a half north of Plan B. By 1970, the last home in Africville was demolished. This forced relocation coincided with the economic downturn on Gottingen Street, which has since taken on a racialized dimension not found elsewhere in peninsular Halifax.

The economic downturn can be pinpointed to the creation of the Cogswell Street Interchange, a multi-level highway interchange which opened in 1973, and the building of Scotia Square in 1967, a complex that included offices, hotel space, residences, parking and a shopping

³⁴ Also see Hébert Boyd (2007).

³⁵ Environmental racism refers to the government placement of minority or low-income citizens into the proximity of environmentally hazardous or degraded environments (see Holifield, 2001; and Waldron, 2018).

mall that housed its own theatre and a department store (Roth and Grant, 2015, p. 45-46). Roth and Grant say, “the programs had little effect on the declining commercial status of the street” (p. 46). I argue that these programs did have an effect and contributed to the continuing decline of Gottingen Street’s commercial status. Scotia Square ended up being in direct competition with the already declining businesses on Gottingen Street and the new interchange effectively isolated the street from the downtown core, making the neighbourhood more North End than Downtown. This was exacerbated by the fact that between 1958 and 1963 the city expropriated almost seventeen acres of land and razed many of the lower-value residential “slums” in the area where Scotia Square and the Cogswell Street Interchange were built (p. 45).

By the early 1970s, the prosperity that Gottingen Street had experienced in the post-war era had all but vanished. Around the same time that Africville residents were relocated to the neighbourhood, shops began to close. In 1972 the Vogue Theatre closed and was reopened as The Eve, a short-lived adult movie theatre. By the mid-1980s, the former Vogue Theatre had become a nightclub (Roth & Grant, 2015, p. 47). The early 1970s also saw the police relocate its headquarters to the street and the opening of the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre. By 1980 the banks had left, Sobeys had left and the iconic Kline’s clothing store had closed too (*ibid.*). As the street continued its economic decline, it became associated with urban poverty and crime. The 1980s and 1990s saw the city’s gay community take advantage of the low rental cost of commercial and residential space and the old Vogue Theatre was taken over by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA) in the late 1980s. GALA turned the theatre into a dance club called Rumors that would remain open until the mid-1990s. To this day, the street continues to be an important area for the LGBTQ+ community, as evidenced by Menz Bar, the Company House (a live performance venue that closed in 2017) and Seadogs Sauna (a bath house). All of these

changes have contributed to the identity of Gottingen Street as working-class, African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw and queer. The intersection of these socially marginalized identities with poverty have created an impression around the region that Gottingen Street is a dangerous place.

During my time in the field, there were numerous reminders of this part of the street's reputation, identity and history. One example will suffice here: on April 17, 2012, gay rights activist Raymond Taavel was murdered on Gottingen Street by Andre Noel Denny, a psychiatric patient who had failed to return to the East Coast Forensics Hospital while on unescorted short leave. Taavel was murdered right outside Plan B, after leaving the Menz Bar, which is directly above the cooperative. In memoriam, Toronto-based artist Brian Pace erected the Raymond Taavel Healing Garden in an empty lot directly across the street from Plan B (Assouad, 2013, August 21). Every day that I was in the field, I would stand outside of the shop, smoking cigarettes, staring at the wire fence that was covered in flowers that served as the entry point to the garden, but ultimately blocked its view from where I stood. As the days turned into months, I watched as the makeshift memorial disintegrated, became less and less tended to, and virtually disappeared into collective memory until it was finally taken down. Nevertheless, the healing garden was only ever intended as a makeshift memorial and Taavel's story is not forgotten. Community members are still working on creating a permanent memorial.

Other examples of this stigmatized neighbourhood identity that people associate with Gottingen Street are everywhere. There are numerous social service providers on the street and side streets, including the North End Community Health Centre, Direction 180 (a methadone clinic), the Ark (a safe place for homeless and street-involved youth), Barry House (a women's shelter), the Salvation Army (the Gottingen Street location offers family tracing services, rehabilitation services and shelter for men), the Metro Non-profit Housing Support Centre, the

Souls Harbour Rescue Mission (for men), Stepping Stone (a sex trade support centre), the abovementioned Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank (which is actually located on Maynard Street), the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Youth Project Society, the Halifax Refugee Clinic, the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Institute for Afrocentric Learning, Adsum House (an emergency shelter for women and children), Sir Sanford Fleming House (a halfway house for men who have recently left prison) and Hope Cottage (a soup kitchen located on Brunswick Street). The street is also home to Nova Scotia Department of Community Services Metro Regional Housing Authority offices, as well as Income Assistance offices. These are in addition to the numerous churches that offer social services in the area.

The number of social service programs that are offered on Gottingen and its side streets is staggering. I estimate that there are more of such services surrounding Gottingen than in any other part of the HRM. This means that every day, Gottingen has a large number of people on it who are looking to use these services. It was not unusual for me to speak with homeless men and women, prostitutes and drug addicts in the amount of time that it took to smoke one cigarette on the street. Gottingen Street is the place where people who need help seek help. The most marginalized citizens in the city know the street well because if they do not live near Gottingen, they need to go to Gottingen to take advantage of its services.

All of this creates problems for the new class of people who have started to invest in the area. Gentrification has already taken place in several parts of the North End and Gottingen Street is the most recent place to experience this. Plan B is one of many businesses that has taken advantage of low rents on the street during the past decade. The street is changing and there is a cultural mixing of the urban poor with semi-affluent hipsters. During the course of my research, I witnessed long-time residents and businesses slowly get pushed out of the neighbourhood in the

name of redevelopment. It is a weird feeling to eat duck prosciutto purchased from a high-end charcuterie business and drink an expensive latte as I walk by a homeless shelter and a methadone clinic, saying “no” when people ask for a smoke or some loose change. And even I could not afford to eat at one of the most upscale restaurants in Halifax, which opened across from the Salvation Army. Plan B vendors joked about what it must be like to spend \$70 on a plate of food as you stare out the window looking at people begging in front of the homeless shelter.³⁶ This is the Gottingen Street of 2013-2014, a complex intersection of class, race, the LGBTQ+ community and gentrification that is the result of the particular history of the city’s North End, of the Halifax Explosion and Africville, of the Vogue Theatre and the Cogswell Street Interchange, of Raymond Taavel’s murder and misconceptions about the street. Plan B is merely one place that is part of the changing image and demographic that makes up Gottingen Street.

5.2 A Brief Overview of the Area Around Canal Street

The Harbourview Weekend Market is located at 42 Canal Street on the edge of downtown Dartmouth. Canal Street is a side street that connects to Portland Street, which is one of the major thoroughfares that links downtown Dartmouth with other parts of the area. During my time in the field, Canal Street was undergoing gentrification, as various large apartment complexes and condo units were being built or had opened around the market.

The gentrification process in downtown Dartmouth has not received the same amount of attention as in peninsular Halifax, but this may be changing. In 2017, *The National Post* declared that Dartmouth is the new Brooklyn, exclaiming that downtown Dartmouth has become one of Canada’s hippest neighbourhoods (Bundale, 2017, November 6). The article argues that until

³⁶ To be clear, this assumed cost was something of an exaggeration.

recently, the area around Portland street had been a dead zone and that this has changed due to opening of “some of the hottest eateries, trendiest shops and coolest hipster hangouts emerge on the gritty streets across the harbour from downtown Halifax.”

Downtown Dartmouth is certainly more bustling than it was even four years ago when I first started fieldwork. Many of these new businesses (particularly restaurants, bars and retail stores) were not present when I left the field. But the evidence of the beginning of the gentrification process already surrounded the market: the largest of the abovementioned condo projects, King’s Wharf, which took years to complete, is part of the same Dartmouth Cove area where Canal Street is situated.

Dartmouth is separated from the City of Halifax by the Halifax Harbour. As a result of the harbour, both cities developed independently. In the early 19th century, Dartmouth was a sparsely populated sawmill and agricultural outpost. Due to the geography of the Halifax Harbour, the only way to get from one side to the other was by boat or by travelling around the harbour, which at the time was no easy feat. That said, the origin of Canal Street is part of how this sparsely populated outpost transformed into an important town in its own right.

The opening of the Shubenacadie Canal shipping route in 1861 connected Dartmouth to the Bay of Fundy.³⁷ The shipping route was short-lived, as it was closed in 1871 when the Intercontinental Railway blocked the canal by replacing a draw bridge with a fixed bridge. Plans to re-open the canal were abandoned by the mid-1870s after the newly incorporated Town of Dartmouth took control of the Dartmouth Lakes as a drinking water supply. Present day Canal Street takes its name from the Shubenacadie Canal and is located adjacent to where the canal

³⁷ For an in-depth history of the construction and demolition of the canal, as well as its significance in the development of the City of Dartmouth, see Barnett (2002).

opened into Dartmouth Cove. Today, few remnants of the Shubenacadie Canal are present around the Dartmouth Cove area, as most of the canal was filled in and turned into roads during the 20th Century. Close to the Harbour a few green spaces and a canal are some of the only vestiges still visible.

The development of the canal and the subsequent building of the railroad led to the industrialization of Dartmouth waterfront, which includes the area on the edge of what is now downtown Dartmouth and the site where the Harbourview is located. As Dartmouth became more industrialized during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, The Starr Manufacturing Company opened its factory in the area (where today Prince Albert Street meets Pleasant Street). The company manufactured many items, but is most notable among historians for being the world's first ice skate manufacturer (Jones, 2002). As the Dartmouth waterfront continued its industrialization into the 20th Century, it became home to a foundry, Dominion Coal and many additional manufacturers.

Although Dartmouth was affected by the Halifax Explosion, Dartmouth Cove was shielded from the blast. Towards the end of WWI, the area that is now King's Wharf became home to Halship's Shipyard. Also on the harbour, directly adjacent to where the Harbourview is now, was the Dominion Molasses Company, which burned down in 1959.

During the years after WWII, the City of Halifax and the City of Dartmouth opened the MacDonald Bridge, connecting peninsular Halifax and downtown Dartmouth for the first time. In the decades that followed, Dartmouth grew rapidly as commuters took advantage of suburban residential options on the outskirts of the city. By the 1970s, much of the industry around the Dartmouth Harbour was in decline. During the 1980s and 1990s, downtown businesses became increasingly affected by competition from shopping malls. It is doubtful that downtown

Dartmouth had the same stigma attached to it as Gottingen Street did towards the end of the century, but after the amalgamation of Halifax and Dartmouth into the HRM in the 1990s, Dartmouth took on the nickname “the dark side.”

Canal Street was part of this decline. By the 2000s, many of the industrial companies had left the Dartmouth Cove area and the landscape became dotted with empty building lots. In the 1990s, the site of the Harbourview was a grocery store. It was replaced by a Value Village by the early 2000s and the market took over the building after Value Village moved elsewhere. By the time I entered the field, the market, the Dartmouth Curling Club (located on Canal Street for eighty years), Dominion Diving, some government buildings and a few small industrial companies were all that remained on the street.

In 2012, the HRM had released a plan for turning Dartmouth Cove into “Dartmouth Cove Square,” which entails, “a multi-use square at the terminus of Canal Street to maintain views to the harbour, accommodating potential events and markets, and that can serve as a well-designed parking lot when not in use” (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2012, p. 4). The document notes that the developers who purchased the Harbourview building prior to the publication of the report planned to tear down the market and replace it with apartment complexes. Five years on, the Dartmouth Cove Square development project appears to have made little headway, but the potential redevelopment plan suggests that the Harbourview market is not part of the city’s agenda moving forward. This is an example of how Plan B and the Harbourview are on different ends of the “gentrification aesthetic,” as described in Chapter 3.3.3.

5.3 The Origins of Plan B

Plan B opened in October, 2011, at 2180 Gottingen Street. It was the brainchild of a handful of flea market vendors who wanted to take the next step, and take control of their

destinies, by opening a brick and mortar store. None of the original group of vendors could afford to open a business on their own: no one had the capital to do so. One research participant told me that the idea had come from an off the cuff comment during a hum-drum day at the Harbourview Weekend Market, where one person made the suggestion. Within a couple of months several vendors had mobilized together, rented the space on Gottingen Street and opened up the shop. It was not only Harbourview vendors who joined the initiative, as Morrigan Lefay's Mystical Gifts (a store dealing in gothic and medieval goods) had recently closed its doors in Dartmouth and In Vinyl We Trust (a used record business based in Dartmouth) also came on board.

According to *The Coast*, Plan B's soft opening on September 17, 2011 comprised the following businesses: "The Monkey's Paw (Antiques and Cuiros [*sic*], known for their Dartmouth Market stall), Toxic Blossom (Japanese street fashion), In Vinyl We Trust (used records available again on Gottingen), Third Eye Blind (games and collectibles), Morrigan Lefay's Mystical Gifts (medieval and goth accessories and fashions, formerly on Portland Street in Dartmouth), Arcane Angel (steampunk jewellery), plus Thai Yoga Massage" (Knox, 2011, original in bold). The short news article also notes that local artists would have pieces on display and that a café and gallery space would be opening soon (*ibid.*). The Monkey's Paw, Toxic Blossom, Arcane Angel and Third Eye Blind had all been at the Harbourview prior to the opening of Plan B. Only Third Eye Blind maintained a presence at the Harbourview after Plan B opened.

By the time that I started fieldwork at the shop, much had changed. The number of vendors had grown exponentially. In January, 2013, *Local Connections Halifax* magazine claimed that the shop had fifty-one vendors (Boon, 2013). When I started in September, 2013,

the total had risen to over seventy. Yet, the Plan B that I experienced was radically different in another way: most of these original vendors had moved on. The Thai Yoga Massage business seems to have been short-lived and I was told various stories about how and why Morrigan Lefay's Mystical Gifts left early on. The other original vendors experience various degrees of success.

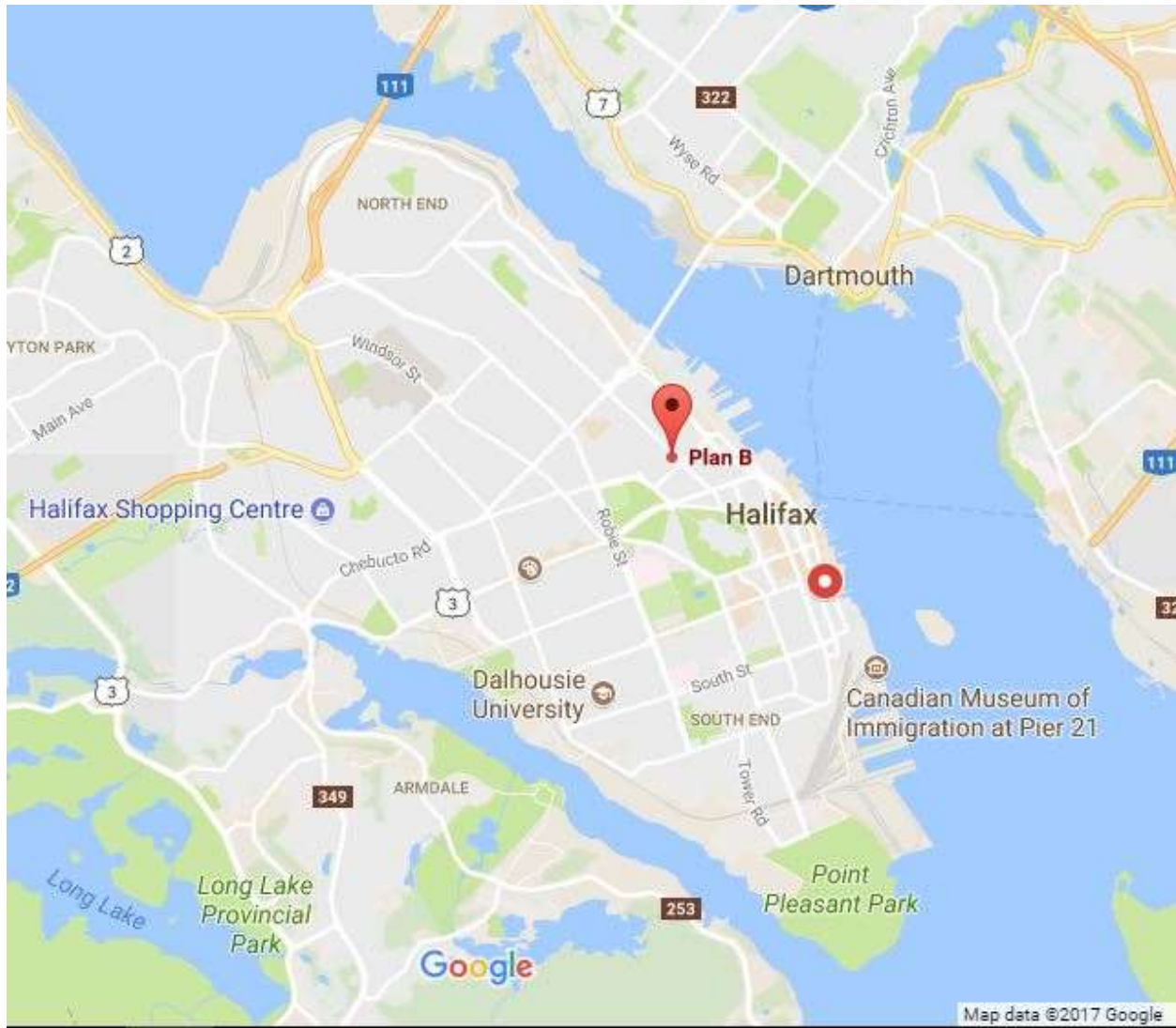


Figure 1: Location of Plan B

For example, In Vinyl We Trust rebranded and became Black Buffalo Records. It moved to its own brick and mortar store on West Street, which opened in January, 2013 and then moved

again to Cornwallis Street in 2014, placing it in close proximity to Plan B. The owner of Black Buffalo Records has appeared as a rare record expert on the CBC radio program *Maritime Noon* and has also spearheaded the bi-annual Halifax Record Fair.³⁸

Arcane Angel's owner is well-known in the crafter community, as she organizes two important events in the city (the Spring Geequinox and Gothic Little Christmas, both of which take place at the Halifax Forum). She has been involved in many other events and travels across Canada to participate in various fan conventions,³⁹ such as Fan Expo. Her jewelry is currently available at Jennifer's of Nova Scotia on Spring Garden Road, which has been a hub for the Nova Scotia craft community since the 1970s.

Toxic Blossom had also left Plan B shortly before I started field research. The two owners opened their own brick and mortar store at Halifax's Historic Properties.⁴⁰ Other businesses that got their start at Plan B, but were not part of the original seven, had also moved into their own spaces, such as the mid-century furniture shop, Abode, and the Parentheses Art Gallery, which joined Plan B in late 2011 and moved a few doors down in 2012. Unfortunately, the gallery closed its doors in 2015, but continues to curate art shows around the city. Even the popular Fancy Lucky vintage clothing store in Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia had operated in Plan B for a time as an extension of the main store. Fancy Lucky had left before I arrived and had been quickly replaced by a different used-clothing business called Vagabond Vintage.

³⁸ Black Buffalo closed in 2017, but the Halifax Record Fair continues on.

³⁹ Fan conventions or "cons" are events where fans of genre entertainment, such as science fiction or anime, come together to participate in organized events and meet creators and other celebrities associated with such genre entertainment.

⁴⁰ By 2016, one of the owners left the company and moved to Japan. By the end of 2017, Toxic Blossom had closed its doors.

By the time that I started at Plan B, only The Monkey's Paw and Third Eye Blind still remained from the original group. Third Eye Blind had had a falling out with some of the other businesses at the cooperative and had only recently returned to the shop in 2013 after being away from the space for nearly a year. As such, The Monkey's Paw is the only one of the original seven businesses that has always operated out of Plan B.

The original cooperative members who I spoke with offered me three main reasons for moving from Dartmouth to Halifax. Two of them are quite simple: many of the original cooperative members lived in and around North End Halifax. The second reason is much more significant: cooperative members wanted to take advantage of the younger, "cooler," hipster clientele that they anticipated would frequent the shop because of the changing demographics of the neighbourhood (which was in the early stages of gentrification). Hence, the move from the Harbourview by the original group was an attempt to cater to a different audience. One research participant even referred to the Harbourview Weekend Market as a "hillbilly market," which I interpret as based on his difficulties trying to market his goods to the wrong audience. As such, the desire to run a shop closer to home and to attract a clientele that is more interested in the types of goods for sale are both sensible reasons for opening the shop on Gottingen, where renting commercial space (at least at the time) was quite affordable.

There is a third reason for opening on Gottingen: even though vendors insisted that they were not interested in opening a shop in Dartmouth, they would have had difficulty opening their shop in the area even if they had wanted to. Dartmouth has a land-use bylaw in effect that prevents used-goods businesses from operating in its downtown core (excluding used book stores, used clothing stores, sports card shops, antique stores and bicycle repair shops) (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2011, p. 9). The land-use bylaw is directed at pawn shops and "junk

stores,” but makes it difficult for people interested in selling used goods to get occupancy permits to operate in Dartmouth.

Members originally emphasized the cooperative as a venue for small used-goods and crafts businesses, but it quickly became a place that hosted art shows, installations and films, community events and fundraisers. According to its president, no major city in Canada is home to a merchants’ cooperative quite like Plan B. This is the narrative that Plan B asserts in the media and was also sincerely stated to me on numerous occasions. There is some truth to this statement, but Plan B does share similarities with another type of shop, the antiques group shop, which is much more common across North America. However, as a cooperative, Plan B is a uniquely situated cooperative/group shop hybrid and this unique status deserves some discussion.

5.4 The Political Hierarchy of Plan B

In the North American context, three types of antiques stores are easily identifiable: the single owner shop, the group shop and the antiques mall. All three types of stores sell antiques. Nevertheless, they are organized differently. I suspect that in many parts of Canada and the USA the single owner shop is the norm, but I cannot say this with any certainty because of a lack of statistical information. In a single owner shop, all inventory is owned by a sole proprietor, who operates the shop. This type of shop is common in Atlantic Canada.

The group shop is far less common in Atlantic Canada but exists throughout North America. In a group shop setting, individual businesses and dealers come together under one roof. Inventories remain separate and it is of the utmost importance that every item has an individual price tag. Group shops come up with codes to keep track of what item belongs to what vendor and these codes must be written on every price tag. Otherwise, a sold item may be credited to the wrong person or a deal may be given on an item that is well below the original

purchase price. With so many “cooks in the kitchen” the people running the organizational structure of group shops must pay close attention to prices and price tags to avoid conflict among group shop vendors. Nova Scotia has two well-known antique group shops—Finer Things Antiques in Halifax and the Great Village Antiques Exchange in the rural community of Great Village. Both shops have many vendors and Great Village is by far the largest shop of its kind in the province. At first glance, it seems that Plan B may be just another group shop, but there are certain things that make this less of a perfect fit to that type.

At the time of writing, there are no antiques malls in Atlantic Canada. The closest antiques malls operate in Quebec and Maine. An antiques mall is like a group shop, but with a major difference: group shop members tend to be highly involved in the operation of their shops, whereas antiques malls tend to be operated by mall owners, who rent out spaces to dealers and then sell their items for a small commission. Since mall owners rely on price tags to make sure that the correct dealers are credited for specific sales and because of the emphasis on commission, the requirement for proper tagging and pricing is much more rigid. In such shops, dealers generally drop off inventory and curate their stock, but are not involved in the day to day selling of their wares and receive payment from the antiques mall owner on a monthly basis.

It should be obvious that Plan B is not a single owner shop. It has more similarities with group shops than it does with the other two types of antique stores, but the wide range of kinds of involvement of individual cooperative members (from everyday involvement to non-existent) makes Plan B more similar to antiques malls in some cases. In fact, the political hierarchy of Plan B makes it a hybrid group shop/antiques mall.

Plan B is operated by a president. Bob Chiasson has been the shop’s president from its inception. As president, Bob is responsible for the management of every aspect of the shop. I

have come to divide the vendors into three types, based on their amount of involvement: core, semi-peripheral and peripheral vendors. Core vendors are those who are actively involved in the day-to-day operations of Plan B. These vendors tend to rent large spaces, tend to their spaces on a regular basis and volunteer their time to operate the store on specific days of the week. Plan B does not have paid employees and relies on vendors volunteering their time to run the cash and take care of shop business. Semi-peripheral vendors generally rent large spaces, which they tend to on a regular basis, but do not volunteer their time operating the shop. Peripheral vendors make up the majority of renters. These vendors rarely tend to their spaces and have virtually no involvement in the operation of the shop.

In fact, there were many peripheral vendors who paid their rent, brought in stock and curated their inventories without any interest in being involved in the shop more generally and who only came into the shop once a month to handle everything in one shot (the seventh day of every month is cheque day at Plan B). There were even a handful of vendors who never came to the shop during my time there and whose status was a source of mystery and frustration not only for me, but for the core vendors who were trying to make decisions about how to use the shop's (sometimes limited) space. These vendors treated Plan B more like an antiques mall than a group shop or the cooperative that it is supposed to be.

The shop's cooperative status also serves to distinguish it from the main types of antiques store that I profile in this section. Plan B is a registered cooperative⁴¹ in the province of Nova

⁴¹ To cover the broad history of cooperatives and the cooperative movement is beyond the scope of this research project. Cooperatives take many forms and have many intentions. There are cooperative banks, housing initiatives, grocery stores, farms, and so on. The idea of the cooperative is multifaceted and there are numerous different kinds of cooperatives, such as worker cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, housing cooperatives, non-retail cooperatives and various other types that have radically different goals. The common thread is the cooperative nature of the given enterprise. At its most basic definitional level, the people who are involved

Scotia and uses the word “cooperative” in its business name. But what does this mean? What kind of cooperative is it? Plan B is owned and controlled by its vendors. Vendors pay monthly rent based on the size of their space and then keep whatever profits are made above the cost of their rent. The idea is to make sure that the cooperative has enough money at the end of the month to pay its own rent and other bills (heat, electricity, telephone, internet, insurance and so on). Since the total amount of rent that individual vendors pay is not enough to cover the operational costs of the business, Plan B rents the back room (its gallery space) on a nightly basis for a small fee in order to make up the shortfall. Anyone and everyone who is interested in becoming a member of Plan B (or who is interested in renting the gallery space) is encouraged to do so.

Most people who ask to join as vendors are invited to become cooperative members with little fuss. The only time that I encountered people being rejected by the cooperative was when core members deemed that a new product was too similar to already existing products (to avoid competition with established members) or because the new product was too “junky”; that is, the quality of the product was deemed not good enough for the store. This was generally not applied to craft vendors or artists but was applied to a handful of garbage pickers who were trying to make money from their junk removal businesses. The application process is not formal, as the president or core vendors would decide to invite a new vendor based on a short discussion about what they wanted to sell and available space. A list of vendors was not even kept on file, which

tend to own shares in any given cooperative and cooperative decisions are democratically controlled through voting. The benefit of organizing into a cooperative is that it allows many people to pool their resources together to achieve goals that could not be achieved otherwise (for example, due to a lack of capital needed to make it on one’s own). It’s also important to mention the ideological dimension of cooperatives: they are about sharing the labour and profits more equally than in regular businesses and have often been used to undermine dominant monopolies (e.g. retail co-ops in “company towns”).

made it difficult to keep track of who was who and who had abandoned their goods. The one major rule was that if a vendor could not pay their rent or disappeared for several months that their products could be confiscated and sold by Plan B to make up the rent shortfall. During months when there was not enough money available to pay rent, bills and vendors, the core vendors would defer receiving their monthly cheques until the cooperative could afford to pay them. Most months this was not an issue, but during one month in particular, the cooperative president had to use his own savings to pay the bills.

Only vendors were considered members, as renting the gallery space was considered a separate endeavour. Customers were not considered members either and could not purchase shares of the business. In fact, vendors did not own shares in the business either. Instead, the amount of clout that a vendor had was based on either the size of his or her space or the amount of time that he or she invested in volunteering to operate the shop (if not both). The vendors who paid the most money for rent had the most say in the day-to-day operations of the shop, as they had the most invested in its long-term viability.

Since the shop president had the most invested in the shop (financially, in terms of space used and in terms of involvement), he sometimes ran the shop by fiat. Decisions made on short notice or made arbitrarily made some other vendors uncomfortable and led to occasional infighting. Some vendors felt that major decisions should be voted on by all members, while others disagreed, arguing that vendors who have little to do with the shop should not have a say in major decisions because of their lack of emotional or financial investment in the space. As a result, most of the major decisions about the business were made by a handful of core vendors. Such decisions usually had to do with how to organize the space, who to invite as new members, or how to delegate day-to-day tasks. During my year in the field, the system worked more often

than not and most vendors only voiced displeasure with the political hierarchy of the shop when they wanted to have more control.

The laissez-faire approach to Plan B's organizational structure made it less democratic than what is generally expected of a cooperative. Key decisions were made by only a handful of people and there was no formal operating committee responsible for delegating tasks. This lack of political organization did cause its own set of problems, but only when something was forgotten, such as when bills did not get paid on time or a vendor forgot to put out garbage on garbage day for weeks in a row.

When the original seven vendors started the cooperative, they initially held meetings and had an equal amount of clout, but the problem facing the political structure of Plan B has to do with the success of some of its vendors more than anything else. As core vendors moved on to their own brick and mortar stores, they were not easily replaced by like-minded vendors. As the number of vendors grew, it became more and more difficult to keep track of who was using what space, because the people who would have been responsible for maintaining these records had left the shop. Rather than replacing people as they left, the cooperative let things slide and has taken on a mentality that is a hybrid of the group shop, antiques shop and cooperative.

5.5 Gaining Entry at Plan B

It was August 23, 2013 when I walked into Plan B with the goal of gaining informed consent to conduct research at the shop. I had met the co-op's president a few months earlier and it was then that I first proposed the possibility of conducting anthropological research at Plan B. He seemed receptive to the idea, but wanted to meet to discuss the project in more detail.

It was a rainy day and I entered the store around 2:30 pm. Bob was sitting at the front counter. We talked about my project and my goals. He was very enthusiastic. He informed me

that he had studied anthropology when he was a university student and had always loved the discipline. When I described anthropological methods and concepts—participant observation, ethnology, ethnography and so on—he knew what I was talking about. He told me that other co-op members had also studied anthropology and sociology. He waxed lyrical about anthropology in general and seemed so impressed with me that he invited me to explore the basement to look at his massive collection of oddities, curios, antiques and bric-a-brac. He was waiting for the fire marshal to arrive in order to conduct an inspection and allowed me to poke around the basement unaccompanied. By this point we had only known each other for mere hours and he was already allowing me to look through his collection of valuables without any concern. I looked around for twenty minutes before coming back upstairs to check out the café at the back of the store. The café owners also seemed to have some knowledge about anthropology and appeared enthusiastic about my project.

After finishing the coffee that I had ordered, I went back to the front of the store to continue my discussion with Bob. The fire marshal had come and gone and Bob seemed to already trust me enough that he started to go into detail about his personal life and his experience being adopted as a child. I quickly learned that conversations in the shop are never really private, as a customer interjected regarding his own experience being adopted. As we continued our chat, some vendors entered the shop and Bob introduced me to them. No one seemed at all concerned by my status as an anthropologist/researcher.

A woman who looked destitute entered the shop. She had heroin track marks on both arms. She wanted to sell jewelry. Bob did not look interested. I had to put more money in the parking meter to avoid getting a ticket, so I left for five minutes. When I returned, they were finishing a deal. Bob purchased some items for \$30, but he did not purchase the costume jewelry

that the woman had for sale. The woman proclaimed that she wanted to look around the store. She told Bob that she needed money for food. I found this doubtful, but said nothing. We followed her around and kept her in sight until she left. Bob told me that he was convinced she was looking for a fix and that her “sob story” was not genuine. He was worried that she might steal something. Bob is continuously worried about theft from small vendors during his watch: he is responsible if something goes missing when he runs the store.



Figure 2: The Café (September, 2013).

Bob and I continued our discussion after the woman left. The discussion became tangential and drifted far away from the topic of anthropology. It was after 5 pm by the time that we came back to the topic of informed consent. Bob seemed confident that my presence would not be disruptive and might benefit the shop. He signed the consent form without any hesitation and my entry to Plan B became official. We agreed that I would start coming in to the shop

regularly after Labour Day, as the Halifax Fringe Festival would be over by then and “Fringe” was his top priority.

My experience gaining entry into Plan B felt odd at the time and still does to an extent as I write this. I had spent months preparing for this first encounter, worrying about what I would say and how my first impression would be interpreted. Ethnographic research that I had read repeatedly, like Knauff’s (2010) account of eating bananas in order to build trust amongst the Gebusi—an example I have used many times when teaching undergraduate courses—did not apply. As such, it was a welcome surprise to be accepted with open arms by a person with an above average understanding and appreciation of anthropology. How many anthropologists can say that their key informant and site gatekeeper studied anthropology? As a result, I was able to settle into Plan B quickly and easily.



Figure 3: The Gallery Space (September, 2013).

Perhaps this experience is why I almost failed to gain entry into the Harbourview Weekend Market months later. But, as I came to understand, the laissez-faire approach to attracting new vendors at Plan B involved letting just about everybody in. I did not realize it then, but as I came to learn during my time in the field our informal meeting was essentially the same way that Bob and core vendors vetted possible cooperative members. The fact that Bob and some of the others had an understanding of ethnography and ethnographic methods certainly helped my quick entry, but embracing new vendors and opportunities was part and parcel of how Plan B worked (and still works). My status as ethnographer may have been unique, but as I quickly came to realize, the transitory nature of Plan B vendors necessitated the continuous involvement of new people. In this way, I was not unique and the same standards were being applied to me, as a newcomer, as anybody else. Gaining entry to the Harbourview was much more difficult, which I will explain in Chapter 5.7. Prior to discussing the Harbourview in any detail, it is important to situate its creation in the history of flea markets in the HRM.

5.6 A Short History of Weekly Flea Markets in Halifax

The history of weekly markets in Halifax is much simpler than I originally anticipated. In Chapter 4, I explained how, historically in North America, what are now considered flea markets and farmers' markets were not necessarily separate entities. This is true for Halifax, but the question of where the split occurred in this city left me perplexed for a long time. In the end, I learned that the flea market industry in Halifax stemmed from the endeavours of one individual, Bill Mont.

I first met Bill Mont at his thrift store in Halifax's North End on a day when I went to Plan B to conduct research, only to find that the cooperative was not open. With time to kill, I drove to the North End and spotted a thrift store that I was unaware of. I was already aware of

Mont's reputation as Nova Scotia's "flea market king," as the closure of his last weekly flea market in Lower Sackville (which he blamed on laws permitting Sunday shopping) had been a catalyst for this project. When I first met him and his employees, I explained my research project and he invited me to come back to see him whenever I wanted.

In 2014, the building where Mont's store was located was sold to developers and he was evicted. The building was demolished and was replaced by a new structure. Mont ended up moving his wares to the Harbourview Weekend Market, where I got to know him casually and over time he told me about how he brought the idea of weekly flea markets to Nova Scotia. Over my years following the flea market scene in Halifax, I have never heard contradictory accounts.

Mont grew up in Nova Scotia during the latter years of the depression and experienced his formative years during WWII. As a young man, he spent his working life as a manual labourer, first in Halifax and then later in other parts of North America, before settling in California. While in California, he fell in love with the weekly open-air flea markets that were held in the state and in the late 1960s moved back to Nova Scotia with the goal of opening his own.

By the end of the 1970s, the name Mont became synonymous with flea markets in Atlantic Canada. He operated over a dozen markets in Halifax and other parts of Nova Scotia. In speaking with market goers who have been attending flea markets in the HRM for decades, I learned that one of Mont's most fondly remembered weekly flea markets was located in Lower Sackville during summer months. Various used-goods vendors and shoppers who grew up in Halifax told me about how they would go to the Lower Sackville market as children or young adults in the 1970s, commenting that their positive experiences at that market had set them on the path to become used-goods dealers and/or collectors later in life.

At some point during his career, Mont made arrangements to rent spaces that were otherwise unoccupied on Sundays—particularly shopping malls—due to “blue laws” prohibiting Sunday shopping in Nova Scotia. This led to him opening a market at the now-defunct Penhorn Mall, where many of the flea market vendors who I met got their start. This market was active until at least 2005 and a decade later many people who I met at the Harbourview romanticized the Penhorn Market when they told me about it.

Mont’s career in flea markets was so successful that other start-ups began emulating his model across Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada, by making arrangements with shopping malls to host Sunday flea markets. But, in the 2000s, the Atlantic Provinces started to permit Sunday shopping, which led to problems in finding suitable spaces to host flea markets and contributed to their decline in the region. When I sold at a flea market in Fredericton, New Brunswick, as a master’s student in the mid-2000s, the market had already moved locations multiple times. This was due—at least in part—to malls being allowed to operate on Sundays throughout the province.

By the time I entered the field, Mont no longer operated any flea markets, though his daughter had taken over the longest standing flea market in the HRM at the Halifax Forum. Other entrepreneurs tried to open markets in the city during the late-2000s, but only one succeeded in keeping his market open.

In the late-2000s, Ontario businessman Gary Janes moved to Nova Scotia in order to open a series of dollar stores. One of his pet projects was to open the kind of flea market that had become popular in Central Canada: a space where vendors rent stalls or booths and leave their inventories during the week. These weekend markets were radically different from the flea market model employed by Mont and his competitors in Atlantic Canada: before the

Harbourview, people had to set up and tear down their wares every weekend at multi-purpose locations, rather than having a specific place designed only for a market.



Figure 4: Location of the Harbourview Weekend Market

Janes wanted to create a destination that was distinct from the old model that customers were used to in Nova Scotia. At first it seemed like he was going to succeed. When he opened the market in 2009 for the first time at a former Value Village location, there was great local interest. Vendors who had been losing their space due to closing markets around the HRM flocked to the new market and shoppers showed up in droves. According to vendors who I spoke

with, during its peak, the market was home to nearly two hundred vendors and always seemed busy.

This peak was short-lived. The business was not as lucrative as Janes originally expected and, as it was explained to me, customers grew tired of the Harbourview market because they craved the experience that they had grown accustomed to at the types of markets that Mont became famous for. People wanted to enjoy the thrill of the hunt by walking past flea market tables filled with disparate products, rather than go to a market made up of little shops. Vendors started to leave the Harbourview for other markets or, in a few cases at least, in order to open their own brick and mortar stores. However, as important vendors left, they were not easily replaced. This led to a slow cycle where vendors left, were not replaced, but took their customers with them. Instead of replacing vendors, small vendors got bigger and took over vacant booths, stalls and spaces.

I am certain that there are multiple reasons that led to his decision, but by 2013, Janes was ready to walk away from the market and sold the business to his close friend and market employee, Paul Green. The transition was a smooth one and by the fall of 2013, Green was completely in control of the Harbourview.

5.7 Gaining Entry at The Harbourview

By the middle of January, 2014, I had spent roughly four and a half months going to Plan B at least five days a week. During these months I had developed a positive relationship with the only Plan B member who was actively involved with the Harbourview Weekend Market, Richard “Rick” Silvert, and he invited me to spend some time with him at his booth at the market. I met with him on January 18, 2014 at a rival (and short-lived) flea market in a neighbourhood in Dartmouth called Woodside. We walked around the market together and I

helped him pick collectibles for his business before we went to A & W for breakfast. Afterwards, I accompanied him to the Harbourview and hung out at his booth for hours as he explained to me his business interests, model and strategies. Once he had a lull, he brought me to the back of the market to introduce me to its new owner, Paul Green.

Paul was caught off guard by my sudden appearance and research request, but he was open to the idea of me doing research at the market and I arranged to commence research at the beginning of February. He gave me his card and said to call ahead of time to finalize some paperwork. I gave him the short version of my project and he seemed quite receptive.

I tried calling him a few times in January, 2014. There was no response, so I left a message both times. He did not call me back. I shrugged this off as being due to a massive snowstorm that had pummelled Halifax during the week, as well as my assumption that he may not regularly go to the market outside of market days. I decided to drive to the market on a Friday to try to track Paul down. I knew that some of his vendors had opening hours on Fridays that were facilitated by their booths being next to the market's side entrance.

One of the weekday vendors tracked Paul down for me. He apologized for not calling me back and said it was okay for me to show up, after 9 am on Saturday. When I asked him if we could chat about what I wanted to do in more detail, he told me that it was not a good time and was non-committal about discussing things during the weekend. I had mixed feelings about this. On one hand, it was a privilege that he allowed me to do research at his business; on the other hand, it was problematic for me to do anything without his informed consent. I did not want to rock the boat and thanked him for the opportunity.

The following day, I arrived at 9 am, just as the doors opened. Paul was sitting in front of the market's café eating blueberry pancakes. I sat down in front of him, trying to initiate

conversation. He told me that he usually arrives before 5 am on market days to prepare (organizing, cleaning, salting walkways and shoveling snow in the winter, putting out signs, filling the ATM with cash and various other activities). I learned that vendors start to arrive as early as 6 am. I tried to set up a time when we could chat about my project, but he claimed to be too busy. I sensed some apprehension and was not sure if he was really too busy or just did not want to talk to me. He told me to spend the day “poking around” the market and getting to know vendors. I was hopeful that we would be able to meet before the end of the weekend. Regardless of what I perceived as apprehension, Paul seemed receptive to my presence, which was a start. Even so, I could not get too involved with the market or its vendors until he and I could actually sit down to discuss my research project.

As I introduced myself to numerous vendors, one warned me that some of the vendors play Crazy-8s for money and that I should be careful that they did not trick me into playing. I took this as a fair warning. I later found Paul playing cards with one vendor, but he claimed he was too busy to chat. Later in the day, I saw Paul playing cards with a different vendor. Again, he rebuffed my request to talk about the research project. Around 4 pm, I saw Paul frantically trying to take out garbage and clean up so he could go home. I offered my assistance, seeing this as an opportunity to gain his favour, but he declined. I left the market as it closed, determined to make headway the following day.

The next few market days, over a couple of weekends, were like a cat and mouse game where I bounced between vendors as I waited for Paul to become available. Every time I checked in with him, I would find him too busy to meet with me. I thought he might be avoiding me and it reached the point where I was starting to question the entire endeavour. I considered going home but found enough tenacity to remain patient. At one point I went to my car to reflect on the

situation and convince myself not to leave. I was frustrated and disappointed. Maybe this was not going to work out.

When I came back inside, Paul and one of the vendors were walking around trying to find two suspected thieves who they described as “Mexican women.” They had supposedly filled a bag with clothes and made a break for it. I walked around with them as they tried to locate the culprits, but we had no luck. We later learned that the women had immediately left through the main exit after stealing the clothing and ran off as fast as they could through a large group of vendors who were taking a cigarette break.

It was after this that Paul finally had a chat with me, but it was not about my research project. Instead, he opened up to me about his “shitty day.” Vendors had been relentlessly making demands, someone had smeared feces all over the women’s bathroom floor and all three bathrooms required more cleaning than usual. In addition to this, the power had flickered during the day, causing the security system to malfunction and he spent an hour trying to fix it. This was compounded by the two thieves. All of this was made worse by him not being able to get to sleep the night before because his dog was sick and needed to be attended to on an hourly basis. As Paul vented his frustrations, I realized that he had not been avoiding me or trying to slight me. He was legitimately busy and was having a rough day. He was physically and mentally exhausted. I felt guilty and selfish for assuming that he had been avoiding me. This had never been the case. I was merely projecting my own fears, inadequacies and frustrations onto him. As I reflected on the day, I realized that the few times I had seen him playing cards was his attempt to take a breather—relax—in the face of a day where nothing had gone as planned. He asked me to meet him for breakfast Sunday at 9 am to have our chat.

The next day I arrived early, but as I was entering the market, Rick approached me and asked me to run his booth for a couple of hours. “Great,” I thought to myself, as this would put a wrench in the plans for my meeting that had taken weeks to organize. I hid my dismay and offered to help Rick, but I needed to talk to Paul first, who was at the market entrance waiting for me and getting things ready for the day. He was okay with waiting to chat, at least for a little bit.

After Rick returned (an hour later), I found Paul at his office, where he was preparing a newsletter that he intended to hand out to vendors before the end of the day. It explained that vendors must show up on time and keep their stalls/spaces open on market days because clients expect the vendors to be open, especially since they pay one dollar to enter the market. Vendors failing to open on time and keeping booths/spaces closed during the day put Paul and the market in a precarious position.

Paul explained to me that the increased costs of running the market were becoming a burden. The cost of propane had nearly doubled since the previous winter and the landlords planned to increase his rent by \$1500 per month, as well as requiring Paul to sign a new, long-term lease. He was thinking about walking away after only buying the market in October, 2013, and was worried about the lack of vendors renting space at the market (I counted around 72, but was not sure how accurate my number was). He was also worried about the number of empty stalls (at least seven large spaces) and the quality of the current vendors.

Paul expressed his frustrations regarding vendor expectations: He always paid for the peg board and slat wall and other building materials out of his own pocket, which was expensive. His frustrations were exacerbated by vendors constantly demanding additional upgrades for their individual booths or spaces, while not willing to contribute towards the cost of building materials. He lamented that most of the people currently inquiring about becoming vendors

wanted to sell the same sort of stuff that was already in abundance at the market, specifically jewelry and video games. Paul recognized that catering to vendors who wanted to sell such products was nothing more than short-term thinking. He wanted a diversity of products to entice more customers and did not want to create a toxic environment for established vendors.

Paul had to drop off the letters to vendors, so I suggested that we could have our chat after he was done. He asked me to meet him in the food court in 15-20 minutes. But, he did not show up for our meeting and I found him playing cards. He told me that he had been, “sucked into the void,” as he chuckled. It did not look like he handed out any of the letters. I was invited to play cards for the first time, but declined and decided to go for a smoke while waiting for Paul to finish.

When I came back inside, Paul was standing near the market entrance. “There you are,” he said to me and motioned for me to follow him to the café. He ordered a coffee and I spent twenty minutes explaining my research project and agenda to him. He seemed enthusiastic and commented about how the project might bring positive attention to the market. In the end, he agreed to allow me to conduct the research project. I was relieved, excited and emotionally exhausted. I decided that the real work would begin the following weekend and spent the last couple of hours of the day speaking to vendors who I had already gotten to know.

Ultimately, what took only a couple of hours to accomplish at Plan B took weeks to accomplish at the Harbourview. The difficulty I faced in receiving informed consent should not have been so surprising, but the ease with which I gained entry into Plan B altered my expectations. While, I did not need to “collude with cockfighters” at Plan B (see Geertz, 1972), I most certainly would need to pass “gatekeeper tests” at the Harbourview.

Paul was a legitimately busy man and what I had initially interpreted as a slight had more to do with timing than anything else. I also suspect that he wanted to make sure that I was genuine and that he did stall somewhat in order to verify that my presence would not cause problems for himself, his vendors or market shoppers. For all he knew, I could have been a troublemaker. I understand now why he was not so quick to grant me full access to his market. He did not know me and needed to learn more about my demeanour before giving me the green light.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY RELATIONS AT PLAN B AND THE HARBOURVIEW

As explained in Chapter 3.2.1, community is a concept with several meanings. One way to think about community is in terms of its role in the creation of symbolic boundaries, where membership of a community is juxtaposed against non-membership. Another way to think about community is in terms of how people become members through forms of association, joint commitment and affect-belonging. I also discussed how the term local (which also has several meanings) is often combined with community with several additional connotations. Both terms are challenging to put into practice (separately or together) because of these multiple and potentially contested meanings.

This chapter examines Plan B and the Harbourview through these concepts by considering how people at each research site create and maintain community and approach the local. I examine the strategies employed by people at both venues as they attempt to engage their surrounding communities and manufacture local-ness in the HRM more generally. Some strategies work better than others. As a starting point, I will present how it is difficult to achieve community building in the shop due to the high turnover rate of vendors. This was a problem also faced by the Harbourview.

6.1 My Unexpected Introduction to the Transitory Nature of Plan B Vendors

Everything seemed to be going well for me as I began work at Plan B. After a few days at the cooperative, I had met almost all of the major vendors and most people seemed to enjoy my company. The only major player who I had not yet met was a woman who called herself “KT Habits,” who ran the shop every Monday. I made arrangements to come to the shop first thing Monday morning but, when I arrived, no one was there! I knocked on the door and there was no answer. After lingering around for some time, I decided to leave to find a place to eat breakfast.

It was almost noon by the time that I returned to Plan B. The store, luckily, was open. Sean (a video game vendor and Plan B's "second in command"), Alex (a soda manufacturer) and KT were present. KT was late because she had gone to the food bank and lost track of time. A woman in her early twenties with many tattoos and piercings, she was the embodiment of the alt-rock image that Plan B was trying to foster at the time. Her hair was dyed blonde that day and I would learn that her hair changed colour on a bi-weekly basis.

Bob forgot to tell her I was coming, which is why she was not there when I arrived. A few of the vendors had mentioned my sudden appearance at the shop the week before, so at least she was aware of my existence. When I introduced myself to her, Sean confessed that he had no idea what my name was. When I first met them, Sean and KT lived together with twelve other people in a punk/flop house and KT informed me that Sean could not remember half of their roommates' names.

Things were slow for most of the day, but picked up for a short time in the mid-afternoon. I spent some time helping customers until it died down again. I asked KT and Sean if they had a vendor map. They chuckled and I could tell that KT saw this as a ridiculous question. Eventually, Sean got bored and left in the late afternoon, leaving KT and I alone together for the first time. I spent the next hour taking pictures of as much as I could of the main floor of the building. Without a vendor map, this seemed like a good way for me to map the space myself.

One of the core vendors, Sébastien (or Séb, as most people call him), walked into the shop. I had met him during one of my first trips to the shop at the end of August. Originally from Northern New Brunswick, he had only been in Halifax for a couple of years and worked in the IT industry. Séb had warmed up to me quickly after learning about my status as anthropologist and had previously told me about his many encounters with anthropologists during the decade

that he spent in the South Pacific working for NGOs (mostly in Vanuatu). Séb even kept a blanket at the shop that he received from a tribal chief in Vanuatu as an upfront payment for marrying the chief's daughter (which never came to pass).



Figure 5: Plan B Interior

One of the pictures I took of the interior of Plan B in Early September, 2013. KT can be seen in the background, running the cash, wearing a red toque.

While Séb and I were talking, my wife, Tania, called the shop looking for me. One of the anthropology professors at Dalhousie had a medical emergency and the department head asked me to teach the ill professor's class until she was ready to return. I had barely made any inroads at Plan B, but opted to leave the field to help my department. I announced to Séb, KT and Alex that I would have to leave Plan B for a while. Their reactions were mixed, but they did not seem to care too much. None of them knew me that well. I had not been there long enough to make a lasting impression and I started to get the sense that they were used to vendors coming and going

and disappearing indefinitely on a regular basis. I contacted Bob via email to let him know about the situation and, luckily, he was okay with me being away from Plan B indefinitely.



Figure 6: Part of Séb's Section (September, 2013).

It was a month before I was able to return to Plan B to re-start my research and my schedule only afforded me enough time to make a couple of trips to the shop during the month of September. During my time away from the shop, the bi-annual “World’s Largest Garage Sale” was held at Halifax’s Exhibition Park. The thrill of hunting for used goods that interest me has almost always afforded me a sense of relaxation and comfort that most other things do not, so I decided to spend some of my leisure time checking out this market.

I ran into Séb, who was selling at the market. He was set up with stuff that I recognized from Plan B (mostly telephones). He showed me some items that he purchased before the doors opened (a clock, a phone manual, an index card case and a bull skull). He was set up in the back

room and did not know what to expect from the event. This was his first time at this particular sale. I explained my experiences at previous sales at the venue (helping a friend and procuring inventory) and tried to downplay his worries. I also filled him in about what happened after I abruptly left the shop. He seemed to be looking forward to my return to Plan B. Since he was alone, I went to get him a coffee because he could not leave his tables. I hung around with him for half an hour. Afterwards, I decided to take a trip to Plan B.



Figure 7: Taxidermy, quack medical devices and other curios in Bob's room (September, 2013).

It was around 12:45 pm when I arrived at Plan B. Sean and Bob were both present. Sean was surprised to see me. “I thought you quit,” he said. Bob had not told him what happened, nor had KT, Alex or Séb. He did not seem happy to see me until I explained the medical emergency. He was sour because he thought I had “ditched” Plan B, like so many other Plan B wannabes. Bob, though, was happy to see me.

Not long after, Bob left and Sean ended up running the store for twenty minutes. He was not supposed to be at the shop and came in on a whim. Another vendor was supposed to run the shop instead. After Bob returned, I asked him about this vendor. It turns out this person had been making excuses not to come in for over a month. Today this vendor did not even let him know. He was not happy about it and I had a sense that this vendor would not be around much longer.

I noticed that the café was closed. Sean told me that the proprietors broke up and would not be running the café anymore. Some of their “hippy friends” had planned on taking over the café, but Bob put a stop to this after they did not show up either. As a result, KT and some of Sean’s roommates arranged to take over the café at the end of the month. Bob and Sean saw this as ideal: with KT, they knew what they would be getting.

I brought up the possibility of renting a cubby. Bob had insisted on this before I got called away. I had had some time to think about this and felt that renting a cubby would make it easier for me to build rapport and would also give me the ability to test out some theories that I had about “dead zones” in the shop. There were ten cubbies available. Bob saw it as a good chance for me to get rid of “shake”⁴² (his word for inexpensive smalls that are difficult to sell online). I insisted that in renting a cubby, I would still be a researcher and that selling stuff would not be my priority. Even so, he was enthusiastic about what having me as a seller might mean for the shop. Given the circumstances of my abruptly leaving the field, I had an ulterior motive: renting a cubbie afforded me a presence at the shop, even if I was not physically there. This would help to prevent others from assuming that I had quit. On a day when one vendor had not shown up to run the store and in the immediate aftermath of the café being closed, I took it upon

⁴² Shake is a marijuana term for “bottom of the bag” that has become common in the used-goods world. I have heard other used-goods dealers use it, as well as the word “chaff,” when visiting flea markets across Canada.

myself to create my own entry trope. This was not Geertz's (1972) cockfighting collusion. Nor was it Knauff's (2010) eating half-cooked bananas to build rapport. I was merely staking a claim to let others know that, despite the circumstances of my abruptly leaving the field so early into my fieldwork, I was still involved. Renting a small space at the cooperative was an end in itself. I left around 3:20 pm and let the guys know that I planned to return the following weekend.

I was confused by the seeming lack of interest in my abrupt departure from the shop during my first days. At first, I couldn't understand why and thought it was because no one at Plan B knew me that well or because certain vendors were not completely aware of the situation that led to me leaving temporarily. This certainly played a role in how some vendors reacted, but it points to a larger structural issue that the shop has faced in perpetuity: people show up looking to become cooperative members with big ideas, but often these ideas do not pan out and vendors start and stop on a regular basis.

The fact that Sean thought I had quit is symptomatic of how he had already encountered other new members doing the same thing. As I learned during my year in the field, most new vendors would only ever become peripheral cooperative members, tending to their spaces irregularly and not being involved in the shop all that much. It was also common for new vendors to quit after only a month due to a lack of sales or the realization that the shop was not really a great fit for them. It was easy to become a cooperative member, but becoming a core member took time and dedication.

These core members were attached to the space in ways that peripheral members were not. New members failing to work out was so common that core members had come to expect this of many of the people who joined the cooperative. Plan B's core membership saw itself as a

community. However, for Plan B to be a community then all of its members would have to be actively engaged in the “spirit of community” as described by Crow and Allan (1994). In reality, the Plan B community was not constituted this way. Part of this was symbolic and part of this was structural. Following Cohen (1985), the symbolic element of Plan B’s community building amongst core members is related to their sense of belonging to the cooperative. As a mental construct, this sense of belonging played a significant role in individual and collective identity construction, as well as attachment to the locality. All of this gave this sense of community credibility amongst core vendors. Peripheral vendors could feel some of this attachment, but the structural element of community building at Plan B prevented many of the small-scale vendors from achieving this.

Members were not on a level playing field. Core members rented larger spaces, were more involved and had more clout in the direction of the shop. Peripheral vendors remained on the outskirts because of their lack of involvement, which was often construed by core members as evidence of not being interested in the shop (at least to the extent that core members were). Following Amit’s (2010) three intersecting points of community: a) joint commitment; b) affect-belonging; and c) forms of association (p. 359), core and peripheral vendors shared the first two points, but only core members really seemed to experience the third. The structure of Plan B led to the inability for peripheral members to experience the same forms of association in the shop as core members. This was because core members tended to find great strength in associating with each other, whereas peripheral members instead highlighted their association with the shop rather than with other members.

For core members like Sean, KT and Séb, who dedicated much of their time to Plan B, new people “flaking off” was nothing new. It is understandable that some of them saw me this

way at first: removing myself from the shop after only a few days was just another example of member turnover at Plan B. This was my unexpected introduction to the transitory nature of Plan B vendors.

6.2 Plan B Community Relations: Bronies, the Media and the “Halifamous”

The following Saturday, I checked the shop’s Facebook page before leaving my apartment and was excited to learn that Bob and another vendor were featured on CTV News on Thursday as part of a segment with Colleen Jones, a local reporter/meteorologist, former curling world champion and minor celebrity (what KT would call “Halifamous”). Today the shop was hosting a major Brony event in the gallery space, followed by a live radio show from Live 105 FM. It was a busy day at Plan B!

Bob was alone when I arrived. We talked about the CTV segment. It turns out that a CTV employee had been shopping at the store and overheard Bob describe one Plan B vendor as the “youngest professional antiques dealer in North America” at only eleven years old. The customer pitched this to his bosses at the television station and they liked the story, which led to the news segment. Bob explained that Plan B’s young antiques dealer was very excited about all of this. Having watched the kid in action, I can say that his knowledge of antiques is superior to many vendors. Bob likes to say that he is “kissed when it comes to antiques.”

Bronies started to arrive. The first one was the event organizer. Bronies are adult male My Little Pony (MLP) fans who are heavily interested in Generation 4 (G4) MLP cartoons and merchandise. The organizer told me that Bronies are also interested in Generation 1 (G1) ponies, but to a much lesser extent. Bronies tend to look at other generations of MLP merchandise unfavourably: “G1 allows us to look at the origins of MLP, but G4 is what we care about,” he insisted.

He was excited: They had a special guest, Nicole Oliver, coming today and the event was a big deal. Nicole Oliver is well-known among MLP fans for being the voice of Princess Celestia, one of the main characters in the television series *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. He informed me that he and another local Brony went to Bronycon in Baltimore during the summer. He was a celebrity liaison at the event and his friend was head of security. It was in Baltimore that they met with (and managed to convince) Nicole Oliver to come to one of their events in Halifax. This was only possible because Oliver's son was a lead character in the television show *Seed*, a live-action comedy that was being filmed in Halifax.

I noticed a new seller setting up in the cubby that I had wanted. He was selling G4 MLP toys. The organizer found one he had been looking to purchase for quite some time among the new vendors' stock. Apple Jack is an orange pony doll with apple cutie marks⁴³ on its haunches. The seller wanted \$15 for it. The organizer was ecstatic: He whispered to me that the doll sells on eBay for as much as \$200. I looked it up later and it was actually selling for closer to \$75, which meant that \$15 was still a great deal. One thing that I have learned over the years is that collectors tend to overvalue their purchases.

More Bronies started to arrive, so the organizer had to start setting things up in the gallery space. I started talking to the man who was displaying G4 MLP merchandise in the cubby. He told me that he used to be a Brony, but had grown out of the hobby, which was why he was trying to sell his stuff. He was proudest of some high-quality MLP posters that he brought with him. They were "Obey" posters, mimicking the work of artist Shepard Fairey, with a picture of Princess Celestia on them. His plan was to sell them to Bronies who hoped to get a signature

⁴³ Cutie marks are symbols that are generally found on the haunches of My Little Pony characters and serve as distinguishing marks.

at the event. His timing could not have been better: This was the largest Brony event Halifax had ever hosted and people readily purchased his stuff. He whispered that he was never really that into MLP, but people kept buying toys and merchandise for him because they assumed he was into it. The more stuff he received, the bigger his collection got and the more people bought for him. His explanation made it seem like he was the victim of a vicious cycle of conspicuous consumption.



Figure 8: Princess Celestia Obey Poster

Nicole Oliver arrived just in time for the event. She had her son and his friend with her. Bob and I were behind the counter and she introduced herself to both of us. We had spent a few minutes checking her resume on the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) before she arrived, which was impressive. We both commented with excitement about how she did voice

acting as a child for *Galaxy Express* (way back in 1979—one of Bob’s favourite anime films), as well as *Masters of the Universe* in the early 2000s (which was a guilty pleasure of mine on Saturday mornings when I was an undergraduate). She was surprised by us acknowledging her body of work, as she was here exclusively for the MLP fans. She was quickly recognized and bombarded by the Bronies who had been waiting for her with giddy anticipation. She purchased the last three Princess Celestia “Obey” posters and I gave her a sharpie. She signed a personalized autograph for Plan B, one for an IWK Children’s Hospital eBay charity auction and one to give to the organizers of the event.

The shop was incredibly busy and after a while became packed with non-Bronies too. We sold myriad antiques, games, knick-knacks, bric-a-brac, clothes and so on. At one point, an apparent motorcycle gang member (garbed in leather and wearing gang colours) waltzed into the shop, but was disturbed by the Brony event and quickly left, appearing bewildered. It was like witnessing a clash of two very different worlds. Hours later, when Nicole Oliver finished the meet and greet/signing, the organizers hosted a large junk food potluck, consisting mostly of candies and cakes. It was obvious that everyone involved had a great time. Bob was delighted by the event: This week’s media coverage and celebrity appearance was nothing but free advertising for the shop. The Live 105 FM crew arrived to start setting up, just as the Bronies started to disperse.

Even though Plan B hosted many community events, especially in the evenings after the shop closed, I rarely attended such events. I tried to at first, but quickly came to realize that these events were quite disconnected from the wider relationships at the shop. In addition to the Brony meetings, events that occurred during my fieldwork included bands (rock, hip hop, punk, folk,

metal, etc.) performing all ages shows, a magic club, a life drawing club, improvisational comedy classes, Furry meetings, the Halifax Fringe Festival, a naming party for a transgender person, art shows, films and a myriad of other functions.

I quickly learned that these events were not something that vendors paid a lot of attention to, unless they happened to be directly involved with a specific function. This was especially true for after-hours events. As such, the cooperative's president would arrive around closing time to take over from the person who ran the store that day and would sit around playing video games while the event took place. This allowed the person who ran the shop during the day to go home for the evening and in some cases (such as during life drawing classes), the shop would be closed. On other occasions, the shop would generally stay open later in order to attempt to generate a little bit of extra revenue from function attendees.

Over the course of my fieldwork, the Bronies rented the gallery space at least once a month, getting together to watch MLP cartoons, talk about toys and eat cake. The group considered itself a community—even if it was a rather small one. One member even explained to me that the community had found it difficult to rent a space that was away from leering eyes and that Plan B afforded the community a safe and somewhat private space where they could do their thing. The reality is that this group of mostly young, homosexual men were well aware of the fact that the general public thought them to be somewhat odd and that their activities were frowned upon by some people who did not share their interests.

The cooperative itself can be considered one community (made up of core, semi-peripheral and peripheral vendors), while the Brony group can be considered a distinctly different community that took advantage of the cheap rental cost of the gallery space and Plan B's aim to be an inclusive community hub in order to host its meetings. Having a peripheral

vendor at Plan B who was also (supposedly) a Brony helped to foster this small community's sense of worth and place. As a distinct community from Plan B, the Brony group having one of its own amongst the cooperative membership helped to foster the three intersecting forms of community that Amit (2010) describes: joint commitment; affect-belonging; and forms of association. First, by having a Brony as a vendor, the cooperative enabled joint commitment between itself and members of this community: one of their own was a member of the cooperative and one of the cooperative's own acted as an intermediary amongst the Bronies. Second, by having a safe place to be themselves, Bronies found affect-belonging at Plan B when other venues did not work. Finally, by fostering joint commitment and affect-belonging, Plan B opened up its space so that the Bronies could engage in forms of association with each other and other Plan B clients in a way that they could be themselves and not have to fear the overt bigotry of others.

Bronies were not alone in this as a community utilizing the space at Plan B. Furrries (adults who dress in animal costumes) did the same thing by renting the shop's gallery space on a monthly basis. Furrries had their own vendor representation through a woman who sold Furry-related costumes and supplies at the cooperative. Punk rockers, alt-rockers, artists of all types, stage magicians and even the BDSM community engaged in similar activities and relations at the space. In 2013 and 2014, Plan B was the place in Halifax for these fringe groups and self-described communities to find their footing and participate in activities safely and without worry of the reactions of the uninitiated or less-enlightened. Plan B was not only trying to present itself as a community hub for the North End and Gottingen Street; instead, it was also a place where myriad communities could thrive, even if only for one day or evening a month. However, hosting

these fringe groups was not the only way that Plan B tried to foster community relations.

Whenever there was a major event taking place on the street, Plan B got involved.

6.3 Nocturning is a Verb

Plan B's anniversary is at the end of October and it is an important time for the shop. Many of the core vendors were diehard Halloween enthusiasts, so the anniversary at the end of October had double meaning for the shop. The fact that Halifax is host to a major night art event throughout the city in the middle of October plays handily into making October a special time at Plan B. *Nocturne: Art at Night* occurs on the Saturday after Canadian Thanksgiving and has been taking place since 2008. It is a type of "white night" festival insofar as it bears similarities to the all-night art festival held annually in Saint Petersburg, Russia, every May, the popularity of which has led to similar night art festivals around the globe. Unlike other white night festivals, however, *Nocturne* runs from 6 pm to midnight. The event is separated into five zones: Downtown Halifax; Halifax Waterfront; Spring Garden; North End Halifax; and Downtown Dartmouth. Since Plan B's inception, the night has been one of the most anticipated parties of the year. The shop stays open late and always comes up with some kind of creative entertainment. From the time I first started field research, core vendors discussed *Nocturne* and nocturning with glee. Being part of *Nocturne* is an active engagement: people go to *Nocturne* to nocturne. Nocturning is a verb.

In early October, Bob asked me to help him design the *Nocturne* window display. I gladly agreed to do my part. As the month went on, KT took over the café in the back of the shop and tried to arrange for the cooperative to host some musicians (many of whom were also vendors), with the headliners being a trio who would play accordion, banjo and the saw in the gallery space.

In the days leading up to *Nocturne*, Bob still had not started setting up the window display and when I arrived early to help the day before *Nocturne*, he was nowhere to be found. We had spent the preceding days driving around procuring props, but I worried that we would run out of time. We built the window displays just in the nick of time. The final product (what we called “Winning Hearts and Minds”) would be talked about in Halifax’s North End for months.



Figure 9: The Heart Out of Sight Out of Mind (Nocturne)

The following is taken from my field notes on October 19, 2013.

Today was a major scramble: Bob and I feverishly built the five tableaux for *Nocturne* with only hours to go before the commencement of the event. We had to clean the windows first with a squeegee and then tape the text for each tableau to the windows so that they were symmetrical. We then had to build each display from scratch. One of KT’s employees was running the café, but with no one running the cash, we found ourselves continuously stopping to

help customers. The first display was a plastic heart in a glass case rotating on top of a turntable with a medical diagram hanging on the wall in back of it. This tableau was easy to make.



Figure 10: Follow Your Heart Never Regret (Nocturne)

The second display involved a mannequin wearing a wedding dress and a Hindu mask. The mannequin's heart was made to look like it had been cut out, so we decided to strap meat on its body. We hacked up the dress and the meat, and then used packaging tape to hold the meat in place. Bob looked like a man possessed as he brandished a large knife and hacked into his abomination. Chunks of meat flew everywhere! Bob then covered his creation with fake blood to add to the effect (he has vials of it in the basement). We then hung a plastic heart with taxidermy bird wings attached to it from the ceiling with twine and then attached the same object to a leash, which we placed in one of the mannequin's hands. The finishing touch was a meat cleaver, which Bob placed in the mannequin's other hand to make it look like the character had cut out its own heart, only for it to fly away.

Bob then started working on turning a male bust into a “Hugh Hefner-esque” dinner jacket wearing skeleton-thing. He drilled a hole into a male mannequin bust and then placed a real human skull on top, while I helped him dress it. The skull was held in place by a screwdriver that he jammed into the hole he had drilled into the bust and then carefully positioning the handle of the screwdriver into the foramen magnum of the skull. The skull was an antique medical specimen that had a detachable skull cap, so Bob ended up putting a plastic brain into the skull.



Figure 11: Heart & Mind Never Getting Back Together (Nocturne)

As Bob helped some customers, I went to work on the centre display, by cutting up a plastic brain and a plastic heart in such a way that I could fit doll arms and legs into the holes. I then taped 1980s *G.I. Joe* and *He-Man* accessories onto the arms of these monstrosities. After this, I attached some weapons to a taxidermy squirrel and mouse that were lying around the shop.

Bob then built a wrestling ring out of black cardboard, using pens and thin rope to make turnbuckles.



Figure 12: Those Who Mind Don't Matter (Nocturne)

As Bob did this, I went outside to squeegee the windows and also put up the official *Nocturne* signs outside. By this time, it was 4:45 pm—only one hour fifteen minutes to go! Bob ran out of light bulbs to light the display and decided that he wanted balloons too, so I scrambled to Sobeys on North Street to get what he needed. It was 5:15 pm when I got back and we still had to finish two displays and put them into the window. At least the wrestling ring was nearly finished. But, we hadn't even started the fifth one. Even so, I was out of time. Tania was waiting for me at home and I had to leave.

Tania and I arrived at Plan B just before 7 pm. The event had already been going on for an hour and there was a huge crowd outside in awe of the displays that we built. I was very

pleased with the outcome. We took a minute to take it all in. Bob's final display ended up being a plastic brain in a bird cage. We walked in and Bob was dressed in his standard costume for such events: a fez and a beige suit.

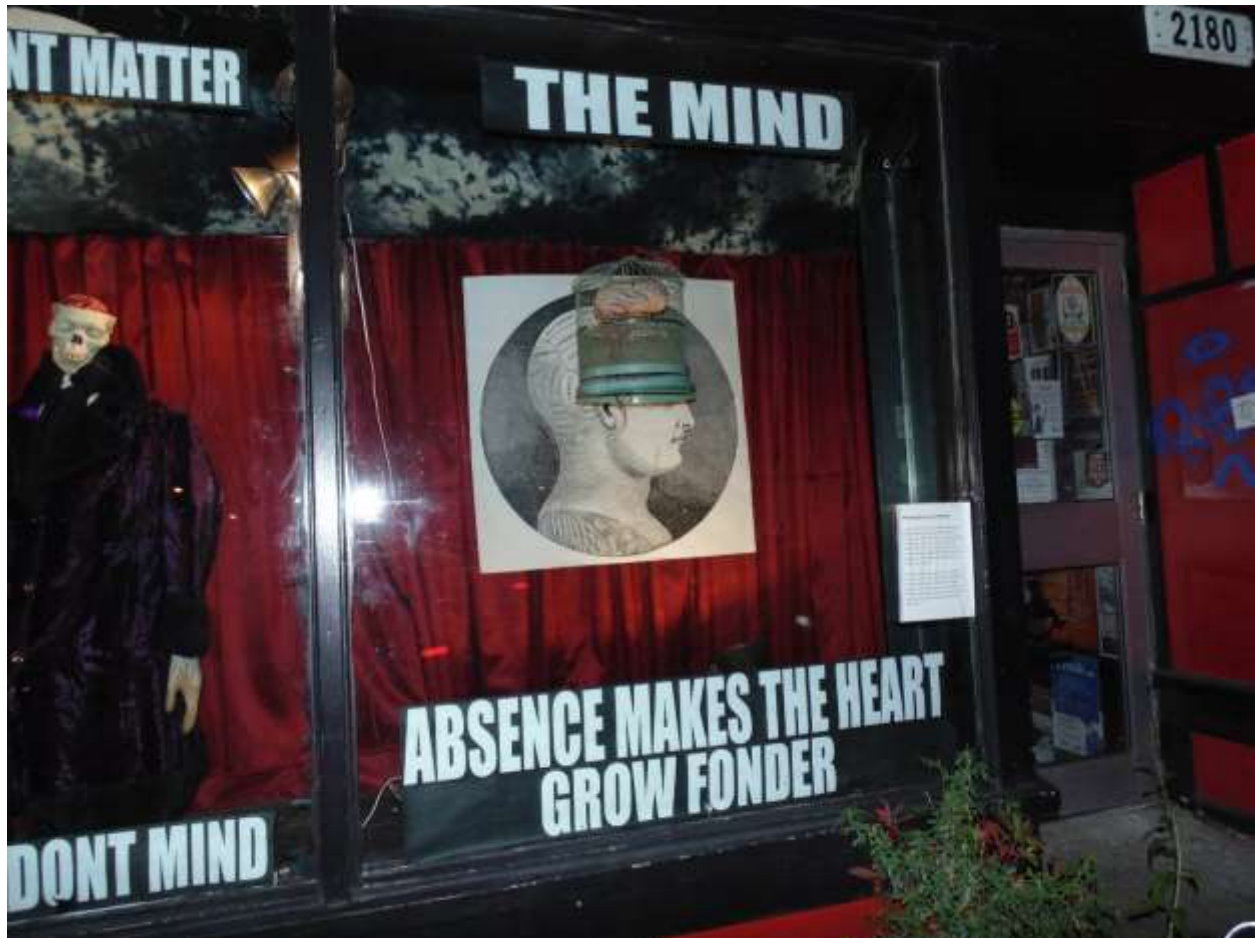


Figure 13: Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder (Nocturne)

I took note of how revellers used “nocturne” and “nocturning” as verbs. Plan B became more and more packed as people arrived to “nocturne” and were compelled to come into the shop because of the window display. I heard the music starting and went to the café to watch the banjo player, who looked spooky wearing a handmade Loki mask made from gauze and animal horns. He was followed by a duo playing saw and accordion, which created a creepy, but delightful sound. Both musicians were dressed in elaborate costumes. The accordion player wore a large hood that covered his face and he looked like an executioner. The saw player wore a

black funeral dress and her face was obscured by a veil. The resulting music and aesthetic could only be described as a bizarre combination of punk, goth and folk sensibilities.

I tried to count the revellers in the shop, but lost track after counting a couple of hundred. It was hard to know exactly how many people had been in the shop because so many people came and went. I suspect that a thousand people set foot in the store during the evening. Tania and I left Plan B around 10:30 pm. I was so tired, I could not keep my eyes open. I had planned to stay all night, but decided that it was not possible. Bob took me aside to thank me for all of my help. “This would not have happened without you and we made \$700 tonight already,” he said. I was happy to have contributed to the event’s success, but it was not me or him alone that made this happen. It was the entire community. This *Nocturne* was a big night for Plan B. Leading up to the event, Bob quipped that it might be the most important night of the year. Now I know why.

It is important to consider *Nocturne* in terms of its significance not only for Plan B, but also for the neighbourhood and the HRM more generally. In itself, *Nocturne* is a community event that highlights the work of artists from the region, the rest of Canada and even internationally. Despite not relying entirely on “local” artists (due to the various places where the artists come from), *Nocturne* is presented as having a distinctly local flair. I cannot comment about this to any extent beyond the “zone” that Plan B was situated in, but certainly the way that *Nocturne* exists on Gottingen Street creates unstated (and perhaps unintentional) boundaries for certain groups (or communities) within the neighbourhood.

At Plan B, *Nocturne* participants were mostly white people, despite the diversity on the street. LGBTQ+ residents took part and played a major role at Plan B, but I saw few African Nova Scotian or First Nations residents at the shop during *Nocturne*. This was despite the fact

that the Mi'kmaw Friendship Centre hosts *Nocturne* events annually and is on the same city block as Plan B. Instead, the majority of revellers at the shop were newcomers to the area who presumably lack historical links to the neighbourhood, which is part of the gentrification of the street. This suggests that as much as it is a community event, in the case of Plan B it is also a symbolic boundary erecting phenomenon in the vein of Cohen (1985) that serves to solidify feelings of a new local for some, while rupturing feelings of community and the old local for others. These symbolic boundaries are also structural in the way that Amit (2010) describes and the structural component is directly related to the gentrification of the street.

As a gentrifying neighbourhood, Gottingen Street is no longer dotted with as many shuttered businesses as it was a decade ago and the makeup of business owners has changed dramatically (Roth & Grant, 2015). There are fewer and fewer businesses operated by entrepreneurs with historical connections to the street and the businesses that have opened are mostly composed of upwardly mobile, white ownership. Even the cooperative, despite having as many as eighty members, is made up of a mostly white membership and this is also true for its clientele. Despite this, many Plan B members who I met during my fieldwork identified as queer and a large number of the clientele also identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community. In my experience, being white and straight or white and queer fit into the gentrification aesthetic of this neighbourhood (see Bridge, 2001).

Nocturne was a success for Plan B in October, 2013. The shop sold a total of \$1600 worth of stuff, which led to its (then) best day ever. As the week went by, Plan B experienced an uptick in sales because of *Nocturne* and the positive press associated with it. Unfortunately, this sales bump would be short lived and the official shop anniversary on Halloween ended up being

a dud: up to that point in my research, it was surprisingly the slowest sales day I witnessed at Plan B. As I came to learn, participating in such events had another motivation: getting noticed. Since any sort of media bump or positive response from participating in such an event was always short-lived, Plan B was continuously trying to find new ways to gain publicity. Doing so on a shoe-string budget was not easy, but Bob had his ways.

6.4 How Plan B Manufactures and Maintains Media Interest

One of the most significant things about Plan B's business model is that some members of the cooperative have an uncanny ability to generate media interest, in terms of both broadcast and print media, as well as social media. One of the most difficult things for fledgling businesses to achieve is to get the word out—spread the brand—and traditional forms of advertising are expensive. Successfully attracting traditional media attention and utilising social media allows small companies to receive much needed advertising for free. But, this is easier said than done.

Plan B relies extensively on Facebook to get its message across and attract potential clients. In this era of social media, employing Facebook has become a standard practice for small businesses. Yet, in surveying other businesses that utilize Facebook in the HRM, the typical use of social media is quite unoriginal. Many companies use Facebook to list their new inventory for the week, which may have been a way of differentiating one's business from others in the past, but today everyone is doing it. For small businesses that cannot afford traditional forms of advertising, social media avenues such as Facebook and Twitter have come to justify not paying for traditional advertising. This can become problematic if businesses using social media do not reach a wide audience.

Plan B started using Facebook as soon as it opened and has used the website not only to introduce new vendors and show off new products, but also to try to involve the general public

through humour. By using Facebook for more than merely showing off new inventory, Plan B has attracted a large following, recently achieving an impressive 5,000 “likes.” This platform reaches and maintains a large prospective client base and engages the clientele on a daily basis. Plan B tries to present itself as a destination, not just another retail store, which has led to it being ahead of the curve since its inception.

However, social media is not enough. What really sets Plan B apart from its competitors is its uncanny ability to attract news media. The cooperative’s president, the “Reverend” Bob Chiasson, is at the forefront of this. Prior to embarking on the journey that would lead to him being one of the founders of Plan B, as well as its president, Bob had spent years working in the film industry in various art departments. The title “Reverend” was a joke nickname that stuck and his many film credits generally list him as the Reverend Bob Chiasson. Bob met his wife in the industry and the two of them have maintained a large network of industry contacts over the years.

For as long as he can remember, Bob has collected and curated oddities and antiques with a wide and eclectic scope of interest. In the late 1990s he gained a reputation because of his knowledge of antiques and ability to source them and became the props master for many high-profile film and television productions, most notably for the first few seasons of *Trailer Park Boys*. Bob was able to use his unique history in the film industry and his large number of contacts to Plan B’s advantage from the get-go. Plan B quickly became a hub for film and television art departments and became one of the primary places to rent props in the city. During my time in the field, not a week went by without a film production company or even a small group of independent performers coming into the shop looking to rent props.



Figure 14: The cover of *Local Connections Halifax Magazine* Vol. 1, # 4, featuring Bob Chiasson in costume.

Bob was also able to parlay his contacts into media interest on numerous occasions and I was fascinated by how often a print media or television journalist came into the shop looking for a story. Plan B vendors encouraged this because any appearance in a newspaper, magazine, or radio or television program was a way to achieve free advertising. And it worked: as soon as a piece about Plan B was published by local media, the shop would see a temporary increase in foot traffic by people who claimed that they did not know Plan B existed. I have come to interpret this as something of a feedback loop of local-ness where local media promotes a local company leading to first time customers checking out the space because of its cool or local factor, which in turn leads to additional media interest. At Plan B, at least, this was an intentional advertising strategy.

Most business owners would be satisfied (if not ecstatic) by such media interest and would rest on their laurels, but Bob took this one step further by creating a caricature of himself that he would perform to the media. Donning a beige dinner jacket, a frilly shirt and a fez, Bob

would always appear at high profile media opportunities in costume. For people who did not know Bob other than through such media appearances, this “Reverend” character came to be how they identified him. I believe that his first major appearance in costume was for the fourth issue of *Local Connections Halifax Magazine* in winter 2013, where Plan B was the cover story.

As a result of this decision to appear in costume during major media promotion opportunities, Bob became more than Plan B’s president. He also became its mascot. When the CBC put out a call for people to appear on a new television show, *Four Rooms*, where “regular” Canadians were invited to present high end collectibles to four different Canadian antiques and curios dealers, Bob’s application was quickly accepted for the pilot episode. When I started research at Plan B, Bob had recently returned from Toronto after filming his segment for the television program. The way that *Four Rooms* worked was that the person trying to sell the item would be given an opportunity to meet with each dealer, one at time, in a closed off room. The dealer had to make a monetary offer, but if the seller rejected it, the offer was immediately withdrawn as soon as the seller left the room. The program was not a success for CBC when it aired in January and February of 2014 and was cancelled after its first season.

Bob brought a mummified cat with him to Toronto to try to sell to one of the dealers. The cat had been found in an old house in Cape Breton (decades earlier) that was undergoing renovations. Bob was adamant that it was an example of an archaic British practice of placing mummified cats in the walls of newly built houses to ward off evil spirits. It was a compelling story and the item was in great shape, but Bob did not have the provenance (aka documentation) to back up his claims.

Only one of the dealers associated with *Four Rooms* dabbled in oddities and when Bob showed up on stage wearing his Plan B costume, explaining the item’s origin and that the

previous owner had named it “Lucky,” the experts essentially laughed him off the stage. Bob’s asking price was \$1,200 and I knew that he did not sell it on the show because Lucky had become a fixture of the oddities section at Plan B during my time there.

When the episode aired on January 5, 2014, I watched with great anticipation. From the outset, the dealers seemed perturbed by Bob’s appearance and disgusted by the mummified cat. Three of the four buyers treated Bob with disdain and even the host of the program could be seen trying to hold in her laughter and looking off camera with a smirk throughout his segment.

The first dealer offered Bob \$20 to give the cat a proper burial. The second dealer offered Bob \$1 to essentially go away. The third dealer made a snide remark about Bob’s costume and offered him \$19.99 so he could buy some “cat chow” or adopt a cat and “make sure this one stays lucky.” Heading into the last room, the show’s host and narrator exclaimed that this was Bob’s “last hope.” In meeting with the program’s oddities dealer, Jessica Lindsay Phillips, the dealer admitted to owning two mummified cats herself and commented that she felt that the condition of Bob’s specimen was not up to her standards. At least during this segment, the dealer appreciated the piece and saw its value. However, she lowballed Bob by offering \$400 for it. Always looking to add humour to disappointment, Bob told the show’s narrator that his meeting with the dealers was an “unmitigated cat-astrophe.” Bob’s segment on the show ended with a shot of him leaving the stage with one of the dealers quipping (through voiceover), “Good luck, Reverend. Hopefully, you’ll find somebody to buy it because—you know what?—at the end of the day there’s a buyer for everything and maybe the Reverend will get lucky.”

Plan B was not mentioned once during Bob’s appearance on *Four Rooms* and the program was edited to present him using a standard reality television series trope: weirdo of the week. CBC presented Bob as such a weirdo, to be laughed at by viewers, and as a person with no

chance of selling his bizarre item. When the program aired on January 5, 2014, I felt vindicated by the fact that on December 14, 2013, Sean and I had sold Lucky the mummified cat to an oddities collector for \$900 cash. Plan B had the last laugh, even if the Canadian television viewership would never know the difference.

The reality is that the beige dinner jacket, frilly shirt, fez wearing Reverend Bob character was not always a success for Bob. Bob was embarrassed by the way he was presented on *Four Rooms*, but took it in stride. At worst, people would forget about it quickly, as soon as the next “weirdo of the week” came onto their television screens. At best, people “in the know” would see the show and think of Plan B.



Figure 15: “Lucky” the mummified cat on the set of CBC’s *Four Rooms*. Oddities dealer Jessica Lindsay Phillips inspects the specimen with great interest, as her colleagues look on with surprise and disgust.

Bob was able to use his increasing media visibility to solicit numerous other opportunities to promote the shop. Bob had spent time pitching a television program about Plan B and its vendors to various television production companies and by summer 2014, Discovery USA and a much smaller Canadian television station were circling Plan B because of Bob’s efforts. In 2014, Bob shot a short demo (called a “sizzle reel”), but neither company pursued the Plan B television series any further. Bob was also approached by the History Channel to appear on *Pawn Stars* in 2015, but this did not pan out either.

What all of this demonstrates is that Bob, as president of Plan B, has been able to use his experiences and contacts in the film industry to attract a wider range of media attention for the cooperative than most other businesses could hope for. And, despite the fact that not every opportunity works out, this attention has not been squandered. Plan B has become something of a media darling and when the cooperative nearly collapsed during a particularly harsh winter in 2015 (that stymied the retail sector throughout Atlantic Canada), Plan B's crowdfunding call to help pay its bills was picked up by regional news outlets, while other businesses closed their doors.

However, there's more to this than Bob's connections in the industry. Bob is a creative person who knows how to put on a show, stage an exciting window display and manufacture publicity stunts through humour, extensive knowledge of the products he deals in and the cultivation of taste (as both a nostalgia broker and a collector himself). As part of the gentrification aesthetic on the street, Bob and his fellow Plan B core members engage in distinctions by putting their cultural capital on display. Some Plan B members are economically impoverished, but the dyed hair, alt-rock and punk lifestyle, as well as the embrace of numerous different cultural groups separates the shop from similar used-goods marketplaces in distinctive performative ways. Bob's appearance on *Four Rooms* and the *Nocturne* events are examples of this. Plan B members are not elites, but are brokers of nostalgia and cultural omnivores who rely on their cultural capital in order to get noticed.

6.5 Using Newspapers to Advertise in the Age of Social Media

As discussed, we live in an era of social media and many businesses, large and small, rely on some form of social media to attract customers. Social media has a large audience and its many avenues are available for free or minimal costs, which makes using it an attractive

alternative to employing more traditional advertising methods. As such, I was surprised to find that the Harbourview was not using social media to its advantage.

At one point, when Gary Janes owned the market, there was a website dedicated to the Harbourview. Before I entered the field, the domain name had lapsed and the website had disappeared. Paul did have a presence on Facebook that another vendor was responsible for looking after, but updates were infrequent and the Facebook page did not have a large following in comparison to other local businesses. Some vendors were quite savvy with their use of social media, but all of the vendors who employed Facebook or other social media websites did so as isolated entities, in effect promoting their own businesses, but not the Harbourview per se.

The fact that many of the Harbourview vendors were old enough that they did not grow up with the internet or employ it in their everyday lives (in comparison to the younger generations that made up the bulk of membership at Plan B) is important. Paul admitted that he was not a technology person and that he had little patience for learning how to use the internet or Facebook to its fullest extent. Many Harbourview vendors felt the same way.

But, the Harbourview vendors did try to advertise the space using traditional methods. Every week one of the vendors would conduct a 50/50 draw amongst vendors with the proceeds contributing to paying for a weekly advertisement in the *Metro* newspaper on Thursdays and Fridays. Individual vendors would also contribute funds to help finance the small advertisement and the names of vendors or their businesses would appear with the ad.

During my fieldwork, I would occasionally take a look at the advertisement and think to myself that it was quite strange that these vendors would pool their resources together to pay for an expensive newspaper advertisement in order to attract customers. I found it strange because the status quo for small businesses in the HRM had long since involved a combination of

Facebook, Twitter, Kijiji, Instagram and/or Imgur to get the word out about one's business. All of these avenues were essentially free and had the benefit of capturing the interest of a much wider audience than newspapers. In reality, it was impossible for me to gauge whether or not the newspaper advertisement did anything to increase the foot traffic at the market, but one thing was for certain: I never heard a customer mention the ad.



Figure 16: Harbourview Weekend Market *Metro* advertisement from the week ending on June 22, 2014. Notice that it still lists the long defunct Harbourview website URL.

Nevertheless, the advertisement reveals a couple of things about the market's vendors and shoppers at the time. Since many of the vendors were older than at Plan B and contributed to paying for the advertisement, it is likely that many of these vendors still read the newspaper themselves. In an era when more and more people rely on the internet for news, newspaper readership has been in sharp decline. However, anecdotally at least, newspapers continue to be an importance source of information for older people. It is also reasonable to assume that the target audience of the market was also older customers based on these kinds of advertisements. The market was attempting to attract a clientele that was reading the newspaper and this is

reflected in the fact that a large number of attendees on any given weekend were not the same kinds of people who were Plan B regulars. This applies more to casual shoppers than collectors, who were more likely to shop at each site. Though there was certainly some overlap, many of Plan B's shoppers were younger and embraced a different, "hipper" aesthetic than the people who attended the Harbourview every weekend.

It also did not help that for months during my fieldwork, the Harbourview's storefront sign was missing. It had fallen off during a windy snowstorm and it took Paul some time to buy a replacement. This was a point of contention for some of the vendors and I watched one in particular ask about when the sign would be replaced on a regular basis. For some vendors, the lack of a sign was not a problem, so much as the giant hole where the sign was supposed to be, which made the exterior of the building look ramshackle and uninviting. The Harbourview's location on a side-street made the building difficult to see from the main road because its vantage point was blocked by other buildings.

In addition to this, and despite a relatively mild winter during the 2013-14 season, Canal Street was in a state of disrepair. There was a real risk that a person would ruin a tire on their vehicle driving down the street. All of these issues and a lack of direct marketing prevented people living in the new apartment complexes from coming to the market, or perhaps even knowing that it was within walking distance of where they lived. As I had informal conversations with regular shoppers, I learned that the majority of the people who I spoke with did not even live in the neighbourhood, but would drive to the Harbourview or take the bus from elsewhere in the city. Unlike Plan B, the Harbourview was not taking advantage of social media, its vendors were paying for expensive advertising and there was an inability to connect with the new people

moving into the neighbourhood in a concrete way. If Plan B had become an expert at garnering media attention, the Harbourview was quite the opposite.



Figure 17: A picture of the missing sign, taken in May, 2014. The new sign went up late in June.

There was only one time during my fieldwork that the media reported on the Harbourview and it was due to one of the vendors, Bill Mont, taking it upon himself to fill in the potholes on Canal Street instead of waiting for the city. Mont had filled the potholes in with gravel and levelled them out with a shovel to prevent additional damage to his vehicle on days that he came and went to and from the market (Davenport, 2014). The media was quick to champion him for taking this work upon himself and he even appeared on the May 30, 2014 episode of *The Rick Howe Show*, a local news radio program, to talk about his deeds. The City was furious because of the negative attention it received and called Mont a “vigilante” (*ibid.*). In a statement released by the city, spokesperson Jennifer Stewart said, “We want to make sure it’s done safely and properly, using the right materials. We understand the frustration of not having all the potholes in the city fixed already, but we would obviously discourage anyone from taking this sort of step” (*ibid.*). During market hours the weekend after this, Mont proudly provided

vendors and customers with copies of the article featuring his exploits in the *Metro* (it made the front page) and I witnessed people enter the market to shake Mont's hand. Whether or not this media attention created a boon for the market is debatable, but if it did it was short-lived.

6.6 Channelling “the Local” at the Market and the Shop

As I learned, the desire to advertise and promote the Harbourview market through newspapers and social media (regardless of their efficacy) was part of a desire to participate in discourses about local business. For many vendors, channeling “the local” was part of a wider strategy to appear relevant in a sea of many entrepreneurial voices doing the same thing. To paraphrase the attitudes of various vendors, the idea was articulated as: “I am here. I live here. Mine is a local business. People should support me.” However, this failed to address the expectations of the buy local movement, which is not only about supporting businesses “from here” (wherever “here” may be), but also relies on promoting things “made here” and weaves together ethical and moral concerns about the environment, fair pay and labour rights.

For dealers of used goods, these deeper meanings of the local concept were not well-articulated or employed. Instead, it felt like “jumping on the bandwagon.” As I discussed Chapter 3.2, the idea of “local” is warmly persuasive, but it is also widely pervasive. The idea of the local continues to be popular and people wanted to be part of this movement—to employ the discourse—even if this did not mean adopting the principles associated with it.

In thinking about how the used-goods vendors who I met at Plan B and the Harbourview employed “the local” as part of their sales strategies, I am reminded of Keith Brown's (2013) study of the fair-trade movement in Philadelphia. Brown's ethnographic research studied interactions between fair trade coffee shop owners and their customers. In his book, Brown identifies three types of relationships that consumers have with fair trade: promoters,

conscientious consumers and purchasers. Promoters are individuals who have had what Brown calls “extraordinary experiences” of the fair-trade movement (such as visiting a coffee plantation in South America), which have directed and increased their involvement in the movement to such an extent that they become promoters of said movement.

Conscientious consumers are depicted by Brown (2013) as the ideal customers of the fair-trade movement. He presents this ideal through a caricature of a person he calls “Gwen,” who is an affluent, educated, employed woman with a family who strives to make ethical and environmentally sound purchases at all times (p. 73). Brown then argues that such individuals are not quite real. Instead, he points to how one of his informants, Nathan, struggles daily to make ethical and environmentally friendly consumer choices, but faces contradictions between his moral ideals and everyday shopping patterns: sometimes he cannot afford ethical and environmentally friendly items; they may not be available; and the businesses where he shops might not be as ethical or environmentally friendly as they claim (p. 73-74). The final type that Brown identifies, purchasers, are the types of people who will buy fair trade products, ethical products, environmentally friendly products and so on only when making such purchases are convenient. Such individuals claim that they would like to buy ethically more often, but generally they do not.

Since Brown’s (2013) typologies are based more on consumers than sellers, they are not a perfect fit for what I am describing here. In addition to this, Brown’s emphasis on environmentalism as a key motivator is not something that played out amongst my research participants. Even so, applying his concepts to how vendors employed “the local” concept is useful here. In particular, the patterns of behaviour amongst conscientious consumers that he identifies are applicable. According to Brown, consumers express their moral identities through

shopping and are increasingly attracted to socially responsible alternatives and are willing to pay a premium for such products because such products are in vogue and making such purchases enables a person to appear socially responsible (p. 75). Yet, instead of highlighting their socially responsible consumption, the conscientious consumers that Brown met deflected attention away from ethical issues towards utility or quality (*ibid.*). They were hesitant to talk about ethical issues and Brown says this is an impression management strategy that involves trying to appear altruistic without being preachy. This is important because, as he notes, only a small number of consumers align their values with all of their purchases. The same type of impression management applies to how consumers invoke the buy local movement.

The issue of impression management and altruism is where these concepts start to make sense in terms of their application of used-goods vendors. Altruism, for Brown (2013), is socially constructed in relation to other acts of altruism (p. 96). During the ethical turn in markets, the cultivation of moral reputation is especially important. Hence, the quest for altruism is competitive (*ibid.*). Brown notes that the rules of the game for ethical consumption are changing and now “local” is taking centre stage for conscientious consumers: “local is the new organic” (*ibid.*).

All of this boils down to a competition for the cultivation of moral reputation through shopping. Conscientious consumers know how to look socially conscious, but few advocate or engage in discussions about social responsibility (Brown, 2013, p. 97). Shoppers are comforted by the thought that their purchases may change the world in small measure, but tend to only possess superficial knowledge about what they are buying (p. 98). No attention is paid to the material implications of consumption or shopping patterns. Instead, the competition for appearing altruistic is about appearance, rather than doing the most good.

So, how does this terminology apply to the used-goods sellers who I met at Plan B and the Harbourview? With the exception of a handful of mostly peripheral vendors at Plan B, none of the vendors who I met could properly be called promoters in Brown's terms. Yet both Plan B and the Harbourview, as well as the vendors who sold there, often employed terms such as "local" and "upcycled" when describing their products. This was more significant than the bandwagon jumping that I describe earlier in this section: vendors knew that some of their clients were interested in making idealistic or ethical purchases and attempted to cater to this, regardless of whether or not said vendors were actually engaging in these practices beyond merely being "sellers from here." This was strategic, particularly at Plan B, where the clientele was often made up of a younger, more university-educated crowd than at the Harbourview. Plan B vendors had a knack for catering to the expectations of this client-base, even though few were engaging the buy local movement in a concrete way; that is, articulating or taking part in the ethical and moral concerns about the environment, fair pay and labour rights on which the movement is based.

This was not as common at the Harbourview because the clientele generally was made up of poorer, less highly educated buyers than at Plan B. The customer base seemed far less interested in local-ness in directing their shopping. When pressed, vendors at both sites could easily invoke the language of localism. In catering to such client expectations without really addressing wider discourses around localism, such practices became little more than the impression management involved in trying to appear altruistic. It boiled down to vendors not wanting to look like they did not care about such things, but this only came to light when they were pressed or had an opportunity to make a sale. In most cases, vendors wanted to appear local without addressing local discourses in a concrete way and only cared if it helped provide an edge in the moment. In Chapter 3.1.2, I discussed the performative role of market vendors in terms of

how vendors and shoppers tend to dress differently at markets (often “dressing down” in order to look poorer than they are) in order to gain an edge when haggling (see de La Pradelle, 2008; and Medlin, 2008). Such dramaturgical analyses are heavily inspired by the work of Goffman (1959). Although performing localness is quite different from dressing down as part of a vending strategy, I argue that both strategies are dramaturgical extensions or examples of the kinds of impression management that Goffman describes.

6.7 The Plan B Karaoke Experience

In addition to participating in community events (like *Nocturne*), Plan B’s president and core vendors took advantage of whatever opportunities to increase the profile of the shop were presented to them. As my time conducting daily fieldwork was coming to an end, the core members of Plan B were focused on a major event that they had been invited to for the second year in a row. The invitation had been extended in October, 2013 and at the start of January, 2014, Bob asked numerous core vendors to become involved, including me.

During the shop’s first year of operation, Bob struck up a relationship with the editor of *Local Connections Halifax Magazine*, making the cover of one of the magazine’s early issues (as shown in Chapter 6.4). The relationship was strong and the magazine’s editor invited Plan B to provide entertainment at one of its flagship events, “The Craft Beer and Local Food Celebration” held at the Halifax Club. The Halifax Club is a private club that was established in 1862 to serve as a meeting place for Halifax’s top tier politicians and business elite. The club is still situated in its original building and has had numerous well-known members over the years, including former Prime Ministers Charles Tupper and Robert Borden, brewer Alexander Keith, novelist Thomas H. Raddall and engineer Sanford Fleming.

For members of Plan B, including Bob, participating at an event at the Halifax Club allowed for certain bragging rights. It provided Plan B's core members with the opportunity to "rub elbows" with a different class of people than those who usually entered the store. Serving as the function's entertainment meant that the invited core members would have all-access passes to the food and craft beer events—something that none of them would otherwise entertain due to the \$85 ticket price and the economic status of the event's revellers.

In the weeks leading up to the event, Bob took most of the planning upon himself. He declared that he wanted to do something that people would remember and arranged to have karaoke and a drag queen perform. Bob spent days trying to find people who he could hire to fill these roles. He was also able to convince two comedians who were associated with the shop to volunteer their time, as well as the saw and accordion players who had performed at *Nocturne*. The rest of us (David, Britt, KT, Sean, Bob and I) would be running a pop-up sale in order to promote the shop's many wares. This was the last major event that I would attend during my daily fieldwork and served as my official send-off (despite the fact that I spent the next several months operating the shop on Wednesdays).

The following is taken from my field notes on January 16, 2014.

The Plan B room was on the top floor of the building. The karaoke DJ had already arrived and set up his equipment. Two craft brewers and a food vendor shared the room with us. Plan B had two tables of oddities, two clothing racks and had built a stage/pavilion for people to perform on. KT, the musicians and I arrived shortly before Bob, David and Britt. The two comedians arrived shortly thereafter. Sean would be arriving later (as he was responsible for closing the shop and needed to get changed), as would the drag queen who Bob had hired.



Figure 18: One of Plan B's Tables at the Halifax Club

With time to kill before the doors opened, everyone scattered in different directions to check out the food and drink on offer by event vendors. Once the doors opened, the building filled up quickly. It was not long before the line-up outside of the building was so long that it went down the entire block of the street. I came face to face with Bob amongst the revellers and we realized that no one was watching the tables, so we went back upstairs.

As people trickled into the room they did not know what to make of Plan B. We had no beer or food, just a stage, clothing racks and tables filled with odd and seemingly disparate collectibles and antiques. The Plan B crew were all dressed up in their finest alternative clothing and must have looked confusing to the businessmen and businesswomen wearing more formal attire. David wore a patterned collared shirt with suspenders and a bowtie; Britt wore a black dress; KT wore a turquoise coloured dress with matching shoes that suited her dyed-pink hair; Bob wore his standard fez and beige dinner jacket; the two musicians were dressed in funeral

attire; the female comedian wore a yellow collared shirt; and Sean wore a vintage white jacket and patterned collared shirt that made him look particularly retro.



Figure 19: Plan B's "House Musicians" Performing on Stage at the Halifax Club

At 7 pm the entertainment started. One of the comedians got on stage and started to tell some jokes. Then karaoke began. The crowd was small at first, but got larger as the night went on. When the musicians started playing accordion and saw, people noticed the strange sounds and the room started to fill up with revellers. Some people got really into it. Others could not believe what they were seeing, staring at us like we were a circus sideshow. The musicians played four or five songs and brought the house down.

The featured comedian told a few more jokes and then the stage opened up for the lesser-known comedian to perform. The featured comedian then introduced the final act, Halifax's reigning drag empress. The remainder of the event was a karaoke party. Some women in the crowd

sang “Don’t Stop Believing” by Journey and the crowd really started to open up to us. The event was supposed to end at 10 pm, but as the other rooms closed, *The Plan B Karaoke Experience* remained open. We sold some stuff, but the event was more about promoting the store. The response was fantastic. The night ended with Bob singing “My Way” by Frank Sinatra.



Figure 20: Plan B Core Member Group Photo

After most revellers had left, the magazine editor walked into the room. We all got together for a group photo, which he took. The flash was not working on the camera and the best picture still ended up blurry.

(From left to right) Top Row: David, KT, the female comedian, Bob, the two musicians; Bottom Row: Me, Britt, Sean

The Plan B Karaoke Experience at the Halifax Club is an example of how class distinctions can become blurred through the consumption of mass culture. Even though the class differences between Plan B vendors and event attendees were apparent due to the fact that most attendees were members of the business elite, the role that vendors played as entertainment in combination with the drag queen and karaoke DJ led to vendors being part of a spectacle that may or may not have had class connotations.

Nevertheless, the Plan B vendors were conscious of their roles and economic limitations in their face-to-face interactions with attendees. They had a chance to interact with a class of people—Halifax’s business elite—who they would otherwise rarely encounter. This young group of punks and hipsters was something of a sideshow for these elites and everyone knew it. However, this status was embraced in the moment by Plan B’s event participants because of the exposure that it brought to the cooperative, as well as the free alcohol and food that was provided. Nevertheless, the spectacle that was Plan B acted as a sort of levelling via mass culture. Some of the products on offer, such as the curios, did not appeal to all, but the pop culture collectibles and vintage clothing were major hits among some attendees. Channeling Peterson (1992), cultural omnivorousness was on display, levelling class distinctions as attendees purchased and discussed relics of popular culture. If the event had not been so exclusive, it would have been impossible to discern the class backgrounds of those involved. The local craft beer, fancy appetizers and other food were part of the class aesthetic that the revellers expected. Plan B only fit into the event through its association with mass culture, catering to the tastes of the cultural omnivores in attendance, which blurred class boundaries in the moment.

But there is more to it than this. Plan B was hired to perform because the cooperative and the performers brought cultural capital to an event that was based on economic capital. The “hipness” of the entertainment and the “coolness” of the goods for sale did not cater to all, but did cater to some members of these economic elites. For those who stuck around, sang karaoke, laughed at the jokes, cheered on the drag queen and/or purchased curios, there was a blend of economic and cultural capital being performed and put on display. It was possible to be elite and be cool at the same time. Plan B was not only catering to cultural omnivores, but creating and blurring distinctions along the way (between Plan B members and the elites, but also between the

elites themselves). This was snobbery versus tolerance and for the Plan B room tolerance won the day. Yet, it was also subversive.

For the younger members, this was a party under the guise of Plan B. It did not matter that they would be back to complaining about “bougies”⁴⁴ once the event was finished. There was a deeper meaning to their involvement: this was an opportunity for subversion, to bring a little bit of themselves to the city’s economic elites and obtain the bragging rights associated with being young punks breaking into the establishment (if only for a night). This was not a Cinderella story, but an opportunity to perform unusual music, have a few drinks, dress up and convince business people to act wild for an evening (and some of the business people who stayed in the room for most of the evening certainly lost their inhibitions!).

For Bob and the shop, this event took on even greater significance. In the days that followed we witnessed a higher-end clientele enter the cooperative due to their interest being piqued at the Halifax Club. Plan B was the flavour of the moment. The cultural omnivores wanted more. In this way, the event had a similar effect to the media coverage the cooperative enjoyed. Yet, there was more to it than this and Bob’s karaoke rendition of Frank Sinatra’s “My Way” is evidence of this.

Most attendees, except perhaps the few core vendors who were closest to Bob, would not have understood the significance of his selecting “My Way” for karaoke. This momentary self-indulgence contained deeper meaning. This was a man who had humble beginnings as a prop master/set designer in the film industry, who had started as a collector of oddities and then became a dabbler in antiques at a local flea market. This was a man who had joined with a group of flea market vendors to open the cooperative in order to take his business to the next level, to

⁴⁴ What they called people who they deemed part of the bourgeoisie.

pursue a dream that was not affordable or achievable alone. This was the man who took on the mantle of cooperative president and stuck with Plan B through thick and thin after watching some of his original companions fail miserably, while others left him behind to open their own brick-and-mortar businesses. As the only member of Plan B who had been continuously active at the cooperative since its inception, Bob stood alone.

It was in this moment that I realized that Bob truly is Plan B. As Bob goes, so does the shop. Yet, in his moment of off-tune karaoke brilliance, he had not become one of Halifax's business elites. He may never become such a person and I am not sure that he wants to be. Regardless, with the help of *Local Connections Halifax Magazine* and as a result of his uncanny ability to attract media attention, Bob and Plan B found themselves on the radar, on the tip of people's tongues during discussions of local businesses. Ultimately, he was part of the conversation. To channel the song's final phrases: let the record show, he took the blows, but he did it his way.

Events like these were rare for the shop and were almost unheard of at the Harbourview. Instead, most events that were community oriented at Plan B were developed and organized in-house. At the Harbourview, any type of event that attempted to attract community members was developed exclusively by vendors who hoped to use it to bring in more shoppers for a day. One vendor at the Harbourview had a penchant for holding children-oriented events on holiday weekends, such as an Easter egg hunt, but other vendors were more likely to advertise that they were having a sale than to actually organize something that community members could enjoy as an event. As I came to learn during my time in the field, there was a great amount of "dead time" at both the shop and the market due to a lack of customers on any given day or weekend. So, vendors came up with ways to pass the time when things were slow. This was easier at the shop

due to its cooperative nature and the fact that most vendors were friends with each other. The competitive environment at the market made this somewhat more difficult. However, I did encounter one major way that rival market vendors came together to pass the time.

6.8 Socializing Across Competition: Crazy-8s for Cash

By the end of February, 2014, I had met most of the vendors at the Harbourview. Some of the vendors, like Rick, were happy about my presence, but most had their guards up around me. I had to work harder to build rapport than at Plan B and I quickly realized that part of this had to do with the competitive atmosphere of the market.

Vendors at the Harbourview were in direct competition with each other. As a result, they tended not to like each other much, but tried to get along for the good of the market. This led vendors to erect boundaries between themselves. They navigated between showing a public face that was “buddy-buddy,” and a private face of dislike directed towards their competition. This was in sharp contrast to the cooperative mentality at Plan B, where everyone was expected to work together for the common good, regardless of overlapping inventories.

In the hours before the Harbourview market opened on any given weekend, I would spend time with vendors who were communicating with each other despite their fractured, competitive relationships. The following description serves to illuminate this. On any given Saturday morning around 8 am, I would enter the market through the vendor entrance and witness two competing vendors having a jovial conversation with each other. They would gossip about recent acquisitions, problematic and beneficial repeat customers, expectations for the day, and other vendors. They might conduct a trade or cash transaction with each other. After this short encounter, they would both return to their respective spaces to set up for the day. Later, when speaking to each separately, they would criticize and complain about the business

strategies of their competitor. At the end of the market day, both vendors would be “buddy-buddy” again.

None of this should be a surprise in a competitive environment, but this back and forth points to the wider context of vendor relationships at the market. Competitive vendors erected boundaries between each other in their private dealings in order to differentiate themselves and their businesses from each other, but they were subject to the machinations of the market as a whole. When something affected the entire market, these boundaries quickly eroded.

Vendors tended to build cliques with other vendors who were not in direct competition with each other. Hence, even though vendors selling similar items might not get along with each other, they would strike up relationships with other vendors who sold different things. The less similar that two vendors’ products were, the more likely that they were to have friendly relationships. For example, video game vendors tended to strike closer personal friendships with non-video game vendors. The same can be said for DVD and blu-ray vendors, book vendors, clothing vendors, knick-knack vendors and so on.

Some vendors had no interest in these sorts of cliques, remaining somewhat isolated in the larger scheme of things. Other vendors utilized cliques to build potential business relationships in order to resell or acquire inventory or to have “first crack” at potentially interesting items that the other party may acquire down the road. In some cases, these relationships were one-sided, with one person doing all of the buying and the other never purchasing anything in return. Many of these relationships were tenuous at best. If a member of a clique passed on an item that was offered to them, it could lead to a competitor making the purchase and affecting the buyer-seller relationship. If a different vendor started making inroads

(by paying more or purchasing what was left behind after the first vendor had “cherry-picked” the best stuff), then the second vendor might end up getting “first crack” down the road.

The problem for me was that entering a competitive marketplace where a lack of vendor cooperation was normal, but hidden, led to difficulty in building rapport. Since Rick had introduced me to Paul, other vendors assumed that we were close friends (at the time we were not) and I only knew a couple of other vendors who I had had past business dealings with prior to entering the market as a researcher.

Most of the vendors who I spoke with had no idea what an anthropologist was or what an anthropologist did. I must have seemed rather strange during the month of February, as I walked around the market introducing myself, talking about how I was conducting research and how I wanted to get to know people individually and learn about their businesses. Most people told me that they were not interested in being interviewed or having me conduct participant observation with them. Some people were polite, but seemed cold and distant, while others seemed to avoid me altogether. I was perhaps seen as a nuisance because I was not there to buy things, which for many vendors was the reason for coming to the market in the first place.

My first inroads with vendors occurred when I smoked cigarettes with the dozens of them who would come outside to have a quick puff during a lull at their stalls. Building relationships was a slow process, but as I explained my history selling at a flea market in Fredericton as a master’s student, my ongoing eBay business, talked about my past and interests, explained my research in more detail and regaled people with anecdotes about the Fredericton Flea Market, people started to tell me more about themselves and their businesses. People were also interested in learning more about Plan B. I was surprised to learn that many of the vendors at the Harbourview were not even aware of the merchants’ cooperative, and was just as surprised to

learn that many of the vendors occupying space at the market in 2014 had not been selling at the Harbourview when Plan B opened. Like Plan B, selling at the Harbourview was transitory, with few of the original vendors still present.

As I got to know a few of the vendors who smoked, and explained my difficulties in building relationships with other vendors, one person suggested to me that I rent a stall or table and start selling items from my business, East Coast Toys and Games. I thought long and hard about this, but decided that it would not be in my best interest to do so. Despite the fact that I rented a small space at Plan B, becoming a vendor at the Harbourview would create methodological problems that were not present at the other venue. First, the competitive nature of the market could lead to me getting into conflict with vendors selling similar products, which I wanted to avoid at all costs. Second, selling at the market would prevent me from spending time with other vendors and learning about their businesses, which was my entire purpose in being there. I had to devise a different strategy.

When, during my first days at the Harbourview, one of the vendors warned me against playing cards for money, I had taken this advice to heart. I am not averse to gambling and play poker well. My father's family had a long-standing tradition of playing poker all night long when we visited the homestead in Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. His father and three brothers were all poker aficionados and I learned how to play the game as a small child. I was not particularly worried about playing card games for money due to a lack of confidence. Instead, my apprehension about playing cards at the market was that, at the outset, it seemed like a secondary activity that would be little more than a distraction. I thought that it was silly that the dozen or so vendors who were playing cards for money were playing a game for children—Crazy-8s—and, at first, I paid little attention to this activity.

Eventually, I realized that whenever Paul was not busy with market business, he would be playing Crazy-8s with one of his anchor tenants. Not all of the large vendors played cards, but many of the vendors that did play cards rented large spaces or appeared to have more clout with Paul when a problem arose. As February came to an end, I was approached by Paul and other vendors to play cards more frequently. At first, I had a tendency to only bring enough money with me to purchase meals from one of the two food vendors at the market and always politely declined these invitations.

As March began, I reflected more and more on what I felt was a lack of success in building rapport with vendors. I started to realize the significance of playing cards for some of the market's cliques. I decided that I would start bringing money with me to the market for the express purpose of playing Crazy-8s for cash and started to study up on the game. Much to my wife's displeasure, I spent the month of March playing various online versions of Crazy-8s on my computer when I was at home, trying to figure out strategies.

Crazy-8s is not a complex game. At the beginning of a game, eight cards are dealt to each player. A handful of cards have special properties. When someone plays a Jack, the person to their left misses a turn. When someone plays a two, the person to the left must pick up two cards. If the next card discarded is also a two then the next person has to pick up four cards (and this continues to a maximum of eight cards). Eights are wild, allowing a player to specify a new suit.

The way that Crazy-8s worked at the Harbourview was that each player would ante-up \$5 per hand. The winner of the hand would win the pot, which was generally \$15 to \$20 depending on the number of players. There were also occasions when players would play games with larger antes, but these games were unusual and generally occurred when only two players were playing.

There was one house rule that everyone had to follow: when you only had one card left in your hand, you had to declare “last card.” If you did not and won the game, your win was forfeited.

Having studied the intricacies of the game in my down-time and having watched vendors play at the Harbourview during the first two weekends in March, 2014, I came prepared to play cards with vendors during the weekend of March 19. As word travelled around the market that I was open to playing cards, vendors started to invite me to play Crazy-8s with them and the vendors who did not play cards took notice. Playing Crazy-8s helped to establish my reputation as a person who was not a troublemaker and as someone who could be trusted. I continued to play Crazy-8s every weekend that I was in the field and over time I came to realize that playing the game was not really even about gambling (though this was a motivator for some players).

Since the market was open from 9 am to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, there were often slow periods throughout each day. Playing cards allowed interested vendors to pass the time, gossip and joke. But why Crazy-8s? Why not some other, more “adult” card game like poker or cribbage? The answer lies in the speed of the game. A round of Crazy-8s usually lasts around five minutes. Other card games can take ten minutes, twenty minutes or even hours to play until there is a winner. Vendors did not come to the market to play cards, but used Crazy-8s as a means to pass the time. The primary goal was to sell stuff, so playing Crazy-8s enabled players to quickly leave if a customer expressed interest in their goods. Once a transaction was completed the vendor could return to play Crazy-8s as soon as the next hand started. With all of this taken into consideration, I should also note that the two or three places in the market where vendors played had long lines of sight, enabling vendors to keep an eye on their spaces when a game was taking place.

There was more to this than merely passing time. Above all, playing cards was a way to socialize. Amit's (2010) description of community as a family of concepts of sociation applies here. By creating cliques around playing cards, these vendors were building joint commitments and affect-belongings with each other that helped to establish the market as a community, regardless of its competitive nature. The fact that these cliques formed around sellers who were not necessarily competing with each other directly by selling the same product heightened these commitments and affect-belongings. Through playing Crazy-8s for cash during downtime, these cliques came to develop important social bonds. The free-flowing gossip and banter were the result of these bonds. These were not the symbolic displays of community that one would expect following Cohen (1985). Instead, these manifestations of community were structural responses to the design of the market itself.

By the end of March, I had played enough rounds of cards (and lost enough money) that the dozen or so vendors who played Crazy-8s were always happy to see me. I participated in gossip and banter and talked about my own life, my business and whatever else people asked me about. Once these vendors were more comfortable with me, I started asking if they were willing to be interviewed or allow me to engage in participant observation with them. Almost all of them declined. When I asked why, the general consensus was that they did not want their names, products or businesses to be directly mentioned in any of my research reports, dissertation or publications. Even after I promised that all of this information could be omitted and that their anonymity would be protected, they still declined my research advances.

As I learned, for some of them this was because they were hiding income, for others it was because they were receiving disability payments that they feared might get cut off if they were identified by name or could be linked to the project in some way. Yet, for the majority of

these vendors there was an understandable motivating factor behind their dismissal: the fear that if they told me too much their competitors might learn their trade secrets. All of these concerns were reasonable. It may seem like I was back to square one after being politely declined in this way, but vendors did become more open to showing me some of their business strategies and “talking shop” with me, as long as I kept the information to myself or presented certain findings as part of an aggregate. Yet, even as I made inroads with card-playing vendors and non-card-playing vendors alike, other vendors still viewed me with suspicion. This was because playing cards helped to pass the time and also dispelled rivalries in the moment. I failed to understand, at first, that this was an entry point into building rapport and that in order to become friendlier with other vendors (particularly those who were not interested in playing cards), I would have to learn about the political hierarchy of the market.

6.9 Cliques, Crews, Families and Isolated Entities

The political organization of Harbourview vendors took time to learn. At the beginning only one thing was certain: Paul was in charge and, as the owner of the market, his decisions were final. Paul only had one employee, the person taking cash at the door and conducting customer head counts each day, but he did have a nephew who would help out with menial tasks on occasion. Otherwise, he was responsible for all of the day-to-day tasks operating the market. Paul had a small clique of trusted vendors who would assist him with certain tasks, but overall this was Paul’s business and his responsibility.

As mentioned previously, in playing Crazy-8s to build rapport with some vendors, I was able to identify that a large number of vendors belonged to cliques within the market, where vendors selling different types of items would come together to gossip. As much as Crazy-8s allowed certain vendors to pass the time, it also became an important means for community

building: card playing allowed certain cliques to foster joint commitment, affect-belonging and forms of association that Amit (2010) presents as prerequisites for community building. Being part of a clique was about sociability.

Not every person was part of a clique, but most of the large vendors were and, over time, I came to realize that some of these cliques had more clout with Paul than other vendors when it came to voicing individual concerns. Some cliques were formed around smoking cigarettes and others were based around other activities. For example, some of the older female vendors would sit and gossip in a particular vendor's booth about the same sorts of things that I heard the card players and smokers talk about.

These cliques helped to form mini-communities of vendors within the market where informal group affiliation could be counted on in times of crisis. But these cliques were not part of any specific vendor's formal business operations. Instead, vendors were aligned in one of three ways: families, crews or isolated entities. In what follows, I will explain this typology and how it affected the operation of the market.

At Plan B, most vendors were sole proprietors. Some smaller vendors had partnered up with each other in order to be able to afford larger spaces and there were certainly a small group of vendors who were in spousal relationships who sold together. There was only one family that had multiple vendors associated with it at Plan B, which made this group an outlier.

At the Harbourview, I quickly came to realize that family relationships were a much more significant part of the market. There were two modes in which this occurred. One was quite significant, while the other was something that I could only identify for one family in particular. This second mode involved one family with multiple vendors renting spaces and operating

separate businesses at the market. Since I only encountered this for one family, I will not delve into it any further.

Many stalls and booths were operated as family businesses. In some cases, these families were spousal and in other cases they were multi-generational. This was true for vendors selling many different types of things. Two of the food businesses were family operations (one multi-generational; the other spousal); a knick-knack business was operated by spouses who had their son come in to help once in a while; one of the book vendors had his wife operate the business when he could not and a second book vendor had one of her sons help out on occasion. There were numerous additional examples and most family-owned businesses had the same family members work together weekly. There were a couple of parent-child teams and many husband and wife teams that operated businesses every weekend. Surprisingly, I did not meet any sibling teams at the market.

Economically, operating a family business made sense. If all vendors were part of the same family unit then revenue stayed within the family. For multi-generational family businesses, I often witnessed parents or grandparents passing on their specific knowledge about their trade to their children or grandchildren. In some cases the children of vendors were adults, but there were also teenagers who were part of family businesses at the Harbourview. In learning their parent's trade, they were also learning about spending and saving and gaining entrepreneurial skills that they may be able to utilise in the future. Family businesses made up a large portion of the flea market's vendor membership.

In a small handful of cases, vendors would partner with other vendors in order to increase their space, inventories, clientele base and revenue. For some larger vendors, the threat of being overwhelmed led to hiring employees who would be remunerated with a small wage or inventory

or other perks at the end of each weekend. Such remuneration was almost always “under the table.”

Because these situations are markedly different from family enterprises, I call them crews. In most cases, a vendor who hired employees would hire close friends with similar interests or particularly knowledgeable clients who were loyal to them. These crews worked in close proximity with each other and were able to create a situation of expertise and teamwork that was encouraging for their clientele.

Although rare, I did encounter a handful of vendors who were not interested in building relationships with other vendors and this seemed to be the result of individual dispositions. These vendors were successful at building vendor-client relations and seemed to get along with other vendors, but were more interested in focusing on their inventories and clients than anything else. Only a small group of people fit these criteria. I have come to call them “isolated entities,” due to their lack of interest in participating in wider market communities.

It is important to clarify at this point that there is great overlap between the types of groups that I call cliques with the family businesses and crews that I describe here. Members of some family businesses would be parts of different cliques and the same is true of members of different crews. Participating in a clique enabled people to make deals with non-competitors, encouraged gossip and the spread of market news, and also helped to fend off boredom during slow periods on any given market day. But, when it came to business, family-based vendors and crews operated independently from other vendors and vendor groups, taking pride in their businesses or contributions to their family or crew members’ successes, while also sharing responsibility for their failures.

Paul was aware of how these three vendor groups operated (without employing such terminology). Paul also attempted to separate vendors selling similar wares from each other in order to diversify the market and to prevent conflict. Book vendors, video game vendors, jewelry vendors, tool vendors and so forth tended to be spread around the market. This helped to prevent vendors from getting into “wars” with each other and Paul declined the inquiries of potential new vendors if they wanted to sell products already available.

There were two exceptions to this. The food vendors were located next to each other because they needed access to water and to be near chairs and tables where people sat to eat. The second exception was also logistical. A small number of vendors wanted to operate outside of market hours and had convinced Paul to allow them to use the side door to the building from Wednesdays to Fridays. Paul did not want customers to have access to the building when the market was not open. These vendors had to move to spaces that were adjacent to the side door. As a result, two rival video game sellers ended up set up next to each other.

6.10 Discussion

This chapter has examined Plan B and the Harbourview Weekend Market through the lens of community. Vendors at both sites attempt to create communities within these venues, while also attempting to involve their surrounding communities in various ways. The efficacy of these methods varies widely. At both sites, the transitory nature of used-goods vending means that vendors come and go on a regular basis. At Plan B, core vendors become significant for the day-to-day operation of the shop by taking the reins. Semi-peripheral and peripheral vendors benefit from the work of core vendors insofar as they are shielded from the day-to-day operation of the shop. Core vendors often become close friends due to the cooperative nature of the shop and attempting to establish mutual goals to further the shop’s agenda. At the Harbourview,

vendors are in direct competition with each other, but most form cliques, crews or rely on family as part of their subsistence strategies on market days. Regardless of the structural differences between the cooperative and competitive models that these sites rely on, both foster the joint commitment, affect-belonging and forms of association that Amit (2010) presents as prerequisites for building community. Both sites and their members also engage in the symbolic constructions of community building by erecting boundaries between themselves and people and places with whom they do not feel a sense of community.

At the Harbourview, despite being a competitive environment, vendors will rally together if there is an external threat that could affect the market as a whole. That said, there are rarely external threats that lead to vendors rallying behind the market. Instead, vendors find themselves fighting boredom during long days and lull periods. Vendors come together to pass the time and socialize in various ways, such as playing Crazy-8s for cash or participating in gossip or knitting circles. Smoking cigarettes also brings some vendors together. Engaging in activities such as these with rival vendors enables the time to pass, while also spreading market news and gossip. Socialization is key to the functioning of these marketplaces, but the political structure and physical design of each site plays a role in how community is manifested.

Vendors at both sites attempt to engage with their surrounding neighbourhoods—as communities—in numerous ways. Plan B has become adept at gaining media attention, which becomes free advertising for the shop. This is mostly due to the president's connections in the local film industry, which he parlays into media exposure and is unique to Bob Chiasson's role in the shop. This is also related to the "hipness" factor that Plan B relies on to distinguish itself from similar shops in the HRM and to make it a distinctly important hub in its neighbourhood. The creativity, humour, alt-rock and punk aesthetics and so on that Plan B relies on help to gain

attention. The cooperative gets involved with its neighbourhood by participating in community events such as *Nocturne*, while also presenting itself as a community hub through its multipurpose gallery space. The gallery space caters to fringe groups, such as Bronies, that have had difficulty finding safe spaces to host their events.

The Harbourview also attempts to engage its surrounding neighbourhood, but has not had the success that Plan B has at attaining the status of community hub. In addition to gaining media attention, Plan B members have become experts at attracting their clientele through social media platforms (especially Facebook). Some Harbourview vendors also use social media to great effect, but the market as a whole uses social media sparingly. Instead, Harbourview vendors attempt to find an audience through paying for newspaper advertisements, the success of which is impossible for me to quantify. Even so, these different strategies cater to different clienteles.

Due to their position in the gentrification processes of their neighbourhoods, Plan B and the Harbourview find themselves on the opposite end of their neighbourhood's gentrification aesthetics (Bridge, 2001). Plan B is a relatively new business on Gottingen Street, which has been rapidly gentrifying during the past half-decade. Gottingen Street and its surrounding area is home to a large number of social services and has traditionally been an area made up of working class, Mi'kmaq, African Nova-Scotian and queer residents. Plan B is part of a broader shift in the area that has brought a more affluent, educated, hipster group of residents and business owners to the neighbourhood (Roth & Grant, 2015). As a result, older residents and businesses have slowly been pushed out of the area as the cost of rent increases. The Harbourview, on the other hand, is located in a formerly industrial area that has experienced rapid transformation due to new luxury condo developments being built adjacent to the market. The Harbourview has had difficulty

attracting these new residents and continues to rely on clients who travel from outside of the neighbourhood to attend the market each weekend.

Despite being on opposite ends of the gentrification aesthetic, vendors at both sites have attempted to evoke the buy local movement in uncritical ways. Vendors assume that since they “live here” and operate local businesses that they should be able to attract clients who are interested in supporting local businesses without actually employing the tenets of the movement itself. That said, channelling the local can be successful for vendors when they articulate who they are competing with, such as big box stores. In catering to a subset of their clientele who are interested in a critical vision of what it means to be local, vendors perform to such expectations in ways that are reminiscent of the impression management strategies discussed by Goffman (1959).

CHAPTER 7: THE ROLE OF THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL ECONOMY

My primary focus in this dissertation is how used-goods vendors, as entrepreneurs, engage in informal economic practices or not. Returning to the work of Hart (1973) and debates that I profiled in Chapter 2, entrepreneurship has been a pivotal part of informal economy literature since the term was first coined. That said, although this phenomenon that has primarily been discussed from the point of view of the Global South, my research in Atlantic Canada is not entirely compatible with expectations found in various models used to explain informality since the early 1970s. As used goods vending entrepreneurs, my research sites and participants are also only one small subset of a much larger (but often interconnected) second-cycle economy that relies on the procurement and sale of used goods.

Despite a great amount of overlap in procurement strategies between the market vendors who I studied and other types of used goods entrepreneurs and workers (such as scavengers and street vendors), there are also marked differences between how other types of used-goods businesses attempt to make a living, which I have profiled in Chapter 4. For the purposes of this discussion, one of the differences between the used-goods markets and vendors who I studied and other contemporary North American used-goods trades is in how these sites and the vendors who work inside of them participate in the informal economy, which are in turn different from the pressures that market and street vendors alike in the Global South experience and participate in the informal economy. My research suggests that one of the most important distinctions between their informal economic activities and the better studied practices in the Global South is the element of choice.

My research findings are compatible with what Chen (2009) has called the “voluntarist model” of informality (stemming from the work of Maloney) and the World Bank Latin America

model presented by Perry *et al.* (to which Maloney was a contributor). As I discussed in Chapter 2.5 and 2.6, each of these models breaks away from earlier expectations of informal economy scholars in the Global South. Maloney (2004) assumed that informal entrepreneurs tended to enter into the informal economy by choice—voluntarily—because said entrepreneurs received greater benefits and a greater amount of control over their activities by working informally. This was a break with prior expectations found in dualistic, structuralist and even legalist models that assumed that people entered the informal economy out of necessity because of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy. The World Bank Latin America model (Perry *et al.*, 2007) relies in part on the work of Maloney, but provides a holistic framework for interpreting the motivations of informal practitioners by marking the difference between informal entrepreneurs and informal employees. In the model, informal entrepreneurs almost always enter the informal economy by choice as an attempt to exit the formal economy, whereas informal employees are more likely to enter the informal economy due to a lack of opportunities in the formal economy, from which they tend to be excluded.

Most of the vendors I met at Plan B and the Harbourview were sole proprietors who were operating businesses full-time or as moonlighters. Not all vendors were operating informally, as some had registered businesses and were remitting HST (which is a significant part of differentiating informal and formal businesses in Canada). Larger scale, full-time entrepreneurs tended to operate their businesses formally, but even amongst moonlighters who tended to have formal day jobs, there were several vendors who told me that they declared their earnings from vending to the government during tax time. That said, there were many vendors who told me that they were not declaring their revenue to the government and were operating informally. The other kind of vendor who I encountered (mostly at Plan B) were artists who used such venues as

a cheap opportunity to experiment and show off their work without any expectation of making money. As a final point, some of the larger scale vendors hired employees to work with them or had family members (often children) help them from week to week.

Despite these differences in business organization, all of these people shared that they were vending by choice, voluntarily as either an attempt to avoid working for someone else in the formal economy or as a means to supplement their incomes to provide an additional revenue stream from their formal jobs. As such, the World Bank Latin America model and the earlier voluntarist models apply to my specific research sites in ways that other models from the Global South do not. This is particularly true for the dualistic and structuralist approaches, which assume that informal entrepreneurs and workers tend to operate informally due to a lack of opportunity in the formal economy and are forced to become informal due to their precarious circumstances.

Of course, the relationship between the formal and informal economies is multifaceted. Generally speaking, the informal economy manifests in two obvious ways at my research sites. The first is the issue of taxation, tax remittance and business registration. What is taxable and what is not, as well as the expectations of who is supposed to collect and remit tax changes rapidly depending on where a person is based. Having a registered business and paying GST/HST or income tax on market or shop sales was a significant part of making a living for certain vendors who hoped to “platform” to their own brick and mortar stores (as I will explain in Chapter 8). There were also many vendors whose businesses were not registered, but who did not make enough money for this to be necessary. Only a handful of vendors who I met were actively avoiding paying tax.

The second issue is how vendors (as well as the venues themselves) take advantage of loopholes in government regulations, or engage in practices that lack regulation (or that have contradictory legal parameters, which can lead to loopholes), or intentionally avoid aligning their practices with regulations. Examples include employing under the table labour, circumventing licensing requirements and tax avoidance. Skirting government rules and regulations in minor ways in order to gain a business edge was also something that happened regularly at both sites in different ways. As such, following insights found in legalist approaches and the Kanbur (2009) model, this chapter presents various examples of how vendors at both sites straddled formal and informal economic activities simultaneously in order to make a living. In this chapter, I profile how vendors deal with theft, issues around the legality of taxidermy, and fear of the CRA, as well as obtaining business permits.

7.1 The Case of the Missing Monkey Kapala

It was late in the afternoon on October 3, 2013, when Bob, his friend and I returned to Plan B after spending the day procuring inventory at an old costume shop that was going out of business. Sean had been running the store in our absence. The pick had gone well and it felt like a perfect day. Then we realized that one of Bob's favourite pieces was missing: his monkey skull kapala.⁴⁵ We spent a couple of minutes looking for it, but could not find it. It had been on the counter, next to the cash register and in plain sight for weeks. I was worried that it had been stolen. Bob looked sad and disappointed. He planned to ask Sean if he moved it, but did not have high hopes. On the drive home, I contemplated how the missing monkey skull kapala had soured an otherwise perfect day.

⁴⁵ A kapala is a cup, usually made from a human skull, used as a ritual implement in both Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Bob's monkey skull kapala was likely Tibetan, as it was mounted in precious metals and jewels.

In the days that followed, Sean explained that he had not moved the skull, nor had he sold it. We asked other vendors about it and no one had any clue as to what could have happened to it. As the days went by, our hope that it would reappear—misplaced in a pile of clutter—faded and Bob came to terms with the fact that it had likely been stolen. And then, it reappeared in the most unexpected way.

It was the following Monday, October 7, 2013 and it was “cheque day.” Plan B pays out its vendors on the 7th of every month. As a result, it was much busier than the previous Monday. As the day went by, a couple dozen vendors all came in looking for money or to settle accounts. Some stuck around to tidy up their spots, while others took their money and immediately left.

Otherwise, it was a fairly slow day. Bob and I spent most of it sitting around and chatting. Our discussion quickly turned towards the new roller derby/rockabilly clothing shop that was opening across the street. Above the new storefront there were a handful of low-rent apartments. There were quite a few sketchy characters who lived there. Everyone called them “crackheads” and they showed the symptoms of drug abuse when they came into the store (rotting teeth, acne/sores, premature aging, impaired speech and walking/talking fast). I had already started to notice a group of them that would enter the shop throughout the week and ask about prices, go to Bob’s room, linger and never buy anything. Two of them came in that morning: a woman in her 40s and a man in his early 20s. They appeared to be intoxicated. They lingered for a good twenty minutes and then left without buying anything. Everyone suspected that they came to Plan B to steal, but no one had any concrete proof.

By the middle of the afternoon, the same woman in her 40s re-entered the shop and told us she had something special to sell. With the exception of a woman looking at Vagabond

Vintage's clothing, we were alone in the store. The woman opened a grocery bag that she had with her and anxiously removed what it was concealing: Bob's missing monkey skull kapala.

"This is my husband's. He is native and uses this for traditional rituals. I need \$100 for it," she said.

Bob played it cool. He picked up the skull and quickly hid it behind the counter without saying anything. She looked bewildered. Bob then looked at me and gave me a dumbfounded stare. He grabbed the cordless phone off the back of the wall and grimaced at the perpetrator. I noticed the young woman who had been browsing the clothing standing in line, holding a sweater that she was waiting to pay for, but keeping her distance. She said nothing, but listened intently and stared at the perpetrator. I assumed that she had already figured out that something was up.

"The funny thing," Bob said, "is that this skull was stolen from me, right off this counter, last week."

"It's not stolen: It's my husband's native relic," she responded, unconvincingly.

"There are two ways that this can go down. I can call the cops," he started, looking at me as I nodded in agreement. "I think I should call the cops, or you can leave it with me and get out," Bob's voice was serious and forceful, but he managed to maintain his cool demeanour. The woman knew she was trapped, so she took the easy road. She told Bob to keep it and hurried out of the store. Bob put the phone back on the wall.

The young woman who had been looking at clothing remained discreet, but was obviously paying close attention. She was pretending to finger through clothing that she did not even seem interested in. Bob failed to notice she was even there. He was too ecstatic to notice. He never thought he would see the kapala again. He valued the item as being worth \$700-\$1000.

He had hundreds of dollars invested in it himself and he was devastated when I noticed it missing. Neither of us could believe that the woman would be stupid enough to try to sell it back to the store it was stolen from or claim it was a native artefact (as monkeys are not indigenous to North America). The chances of this happening were slim to none.

Bob then explained that he had not reported it as stolen and was glad that he did not have to call the cops: It would have been a “we said, she said” situation. Yet, there was more to this: He was worried that the police would have confiscated it, considering the skull to be illegal, and possibly charge him too or put him on a list of people who sell exotic animals. Bob had every right to be paranoid. His dealings with antique taxidermy placed him in a grey area and the monkey skull kapala was amongst his more questionable items. Even though it had been damaged during the time it had been missing, he was better off not calling the cops: what if they shut him down? Unfortunately, there was another element to this that Bob had not vocalized (and had perhaps not considered): since the woman was able to flee with impunity, would Plan B now have a reputation as a place where you can steal, get caught and not have to worry about repercussions?

The woman with the sweater interrupted us and told us that she witnessed everything. “I am Inuit and we do not have monkeys in Canada,” she said. She was insulted that the thief had invoked pan-aboriginalism incorrectly in order to try to sell us an item that had been stolen from the shop. Even so, she was happy we got it back. She purchased the sweater, called us “cool guys” and left.

We regaled everyone with the story for the rest of the day. When people questioned it (as Bob is known for pulling peoples’ chains) he asserted, “brian was there!” Customers and vendors alike were in disbelief. When Séb heard the story he immediately took me downstairs to get a

small display case that we spotted when cleaning up on a previous day. “We have to make sure this doesn’t happen again,” he said. Bob, Séb and I cleaned and assembled the case. Afterwards, we put it on the counter to the left of the cash register and placed the kapala inside.

Surprisingly, just before closing time, the man in his early 20s who was with the perpetrator earlier in the day came in with a boxed, antique clothes iron (a small one), asking for \$10. Bob wanted nothing to do with this and told the man to leave. This made the man agitated, but Bob showed him the door.

7.2 The Grey Area of Taxidermy

The legality of taxidermy was one of the things that I found particularly perplexing during my time at Plan B. A handful of vendors sold vintage taxidermy specimens at the shop and another vendor used animal parts (mostly bones and soft tissue harvested from roadkill) to make jewelry. Few of the items on offer at the shop were exotic and the only endangered specimen was a golden eagle that was on display, but not for sale. There were, however, some very old foreign pieces at the store like the monkey skull kapala, as well as a human kapala and a few other pieces that caught me off guard. Like the golden eagle, these more questionable items were mainly on display with no price tags attached.

The buying and selling of vintage taxidermy is not prevalent amongst the used-goods sellers who I encountered in the field, but the practice is firmly situated in the used-goods trade and is a worthwhile foil for exploring how legalist approaches and the Kanbur model apply to the used-goods trade more broadly. Following legalist approaches to informality, the ways that used-goods vendors deal with taxidermy can be analyzed in terms of how complex administrative processes and government bureaucracy can lead to informal practices due to operating formally becoming prohibitive. However, simply saying that complicated or convoluted formal

instruments (such as procuring permits for questionable specimens in this case) will inevitably lead to informality fails to get to the crux of the matter when dealing with specific cases such as this.

This is where the Kanbur model becomes relevant. Kanbur (2009) is clear that researchers should describe exactly what regulations they are concerned with when discussing informality (p. 37). This is because what is formal and what is informal varies dramatically across jurisdictions. As such, regulation and enforcement issues are specific to a given geographic context. Indeed, following Kanbur, dealers have had to adjust their practices depending on the regulations and level of enforcement in place. This is just as true for taxidermy as it is for other regulations that affected the vendors who I met. As certain types of taxidermy are heavily regulated, vendors dealing in stuffed specimens either have to stay within the ambit of regulation and comply or stay within the ambit of regulation and not comply (*ibid.*). As I will show, however, taxidermy laws in Canada are so complex that even diligent vendors had difficulty understanding regulations and complying, even if they wanted to. In this way, the example of taxidermy vending straddles the legalist approach and the Kanbur model. An overview of specific Canadian taxidermy laws and laws that affect the sale of taxidermy indirectly help to demonstrate this.

In Canada, most taxidermy is regulated provincially. Nova Scotia's taxidermy laws are part of the *Wildlife Act* (1989). This act regulates taxidermists, carcass traders and fur traders (as well as hunters). The emphasis of the act is on the raw materials used to make taxidermy. As such, carcass traders, fur and pelt traders and taxidermists require licenses in order to legally ply their trades and must keep detailed records of the items that they buy and sell as part of this industry. There are certain animals that even licensed traders have difficulty dealing in,

particularly certain birds that are described in Section 50 as “Protected Wildlife,” including eagles, osprey, falcons, hawks and owls. It is only legal to own stuffed examples of these birds if the parts are obtained through finding a specimen that has not been poached illegally (such as finding a specimen that has died as a result of natural causes or as roadkill). In such cases, taxidermy examples of these birds are not allowed to be sold and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides permits to owners. The act also makes it illegal to export or import animal parts without a permit (Sections 63 and 64).

A careful reading of Nova Scotia’s *Wildlife Act* (1989) shows that buying and selling antique taxidermy is not illegal per se and there is no mention of any requirement to possess a license or permit in order to engage buy and sell such items within the province. The only exception appears to be in regard to the bird species listed above. This entire act is aimed at protecting living wildlife, not specimens that have already been preserved.

At the federal level, the *Species at Risk Act* (2002) deals with the protection of extirpated, endangered or threatened species in this country. In all cases, killing creatures listed under one of these categories is illegal in Canada. Section 32 (2) is clear that, “No person shall possess, collect, buy, sell or trade an individual of a wildlife species that is listed as an extirpated species, an endangered species or a threatened species, or any part or derivative of such an individual.” Although this is directed towards the prevention of killing living species, the issue of taxidermy is implicit in the phrasing of this subsection of the act. It is difficult to see any room for privately owning a stuffed specimen of a creature so defined.

Beyond this, the government of Canada is a signatory on the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a multilateral treaty that prevents the unethical sale and transportation of endangered and threatened animal

and plant species. There are over 35,000 species protected under CITES, including 5,000 animal species. This treaty is aimed at conservation and a CITES permit is required to bring parts of any species on the CITES list into Canada, under the auspices of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA). However, when dealing with taxidermy that was created prior to 1973, CITES permits are not necessary (at least when dealing within the country).

In terms of human remains, things get a bit more complicated. It is actually not illegal to buy or sell human remains in Canada. This does not mean, however, that Canadians can dig up graves and sell bones for profit! Section 182 (b) of the Criminal Code of Canada is quite clear that anyone who, “indecently interferes with or offers any indignity to a dead human body or human remains, whether buried or not, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.” As such, it is incredibly difficult (and expensive) to source, buy and sell human skeletal remains in Canada. Certainly, provincial regulations about taxidermy apply to the buying and selling of such remains, even if specific provincial acts do not mention human remains explicitly.

In Ontario, a company called the Skull Store specializes in the sale of animal bones and also human skulls. In an interview with Vice News in 2015, the owners of the Skull Store explained that selling human skulls is actually much easier than one might think: humans are the only primates that do not require CITES permits (Heck, 2015, December 2). The owners of the Skull Store have taken advantage of a grey area in the law around buying and selling human remains: they only sell antique specimens that have been sourced from private collections, which were originally procured as medical specimens or ethnographic pieces. Despite the fact that the buying and selling of such remains could technically be considered illegal in terms of Section 182 (b) of the Criminal Code of Canada, there seems to be little appetite by police to chase after

companies like the Skull Store and I have not been able to find a test case in the legal history of this country providing any precedent on the matter.

Legally buying and selling taxidermy and human remains in Canada requires a complex understanding of provincial, federal and international laws regarding specific items that some of the vendors who I met at Plan B have in their inventories. For the most part, the sale of antique taxidermy and even antique human specimens (particularly medical and ethnographic materials) does not go against the letter of the law in Nova Scotia, unless a seller is dealing in endangered or prohibited specimens. As Plan B gained a reputation as one of the “go-to places” in Halifax for taxidermy, it was important for me to gain a better understanding of how the laws work. Even so, I have barely scratched the surface of a complex situation that intersects multiple federal and provincial government departments, as well as international agreements, which have different agendas and things at stake in how they deal with the sale of animal parts.

The theft of the monkey kapala (and the realization that Plan B had human skulls for sale) opened my eyes to the fact that informal economic activities may have been taking place at Plan B in unexpected ways. Some vendors were quite careful with how they dealt with taxidermy and others were more laissez-faire about it. The owner of the golden eagle, a prohibited item in Nova Scotia that is illegal to sell, was adamant that the piece was not for sale and also spent a number of years trying to obtain an ownership permit for it. As an antique specimen, it did not have a permit attributed to it, making its provenance unknown. This is part of the difficulty in dealing in taxidermy legally. In fact, the owner of the golden eagle had purchased it to resell, only learning later that it was illegal to do so. Having made the purchase, this particular vendor’s only legal option was to keep the specimen as a private piece and to attempt to obtain a permit (which was made more difficult by the lack of provenance). Following Kanbur (2009), this particular vendor

decided to stay within the ambit of regulation (p. 37). However, he could just have easily given up in his pursuit to procure permits and sold the piece illegally/informally.

As taxidermy dealers at Plan B have learned more about the laws in Canada and CITES, they have avoided purchasing more questionable pieces. Yet, many (if not most) of the antique specimens that come into the shop do not include documentation due to their age, and attempting to source permits for certain pieces is not easy, leading to the occasional informal transaction. The practice of buying and selling taxidermy is not detached from the formal economy, which is part of the point of looking at this through the lens of the informal economy more generally. Instead, some transactions may be more formal (or official) than others. Since transactions may be simultaneously formal and informal when dealing with taxidermy (for example, the specimen may be legal to sell, but is missing its permit), real world transactions make it difficult to think of such informal activities as occupying a separate sphere of exchange from the formal economy. Following assumptions from the legalist approach, it should not be a surprise that in some cases questionable pieces were purchased and sold outside of the ambit of regulation because of the difficulty in procuring formal permits. However, the convoluted and sometimes competing legislation regarding taxidermy led to this happening unintentionally more often than not. For example, the rules allowing to buy and sell pre-CITES convention specimens do not apply to migratory birds (among other things) and in some cases it was easier to ignore certain competing and conflicting rules. Considering a lack of enforcement regarding the sale of antique taxidermy, and following Kanbur's model, this should not be surprising.

There are also optics involved with buying and selling taxidermy at an antiques store. To the uninitiated, the display and sale of human skulls and certain taxidermy specimens was unsettling and garnered questions and concerns from both customers and other vendors. One

vendor in particular thought that displaying the human kapala was a potential Pandora's Box for the shop because of the possibility that some government agency might confiscate it or shut Plan B down. This never did occur and the vendors selling taxidermy were adamant that they were doing things correctly. Yet, when the monkey skull kapala was stolen Bob did not call police to report the theft because he did not want to have to deal with law enforcement officials confiscating goods that he owned legally because they did not understand the law. Indeed, this is something implicit in legalist approaches to informality: the benefits of staying off the radar of the police (and potentially having to deal with uneven and perhaps ignorant enforcement regimes) outweighed the cost of losing this prized specimen. Bob was lucky that he managed to get the monkey skull kapala back and was just as lucky that he did not have to get the police involved.

7.3 The Fear of Theft and Purchasing Stolen Goods

Although the missing monkey kapala is something of a special case, broadly speaking, theft problems at Plan B were rampant during my time in the field and continued after I left. In certain respects, this problem was as much psychological as it was based in reality. For the core vendors, issues of theft were minimal, though everyone had items stolen from time to time. One of the most difficult things to deal with regarding theft was that peripheral vendors who only came into the shop once or twice a month would automatically assume theft if something was missing and directed their anger and hostility towards Sean, Alex, KT or Bob, blaming them for not paying enough attention. More often than not, however, the missing item had merely been misplaced by clients who had picked up something in one part of the store, decided not to purchase it and then left it somewhere else in the shop. One vendor called this the "Walmart mentality," referring to how shoppers will move things around in shops without considering the

consequences. Some vendors tried to educate clients about this as a preventative measure, but this was futile. Since none of the volunteers who operated the shop saw it as their responsibility to clean up other peoples' spaces and search for misplaced items, there was a disconnect between peripheral vendors and core vendors (who complained that the peripheral sellers had no one to blame but themselves for not being more involved in the curation of their own spaces).

Theft was hard to quantify in a context where stuff was constantly being misplaced, but it did happen. Clothing theft is a prime example. Every morning I would go into the change room and find multiple empty clothes hangers. I long suspected that people were stealing clothing from the shop, but was never able to prove it beyond the daily appearance of empty clothes hangers. Some of the vendors assumed that people were again engaging in the Walmart mentality, merely leaving empty clothes hangers in the change room after deciding to purchase something, instead of bringing it to the front counter with their purchase. I suspect that the reality of this involved a combination of both things.

The problem with footwear theft was much more concrete. Every summer, young transient men and women travel across Canada looking to busk or panhandle. I often witnessed these "crust punks" (as vendors liked to call them) enter Plan B wearing shoes that were falling apart. At least once a week during the summer, a clothing vendor would complain that a pair of shoes or boots was missing and would ask why a pair of destroyed footwear was in the space where their missing footwear had been. It did not take long to figure out that some of these travellers were switching out their old shoes and stealing new ones when they were in the shop.

There was another problem: the fear that people were selling stolen goods to the shop. This did not happen often, but it did occur. There was one vendor in particular who did not seem concerned about whether or not the items purchased were possibly stolen. This became apparent

because of this particular vendor's occasional dealings with an individual who boasted about being a drug dealer. It appeared that this person was trading drugs for items that may or may not have been stolen and then would bring these goods to various shops around the HRM to sell for cash. When asked, the vendor informed me that the possibility that the items were stolen did not matter. This only became an issue if the seller boasted or admitted that the items had been stolen (which had never happened). This vendor's "don't ask, don't tell" attitude towards the possibility of purchasing, possessing and reselling stolen goods was not shared by other cooperative vendors. The specific vendor in question left the cooperative while I was still in the field.

Generally, the accidental purchasing and possession of stolen goods was only a problem for a handful of the larger vendors. Most of the cooperative vendors did not rely on daily buying, selling and trading of used goods. This was due to many factors, but often came down to fit. If the person running the store one day was a book vendor and someone entered the shop trying to sell a collection of records there was usually no deal made: the book vendor was not interested in records and the seller would either have to leave his or her stuff for another vendor to look at or come back later.

Amongst core vendors, only Bob, Sean and Séb regularly bought or traded for items that people brought into the shop. When Bob was not involved in film industry jobs, he spent most of his time at the shop. Since Bob tended to be at the shop more often than anyone else, this increased the potential for Bob to be duped into buying a stolen item. Though rare, the way that Bob would find himself in such a situation generally went something like this: an unknown or relatively unknown person entered the shop to sell some kind of collectible. Bob examined it, appraised it and declined or made an offer. If an offer was made, the buyer usually took it or tried to negotiate for a higher price. Some people walked away from a deal, but someone who

was trying to sell a stolen item would almost always take the money. The only way that this became an example of purchasing stolen goods was when, a short time later a customer entered the shop and described a missing item. Bob's unspoken policy in such situations was to always give the item back to a person who came in claiming it was stolen (especially if the victim could describe it and it was not in sight). This was easier than getting the cops involved. Bob would take the loss, but maintain the shop's good reputation. The next time that the seller of the stolen item entered the shop, Bob would ban that person then and there.

Following assumptions found in the legalist approach to informal economies, this was an easy way to avoid the costs of calling the police and becoming embroiled in a situation where the item in question would be confiscated and both the purchaser of the item and the victim were left without the item in question and facing bureaucratic hurdles that benefitted neither party. Cooperative members did not want a steady stream of police officers entering the shop and were eager to avoid government officials in general: police officers, bylaw officials and bureaucrats were almost always a disruptive presence that hindered business.

Of course, being duped is not fun. There is a monetary loss, as well as the gut-punch feeling that comes with having one's trust violated. There are warning signs, though, that led to vendors declining transactions. The first was price. When someone asked for \$10 every time that he or she entered the shop to sell something, it became obvious that the \$10 was needed for something specific. There were a handful of people who would come into the shop every few days looking to sell whatever they had for \$10. Why \$10? Well, \$10 seemed to be the magic number for whatever drug such individuals intended to purchase. I can say this with some certainty because the building across the street had an incredible amount of traffic. I would see people coming and going from the building on a regular basis and would often see people sell an

item to the shop and then immediately enter the building across the street. Store regulars and vendors called it the “crack house” or “meth house.” The city started to field complaints and, on October 30, 2014, declared the building unsafe and evicted the tenants (CBC News, 2014, October 30). For the people who were evicted, this must have been extremely difficult, but the sentiment on the street was that it was about time that the city did something. Years later, the building is still empty, the city’s locks are still on the doors and the exterior has continued to decay.

One Friday in the middle of October, 2013, I came face to face with this reality. Bob had taken the day off. Alex was running the store instead and KT was in the back working on setting up the café. As we were hanging out behind the counter, a woman walked in and asked to put a poster on the community board by the front entrance. She noticed a camera on the counter, which she said was stolen from Scotia Square. There had been a NSCAD student art installation with old cameras, a typewriter and some other stuff on display at the mall that went missing a week earlier. She said it belonged to a man in her class. This same man walked into the shop as we discussed the incident. After making some phone calls, we returned the camera to the victims.

They informed me that their professor was very upset. Upon checking my field notes, I was able to pinpoint when the purchase happened. The camera had been purchased from a sketchy couple who we were convinced were drugs addicts from across the street and who were associated with the people who tried to sell us the stolen monkey kapala. Plan B did not purchase the rest of the stuff that they tried to sell because another camera and a typewriter were broken. I took note of the fact that the camera we gave back to the student was an Art Deco style Sears Roebuck Tower. After the incident, the culprits who sold Plan B the stolen camera were banned from the store. The police were not involved.

This is a textbook example of how Plan B vendors dealt with accusations of possession of stolen goods: they were duped into buying them; someone came in looking for said stolen item(s); the item(s) would be returned; and the culprit was immediately banned from the shop. The police were not called because they were seen as being a potentially disruptive presence. The vendor who was duped had to suck up the financial loss as a form of “shrinkage” (a business term for lost, stolen or damaged inventory) and would attempt to be more cautious when making subsequent deals.

7.4 Anthropologist or Tax Spy?

One of the things that I have come to appreciate through conducting fieldwork is that people are willing to talk about almost anything as long as they have nothing to hide. Yet, when people do have something to hide—or think they do, even if their concerns are not warranted—they will tend to stop talking. As I learned in the early months of conducting fieldwork, only a handful of Harbourview vendors had registered businesses and remitted GST/HST on their sales. These people were happy to talk about their businesses, but almost everyone else answered my questions cautiously.

Over time, I was able to tease out information by asking questions like, “How did you do today?” or “How were sales this weekend?” Some people would respond with unquantifiable adjectives like “good” or “bad,” but others would tell me their sales numbers or give me a ballpark figure, especially as the months went on and people came to trust me more with this confidential information. At all times, I was aware of the possibility that some people were not providing me with their true numbers and I could not take what they said at face-value. As such, the information that I was able to uncover is not quantifiable. Nevertheless, determining whether or not people were being honest with me required detective work and I came up with a handful

of strategies to determine whether or not the vendors who did not want to talk to me were actually making large amounts of money.

One of the first things that I checked was whether or not the Harbourview itself was registered properly and had been paying its taxes. A quick search of Nova Scotia's Registry of Joint Stocks showed that it was. Paul's business was completely above board. Knowing this, I started to pay closer attention to the number of people who would come through the doors on any given day. Entry into the market at the time cost one dollar per person.⁴⁶ Many of the same customers entering the market from week to week were looking to spend money on specific types of collectibles, but there were also just as many small families who would come into the market looking to save money on household items, as well as seniors who were seeking a social outing.

The same person took money at the doors every weekend during my fieldwork period and was always willing to tell me the headcount for the day. The market averaged five hundred customers per day during my fieldwork period. The door fee enabled Paul to cover part of his monthly rent for the building, while vendor stall rents paid the difference. Paul also rented parking spaces to local workers during the week as part of his wider subsistence strategy. Crunching the numbers, it became clear to me that Paul was struggling to make ends meet.

And this is the thing. Considering the number of people who entered the market every week and comparing this with the sales numbers that some vendors provided me, I quickly came to realize that most of the vendors at the market were not making a lot of money either. Certainly, someone might have windfall on one particular weekend, but on average, most vendors were not making enough per week to justify registering their businesses. There were a

⁴⁶ The door fee has since increased to \$2 per person, as of 2016.

few people making “big money” on a consistent basis, but most people were earning a pittance. Few vendors were generating the \$30,000 revenue per year needed to require them to register their operations as formal businesses. For such individuals, all that it would take to be tax compliant would be to declare their earnings as income at tax time. Nevertheless, some small-scale vendors continued to be suspicious of my presence at the market.

The following vignette will help to illuminate this. In my first few weeks at the market, I met two vendors who I really liked. They worked together in an employee/employer relationship with an eclectic inventory, but didn’t seem to sell a lot of stuff. As I got to know them a bit better, I found that one was very open with me, while the other always had his guard up and would make cautious comments about certain practices that they were engaged in when I was around. Did he have something to hide?

On a Saturday morning in early April, this vendor approached me and asked me if I knew how to remove a cork that had gotten completely stuck inside of a jug. He assumed that I must be smart enough to solve the problem because I had taught at a couple of universities. I was completely at a loss about how to remove it myself. I spent nearly an hour trying to dislodge it with my pocket knife, but this was a fool’s errand. I promised him that I would do some research and try to come up with a solution.

That evening I Googled how to remove corks from the inside of bottles and found a solution on YouTube that I thought was bizarre. The video showed a person stuffing a plastic grocery bag into a bottle, blowing air into the bag and then wrenching on the bag with great force. The result was that removing the plastic bag filled with air created enough force that the cork shot out of the bottle like a bullet. I was concerned that this was some sort of trick and that I would embarrass myself, but I figured it was worth trying.

The following day, I met up with the two vendors and proposed this solution. Both thought that it was as ludicrous as I did, but decided to go along with it. One found me a plastic bag and I inserted it into the jug before blowing it up. On my first attempt, the bag popped loudly like a balloon and all that I accomplished was startling surrounding vendors. The two vendors I was trying to help laughed at me, but I decided to try again. The vendor who had been cold with me watched in great anticipation, expecting me to fail, with an “I told you so” look in his eyes. The other vendor had already lost interest and had gone off to work on something else, as he sat in his chair in the corner of their stall. I reamed as hard as I could the second time around and rather than hearing the bag pop, we watched in amazement as the cork flew like a bullet by the head of the vendor who had lost interest. “Holy shit!” he exclaimed, as he jumped out of his chair. The cork had missed him by inches, which was a lucky break for me (and him, as he almost certainly would have been injured). The cork ended up flying behind some of the space’s fixtures and we did not find it again for weeks. Even so, my solution had worked. Both men were impressed and the vendor who had his guard up around me shook my hand. In a matter of minutes, I had provided him with a neat trick to remove corks from bottles and also proved that I was a man of my word. After this, he completely dropped his guard around me and seemed generally happy when I offered him help. He became more inquisitive about my research project and started to ask me questions about it.

Towards the end of April, this same vendor took me aside. Prior to the finding the cork solution, I had started handing out business cards that briefly explained my research project and goals. I had hoped that these cards would help vendors understand my presence a bit better. He only looked at my card after I had removed the cork from the jug. He told me that until then, he had no respect for me. After he read my business card and chatted with me a bit more about what

I was doing, he changed his opinion. He told me that when I first started coming around and asking questions, he thought I was either a weirdo or a tax spy. He had assumed that I had some sort of insidious agenda.

As he explained all of this to me, I came to a greater understanding of some of the difficulties that I had been facing in building rapport. Some people thought that my research could harm them or the market. I did not know he felt this way and was glad he told me so. I thought he liked me long before this. Instead, he was keeping up with appearances, as he had not showed me any animosity, only distance.

As the months went by, people became more comfortable with me being around and other vendors expressed similar reservations to me. As I learned, some people did have legitimate reasons to be cautious around me, but most did not. I did uncover evidence that certain vendors were not declaring their income and were worried that they might get in trouble if they were seen selling at the market by the wrong people. Yet, the reality was that most people had nothing to hide. Instead, my line of questioning had made people think that I was up to no good.

In my overview of information search and bargaining in Chapter 3.1.1, I begin with a discussion of how, according to Appadurai (1986), commodities are embedded in social relations (p. 3) and that documenting the micro-level interactions of bargaining and the search for commodity price and quality information has been the most common approach for analyzing embeddedness at weekly and periodic markets (see Alexander and Alexander, 1987; and Geertz, 1978). In this discussion, I note that Geertz positions information search at bazaars as the primary factor for generating and maintaining social relationships: a lack of information can lead to buyers and sellers making poor choices regarding quality and pricing (p. 28). For this reason,

market participants utilise elaborate social networks that are oriented around the search for (and protection of) knowledge about goods and prices (*ibid.*).

Much of this literature focuses on how searching for information leads to bargaining between vendors and clients (who are in direct competition with each other when they haggle) and how successful bargaining strategies can lead to the clientelization of repeat customers. But, as I spent more time at the Harbourview, I came to realize that the protection of information is just as significant as the search for information, particularly when it comes to relationships between vendors in a competitive environment. Any particular vendor's weekly sales, procurement strategies and dealings with customers were closely guarded secrets that were only discussed with trusted associates. Guarding such secrets could give a particular vendor an edge over their direct competitors, while allowing such information to flow freely could have negative consequences. Hence, information was not only sought in the quest for clientelization and haggling regarding individual items for sale. It was also protected for the long-term viability of one's own market endeavours more generally. As such, my poking and prodding about such secrets was met with great caution. At best, I might keep this information to myself, but I could potentially jeopardize the protection of the information. Trust is something that is earned and as I played cards or assisted vendors in helpful ways (like finding a way to remove corks stuck inside bottles), preconceived misgivings directed towards me gradually began to erode.

However, asking vendors about their sales and procurement strategies continued to be tricky, even as I built rapport. People at the market did not want others to know that they were either making a lot of money, or not making enough to get by. In a competitive environment, these are closely guarded secrets because revealing this information can lead to competitive disadvantages. If everyone knew that you were broke then they would be less inclined to try to

sell you things for your inventory because your competitor might be able to offer more for the same thing. Likewise, if you had a reputation for being broke, people would assume that you were desperate and would offer you well below market value for the things you had for sale. At the same time, if everyone thought that you were rich then people would start to try to take more and more from you.

These are just a few examples of how letting information slip can have unintended consequences for vendors in a competitive environment. In reality, these are as much issues of impression management as they are information protection. As I came to learn, vendors would happily exchange their sales data with people who were part of their clique because they did not have to worry about this information being transmitted to their competitors: clique members were often trusted confidants. As I was not part of any such clique, people were much less willing to provide me with this information, out of fear that I was not trustworthy enough to be privy to such high-stakes knowledge. Eventually, I was able to gain a reputation for keeping information confidential, but this took months.

Yet, my research focused on informal economic practices and I unintentionally summoned the CRA boogeyman in the minds of several vendors. I came to realize that providing me with information about informal practices could be dangerous for certain vendors and that a lack of trust was quite common at the Harbourview when it came to economic information. I did not have similar problems at Plan B. Due to the cooperative nature of the shop, core vendors tended to be free with their information. Whether they were operating registered businesses or not (or even needed to), vendors were usually open to discussing this with me and other vendors. Core vendors relied on each other getting involved (to some extent) with each other's operations through the exchange of knowledge and ideas in order to become more successful in their

endeavours. As a result, I often found myself more involved in Plan B vendor's businesses than I initially expected. Unfortunately, some of these endeavours failed rather quickly, which I will return to in the next section of this chapter.

A lack of trust in the dissemination of information at the Harbourview regarding informal economic practices is, in my opinion, a reasonable explanation for my inability to receive clear and transparent answers from market vendors. This seems especially true when comparing these reactions to my questions at Plan B. However, I do not see this as the complete answer and it is worth delving a bit into expectations found in certain strands of the informal economy literature to consider other explanations.

One of the things that stands out amongst vendors at both sites is that the majority of them were moonlighters, who had formal day jobs. These moonlighters used the market or the shop as a secondary income source and many of them treated their used goods vending as a hobby. Very few of the vendors who I encountered at each site operated registered businesses or were planning to formalize their activities with the goal of their businesses becoming their primary source of income. Moonlighters and formal (or formalizing) businesses at the market had in common that they were operating by choice as either a form of exit from the formal economy (amongst those informal vendors who used the market as a way to build a business as a primary income source), or as a supplement to the formal economy (amongst moonlighters). That said, there were a small number of vendors who found themselves at the market because of an inability to find work in the formal economy or because they were no longer able to work in the formal economy (such as those who were receiving disability payments). This very small number of vendors may be thought of as experiencing exclusion in the way that Perry et al. (2007) describe.

There are a couple of ways that this kind of exclusion can be interpreted. One would be to assume, following the World Bank Latin America model, that this subset of informal entrepreneurs was forced to work informally as a result of being excluded from formal employment. For the people receiving disability benefits, this explanation does not hold: like the pensioners who vended at the market these individuals were receiving benefits that they had accrued through their work in the formal economy. Such individuals were not excluded from the formal economy because of a lack of opportunity, but due to specific ailments that prevented them from being able to work. In cases like this, the exclusion is not the same kind of exclusion that one finds in the informal economy literature stemming from research in the Global South. Instead, these vendors were more like moonlighters insofar as they were receiving income formally and were using their vending practices as a second revenue stream.

The small number of vendors who relied on their market activities as primary sources of income, but who were not attempting to formalize are a different case. Some of these vendors opined that they were unable to find meaningful work in the formal economy. For some this was due to a lack of skills or education leading to few options outside of working in retail or the service industry, while for one or two others this might be due to having criminal backgrounds that made finding formal work difficult. Language barriers did not seem to be an issue for any of the vendors who I met, as even the few immigrant vendors who I encountered tended to have formal day jobs (or spouses who did). With all of this in mind, one way that this can be interpreted is through Standing's (2011; 2014; and 2015) concept of the precariat underclass. However, I do not see this as a great fit: even though this small subset of vendors may have a marginal work status in the formal economy, they have taken it upon themselves to become informal entrepreneurs in a situation where there are few benefits for them in seeking formal

employment. Despite being excluded from the formal economy in a way that might lead them to becoming precariatized, these vendors had taken a different path by attempting to become self-employed (rather than choosing to be underemployed and leaving their work destinies in the hands of employers who may seek to exploit them). Of course, this solution to avoiding precarity was not exclusive to Harbourview vendors. Indeed, I also identified similar practices at Plan B. This does not disprove the potential utility of the precariat concept, but it does suggest that—at least at my research sites—the selling practices of vendors prevents precariatization.

7.5 The Rise and Fall of Café B.R.E.A.M.

At twenty years old, KT Habits was the youngest of the core vendors at Plan B. She was a streetwise, tough-as-nails woman who had grown up in poverty and learned how to get by on the streets of Vancouver, BC. She came from nothing and expected nothing. She worked as a custodian at a large apartment complex on the weekends and struggled to make ends meet. She started at Plan B by selling jewelry that she made from upcycling other people's unwanted things and quickly started running the store on Mondays. She had been at the cooperative for around a year before I showed up. She lived at the "punk house" (as they called it) with a dozen other young men and women who were struggling to get by and found solidarity with each other through their punk, goth and alt-rock lifestyles. Many of her housemates were vendors at Plan B and those who did not sell at the shop were frequent customers.

KT was the personification of the type of clientele that Plan B catered to at the time. Covered with tattoos and donning a different off-the-wall hair colour every few weeks, KT looked like Plan B and, at least for a time, was the glue that held Plan B together. I personally felt that Plan B could not function without her. In the end, I was wrong.

Since its early days, Plan B has attempted to operate a café at the back of the store. The first person who operated the café did so for over a year before deciding to leave the space due to a lack of revenue. Shortly thereafter, local celebrity Bill Wood (the comedian and stage magician from the comedy act Picnicface) took over the café and reopened it as the C Café in June, 2013 (Hiltz, 2013, June 26). Wood gained some publicity for opening the café, but due to his commitments with other projects had to abandon the café after only a couple of months. By the time that I started conducting research at the shop in September, 2013, a young couple had taken over the operation of the space. This was short-lived, as when the couple broke up in early September, they too abandoned the space.

With a gaping hole in potential shop rent and the desire to maintain a café on the street, Bob and KT agreed on a plan for her to take over the café space. Despite her lack of knowledge about operating a café, this seemed like a wonderful idea at the time. KT quickly started working on reopening the space and by the beginning of October was serving coffee. She was nervous about failing, but excited about the potential that running her own business had. She quickly announced that her new café would be called Café B.R.E.A.M.⁴⁷

It was not long before KT assembled a diverse group of three friends/housemates who would help her run the café, but she quickly ran into some barricades: she did not have any capital, needed to obtain a food handling permit for herself and her staff, needed to apply for a business license and was forced to only serve coffee and pre-packaged items (like soda) until the license was acquired. I do not think that she realized, at first, that obtaining the necessary

⁴⁷ An acronym for “bitches rule everything around me,” which is a play on the Wu-Tang Clan song *C.R.E.A.M.* (which is an acronym for “cash rules everything around me”). The name was an in-joke for her and some of her friends and she was adamant people who were not in on the joke were told that the acronym stood for “bread rules everything around me.”

licenses and permits would take time. So, she (or one of her friends) showed up every day and made coffee, put their sandwich board with the café name on it outside on the sidewalk and watched the time fly by without making any money or generating a loyal clientele. As the weeks rolled on, potential food buyers all but disappeared, presumably taking their business to different venues. The café at Plan B started to feel like a distant memory.

When KT learned that it would cost over \$100 for all four of them to take the food handling course together and that the course would not be offered until the end of October, she managed to obtain the money from a group looking to help young entrepreneurs (I never learned who). She decided that she would try to raise money and keep people interested in the forthcoming café by serving coffee and tea at Plan B's after-hours events. This, at least, gave people the impression that something was on the way and helped to pay for the costs of her products.

The thing that most people who witnessed KT's attempt at opening her café do not realize is that she barely had enough money to pay her bills at home. Her income from her custodial job was minimal and she did not make much at Plan B either. For her, Plan B was not about making tons of money. Instead, she saw it as a social enterprise that would enable her and her friends to try new things and have a safe, cool place to hang out at. Her crew of mostly impoverished LGBTQ+ individuals was concerned about the gentrification happening on the street and did not want to be left behind or pushed out. In the many conversations that we had, she expressed to me her desire to stay with Plan B forever, but whenever we talked about such scenarios she worried whether she was on solid footing at the shop.

KT did not receive the food handling permits until the middle of November and then learned that she was not legally allowed to open the café until the health inspector had given it a

stamp of approval. She beamed with pride as she hung up all four food handling permits on the wall in the back of her café on November 13, 2013. Things were starting to come together.

At first it seemed like she would have to wait a couple of weeks for the health inspector to come. But, the health inspector did not come. KT would call and leave a message, but not hear back. By the time she did hear back, the health inspector's office told her that she would have to wait until January because of how backed up they were due to employee vacations over the Christmas holiday. This devastated her. The café trudged along serving coffee and tea, but by this point the dream of opening the café was starting to seem more like a nuisance. By December, no one was coming in off the street asking about the café reopening anymore. Nearly three months had passed since the last iteration had closed and the once loyal clientele had found other places to eat. As the days went by she looked more and more discouraged. By Christmas, KT had run out of projects and was just waiting for the health inspector to come. And she kept waiting and waiting.

On January 13, 2014, the health inspector finally appeared, two months to the day from when KT received her food handling permits! KT was sick and was at home in bed when the man strolled in to Plan B. At first, I felt panicked by this apparent poor timing and since Sean was the only other person present, it became my responsibility to show the health inspector around. My panic was mitigated when he explained to me that KT did not have to be present for the inspection. The inspector checked the water temperature and the fridge temperature and asked for my signature before signing off and giving his stamp of approval. He was in and out of Plan B in ten minutes. KT waited two months for the government to send someone to check a couple of temperatures. I was dumbfounded. That was it? KT's life had essentially been on hold

for two months when the café finally opened on January 20, 2014. Yet, even then, things were rocky from the get-go.

Finally, KT was able to get to work, but her lack of starting capital quickly became insurmountable and the choice of menu was unsustainable. KT decided on serving a mostly vegan menu, but this was not well received. The pace of sales was so slow that the ingredients that she purchased ended up going bad before they could be used. As she faced a cash shortfall, her enthusiasm quickly depleted. Within a month she ceased serving most of the items on her menu, but continued to dabble with sandwiches. She started staying up all night baking cakes and other sweets in order to try to drum up interest, but most days she would not even sell a slice of cake and she found herself giving the baked goods away or eating them herself before they went stale. It seemed like the only people coming into the café were shop vendors and, even then, they tended to only purchase coffee. It was not long before the coffee makers started to malfunction too and KT did not have the money necessary to purchase a new commercial coffee maker. As a last-ditch effort, KT started trying to sell things like candy and chocolate bars through the café, but whenever she was not looking, the bars and candy would be stolen. When I stopped going to Plan B on a daily basis at the end of January, 2014, Café B.R.E.A.M. was essentially defunct.

After months of KT not being able to pay rent and making little headway in building the café, Bob officially closed the café at the end of February. When she found out she was losing the café, KT took her jewelry off the shelf, left the co-op and did not come back. Almost immediately, Bob started advertising that the space was available for rent. Despite twenty applicants in the first few days, he could not find the right fit and the café went fallow once again.

There are many reasons why Café B.R.E.A.M. failed. KT's lack of experience running a business (despite operating Plan B as a volunteer) made things difficult at first and her lack of economic capital was a major hurdle. Some vendors blamed her menu and the emphasis on vegan menu items, which may have turned off some customers. This was compounded by the increased competition on the street for food, as a couple of other cafés and restaurants opened on Gottingen Street around the same time.

Certainly, all of these things contributed to the failure of the café, but the one thing that really hurt KT was her attempt to do things formally. Indeed, the failure of Café B.R.E.A.M. is prime an example of the types of barriers that are anticipated when one subscribes to the legalist approach to interpreting informality. For KT, lengthy registration processes, complex administrative steps and economic costs associated with operating legally/formally became prohibitive. This was made almost absurd by the lengthy delays she faced when attempting to deal with the health inspector who spent only a few minutes in her place of business before giving it a formal stamp of approval.

The hurdles that KT faced in terms of obtaining food handling permits and then getting the go-ahead from the health inspector led to a certain amount of malaise that she was never able to shake. The fact that it took two months from the time that KT received her food handling permits for the health inspector to come into Plan B points to structural problems with how bylaw officials treat new businesses in the HRM. The delay in gaining approval from the health inspector was not KT's fault and set her up for failure. As she waited for the health inspector, KT turned away interested clients who had developed goodwill with the shop through the previous incarnations of the café. As time went on, these people went elsewhere and once they had been

clientelized by the other cafés and restaurants on the street, they did not come back. By trying to do things by the book (or in Kanbur's (2009) model, following the ambit of regulation), KT was let down by the City. Yet, this does not mean that KT used this downtime to the best of her ability. Early on, she spent this time finding projects to complete, but as November turned into December and then into January, she spent more and more time sitting around waiting for the health inspector to arrive, when she could have been doing other things. Her café was broken before it ever opened.

By April, KT and most of the other residents of the punk house decided that it was time to move on from Halifax. Several of them packed up their stuff and headed for Toronto. KT made one last stop at Plan B in April before she left, giving Bob and Sean some leftover stuff to sell that she could not take with her. David and Britt started running the shop on Mondays. Bob continued to search for a new person to operate the café, but never did find someone who he thought would work out. By the time I had officially left the field in August, 2014, the café space had been turned into a storage area. I only saw KT a few times after the café was dissolved and even during our last meeting, I felt like she really didn't want to leave. But she did. Eventually, the teal color of the café was painted over and the few remnants of KT's previous omnipresence at the shop disappeared. Such is the transitory nature of Plan B vendors.

Months later, those of us who still remained were faced with a certain amount of irony when we learned that no single incarnation of the café had ever operated legally. Plan B was missing a necessary permit to operate a café at the space. However, no one was aware of this and not even the health inspector indicated that the shop required an "assembly" permit.⁴⁸ As such, every version of the café that had ever existed at Plan B had operated informally. Ultimately, KT

⁴⁸ "Assembly" is what the HRM calls restaurants and cafés when issuing permits.

could have operated this way without anyone ever knowing. If she had opted to merely skirt regulations she probably would have gotten away with it, just like all the other cafés that had preceded her.

This is where the Kanbur (2009) model becomes particularly important for interpreting the practices of vendors such as KT. She attempted to comply with the ambit of regulation, when she may have been better off avoiding compliance in the first place (and asking for forgiveness later, if necessary). This has to do with the lack of enforcement of certain regulations that enabled previous incarnations of the café to operate informally in the first place. Government departments responsible for verifying that the café had the proper assembly permit had never done so and it is also possible that the health inspector would not have had the new café on its radar either, assuming that KT was part of a previous iteration rather than a new business. This is the value of the Kanbur model: Kanbur emphasizes how the relationship between regulation and enforcement is necessary for interpreting the nature of formality and informality (p. 38). In this case, a lack of enforcement by one government agency (the body issuing assembly permits) led KT to think that she was operating formally when in reality she was not.

At the same time, a lack of timely action by a different government body (the health inspector) prevented KT from opening her business for several months as she attempted to operate formally (even though she was already operating informally, unaware). Combining this with a legalist approach helps to explain KT's failure: the health inspector did not check to see if the proper permits were even in place and the convoluted bureaucracy contributed to the business's demise. Even though KT may not have succeeded if the regulatory situation was simplified, it is hard to argue against the convoluted bureaucracy playing a role in her failure. In fact, no one even knew about the assembly permit until KT had already left Halifax. It is

doubtful that we would have ever learned about this missing permit if not for a building inspector and fire marshal crack down on the shop that began just as I was leaving the field.

7.6 Building Inspector and the Fire Marshal Crack Down on Plan B

In the days after the event at the Halifax Club, I started to plan my departure from full-time fieldwork at Plan B. At the time, the shop volunteers were spread quite thin. I wanted to give something back to the shop and the fact that I would only be conducting research at the Harbourview on weekends enabled me to have more time at my disposal. After some discussion with Bob, Sean and KT, it was decided that I would run Plan B on Wednesdays until the end of August, when I would officially return to Dalhousie to continue my studies and work on the dissertation.

My first day running the shop was on February 5, 2014. I quickly found myself with much greater responsibility. When vendors or clients were upset on Wednesdays, I took the brunt of it. When new potential vendors came to the shop, I had to find spaces for them and enter them into the point of sale (POS) system. When clients called looking for something, I had to find it. When people came to the shop looking to sell things, I had to contact vendors or purchase things on their behalf out of pocket in order to facilitate the business. When police or bylaw officials appeared, I had to deal with them. I also had to arrange events. Within a couple of months Wednesdays became very lucrative for the shop, as I started averaging \$500 in sales each day. The fact that I had spent so much time with all of the vendors, getting to know them and learning about their wares gave me significantly more knowledge about what was for sale in the shop than many of the other core vendors and I also knew where everything was. My presence helped the shop and I felt good about it.

As time went on, I found myself facing the same problems that irritated other volunteers: vendors did not clean up their own messes and the organization of tasks was never clear. Sometimes bills went unpaid or there was not enough money to pay vendors their earnings on time. Documents got lost and notes were not passed on to their intended recipients. Core vendors rarely met to discuss the direction of the shop or to make changes to deal with problems. When they did, decisions were made informally and were non-binding. The core did not get any bigger during the summer and Bob, Sean, David and Britt were often absent when major decisions needed to be made. People who wanted to see major changes, like Séb and Rick, were either unwilling or unavailable to become more involved. Such meetings generally resulted in decisions about re-arranging the space, but little else. Some people thought that Bob had too much power over the space and wanted tasks to be more divided when it came to paying bills, etc., and I could tell that Bob's feelings were hurt by this. The reality was that Bob could only achieve so much alone and he wanted to relinquish some of his responsibilities, but the revolving door of core vendors made this quite risky. Only Bob was invested enough in the shop for it to be his life's work. Vendors wanted changes, but things were at a standstill.

The funny thing about change is that it can come when you least expect it and from sources that one would never think of. I worried that the Canada Revenue Agency or Registry of Joint Stocks might come calling due to late payments, but this was not the case. Instead, different government bodies took aim at the shop, setting in motion deep structural changes at the cooperative that took a year to complete.

Despite Plan B's reputation and success in developing solidarities with other businesses on Gottingen Street, the cooperative had a rocky relationship with one adjacent business. Numerous Plan B vendors complained to me that this other business saw Plan B as competition

(because of the cooperative hosting all-ages music shows, with bands performing weekly).

Rather than having constructive discussions or trying to come to compromises about the use of the space, I witnessed on multiple occasions the manager of the rival business come into the shop, berate Bob and demand that he stop hosting events because they were too loud.

One day in August, the manager of the rival business came into the shop demanding that Plan B cancel a musical performance or else they would call the police, building inspector and fire marshal to shut the shop down. The sad thing was that the band playing at Plan B that evening was also playing at the rival business later the same night. Bob refused to meet these demands and after a heated exchange between the two men, Plan B went ahead with the show. After this, the manager of the rival business stopped coming into the store to complain and we all thought that they had given up.

No one has ever been able to prove that the rival business was behind what happened, but given the timing and the poor relationship between the two businesses and the threats made by the manager, most vendors suspected that what happened next was the result of them following through with their threat.

On August 25, 2014, the fire marshal and building inspector showed up, unannounced, as part of a “routine” checkup. This was highly suspicious. The fire marshal and building inspector wrote up a large list of problems that needed to be corrected. Plan B faced a time-crunch, as the first deadline was in four days. Bob and numerous other vendors spent the remainder of the week obtaining documents and trying to get everything in order, meeting the minimum requirements to keep the cooperative open with little time to spare.

Most of the problems identified on the notice were minor, but cumulatively the solutions would cost money and take time to address. Issues ranged from placement of fire extinguishers

and overloaded power outlets to all of the ceiling tiles needing to be replaced. The biggest problem was that Plan B never received an occupancy permit or assembly permit, meaning that the shop had been operating illegally since the beginning and that despite having the signature of the health inspector, the various incarnations of the café had never been officially permitted by the city.

In terms of the informal economy literature, the sudden appearance of the building inspector and the fire marshal can be interpreted in terms of both the legalist school and the Kanbur (2009) model. Indeed, one of the key points of the legalist approach is that government policies can and do lead to informality (Ferman, Henry and Hoyman, 1987, p. 165). However, in the case of the missing occupancy and assembly permits, Plan B members were caught completely off guard. This was not due to an active attempt to circumvent city bylaws, but was instead the result of none of the members even being aware of the need for such permits in the first place. The fact that the health inspector had signed off on every incarnation of the café without confirming that there was an assembly permit contributed to the shock and bewilderment that was felt by the Plan B members who ended up dealing with the building inspector.

Following the Kanbur (2009) model, this is an example where regulation and enforcement do not align. The cooperative could not afford to move, so procuring an occupancy permit became a priority. The café situation was less of a priority. Nevertheless, the cooperative's options were to abandon using the café space altogether, to continue to use the space without procuring the permit, or to procure the permit and actually operate the café legally/formally. Being on the radar of different agencies responsible for bylaw enforcement left the cooperative with little choice but to procure the permit if they wanted to use the space. Using Kanbur's terminology, Plan B went from staying within the ambit of regulation but not

complying, to staying within the ambit of regulation and complying (p. 37). Indeed, the cooperative opted to address each of the building inspector and fire marshal's list of requirements, but this was a long process that was only initiated just as I was leaving the field.

My final day running the shop was August 27, 2014. In many ways, it was like any other day during my time as a volunteer. I arrived early, cleaned the space, put things away, dealt with customers and booked events. Yet, the spectre of the building inspector weighed heavily on myself and the vendors (Bob, Rick and Alex) who came into the shop early that day in order to work towards complying with the building inspector's demands and to meet with the fire marshal for a proper inspection.

The fire marshal and his assistant arrived at exactly 10 am and I listened intently as Bob showed them around the shop, while the others made themselves look busy. The fire marshal admitted that this was not a routine inspection and that they had come on Monday and today because someone had called to file an official complaint about Plan B hosting events without a proper permit, while also accusing Plan B of serving alcohol.⁴⁹ The former accusation was true, but the latter accusation certainly was not. All of this led credence to the notion that the rival business was actively trying to get Plan B shut down by the city, which Bob, Alex and Rick discussed at length and with furious anger once the inspection was completed.

The inspection ended up taking quite a bit longer than Bob expected, as both the fire marshal and his assistant kept getting distracted by "cool stuff" that they wanted to look at. Bob used this to his advantage, acting quite charming and personable towards the two men. The fire

⁴⁹ I can say with absolute certainty that alcohol was never served to patrons during my time at Plan B.

marshal made a large list of requirements for Plan B to address and set a floating November deadline. After the fire marshal left, Bob, Alex and Rick drove to Truro (which is about an hour away) to re-register the cooperative (as the registration had lapsed), after learning that the building inspector would not accept any of the documents it had requested unless the company had a business number.

In the mid-afternoon, Bob, Rick and Alex returned from Truro. Rick seemed panicked, Alex was paranoid and pessimistic and Bob was acting passive-aggressive. All three men were under an incredible amount of stress and these were the temperaments that resulted from their stress. It turned out that they did not need to go to Truro at all. They merely needed to pay their back-dues to the cooperative board and provide financial information and co-op meeting minutes from the past year. Unfortunately, there was a snag: Even if they were able to submit the documents and payments this week, the board would not be able to process everything until the first week of September. Hence the stress.

As I listened to them argue, I realized that Plan B already had a business number that could be provided to the building inspector. Despite having let the business registration lapse, the business number would still be the same once the cooperative board had received the documents and payments it requested. As I stated this point, a sense of relief came over the three men, as they realized that they had a solution to their most immediate problem. The building inspector did not know that they had let the business registration lapse and if she checked they would, by then, have proof that the back-dues had been paid and were being processed. The tension in the shop started to dissipate. Alex and Rick left and then Bob went to the basement to work on the tasks at hand. I spent the rest of the day puttering.

Around 7 pm, Bob came upstairs to relieve me. I returned the shop key to him as he locked the doors and then I left without any pomp and circumstance. My end at Plan B was not like the anthropological tropes that have become common in ethnographic writing. There was no party, there were no tears, no big hugs and there was no line up of well-wishers who I may not ever see again. It was just me and Bob. I thanked him for the privilege of being able to participate at the shop and to spend the past year following him (and the others) around. As I shook his hand, we became subtly emotional. He stared downwards and said, repeatedly, “It’s been fun. It’s been fun.” Regardless of the significance of the tasks at hand, for the two of us my departure was surreal. Yet, I was not returning to some distant land, just my apartment on the other side of the city. Bob and the others knew how to get in touch with me and that they would see me again.

7.7 Discussion

After I left the field, I had a chance to reflect on the issues facing the cooperative from a distance. In facing these forced regulatory changes, something became altogether clear: what had started off as a “plan B” for the original vendors had really become “plan A” for the current vendors. There was not another contingency plan and making these changes required an assessment of how the business operated. It was a formal business that was skirting some of the rules that formal businesses are supposed to follow and compliance would only now come from necessity in the face of crisis. As I have reflected on this in the years since I left the field, I have come to realize that part of this was growing pains that resulted from trying to formalize. At Plan B, the larger, core vendors had all started small at places like the Harbourview and as they got bigger they had to learn how to navigate the rules and regulations, as well as income and tax

issues, that they had not needed to think about previously. However, as many of them learned, trying to do things formally was not without its pitfalls.

A legalist approach would blame encumbering regulations for the struggles that some vendors faced. What happened to KT is a case in point. The core vendors who stayed with the cooperative or who envisioned opening their own standalone stores continued on the path to formalization. Often formalization resulted from necessity, rather than a desire to formalize. As such, few Plan B vendors went out of their way to create problems for themselves and only procured permits, business registrations and so on, if they thought they were necessary or if a government agency enforced a regulation. No one was actively trying to be informal, but in some cases (like the grey areas of taxidermy) the only way to soldier on was to try to stay within the ambit of regulation while realizing that this might not be possible at every turn. Most people wanted to comply, but sometimes it was too difficult to do so because of convoluted laws and regulations. The fear of doing something incorrectly was best ignored unless bylaw officials showed up and forced some kind of compliance order.

Ultimately, Plan B found itself in a sort of limbo just as I was leaving the field: as a business its legal status was not quite formal and not quite informal. Plan B is a registered business. Despite this, members had let these registrations lapse during the time that I was in the field. Hence, Plan B was a formal operation that had entered non-compliance in terms of its registrations. And, yet, the cooperative had not obtained its occupancy permit for the commercial space it rented, nor had it obtained the assembly permit necessary to open a café. As such, Plan B had been operating informally for several years prior to the building inspector learning about these missing permits.

But, for the various incarnations of café at least, café owners had been granted the proper food handling permits and the signature of the health inspector in order to comply with city requirements. So, we have an example of a series of cafés that were operating somewhere between informality and formality: the cafés were formal enterprises operating informally because of Plan B not having the proper assembly permit to operate a café in the first place.

Beyond this, the cooperative did not charge tax on client purchases and it was up to individual vendors to back the tax off of their sales if they had registered businesses. This was a clever way for registered businesses and non-registered businesses to operate together: without having a tax number, non-registered businesses in the cooperative were not supposed to charge tax. But, this strategy only worked because of the shop being a registered cooperative. Had it been an antique group shop, tax would have had to have been charged and remitted on every sale. Ultimately, this arrangement acted as an unintentional shield for vendors not in compliance with tax regulations, as they were not charging tax fraudulently while operating informally.

For some vendors, joining the formal economy was a hurdle or hindrance that could potentially ruin years' worth of work, as the fear of paying back taxes was a real concern. For others, such as KT and her Café B.R.E.A.M., trying to do things above board led to waiting for months for permissions and played a role in the failure of her enterprise. However, for those who were completely compliant, such as Séb, there was no question that they were doing the right thing for themselves: they did not have to worry about such repercussions for their own businesses. As the proprietor of a registered business, Séb was at an advantage when it came to purchasing items at his favourite haunts (such as auctions) because of the fact that the tax he paid on acquisitions was a legitimate business expense (which was not true for all auction goers or even his colleagues at the shop). I will return to this issue in more detail in Chapter 8.1 and 8.2.

Although I have not profiled the Harbourview to a great extent in this chapter (barring the story of one vendor assuming that I was a tax spy), similar complexities can also be identified at the weekend market. Some vendors operated registered businesses, but many did not because of their particular aspirations. Like Plan B, the Harbourview is a registered business that houses formal and informal businesses under one roof. The major difference between the market and the shop is that the former is a competitive environment, while the latter is a cooperative one. Issues of taxation and taking advantage of loopholes or shortcomings (stemming from government regulations and even market rules) are part of the convergence of formal and informal activities at the site. I will spend much more time discussing Harbourview vendors in Chapter 8.

Plan B managed to obtain the occupancy permit quickly and members went about making sure that other permits were in place. By the summer of 2015, everything had been solved. Plan B had an accountant, the ceiling tiles had been replaced and the business had addressed every aspect of the compliance order. Bob decided that he wanted to take another, final, shot at opening a café and decided to do it himself, obtaining the proper assembly permits and doing everything “by the book.” Formal vendor meetings started to happen more regularly and by the fall of 2015, core vendors decided to re-design the space, removing the window display, painting and completely redesigning the interior. By the beginning of 2016, the new café was open and Plan B had a new image. The core group had grown and Plan B was stronger than it had been in a very long time. In the end, whoever called the building inspector and fire marshal did the cooperative a favour: it forced people to change and to take control of their own destinies and futures in the face of adversity. The cooperative prevailed.

CHAPTER 8: MAKING A LIVING (OR NOT)

There were numerous motivations for selling at each research site. Some vendors relied on these marketplaces for social interaction, while many other vendors were moonlighting from their day jobs in order to supplement their incomes. At Plan B, fledgling artists and crafters took advantage of the inexpensive rent in order to attract interest in their pieces. Yet, there were several larger vendors (many of whom operated registered businesses) who relied on their vending as their primary source of income.

Vendors relied on various procurement strategies as part of their economic practices. In Chapter 4, I profiled several of the potential avenues for procurement that are part of the broader second-cycle economy, including scavenging and garbage picking, garage sales and street vending. As I learned in the field, numerous vendors relied on some of these avenues as part of their broader procurement strategies. However, the scope and scale of these practices is beyond what I could possibly do justice to in this dissertation. For this reason, I will mention a few of the trends that I encountered regarding these strategies here.

Few vendors at the shop and flea market relied on garbage picking to acquire their goods for resale. Such individuals were looked down upon by other vendors because many of the goods they had for sale were damaged or in poor condition. At Plan B in particular, several people came in off the street on a regular basis looking to sell things that they had found in the trash. One customer had a knack for finding quality items this way and was able to consistently make some extra pocket money doing so, but often customers who were trying to sell such items were turned away due to their poor condition. There were also some higher end vendors who attended events such as the bi-annual curbside giveaway in the HRM, procuring damaged goods that they would then upcycle or repair before adding to their inventories. The curbside giveaway is a

formal event organized by the city government where residents are encouraged to place unwanted goods on the curbside for free, rather than placing such items in the trash. This event usually happens in the spring and fall. Several used-goods sellers who I have met rely on these events as an opportunity to acquire free items for their inventories. These are the ways that scavenging and garbage picking were part of the larger subsistence strategies of used-goods sellers at my research sites. These individuals acquire items without having to pay for them, but this pursuit requires a great amount of labour and time.

Garage sales were much more significant for my research participants, particularly those dealing in collectibles. Garage sales enabled certain vendors an opportunity to procure a large amount of inventory in a short amount of time on Saturday mornings during the summer months. That said, the inability to attend yard sales for at least six months of the year (due to weather-related limitations) and the reality that some days attending garage sales would be more fruitful than others necessitated that making purchases in this way was only one part of a larger body of procurement strategies.

Street vending was not a major part of my own research trajectory. Some vendors treated street vending as an opportunity to procure inventory in the same way that they treated attending garage sales. However, few used street vending as a selling strategy. In fact, I only met a handful of flea market vendors who participated in street vending in the HRM during my time in the field. These vendors have to obtain permits from the City of Halifax and only have a small window of opportunity to sell at designated areas during certain times of year. After I left the field, Plan B started to participate in periodic night markets hosted by the North End, beginning in 2015. These night markets were street sales where numerous informal street vendors (many of whom were not Plan B members) came together to sell their wares in front of Plan B and at

another site (colloquially called “Squiggle Park”) down the street, a block away. The cooperative members saw participating in street sales as another way to gain attention and promote the shop and filled out their roster of sellers by asking non-members to participate as well. Unlike some of the street vending profiled in this section, these “North by Night” markets were supported by city government and were put on in conjunction with the North End Business Commission.

Albeit significant, procurement strategies are only one characteristic of how used-goods dealers go about their businesses. This chapter examines how some of the larger vendors attempted to make a living during my time in the field. In this chapter, I introduce the platforming concept, which relates to the dream of opening a brick and mortar store, while also presenting examples of how some failed brick and mortar stores found refuge at both research sites. Platforming and seeking refuge are goals that may be unique to small-scale marketplaces and these were only activities that were enacted upon by a small minority of vendors who I met in the field. More generally, however, both platforming and seeking refuge (as possible outcomes) help to highlight the value of thinking about informal entrepreneurship through the lens of exit (rather than exclusion), channelling the ideas of Maloney (2004) and Perry *et al.* (2007). At the same time, these potential outcomes call into question Standing’s (2011; 2014; and 2015) assumptions about the precariat and precarity, while also challenging certain assumptions about informal economies that stem from research in the Global South (such as those found in dualistic, structuralist and legalist approaches). Prior to delving into the significance of platforming and seeking refuge for certain vendors, I describe my experiences attending auctions with Séb (one of the few moonlighters who operated a registered business at either site), who relied on auctioning in order to acquire inventory for his own business.

8.1 At the Auctions with Séb

Séb had already been at Plan B for more than a year when I started fieldwork. He worked in the area and only came across the shop for the first time during the transit strike of 2012. Séb had been taking the bus to the North End from a different part of the city in order to get to work at his tech job every day and the transit strike led to him having to drive to work and fight with other commuters to secure one of the limited numbers of paid parking spaces in the area. As he changed his work commute routine, he ended up walking past Plan B on a daily basis. One day he decided to stop inside and he quickly determined that he wanted to try his hand at selling antiques. He rented a cubby and did well enough to justify renting a larger space once one came available.

By the time that I started at the co-op, he was one of its largest, anchor tenants. As an IT professional, Séb was the only true moonlighter amongst the Plan B core. Most of the others were full time dealers. Séb operated a registered business and was a consummate business professional. He paid close attention to his inventory and kept immaculate records for his accountant.

Séb's main interests were precious metals, antique clocks, watches and telephones, as well as vinyl records and audio gear. Nevertheless, he had eclectic tastes and a keen eye for quality. He dabbled in things that he liked, but was not afraid to purchase things that he did not like if he knew their value. Over time, I watched him purchase and wax lyrical about taxidermy, ethnographic art, quack medical devices and early 20th century electronics, among other things. As he was the owner of one of the few formally registered businesses I encountered in the field, I decided that I wanted to see Séb work. After he got to know me a bit, he agreed to let me accompany him to some auctions.

For antiques dealers, sourcing goods can be a struggle (even though it can also be a great source of pleasure). People like Séb employ a wide range of procurement strategies, such as constantly scoping out yard sales, flea markets and thrift stores, while also making trips to antique stores. In my conversations with Séb, however, I came to realize that he was most fond of travelling around the province to attend auctions. Auctions were where the magic happened.

After discussing the possibility of accompanying him to an auction for a few weeks, Séb asked me to join him for a weekend of auctioning in late October, 2013. We travelled to two auctions together. The first was held by one of the province's most well-known auction houses, Crowther and Brayley, at the Dartmouth Sportsplex. The second was an estate auction held at a farm house in Rawdon, a rural community in the municipality of East Hants.

On Friday, October 25, 2013, Séb met me at Plan B around 4:30 pm. We went to the auction viewing in Dartmouth in advance of Saturday's event. After arriving at the Dartmouth Sportsplex, we spent a few minutes looking around, but Séb only spotted one thing that he was interested in, a mercury pendulum clock. We decided that it was worth attending the auction and agreed to meet the next day at 8:30 am.

The following is taken from my field notes on October 26 and 27, 2013.

I arrived around 8:30 am and met Séb inside. He explained to me that at this auction many dealers come only for the cheap box lots and then leave. The auction was held in a large room. The centre of the room was filled with chairs for attendees to sit in and the perimeter of the space was lined with the auction items. The most expensive stuff was kept at the front of the room, close to the auctioneer's podium. Less expensive, but interesting items (called "smalls") were neatly arranged on tables along one of the side walls, while the other side wall had art and

furniture arranged next to it. The back wall of the room was cluttered with boxes of unsorted stuff that was of lower quality and value. These box lots were the things that lower end dealers focused on. For Séb, the box lots were generally a waste of time, but he looked anyway, just in case an interesting antique or collectible had gone unnoticed by the auction house staff.

I spotted one well-known local dealer in the crowd and Séb pointed to numerous other dealers with ties to antiques shops around the HRM. We also ran into a woman who used to sell mid-century furniture at Plan B. We were mostly waiting around for the box lots to end, so that Séb could start bidding on what he came here for. Séb assured me that a different segment of the crowd was here for the furniture than for the box lots and that by the time they got to the mercury pendulum clock it would be mid-afternoon.

The auctioneer started with the box lots. I got right in the middle of things and noticed that the class of clients (based on their appearance and generally more dishevelled look) did seem different from those looking at the mid-century furniture at the other side of the room. The patrons who were not interested in the box lots found their seats in the middle of the room, while those who were here for the box lots competed with each other energetically. This went on for at least an hour until each one of the box lots was sold.

The auctioneer went through this at a rapid-fire pace and if I had not attended other auctions in the past, I would have been completely lost. I could tell by who was participating that only a handful of people were seriously bidding. Most people seemed confused by the auctioneer's furious pace or dazed by the spectacle. The dealer I recognized won at least a dozen lots and seemed quite pleased with himself. Anything that Séb was interested in from the box lots sold for more than his limit and he did not place a single bid. Interestingly, he spotted an architectural tool (called a planimeter) in one of the box lots and offered the man who purchased

the box \$30 for it, which he happily accepted. I noticed other people in the crowd looking through the sold box lots and making offers on individual pieces to the auction winners.

As the furniture came up to auction, Séb kept an eye on the clock. The auctioneer started to alternate between the furniture and the more expensive smalls. One of the staff members moved the clock and Séb noticed another patron examining it. He had been hoping no one would notice it and was now worried: It would be a few hours before it came up for auction. He desperately wanted a coffee, but was afraid to leave the room out of fear that the clock would be auctioned in the meantime. I went to get him a coffee and he stayed glued to the spot where he was standing. I left the auction a few minutes afterwards because of an appointment that I had scheduled prior to us planning to spend the weekend auctioning together.

The next morning, I picked up Séb at his home in Dartmouth around 7 am. We spent most of the drive talking about what Séb hoped to find, such as clocks, phones, watches, weird medical stuff and cool antiques. It was cold and raining when we found the house and we were among the first people to arrive. Séb brought chairs so we could sit during the auction, but he had not planned for rain, whereas I had my umbrella, extra socks and a pair of Duckies shoes. There were items for the auction strewn inside of the house and in a shed, with numerous large pieces of farm equipment on offer next to a large barn. Everything, including the property, was being auctioned off. We went inside the farm house and shed to inspect different lots and items that were on offer. Séb's interest in attending the auction was due to the age of the collection, but he was not sure what to expect. He pointed to a pocket watch he hoped to buy, as well as a vintage metal Coca-Cola cooler, some snowshoes and some additional odds and sods. The quality of the items for sale was not as high as Séb expected. We hoped that the rain would deter buyers from making the trip to Rawdon, but by 9:30 am there were hundreds of people at the farm.

The auction started around 9:30 am and was held outside. It was windy, raining and uncomfortable. Twice during the auction, I had to go to my car to warm up. It was just over 0 degrees Celsius, but it felt much colder. My umbrella broke early during the auction and the soft ground quickly turned into mud. The first items that were auctioned were old farm equipment pieces that were outside and around the barn. The auctioneer hid inside the barn, speaking into a microphone, while the crowd of mostly farmers bid on the implements for over an hour. Séb and I spent this time huddled inside the shed with dozens of other buyers trying to warm up.

It was after 11 am by the time the auction moved into the shed. Many of the farmers who had been bidding on equipment left after this and the crowd started to thin out. We were all kicked out of the shed so the auctioneer and his crew could more easily present the stuff on offer. I was too cold, so I left for the car to warm up. When I returned to the shed around noon, Séb had purchased an antique heater and the snowshoes he had been looking at. We shared a cigarette and I noticed him shaking from the cold. His shoes were thin and soaked all the way through. He was also covered in mud up to his knees.

I went into the house to warm up and came back outside a few minutes later. Séb had won some old Quaker and Robin Hood flour bags that neither of us had previously noticed. He then won the Coke cooler for \$85 and a mirror for his wife. He stuffed the flour bags into the cooler and took the stuff to my car. As the auctioneer sold things, I noticed other winners taking stuff to their vehicles too. An hour later there was enough room for everyone to stand in the shed.

The box lot that included the pocket watch that Séb had been looking at came up for sale and he won it for \$75. He quickly sold some of the other pieces in the box he did not want for \$20 to another dealer. They then switched exclusively to furniture for about an hour. Séb had his eye on a few more smalls, so we agreed to stick around. Only thirty people were still in

attendance by the time all of the furniture had sold and most were dealers that Séb had pointed out to me. Séb was shivering, but seemed to generate warmth by playing with the pocket watch and kept himself occupied by continuously examining it.

After the auction ended, we paid for our items and set off for Dartmouth. During the drive back, we chatted about what we had won and lamented a few missed opportunities. Séb then told me that he had not won the mercury clock at yesterday's auction, but the pocket watch he won in Rawdon was worth far more and made up for it. He was glad that he had saved his money.

In the safety of my car and away from the prying eyes of others, Séb was finally able to give his new watch a full inspection. He explained that the watch was early Victorian, had hand-crafted gilding and a "beautiful" movement. It seemed to work, but the latch was broken and it was missing the pin for its casing, as well as the wind-up key. He had to do some research, but was sure the piece was worth hundreds of dollars. I explained my justification for purchasing a handful of items too and we gleefully agreed that our separate knowledge complemented each other because we were not interested in the same things. Despite the shiver-inducing cold and heavy rain, we worked well together.

8.2 The Interplay of Formal and Informal Economics at Auctions

Within a few weeks, Séb was able to determine that the pocket watch was actually much older (from 1811) and more valuable than he originally expected. I ended up meeting up with him for a handful of other auctions, mostly at Crowther and Brayley, during my time in the field. The auction at Rawdon was something of an outlier because of how miserable the weather was (one does not have to worry about such things at an indoor auction), but there are certain things that I learned by accompanying Séb that are worth mentioning here. Séb's reputation for having

a keen eye and being an excellent picker was justified. As I came to realize as I watched him, having a keen eye involved having knowledge about what he was looking at, but also involved making educated guesses and taking risks. The flour bags that he purchased in Rawdon were evidence of this: he knew that they were worth something, but took a chance and was rewarded with a handsome profit. The pocket watch is also evidence of this: he knew it was a valuable piece, but subsequent research was required to learn exactly what it was. At the same time, Séb was surprised by some of the things that I purchased and was shocked by what I sold them for later. He did not have the knowledge to interpret their value. When he learned that I had sold the things I purchased relatively quickly for a handsome profit of my own, he took note and filed this knowledge somewhere into the recesses of his dealer brain.

It also became clear that dealers at auctions are a secretive bunch. Individuals who came in groups whispered to each other about the things that they were interested in to avoid being overheard by a potential rival and Séb and I did the same thing. For some auction goes the event was entirely about socializing, but for people like Séb, socializing was about sizing people up and searching for information in ways similar to those described by Geertz (1978) regarding peasant bazaars. Auctions can be extremely competitive and dealers fear tipping their hands to competitors. But, when something sells for a price that most people think is high, everyone takes notice. The buyer might have overpaid, but also might have known something that everyone else overlooked. People like Séb use auctions not only to acquire goods to resell, but to keep an eye on what others are buying and to learn more about antiques and collectibles. The reason why people like Séb can be successful is that they focus on what they already know about and only take chances on things that sell low. At this particular auction, Séb took a few chances on items he was not particularly knowledgeable about, but in every case the amount he paid was low

enough that he was willing to take a risk. This is an important strategy for avoiding overpayments: it is inevitable that a used-goods dealer will eventually buy something that they overpaid for or did not inspect closely, resulting in lost revenue. This is called “paying for your education.”

Séb’s reputation as a keen picker only grew during my time in the field and in August, 2014, he turned a bunch of heads when he took a chance on an early 20th century river diving helmet at a local auction. I was not present at the time, but the story has become somewhat legendary in the local used-goods community. The other dealers in attendance (including owners of well-regarded antiques stores in Nova Scotia) were convinced that the helmet was a replica. As word travelled around the auction that the item was fake, the dealers in attendance avoided it. Séb was convinced it was real and took a chance, paying \$150 for the item. He was able to confirm that it was real and sold it within weeks for thousands of dollars. People called it “the find of the year” and Séb became a person that others watched closely at auctions. Now, when Séb starts bidding it becomes a case of, “What does he know that I don’t know?”

As I have attended more auctions since leaving the field, people have also started to take notice of what I bid on and sometimes rival dealers bid me up in order to try to “drop” auctions on me at over-inflated prices. Dropping is a tactic that dealers use on each other at auctions in order to make competitors spend all of their money more quickly. This is especially common when a rival dealer anticipates competition on an item that they have their sights on later in the day. If a competitor has already spent all of their money, the item that the “dropper” is really interested in might sell cheaper due to buyer fatigue. One does not go to the auction to make friends.

Auctions are a focal point for the interplay of the formal and informal economy when it comes to used-goods dealers. Professional auction houses and auctioneers operate formal, registered businesses and charge tax on their sales. Numerous auction goers, particularly owners of antiques stores and art galleries are also representing registered businesses when they make purchases at auctions. Even individuals attending auctions, like Séb, may operate registered businesses. At the same time, numerous collectors will target specific auctions in order to bid on items that they want for themselves or for other collectors who they know. All of these are examples of auctions being sites where people engage in formal economic practices.

On the other hand, many of the small-time dealers who I met attending auctions (such as those who focused on the box lots at Crowther and Brayley) were less likely to be acting on behalf of registered businesses. Some of the people who I saw at this particular auction (and who I came to know through other venues during my time conducting research) later informed me that they were not operating registered businesses. Instead, such individuals would purchase items at auctions (be they box lots or higher end pieces) that they would sell at flea markets, on Kijiji or Facebook, or even online auction sites. Flea markets and Kijiji, though, appeared to be the most common avenues for these small-time dealers to quickly flip the items that they had purchased. There were even some individuals who purchased items at auctions that they hoped to sell to other dealers, a practice that is called “hustling.”

Such informal entrepreneurs lamented having to pay tax at auctions, but did not charge tax themselves or declare their incomes. They were earning enough money to keep the cycle of buying and selling going, but I also came to realize that few, if any, of these informal entrepreneurs were making more than a pittance. Like Séb, many were moonlighting during their

spare time to make a little bit of extra money doing something they enjoyed. However, unlike, Séb, they did not necessarily see their endeavours as businesses at all.

As moonlighters making a pittance, these small-scale used-goods dealers do not easily fit into expectations found in most informal economy literature approaches derived from research in the Global South. These dealers tend to have formal day jobs and are not working informally because of a lack of options or opportunities in the formal economy, as found in outdated dualistic interpretations (Chen, 2012, p. 2), as well as in the supposed precariat “class-in-the-making” promoted by Standing (2011; 2014; and 2015): they are already earning their primary incomes formally. Nor are these dealers self-exploiting or caught up in global chains of production that structuralist approaches assume explain the informal economy in the Global South as an exploitative mechanism that maintains a reserve labour force (Chaudhuri and Mukhopadhyay, 2010, p. 4-6; and Chen, 2012, p. 4-6). Instead, for the most part, these moonlighters are hobbyists who do not see their endeavours as necessarily being businesses at all. As such, the pittance that they make ends up being a little bit of extra pocket money that helps pay for vacations, home repairs, or other non-business expenses. Other moonlighters are collectors who use their earnings to purchase items for their collections that they had been saving for. As a result, many of these moonlighters do not see much value in registering their businesses and it is questionable that very many of them even had to legally register at all.

All of this leads to a few points that are worth highlighting: First, despite operating informally, such dealers were not doing so because of being excluded from the formal economy. Nor were these vendors exactly engaging in such practices as a way to exit the formal economy, as would be expected following the voluntarist approach (Maloney, 2004) or World Bank Latin America model (Perry *et al.*, 2007). Instead, these vendors were choosing to operate in this way

to supplement their formal earnings with informal ones. These are not ground breaking or astonishing insights: this is what moonlighting is. That said, moonlighting tends to be overlooked in the approaches to informality that stem from literature in the Global South.

A second issue worth considering for the purposes of this project is that, as merely one avenue for procuring used goods to resell, the auctions were not significantly different than other procurement strategies that I have described already, except for the fact that auction houses themselves are entirely formal enterprises, which is not necessarily true of many of the other procurement avenues that I profile in Chapter 4. If anything, the differences had to do with the context of the auctions themselves, the competition in bidding against a rival and in trying to keep knowledge about specific items secret from competitors who did not want to “pay for their educations.” Yet, the similarities are not surprising.

As I describe in Chapter 3.1.1, used-goods shoppers and dealers rely on information from trusted sources when conducting transactions. However, this is not quite the same circumstance as what Alexander and Alexander (1987), Geertz (1978) and Stoller (2002) are all arguing in terms of how their observations show that the degree of social ties that an individual has with trading partners dictates his or her success in getting the best deal. What these authors are pointing to is the clientelization of shoppers by dealers, which is not something that happens at auctions. However, there is an important form of information exchange that takes place at auctions. This occurs at auctions when trusted colleagues attend the events together, making suggestions and exchanging knowledge freely. Even so, this knowledge is closely guarded. The opportunity for dishonesty is certainly present. For example, I have heard stories of dealers talking down the authenticity or quality of a particular auction piece to create uncertainty only to

use this to their advantage when the item comes up for bid. Such practices rarely fool people twice.

In addition to this, I witnessed people at auctions that I attended with Séb who appeared extremely dishevelled, only for him to tell me that “so and so” was a high-end dealer. This phenomenon of dressing down was not surprising, given that it appears in literature about markets that I describe in Chapter 3.1.2 (see de La Pradelle, 2006; and Medlin, 2008). However, maintaining anonymity is much more difficult at auctions than at other used-goods venues. People who place bids get noticed and the more that a person bids and/or buys, the harder it is to conceal one’s identity. Both Séb and I experienced this to varying degrees the more that we participated at specific auctions. In fact, some well-known antiques dealers did quite the opposite of dressing down, instead wearing clothing emblazoned with their business emblems as if they were walking billboards. When everyone already knows who you are there is no point in dressing down.

8.3 Platforming and the Shrinking Core of Vendors at Plan B

Séb was one of the few core vendors at Plan B whose business seemed to be growing on a regular basis and his continuous attendance at auctions around the province was evidence of his increasing knowledge and economic strength in the antiques business. In many ways, he was an exception to the rule. At Plan B, the shrinking group of core vendors and the transitory nature of minor vendors was something that Bob and I continually discussed during my early days of fieldwork. One day, as I was quizzing Bob a bit more about this problem, he told me that he was hoping to bring David into the inner circle. David and his girlfriend, Britt, started selling vintage clothing at the shop around the same time that I first started fieldwork and both became more involved in the day to day operations of the shop. David operated under the name Vagabond

Vintage and had been selling at pop-up shops on the streets of Halifax and sporadically at local universities prior to joining Plan B. When I first met David, Bob was running Plan B by himself four days a week. KT, Sean and Alex all worked one day only. The idea was that by bringing David into the inner circle he would start running the shop one day a week, relieving some of the pressure that Bob was experiencing.

This problem started in the months before I began fieldwork, when one of the major Plan B vendors left the cooperative in order to open a brick and mortar store. The vendor had been as involved as Bob and ran the shop multiple days per week. When this particular vendor left, it created an organizational nightmare for the volunteers operating the shop: all of a sudden there were not enough volunteers to run the shop day to day and the shop also found itself losing an anchor tenant.

Whenever an anchor tenant left the shop, it cost the cooperative money. Not in a concrete sense, but in a potential sense. If a core vendor opened their own brick and mortar store their most loyal clientele often left with them and stopped coming to Plan B as often. It was also difficult to replace large vendors with new ones curating sizeable inventories. Vagabond Vintage's appearance on the scene was serendipitous: the previous anchor tenant had sold clothing and a new, large clothing vendor provided the shop with some continuity.

One day in early October, I witnessed two men walk into the shop and start packing up their stuff. I introduced myself. They had both been selling mid-century glassware and kitchenware at Plan B for some time, but decided to leave Plan B because they had not been making enough money to justify paying their rent. They explained that when they started at Plan B in 2012, two other dealers were also selling mid-century items. These various mid-century

products synergized well and attracted a clientele searching specifically for such items. One of these other dealers had sold high-end furniture and the other had a mishmash of wares. When the furniture seller left Plan B to open her own store, they decided to jump ship. Bob was not surprised to see them go, but for me this led to more questions than answers. Was Plan B merely a stop-gap for vendors with aspirations of moving to their own brick and mortar stores, or were the peripheral vendors doing so poorly that their lack of sales explained the transitory nature of Plan B vendors? As I would learn over time, it was actually a little bit of both.

It was on this same day in early October that a young American customer walked into the store. He announced to us that he was visiting from Long Island and told us about how he operated a cooperative art gallery in New York State. He was an artist who was looking to develop a space similar to Plan B back in New York. We looked at his website as he explained that Plan B and his gallery were examples of a new movement in North America that he referred to as “platforming,” where small, hip artists and entrepreneurs create spaces that act as platforms for emerging talent and community involvement. As Bob and I reflected on this concept, we started employing it differently. It was clear to us that some vendors were using Plan B to “platform” to their own brick and mortar stores, as is evidenced by the two vendors mentioned above. What about the vendors who were not faring so well?

Some vendors never stopped working on their trade at Plan B, but seemed to never get ahead. Alex ran the shop every Wednesday. He had been selling soda that he had been bottling at Plan B, as well as some video games. His soda had been featured in *Local Connections Halifax Magazine* and he had been supplying a restaurant called Boneheads. But, because his product was hand-crafted (from making the soda, to sourcing the bottles, cleaning them and meticulously

gluing his own labels on each bottle one at a time), he was burning himself out, and missing deadlines with little monetary gain to show for his labour.

In early October, he announced that he was ceasing production. He had done a cost/benefit analysis and determined that in order to be able to make a living manufacturing soda, he would have to purchase machines designed for mass production. He simply did not have the capital to cover the start-up costs and realized that he would have to be selling tens of thousands of bottles of soda in order to make a reasonable profit. The risk was not worth it. Deflated, he decided to switch gears. After ceasing production of his soda, Alex stopped coming in as much, other than his usual day running the shop. Instead of platforming to the next level, Alex gave up on his business and, later, the cooperative too.

By the middle of October, I had met most of the major vendors at Plan B, but one remained an enigma. Rick was the only original member of the cooperative other than Bob who was still involved with Plan B, but unlike the others who started the shop, he never left the Harbourview. I had met him a few times prior to starting research and I had no way to know then that he would become one of my closest confidants and key informants during the course of my research project at both sites. Rick was Plan B's vinyl record dealer, though his business at the Harbourview was multifaceted, as he dealt with anything and everything related to popular culture (film, music, toys, games—you name it, Rick sold it).

One morning when he was in the shop to sort some records, I asked him if he ever considered opening a store. He chuckled and explained to me that he ran his own store in Dartmouth, called Third Eye Blind, for seven years, from approximately 2002-2009, but things fell apart during the recession and he had to close his shop. The Harbourview opened shortly

thereafter and he promptly moved his inventory to the fledgling market in order to stay in business.

Bob later told me that one other vendor at Plan B also had a store at one time, but was forced to downsize. Rick and this other vendor were on the opposite spectrum of this platforming business that Bob so happily and enthusiastically talked about after the man from Long Island provided us with the term. Yet, in learning about Rick and the other vendor's failed brick and mortar stores, I came to realize that Plan B was not just about platforming: It also provided sanctuary for failed businesses. Over the course of my time in the field three other vendor groups joined the cooperative because they had lost their retail space, though all three of these groups later managed to find new locations and used Plan B as a stop-gap.

Despite Bob's dream of Plan B serving to incubate small businesses and the reality that a handful of vendors or vendor groups were using the space as safe harbours in the face of failed brick and mortar locations, I quickly came to realize that both were exceptions to the rule. Most of the small vendors seemed to be testing out products or ideas to see if they were viable or to earn a bit of pocket money. All of the jewelry and craft sellers (who made up a large number of individual vendors, but only took up a small portion of shop space) were like this.

Many small-scale vendors would sublet their spaces. A group of vendors selling patches, prints and miscellaneous goth and alt-rock stuff did this. So did Alex and his roommate. There were also small-scale clothing vendors and jewelry makers who operated this way. These vendors did not seem to grow and, instead, always seemed to be searching for a new person to sublet their small spaces. Other members, such as Sean and Séb, were actively growing their spaces. Since space was limited, growth only occurred when an adjacent vendor left the shop and the larger vendors took the opportunity to usurp the empty space.

Many people did not manage to make their businesses/endeavours work at Plan B. For some, it was a lack of sales and, as I came to learn, there was a monthly exodus of old vendors from the shop. Such vendors seemed to experience an initial boon of sales (because they were the “hot new thing”) but inevitably packed up their stuff after a month or two of not doing well. Yet, new vendors were always waiting in the wings and empty spaces were rarely empty for long.

At least one seller who operated a vintage clothing store outside of the city (and who left Plan B before I started), had been using Plan B to sell stuff that did not fit into the aesthetic of her own brick and mortar boutique. Bob made a comment to me after I set up my shelf of toys that made me think that he saw my stuff in a similar way. He told me to “bring the shake, the stuff you can’t sell online.” As time went on, I also became aware that some co-op members sold at Great Village Antiques and other group shops. All of these examples point to another way that Plan B was being utilized by its members; that is, to supplement a larger business.

Although this platforming concept was a helpful term for explaining the part of the cooperative’s identity narrative that Bob and other core vendors tended to highlight, it was rare for vendors to platform to their own brick and mortar stores. The fact that the cooperative itself had resulted from several of its original members platforming from the Harbourview helped to make this term attractive for describing Plan B’s origins. This was despite the fact that one of the original vendors (Morrigan Lefay’s Mystical Gifts) entered the cooperative after losing its brick and mortar store and Rick having done the same thing when he became a vendor at the Harbourview. Many more vendors failed in their endeavours or moved to other opportunities in order to try to make things work when Plan B did not. Other vendors did not even see themselves

as businesses, which was particularly true for the artists who sold art prints or jewelry at the shop. They were more interested in getting their stuff out there than anything else. Selling a print or an original piece was more of a bonus. However, for the collectible used-goods vendors, there was much more at stake. These were the people who dreamed of platforming or using their profits to build capital to make a living, even if they did not envision opening their own stores. This was not unique to Plan B. I encountered the same phenomenon at the Harbourview.

8.4 Platforming and Other Vendor Motivations at the Harbourview

In the previous section, I discussed how some vendors endeavoured to “platform”; that is, to use the shop to build enough capital and clientele to justify opening their own brick and mortar store. Part of Plan B’s identity narrative relied on being able to point to former members who later operated successful brick and mortar stores in Halifax or elsewhere in Nova Scotia. A handful of Plan B vendors were able to accomplish this during my fieldwork period, but many vendors who I met did not have this as an immediate (or long-term) goal. This was particularly true for the shop’s crafters and artists, who were more interested in using the cheap rent at the space to experiment and get the word out about their products or artwork.

In speaking with Paul, I learned that he had hoped the market would enable fledgling businesses the opportunity to platform too. During the years that Gary Janes owned the market the vendors who started Plan B certainly engaged in a type of platforming that led to the opening of the cooperative. Paul asserted that numerous other people had opened businesses in Nova Scotia after starting at the Harbourview and he hoped this would continue. Part of Paul’s reasoning was altruistic. He and Gary took pride in knowing that the market had helped some vendors succeed enough to justify taking the next step as entrepreneurs. This narrative was important for survival and recognition for the market. As Paul explained, if people started to

realize that flea markets could help to foster the establishment of small businesses he hoped they would be taken more seriously and that maybe—just maybe—various levels of government would take notice and start to offer more support to businesses like Paul’s.

During my time in the field, three Harbourview vendors left to open their own brick and mortar stores. Two of these vendors had used the market as a means to build capital, clientele and confidence as they worked towards their long-term goal of opening a store. One of these vendors purchased an already existing business that dealt in the same product after the previous owner retired. The other vendor opened a kiosk elsewhere in the city, which enabled him to expand his operating hours and attract a larger clientele.

The third vendor was forced to move out of the market due to changing laws in the province of Nova Scotia. This particular vendor sold e-cigarettes; amendments to Nova Scotia’s “Tobacco Access Act” made it illegal to sell or display e-cigarettes in stores where minors were allowed (Health and Wellness, 2015, May 29). The new law would be coming into effect towards the end of 2014. The vendor in question had only recently left his day-job to pursue the e-cigarette business full time. He spent months trying to get ready to open the store and made the transition before the new law came into effect.

All three of these businesses have managed to succeed and grow since leaving the Harbourview, adding examples to the growing list of small-scale vendors in the HRM who have used flea markets as platforms to pursue their goals as entrepreneurs. Of the over seventy vendors who I met at the Harbourview, various others expressed their desire to platform in this way. In September, 2016, Rick signed a commercial lease in order to open a brick and mortar store in Dartmouth.⁵⁰ Another vendor followed suit in 2017. Most of the other vendors who

⁵⁰ His store, rebranded “Lost World,” opened in November, 2016.

wanted to open brick and mortar stores are still working at the Harbourview. Though I suspect that some of them are much closer to taking this leap than when I was in the field, nothing appears imminent.

Despite these examples, few vendors actually used the market as part of a deliberate long-term strategy to platform to a brick and mortar store. Certainly there were newer vendors who appeared during the course of my fieldwork who also had big plans for their businesses in the future, but they were only just starting out and had a lot of hard work to do before even entertaining such a possibility. However, many who I spoke with did not express a desire to move beyond the flea market or to take their businesses to the next level.

Around a third of the vendors at the Harbourview were post-retirement or close to retirement age. For such vendors, coming to the market accomplished two things: it enabled them to be sociable with vendors and shoppers instead of staying at home. It was something to do on the weekends. It also enabled them to supplement their incomes in retirement, making vending an important part of their subsistence strategies. Some of the vendors who I met were in their 70s and 80s and chuckled when I asked them about platforming. For these vendors, going to the market was all about participating in the wider market community. These were the vendors who were most likely to foster the three prerequisites for community defined by Amit (2010), as discussed throughout this dissertation. Considering that the oldest vendors at Plan B were in their early-50s and that the majority of vendors at the shop were in their 20s and 30s during my fieldwork, age played a significant role in the divergent long-term goals of vendors at the two venues.

For a large portion of the younger vendors at the Harbourview (who were in their 40s and 50s), selling at the market was a type of moonlighting. These people had day jobs and quite a

few of them had rewarding careers. This was particularly important for the handful of vendors who relied on seasonal work, such as the fisheries, to make a living. Such individuals did not see their activities as anything more than supplementary and did not aim to open their own businesses.

Perhaps the most interesting motivation for a very small number of vendors (fewer than five) was that the flea market offered a refuge for them after their brick and mortar stores failed. Two men who I came to know well and who graciously allowed me to follow them around and learn about their businesses had previously owned stores in Dartmouth, but had shuttered them during the recession of the late-2000s. Despite having to close their stores, both men retained large inventories and quickly joined the market when it opened within a year of their businesses closing. As brick and mortar “refugees,” the Harbourview offered these men the ability to stay in business rather than seeing their life’s work disappear before their eyes. Taking refuge also maintained their social relations with previous customers, while continuing to foster clientelization with new ones. In the next two sections, I will describe my encounters with both individuals at the Harbourview.

8.5 Third Eye Blind

Richard Silvert’s friends call him Rick, and I have mentioned how he facilitated my entry into the Harbourview. As the only person who I met in the field who was a vendor at both the Harbourview and Plan B, Rick’s status in my research project is unique. Rick grew up in Halifax and both of his parents were academics. His father was a particularly well-known marine ecologist who spent his career working for Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans before spending the last years of his life in Portugal. Rick’s mother spent her career as a lecturer at Dalhousie University, having never completed her PhD. Rick’s paternal grandparents were also

academics who had high expectations for their son and were disappointed by his choice to become a marine ecologist because, as Rick tells the story, “Marine ecologists don’t win Nobel prizes.” Rick also likes to tell the story about how his grandfather was involved in a long academic dispute with Carl Sagan. The Silvert family was a well-connected, highly educated bunch.

However, Rick is not an academic and never had such inclinations. He did attend Dalhousie as an undergraduate in the early 1990s, but never finished his program. Afterwards he went to trade school in Cape Breton, but after losing his thumb in an accident (and having it re-attached, but losing a great amount of mobility) he decided that he could no longer pursue work as a tradesman.

It was during this time that he started selling Magic the Gathering cards (a popular collectible trading card game) at the Penhorn Mall flea market on weekends when he commuted to Halifax from Cape Breton. He quickly started to make money doing this and after leaving trade school he started to sell cards at the flea market full time. He expanded his products and grew in size until deciding to open a brick and mortar store in Dartmouth in the early 2000s. The store was called Third Eye Blind and became one of the HRM’s go-to spots for nerds and geeks. In the nearly ten years that he ran the store, he watched his young customers grow into adults and he built a loyal following. But, as he explained to me, he was not as careful with his money as he should have been. In the lead-up to the recession of the late 2000s, Rick was forced to move to a smaller retail location in Dartmouth because of his dwindling clientele. As people were guarding their money and worrying about paying their bills, purchasing things like toys, games and collectibles became harder to justify. He did not last two years in the second location before his losses caught up with him and he was forced to close his doors.

Rick was not ready to give up. Faced with the bills associated with a shuttered business and still having a large inventory that he could not retail, it was serendipitous that the Harbourview opened in Dartmouth soon after. So Rick went to the Harbourview and has been one of its anchor tenants ever since, slowly building things back up with the long-term goal of opening another brick and mortar store.

I first met Rick a couple of years before I started fieldwork. Due to our similar businesses, we were bound to cross paths eventually. When Tania and I first moved to Halifax we would often attend local flea markets to purchase inventory for East Coast Toys and Games. I do not recall our first meeting, but it was on one of these trips to the market to search for collectibles to re-sell. As a result, Rick was already familiar with me when I first started fieldwork at Plan B.

Despite being one of the original seven members of Plan B, Rick was something of a peripheral character. He rented a large space to sell odds and sods at the shop, but had had a falling out with one of the other vendors in the shop's early years and had cut ties until a few months prior to my arrival on the scene. This falling out set him on a different path, as he started to invest his time and money in researching and selling rare vinyl records.

Rick strongly supported Plan B's vision and wanted the shop to do well. He returned to the shop after over a year away in early 2013, but was worried that he might encounter similar problems that led to his leaving the first time and did not want to get involved to the extent of becoming a core member. As such, I would only see him on occasion at Plan B, on days that he entered the shop to rearrange his space or bring in new inventory.

As time went on, he became more involved with the shop, though still not so much as to become a core member. Instead, his relationship with Plan B was unique: he was sometimes more involved than other core members, but never became so involved that he was operating the store himself during my time in the field.⁵¹

Knowing that I hoped to conduct similar research at the Harbourview, Rick offered to introduce me to Paul Green, as previously mentioned. Having Rick as a trusted, key informant helped to facilitate my entry into the market because of his status as an anchor tenant who was vouching for me.

Having Rick “in my corner” was significant for many reasons. In my first weeks at the market he offered me use of his space at the Harbourview to safely leave my stuff and to use as my “base of operations.” This allowed me to leave my backpack somewhere secure and gave me a place to disappear to when I needed a quiet moment.

In many ways, Rick was my “stranger-handler.” Agar (1980) defines stranger-handlers as “natural public relations experts. They can find out what the outsider is after and quickly improvise some information that satisfies him without representing anything potentially harmful to the group” (p. 85). Agar claims that most stranger-handlers are also group deviants—outsiders themselves who are on the fringes of the group. This was not the case with Rick, as he was one of the few original Harbourview vendors who still operated a stall at the market when I was there. However, he was the public relations expert that Agar envisioned. He was a long-standing vendor with a certain amount of clout and he was the person who brought me into the fold. Even though I am not aware of anyone ever saying so, I was his problem—at least initially. Rick took

⁵¹ Though he did end up running the shop one day a week in the months before he opened his brick and mortar business in November, 2016.

on a risk by taking me under his wing: We did not know each other well, but I had achieved some goodwill with him through our encounters at Plan B and he felt he knew me well enough that I was not going to create problems or be a burden. Few others at the market had ever met me, and Rick's status at the market was not enough for me to gain easy access. I had to earn it and Rick became my intermediary. If I had made a fool of myself it would have reflected poorly on Rick for bringing me into their midst. In this way, Rick was taking a risk by being my handler. All I could do, early on, was try to earn my keep and hope that other vendors, as well as Paul, saw me as someone who was not causing problems.

Hanging out at Third Eye Blind allowed me to get to know Rick better as I helped him sort through his inventory and rearrange his space on any given market day. It also helped me to get to know his mother, who was not particularly interested in the collectibles that her son sold, but was present on most market days to take advantage of the social atmosphere like other members of her age cohort. She also offered her support and helped to relieve Rick when he needed a break or to leave the market to tend to some business by going to other markets or yard sales (during the summer months). Rick was also the first person to agree to me doing participant observation with him. This was extremely beneficial for me insofar as it provided the opportunity for me to be seen working by other vendors.

Some vendors did not have a good relationship with Rick and spending time at Rick's booth initially led to these vendors being cautious around me. As I learned at the market, loyal customers and trusted vendors got along well as parts of cliques, but boundaries were quickly formed when a person was associated with a rival clique or competitor. I had to work hard to prevent myself from being seen as Rick's friend or ally in order to build relationships with other vendors.

One of the things that struck me about Rick was how messy he was. I would not call him disorganized because he did his best to organize his space and everything had a place. However, there was clutter everywhere. He would sell a pile of stuff and by the next weekend (if not by the end of the day) there would be just as much new product in its place. I realized that Rick had more in common with Bob Chiasson at Plan B than he let on. Of all the people at Plan B, Bob had the most significant messiness/organizational problem. Bob often joked that he had to get into business because he realized that he was a “late stage four hoarder.”

Rick suffered from the same mentality. Perhaps suffering is not the best way to describe this, but part of what drove Rick, as a used-goods collectibles dealer, was the thrill of the hunt. It was not enough to have an amazing amount of sellable product with nowhere to put it. He needed more—always more—and sometimes it was too much. Since he was essentially a one person operation (his mother offered more moral support than labour), he would quickly find himself overwhelmed by new inventory. He would talk about how he needed to avoid buying anything during the week, but by the following weekend he would have a cart-load of new items to add to his inventory. By the middle of the summer it was difficult to move around in his space. He would spend all day trying to organize a section only to fill up the newly vacated space with the mixed-up piles of stuff that were cluttering other parts of his booth or that he had purchased or traded for during the day.

As he explained to me, he could not let any good deal slip through his hands: maybe one of his competitors would buy it instead and get an edge on him by having better product; maybe the person would not contact him to sell stuff next time if he did not purchase the collection when it was offered to him; he might miss out on a referral if he did not buy the collection, as the seller almost certainly had friends who might want to sell their stuff too; and, worst of all, if the

collection he was offered had somewhat unique items, it was possible that he would not have the opportunity to purchase the same thing again anytime soon.

There is a certain hectic panic that goes through the minds of some used-goods dealers which serves as a justification for making purchases despite already having more than enough stuff. All of these misgivings about letting a collection slip through one's fingers are possible outcomes for not buying a collection. Since used-goods dealers do not operate the same way as first-cycle retailers, they cannot call a wholesaler and order new inventory when they sell their stuff (though some used-goods dealers certainly also sell new items and have accounts with wholesalers as a matter of course). When people would complain about the prices of vintage collectibles, Rick would explain to people that, for example, "he could not just call Kenner and order a bunch of 1970s Star Wars action figures. Kenner doesn't exist anymore." Hence, it was bad business to turn stuff away.

Rick constantly spoke about how he wanted to open a new store, but instead of focusing on pursuing this goal he just kept buying more and more stuff. The dream of having a new shop lacked any sense of urgency and Rick became complacent in continuing to buy more stuff than he needed rather than actually pursuing a retail space that he could afford. This continued throughout my time in the field. It was only after the price of entry to the Harbourview was raised to two dollars that Rick noticed a major shift in his revenue and started to seriously look for a new space in summer of 2016. With fewer attendees and dwindling sales, Rick found himself pursuing a brick and mortar store for real. The situation had changed at the Harbourview and survival meant leaving the market as his revenue continued to decline.

8.6 Barry's Books

I met Barry during my first day of fieldwork. An older gentleman, Barry would spend his market days seated in his chair reading books, particularly non-fiction. Originally a New Yorker, Barry was easily identifiable in a crowd due to his accent and his penchant for trying to make a deal. Barry was among the first Harbourview vendors who I met, due to his proximity to Rick (he was set up in the booth next to him) and I quickly realized that he was a very intellectual man. I thought we might hit it off, but it took a while.

During our initial encounter, I explained my intentions as a researcher. His interest seemed piqued, but he appeared to be more interested in selling me books than in talking about anything else. This makes sense, given his purpose in coming to the market was to sell things. When I told him that I rarely read for pleasure, instead enjoying other forms of media during my leisure time, he lost interest. During my initial weeks at the Harbourview, we had polite, casual conversations during smoke breaks, but I always felt that he was trying to sell me something.

I would eventually realize that Barry's presence at the market was motivated by three things: making some spending money, using down time to feed his appetite for the written word, and meeting people who were also avid bibliophiles. His salesmanship was not only an attempt to get a person to buy a book, but to chat with them about reading. When he asked a passerby, "What do you like to read?" he was not merely trying to sell something (though this was implicit in the question); instead, he was trying to get people to talk about their love of the written word.

In the middle of March, 2014, Barry tried to sell me some anthropology books, which I already owned. We chatted about anthropology for a few minutes and then, to my surprise, he asked me if I could watch his space while he went for a smoke. I agreed and offered to help him out any time.

Towards the end of March, Barry started to ask me to look after his space more often, so he could go for a smoke, order some food or use the bathroom. I was happy to oblige. Then, on April 6, he approached me with an offer I could not refuse. He took me aside and informed me that he was hoping to go on vacation in a few weeks and wanted me to run his booth at that time. I was flattered. This was a great opportunity to learn more about Barry and his book selling strategies. In order to do this, I would have to shadow him and, after some negotiation, Barry agreed to me shadowing him as a participant observer starting the following weekend. He showed me how he organized his books before we parted ways for the day.

The thing about Barry's Books is that to the naked eye it was disorganized chaos. Rather than use book shelves to hold his books, Barry stacked old milk crates on top of each other from floor to ceiling. The crates were stacked on their sides, creating make-shift shelving units. This was certainly a cheaper solution to storing the books than purchasing and assembling actual book shelves, but some customers and vendors told me that they thought his set-up was an eyesore. Yet, this was not the biggest problem with how his books were displayed: milk crates are not designed to be stacked on their sides and the crates on the bottom of his stacks had plastic stressing and were starting to buckle. I assumed that it was only a matter of time before one of these stacks of milk crates filled with books would come toppling down.

Unfortunately, Barry's vacation plans changed during the week and when I met with him the following Saturday, he had changed his mind about me shadowing him as a participant observer. We kept in contact over the next few weekends and he even helped me to buy some French verb conjugation books. Then, one morning, he changed his mind again.

The following is from my field notes on May 3, 2014.

Before I entered the market, I watched Barry arrive and we had a chat while we smoked cigarettes. He had changed his mind and wanted me to follow him as an apprentice, which I happily agreed to do. After we went inside, I stopped by the café to order breakfast. After ordering my food, I went to see Barry. Unfortunately, one of his shelves had collapsed during the week.

Barry looked deflated and asked me to start moving stuff while he went to order breakfast. I slowly removed books and milk crates so that I could make enough space to get into the section that had collapsed under the weight of his books.

Barry sat and read as I went about sorting his stock. He went over pricing with me and I went to work pricing some of the books (mostly kid's books, as most of the other genres were already priced). I also sorted his VHS tapes and removed some of the old price stickers from numerous books. By noon, I was pretty much finished sorting books.



Figure 21: A Picture of Barry's Books taken on May 19, 2014

After I finished setting everything back into place, he thanked me for my work and suggested that I go for a walk around the market. I checked back a couple of times and helped him sort some more stuff. He was not talkative then either and spent most of his time reading. By 2 pm we had parted ways, but I agreed to continue to shadow him more tomorrow.

The following is taken from my field notes on May 4, 2014:

For much of the day, I sat with Barry and tried to help him make sales. It was slow and he told me that he did not make much yesterday. Today seemed like he would not fare any better. I approached his clients with enthusiasm and did my best to help. They all seemed to be looking for something that Barry did not have in stock. As they day went on, Barry encouraged me to sit and read, like he normally did.



Figure 22: Barry in the section that had collapsed a couple of weeks after we had rearranged everything. The book display did not collapse again after this. Picture taken on May 19, 2014.

We chatted about how he got into the business. He told me that he has loved books for a long time and collected them for years. After much thought, he decided to purchase four truckloads of books from a library sale and then another huge lot from the church across the street from the Harbourview. He then set up shop for a few years in Dartmouth prior to coming to the Harbourview. His shop just was not working anymore and the Harbourview enabled him to stay in business.

Barry shared some tips with me as I tried to help him make sales. One thing that he insisted on was that rather than talking to customers in the first person (“I”), use the second person (“we can help you out”). He claimed that this was more inclusive and that he started doing this as a school teacher to entice students into doing their homework: “We have a paper due tomorrow.” It made sense and I watched him consistently address clients this way. He also told me that his strategy was to greet people, ask them if they needed help, or what they were looking for, and then allow them to browse. “This prevents people from thinking you are looking over their shoulders,” he insisted.

As things were slow, I asked Barry how much he usually sells. He emphasized that he often does quite well and that this weekend was an exception. You just would not know it because he was always sitting reading and rarely looked busy. He complained that his biggest problem was that there were not any “book addicts” anymore and that he rarely had people stop by who were hungry for buying books just for the sake of buying them. I suspect that what he was experiencing resulted from a change in dominant media consumption from the written word to film, television and video games.⁵²

⁵² I imagine that Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) would be horrified by a world where a love of books had been usurped by the general public’s interest in other forms of media that they found

Later, Barry introduced me to one of his associates, who he subsequently explained was retired and bored and had deep pockets. As they chatted, Barry tried to sell him his book business and also offered him a partnership. I was surprised, not so much by his actions, but by how abruptly the business propositions seemed to take place. Barry laid it on thick. I saw the salesman come out of him. His associate seemed anxious and trapped, but Barry was very convincing. “For [x amount of dollars] you can buy it all or for half that amount you can become a 50% partner and you can take all of the money we make until the amount is paid off.” His associate’s interest was piqued enough that he agreed to meet sometime during the next week to discuss the matter further, but his body language suggested to me that this would merely be a pleasantry. Barry seemed tired of the business and the flea market scene. He was ready to move on and if that was not a possibility at least wanted the flexibility to take certain weekends off.

For the remainder of my fieldwork I would often give Barry a hand when he needed help. His interest in my eBay business led to us discussing how he might be able to use the internet to attract more clients and I agreed to post an advertisement for Barry’s Books on Kijiji every week that I was still in the field. I am not sure if the advertisement helped Barry to increase his sales, but he did tell me that he noticed more customers after I posted it online.

Barry was unable to convince his associate to buy into the business and quietly expressed to me his desire to move on from the business a few more times before my fieldwork ended. If anything, my days conducting participant observation with him in May, 2014, had encouraged

highly suspect as part of the culture industry. Ultimately, however, this decline in “book addicts” is evidence of shifting tastes towards other forms of media that has occurred over time.

him to rearrange his space a bit more and he was able to open up a few more sections that had previously been inaccessible to customers due to clutter.

The story of Rick and Barry's arrival and commitment to the Harbourview is similar insofar as they both used the opening of the market as a refuge for their shuttered brick and mortar stores. That said, this was a story of two men who were headed in opposite directions. Rick wanted to use the Harbourview (and Plan B) to grow his inventory and to build his capital back up with the goal of opening a new store down the road. In September, 2016, Rick finally achieved his goal, signing a commercial lease in Dartmouth that enabled him to open a new brick and mortar store by the end of the year. Barry, on the other hand, has no desire to open another used-book store and continued to wind down as he prepared for his twilight years.

Another one of the Harbourview's large tenants had also been trying to build enough capital to open a store, but his story was quite different, as he did not arrive at the Harbourview after shuttering a store. Instead, this individual, Bill Arsenault, had been slowly biding his time for over a decade.

8.7 GAU Games and the Dream of a Brick and Mortar Store

I met Bill prior to commencing fieldwork at the Harbourview through my business. As a video game re-seller, we had crossed paths a few times after I moved to Halifax and we had already built a great rapport. Bill had been at the Harbourview since its inception. Prior to that had sold at the Penhorn Mall flea market since the late 1990s. When he started at the Harbourview, he only rented a couple of tables and had a very small inventory, which he quickly grew. He was, at first, a moonlighter, spending his evenings working as a commissionaire. Yet, as his inventory and sales grew, he moved to a larger space at the back of the market and he

eventually quit his job to focus on the video game business full-time, registering his business, GAU Games, with the province. Bill was in it for the long haul and dreamt of opening a shop.

As GAU grew, Bill arranged for two of his friends to start helping out on the weekends. Shawn and Scott were constants at GAU and had arranged a deal with Bill that was, at the time, convenient and lucrative for all three men. Shawn and Scott were video game aficionados who had a specific interest in Japanese video games and consoles. Shawn and Scott started to import games and hardware from Japan and GAU gained a reputation for being the only place in Atlantic Canada that carried a wide inventory of foreign video games and consoles.

Shawn was not a paid employee, but Scott did receive remuneration on occasion. Instead, both men were allowed to use the space to sell foreign video games and Bill would take a commission from their sales. The men were expected to work for Bill on the weekends and they developed a standard routine that had taken hold over a number of years.

Early in my fieldwork, a fourth man joined the GAU crew, Bill's brother-in-law, Richard Clarke. Richard had a very warm, bubbly personality. Richard was an amateur console and computer repair specialist and was looking to hone his trade. Bill and the other video game vendors at the market did not have the skillset to repair non-working consoles and had been outsourcing such work to several other repair people. Having Richard become GAU's main repairman helped to give Bill an edge, while also helping to informally employ his brother-in-law and help him get out of the house.

It was Bill who first managed to convince Paul to let certain vendors open on weekdays (Wednesday through Friday). Being able to open outside of regular market hours enabled Bill to operate his business as if it were a brick and mortar store, but without as much freedom as he would have had were he to rent a standalone retail space. In order to facilitate this, Bill moved

his space to the side of the building so that customers could access the market's side entrance. This was the only way that Paul could ensure that people were not sneaking into the market during days that it was closed. By the time that I started fieldwork, Bill had only recently made the move and was focused on trying to bring more customers to his space during his weekday hours.

During his weekday hours at the Harbourview, Bill started to partner up with another vendor who was selling cellphone accessories and providing a cellphone unlocking service. This other individual was of the same mind as Bill and was planning to open a brick and mortar store of his own. As they both bided their time, tried to build capital and increase their client base, I accompanied them on trips to look at the exteriors of potential retail locations. Their idea was to continue this informal partnership by renting space together in order to minimize their starting costs. However, as the months went by, the other vendor decided that he could not wait any longer for Bill to commit and left on his own, eventually opening a kiosk in a different part of the city. For Bill, the risks outweighed the potential benefits. As a result, he was left behind. Instead, Bill continued to plug away at building the capital required to pursue his dream.

For businesses like GAU Games, being registered and remitting taxes actually creates a disadvantage in a competitive environment where not all competitors are doing the same thing. In my interviews with a handful of Harbourview customers, one thing stood out: in addition to the search for great deals or desired collectibles, customers loved that they did not have to pay tax at the market. What the customers who I interviewed failed to realize was that in some cases they were paying tax, but that the vendor in question was backing the tax off of the purchase price, rather than charging tax in addition to the price.

Bill could not afford to add Nova Scotia's 15% HST to the purchase price for fear that it would deter customers. He had to back the tax off his sales because charging tax would not go over well with clients at a market where no other vendor added HST to their sticker prices. As such, tax became additional overhead that was hidden in the price of the goods for sale. As a result, remitting tax led to smaller profit margins. Due to his smaller sales margins, he was not able to offer as much as his competitors for games and consoles. Being a registered business put GAU at a disadvantage. Bill was able to succeed because of the arrangement that he had with Shawn and Scott that enabled him to take advantage of their cheap labour. That is, until they stopped working for him.

GAU Games faced great difficulties when Shawn's health started to deteriorate. In the summer of 2014 he started to experience vision problems, a complication from his diabetes. This led to a series of surgeries that prevented him from being able to attend the market on a weekly basis. Unlike Bill, both Shawn and Scott had day jobs. Both men loved to come to the market to tinker, talk shop and make a few sales. They were moonlighting, but when Shawn was not able to come as consistently, it created a gap that was hard to fill.

Shawn's absence started to take its toll. GAU had previously been a well-oiled machine, but I started to notice that Scott and Bill were not getting along as well as usual. The summer was a slow time for sales and Bill was starting to get stressed out. This was compounded by Shawn's absence and there were weeks when Bill did not make enough money to pay Scott what he was owed. It seemed like big changes might be coming for this most tight-knit of crews at the Harbourview.

The move to the side entrance had gone smoothly, but Bill continued to struggle to make sales. He and I would discuss ways to drum up more business, like having a sale or offering higher than average trade value for a fixed period of time. Yet, when he tried to implement any such change, the boon always seemed short-lived and it was back to the drawing board. Eventually, Bill started selling items on Amazon.ca and he sought my advice as he dabbled with the new selling strategy.

Bill relied on old price charts that he had designed himself and often would look up the prices of games that people were offering to sell or trade using his price lists, not acknowledging that prices are dynamic and that they may have changed dramatically since he first did his research. This also put him at a competitive disadvantage because, since video games have become one of the most popular collectibles of our time, there are many savvy wheelers and “wannabe” dealers who exploit holes in other dealers’ pricing in order to buy games to flip. This influx of shadowy wannabes led Bill and the other video game vendors at the Harbourview to become more diligent with their pricing.

Many of these small businesses and shadowy wannabees made a pittance and were not necessarily generating enough revenue to apply for a tax number, but some businesses at the Harbourview did generate enough revenue to justify operating formally. The main advantage was not having to worry about tax compliance. However, informal rivals could pay more for inventory, eroding GAU’s buying power. Wannabe dealers had so little overhead that they could pay even more for stuff than market vendors (as the wannabes did not pay rent or have to worry about remitting tax). As a result, the wannabes started to corner places like Kijiji, which had previously been important sources of inventory procurement for GAU. In this example, we find a registered (formal) business operating in a market that is also a formal business housing

numerous formal and informal businesses (as well as itinerant vendors who might not even be justifiably considered businesses at all). Said businesses then cater (often unknowingly) to rival, wannabe businesses that are operating in a way that is entirely informal.

That all of these types of transactions are happening simultaneously, under one roof, demonstrates the heterogeneous nature of the business practices found at places like flea markets. Even within GAU, the crew's employees, Shawn, Scott and Richard, were essentially informal labourers, who traded their labour for the opportunity to sell some of their own stuff, while being remunerated for their work only on occasion. Like Plan B, the Harbourview was a place where formal and informal blurred together; the space was simultaneously formal and informal. It was the interplay of various economic behaviours, the co-occurrences of which enabled the market and the businesses it housed to function every weekend. That said, one thing stands out as being a common denominator amongst vendors at these sites: regardless of their goals, their backgrounds, or the things that they had for sale, all of these vendors wanted to be there. The vendors at Plan B and the Harbourview vended by choice and their individual pursuits were not the result of exclusion from the formal economy or due to some kind of supposed precarity. Some weeks were good, others were bad and most were somewhere in between, but week after week these vendors returned to these places voluntarily. This was even true for the small number of market participants who worked as informal employees, like the crew that worked for GAU.

Despite being a close-knit crew, Bill's employees were very friendly with the other video game vendors at the market. Part of Shawn and Scott's interest in coming to the market every weekend was that they might be able to acquire interesting and unique items for their personal collections. Bill certainly helped to facilitate this by trying to source items for Shawn and Scott's

collections, but Shawn and Rick became particularly close and Rick was also constantly trying to help Shawn find collectibles he was looking for.

Before Shawn's vision problems put him out of commission, Rick started to employ him intermittently to operate his booth on weekends when he could not be present. Rick would occasionally attend other events as a vendor (such as record fairs) and did not want to close his booth at the Harbourview in order to sell somewhere else. This led to a certain amount of antagonism between Bill and Shawn. For Shawn, the occasional work offered by Rick provided him a small amount of remuneration that he was not receiving from Bill. For Bill, Shawn's involvement with Rick was something of a slight.

The competitive nature of the market and the large number of vendors selling video games led to most game vendors complaining about low sales on a weekly basis. There were four vendors who were exclusively selling video games or who had video games as a major part of their inventory, as well as at least six others who had some video games for sale. More games did not lead to more customers. The increasing number of vendors selling games led to a smaller piece of the pie for vendors like Bill, and one of his rival video game vendors ended up quitting the market prior to me leaving the field. When this happened, the other three main game vendors were able to increase their sales, but Bill in particular would lament that things were not as good as they used to be when he was the sole video game vendor.

By July, Shawn's health had stabilized to the point that he was becoming active at the market again, but he was helping Rick more often. Rick had also started to offer continuous business to Richard regarding console repairs and Scott was starting to hang out at Rick's booth too. The slow sales pace of summer was taking its toll on all of the vendors at the Harbourview,

but this seemed to be affecting GAU crew members in particular. When things were not going well at GAU all of the members of the crew were at each other's throats. The men remained civil with each other, but all four of them were starting to get hung up on minor details and small cracks in their relationships with each other started to widen. At the beginning of 2015, several months after I left the field, Shawn and Scott parted ways from GAU. They literally crossed the floor to work with Rick, who had offered them a more lucrative arrangement to work with him instead of GAU. Richard continued to work with Bill, but he too became less and less tied to GAU. When Rick opened his new store, Lost World, down the street from the market, Scott, Shawn and even Richard went with him (though all four men maintained ties to the market). Bill, on the other hand, continued to try to build capital to platform to his own store, but remained at the market.

8.8 Discussion

Few vendors at Plan B and the Harbourview actually envisioned their endeavours as their livelihoods. For those that did, however, platforming was often a goal. The reality is that most used-goods vendors at each site were moonlighting from their day jobs and most moonlighters saw their endeavours as a second revenue stream resulting from doing something they enjoyed. People like Séb were rare insofar as he was a moonlighter operating a registered business. Most moonlighters did not make enough money to justify business registration and did not treat their operations as businesses like Séb did. The reality is that Séb, like most of the moonlighters who I met, did not need the shop or market to make ends meet. As such, many of these moonlighter businesses were as much hobbies as businesses.

For a small group of vendors, however, vending was their primary source of income. These vendors relied on the market or the shop in order to pay their bills and get by and maybe

even get ahead. The younger vendors who I met who relied on their vending as primary sources of income dreamed of opening their own stores, but there were also vendors who had previously operated their own shops, but had watched the fruit of their labours disappear and ended up at these sites as brick and mortar “refugees.” Rick, Barry and even Bill Mont found themselves at the Harbourview for these reasons, as well as several vendors from Plan B who I have not profiled. For older vendors, like Barry, the idea of opening another store was not a goal. He was looking to get out of the business in order to enjoy retirement. In contrast, Rick scrounged and planned and eventually was able to open a new store after years of being such a refugee.

Plan B itself was the result of vendors wanting to platform. That said, Plan B is unique insofar as the original vendors could not afford to go out on their own without the help of other Harbourview vendors (and ultimately a few other vendors who were not originally involved in the Harbourview when the shop first opened). Other than Rick and Bob, all of the founders of the shop had moved on to other things by the time I entered the field (including a few who had opened their own stores after using Plan B to platform). However, platforming was relatively rare. During the year that I was in the field, only three Harbourview vendors opened their own shops (all of which are still open years later) and only two Plan B vendors did the same (though both of these shops failed within one year). I met as many refugees as I did platformers when I was in the field. Since the time of my research platforming has become rarer still.

Rick opened Lost World in November, 2016, as the culmination of his years of trying to build enough capital to re-open his store. He blamed the increased cost of the client door fee for declining sales and this became a major catalyst for platforming when he did. Séb stopped selling at Plan B in 2015 (as well as quitting his IT job) in order to help his wife build her homecare business and to become a stay-at-home dad. He joked that it was like being retired. He continued

to sell odds and ends through various internet sites such as eBay. In the summer of 2017, Barry was deported. It seems that he never applied for permanent residency and had been living in Canada illegally. Whether or not his business was also operating illegally when it was a brick and mortar store is a question I have not been able to answer. In September, 2017, Bill left the Harbourview too, partnering with Cape and Cowl, an established comic shop in Lower Sackville (which is a community in the HRM). He reached a point where he was not making enough money to continue at the Harbourview and his exit strategy had been in the works for several months. Only time will tell whether or not this new opportunity as part of a shop will work out for Bill and GAU games. Either way, he finally achieved his dream of operating out of his own brick and mortar store.

Besides Rick and Bill, I do not know of any other vendors who have platformed from Plan B or the Harbourview to their own shops in the three years since I left the field. The turnover rate at both sites has been much larger than the number of people who have tried to platform. So many people have come and gone from Plan B and the Harbourview in the years since I left the field that I hardly recognize anyone at either site anymore. Such is the transitory nature of moonlighting and the used-goods trade. Yet, for every Rick and Bill there is always someone new who shares a similar dream and this is part of the power and appeal of selling at used-goods markets. Small-scale vending takes a lot of work, but does not require the economic capital or risks that opening a store from nothing entails.

Many vendors are not able to turn their efforts into a lucrative primary source of income (if they even want to do so), but some do. There are dozens of shops in the HRM that are now owned by former Plan B and Harbourview vendors (and many more that have opened and closed). They may not have ever opened were it not for these smaller-scale venues. Making a

living is not easy, but for some people who aspire to own their own brick and mortar businesses, places like the Harbourview and Plan B offer an opportunity to hone their trade and test the viability of their ideas and goals with little financial risk. For those who do not dream of owning their own stores, such venues offer an opportunity to socialize, earn some pocket money and cultivate their hobbies as buyers and sellers of the stuff they love.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

My final day at the Harbourview was August, 31, 2014. I arrived well before the doors opened and, as usual, I paid the one-dollar entry fee. For the first time during my fieldwork, Paul witnessed me pay. “What are you doing? Why are you paying to get in?” Paul asked. I explained that I had paid the dollar entry fee every single day that I had been in the field. The woman taking money at the door confirmed this and Paul cracked a smile. He did not expect me to pay to enter the market, but I explained that it was a privilege to be allowed to conduct research at his venue and that I wanted to make sure that I made my contribution to keeping the space open. He seemed tickled by this small gesture and thanked me for it.

As the day went on, vendors seemed to be hiding something from me. People came to shake my hand and to tell me how much they would miss me. But, it seemed like something was going on just outside of my line of sight and at certain moments during the day vendors tried to lead me away from certain parts of the market. I was not sure why, but I decided to follow their lead. To my surprise, just before the end of the day, Paul and one of the vendors presented me with a card, signed by more than half of the vendors, expressing how much I would be missed. Another vendor, who sold baked goods, gave me a basket of home-made pastries. Many vendors had come and gone during my time in the field, but there was only one other occasion when the vendors had come together to sign a card for a fellow vendor, and this particular vendor had been quite ill. As the market came to a close for the day, vendors shook my hand, gave me hugs and told me about how much my presence had meant to them. One vendor even made me an origami decoration as a symbol of our camaraderie. I drove a few vendors home and then drove home myself, delighted by the connections I had made and the memories we shared.

In the years since I left the field, I have only returned to the Harbourview occasionally. Every time I stop in, I notice radical changes. Many of the vendors who I met have moved on to other things, but many others continue to vend each weekend at the market.

Unfortunately, the owners of the building have continued to let it fall into disrepair. In the winter of 2015, power outlet and heating problems plagued the venue. Paul quietly started to look for a new space to rent but has not found something suitable. Expenses continue to increase, despite the building's decay, and in the spring of 2016, Paul was forced to raise the price of admission to \$2 per person. I have continued to chat about the market with a handful of vendors with whom I have kept in close contact and some worry that the market is in decline because of the state of the building and the increased cost of admission. One vendor went so far as to say that, "What Paul fails to realize is that we are his clients. The people paying the entry fee are our clients." Ultimately, the vendors feared it would drive their customers away.

Nevertheless, some vendors continue to build capital to pursue their dream of opening brick and mortar stores and there are many new faces at the market. Those who intend to stay at the market hope that a new venue will be found by the time the current lease expires. For those who intend to move on to bigger and better things the market continues to be an important source of capital as they pursue their long-term goals. I hope that my profile of the market demonstrates to readers the importance of this venue for fledgling entrepreneurs. The Harbourview Weekend Market deserves credit for what it offers to small-scale entrepreneurs; that is, a place to chase their dreams. The same is true for Plan B.

9.1 Theoretical Contributions

In Chapter 1.2, I present the two sets of questions that this dissertation answers, both of which are framed around entrepreneurship:

1. How do used-goods vendors in Atlantic Canada engage in formal and informal economic practices as part of their entrepreneurial goals? How do these practices differ from or confirm expectations about informal economic activities found in contemporary debates that predominantly focus on activities found in the Global South?
2. What factors affect how used goods vending markets and vendors in Atlantic Canada make a living (or not)? How do venues and vendors address issues such as community involvement, gentrification, clientelization and cultural distinctions as characteristics of the re-configuration of the used-goods trade in this region?

In order to address these questions, I have focused on the following theoretical frameworks: a) the informal economy; b) the entanglement of economic and social relations at weekly markets; c) the local community; and d) the relationship between distinction, mass culture and gentrification. Throughout this dissertation, I have treated the literature regarding the informal economy as my primary research framework. Though significant, I have treated the remaining frameworks as secondary. Of these secondary frameworks, I consider the issue of embeddedness as implicit in structuring this dissertation: economic relations at the market and the shop do not exist without being directed or affected by social relations. As I have shown, each site relies on the social relations of participants in order to function. This often hinges on invoking community, but the role of information search and bargaining is also important in relationships between buyers and sellers. Much of this is manifested in the political hierarchies of vendors at each site.

My research findings allow for theoretical contributions to literature about each of these topics. In this final chapter, I will explain how my research findings complement and deviate from expectations found in literature about these topics, while explicitly answering the two

research questions. Prior to answering the questions, I will go into more detail about how my research findings contribute to a broader understanding of the concepts that I am working with here.

9.2 Distinction, Gentrification and the Local Community

During my time in the field, I was quite interested in learning about how vendors attempted to distinguish themselves from each other in relation to vendors within the same sites and vendors working at different sites. In the field I encountered a few ways through which this was expressed, relying on Bourdieu's (1984) *distinction* concept regarding how class differences can be expressed through the cultivation of taste. There are a couple of ways that distinction can happen: a) venues can be designed to cater to their clientele as different from other similar venues, by cultivating relationships based on the tastes of clients (while also attempting to cultivate new tastes); and, b) vendors can attempt to do the same thing in their attempts at clientelization.

The difficulty in employing the distinction concept is that many used-goods vendors sell products derived from popular culture and the culture industry. Since people of all class backgrounds can and do consume the products of popular culture, interpreting class backgrounds through purchases becomes increasingly difficult. As such, class differences are difficult to ascertain through the preconceived tastes and the cultivation of new tastes that derive from the culture industry. Indeed, many collectibles buyers may have been cultural omnivores (see Peterson, 1992). If the omnivore thesis holds true then the only way to make assumptions about collectibles purchases was when a customer spent a large sum on a single item. Instead, class backgrounds were easier to identify amongst buyers and sellers who specialized in used household items, insofar as people looking for cheap housewares were more likely to have less

money at their disposal than people looking for higher end used goods (that were not derived from popular culture). Fortunately, there are other ways to address distinction that were evident at each of my research sites.

My research suggests that gentrification is one avenue for employing the distinction concept. In this case, the connection between distinction and gentrification applies to the different relationships that each site has with their surrounding neighbourhoods. Plan B is part of the gentrification process in its neighbourhood, while the Harbourview is at odds with it. This is because each site expresses a different relationship to the changes in their neighbourhoods in terms of their “gentrification aesthetics” (Bridge, 2001; and Slater, 2011). Not only has Plan B become part of the gentrification process in its neighbourhood, it does so by manufacturing “hipness” and presenting itself as an artistic hotspot. The alt-rock, punk, “cool factor,” helps to make Plan B distinct from other used-goods marketplaces in the HRM, while catering to the changing aesthetic of Gottingen Street.

Beyond distinction, it is also evident that differences between vendors and the two sites rely on community building. Vendors at each site express themselves as being part of larger communities that are formed through selling at the shop or market. This is based on the erection of Cohen-esque (1985) symbolic boundaries as well as becoming committed to the places where vendors do business. As such, vendors attempt to engage in, maintain and further their communities while also achieving their own goals. In many ways they are successful at doing so. However, when employing the language of the “buy local” movement as part of channelling the “local community,” many of the vendors who I met were employing a sort of bandwagon jumping that did not rely on a critical engagement with the movement itself. The following

sections will examine the various ways through which differences are created and maintained at and between these two research sites.

9.2.1 Invocations of Community and *The Local* at Each Research Site

From the beginning, Plan B has attempted to cater to its neighbourhood, albeit with various levels of success. The cooperative is designed to give small-scale used-goods and crafts sellers an opportunity to build their businesses and to experiment with products in a low-cost setting. Yet, the cooperative also attempts to attain a kind of community by presenting itself as a community hub. It has done so in a variety of ways, including: attracting news media; promoting itself through social media; offering opportunities for musicians, niche groups and artists (among others) to host events at its gallery space; and participating in city-wide events (such as *Nocturne* and the Halifax Fringe Festival).

The Harbourview Weekend Market has not involved its neighbourhood in the same way. The market is owned by one person and the emphasis is two-fold: making enough money to pay the bills in order to keep the market viable and being a springboard for small businesses that are trying to build enough capital and clientele to open their own brick and mortar stores. These are both important goals and over the course of my time at the market I watched a small number of vendors leave to open brick and mortar shops. However, the market rarely holds community-oriented events or makes attempts to involve the neighbourhood where it is located. Yet, the Harbourview remains an important venue for market participants. It is a place for social integration, social relations and entrepreneurship. This just does not manifest itself as part of a general neighbourhood relationship in the same way that is found at Plan B.

Ultimately, the social element is critical to the functioning of each of these marketplaces. Based on my description of Plan B in this section, the role of social relations for the success of

the site should be obvious. Plan B presents itself as a community hub and participates in wide ranging activities that take place on the street and the city more generally throughout the year. The social element of economic relations is just as significant for the functioning of the Harbourview, even if this is not as obvious. The Harbourview does not engage its surrounding neighbourhood or the local community to the same extent as Plan B, but this does not mean that the Harbourview is devoid of community and community relations. Despite being a competitive environment (in comparison to the cooperative environment of Plan B), the Harbourview is an important community for the people who vend and shop there. The market allows for social integration and social relationships to flourish and competing vendors create their own groups and political hierarchies that come together when external forces threaten the market as a whole.

Despite Plan B's attempt at being a community hub, the shop is not part of a broader government-based civic agenda. It is also unlikely that if the Harbourview became more community oriented it would receive the level of government support that farmers' markets in Halifax rely on. Some of this has to do with government assumptions about class relations and the types of clientele that used-goods businesses cater to and, in Dartmouth specifically, this should not be surprising given the toothless land-use bylaw directed towards "junk" dealers (which I will return to later in this chapter). Yet, this does not explain everything. Instead, I have come to learn through my time in the field that various levels of government are more likely to be indifferent towards used-goods sellers and venues than they are to antagonize them. The structural problems regarding a lack of communication between various government bodies that I have mentioned in this dissertation (be they bylaw enforcement, health inspectors, fire marshals and so on) are not directed towards my research sites and point to larger problems with different government arms not communicating with each other. For vendors at both sites, this was

particularly perplexing at the municipal level, especially as Plan B and Harbourview vendors attempted to channel their interpretations of what it means to be “local” in their business endeavours.

For the most part, these manifestations of local-ness did not rely on critical conceptualizations or an attempt to advance the buy local movement in a concrete way. Many vendors who I met were interested in employing the local concept as a means of drumming up customer interest. For most vendors, “local” generally referred to that fact that they “lived here,” rather than searching for a deeper meaning. Declarations of “living here” failed to engage with the wider meanings behind the buy local movement, which is directed against large corporations, catering to the development of social integration in surrounding communities/neighbourhoods and, in many cases, encourages sustainable and environmentally friendly business practices.

Vendors at both research sites saw their venues as communities. Despite Plan B being cooperative and Harbourview being competitive, vendors at each site saw themselves as being important parts of the venues where they sold their wares. It was not difficult for vendors at either site to create symbolic boundaries between their venues and other similar venues around the HRM. Due to Plan B’s unique history as resulting from a majority of original members platforming to the shop from the Harbourview, Plan B members had little difficulty in comparing their shop to the Harbourview as distinctly different places. Despite platforming from the Harbourview being an important part of Plan B’s identity narrative, vendors had also constructed symbolic boundaries between themselves and the venue that led to the shop’s formation in the first place. These are the types of things that we should expect following Cohen’s (1985) work on community.

Harbourview vendors were less likely to talk about Plan B in terms of the symbolic boundaries that Cohen (1985) describes. In fact, few Harbourview vendors were even aware of Plan B's existence. This was mostly due to the large number of vendors who had joined the market after Plan B opened. Instead, Harbourview vendors were more likely to compare themselves to (and complain about) the three other flea markets that were open in the HRM at the time. One of these markets opened just down the street from the Harbourview a month before I entered the field. It was particularly common for me to hear competing Harbourview vendors complain about this new rival market together. As direct competition, it makes sense that Harbourview vendors would erect symbolic boundaries against rival flea markets rather than a used-goods shop that few were aware of, regardless of a common history.

There is more to the establishment of community than symbolic boundary formation. As discussed in Chapter 3.2.1, Amit (2010) identifies three strategic, intersecting points at which the ambiguities of community arise (p. 359): a) joint commitment; b) affect-belonging; and c) forms of association. As communities, both Plan B and Harbourview vendors engage in joint commitments with each other in order for their venues to survive. This is related to affect-belonging, which refers to a sense of belonging to a collectivity (*ibid.*). The forms of association at both venues are radically different (cooperative vs. competitive), but this does not prevent members of either venue from seeing themselves as belonging to a larger community. It does not matter that Harbourview vendors in particular are in direct competition with each other. When something external affects the market as a whole, vendors rally together. Joint commitment and affect-belonging usually hold things together in this competitive environment.

The glue that holds both sites together is economic. Without economic transactions, these places would not exist and clientelization would be impossible. Yet, these economic transactions

are embedded in social relations. This is true for relationships between vendors and clients: successful clientelization relies on the interplay of information search, bargaining and the performances of vendors and clients. This is also true for relationships between vendors at each site: despite one site being cooperative and the other being competitive, the boundary creations discussed earlier in this section hinge on the embeddedness of economic and social relations.

At each site, much of this social element is rooted in vendors catering to and fostering the discernment of taste amongst their clienteles based on the products they have on offer. This is part of what brings people to these venues in the first place. Collectibles dealers in particular have to become experts at brokering nostalgia. That said, catering to and developing tastes amongst clients is not easy, especially for used-goods sellers who dabble in the material culture of mass/pop culture.

9.2.2 Distinction and Mass Culture

As presented in Chapter 3.3, distinction is a class-based concept that relies on the discernment of taste. In its simplest form, the idea is that upper-class, middle-class and working-class tastes develop because of class relations and that manifestations of taste result in boundaries between the classes.

For used-goods sellers at the market and shop that I studied, the concept of distinction serves to underscore differences between the venues and differences between vendors within the same venue. It is also a useful way to think about how vendors deal with their clients. As such, we can think about how the market and the shop participants actively attempt to differentiate themselves from one another and other similar businesses (as separate, distinct fields) in terms of the cultivation of tastes. In particular, Plan B tries to foster a clientele that is interested in being “cool,” while the Harbourview attempts to attract a different sort of clientele by being “folksy.”

Vendors also attempt to cultivate tastes through their inventories. In terms of exclusively used goods at places like Plan B and the Harbourview, there are really two types of goods on offer: collectibles and non-collectibles. Plan B tries to present itself as being more upscale than the market where it originated by having an inventory that is made up mostly of collectibles on offer for its clientele. The shop emphasizes the antique, vintage and collectible nature of its ever-changing inventory, which attracts a clientele that hungers for such goods. At the same time, vendors within the shop unconsciously attempt to conceal internal differences that are based on different class backgrounds and business activities which may erode the cooperative emphasis of the venue.

At the Harbourview, distinctions between vendors are much more apparent. Vendors at the market come from various class backgrounds and are generally in direct competition with each another. This leads to vendors trying to distinguish themselves from others who sell similar products. They constantly search for better products to exert a sort of one-upmanship over each other. Having rarer and more valuable collectibles on offer attracts a higher end clientele, while also making the competition look less interesting in the eyes of potential clients. The types of goods on offer vary significantly at the market, as in addition to vendors selling antique, vintage or collectible items, there are also many selling housewares, bric-a-brac and low cost goods. It is possible to think of the Harbourview as not being one field, but potentially many overlapping fields in the same physical space.

Where distinction comes to the fore at both sites is in terms of the relationships between vendors and clients. The cultivation of the discernment of taste happens at the vendor-client level. However, due to the nature of the goods on offer, specialized vendors are catering to a clientele whose desire for pop culture goods serves to obscure class at the moment of exchange.

Plan B vendors, specializing in antique, vintage and/or collectible goods respond to the tastes of potential clients, while also teaching these same clients about the specific goods on offer as they try to generate excitement about their wares.⁵³

At the Harbourview, certain vendors who sell highly specialized products engage in similar relationships with potential clients insofar as they deal in similar antique, vintage and/or collectible items like vendors at Plan B. These specific vendors also help to train the tastes of their clients. At the same time, many Harbourview shoppers are instead searching for cheap household items or good deals. These differences between venues and between vendors within the same venue (particularly the Harbourview) can become the focus of symbolic struggles for distinction through which vendors seek to establish themselves as both guardians and architects of the discernment of taste(s). These symbolic struggles are, in effect, aspects of class struggle through which the habitus of the market and the shop are formed. That said, vendors (and the venues themselves) are not really the producers of distinction. Plan B may in fact be “selling cool,” but the shop itself does not have any real clout in the production of what is “cool” at a societal level.

The problem for all of this is that it is quite difficult to determine what a person’s economic class is when it comes to their purchasing of the goods of mass culture. It is possible to make guesses about people’s economic backgrounds or class based on what they are buying and selling, but this is not truly quantifiable. Instead, I argue that the products of mass culture and popular culture obscure class-relations and class backgrounds because the products of the culture industry induce a sort of class-levelling (see Gartman, 1991). Following Peterson (1992), there is

⁵³ However, this cultivation of the discernment of tastes can be quite difficult at Plan B considering that very few vendors are present at the same time and said cultivation requires some kind of social interaction.

a tendency for people with high amounts of economic or cultural capital to embrace various cultural forms that are based on tolerance, rather than snobbery when it comes to popular culture. These cultural omnivores exhibit taste, knowledge and participate in pop culture in broad ways. Cultural omnivorousness is part of the blurring of class relations through popular culture. As such, it is often impossible to tell whether a person purchasing an album by David Bowie, a New England Patriots jersey or a Star Wars action figure is upper-class or working-class based on the purchase itself. That said, not every Bowie, football or Star Wars collectible is equal and it is possible to make assumptions about a customer's economic status based on the amount that they are spending on a particular item.

Ultimately, the culture industry and the products of mass and pop culture succeed because they create and contribute to the language and behaviour of modern consumerism that everyone, regardless of class background, understands. As such, distinctions are blurred and obscured in the used goods collectibles market. This is compounded by the fact that vendors and shoppers tend to dress down and engage in other performances when attending used-good venues in order to appear poorer than they are with the intention of gaining an edge while haggling (see de La Pradelle, 2006, p. 173; and Medlin, 2008). This is something that I witnessed time and again.

9.2.3 Distinction and the Gentrification Aesthetic

Another contribution that my research makes to discussions of class distinctions is through the relationship between distinction and gentrification. This is particularly useful when comparing Plan B and the Harbourview, venues that find themselves on different paths regarding the gentrification of their neighbourhoods. As a process, gentrification pushes out long-

established residents and businesses in economically depressed areas, as more affluent residents and businesses take advantage of low-cost rent in such neighbourhoods.

One of the difficulties in approaching this topic is that gentrification literature tends to either focus on the experience of home buyers or renters, or the outcomes of gentrification where a neighbourhood has been transformed to the extent that small businesses have themselves been pushed out (even if said businesses played a role in gentrification earlier in the process). Of the many approaches to understanding gentrification that are present in the literature, I see Bridge's (2001) concept of the *gentrification aesthetic* as particularly appealing for explaining the role that small businesses can play in the gentrification process. Bridge uses the term "gentrification aesthetic" to highlight how real estate agents act as key intermediaries in the encounter between housing taste and price amongst prospective buyers. Hence the term refers to the way in which housing taste results in price at the market, revealing the boundary marking of gentrification as a form of distinction (p. 87).

As I have argued, businesses can and do partake in a type of gentrification aesthetic, which is itself a class distinction. Residents and businesses that fail to utilise this new aesthetic are pushed out and left behind, as more and more affluent residents and shoppers come to the neighbourhood. Rather than this being reflected in the price of buying or renting a home, the gentrification aesthetic, when applied to small businesses, may help to establish why some businesses succeed or fail in their participation in the process in terms of their ability (or not) to cater to the tastes of the residential gentrifiers.

Situated in separate neighbourhoods in the HRM, Plan B and the Harbourview are caught up in opposing sides of the gentrification process. Located on Gottingen Street, Plan B is situated in what has long been a part of the city made up of predominantly working-class whites, African-

Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq residents. For decades, the street and surrounding neighbourhoods have been considered dangerous by non-residents due to the area's reputation for violent crime. It has also long been a street dotted by shuttered businesses. During the past decade, the street has undergone rapid gentrification, leading to long-time business owners and residents being pushed out due to the burgeoning interest of developers, as well as more affluent white business owners taking advantage of cheap commercial rent (of which Plan B is an example). More affluent residents have followed suit, taking advantage of newly built condo developments and purchasing older homes to renovate. Plan B is not at odds with the gentrification of the street. The cooperative has contributed to the street's gentrification by catering to the tastes of the new residents, rather than the tastes of the residents who are being displaced. Plan B is one such entrepreneurial enterprise that has taken part in the gentrification process and has maintained relevance by catering to the street's gentrification aesthetic.

Meanwhile, the Harbourview is situated on the edge of downtown Dartmouth, a commercial district that has also been undergoing rapid gentrification over the past few years, particularly on Portland Street (which is essentially the downtown's "main street"). The market is located in a space that is a bit out of the way and in an area that has mostly been zoned industrially. This has changed over the past half-decade as previously industrial-zoned plots of land have been scooped up by developers who have built large condos and upscale apartment complexes that surround much of the area where the Harbourview is located. Due to the

aforementioned land-use bylaw in downtown Dartmouth that prohibits used-goods vendors from opening businesses in the area, the Harbourview is located on the edge of a downtown that has recently been adversarial towards the used-goods trade. This is despite the fact that the bylaw is virtually unenforceable (which I will return to later in this chapter). This attitude may be changing, with *The National Post* recently calling downtown Dartmouth Canada's "new Brooklyn" (Bundale, 2017, November 6), but the fact remains that the market is not part of the City or developer's plans regarding the Dartmouth Cove area moving forward (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2012, November). This is compounded by the surrounding land being engulfed by condos and housing developments. Unlike Plan B, which caters to the tastes of the gentrifiers through what is on sale at the shop and by attempting to become a community hub, the Harbourview finds itself odds with the gentrification aesthetic of its neighbourhood through its lack of involvement with the emerging community of gentrifiers.

9.3 The Informal Economy

Due to my research hinging primarily on issues facing used goods vending entrepreneurs in terms of their relationships with the informal and formal economies, I have saved my theoretical contributions relating to this topic to end this dissertation. In Chapter 2, I presented four historical approaches (the dualistic approach; the structuralist approach; the legalist approach; and the voluntarist approach) that directed research into the informal economy from the 1970s into the early-2000s. All of these approaches were based on insights and research from the Global South, which I subsequently problematized in terms of their application to instances

of informality in the Global North. I then identified three different frameworks that have become prominent in contemporary informal economy research, two of which are particularly important for the way that I have framed this dissertation: the Kanbur (2009) model and the World Bank Latin America model (Perry et al., 2007). Of all of the competing threads and interpretations that are present in the earlier approaches and the more recent holistic frameworks, my research particularly relies on the common thread of entrepreneurship that is present through the history of the literature. My goal has been to apply some of these insights and competing approaches to how informal entrepreneurship is manifested in used-goods markets in the Global North.

My research sites are only an example of the countless avenues available for exploring entrepreneurship through the lens of informality in the Global North. If my research is generalizable then this is only possible in regard to the practices of other used-goods vendors. The models and approaches I rely on may not be applicable to other informal economies in countries like Canada. As a literature that focuses predominantly on issues in the Global South, my research deviates from assumptions about the relationship between precarity and informality that are found in certain frameworks and models that have directed such research. However, this does not imply that other informal practices in Canada have not resulted from precarity.

Additionally, it is worth noting that a formal business may engage in informal practices or an informal business may engage in formal ones depending on the context and situation. My research sites, being formal enterprises that house formal, informal and non-businesses simultaneously offer an examination of how competing or cooperative interests can exist simultaneously in relative harmony in one place. This may not be true for other informal economies in the Global North. Indeed, the ways that informal economic practices emerge are multiple and depend on context, the kinds of regulations that are in place and the degree to which

they are enforced. As such, my research only offers a glimpse into one possible avenue for understanding the interplay between formal and informal practices.

The reason why the Kanbur (2009) model is especially significant for my research is that issues of regulation and enforcement affected my research participants and the operation of the research sites on numerous occasions. At the same time, the voluntarist school (Maloney, 2004) and World Bank Latin America model (Perry et al., 2007) are particularly good fits because, unlike possible other informal economies in Canada and unlike the way that informal economies tend to be discussed in the Global South, all of the people who I met were engaged in such practices by choice. This is evident amongst vendors who dreamed of platforming and those who become brick and mortar refugees. This is also applicable to the practices of moonlighters and hobbyists. A final example that is specific to Plan B were the many artists who offered art pieces for sale with no expectation that they would sell, instead hoping that their offerings might attract the attention of the wider art community.

Despite several different types of vendors with a myriad of different goals, all have two things in common that are part and parcel of informal economy literature: a) they have to deal with issues of business registration and taxation if they hope to formalize or ignore these things and stay outside of the ambit of regulation; and, b) most vendors attempt to follow the rules by conforming to regulations that affect them, but when such regulations are convoluted, make no sense, or stand in the way of making a living, they take advantage of legal grey areas. Prior to answering my research questions, I will discuss each of these issues in more detail.

9.3.1 Business Registration and Tax Remittance

Through my research, it is clear that amongst used-goods dealers, income is often undeclared and tax unremitted, but this is not the case for every vendor, and the degree to which

this occurs differs greatly from vendor to vendor. Some vendors operate completely “above board” and others completely “off the books,” but most employ practices that are somewhere in between these extremes. My research suggests numerous reasons for this. Only a few times did I encounter individuals who were consciously and intentionally avoiding paying tax. For the most part, however, people either assumed that what they were doing was so insignificant that they did not need to declare their income (as most of the individuals I met only made meagre amounts of money through their vending) and others found the tax system so confusing that they struggled to engage with its formalities (even though many of them tried). In fact, few vendors were making enough money to legally have to register their businesses at all. This was true at both research sites. Only a handful of the people who I met at Plan B and the Harbourview Weekend Market had the tax system “down to a science.”

None of this is particularly surprising or new for informal economy research. Indeed, this fits into expectations found in legalist approaches to interpreting informality. Vendors interested in formalizing tended to find the process burdensome and confusing. Other, generally smaller vendors tended to be either completely ignorant of the regulations in place or actively avoided them out of fear that trying to formalize may lead to the CRA causing them problems and taking their money. Legalist scholars would insist that lengthy registration processes, complex administrative steps and economic costs associated with operating legally/formally become prohibitive and encourage informal activities (see Chaudhuri and Mukhopadhyay, 2010; Chen, 2012). This tended to be a common sentiment for vendors at both sites. Even the vendors who had formalized complained about the confusing tax system and the amount of money that they had to pay for various business-related fees to government agencies and accountants.

The ways that vendors addressed or ignored the systems formulated around business registration and taxation are best explained in terms of the intentions behind becoming a used-goods dealer. For example, those who used the Harbourview as an opportunity to socialize, making some pocket money was a fringe benefit. Some of these smaller-scale vendors were actually on disability benefits and were afraid that a government agency might catch wind of their activities and take away their benefits, which led to them consciously avoiding increasing their size.

I do not consider such vendors to necessarily be examples of Standing's (2011; 2014; and 2015) precariat, nor do I see such vendors as being excluded from the formal economy: in receiving benefits or pensions, such vendors were still linked to and receiving perks from their former formal jobs. For such individuals, the small amount of pocket money that they made was part of a broader livelihood strategy. Many of the vendors who took their "businesses" more seriously were in fact moonlighters who had day jobs and used the market as a means to develop a second revenue stream. For most of these moonlighters, business registration did not make much sense. Their earnings were meagre and it is doubtful that they made enough money to justify registering their businesses in the first place.⁵⁴

Only amongst larger-scale vendors did the issue of tax remittance really have any great significance. For these larger vendors, their businesses were in many cases their day jobs and primary source of income. As they became larger, many of them registered their businesses as they attempted to build capital with the goal of platforming to their own brick and mortar stores. For the large vendors who did not register, the fear of the CRA taking all of their money was a

⁵⁴ Some of these moonlighters told me that they declared their earnings as income and others told me that they did not. I have no way to know whether or not such vendors were telling me the truth.

major deterrent that led to continuing to do things off the books. But, several of these vendors eventually took steps to register their businesses officially as they reached the point where they became “too big” to hide.

Nevertheless, the insights and expectations from the legalist school only explain why some vendors fail to formalize as a result of burdensome and confusing regulations. The approach does not help to interpret how and why vendors find themselves operating in the informal economy in the first place. As such, it is worth thinking about all of this in terms of the World Bank Latin America model (Perry et al., 2007). The decision to work formally, informally or somewhere in between depends on the goals and practices of individual vendors, but at no time did I encounter a vendor who was forced to work informally because of a lack of opportunities to find formal employment. For moonlighters, informal vending was supplementary to formal income. For full-timers, informal vending was a choice against trying to make ends meet in the formal economy, rather than evidence of being excluded from formal employment. Unless, of course, such vendors were already operating formally, in which case the issues of exit and exclusion do not apply.

This brings me to another choice that is not covered by the World Bank Latin America model; that is, why are some of these entrepreneurs attempting to formalize, while others continue to work informally indefinitely? Understanding the intentions of these entrepreneurs help to answer this question (especially for those who envision opening their own stores and the reality that they will have to formalize eventually) and there is room for a legalist analysis here for the reasons mentioned above. However, the Kanbur (2009) model also has an explanatory role: despite the fear of the CRA boogeyman, as well as confusing and complex registration and licensing processes that can lead to vendor apathy, there is a lack of enforcement. CRA agents

are not hiding around the corners of the shop and the market looking to catch people failing to collect and remit tax. Despite one Harbourview vendor thinking that I was a tax spy with some sort of insidious agenda, such an occurrence is unlikely to take place at these marketplaces. Instead, the CRA acts like most other government agencies in Canada when it comes to enforcement. They rely on tips from the public and are reactionary in their endeavours, rather than proactively looking for used-goods vendors who are not complying.⁵⁵ For informal vendors at my research sites, and presumably at similar markets across Canada, it is easy to fear the CRA, but it is unlikely that CRA enforcement officers will appear and start auditing people unless they are mandated to do so by their bosses or a particular entrepreneur ends up on their radar. Enforcement seems to be quite lax, which is part of what Kanbur is pointing to in his model as a necessary indicator for explaining why certain people participate in informal activities. Importantly, this is not limited to the regulations dealing with business registration and tax collection and remittance.

9.3.2 Informal Loopholes

There are other ways through which economic activities can become informal beyond issues of collecting and remitting tax. At Plan B, examples include how vendors did their best to navigate taxidermy laws, despite confusion and grey areas (see Chapters 7.1 and 7.2), as well as how the shop did not have occupancy permits and operated illegally in its space for several years

⁵⁵ It is somewhat telling that I did not meet a single vendor at Plan B or the Harbourview who had ever been audited by the Canada Revenue Agency (at least regarding their vending activities). In 2012, my own business was audited as a result of a CRA project directed towards eBay sellers. This occurred after the CRA had won a legal battle with eBay in Canada and they were awarded the sales data of Canadian sellers who had reached a certain sales threshold per annum. CRA only came after eBay sellers because of a government mandated project and because of their sudden access to a large amount of data through eBay's paper trails. In this case, the CRA started to investigate and enforce tax regulations because it was easy to investigate and enforce said regulations.

(see Chapter 7.6). This was also true for the various incarnations of the café, which did not have assembly permits. The café example is particularly perplexing because of how the health inspector, representing a different government body, signed off on every incarnation of the café without it having the proper permit to open in the first place.

Bylaws and permits also affected Harbourview vendors (albeit to a lesser extent than at Plan B during my time in the field). In Chapter 5.3, I briefly mentioned a land-use bylaw in downtown Dartmouth that targets used-goods sellers. Some vendors at the market who were interested in platforming were aware of the bylaw. It played a role in how they envisioned platforming to their own brick and mortar stores. This even played a minor role in Plan B's decision to open outside of Dartmouth. The land-use bylaw prevents used-goods businesses from operating in Dartmouth's downtown core without a license (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2011, p. 9). It is directed at pawn shops and "junk stores," but makes it difficult for people interested in selling used goods or antiques to get occupancy permits to operate in Dartmouth. Many items are banned even with the license. Or, so we thought.

The issue of the land-use bylaw was first brought to my attention prior to entering the field. Charlene Croft, a former Harbourview and Plan B vendor who operated a company called "Book of Joe" (that sold books and old toys), had been trying to find information about the law when she planned to platform to her own brick and mortar store in downtown Dartmouth. She soon learned that her business would be unable to procure proper permits to open in the area. The owner of Book of Joe never did manage to open her store and eventually changed directions and scale to become a petty dabbler/occasional seller after leaving the market and the shop. Most of this occurred before I began fieldwork. That said, she was convinced that people who drafted the bylaw were connecting selling used goods to crime and tried to discuss the issue with the area's

city councillor, Gloria McCluskey, to no avail. The law was the law. Frustrated, she started a media campaign in 2010 that received some coverage, but was quickly forgotten (Flinn, 2010, September 16).

Fast-forward to early autumn 2016. Rick had just signed a lease for his new store in downtown Dartmouth when Charlene reminded him of the bylaw. Having already signed the lease, Rick became quite worried that he would not be able to obtain the licenses or permits necessary to open the shop legally and that even if he could he would be prevented from selling most of his wares due to them not being mentioned in the bylaw as exempt with a license. So, the two of them looked at the law again and started contacting municipal officials. By this time, McCluskey had retired. Municipal officials had no idea what Rick and Charlene were talking about. The law was on the books, but no one had ever bothered to draft the process to obtain a license. An upper-level member of the downtown business commission suggested that Rick open and apologize later if necessary because, “it is easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission.” By this time several stores had opened in the neighbourhood (or had already been opened even prior to Charlene’s quest to challenge the bylaw) with impunity. In the end, Rick opened the shop without having to obtain the non-existent license, but because the land-use bylaw is on the books, he and several other businesses dabbling in used goods in downtown Dartmouth are operating informally. It does not matter that the law is unenforceable: since it is on the books, business owners in the neighbourhood are operating illegally without the license even though the license does not exist.

Such examples give credence to the notion that informal economic activities arise from holes in formal regulations. In Rick’s case, we have an example of a used-goods vendor who is trying to formalize, but is faced with not only confusing, but contradictory and incomplete

bylaws and regulations. Rick's choice was easy after he learned that the license was non-existent, but he still worried that he would have to deal with this eventually. As the law was clear in intentions, but was incomplete insofar as the licensing process had never been drafted, Rick found himself operating informally because there was no other path.

This peculiar example helps to give credence to the Kanbur (2009) model's call for understanding and interpreting regulations and enforcement when engaging in informal economy research. However, this does not necessarily fit neatly into any of Kanbur's four types of economic responses to regulation (p. 37). Rick wanted to stay within the ambit of regulation and comply, but because of there being no license this was impossible. This was not a choice, so much as a result of the circumstances around the regulation and its (lack of) enforcement. Perhaps the failure of the law itself, as being incomplete and unenforceable, would place this situation in Kanbur's fourth response type: the activity is outside of the ambit of regulation in the first place, so there is no need to adjust. In Kanbur's model, this option is not considered to be akin to operating informally. Instead, it is outside of the realm of the formal and informal spheres. That said, in this circumstance, I do not see this response type as a great fit: there is a law on the books that makes it illegal to sell used goods in the neighbourhood where Rick opened his shop, so despite there being no need to comply, he is still not complying. Nevertheless, the Kanbur model helps to expose some of the difficulties in pointing to an activity as being either formal or informal and looking at the context of the regulation and its enforcement has better explanatory power than other approaches regarding how and why entrepreneurs make the decisions that they do when faced with regulatory hurdles.

The other examples of regulation enforcement that I present in this dissertation (as well as the many additional examples that I have not profiled) are easier to consider in terms of the

Kanbur (2009) model. For example, the crackdown at Plan B in 2014 led to the cooperative making a large number of changes. Plan B adjusted in order to comply and stay within the ambit of these regulations. KT Habits attempted to do the same thing when she was getting ready to open Café B.R.E.A.M., at least in terms of procuring food handling permits and a health inspection. Had she known that she would also require an assembly permit, she probably would have sought one out. Similar instances also occurred at the Harbourview during my time in the field. Ultimately, the response was almost always to adjust and comply, but with the least amount of effort possible. The recommendation that Rick was offered by a business commission member seems to apply to how most of the people who I met in the field dealt with government regulations that they were unaware of or hoped to avoid through taking advantage of loopholes or a lack of enforcement. Non-compliance was almost always forgiven, but permission was not always granted. Indeed, it was easier to ask for forgiveness than it was to ask for permission.

9.4 Final Thoughts: Answering the Research Questions

This dissertation began with the presentation of two research questions, which I reiterated at the beginning of this chapter. To answer these questions, I will begin by repeating that both Plan B and the Harbourview are unique in Nova Scotia (and mostly Atlantic Canada). There are numerous antiques group shops in the region, but Plan B remains the only one that has cooperative status. Similarly, at the time of my fieldwork, the Harbourview was the only market in the province that was a permanent market where vendors could leave their wares throughout the week. Various other markets have attempted to employ this strategy in Atlantic Canada, though most have failed. As unique used-goods venues in the region, both Plan B and the Harbourview help to re-configure the used-goods economy in Nova Scotia (with the possibility of a trickling-out effect to other parts of the region as people become more aware of the two sites

and try to copy them). However, this is merely a starting point that helps to situate some of the factors that affect how used goods vending markets and vendors in Atlantic Canada make a living (or not).

Another factor that helps to understand the relationship between the formal and informal economies (and which applies to used-goods markets in Canada in general) is that both sites allow for such practices to happen simultaneously within their walls. As formal enterprises, both venues cater to formal, informal and non-businesses. Plan B may be cooperative and the Harbourview may be competitive in nature, but each venue enables its vendors to engage in radically different formal and informal practices simultaneously and side by side. This is part of the inner workings of these venues that enables them to survive.

The platforming and brick and mortar refugee phenomenon that I have introduced in this dissertation is also an avenue for examining the relationship between formality and informality in the Global North. In the best case scenario, vendors who dream of owning their own brick and mortar businesses will gain enough capital, build a loyal clientele, register their businesses and platform beyond their humble beginnings at places like the Harbourview and Plan B. Successful businesses have to start somewhere and in an economic climate where entrepreneurship continues to be highlighted by various levels of government as a potential solution to regional, provincial and even national economic woes, it seems counterproductive to count out places like flea markets and used-goods shops as potentially facilitating new forms of entrepreneurship. And this is one of the major ways that my research might be generalizable: despite being unique in the region, Plan B and the Harbourview are just two places that enable the flourishing of small-scale used goods vending. As someone who has visited flea markets and antique group shops in almost every province in Canada, I can say with some certainty that what I identified at these two

sites in Halifax is not unique to the HRM or this region. Indeed, I would be surprised if similar trends cannot be identified in used-goods venues across the Global North.

Regarding the Global North, the information that I uncovered at each of my research sites presents a break from expectations found in informal economy literature that tends to stem from research conducted in the Global South. The most obvious and significant differences are related to issues of exit vs. exclusion and precarity. Older approaches problematize informality as creating or being the result of precarity. Dualistic approaches assume that informality is a residue of traditionalism that runs counter to modernization; structuralist approaches present informality as resulting from capitalist exploitation; and legalist approaches put the blame firmly on government regulations creating hurdles for formalization. Recent models, such as the WIEGO model and the World Bank Latin America model present a holistic picture of informality in the Global South, with both presenting informal entrepreneurs as being at the top of their respective hierarchies. The WIEGO model assumes that employees will find themselves working informally as a result of precarity, while the World Bank Latin America model assumes that informal employees tend to find themselves so employed as a result of being excluded from the formal economy (in sharp contrast to their informal employers who had intentionally exited the formal economy because of a lack of benefits available to them).

Issues of exclusion and precarity may indeed explain other types of informal practices that occur in the Global North and I cannot say that these insights will not apply to other examples of informality that can be found in countries like Canada. However, neither of these assumptions apply neatly to my research sites. One of the major aspects of the exit vs. exclusion argument centres on choice; that is, the people who find work as informal entrepreneurs tend to enter such activities as a choice that leads to an exit from the formal economy because the

benefits of operating informally outweigh the benefits of maintaining formal employment. The flip side of this is that informal employees tend to enter informal jobs when they find themselves excluded from opportunities to find formal work. These employees then become informal workers because they have no other choice.

Choice is not at issue here. Indeed, I have returned to the issue of choice throughout this dissertation because every person who I met in the field became a used-goods entrepreneur by choice and this was even true of the few employees who worked at the market or cooperative. Instead, the exit vs. exclusion dichotomy does not fit and does not help to explain the types of informal practices that I encountered in the field. Both exit and exclusion assume that informal entrepreneurs and workers are no longer attached to the formal economy. This could not be further from the truth for my research participants. The largest of the vendors who I met at Plan B and the Harbourview tended to operate formal businesses or were working towards formalization. As such, these businesses cannot be considered informal or to be an example of exit from the formal economy. These businesses were already part of the formal economy.

Since the majority of the vendors who I met were not operating formal businesses or on the path to formalization, this does not mean that these other types of operations resulted from exit or exclusion either. Most of the people who I met were moonlighters who maintained formal day jobs and used the market as a means to receive a second income. Despite most of these vendors operating their businesses informally or as hobbies/non-businesses, these moonlighters had not exited or been excluded from the formal economy. Instead, they relied on the formal economy as their primary source of income and their used-goods activities were supplementary. This was also true for retirees and people who were on disability who had presences at each site. Even though such individuals were no longer working in the formal economy, they were still

receiving benefits (such as pensions and disability payments) because of their work in the formal economy. They were not being excluded, even if they were no longer working. The small number of informal employees who I encountered in the field were not excluded from the formal economy either. The majority of them also had formal day jobs and treated their informal employment as a hobby, rather than relying on their informal jobs as a primary source of income. The issue of choice directed these activities, but the language of exit vs. exclusion and precarity do not fit.

Insights from the Kanbur (2009) model, in contrast, are particularly helpful for interpreting the types of informality that I encountered in the field. Kanbur creates room for thinking about the relationship between formal and informal economies differently than the other approaches and models presented in this dissertation. Rather than looking at informality as something that is inherently negative, or as something to be problematized that results from or leads to precarity, Kanbur argues that researchers must identify what regulations are in place and how they are enforced in order to make sense of how formality, informality and other options manifest. In this dissertation I have discussed how various taxation issues (related to business registration), taxidermy laws and municipal bylaws affect the sites and the people who vend in them. Some of these laws and regulations are federal, others are provincial, but many were regulated and enforced (or not) at the municipal level. Following Kanbur, it is important to express that these regulation and enforcement regimes are particular to the Halifax context and will not materialize in the same ways elsewhere in the Global North, Canada or even Atlantic Canada. Hence, the bylaw enforcement issues that I have presented in this dissertation and the effect they had on the venues and vendors are contextually specific. As such, some of these cases cannot be generalized and applied to other jurisdictions where other laws and enforcement

regimes are in place. This does not mean, however, that other characteristics of informality that I have presented in this conclusion (especially my problematization of the language of exit vs. exclusion and precarity) cannot be generalized and applied to other used-goods markets and vendors in the Global North.

Moving beyond the issue of formal and informal economic activities, the used-goods trade and flea markets more generally are under-researched in the North American context. However, they can be important sites for interpreting fledgling forms of entrepreneurship that deviate from expectations about how the economy works. These are sites where some vendors are able to hone their trades and platform to their own brick and mortar businesses. In Halifax, at the very least, Plan B and the Harbourview have achieved both of these things: through their humble beginnings, these small-scale marketplaces have facilitated the creation of dozens of stand-alone businesses that continue to contribute to the local economy.

Additionally, the relationship between Plan B and the Harbourview is unique because of their common history. The comparison is made rich through the ways that both sites exist in relation to the gentrification of the neighbourhoods and their positions regarding the gentrification aesthetics that they find themselves residing in. The ways that gentrification manifests will differ from context to context, but catering to (or not) a specific gentrification aesthetic is generalizable and this should be easily applied to other contexts in gentrifying neighbourhoods in the Global North. Few gentrification researchers employ Bridge's idea of the *gentrification aesthetic* in their work and even fewer think about the relationship that business have with the gentrification process in these terms.

The issue of gentrification is also related to community involvement and development. In thinking about these types of places as communities that attempt to differentiate themselves from

similar venues through the erection of symbolic boundaries, while also relying on fostering joint commitments, affect belonging and forms of association between vendors and clients, it should be possible to make generalizations about the role of community in the success or failure of individual enterprises and the venues themselves. As vending communities, the Harbourview and Plan B contribute to a reconfiguration of the used-goods trade in Atlantic Canada by enabling the experimentation, growth and maintenance of second-cycle entrepreneurs in the region.

CHAPTER 10: EPILOGUE

On September 30, 2018, Plan B closed. The cooperative has always operated on razor-thin margins and had been struggling for some time. This was compounded by its core membership shrinking during the previous two years (after plateauing in 2016). I had not been involved with the shop for months, nor was I involved in its closure. I was, however, aware that things could be coming to an end as a result of some conversations I had with Bob earlier in the year.

On October 1, 2018, Bob posted his explanation for Plan B's closure on the store's Facebook page:

Last night at approximately 11:30 pm the lights went off at Plan B for the last time. Standing in the darkened space for the last time I thought about all the changes Plan B has seen over the past 7+ years since we opened our doors. Like watching Gottingen Street develop from a place some people were afraid to come to one of the most vibrant streets in the city. Mainly though I thought of how proud I was that Plan B functioned as a place that welcomed people that mainstream society tended to overlook. I loved the rich diversity of subcultures that I would never have otherwise encountered that casually rubbed shoulders in the shop. But of all the unexpected ways that Plan B behaved, the one I loved the most was its almost uncanny ability to collect the most intriguing people. Plan B became Halifax's Bad News Bears of the vintage and antique world. The Plan B core group was ever changing but always loaded with fascinating individuals, all of whom eventually became more than friends, they became my family.

It was a boat load of fun, but no party lasts forever.

I would like to thank all of our customers, past and present, for their patronage and making it possible to live this wonderful dream. Many of you have become good friends and really, at the end of the day, that has been the most rewarding part of running a shop, the people who come to it. The thing I will miss most about Plan B is you.

Why close the shop? Ya cant fight city hall.

I'm not sure if you've heard the news but Gottingen St. between Cogswell and North is scheduled to be transformed into a "bus transit zone" at some point in October. What does that mean? It means the street will have a third lane added that will remove the parking on both sides of the street. The lane in front of the shop will be a 24hr. dedicated bus lane that will see between 50 and 90 busses an hour or, roughly, a bus a second. The vast majority of these busses do not stop on Gottingen St., they are just passing through,

and so add nothing to the street itself. While Plan B is reliant on the street parking, we are absolutely dependant on the ability to load and unload in front of the shop.

The city has (over a dozen consultations) grudgingly granted a few hours a day parking on the opposite side of the street. I'm not sure if you've ever tried to run heavy boxes or awkward pieces of furniture across a busy street but imagine dodging a bus a second! And since loading and unloading for shows or coming from a house clearance or auction typically require about 2 hours (occasionally more) of loading while parked in front of the shop, I can't imagine how long that would take running back and forth through traffic. So, given how the lack of parking is going to adversely affect our bottom line and, believe me, we operate on a razor thin margin as it is, coupled with the lack of loading access to the shop, we are effectively finished as a business. So, we figured it was best to pull the plug and move while there was still street-loading availability to do so.

What's next?

I'm not gonna lie, I'm really looking forward to taking a few days off for the first time in over 7 years, but if there is one thing I've learned during my tenure at Plan B it's that the city likes the strange and unusual almost as much as I do. So rest assured that we will be back. (Plan B, 2018. October 1)

In the post, Bob highlights the city's decision to remove street parking from Gottingen Street in order to make the street a bus thoroughfare as the main reason behind the closure of Plan B.

When this had been announced as a possibility in the Spring, Bob and the few remaining core vendors all expressed their concerns to me, worrying that the changes would obstruct the cooperative's continued viability. Bob even asked me to keep an eye out for cheap alternative retail spaces at the time, but nothing came to fruition. As such, I was not surprised to learn of the shop's closure.

Within a couple of days of the Facebook post, its comments section had over one hundred responses from well-wishers, who were mostly loyal clients or former vendors. The major trends amongst commenters was the hope for a new Plan B (perhaps a "Plan C") and their delight at having had the opportunity to experience the shop at one point or another during its seven years in existence. Plan B's "weirdness" was a common theme. One commenter said, "Thanks for keeping Halifax weird!" Another said, "A job weirdly and well done."

Reddit users were not as kind to Bob in their assessment of the shop's closure, arguing that he was using the new bus lanes as a scapegoat for a failing business in a subreddit called "Plan B Merchant Co-op shuts down" (chairitable, 2018, October 1). For example, user "TheWalrusTalks" said:

This is such bullshit. It's shutting down because it wasn't making any money. There is no shame in shutting down a business that isn't working (quite the opposite, IMHO); I don't know why small business try to place blame on city hall when it doesn't work out.

Another common thread among reddit commenters was Bob's exaggerated math regarding the number of buses that would go by the shop, claiming that there would be a bus per second (which he states twice in the post). I see these as typos being made by a man who has just decided to abandon his life's work, but the reddit users were quick to equate this example to Plan B's inability to operate properly as a business. Others commented about how Plan B's failure was the result of its disorganized appearance. For example, reddit user "sirgregorypeckerhead" said:

I used to really like the place. I used to find cool stuff. It was a bit messy but not gross. For the past while it's just been a disaster zone and there hasn't been anything worth a second look. The concept itself is cool... A bunch of people coming together with craft products, antiques, thrift and curios. It just got... Too far gone. I shouldn't be stepping over garbage in your store. That's not the bus corridor's fault. (2018, October 3)

Despite the fact that there are far more comments supporting Plan B on Facebook than there are critics denigrating the cooperative on reddit, these comments cannot be completely ignored. A change to the transit system (even one as extreme as what will happen on Gottingen Street before the end of 2018) should not, in itself, lead to the closure of a business. Rather, in my opinion, this situation should best be thought of as "the straw that broke the camel's back." Indeed, if I have presented my experiences at the shop from 2013-2014 in the way that I have intended, I hope that readers will agree with this assessment by reflecting on how the transitory nature of vendors,

shrinking core membership, struggles with bylaw compliance and the reality that few vendors made enough money to make a living at the shop all contribute to explaining how something like changes to the street's bus system could be the "last straw." Plan B's financial foundation has always been weak. Its strength was the people who made the place what it was.

From an academic standpoint, Plan B's seven years in operation is worth thinking about in terms of the gentrification that KT and her crew were so worried about, that Bob and some of the older vendors delightedly participated in and how both perspectives have come full circle. When Bob and the other original vendors opened the shop in October, 2011, the street was only just beginning its current phase of gentrification. Gottingen Street still had a bad reputation at that time. The working-class, queer and racialized groups who had coexisted in the neighbourhood were still very visible and the street was dotted by shuttered storefronts. Plan B contributed to the gentrification process on Gottingen Street during this time period insofar, as I have argued, the shop and its vendors actively participated in the emerging gentrification aesthetic of the street. In the years since I have left the field, gentrification on Gottingen Street has continued rapidly and has, perhaps, reached its peak in 2018. Although I have not obtained hard figures, it certainly feels like the number of residential and commercial buildings that have been built this year in the neighbourhood is unmatched in the rest of the HRM.

The strange thing about this argument is that the relationship between transit ridership and commercial gentrification is not something that necessarily comes to mind when thinking about gentrification in general. Is this really part of the gentrification process? It is impossible for me to say, given the scope of this research project and the timing of the shop closing just prior to my defense. Not all urban change is rooted in gentrification. However, I suspect that Plan B's role in the gentrification aesthetic would be diminished over time, were the shop to remain open.

The Gottingen Street of 2011 is not the same as the Gottingen Street of 2018 and it is possible that Plan B would have found itself standing against the changing aesthetics of the street over time. It will be telling if other businesses on Gottingen Street close for the same reasons as Plan B and whether or not the cool, “hip” businesses that have made the street a destination over the past half-decade or so will face similar pressures moving forward.

Ultimately, this dissertation is a snapshot in time. The Plan B that I researched for a year in 2013-2014 is not the same one that closed in 2018. Most of the people, the items for sale and even the regular customers who I met in the field had moved on to other things by the time the store closed. The same is true for the Harbourview, which is still alive and well, but has changed dramatically since I left the field. The Harbourview remains, but Plan B is gone. For the many people who walked through the doors of the cooperative during its lifespan, its legacy will continue in collective memory. It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to maintaining its memory, as well as reflecting on the reasons for its rise and fall.

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APPENDIX A: STATEMENT ABOUT PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

In any research project, the protection of confidentiality of research participants is of the utmost importance. This is particularly true in this context insofar as some of the information that I uncovered is related to the informal economy and the issue of whether or not certain used-goods and craft vendors are remitting enough tax to the government. Since many of the vendors who I encountered in the field, particularly at Plan B, are (or were) trying to get their names and their businesses recognized by a larger audience of potential clientele, some vendors were adamant that their names and/or business names be used in the final research report. At the same time, the majority of vendors at the Harbourview Weekend Market talked to me off the record and were clear that they did not want their participation to be documented or linked back to them in any way. The reasons for this are multiple and I have worked diligently to ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of the people who lent me their time, knowledge and resources while I was in the field is protected. My writing must not jeopardize the livelihoods of any of these people and even though I did not uncover anything in the field that could necessarily put someone in peril, this dissertation has been carefully constructed in order to make sure that this is not possible. In order to accomplish this, names have been changed in some vignettes and linkages between products and pseudonyms have also been avoided (insofar as highly specific products could be linked to certain individuals).

Plan B's president, the "Reverend" Bob Chiasson, is the public face of the shop. He has appeared on magazine covers and numerous news stories and television programs (sometimes as a caricature of himself) and his identity is so well known that it is impossible to talk about Plan B

in a way that protects his identity all of the time. Nevertheless, there are places in this dissertation where his identity is obscured and this is done on a case by case basis.

The main vendors at Plan B during the time that I was there (who I have come to call core vendors) all agreed to participate in writing (with one exception) with the understanding that their identities would be made explicit in the final research report. The remaining core vendor verbally agreed to participate after I had left the field. As such, the following individuals are identified in this dissertation: Sébastien Lanteigne (an antiques dealer), KT Habits (a jewelry dealer who also operated the café during part of my time at Plan B), Sean Massey (a video game vendor), David Figeroa and Britt Ward (owners of Vagabond Vintage, a clothing company), Alex Hagen (a book and video game vendor who also manufactured and bottled his own brand of soda) and Richard “Rick” Silvert (a vinyl record and general pop culture collectibles dealer). These individuals formed the core group of people who were the most heavily invested in the day to day operations of the shop during my time there and every one of them participated with the understanding that I would use their real names, as this would help to promote Plan B. All other vendors at Plan B, as well as shoppers, are treated this way. The only time that a client’s name is not protected is when his or her involvement (such as a celebrity public appearance) was high profile and well-advertised.

This is extended to the Harbourview Weekend Market with two exceptions. The owner of the market, Paul Green, is the public face of his market and it is impossible to talk about the Harbourview without mentioning its owner. The other exception is that Rick Silvert is simultaneously a vendor at Plan B and the Harbourview and to gloss over his significance at the Harbourview, while not doing so at Plan B is highly problematic. He is not always named in this study in order to protect the identities of people with whom he associated at the market. There

were a handful of other participants from the Harbourview who were open to the idea of having their real names used in the final research report and I have done my best to accommodate such requests.

APPENDIX B: OPERATING A BUSINESS WHILE IN THE FIELD

I am no stranger to flea markets and the used-goods trade. My wife and I have operated a large eBay company, East Coast Toys and Games, in Atlantic Canada since 2008. We sell pop culture and entertainment related items of all sorts: comic books, video games, vintage toys, board games, movies, etc. This business was started as a result of me selling with a friend at the Fredericton Flea Market in the mid-2000s when I was a graduate student at the University of New Brunswick and, later, a lecturer at St. Thomas University. After coming to Halifax to embark on PhD research, my wife and I continued to grow our business online, but I decided against selling at flea markets in order to prevent my business from affecting my ability to conduct research.

The fact that I operate a used-goods business and that I spent a couple of years selling at a flea market in Fredericton, New Brunswick has created methodological advantages and disadvantages that someone with a different background would not face. My experience has allowed me to develop an expertise and authority in the products that I sell that few other people have and, in many cases, this has served me well. Being a used-goods dealer who can demonstrate such expertise (particularly in identifying obscure items and the ability to appraise and determine market value for such items) affords me credibility among other used-goods vendors who have developed similar expertise regarding their own wares.

Similarly, the fact that I spent a couple of years selling weekly at a flea market has left me with compatible experiences and stories that I can share with other flea market vendors, even if their location is in a different city and is quite different than the market where I once sold. I have been there, done that. All of this affords me additional credibility in the field. I have a better

sense of what used-goods sellers and flea market vendors deal with in these pursuits than someone who has not lived in this world.

From the beginning, I made sure that everyone who I encountered in the field was made aware of East Coast Toys and Games. I would then proceed to emphasize that I was not conducting this research in order to benefit my business. The most important thing to highlight was that I was not trying to poach stock from vendors. This was a real concern for some people and understandably so. For vendors who dealt in the kinds of things that I sell online, I had to be especially careful when I was building rapport: if they felt that I was in competition with them everything would fall apart. Explaining that my business was not going to compete with other vendors was not enough. Actions had to speak louder than words and I accomplished this by making sure that when people came in to sell goods or make trades with vendors that I was not in the way and that if I was present that I was invited to be there and that I was not trying to buy items out from underneath the sellers who were gracious enough to let me conduct my research with them.

At Plan B, I had trouble gaining acceptance until I became a cooperative member, and the fact that I operate East Coast Toys and Games afforded me the ability to become a vendor. After being persuaded to rent a space by numerous cooperative members, people began to feel more comfortable with me. At the Harbourview, however, I decided against operating a table and selling goods because I felt that this would hinder my ability to conduct research and also create problems as I competed with other vendors.

APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY AT PLAN B

Between August, 2013 and August, 2014, I spent approximately 128 days at the Plan B Merchants Cooperative. The bulk of this took place from September, 2013 to January 2014. During my time at Plan B, I conducted intensive participant observation with eight “core” vendors (who were significant in the day-to-day operation of the shop), while also interviewing eleven vendors and shoppers.

When I started at Plan B, I attended the shop (on average) five days per week. Generally speaking, I was in the shop Monday through Friday from open until close. The shop is open from 11 am to 7 pm daily. I would take the bus from my home in Cowie Hill to the CBC building on Bell Road and would walk to Gottingen Street by crossing through the Halifax Commons. I would arrive at the shop around opening time and would proceed to help the person running the store on any given day with whatever tasks needed to be accomplished. My days were spent conducting participant observation with vendors and helping the shop’s clientele find what they were looking for. I would also help to facilitate trades and purchases for vendors when clients were looking to divest themselves of unwanted collectibles. It became obvious to me after a month or so that Mondays were very hum-drum and that weekends were much busier at the shop, so I started to spend more time at the shop on Saturdays as the months went by.

I spent most of my time hanging out with, helping and in conversation with the vendors who worked at or participated at Plan B regularly. These vendors became the focus of this research project because of their (nearly) daily involvement with the shop and their significance in its day to day operations. All of the regularly participating vendors allowed me to participate with them inside of the shop and outside of it (at their homes, on “picks”—that is, actively

hunting for goods to resell—, running errands related to their businesses and so on). I call these people “core vendors” because of their importance to the day to day operation of the shop.

Within a month of being at the cooperative, I ran into a snag regarding my own involvement. Peripheral vendors were not comfortable with me being present every day without me being a member of the cooperative in more than just name. I was very open about the fact that my wife and I operate a business where we sell old pop culture collectibles on eBay. After some discussion (and at Bob’s request), I decided to rent a shelf on a small bookshelf for \$20 per month where I would have some vintage action figures for sale. After setting this up, my relationships with non-core vendors improved because my status as a cooperative member was real. There was also a business drive to this, as at the cooperative, increasing the diversity of the inventory made the shop more appealing for customers. At the time, no one was selling vintage action figures at Plan B and the cooperative’s core vendors saw my contribution as a way to improve the shop’s selection.

The shelf was approximately 2 feet long x 1 foot high x 1 foot deep in size. I was able to fit between thirty and forty figures on the shelf at any one time. Core vendors were surprised by how well my stuff sold, as during my time with the shelf I sold at least \$100 per month. I did not emphasize the fact that I had a shelf and did not actively promote the fact that East Coast Toys and Games had a presence at Plan B.

As time went on and I gained core vendors’ trust, I was taught how to operate the POS system and how to operate the cash. During my initial months of fieldwork, I only operated the cash alone a couple of times and this was when the vendor running the shop that day had to leave for a few minutes.

After spending nearly five months at the shop it was time for this phase of the research project to come to an end. I joined a group of core vendors for an event at the Halifax Club (where Plan B core vendors hosted a karaoke night, stand-up comedy and a drag queen as we simultaneously held a pop-up sale as part of a larger event hosted by *Local Connections Halifax Magazine*). In some ways, this was my send off, as we partied until the early hours of the morning once the event had finished. Plan B then posted a thank you message to me (laced with absurdist humour) on their Facebook page as I prepared to move to the Harbourview Weekend Market.

Nevertheless, this was not the real end of my association with the shop. At the time that I ended my daily research at Plan B, the number of core vendors was shrinking: Some of the core vendors were moving on to other things. This led to a situation where there were not enough people to run the shop throughout the week. Recognizing that the shop was in a jam, I offered to run Plan B one day a week (Wednesdays) until I had to return to Dalhousie in September, 2014. My offer was quickly accepted and I was given a key to the store. After a bit of casual training regarding opening and closing procedures, I started to run the store on Wednesdays until the end of August, 2014. Since I would be running the store, Bob and other vendors wanted me to increase my shelf space in order to legitimate my presence as a shop volunteer. With initial hesitation, I took over an entire bookshelf for \$40 per month.

In agreeing to all of this, my role at the shop changed. I became known to clients as the “toy guy” and as the guy who ran the shop on Wednesdays. This also gave me a great deal more insight into the operation of the shop and how boring it could be. When I was conducting daily research, I was involved in participant observation with the vendors who ran the shop weekly on a set schedule and other vendors would come in to hang out knowing that there would be

something going on. Now, with fewer core vendors and without me participating with someone else on Wednesdays, I was not shadowing another vendor for eight hours. In fact, I found that I would be alone in the shop for hours at a time or that it would be just me and some shoppers. I found myself pining for other vendors to come in and the day to day operations of the shop started to get to me. I became more sensitive to certain vendors not cleaning up after themselves on their days, not replacing the toilet paper or paper towel, not mopping, not taking out the garbage, not leaving notes or writing things on the calendar. I found myself coming to the shop earlier and earlier, as I tried to complete more tasks. It was not unusual for me to arrive at the store at 8:30 am and spend hours trying to clean up. I realized that I was starting to burn out as I internalized issues that had bothered the vendors who I had come to replace. As I learned, it was hard work looking after a space that was several thousand square feet in size.

APPENDIX D: METHODOLOGY AT THE HARBOURVIEW WEEKEND MARKET

Although I engaged in participant observation with seven vendors and conducted interviews with ten vendors and shoppers at the Harbourview Weekend Market, the way that I went about this was quite different than at Plan B. The market was only open on weekends, space was organized differently and everyone was in competition with each other, unlike at the group shop, where everyone tried to work together and there was one single cash register.

All of this created a different atmosphere for my role as ethnographer: rather than being able to spend an entire day with one or two vendors who happened to be running Plan B, my time was spent moving between different vendor booths, tables and spaces throughout each day. The fact that vendors at the market rent their own spaces and are in competition with each other also made it methodologically impossible for me to rent a space to sell wares.

In the end, I spent approximately 58 days at the Harbourview from January, 2014 to August, 2014. I actually spent seven months at the Harbourview every weekend in comparison to the five months that I spent working intensively at Plan B, but the smaller number of market days meant that I had to be much more focused on building relationships with regular vendors. Unlike at Plan B, where fewer than a dozen people who I met can be considered core vendors, the majority of vendors at the Harbourview were regulars (who sold every week). Certainly, there were itinerant vendors too, but they made up the minority of vendors on any given weekend.

The great competition between market vendors also affected my ability to gain trust. If I appeared too close to one vendor, a different vendor might not trust me. This was not a problem that I faced at Plan B because of the context where cooperative members were supposed to be (and generally were) working in tandem and, generally, there were only a few Plan B vendors present at any one time. Instead, the Harbourview vendors (numbering between 60 and 80 people

depending on the weekend) showed great camaraderie amongst each other when there was an issue facing the market as a whole, but when talking about inter-vendor relationships, the market was quite cliquy. It also didn't help that vendors at the market who sold the same or similar items did not always get along and that information that was supplied to me by one vendor about another was often biased because of this competition.

As a result, it was much more difficult at the Harbourview to locate vendors who were willing to be interviewed and talk on the record. It was also difficult to find vendors who agreed to have me shadow them for the purposes of intensive participant observation. I was able to work around this by speaking off the record with many individuals and by building relationships where vendors were happy to have me around, to show me things and to accept my assistance (and vice-versa) with the understanding that it was okay for me to write about them as long as information in final research reports could not be linked back to them.

APPENDIX E: COMMUNITY CONSENT FORM

Community Letter of Permission

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers Markets’ and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

To whom it may concern,
This letter establishes that I have spoken with Mr. Campbell about his proposed research project entitled “Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers Markets’ and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada” and that I, on behalf of the market community that I represent, give permission to Mr. Campbell to conduct research at the market venue.

Mr. Campbell has explained to me that the purpose of his research project is to learn the opinions of owners, managers, vendors and shoppers at the venue regarding environmentalism, the types of clients that it attracts (whether they are middle-class, upper-class; men or women; and so on), as well as how owners, managers, vendors and shoppers approach government regulations and taxes that affect the venue.

Mr. Campbell has explained to me that he will be conducting participant observation and interviews with market participants and has explained what both of these things entail. He has explained that he operates an eBay business and that he will not be acting on behalf of his business when conducting research at the market. He has also clearly explained that the risks associated with this study are low and the market’s participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that anything said to Mr. Campbell during the time that he is participating at the market will be confidential and that even though the market will be identified in reports, individuals will not be unless they request to be. Mr. Campbell has promised that the identity of participants will be protected by removing any identifying personal details from documents that are produced. Mr. Campbell has provided me information about how I can contact him by telephone at (902) 479-4919 or via email at br528965@dal.ca and has also provided me information about how to contact Catherine Connors, Director of Research Ethics at Dalhousie University by phone at (902) 494-1462 or email at ethics@dal.ca. In agreeing to grant Mr. Campbell permission to conduct research at the market, he has promised that a copy of the final dissertation will be provided to the market upon its completion.

This letter confirms that I grant Mr. Campbell permission to conduct his research project at the market that I represent.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Venue: _____

Email or mailing address (for sending the research report):

Telephone: _____

APPENDIX F: SHOPPER INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form for Shoppers

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers Markets' and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

My name is brian Campbell and I am an Anthropology PhD candidate at Dalhousie University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. I would like to learn your opinions about how owners, managers and vendors at flea markets, farmers' markets and similar venues promote themselves and whether or not this helps to attract clients. I am also interested in your opinion about the types of clients that your market attracts (whether they are middle-class, upper-class; men or women; and so on) and what your opinion is about the venue more generally. A third point of interest is your opinion about how owners, managers and vendors deal with government regulations and taxes. In order to achieve these goals, I will be actively participating at the venue you frequent and will interview 10 to 20 individuals.

I would like to invite you to be interviewed as part of my research. As an interview participant, you will be asked to talk about your personal experiences and thoughts about what attracts you to shop at the venue. The interview will take roughly twenty five minutes.

The interview will take place in a quiet location where you feel comfortable talking. Risks associated with this study are low, but it is possible that you may experience some emotional discomfort discussing your personal experiences. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or decline to answer questions which you find uncomfortable. Participating in this research might not directly benefit you, but we might learn things that will help with the success of the market that you frequent. If you have any questions about the study, I am happy to answer them for you.

I own an eBay business, which started at a flea market in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Your venue is very different from the one that I used to sell at, which is one of the reasons why I would like to learn more about it. By interviewing you, I will not be acting on behalf of my business.

Your interview responses will be confidential and you will not be quoted or identified in any reports or publications unless you request to be (so long as identifying you does not inadvertently identify someone else). I will protect your identity by removing any identifying personal details, including your name, from documents I produce. Only I will have access to interview recordings, which will be stored securely. Despite these precautions, the research location will be revealed in reports and there is some risk that people you know might be able to identify you based on things you say. If you agree to be quoted, I will contact you by phone to verify quotations.

Contact brian Campbell by email at br528966@dal.ca or by phone at (902) 479-4919.

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, ethics@dal.ca If you live at a distance from Halifax, it is acceptable to call collect.

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers' Markets and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

Please check as applicable:

- I consent to having my interview audio-recorded.
- I consent to having direct quotes from my interview appear in research reports and publications.
- I request a straightforward summary of research results.
- I am willing to be contacted within a few weeks of completing the interview in order to clarify certain points.

All of your interview responses will be treated as anonymous unless you specifically request that your identity be revealed (so long as identifying you does not inadvertently identify someone else). If you choose this option, quotes will be verified with you prior to publication and you are free to change your mind and remain anonymous.

- I prefer that quotes from my interview that appear in research reports and publications be directly credited to me (so long as identifying me does not inadvertently identify someone else).

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study. However I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Email or mailing address (for sending the research report summary):

Telephone (to verify quotations): _____

APPENDIX G: VENDOR INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form for Vendors, Owners, Managers or Employees

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison
between Farmers Markets' and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

My name is brian Campbell and I am an Anthropology PhD candidate at Dalhousie University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. I would like to learn about how owners, managers and vendors at flea markets, farmers' markets and similar venues promote themselves and whether or not this helps to attract clients. I am also interested in your opinion about the types of clients that your market attracts (whether they are middle-class, upper-class; men or women; and so on) and what your opinion is about the venue more generally. A third point of interest is that I would like to learn about the types of issues that you face when dealing with government regulations and taxes. In order to achieve these goals, I will be actively participating at the venue you frequent and will interview 10 to 20 individuals.

I would like to learn more about your business and invite you to be interviewed as part of my research. As an interview participant, you will be asked to talk about your personal experiences and thoughts about businesses at the market (including your own). The interview will take roughly one hour.

The interview will take place in a quiet location where you feel comfortable talking. Risks associated with this study are low, but it is possible that you may experience some emotional discomfort discussing your personal experiences. Even though I have gained consent from market management to conduct my research project, your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or decline to answer questions which you find uncomfortable. Participating in this research might not directly benefit you, but we might learn things that will help with the success of the market that you frequent. If you have any questions about the study, I am happy to answer them for you.

I own an eBay business, which started at a flea market in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Your venue is very different from the one that I used to sell at, which is one of the reasons why I would like to learn more about it. By interviewing you, I will not be acting on behalf of my business.

Your interview responses will be confidential and you will not be quoted or identified in any reports or publications unless you request to be (so long as identifying you does not inadvertently identify someone else). I will protect your identity by removing any identifying personal details, including your name, from documents I produce. Only I will have access to interview recordings, which will be stored securely. Despite these precautions, the research location will be revealed in reports and there is some risk that people you know might be able to identify you based on things you say. If you agree to be quoted, I will contact you by phone to verify quotations.

Contact brian Campbell by email at br528966@dal.ca or by phone at (902) 479-4919.

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors , Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie

University at (902) 494-1462, ethics@dal.ca" If you live at a distance from Halifax, it is acceptable to call collect.

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers' Markets and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

- Please check as applicable:
- I consent to having my interview audio-recorded.
- I consent to having direct quotes from my interview appear in research reports and publications.
- I request a straightforward summary of research results.
- I am willing to be contacted within a few weeks of completing the interview in order to clarify certain points.

All of your interview responses will be treated as anonymous unless you specifically request that your identity be revealed. If you choose this option, quotes will be verified with you prior to publication and you are free to change your mind and remain anonymous.

- I prefer that quotes from my interview that appear in research reports and publications be directly credited to me (so long as identifying me does not inadvertently identify someone else).
- I prefer that my business or organization is identified in research reports and publications (so long as identifying me does not inadvertently identify someone else).

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study. However I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Email or mailing address (for sending the research report summary):

Telephone (to verify quotations): _____

APPENDIX H: VENDOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM

Consent Form: Vendor Participant Observation

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers Markets' and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

My name is brian Campbell and I am an Anthropology PhD candidate at Dalhousie University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. I would like to learn about how vendors at flea markets, farmers' markets and similar venues use environmentalism in order to promote themselves and whether or not this helps to attract clients. I am also interested in the types of clients that your market attracts (whether they are middle-class, upper-class; men or women; and so on) and what their opinions are about the venue, as well as the types of issues that owners, managers and vendors face when dealing with government regulations and taxes. In order to achieve these goals, I will be actively participating at the venue you frequent.

I would like to learn more about your business. Part of what anthropologists do is to live and work with the people they are researching. I would like your permission to participate with you while you work at your venue. This will entail me participating with you as you sell goods through your business, as well as participating with you in other aspects of your business before and after business hours. If you agree to participate, I will work with you for approximately two weeks.

Risks associated with this study are low and, even though I have gained consent from market management to conduct my research project, your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. Any questions that I ask you will be for the sake of clarifying things as they happen. You may decline to answer questions which you find uncomfortable. Participating in this research might not directly benefit you, but we might learn things that will help with the success of the market. If you have any questions about the study, I am happy to answer them for you.

I own an eBay business, which started at a flea market in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Your venue is very different from the one that I used to sell at, but I am comfortable working in fast paced environments and can help unloading stock, providing information to customers, packing up stalls at the end of the day and so on. You may withdraw from future participant observation sessions if they become too time consuming. I will not be acting on behalf of my business and this will not interfere with your pursuits.

Anything that you say to me during the time that I participate with you will be confidential and you will not be quoted or identified in any reports or publications unless you request to be (so long as identifying you does not inadvertently identify someone else). I will protect your identity by removing any identifying personal details, including your name, from documents I produce. Only I will have access to information obtained while I participate with you, which will be stored securely. Despite these precautions, the research location will be revealed in reports. If you agree to be quoted, I will contact you by phone to verify quotations.

Contact brian Campbell by email at br528966@dal.ca or by phone at (902) 479-4919.

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors , Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie

University at (902) 494-1462, ethics@dal.ca" If you live at a distance from Halifax, it is acceptable to call collect.

Research Study: Distinction: A Comparison between Farmers' Markets and Flea Markets in Atlantic Canada.

- Please check as applicable:
- I consent to having Mr. Campbell participate with me at my business.
- I request a straightforward summary of research results.
- I am willing to be contacted by phone within a few weeks ending participant observation to clarify certain points.
- I prefer that quotes that appear in research reports and publications be directly credited to me (so long as identifying me does not inadvertently identify someone else).
- I prefer that my business or organization is identified in research reports and publications (so long as identifying me does not inadvertently identify someone else).

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study. However I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Email or mailing address (for sending the research report summary):

Telephone (to verify quotations): _____