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## NEIGHBOURHOOD-EMPLACED CENTERS: A TREND WITHIN AMERICAN URBAN COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

Urban institutions seeking to engage their local communities and invigorate research and education through application to contemporary regional challenges employ a range of geographically focused engagement frameworks. The University of Pittsburgh is among them. As a premier urban-located university, holding the Carnegie Foundation's highest research classification, the University has chosen to focus on building community strength as one of its strategic priorities. Pittsburgh is a post-industrial American city that has seen marked renewal through an innovation economy focused on information technology, healthcare, engineering, energy, higher education, and manufacturing (Burning Point Technologies, 2016). Despite international recognition for this economic turnaround, significant disparity remains an issue among city residents' economic opportunities, particularly along racial lines (Center on Race and Social Problems, 2015a) and among the vitality of the city's neighbourhoods (Center on Race and Social Problems, 2015b). As part of the University's strategy to engage its communities through its role as an anchor

institution, economic contributor, and agent of innovation and knowledge creation, it has set about developing a series of neighbourhood-based community engagement centers to coordinate, link, and maximize its engagements within those neighbourhoods. In doing so, it joins the ranks of a number of universities seeking a hyperlocal expression for engagement activities.

Using a place-based neighbourhood approach necessitates structural, physical, and—perhaps most importantly—paradigm shifts, particularly those that institutions use to guide community engagement. As a means to document this trend within American higher education and to serve as an orienting piece for our efforts at the University of Pittsburgh, this essay situates the neighbourhood centers approach in the larger national effort to clarify, define, and develop operational frameworks for community engagement among American postsecondary institutions, especially among urban research universities. This essay presents three geographically focused engagement frameworks: Stewardship of Place, Anchor Institution Mission, and Metropolitan University. Then, the concept of place as a sociological concept is introduced as a way of considering the distinction between being *in* a place (place-based) and being *of* a place (emplaced). Four diverse examples of neighbourhood-emplaced centers are presented.

The essay concludes with a discussion of the paradigmatic shifts that arise from these theoretical concepts and practical examples. These shifts include prioritizing community development theories and principles as planning frameworks; adopting democratic civic engagement as the animating paradigm for neighbourhood-emplaced teaching, learning, and research; and building the capacities of stakeholders involved in neighbourhood-emplaced spaces to operate as boundary spanners.

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GEOGRAPHICALLY FOCUSED FRAMEWORKS

Efforts to clarify, define, and develop operational frameworks for community engagement among American postsecondary institutions and the national associations that support them have intensified within the past fifteen years. Among these efforts, two have heavily influenced the ways institutions define, operationalize, and organize themselves to engage with communities and how they understand the substantive contributions of community engagement to their core activities of teaching, learning, and research: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Community Engagement Classification and the Association of American Colleges and Universities and U.S. Department of Education's work on civic learning and democracy's future.

#### Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the national body that categorizes and classifies accredited institutions of higher learning, added the elective Community

Engagement Classification in 2006 to recognize markers of quality practice across community-engaged institutions. The development of the classification framework established a robust definition and core principles for community engagement, stating:

*Community engagement [is] defined broadly as the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.*

(Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2006)

To successfully earn the Community Engagement Classification, institutions must demonstrate that community engagement is pervasive across the institution's expressions of its mission, learning environments, research and knowledge production activity, and interactions with its external communities. Applicants must describe how they measure the impact of their engagement efforts on the community's perception of the institution, as well as their impact on faculty, students, the institution, and communities with which they engage. They also describe how the findings of their impact evaluations are used to improve the institution's approach to community engagement. Further, applicants must demonstrate how engagement is fostered through institutional policies and practices (such as dedicated infrastructure, staffing, budget, faculty reward and recognition, and institutional messaging). The foundation's explicit attention to contexts of partnership and reciprocity orient community engagement in highly collaborative and responsive ways. The result of the Community Engagement Classification is a breakthrough in having a widely accepted definition of community engagement and its principles. The framework has prompted American institutions, especially research-intensive institutions, to consider the infrastructure, policies, leadership commitments, and practices that will best foster community engagement to the standard and quality expected by the Carnegie Foundation classification instrument.

### Civic learning and democracy's future

The second major stimulus was the work undertaken by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the U.S. Department of Education to articulate the critical role of postsecondary education in the development of each new generation of citizens' civic capacities and the future of democracy. This work resulted in a landmark report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (Musil & Hampshire, 2012). The report advocated for the intentional preparation of informed, engaged citizens and recognized the central role postsecondary education plays in that endeavour. It provided evidence that students involved in civic learning opportunities have greater persistence through and completion of their baccalaureate degrees, graduate with skills necessary for future employment, and develop habits of social responsibility and civic participation. It further called upon

institutions to reclaim their civic and democratic missions and to embrace civic partnerships locally, nationally, and globally. The report advanced a schematic of the knowledge, skills, values, and collective actions embedded within civic learning and democratic engagement. In doing so, it offered institutions a framework of student learning relevant across the diversity of disciplines and parsed the interrelated facets of a civic-minded campus. These facets include a civic ethos governing campus life, civic literacy as a goal for every student, civic inquiry integrated within the majors and general education, and civic action as a lifelong practice.

### Geographically focused frameworks

The Carnegie Classification and the attention paid to civic learning and democracy deeply influenced institutional attempts to organize and orient community engagement. Geographically focused approaches to community engagement became particularly relevant as a means to focus partnership work and its underlying infrastructure (key to the Carnegie Classification) and to focus the institution's attention to the civic concerns of its region as a means to inform students' civic learning and active participation in civically focused engagement across a spectrum of activity types.

Three frameworks employ geography as a focusing lens among the approaches to community-university engagement within the United States: stewardship of place, anchor institutions, and metropolitan universities. These are not mutually exclusive, for example, the Metropolitan Universities Declaration (Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, 2004) describes attending to both stewardship of place and anchor institution work as goals among its metropolitan university members. Nor are the institutional approaches found within each framework identical, but they provide ways to organize the collective commitments and strategies used to engage with a locality. Each frame is influenced by the identities of those institutions typically associated with the frame (e.g. comprehensive institutions are typically associated with Stewards of Place and research intensives are typically associated with Anchor Institution), but they are instructive to a wide variety of institutions. Collectively, their roots are based in the fundamental idea of urban engagement as a strategic and scholarly role of an urban-located university.

More than half of all U.S. postsecondary institutions are located within the country's urban cores (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). Understanding the changes and conditions within American cities is key to realizing how postsecondary institutions might best be involved in their continued revitalization. According to Murphy and Cunningham's (2003) review of urban development and community power, American cities and their residents experienced drastic economic and social changes during the last century, fuelled by industrialization, the Great Depression, and World War II's employment economy. They explain that 1949 brought federal legislation that offered financial help to cities and neighbourhoods that created plans for modernization, including neighbourhood renewal planning and anti-poverty

programs. According to Murphy and Cunningham, corporate economic interests combined with the hopes of local "political entrepreneurs" (:18) to leverage this federal funding for massive urban redevelopment, expanding large business and institutional footprints while gentrifying those neighbourhoods closest to the downtown core.

*These efforts devastated low-income families, particularly African Americans, because they destroyed poor black communities, challenged veteran neighbourhood stakeholders, displaced inner-city employers, and demolished affordable housing. ...many programs, scattered across the nation, resulted in multi-block demolition that drove masses of people into public housing while cleared land was used for condominium and corporate headquarters or, even more unsettling, was left fallow.*

(Murphy & Cunningham, 2003:18)

From the 1960s onward, postsecondary institutions were witness to the economic and social distress rising within American urban areas (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Brownell, 1995). In many instances, neighbourhoods surrounding these institutions became increasingly blighted, victims of higher crime, and their residents experienced deep poverty, racial injustice, lack of access to quality education and health services, and family instability. At the same time, institutions were increasingly surrounded by a resurgence of local community coalitions realizing their collective power (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003). Over time, urban institutions were catalysed (whether through a desire to enact their civic missions or by neighbours requesting their partnership in addressing economic and social challenges) to join the efforts to revitalize the nation's urban core. In part, this interest and investment was fostered through programs such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) grants. Launched in 1994, the COPC program was intended "to create enduring partnerships between academic institutions and communities in order to build capacity for more effective responses to the needs and problems of distressed neighbourhoods and to enhance the research and teaching capacity of participating colleges and universities" (Vidal, Nye, Walker, et al., 2002:1-4). Between 1994 and 2005, the COPC program distributed more than \$76 million dollars to urban institutions that then matched those grants on a 1:1 basis (Office of University of Partnerships, 2017). In addition to COPC (and in many ways based upon it), university-focused associations such as the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, and Anchor Institution Task Force fostered a series of geographically focused frameworks to direct institutional efforts toward their involvement in their urban communities.

### Stewardship of place

The stewardship of place framework was authored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities

(AASCU) and is focused on operationalizing the work of *publicly engaged institutions*. Public colleges and universities typically are subject to the control of publicly elected or appointed officials and get major financial support from public funds (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The stewardship of place framework, first articulated in the 2002 *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*, entreats publicly engaged institutions to "function as learners as well as teachers in tackling the myriad . . . opportunities and issues facing our communities and regions" (Elmendorf, Reindl, & Williams, 2002:5). The stewardship of place framework was developed as a way for AASCU to think of the purpose and role of regional comprehensive universities as distinct from community colleges or research universities (Mahaffey, 2015).

Within the stewardship of place framework, public engagement is place related, interactive with communities, and mutually beneficial. Disparate institutional efforts are integrated within a larger institutional strategy for engagement. With regard to its place-related nature, the publicly engaged institution has a heightened sense of its locality. Despite acknowledging the ways in which the institution interacts at the national and global levels, a publicly engaged institution understands that it is fundamentally linked with the communities and region in which it is situated and pursues its "worldview in a way that has meaning to the institution's neighbours, who can be its most consistent and reliable advocates" (Elmendorf et al., 2002:9).

The 2002 report outlined a vision of stewardship of place, but did not offer concrete avenues or domains of that work. Given the progress in quality practices and principles that developed around community engagement across higher education, in 2014 AASCU issued a new report, *Becoming a Steward of Place: Four Areas of Institutional Focus* (Domagal-Goldman, Dunfee, Jackson, & Stearns, 2014), which outlined four ways institutions could implement stewardship of place: 1) civic engagement, 2) work with P-12 schools, 3) economic development, and 4) internationalization. AASCU offered a companion report that sought to understand the ways in which these four domains had been implemented by AASCU member institutions that had achieved the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. A place-related characterization of public engagement was demonstrated across the institutions studied. Campuses were found to focus primarily on improving P-12 schooling and community access to continuing education; economic development inclusive of hiring, contracting, purchasing, local investments, workforce readiness, tech transfer, and business and enterprise incubators; consideration of local and regional contexts within institutional strategic planning; and making tangible investments and initiating partnerships with local and regional nongovernmental organizations, parks/recreation facilities, and infrastructure projects (Saltmarsh, O'Meara et al., 2014).

### Anchor institution

Among research intensive universities, a complementary orientation toward place-related engagement developed as

anchor institution work, sometimes expressed as an anchor institution mission. Advocates of the anchor institution framework position it as distinct from generic community engagement. They characterize community engagement as a broad frame for partnerships and problem solving that can be performed at any scale and without specific geographical targets for engagement, while the anchor institution mission is described as engagement through place-based partnerships and economic development focused on an institution's immediate geographic location such as its neighbourhood, city, and region (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012). The markers of anchor institution work include partnership development and organized economic development through the institution's role as a major regional purchaser, employer, workforce developer, real estate developer, incubator, and network builder (Hahn, Coonerty, & Peaslee 2010; Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and CEOs for Cities, 2003).

Responding to worsening urban conditions from the 1960s to 1990s, respected public figures and scholars called upon urban universities to fulfill their core academic missions through "serious engagement with the problems of their host communities" (Taylor & Luter, 2013:3). These institutions were seen as influential economic generators through their purchasing and hiring power and potential partners in addressing their cities' distress through locally relevant research. Medical facilities also began to be recognized for similar contributions. In 1999, Harkavy and Zuckerman coined this pairing the "Eds and Meds" (:1), stating such kinds of institutions were significant assets to struggling cities but were often overlooked. In the 2000s, awareness grew among regional leaders that other kinds of organizations—for example, large place-committed corporations—could be seen as assets fixed geographically and thus motivated to participate in revitalization work. In 2001, an Aspen Institution study named the immobile infrastructurally invested entities "anchor institutions" (Fulbright-Anderson, Auspos, & Anderson, 2001:1). Postsecondary institutions began to see themselves as one of a number of invested partners in a locality and the powerful possibilities that existed in banding together with other sector partners, or what Nancy Cantor (2015:9) called "place-based barn-raisings." Similar to the concept's spread across sectors, the once urban concept of anchor institutions soon spread into various geographies: cities, regions, rural, etc. It is a concept of engagement that has also spread beyond the U.S. (Goddard, Coombes, Kempton, & Vallance, 2014).

An anchor institution's immobility is its primary motivation for making a positive impact on its local community. The conditions and vibrancy of the surrounding community significantly influence the numbers of faculty and students who wish to make the institution their home, and the degree to which an institution can find opportunities locally to advance innovation, knowledge production and deploy knowledge transfer activities. "Enlightened self interest" (Taylor & Luter, 2013:3) leads anchor institutions to become active in urban renewal projects. Anchor institutions can be counted on to prioritize local and regional innovation and knowledge creation;

help employers prosper and grow through knowledge transfer; participate in community revitalization; and intentionally contribute to the region's educated population (Shaffer & Wright, 2010), often in response to regional workforce opportunities and needs.

Institutions that embrace the anchor role do so not only to support organizational thriving. They also embrace the identity out of a sense of mission. An anchor mission is realized through commitments to a "social-purpose mission (democracy, equity, social and racial justice, place and community)" that allow it to "build democratic, mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships with its host community, thereby enabling it to become a *change agent* and engine of socioeconomic development" (emphasis in original) (Taylor & Luter, 2013:7). Anchor institutions sustain their involvement when they receive a return on their investment, often through a coupling of social responsibility and self-interest. According to Taylor and Luter (2013), location is a strong influencer of whether an anchor adopts its social purpose mission, and points to distressed urban locations as most likely to support the full anchor rationale: organizational thriving and a social-purpose mission.

Axelroth Hodges and Dubb (2012) examined 10 anchor institutions and found three approaches or roles that significantly influence the way the anchor mission is realized. Some institutions play the role of facilitator, in which they have few or no commitments to a specific locality but are generally responsive to community needs, and prioritize the teaching and learning mission of the institution. Other institutions play the role of leader, in which they focus on comprehensive and specific neighbourhood revitalization through academic and non-academic work. Often, this approach is used when the campus is directly adjacent to an urban area that has significant economic and social distress. As a response, the institution seeks to revitalize and renew the area. Within this approach, the community is beneficiary of the institution's community development work. Still other institutions play the role of convener, brokering community development processes with networks of community collaborators. Conveners will often work in communities that are not adjacent to campus, bringing both their educational contributions as well as economic development to bear.

### Metropolitan universities

Similar to the other frameworks, a metropolitan university also presents a way of engaging locally, but the nuance of the metropolitan university framework is that attention is paid to the entire metropolitan region and not a narrow sub-area. This regional attention creates a difficulty: the demands of a metropolitan region are multifaceted and numerous. The metropolitan university identifies mutual interests and collaborations spanning the urban core, well-to-do urban villages, and suburban areas; between resident, legislative, corporate, and nongovernmental organizational constituencies; and across the range of the polity's interests (Brownell, 1995).

American universities that assert their purpose, or "essential



rationale," to be their relationship with their surrounding metropolitan region and whose commitments to engagement permeate the whole institution are considered metropolitan universities (Hathaway, Mulhollan, & White, 1990:12-13). Within the metropolitan university framework a distinction is made between "metropolitan universities" and those institutions that are located within a metropolitan area or that enrol a substantial/majority segment of students from the metropolitan region but that do not form sustained, reciprocal engagements with their cities (Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, 2004).

Much like anchor institutions, the metropolitan university embraces a dual mission to provide students with rich learning experiences while strengthening the metropolitan region through community building efforts (Allen, Prange, Smith-Howell, Woods, & Reed, 2016). Hathaway et al. (1995:11) explain:

*By choosing to fit into the metropolitan university model, a university accepts the added obligation to extend its resources to the surrounding region, to provide leadership in addressing regional needs, and to work cooperatively with the region's schools, municipalities, businesses, industries, and the many other institutions and organizations in the public and private sectors. By accepting this mission, a university affirms that it not only accepts the academic and scholarly obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon all excellent universities but that it intends to extend the expertise and energies of the university to the metropolitan region in somewhat the same way that land-grant institutions served the agricultural society during the nineteenth century.*

The three frameworks are similar and often work in concert within a single institution's efforts to engage its local communities, but differ in the range of geographies engaged and the specificity of the strategies entailed. This is certainly the case at the University of Pittsburgh, where we have embraced the ethos of stewardship in our host neighbourhood of Oakland; qualify as a metropolitan university and as such attend to issues of the Southwestern Pennsylvania region; and are viewed as an anchor institution within the city as one of its four largest employers, a significant purchasing agent, and a community-engaged institution. The University is now choosing a deliberate neighbourhood approach to better link and leverage our localized community engagement activities. Axelroth Hodges and Dubb (2012) note that some institutions see themselves *within* a broader community, of which they may engage some areas or none at all. Other institutions see themselves as *part of* the community, recognizing their shared futures. The historical relationship between the locale and the institution greatly influences the type of engagements that are possible. For example, within stewardship of place, there is an emphasis on having a place-related focus as one of the four characteristics of a publicly engaged institution but there is an implicit distinction between place-related and place-based (Elmendorf et al., 2002). Within anchor institution work, depending on the role the institution takes, such as the leader role, the university can heavily determine the way the place will evolve, to as great an extent as changing the very nature of the place to become university-centric. Referred to

as university cities (Shapiro, 2015), these environments tend to cluster innovation, business, culture, and amenities tightly around a research university. These distinctions are interesting to consider as we explore an emerging practice of *emplaced* engagement strategies.

## PLACE

What is meant by *emplaced* engagement and how does this change the intellectual and applied practice of community engagement? Place is not a marker of a particular kind of community engagement work (e.g., one form of community engagement is focused on place, whereas another is not) but rather can inform an institutional paradigm or orientation in which community engagement efforts are informed by a sense of place; they honour that engagements are *emplaced*, and as a result reflect the context, setting, and meaning made of that setting by those who live, work, and seek to influence that location. Thomas Gieryn (2000), a sociologist who studies place, argues that "place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game—a force with detectable and independent effects" (:466). He goes on to explain that the consideration of place is more than a "bundle of analytic variables" such as demographic characteristics of a location (racial proportions, unemployment rates, etc.). In his view, place is an interaction among a geographic location, its physicality (the material forms, whether natural or built, found there and the social processes that happen through them), and the meaning and value that is "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" there (:465).

### Of a place: Emplaced

The acts of narrating, perceiving, feeling, and understanding the meaning of place (Gieryn, 2000) are done among people who have an interest or a shared concern of a place. This is often the domain of neighbours, whose lives are entangled with the place. Paul Pribbenow, President of Augsburg College, associated a commitment to place with becoming a neighbor in his essay, "Generosity and Faithfulness: A Meditation on Why Place Matters for Higher Education," saying, "place demands our presence as a neighbour" (Pribbenow, 2015:8). Being a neighbor typically means one is *of a place*, distinct from being *in a place* (which may be time- or involvement-limited). Nancy Cantor, a prolific postsecondary leader and community engagement champion, pointedly challenges American higher education to be "citizens of a place, not on the sidelines studying it" (emphasis added) (Cantor & Englot, 2015:75). She goes on to describe how, during her time at Syracuse University, as part of efforts to express its anchor institution mission within the city of Syracuse's Near West Side, residents orally and visually narrated their lives and communities to faculty, students, and staff. The acts of interpreting, imagining, feeling, and understanding built trust and shared concern between Syracuse University and Near West Side residents. "As these narratives accumulated . . . we got new eyes" (Cantor, 2011:7).

If place is agentic (Gieryn, 2000), then postsecondary institutions that take the posture of neighbor are affected and influenced by the evolving and contested realities of that place. The collaborations and work done in the place, if valuable, also become *of the place*—become *emplaced*—reflecting the histories and realities of the place. These histories and realities are not fixed. They are contextualized within an ever-changing socio-

political environment of the place (Hynie, MacNevin, Prescod, Rieder, & Schwartzentruber, 2016). Strategies and projects are not so easily imported from a different community-university locale without significant tailoring. For example, Irma McClaurin, former executive director of the University of Minnesota's Urban Research Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC) said, "We can't just replicate the university's Research and Outreach centers that serve rural Minnesota. . . . We're truly trying to establish a partnership where we can be good neighbours" (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012:97).

One of the characteristics of neighbours is that their shared concern about a place is bound up in their physical tie to it, which elongates and grounds their commitments to the place. Universities are also seeking to elongate and ground their emplacement through different ways of establishing physical roots in communities, one of which is "hyperlocal" engagement (Britton & Aires, 2014:66). Within the next section, the idea of hyperlocal and emplaced engagement will be explored through the use of shared spaces and neighbourhood presence.

### NEIGHBOURHOOD-EMPLACED CENTERS

The neighbourhood space approach to engagement is one strategy that can be used within an institution's portfolio of anchor, metropolitan, and stewardship of place efforts. For some institutions, such as those occupying a convening role (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012), it becomes a way to realize their anchor missions despite having campuses in stable or fairly well-to-do parts of the urban core. For others, it signals that, despite having a large campus adjoining the neighbourhood, the institution is making efforts to fit within the scale and fabric of the neighbourhood separate and apart from campus life. Regardless of geographic proximity to the neighbourhood being engaged, this approach of focus on place also serves to focus the intellectual involvement of faculty, staff, and students in their engagement with communities.

The inhabitation of physical space within a neighbourhood demands a long-term presence and commitment that unplaced engagement efforts do not always feel. "Understanding how we share space calls attention to (and aids in moving away from) transactional or episodic work toward sustained work with measurable results" (Barajas, 2016:2). A number of examples are presented below.<sup>1</sup>

#### Drexel University, Dornsife Center for Neighbourhood Partnerships

Drexel University founded the Dornsife Center for Neighbourhood Partnerships as one strategy within its bold civic engagement vision that is largely based on anchor institution work. As part of this work, Drexel was participating as a stakeholder in local community planning processes. Within those processes, neighbours expressed a need to have more integrated and constructive relationships with the University and to move beyond what had been a contentious relationship (Britton & Aires, 2014). They also wanted to have better access to collaborative problem-solvers and saw Drexel as a key partner in achieving their communities' priorities. The result was undertaking a two-year stakeholder planning process that would lead to the Dornsife Center, a hub for neighbourhood-university engagement. Using the Future Search planning process (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010), the

past, present, and desired future of the relationship between neighbourhoods and university was laid out in consensus-building discussion (Britton & Aires, 2014). Through these conversations, a distilled set of priorities was identified: income disparity, low educational attainment, health disparities, fresh food access, homeownership, and racism and the legacy of segregation. The neighbourhood-embedded facility is a community gathering space that provides opportunities for collaborative work on identified priorities, supports academic engagement across all of Drexel's colleges and schools, and has programming specific to the desires of the neighbours in that area. The Dornsife Center hosts monthly community dinners and is governed by a stakeholder advisory council (Britton & Aires, 2014).

#### University of Minnesota, University Research Outreach/Engagement Center

When the University of Minnesota began to reinvigorate its land-grant, one strategy was to develop deeper partnerships with the local urban area, a new urban vision for engagement that included a center within the Northside neighbourhood (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012). The Northside community expressed concern and protested the University's efforts, fearing that UMN would be exploiting the neighbourhood for research purposes. Over the next five years, a difficult community-university dialogue ensued that Barajas and Martin (2016:51-52) describe as discussing "research, race, knowledge production, ownership and intellectual property, exploitation, experimentation on black children, and claims of past broken promises and lack of trust." The initial focus of the center was changed, as was its initial location, but the vision for having a neighbourhood and urban extension presence was retained. With these changes came a more participatory approach to planning the center, eventually named the University Research Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC). Two years of "listening" via focus groups, conversations, and interviews culminated in a two-day conference and established a mission for UROC (Barajas & Martin, 2016), a triple focus on education, health, and community and economic development (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012), and an epistemology of community-driven knowledge. Eventually UROC developed a triple focus on education, health, and community and economic development (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012), but also an epistemology of community-driven knowledge production that prioritized action, consideration of many ways of knowing, mutual benefit, and value for community assets (Barajas & Martin, 2016).

#### University of Utah, Hartland Partnership Center

In the early 2000s, the University of Utah initiated a greater focus on civic engagement and community-university partnerships. Through more than 250 interviews with leaders and residents of Salt Lake City's Westside neighbourhood, the University learned of important community priorities, specifically that a physical center for engagement in Westside was needed to ensure *sustainability and credibility* of the initiative (University of Utah, 2017a). The University Neighbourhood Partners (UNP) office opened in 2003 in a residential house in the Westside neighbourhood. In 2004, the UNP Hartland Partnership Center opened in an apartment complex in Westside. In 2012 it relocated to a 10,000-sq. ft. building adjacent to the apartment complex. Its mission was to serve

as an educational and community center (University of Utah, 2017b) for immigrant and refugee families living in Westside. The predominant work of the center is to offer adult and youth programming, much of which is geared toward the realities of an immigrant population, through an asset-based and co-designed approach that is carried out by Westside residents and university personnel (Mileski, Mohamed, & Hunter, 2014). Members of the Hartland Resident Committee act as advisors to the center and often speak to University of Utah classes. They receive stipends in recognition of their leadership of the initiative. "Rather than creating programs for community members, engaging them in program development creates more effective involvement and contribution from community members" (:147). Through this process, the primary paradigm of the center is capacity building.

### York University, York U-TD Community Engagement Centre

York University's main campus borders Toronto's Jane-Finch/Black Creek neighbourhood, an area that has been stigmatized as having high crime, gunplay, and drugs. It also has a history of rich civic activism and has undergone planning efforts to build neighbourhood capacity and improve education and employment rates (Hynie et al., 2016). In 2006, York received a ten-year gift from the TD Financial Group to coordinate the university's engagement in the neighbourhood. York established a working group to conduct an internal and external consultation process that reported community and university stakeholder beliefs about the purpose, structure, and operations of a neighbourhood-based center. The report laid out recommendations for physical space, executive staff qualities, programming, and the principles or ethical commitments that would guide a center's work (York University, 2007). This process resulted in the York U-TD Community Engagement Centre, a storefront center that works with units across the university to engage teaching, research, and resource sharing with the neighbourhood (York University, 2017). The storefront presence within a repurposed strip mall also houses Seneca College's Yorkgate campus (a technical school specializing in vocational preparation), a community health center, and a youth-serving program center. This proximity to vocational and community programming maximizes York's ability to leverage partnerships and participate in collaborative programming (Hynie et al., 2016).

In 2013, five years into the existence of the center, residents, community organization staff, university stakeholders, and community organizers came together for a conference that was initiated due to concerns that York and the Jane-Finch/Black Creek neighbourhood continued to wrestle with a belief that the processes and products of community-focused research were inequitable; stigma and stereotypes of the neighbourhood endured among university stakeholders; engagement practices and structures unintentionally marginalized community voice; and despite the existence of the center, York University was still largely inaccessible to neighbourhood residents. The conference created opportunities to dialogue about "social justice, equitable research practices, race and power relations in order to establish alternative practices that address the

needs of the community and university" (Narain & Kumar, 2013:3).

## DISCUSSION

As introduced earlier, taking a hyperlocal or neighbourhood focus has both physical and paradigmatic implications for the work done there. Barajas and Martin (2016) explain this as attending to both the physical and epistemological natures of the space. Though the physical footprint of these efforts is vital to their success, and much can be learned from how a particular ethos for engagement is established through the aesthetic and built environment of such centers, the paradigmatic aspect of neighbourhood-emplaced work is critical to understand. The examples provided by the Dornisife Center, Hartland Center, UROC, and York U-TD Community Engagement Centre illustrate that university efforts to be of a community, or *emplaced*, are not successful without attending to the collaborative and participatory development of their structures, activities, and purposes. Through participatory planning processes and community-university listening sessions, these exemplars acknowledged and addressed the socio-political context (Hynie et al., 2016), historic community-university relationship (Axelroth Hodges & Dubb, 2012), and the interactions among geography, physicality, and the meaning and value by those of that place (Gieryn, 2000).

A subtle differentiator between these efforts and other geographically focused engagement efforts is the degree to which they operate on the scale of the neighbourhood and as part of its fabric. In doing so, the exemplars may represent a shift from a university-centered way of engaging communities to the university joining the neighbourhood ecosystem at play within community development efforts. The notion of locating the university within an ecosystem (as contrasted with the institution being centered) has been explored as it relates to collaborative knowledge generation (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009) and within partnerships (Daynes, Howell, & Lindsay, 2003). The metaphor is useful. It describes an orientation and positionality that goes beyond co-determined work to being a part of an existing array of networks, leaders, and initiatives seeking community development while still retaining an institutional agenda and interest, just as any other community organization within the ecosystem does. Joining the ecosystem of community development points to the need to embrace community development theories and frameworks; orient teaching, learning, research, service and creative activity engaged in the neighbourhood in democratic and civic ways; and build the boundary-spanning capacity of university stakeholders collaborating in these spaces.

### Community development

While community-campus engagement frameworks are built on multidisciplinary theoretical roots (including learning theories, civic and citizen participation theories, organizational development theories, and so forth), Stoecker, Beckman, and Min (2010) point to a lack of familiarity with community development theories and frameworks within community-campus engagement practice and scholarship.



For institutions that aspire to neighbourhood emplaced engagements, reference to and application of community development theories along with community-campus engagement theories and frameworks is important because it appropriately orients the institution's positionality and efforts within neighbourhood-based work. This application of theory quickly leads the postsecondary institution to realize its appropriate role within existing localized, participatory community planning processes and the need to align neighbourhood-emplaced activities with existing community planning goals. It quickly leads the postsecondary institution to realize its appropriate role within existing localized, participatory community planning processes and the need to align neighbourhood-emplaced activities with existing community planning goals. Upon consideration of community development theory and frameworks, the institution quickly realizes its role is not to become the leader, but may best be expressed as learner, supporter, partner, and perhaps even as a participant within community development planning processes if welcomed by the community. Acquiring a community development sensibility may also allow an institution to determine which community processes with which to ally. For example, those processes that prioritize community leadership, broad participation, and civic goals would be more desirable than those that serve economic and political interests outside of the neighbourhood, such as those witnessed during the 1950s and 1960s eras of urban redevelopment.

Community development theories are eclectic in nature and are often derived from first-hand experience (Cook, 1994).

*Thus, [community development theory] has taken on the appearance of a jumble of definitions and theoretical bits and pieces being constantly arranged, modified and re-arranged. However, this maze of mental activity and images is not haphazard. It revolves around, and is anchored in, a core of coherent definitions and propositions."*

(Cook, 1994, para. 10)

This section presents a summary overview of the definitions and propositions of community development, including its goals, participatory nature, constituent planning processes, and underpinning values that are particularly relevant for neighbourhood emplaced engagement strategies.

Though community development has come to refer to broad notions of community (Phillips & Pittman, 2009) (such as regional, rural, urban, etc.), it is a framework and pursuit found within urban neighbourhoods to bring about change (Warren, 1970). At a neighbourhood level, community development is influenced by the specific attributes of the neighbourhood setting, which according to Luter (2016) include the physical or built environment (forms an existing visual state); people (those who live, work, influence, or have responsibility for shaping the neighbourhood); organizational network (the web of formal and informal organizations that have a stake in the neighbourhood); institutional network (supportive services

found within the neighbourhood); neighbourhood economy (opportunities for residents to participate in the exchange of goods and services in both formal and informal ways); and neighbourhood proximities and access (ease of access to other city services and institutions, private and public).

The emphasis on local action, or the vision and action that emerges from within the community, is one of the most important aspects of community development for postsecondary institutions to understand. Rothman (1995) draws attention to participatory and indigenous leadership involved in this sort of community intervention by referring to it as "locality development" (:28), saying:

*This approach presupposes that community change should be pursued through broad participation by a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in determining goals and taking civic action. . . . Leadership is drawn from within [the community], and direction and control are in the hands of local people."*

(Rothman, 1995:28-29)

As a result, community development is both a process (Rothman, 1995) and an outcome (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). The process of community development builds community competency, social integration (Rothman, 1995), and social capital (Mattessich & Monsey, 2004). The outcome of community development is various forms of community improvement including changes to the physical or built environment, natural environment, or cultural, political, economic, and social conditions (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). As early as the 1950s, community development's multifaceted nature was noted as a "process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative" (United Nations, 1955, in Rothman, 1995).

Theories of community development are based on the interplay of community systems and human behaviours: through community planning processes that both build and are resourced by social capital, consensually defined goals are chosen by community members that will likely improve the community's physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, and economic realities. In an atmosphere of mutual support, the members of the community work together to realize these goals, often marshaling resources found within and outside of the community (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003).

It is within this context that neighbourhood-emplaced centers operate. Thus, if a university seeks to establish a neighbourhood-emplaced center, the implicit assumption is that it will acknowledge and participate in the community development processes at play and align its contributions to the community development outcomes sought (social, physical, and economic development). This may come in the form of the institution taking the role of citizen, participating in community planning processes, or seeking opportunities to contribute social capital and resources that align with the



community's consensually defined goals for improvement. Within each of the exemplar centers offered in this essay, the institutions were highly responsive to (and almost always participated in) the planning processes of the neighbourhood. Much of their programming is directly aligned to the community development outcomes/goals established through those planning processes.

### Democratic civic engagement

In addition to recognizing that neighbourhood emplaced efforts must complement a neighbourhood's community development efforts, these initiatives also look forward to future collective actions that can be taken in partnership with neighbourhood residents. Following Cook's (1994) argument that community development theory prioritizes systemic, integrated, democratic processes of civic participation, the sort of community engagement (across teaching, research, economic development, and creative activities) appropriate in neighbourhood-emplaced efforts would likewise have these qualities. Democratic civic engagement does just this. It is a framework of community-campus engagement that embraces democratic notions of "inclusiveness, participation, task sharing, lay participation, reciprocity in public problem solving, and an equality of respect for the knowledge and experience that everyone contributes to education and community building" (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009:6).

Participation and inclusion (of the university in the community development ecosystem and of the community within the university's development of engagement agendas and public problem-solving pursuits) are central to the concept of democratic civic engagement. Each concept makes its own contribution to the framework. Within a community-development or community-organizing frame, differences among definitions of "participation" are typically explained by the degree to which power and decision making are shared, with more authentic forms of participation being marked by higher degrees of shared decision making (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Spaces of participation are influenced by the power relations among the entities seeking to collaborate there (Cornwall, 2002, Davies et al., 2016). Inclusion, on the other hand, points to the degree that a process or culture is changed to embrace the contributions and participation of those who would be involved. Co-production of engaged spaces fosters accessibility for those who would otherwise be excluded from the endeavour (Davies, et al., 2016), thus leading to an inclusive stance.

Perhaps the most defining aspect of democratic civic engagement is its emphasis on the *civic purposes* of shared public problem solving and engagement. This emphasis stands in contrast with the typical institutional agenda of public service activities. Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton (2009:6) explain:

*To paraphrase Dewey, mere activity in a community does not constitute civic engagement. Civic engagement defined by processes and purpose has a particular meaning in higher education and is*

*associated with implications for institutional change.*

*The processes of engagement refer to the way in which those on campus—administrators, academics, staff, and students—relate to those outside the campus. Purpose refers specifically to enhancing a public culture of democracy on and off campus and alleviating public problems through democratic means.*

The example provided by the York U-TD Community Engagement Centre provides a vibrant illustration of the distinction between activity in a community and democratic civic engagement. Despite having five operational years as a neighbourhood center offering a multitude of services and facilitating numerous research projects, the community concerns about exploitative research, entrenched stereotypes, and lack of a co-constructed process and purpose animating the center hampered its ability to engage stakeholders productively and equitably in addressing public problems.

In addition to fostering more reciprocal and equitable community relationships, democratic civic engagement enables the kinds of research, teaching, and involvement that are mission-critical aspects of modern postsecondary institutions. Research, innovation, and knowledge production that are underpinned by the principles of democratic civic engagement have the capacity to produce knowledge that honours a diversity of expertise (lived, indigenous, academic, practice, etc.) with the potential to affect—immediately and longer term—the pressing challenges experienced nationally and locally. Reciprocal knowledge production (Hoyt, 2011) bridges the worlds of practice and theory, enhancing the relevance of scholarship. In a scarce research-funding climate, evidence of relevance, impact, and applicability is vital to the work of research institutions. With regard to teaching and learning, students who are well prepared for, and actively involved in, collaborative public problem solving have opportunities to acquire and practice civic skills and abilities that are fundamental to a well-educated citizenry and of critical interest to future employers. These skills and abilities include knowing how their own identities inform their assumptions, values, and responsibilities to others; learning various methods for influencing change; gaining practice with critical inquiry, analysis, and reasoning; gathering and evaluating multiple sources of evidence and diverse perspectives; developing empathy, open mindedness, and ethical integrity; and practicing public problem solving, collaboration, deliberation, and compromise (Musil & Hampshire, 2012).

### Boundary-spanning capacity

The civic capacities necessary to earn trust and credibility; align one's teaching, research, creative activity, and contributions to the goals of the neighbourhood; and act in inclusive and participatory ways are not necessarily the same as those required of work done inside the culture of higher education. These capacities represent boundary spanning, or the ability to build relationships that navigate and knit together the cultures and practices of community and campus in order to achieve collaborative goals. Building the boundary-spanning

capacity of those involved in the engagement enterprise is critical to its success and sustainability. Neighbourhood-emplaced centers have a range of stakeholders, be they center directors, participating faculty and researchers, supportive staff, student leaders, or community members that need to have the capacity to work in boundary-spanning ways. Weerts & Sandmann (2010) described university stakeholders who operate as boundary spanners as:

*[P]rimarily responsible for interacting with constituents outside their organization. These spanners negotiate power and balance between the organization and external agents to achieve mutual objectives, and they also represent the perceptions, expectations, and ideas of each side to the other.*

(:638)

Rose (2014) described community members who operate as boundary spanners within community-university engagements as often being formal organizational leaders who use their organizational affiliations and networks to gain visibility of opportunities, community changes, and available resources to further engagement. Within the Rose study, the community boundary spanners who participated were communicative visionaries that held trust and credibility across the organizational and cultural boundaries they worked (2014).

Neighbourhood-emplaced work is, itself, a boundary-spanning notion of engagement infrastructure. Davies et al. say that "[i]t is also important to ensure that those we are working with are also able to operate on an equal basis within the different spaces in which we choose to meet, are able to understand the significance of closed, invited or claimed spaces, and the dynamics of hidden or invisible power in the relationships we develop together" (Davies et al., 2016:13).

Though the community members, faculty, staff, and students who are engaging one another might be predisposed to collaboration and may position themselves to have a vantage point from which to make connections among constituencies, these are likely insufficient qualities unless accompanied by other capacities associated with boundary spanning. These include sharing and translating the expectations and perspectives among different campus and community cultures and stakeholders; attending to power dynamics at play between neighbourhood and campus stakeholders while helping the effort achieve mutually defined goals; familiarity with campus and community culture; facility with civically oriented pedagogies and research methods; and knowledge of how to participate in community development processes and have efforts be informed by such processes. Such capacities can and need to be built within those working in neighbourhood-emplaced spaces. Dedicating resources and programming to faculty development, student orientations, community partner orientations, advisory board trainings, and the like is critical to the sustainability and success of the neighbourhood-emplaced engagement strategy.

## CONCLUSION

As the anchor institution framework implies, the University of Pittsburgh is acting out of enlightened self-interest. Developing neighbourhood-based centers provides us with opportunities to advance the frontiers of knowledge through pioneering research, build community strength, and prepare our students to lead lives of impact (University of Pittsburgh, 2016). Through the centers, the University will engage with diverse groups, creating inclusive and strong community partnerships that will help us leverage community expertise that in turn can shape research agendas and students' educational experiences. As a state-related institution, the centers are another way we demonstrate our value as a regional asset, contributing to the region's revitalization, particularly within neighbourhoods close to the University campus. Creating a series of neighbourhood-based centers is a means to harness urban engagement as a strategic and scholarly endeavour. Neighbourhood-based engagement contributes to our vitality and strength as a premier urban-located research institution as well as to our civic mission, one that we share with all institutions of higher education.

As we move forward with our plans at the University of Pittsburgh to establish neighbourhood-emplaced centers of engagement, looking to the examples of our peers, the lessons they have learned, and balancing that wisdom with the agentic influence of our specific neighbourhoods will be key in our success. Perhaps most importantly, the paradigms we embrace as guiding principles for the development of our centers will shape the degree to which they reflect emplaced notions of neighbourhood engagement.

From the practical examples explored here as well as the understanding gained by examining community development theory, democratic civic engagement, and the concept of boundary spanners, we draw three key insights. First, neighbourhood-emplaced engagement that occurs at the scale of a neighbourhood and as part of its fabric reflects and responds to the neighbourhood's community development processes and is designed through planning undertaken collaboratively by community and university stakeholders. Second, the activities that take place within these centers (such as student engagement, community-engaged teaching, and community-engaged research) ought to be developed under the rubric of democratic civic engagement, which fundamentally focuses efforts on civic issues important to the neighbourhood and steers their implementation in inclusive, participatory ways. Finally, those stakeholders who work through the centers ought to have capacities as boundary spanners, an identity and set of qualities that need to be intentionally cultivated as part of the center programming and infrastructure. Our communities deserve no less.

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### (Endnotes)

1 These are just a few examples we identified that could be models for what we are seeking to undertake at the University of Pittsburgh. Our criteria included placement within the neighborhood setting, co-location of many kinds of university engagement activities, and robust partnership orientation. There are other examples of shared space centers (such as Barbara Weitz Community Center at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, among others) and neighborhood-based partnership programs (such as the Community University Partnership Programme at the University of Brighton, UK, among others) that are excellent examples of shared space and programming efforts.